Twin City Camera Club
Digital Workshop Class
Preparing Images for Competition
Presented by Tom McCall

Notice: The PowerPoint program was prepared with screen captures while using Adobe Photoshop CS3 Extended.

Everything used should be available in newer versions and in Adobe Photoshop Elements; however some of the same Tools and Selections may have a different appearance and may have to be found in other locations...

Preparing images for competition

Included within all of the enhancement techniques, filters, add-ons, plug-ins and tools, you will find several that fit into what could be thought of as Basic image enhancement techniques and therefore should be considered for most images during post processing. Consider the adjustments as suggestions and try different settings until you see and like what works for you.

Basic Techniques

> Spot and Clean
> Setting Black Point
> Sharpening
> Saturation
> Dodge and Burn
> Vignette
> Brightness and Contrast
> Saving Working Copies
> Cropping
> Sizing and Saving

These techniques should be considered, possibly even tried to determine the results, just remember that some of the techniques are not applicable in every situation and therefore shouldn't be used.
For each method shown in this class, there could be and probably is, many additional tools and/or techniques and processes to accomplish the same thing. Once you learn what is available, you will use what becomes most comfortable, that is, until it is upgraded, improved or changed. Then you will learn a new way…

Opening a new image.

        Opening from within Camera Raw
        Opening directly in Photoshop, Elements, etc.

Once opened, always make a duplicate of the Background Layer. When it is first opened you will see a small icon of a Lock located to the right on the Layer. The Lock indicates that some functions are not available. By duplicating it (making a copy of the Layer) the Lock is gone, making it open to all functions.

Changing the Names of the Layers.

When you duplicate a layer you have the option to rename it at that time or you may rename it at any time by double clicking on the Layer name.
By using a descriptive name for the Layer when you create or duplicate it, provides a way to identify the technique used in that Layer. By using codes in the descriptive names of the Layers and/or image names when you save them.

Everyone has their own way to do things, so these are suggestions on a couple of ways to keep track of how you worked on an image so you'll know most of what you did in case you want to make changes or use similar methods on another image.

Spot and Clean

Duplicate the Layer.
        Select one of the Healing Brush Tools
        Increase the size of the screen image (Zoom In) to 200% or more.
        Remove dust spots and other distractions.

Use the Clone Tool in areas that the Healing Brush can't work. Create a New Layer for using the Clone Tool. Select Current and Below in the Clone Tool preferences.
Once completed, Stamp Visible the Layer. Use Ctrl + Alt + Shift + E

Setting Black Point

Create a New Adjustment Layer "Levels".
        Select the Black Point Eyedropper by double clicking it.
        Set the Value in the Upper Box B: to 5 %   Click OK
        Select the White Point Eyedropper by double clicking it.
        Set the Value in the Upper Box B: to 95 % Click OK

Select the Black Point Eyedropper by clicking it.
        Find the Black Point on the image and click on it.
Select the White Point Eyedropper by clicking it.
        Find the White Point on the image and click on it.

No need to set the Gray Eyedropper because it is already set at 50%. Use of the Gray Point Eyedropper is optional.

Click OK to continue.

Once completed, Stamp Visible the Layer before continuing. Use Ctrl + Alt + Shift + E

Sharpening

Increase the size of the screen image (Zoom In) to 100%
Select the Sharpen function.
Select the view area by clicking on the location.
Set the Amount to 200 %
Set the Radius to 0.3 pixels (This is a starting point)
Check the amount by Left clicking in the view box.
Click OK to continue.

Once completed, Stamp Visible for a new Layer is optional before continuing.

Hue/Saturation

Create a New Adjustment Layer "Hue/Saturation".
      Adjust the Saturation to +15 as a starting point.
      Check the amount by clicking the Preview box.
      Click OK to continue.

Dodge and Burn

Create a New Layer (Blank).
      Fill with 50% gray.
      Set the Blending Mode to Overlay.
      Select the Brush Tool, Set the Opacity to 10%.
      Burn (Darken) with Black as foreground color.
      Dodge (Lighten) with White as foreground color.
      Check the amount by clicking visible (eye) Layer box.

