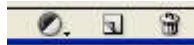


Photoshop Elements SIG – March 9, 2005
by John Durrett - SIG Co-lead

Layers

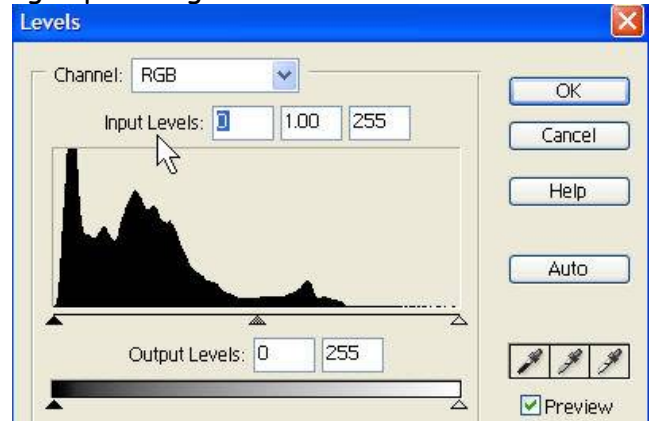
Photoshop Elements is most frequently used to modify or enhance photographs that have been taken with either digital cameras or scanned into the computer with a flatbed scanner. Using Layers is at the heart of any Photoshop process. Levels allow you to try various modifications to a photo in measured stages. We will demonstrate how Levels works one step at a time. The first step is to open a photo you want to edit. Then save a copy of the photo as a PSD file by selecting **File>Save As** and then select **Photoshop (*.PSD)** in the Format drop-down menu. Click **Save**.

Now open the Layers palette on the right side of the screen. If necessary, click on the Layers tab and drag the palette from the palette dock at the top-right of the screen (PE 2). There are three important symbols on the Layers palette: the Adjustment Layer, the New Layer, and the Trash icons.

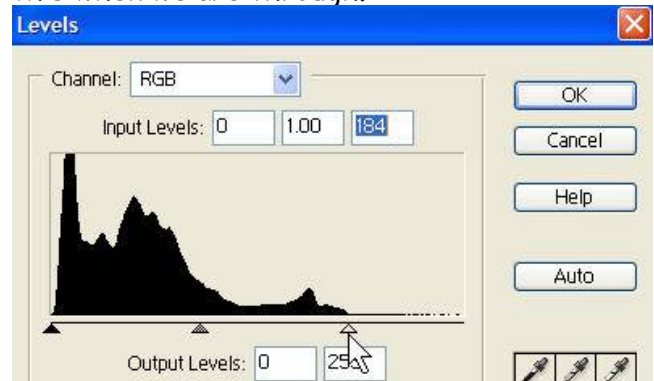


When you open the Layers palette for a new photo file, the first layer you see is the Background Layer. That represents all the information in your picture. That's what you start with. You want to protect this layer and NOT change it during the editing process. Now we add the most popular layer of all, the Levels Layer. To do this, **select the Adjustment Layers icon (the Circle Icon that is half black and half white)** and **choose Levels** from the drop-down menu. A Levels Layer will be added, and you will be looking at the Levels dialog box. The black uneven area in the middle of the figure is a histogram showing the distribution of the color intensity

of the photo as it goes from its darkest pixels to its lightest pixels. Most digital pictures that we have do not span the full axis. This histogram shows a picture that has a lot of dark pixels, but is lacking definition in the light pixel region.



What we do when we use Photoshop Elements is to take the photo's intensity profile and stretch it out to fully span the dark-to-light axis. When we do this, we redefine the picture's darkest pixels to be black and the lightest pixels as white. This adds color definition to the photo. For the histogram above, we click on the open triangle at the right and immediately below the histogram. Then we drag the white triangle to the left until it is under the leading edge of the first main rise in the histogram. It will look like this when we are through.



