

# Favorite Foto Hacks

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Hacks Main Title



1 Gizmos

Digital photography is one of the most hackable hobbies. Here are just a few of my favorite tips.

There are tons of great gizmos to make your life as a photographer easier...

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UltraClamp

The Pedco Ultra Clamp is the perfect complement to the compact tripod. It turns any car window, chair back, or table edge into a sturdy camera mount. \$33 from [www.buyporters.com](http://www.buyporters.com) Item #10-0755



Gaffers Tape

Gaffers tape is one of the most versatile tools in the studio or on location. I prefer the 2" width. Cloth on one side and non-residue adhesive on the other. About \$14 from [www.studiodepot.com](http://www.studiodepot.com)

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2 Card Readers

Generally speaking, the slowest way to transfer your images from your camera to computer is using its USB cord. For faster uploads, check out these excellent media card readers.



SanDisk PC Card

PowerBook owners can use low-cost PC Card adapters such as this one made by Sandisk. Less than \$20 from [www.sandisk.com](http://www.sandisk.com)

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Belkin\_reader

The Belkin Hi-Speed USB 2.0 15-in-1 Media Reader & Writer lets you drag and drop files, images, and music to your computer from your PDA or handheld, MP3 player, digital camera, or other device. <http://www.belkin.com/> About \$45



Lexar\_Firewire

Lexar's FireWire CompactFlash Reader plugs into any computer's FireWire port. Watch the LED indicator as you transfer your images, music and information easily and quickly. <http://www.lexar.com/readers/firewire.html> About \$40

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Sandisk\_FireWire-Reader

The SanDisk Ultra ImageMate Reader is an external flash card reader that connects directly to your computer with a FireWire port.  
<http://www.sandisk.com/retail/ultra-firewire.asp> About \$40

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Flash Bracket

Stroboframe Quick Flip models offer high value, compact size, light weight and fast handling. <http://www.adorama.com/SB310635.html>  
About \$48

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3 Flash Modifiers

Your on-camera flash is good in a pinch, but for more natural flash pictures you should consider some of these accessories.



Flash Bracket Flipped

And when you turn your camera sideways for a vertical shot, the Stroboframe allows you to quickly adjust your flash accordingly.



Stofen Bouncer

Add a little kick light to your bounce flash shots with the Stofen bouncer. <http://www.stofen.com/Info/index.htm> About \$20



Biz Card Bouncer

Or if you want to save a few bucks, use a business card and a rubber band to make your own bouncer.

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4 Battle Blinkers

How do you get pictures of those who blink when the flash fires?



Foil Blinkers

A great trick to foil those who blink at the flash is to use your camera's red eye reduction mode. The subject will blink at the preflash, then have his/her eyes open when the real exposure is recorded.

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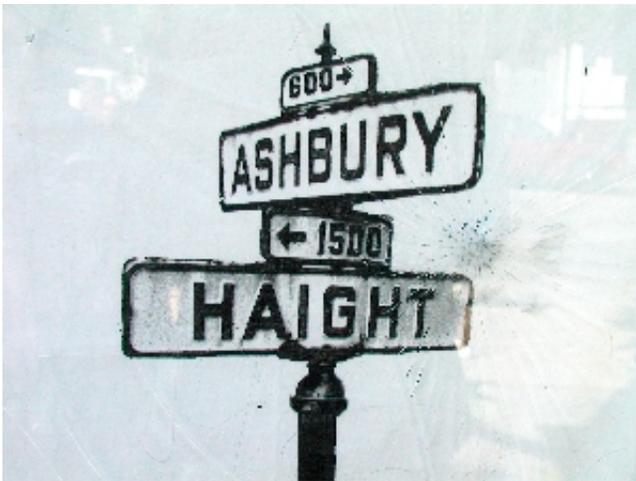
5 Shoot Signs

With digital cameras you no longer have to take notes while traveling. Just take a picture of a sign.