Once completed, Stamp Visible the Layer before continuing.   Use Ctrl + Alt + Shift + E

Vignette

Open the Lens Correction dialog box.
      Select Custom.
      Adjust the Vignette slider.
      Click OK to continue.

Once completed, Stamp Visible the Layer before continuing. Use Ctrl + Alt + Shift + E

Saving a working copy (Many times)

It's a good idea to save working copies during the process so that you can return and make changes to the image without redoing all of it.
Go to Save as: Type in your file name, could use codes. CAUTION: Never save it back onto itself with the same file name.
                Select the Format: Photoshop (PSD)
                Select the file location to Save In.

Click Save.

Brightness and Contrast

Create a New Adjustment Layer "Brightness/Contrast".
        Adjust the Brightness Slider to 8 Starting Point
        Adjust the Contrast Slider to 16 Starting Point
        Check the amount by clicking visible (eye) Layer box.
        Click OK to continue.
        Stamp Visible the Layer before continuing   Use Ctrl + Alt + Shift + E

Cropping

Select the Crop Tool.
        Set the Width to 1024 px, Height to 1024 px, for the TCCC Horizontal
Competition format.
        Set the Width to 1024 px, Height to 1024 px, for the TCCC Vertical Competition
        format.

Or with the boxes Clear, Crop as desired.

Using the Crop Tool set to a Width of 1024 px and a Height of 1024 px and moving it to find the right Crop location.

Sizing and Saving

When ready to Size and Save your image, Check to make sure the Mode is set at 8 Bits/Channel and then Flatten the image. (You should have already saved a working copy) If you used the Cropping Tool set for the TCCC Horizontal settings of 1024 px by 1024 px you can just Flatten the image and use Save As to save it as a JPG.

Image Size

Open the Image Size dialog box.
You'll be changing the largest size to 1024.
For Horizontal, Change the Width to 1024.
For Vertical, Change the Height to 1024.

Canvas Size

Open the Canvas Size dialog box.
Change the inches to pixels.
For Horizontal, Change the Width to 1024.
For Vertical, Change the Height to 1024.
Canvas extension color should be Black.

Saving

When you have completed all of the modifications you must flatten the image.
Under Layer select Flatten Image

Then go to Save As.
      Select the location to Save In
      Type in your file name, could use codes.
      CAUTION: Never save it back onto itself with the same file name.
      Select the Format: JPEG (JPG)
      Click Save

Saving (JPEG Options)
With the JPEG Options box open, move the Slider towards the right (Large file) side until the File Size (shown under the Preview box) is as large as you would like but **Does Not Exceed 1 mb.**

Click Ok

NOTES:

It's always best to Start with a good photo.

Almost always, images right out of the camera need some adjustments.

When Opening from Camera RAW it can be set to 16 Bit, will have move colors to work with but when ready to Size and Save change the Mode to 8 Bit.

Several Healing Brush Tools have Content-Aware to choose as a preset. Try them all to see what they do. Then find the ones you like to work with.

Making a New Layer (Blank) for the Clone Layer is almost always best.
Setting the Black Point and White Point eyedroppers you may see "Save New Colors as Default" Click Yes.

Using the Threshold is one way of finding the lightest and darkest areas in the image.

Try some of the different Sharpening Methods "High Pass" only sharpens the edges of things. While using Smart Sharpen and Un-sharp mask they sharpen everything.

When using Hue/Saturation first try the "Master" then try the Individual Colors De-saturate can be useful in some applications but is usually Not the best way to convert to Black and White.

When using Save for Web –it will place Dashes where ever there are spaces. If you use Save for Web to Save your Images you Must rename them to get rid of the dashes.

I want to say again… All of the processes explained in this class most likely can be done many different ways. So try them, see what you like and then try others too.

Don't forget the HELP file to help you find how to locate a Tool or Process.

Lots of tutorials are on the web that can walk you through how to do things.

If you ever get really stumped and just can't seem to figure something out. Call me.

I wish you many happy manipulations…

Tom