

PRODUCT REVIEW: Adobe PhotoShop Elements

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MANUFACTURER: Adobe

LIST PRICE: \$99.99 at computer supply stores. Also available at amazon.com for \$82.99.

Adobe PhotoShop Elements is a cousin of Adobe PhotoShop and has a lot of its bells and whistles. It is good for use with digital cameras and other photo CDs. It is not to be compared to PhotoDeluxe, which is more limited in features. PhotoShop Elements is more complete and sophisticated and has a lot of the features of PhotoShop. It also takes a little longer to learn than PhotoDeluxe.

It is specifically designed for non-business photographers and anyone who would want a quality image-editing program that is easier to use than PhotoShop. You can use its imaging capture features for photos taken with film cameras, digital cameras and photo CDs, and prepare your pictures (images) for e-mail, the Web or printing.

This software comes on a CD and will run in Windows 98, Windows 98 SE, Windows ME, Windows 2000 or NT4. Recommended are a Pentium computer, 64MB Ram, minimum of 150MB hard disk space, and 256- color 800x600 monitor. The 150MB hard disk space is required for installation only. Keep in mind that graphics require a large amount of hard disk space.

Provided are a good manual, a Quick Reference Card for Windows and Mac and a booklet providing technical support options. Tech support is available 24 hours a day; however, the support by phone is not free. Cost is \$2.00 per minute. Free technical information is available over the Internet at www.adobe.com.

The installation went without a hitch from the CD. No drastic changes were made to my system. An uninstall option is available. Before installing, it is highly recommended that you disable your antivirus program; don't forget to enable it again after completing the installation. The complete installation took about 15 to 20 minutes.

After you have installed and registered Elements (you can register it online), I recommend that you read and print out the PhotoShop Elements "read me" file (five pages). Or you may want to print it out prior to installation as it gives some information on documentation updates, as well as some installation and update hints. When running Elements for the first time, follow the instructions to update the program online for the latest updates.

The opening screen may confuse you, but it is easily managed by using the quick reference card. I opened an e-mail photo, which I received by e-mail from Germany. It was rather grainy and blurry, so I proceeded to resize and then sharpen the picture. I also

touched up some of the red eyes and improved on the outlines by using the lasso feature. The next item was to improve the background color and facial tones. This took me awhile to do it right, but it worked great. The “undo” command helped me in this endeavor until I got the picture looking the right way.

Several items are really helpful. To do Web work, the “save for Web” command will generate the correct size of JPG, GIF or even PNG image to be used on your Web page. Another great tool is the photomerge. Before, I could never combine some area shots the right way. This tool will let you stitch separate shots of an area into one great looking area shot.

A picture package feature will let you automatically apply multiple versions of the same image onto a sheet of paper. There are several layouts you can choose from.

Included is an online Service Wizard where you can send images directly to shutterfly.com. Shutterfly.com lets you create glossy prints of your pictures and e-mail them to your family or print them on greeting cards.

If you are looking for a graphics (picture) editor that falls into the middle or lower price range with features close to Adobe PhotoShop, this is it. The price is great, the editing tools are great, and the learning curve is not as long as with PhotoShop.