Signs about locations and monuments

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Artistic Signs



Danger Sign

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Unusual Signs



Funny Signs

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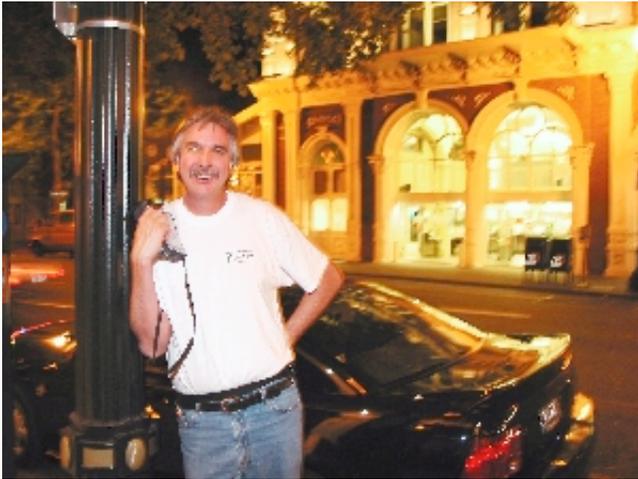
... And of Signs of Things to Come



6 Nighttime Portraits

Add interest to your nighttime portraits by using the nighttime flash mode.

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Nighttime Portraits

Nighttime flash slows down the shutter speed so you can record ambient light as well as the flash-illuminated subject.



Program Modes

Look for the moon and star icon on your camera's program modes.

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Ultrapod

And for best results, use a tripod to steady the camera during the long exposure.

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7 Crop & Resample

The cropping tool is more powerful than first meets the eye...



Uncropped Original

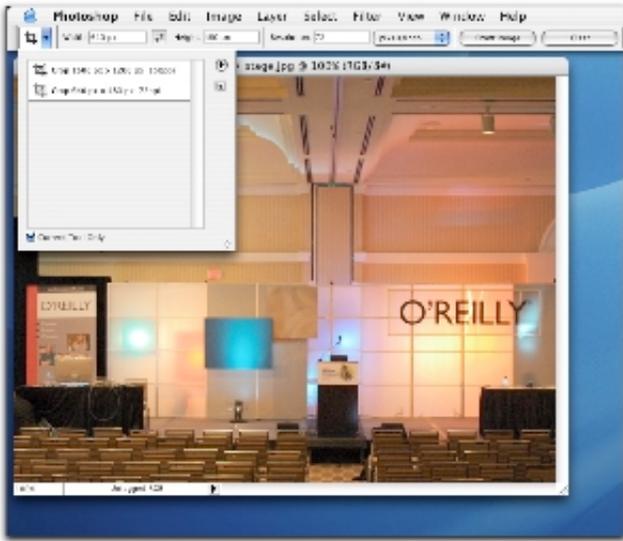


Crop Selection

You can set dimensions in the top menu bar and Photoshop will resample the image for you at the same time you crop it.

Notice how the cropped area is constrained to the 640 x 480 proportions.

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Crop Presets

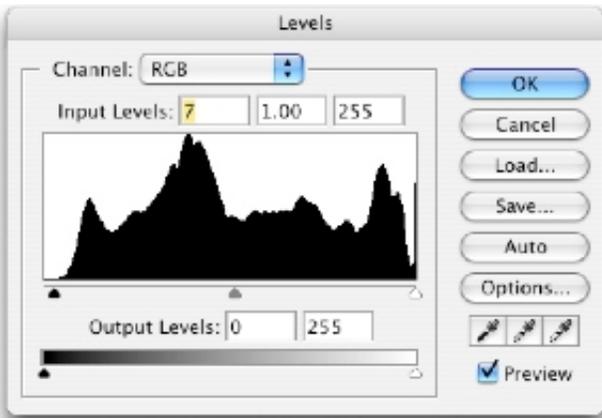
You can even save your most common settings in the cropping tool drop down menu for easy reuse later.



8 Resample Hack

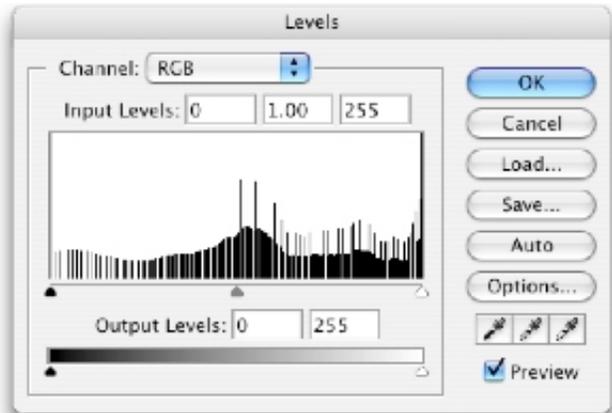
Here's how resampling can also restore health to your image's histogram.

