Preparing Images for Publication

These instructions are designed for publication staffs to consistently edit their images for the yearbook, newspaper or magazine.
Preparing images for inkjet printing or display would be a slightly different workflow.

STEP 1: GET THE IMAGES INTO THE COMPUTER, DELETE AND BATCH RENAME

Photoshop/Bridge

If scanning, scan the image at a resolution and size slightly higher than you think you're going to need. If you captured the images on a DSLR or smartphone, download the images to the hard drive.

Use Adobe Bridge to review the photos that you captured. If you select the first image and press the space bar (on both Macintosh or Windows) you can view the images full screen. Use the arrow keys to advance through the photos. If there are images that are not of a quality suitable for publication or not worth saving at all, they can be deleted from Bridge by pressing the Delete key. The strongest images should be labeled with a single star (Command + 1 on a Mac or Control + 1 on Windows in the thumbnail view. Just the 1 key if you are in full screen mode.) These are the images that will be processed through the remaining steps in the workflow.

Select all of the images that are left and choose Batch Rename from the Tools menu. Work with a standard naming convention for all publication images – my suggestion is Event/Location/Person_Date_Photographer's initials_Serial Number.Extension. A standard naming convention might look like *homecoming_10-12-19_JS_01.jpg*. If you do a chronological yearbook consider putting the Date field first so that all images can be sorted chronologically.

Do not use any periods or / \ in the file name. Join the words together with an underscore so that if the image is going to be posted online it has a clean URL. You may need to abbreviate.

Lightroom

In Lightroom, choose Import in the Library menu. Then choose your source (camera or memory card). At the top center of the Import window, choose "Copy. Then right under this line, choose "New Photos." (This hides all photos previously imported.) In the top right corner of the window, you will see a "TO" section. Click and hold on the "TO" and a menu will pop up. Choose where you want to save your photos at this point. The Destinations panel will show you the default path.

Now go to "File Handling." At this point, choose "minimal" for Build Previews to save time. If you have an external hard drive set up for back ups, this is where you choose it under "Make a Second Copy To:" and then choose your folder on your back up drive.

Next go to File Renaming. Click on the Rename Files. In the Template Box, choose "Custom Name-Sequence." Then, under Custom Text, type: Event_Date_Photographer's initials. The sequence will start automatically at #1.

Now select all the images you want to import and click Import in the bottom right corner of the window. Once they are all imported, they will show up as "Previous Import" in your Catalog (located in the upper left side in Library module). Click the "E" key and scroll through your photos. Rate your strongest photos by clicking the number "1." Any weak, out of focus, unusable photos should receive an "x." You will delete these from Lightroom after looking at all the photos. (While in Previous Import, go to Photo in the menu bar and scroll to the bottom and click "Delete Rejected Photos.)

STEP 2: FILE INFO FOR CAPTIONS AND CREDITS

Photoshop/Bridge

If you have a photo open in Photoshop under the File menu select File Info and enter your photo credit and caption information in to the author and description fields. If you are Bridge, you can enter this data in the creator and description fields under IPTC Core. Selecting multiple images will allow you to enter the data for all of the selected images at one time.

Lightroom

In Lightroom's Library module, the photo credit should be part of the file name (by initials); you can enter caption information in the Metadata panel on the right side of the window. Just click on "Caption."
Put all the photos from this import into a specific "Collection." You should already have set up "Collection Sets" for various sections of your book: Sports, Student Life, etc. Now you should choose all the photos for a specific area, such as JV Football, and choose "New Collection" under the Library menu. Name the collection (JV Football, for example) and put it inside of the appropriate Collection Set. Do your editing work inside your collections to stay organized

STEP 3: LEVEL, ROTATE AND CROP

Photoshop/Bridge
Use the ruler to level the photograph. This is done by drawing the ruler along a horizontal or vertical line that should be at 0 degrees or 90 degrees. Go to Image – Rotate Canvas/Image Rotation – Arbitrary and click OK. In later versions of Photoshop you can also click on the Straighten Layer button at the top of the window. Be sure to uncheck Delete Cropped Pixels if you have that option.
Finish rotating the canvas so you can see the image facing the right direction, if necessary, by going back to the Rotate Canvas/Image Rotation menu.
Then use the cropping tool to crop out unnecessary portions of the photo. Cropping should only be done to strengthen the composition of the photograph. Use the cropping tool to select just your subject and then move the corners or edges out to include what is needed to tell the story rather than starting on the outside and moving corners or edges inward.

