Ely Photographic Club

STEP BY STEP BASICS FOR PROCESSING IMAGES

Generally

These notes are for Lightroom Classic (LRC) and Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) but the principles also apply to Lightroom CC. The panels references are for LRC, but they are very similar in ACR.

Before we start on processing it's important to understand Colour Space as this can cause issues when exporting the photo. The "Color Space" setting is in the LCR Edit menu, Preferences, 3rd box from the top. Adobe recommends using Adobe RGB, which has a wider range of colours (Gamut) than sRGB.

Most modern cameras offer the choice in the menu settings of either AdobeRGB or sRGB. It's useful therefore, if you are using LCR or ACR to set your camera to AdobeRGB and LRC to the same so when working in LRC or ACR you are seeing the full range of colours available and when printing from these programmes you are using as much colour information that you can.

Unfortunately, web-based outlets such as facebook and Instagram and club competition software such as PhotoEntry use sRGB so the photo will need to be converted during export process from a RAW, JPEG or Tiff file in Adobe RGB to sRGB.

This can cause the colours to change slightly and some colours to look more or less saturated so you may need to adjust the saturation accordingly.

If this all sounds too complicated just set your camera to sRGB and process in that gamut.

There is a separate tutorial on exporting in the Tutorial Section of the club website called "Lightroom Classic – Exporting Photos".

Processing

As a place to start on an image its often worth selecting the Profile (if it's a RAW image) say Adobe Landscape and then hitting the Auto tone button on the basics panel. If it's a JPEG then just go straight to Auto. This used to be awful but now works quite well.

You may still need the following basic methods to improve the image but often most of the work will be done and this can give a reasonable starting point.

However, it doesn't always work so you may still need the following methods to fix things if it doesn't or just improve things from where it takes it.

The 7 steps in the Kelby system are set out below. If you want to access some very good lessons on Photography and processing you can use the free lessons on You Tube or go to paid content on websites such as Kelbyone, which has many lessons and courses that guide you through the process in a more structured way.

1. **GET THE COLOUR RIGHT**

   If shot in RAW, in the Basic development panel, try the White Balance pre-sets. It will say "As Shot" at the beginning, which is the setting you had in the camera when taking the photo.

   Click on it and select from Auto; Daylight; Cloudy; Shade; Tungsten; Fluorescent; Flash; Custom. Scroll through and see the differences it makes.

   Press the letter y on the keyboard to see the side-by-side view to compare, or the backspace key to see the before. Hit these keys again to get back to the single / amended screen.

   To return to the "As shot" image just double click on the WB next to the dropper tool or select "as Shot" in the drop-down menu.

   If it's not quite as you want just move the "Temp" or "Tint" sliders a bit, but this is not the best solution.

   Use the dropper to select something in the image that should be a mid-tone / grey. This will be shown as "Custom". You can click on various points in the image until you get the colour you think is the best.

   When using the dropper do not check the "Auto Dismiss" check box in the bottom left corner of the screen as it will cause the dropper to jump back to its housing after just one click, rather than let you click on various places before being re-housed.

   Also don't check "Show Loupe" as this brings up the box of colours as you move around the screen to select a location for the dropper. It's also showing the numbers of the RGB colours, so it is to help find a spot where the three numbers are the same. It's impossible to do so just use your eyes. So, keep this unchecked.

   If it's not an accurate colour you want but say you want to change to a sunset or sunrise just move the "Temp" or "Tint" sliders, to create the look you want. You can adjust the exposure and shadows to help with this.

2. **EXPOSURE**

   Check your histogram. If there are gaps at either / both ends then you can expand the tonal range, using the White and Black sliders.

   Hold the shift key and double click on the word white and it will set the white point for you. Do the same with the black point by holding shift and double clicking on the word black. Then look at the image and if required adjust the exposure slightly. Either darken or brighten.

   Press the letter y on the keyboard to check the difference.

   If you think the auto adjustment has gone too far just pull back a little.

   Checking for blown or clipped highlights, where there is no detail in the image. Look at the histogram and there are two triangles along the top, one on the left and one on the right. They should both be dark grey. The one on the right shows the whites and if the triangle is

white then you have blown or clipped highlights. If the triangle is red, green or yellow then that means you may have clipped one of these colour channels but that's not so important.

Obviously, the sun or a bright light at night will clip but other things shouldn't.
Click on the triangle or hover over it to see the areas in the image that are clipped.

If it shows red these areas are completely clipped, yellow is slightly clipped and may be recoverable.

With the triangle clicked on the clipping area will remain visible. Then move the Highlights slider to the left until the clipping goes away.

A point to remember is that RAW images have a wider tonal range than JPEGs so they may not be clipped in the first place and if they are they may be recoverable, when JPEGs may not be. Most times RAW will give you more flexibility.

For landscape photos moving the highlights slider a lot to the left, even to -100, helps the sky as its usually brighter than anywhere else in the photo. Try it and see what it looks like.

You do the opposite if the black triangle is coloured, to recover the blacks.

3. **ENHANCE CONTRAST**

First try changing the profile to say Adobe Landscape for example. This is near the top of the basic panel opposite the four little squares.