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Healthy Levels - 1

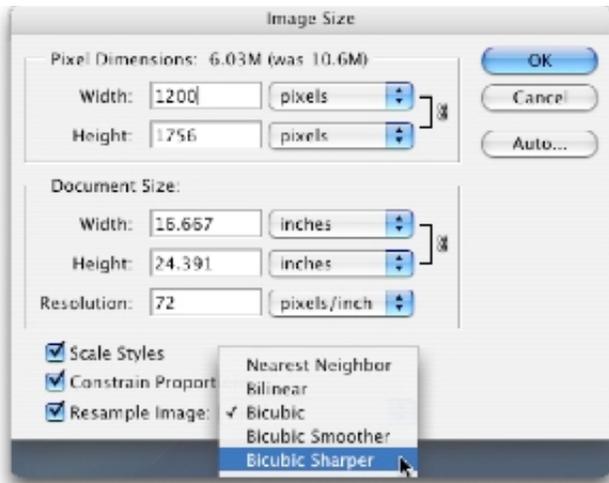
Here's a histogram for what I call a "healthy image." It has information across the entire dark to light spectrum with no "combing."



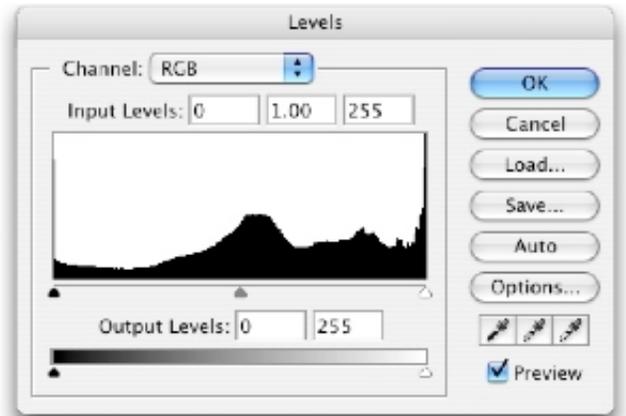
Unhealthy Levels -2

Unfortunately, I didn't like the way the picture looked. So I adjusted it to my visual taste in Levels and clicked OK. But when I reopened Levels to check the histogram, I saw that my adjustments created an "unhealthy" histogram with lots of combing.

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Sample Down -3



Restored Levels -4

This is why you make your exposure adjustments before resampling. Go to "Image Size" and adjust your width or height. If you're sampling down, choose "Bicubic Sharper." Photoshop actually reshuffles the pixels when you sample down, plus it will add just the right amount of sharpening, saving you an entire step.

Now here's the histogram from the resampled image. Notice that it is much healthier with most of the combing removed. Here's yet another reason why you should shoot at your camera's highest resolution providing with these types of options.

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9 Rotate Movie

You can shoot vertical QuickTime video with your camera, you just have to know how to rotate it afterward.



QT Rotate Frame

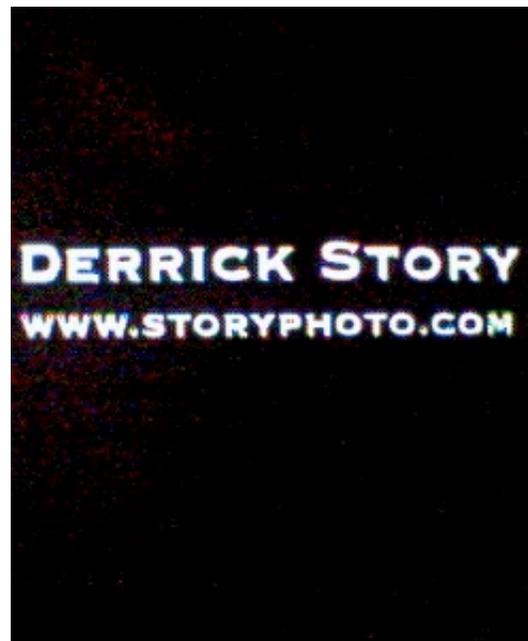
First, go to the Movie drop down menu, then select Get Movie Properties (CMD - J). Then select Video Track from the left drop down menu and Size from the right drop down menu. Now just click the rotation arrow in the direction that you need to adjust. Your movie will be properly oriented.

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10 Camera Phone Screen

You can personalize your camera phone so it is identified as yours if lost.