Lightroom
In Lightroom, go to the Develop module. Click on the Crop tool in the upper right corner of the window (or just click "R"). Looking at the dialogue box on the right, use the crop tool and ruler to rotate the canvas and crop out unnecessary areas.

STEP 4: IMAGE SIZE

Photoshop/Bridge
This is found under the Image menu. Uncheck the Resample Image box so that you link height, width and resolution. Then change the resolution to the PPI you need for your publication. The file size at the top of the window should stay the same or get smaller – never larger! Remember that PPI should be 1 1/2 to 2 times the LPI for your publication. For newspapers, this is usually 160 PPI. For yearbooks and magazines, the resolution should be 300 PPI. If unsure, always go with 300 PPI.

Lightroom
In Lightroom, you do not worry about image size until you export your photos. You can use the crop tool to choose custom crop sizes by clicking on the up/down arrows to the right of "Aspect - Original."

STEP 5: CLEAN UP BRIGHTNESS, CONTRAST AND COLOR BALANCE

Photoshop/Bridge
Although you can do the same thing more precisely with Curves, adjusting Levels is a little easier but it does not give you the control or image quality that Curves will. It is recommended that you calibrate your monitor if you want to use Curves. Using the Histogram ensures a more consistent result than just using the Adjust Brightness or Contrast tool.
If the image is an RGB file, change to the Red channel and adjust the highlight arrow and the shadow arrow until they are at the end of the graph. Do the same to the Green channel and then the Blue channel. By holding down the Option key (Mac) or the Alt key (Windows) you can adjust the pointers until data just starts to appear. Then pay careful attention to the mid-tones. Even on the best photo, moving the midtones arrow (gray) to the left (towards the shadow) will improve the way the photo reproduces on the page. Moving the midtones arrow to the left brings out more detail in the dark areas.
Do not adjust the separate channels if the image has a very dominant color, for example a scene with a swimming pool or at sunset – adjust these images only in RGB, not in the separate channels.

Lightroom
In Lightroom's Develop Module, use the Basic panel to add brightness, contrast and color balance. Experiment with all the settings in the Basic panel. Since Lightroom is non-destructive (nothing affects the original jpeg until you export it), you can add, subtract, change, fix, modify as much as you need to. Pay attention to the Histogram in the upper right corner. You also fix overall shadows and highlights in the Basic Panel.
Once you have color corrected and edited any photo, you can sync it with similar photos by choosing the original photo first, then the others and then clicking on the "Sync" link on the bottom right of the page. Choose exactly which corrections you want to sync; do NOT choose to sync the crop as you would have done that for the individual photos.

STEP 6: DUST, SCRATCHES, DODGE AND BURN, RED EYE, SHADOWS/HIGHLIGHTS, ETC

Photoshop/Bridge

Use the clone stamp, the healing brush and other tools to remove dust spots and scratches from the image. Most images from a digital camera will not require this step.

Use the red eye tool to remove red eye by clicking only in the center of the subject's iris. This must be done in RGB mode.

You can use Shadow/Highlight under Image – Adjustments to also help bring out more details in the shadows and highlights but you should be extremely cautious in using this tool. If you did Step 5 correctly you may not need to use Shadow/Highlight.

Lightroom

In Lightroom, use the choices to the right of the crop tool to fix dust, scratches, burning, dodging, red eye and more. Click on each tool to see what options are available.