If your photo also requires that you move the black triangle from the left to meet the far left portion of the histogram, then do that. Don't worry about the other icons and buttons for now. Click OK, and the Levels Layer will be added to your Layers Palette. **Save your file.** You may notice a significant change in the color intensity of your picture after you apply the Levels Layer. If you do, then that is why we use this layer first. It tends to have the biggest, most immediate payoff. We will show how other photos can be adjusted using the Levels Layer in the SIG meeting.

Cropping

The Crop tool is one of my favorite tools. It helps me do two things: eliminate the extraneous from the picture while placing the emphasis on the subject and resizing the picture for a potential output. Sometimes I only crop for esthetics and rework the image until I get it cleaned up as much as I can. Then I save the file as a master file. The next step is to crop for size. All that said, I usually do both at once. To use the Crop Tool open your photo and **click on the Crop Tool symbol in the Tool Bar.**



Type your dimensions into the Width and Height windows and click and drag the Crop Tool across the photo. Oops. No, no. You can't do that yet! Do one thing first. Be sure you are working on a duplicate PSD version of our photo. If you are, then recheck your dimensions. Did you enter only numbers? If you did, then note that Photoshop Elements considers numbers without dimensions to be a

request to use pixels. If you want inches, add in after the number, such as 10 in by 8 in. **Click on the photo and drag the Crop Markings out until you have the features captured that you want.** After you release the mouse, you can click and drag to reposition the Crop Markings for better positioning in the picture. To make the Crop final, either double click the picture inside the crop area or click on the black check mark in the tool bar above the picture. If you like the picture as you cropped it, then Save it. If you don't like the cropping, then select Ctrl+Z to undo the Crop. Redo the Crop until you are satisfied. **Save your file. I will show examples of Cropping in the SIG.**

Image Size and Cropping

When you Crop your photos, you are trading off image size and resolution. This is a typical photo of dog begging for food.



When I check the original photo Image Size, I find it is 11.4 in by 8.5 in at 180 pixels/inch. To trade off size versus resolution, open **Image>Resize>ImageSize** and **uncheck the selection for Resample image.** Then I crop the picture to 8 in by 10 in using the Crop Tool. I get an 8 in by 10 in at 144 pixels per inch. I lost resolution. So I undo the first

Crop and Re-Crop at 5 in by 7 in. My resolution jumps to 205 pixels per inch.



I now have a file that will make an excellent print with my inkjet printer. Sometimes you trade off printed picture size for resolution. It is worth the trade.

Cloning

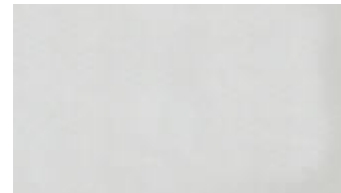
If you are going to touch up a photo, you will need to learn Cloning. This is a little tricky, but you can learn this by repetition. Trial and error, and don't be afraid to try. Remember, you always have Ctrl+Z to fall back on. To use the Clone Tool, open your photo file, save it as a Photoshop PSD file, and open the Layers Palette. Now, even if you have already added and adjusted a Levels Layer, you need to add a copy of the Background Layer. To do this, click on the Background Layer and drag it over the New Layer icon. This adds a copy of the Background Layer immediately above the Background Layer. Now, click on the Clone Tool in the Tool Bar. It is the little tool that looks like a rubber stamp.



Now, check the defaults in the tool bar immediately above the picture. They should be set in Normal Mode, 100% Opacity, and a check mark in Aligned. Do not put a check mark by Use all layers. The size of brush that you use will depend on the detail you are trying to clean up in the picture. In this picture I want to eliminate the window in the wall.



To do this, I click on the Alt key and move the mouse to the area I want to use as the source for my cloning (the blank wall in this case). When I hold down on the Alt key, the mouse pointer turns into a target shape. I click to set the source, and then I move the mouse over the window. I click and drag the mouse (which is now acting like a brush that is using the old wall as a source) over the window until it has been eliminated.



Trust me, the window has been removed. You will probably have to Clone several areas of the wall over the former window spot to make new wall look genuine. I will demo this in the SIG. Photoshop and Photoshop Elements make cloning easy. You can even change heads and remove people. But we leave that for another time.