

# Adobe Photoshop Elements 6

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Adobe's Photoshop Elements 6 is the most recent version of the non-professional photo editing software that Adobe has been publishing for several years. For those who don't need or can't afford the \$600 plus price tag for Photoshop CS3, this program is the industry standard. Most digital photography magazines and books refer to techniques in Photoshop programs. Photoshop Elements 6 allows everyone, from a beginner to a semi-serious photographer, to be able to make minor or major modifications to their photographs.

The software is widely available in retail stores and online. There will probably be a newer version coming out soon, this one was issued in the fall of 2007. Online prices are about \$60 and the package includes a DVD, an 18 page "Getting Started Guide" and an "Editing Keyboard Shortcut" card.

System requirements include: An Intel Pentium 4, Pentium M, or Intel Centrino 1.3 GHz processor; Windows XP with Service Pack 2 or Windows Vista (a Macintosh version is also available); 256MB of RAM (512MB recommended); 1.5GB of available hard-disk space; Color monitor with 16-bit color video card; a 1024x768 monitor resolution at 96dpi or less; Microsoft Direct X9 compatible display driver; and a CD-ROM drive.

Installation was pretty straightforward, taking about 15 minutes to complete the install, restart the computer and then register online. A "Welcome" screen asks if you want to "Organize, Edit, Create, or Share" your photos. You can choose from this menu each time you start it up or ask the program to always start in one of those modes. I did get an annoying pop-up asking if I wanted to win a laptop if I made a movie.

As soon as you start to use the program, you run into the biggest problem with this software. The included "Getting Started Guide"(18 pages) is very brief and almost useless in using the program. There is no tutorial, no written manual nor is there a manual on the DVD. The only source of "Help" is online. Unless you have a high-speed connection or have purchased "How-to" book, you will be lost. You can download and print the over 400 page manual if you have enough ink, paper and time. If you have used Photoshop before or some other photo editing software, you can begin to explore and follow some limited guidelines in the software. Otherwise, you must access the Internet for almost every bit of information, including a Glossary. Unless you have a high-speed connection, the book (e.g. Missing Manual for Photoshop 6 about \$26.00, Photoshop 6 for Dummies about \$17.00) or a high tolerance for frustration, do not proceed until you get one or more of them.

As you start to use the program, each function used for the first time will have to go through an annoying "loading" or "preparing function" delay. In the "Organizer" mode you can import photos from your files on cameras, scanner, hard drive, or even mobile phone. Once the photos are there, you can have the program automatically scan for, and correct red-eye. Photos can be also arranged and categorized by date, keyword tags, star ratings, file name, media type, etc. You can also create "Albums" to keep photos together while working on a project. A handy

and timesaving function in Organizer is to click on one or more photos and have the same action taken on all of them. You can have red-eye removal, “Auto smart fix”, Auto Color, Auto Contrast, and Auto Sharpen done on several photos at once. This may be enough correction for most of your shots. It would be useful if there was a “before” and “after” comparison on the screen in Organizer. You can always “undo” but that reverses the changes to all the photos you selected.

In the “Edit” mode, you are in the most useful function of the program. You are able to use “Guided”, “Quick”, and “Full” edit modes. The easiest to use is the Guided mode. There you are led through Basic (crop, rotate, and sharpen), Lighting and Exposure (Enhanced color, Remove color cast, and Skin tones), and Guided Activities (touch up and photomerge) edit modes. In each activity, you view a before and after photo and a slider to move until you get the effect you wish. Each correction also has an “auto” button if you don’t want to make the slider adjustments yourself.

In the “Quick” mode you go directly to the Smart Fix, Lighting, Color and Sharpness controls. Again you can use the auto fix button or make the changes yourself with the slider.

In the “Full” edit mode you get into Layers, Filters and dozens of Effects that you can apply to the photo for more detailed correction and artistic results. You can experiment with these functions or refer to a manual to get the result you wish.

The other two main functions of the program are “Create” and “Share”. In the Create mode you can produce Photo Books, Calendars (though you are sent to an online link to order it from Kodak), Collages, Online Galleries, and Slide shows. In Share, you can send photos to an online gallery, an email attachment, Photo mail, order online prints or create a CD/DVD. The process to send an email with a photo was annoying. You had to use Adobe email and get an email sent to your account. You then had to enter into the verification screen a 32-character code sent to your email. Finally, you could send the email to someone.

In comparison to other photo editing programs, Photoshop Elements 6 probably has more capabilities for the advanced user. Paint Shop Pro X however, has an excellent Learning Center and useful Help without using the internet. Picasa and Paint Shop Pro can do many photo editing functions as well and with a shorter learning curve. However, in the long run, Photoshop 6, after spending additional money to buy a manual, will be worth the investment.