STEP 7: UNSHARP MASK/SMART SHARPEN

Photoshop/Bridge

Unsharp Mask helps bring out the places where shades of gray intersect, improving the reproduction quality. However, the effects should be hardly noticeable on the screen. An amount of 50-70 percent, with a radius of 1 and a threshold of 0 levels works for the average photo from a digital camera. Use 70-90 percent for an image that was scanned from a negative or print. This step should be done after steps 1-6 have been completed. You can also use the Smart Sharpen tool instead.

Lightroom

In Lightroom, there are two places to sharpen a photo: the first is in the Detail panel on the right (called Capture Sharpening). Use the close up of the photo at the top of the panel to determine correct sharpening and noise reduction. Use all of the sliders under Sharpening, especially the masking slider. Just click on the Option/Alt key and then click and hold on the masking slider. As you drag to the right, you will see the screen turn from white to black/white. The black areas are not getting sharpened, but the edge areas will be sharpened. The second way to sharpen a photo is during export. Those instructions come later.

STEP 8: COLOR MODE

Photoshop/Bridge

Most yearbook companies are now asking schools to leave images in RGB format, but newspaper publishers still generally require color images to be in CMYK format. For Grayscale images, go back to the channels palette, select the channel that has the best tonal range and then trash the other two channels. Or you can choose "Desaturate" under the Image – Adjustments menu. Try both options to see which one looks best.

In Photoshop 9 and higher, you should use the Black and White option under Image – Adjustments to fine tune RGB and CMY. Or create a Black and White Adjustment layer and make the adjustments there.

Whichever process you use always go to Image – Mode and change the image to Grayscale. The Photoshop window must indicate that the photo is "Gray" and not "RGB". Check Levels (Step 5) after converting to Grayscale.

Lightroom

In Lightroom, you can make a photo Black and White in several ways: You can use the Lightroom Black and White Presets on the left side of the window; you can choose Black and White at the top of the Basic panel; you can go to the HSL/Color/B&W Panel on the right and uses the sliders there. Choosing RGB or CMYK comes during the Export process.

FINAL PHOTO

The final photo should have a good contrast range – a good black, a good white and good shades of gray in between. The subject should fill the frame and should be sharp.

STEP 9: SAVE AS

Photoshop/Bridge

The final photo should be saved as in a format that's compatible with the software you're using for publication. This could be JPEG, PSD, TIFF or PNG. JPEG is usually the smallest file format but always save at Maximum quality and Baseline (Standard). PSD and PNG files can both handle transparency if you have created a cutout or COB. Selecting Save As ensures that you don't overwrite the original file. Some staffs prefer to Save As prior to Step 3 so that all work is done on a copy.

Some yearbook companies do not want PNG files so make sure that you check with your rep to see what is preferred. TIFF is usually the largest file size because it contains the most data but most printing processes won't benefit from that extra data.

For photos that are going to be viewed on the Web, in PowerPoint or on CD, JPEG or PNG will work. Only save the image once as a JPEG. Multiple saves as JPEGs can dramatically reduce the quality of the image.

Lightroom

In Lightroom, you do not "Save As"; instead, you export your files. Go to the Library Module, choose the photos you want to export, and click on "Export" in the lower left corner of the window. A dialogue box will appear. You can then choose the folder you want to export/save to. You can even name a new folder at this time. Choose "Save to a Specific Folder" and then click the "Choose" option and choose your folder. Next, under File Naming, you can rename your file. I recommend "Custom Name-Sequence." Under this option, type in your custom name. Then choose which number you want to start the sequence with. Under File Settings, you can choose your format by using the guidelines listed above. The difference is that you can save multiple times as a jpeg if you want, because the quality of the image is never affected inside Lightroom. CMYK is not an option in Lightroom. Under Image Sizing, you can choose the specific size of the image, setting the resolution to 300. Finally, if you have not sharpened your image previously, you can Output Sharpen for matte or glossy paper. Click "Export" and you are done.

Based on an article written by Bradley Wilson for C:JET magazine, a JEA publication.

Additional content provided by Mark Murray and Kathy Daly. Updated June 2020.