Then adjust the white and black points as noted above.
Then add a bit of Contrast with the contrast slider in the Basic Panel.

You could use the Tone Curve panel instead. Go to the bottom and click on Point Curve and then select Medium Contrast or Strong Contrast and see which looks best. This set an "S" curve for you which you will see in the curves graph above. This adds contrast in addition to what you may have added using the contrast slider.

There are two other sliders in the Basic Panel that add contrast, and these are Texture and Clarity.

Clarity can add detail but can look too much and make things look a little harsh. The Texture slider can bring out the detail without this harsh look. Generally, its best to use 50% Clarity for any given selection of Texture. Both should be used carefully to avoid a grungy over harsh look, unless of course that's what you want to see.

Clarity can help to make some things shiny, such as metal, water, glass, etc and add contrast detail to edges, so it definitely has its uses.

4. DEALING WITH PROBLEMS

Some adjustments such as opening the shadows or changing exposure can do things such as adding noise or give a horrible old HDR effect so watch for this.
If you get noise, then this can now be dealt with properly in LRC and ACR and is covered in the Detail Panel.

The Luminance slider reduces noise but at the same time loses detail in the image so isn't very useful if used too much.

The new Denoise button only works on RAW images and removes the noise without reducing detail and produces a new file which will appear next to the original file in the film strip. You then continue working on this new file.

When you click on the Denoise button it opens a preview window called Enhanced Preview and this shows you the noise reduction that will be applied. Hover over the preview / click on it to see before and after. If it's too much or too little move the Amount slider to suit, but 50% seems to work well.

It informs you how long it will take to create this new file. Obviously the slower your computer and the larger the image file the longer this will take. Click on Enhance to run the new file.

Denoise, can remove haze or mist. This is a very useful slider but be careful and watch for issues.

This can enhance any vignetting in the corners, and this is more difficult to deal with so be careful here. There is a vignetting slider in the lens correction panel that can help.

It can also add a blue tint. The blue tint can easily by corrected by using the tint slider or other colour corrections shown above.

5. LENS CORRECTIONS

There is a panel in LRC called Lens Corrections and in ACR called Optics. These are the same panel just given different names for some obscure reason.

LRC and ACR know from the metadata which lens has been used and it has adjustment for many lenses. If it can't find the lens used it will say none. If this happens go into the profile and select the camara and lens size used, and it will try to correct things based on your selection. This can be a bit trial and error to get the right fix.

Just check the box for "Enable Profile Corrections". This will usually fix any bowing and remove any corner vignetting.

There is a Manual section here with a slider that can also help to remove distortion.

If you have any Chromatic Aberration, which are coloured edges to objects, then check this box as well. There is also a manual Defringe slider to help with this.

Next is the Transform panel in LRC or Geometry in ACR. This is for where things are leaning over, forwards, or back.

Auto usually works well but sometimes more is required.

If more is required, click on Guided, and draw lines on the image which should be straight. Two or three are usually enough, usually two vertically and one horizontally.

This will straighten the image but will cut off areas so when taking buildings, it's always a good thing to allow lots of space to the sides and top to allow for this.

Once you are happy and the white areas that will be cut off are not important, check Constrain Crop or crop manually with the crop tool. If these white areas are important, you will leave the crop as it is and you have to go into Photoshop to try to fill them in.

Check the crop (visible area) of the photo is as you would like it. Check for odd items sticking out from the edge or things cut off that should be visible and adjust the crop accordingly.

6. MAKING LOCAL ADJUSTMENTS

Masking. This is now so powerful with lots of selection options.

Click on the grey circle just above the Basics panel and this opens the masking options. Create the mask you require and then make the adjustments.

You can create multiple masks with many different adjustments. This needs a separate set of lessons as there are so many options.

7. FINISHING MOVES

Vibrance; This is a finishing tool in the Basic panel that is like smart saturation.

It enhances the less saturated colours in the image, so it has a subtle effect making the image look more vibrant. Probably only use 10% - 20%.

Sharpening: This is in the Detail panel. Use sparingly as going too far can look odd. 40% is usually good but you can go to 60% - 70% but be careful as over sharpening can look odd.

Go to 100% view (using the % next to Navigator top left of the screen) to zoom in on the image to see the effect on the whole image.

 Leave the radius at 1.0; You can push it to 1.1 if you want to, but this can look over sharpened.

Detail is best left at its default setting to avoid adding halos, which are very difficult to remove in LRC or ACR.

The masking slider under sharpening will adjust the areas where sharpening is applied. Hold down the Alt key on Windows / the Options key on Mac, and the image will turn white showing everything is being sharpened and as you drag the slider to the right the areas not being sharpened turn black, and only those areas being sharpened remain white.

Vignetting: Some people like this addition to a photo and some don't so be careful with its use. It adds darkening or lightening to the corners of the image and can be useful for portraits or wildlife to focus the viewers' attention to the subject.

Move the slider to the left to -9 or max -11, which is usually enough to use for a subtle vignette. Keep the feather at minimum of 50 to avoid the effect looking harsh.

Be very careful with vignetting as it can look too much too easily.

Masks: Use masks to add or remove highlights from any troubling areas that may remain, using the masking tools available.