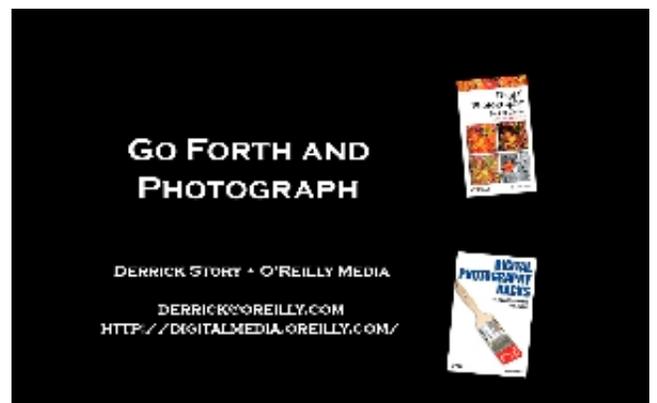
Personalized Screen

First, use Photoshop to create the information you want to include. Choose the backdrop and make the image so it fills your computer screen. Then take a picture of it with your camera phone in "Nighttime" mode.

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Phone with Screen



Closing Title 2

Have fun with these hacks!

Now all you have to do is save the image as your wallpaper. And every time you turn on your phone, it will display your personal information.

# Timesaving Photoshop Tips

by **Derrick Story**, Author of [Digital Photography Hacks](#)

Mastering Photoshop is a lifelong endeavor. Regardless if you use the full CS version, or like the more affordable Elements 3, there are hundreds of shortcuts just waiting for your discovery. In this article I'll show you a few of my favorite timesaving tricks.

## Sample Down and Sharpen at the Same Time

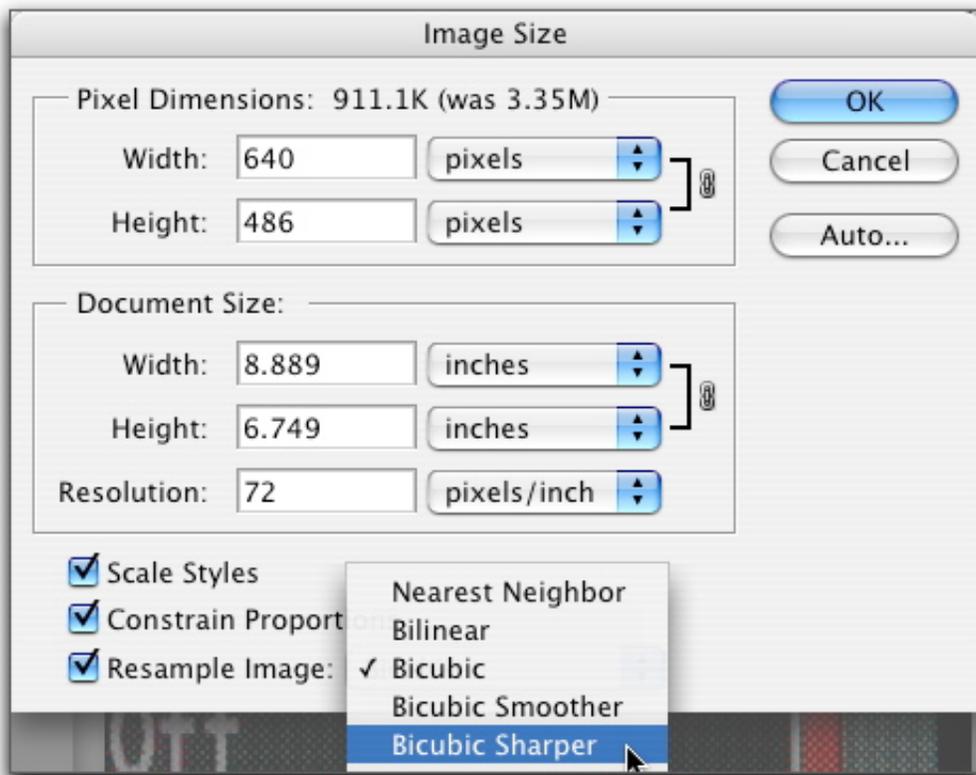
*(Photoshop Elements 3, Photoshop CS)*

By now you've figured out that you shouldn't send 4-megapixel images to friends and family as email attachments -- that is, if you want them to continue opening your letters. That's why making a smaller, more portable copy of the photo is recommended. We call the process of making the image smaller "sampling down."

Make a copy of your original photo, open it in either version of Photoshop, select Image -> Image Size, and change the width and height dimensions to a more reasonable attachment size, such as 640 x 480.

Even though sampling down is a good thing, during the process Photoshop moves the pixels around a bit and some loss of sharpness results. Most of us respond by applying an Unsharp Mask filter after sampling down to restore the image's original crispness. But you don't have to! You can resample and sharpen at the same time.

Back in the Image Size dialog box, change the resampling algorithm from "Bicubic" to "Bicubic Sharper" as shown below. Photoshop will sample down and sharpen your picture all at once -- and it will look fantastic!



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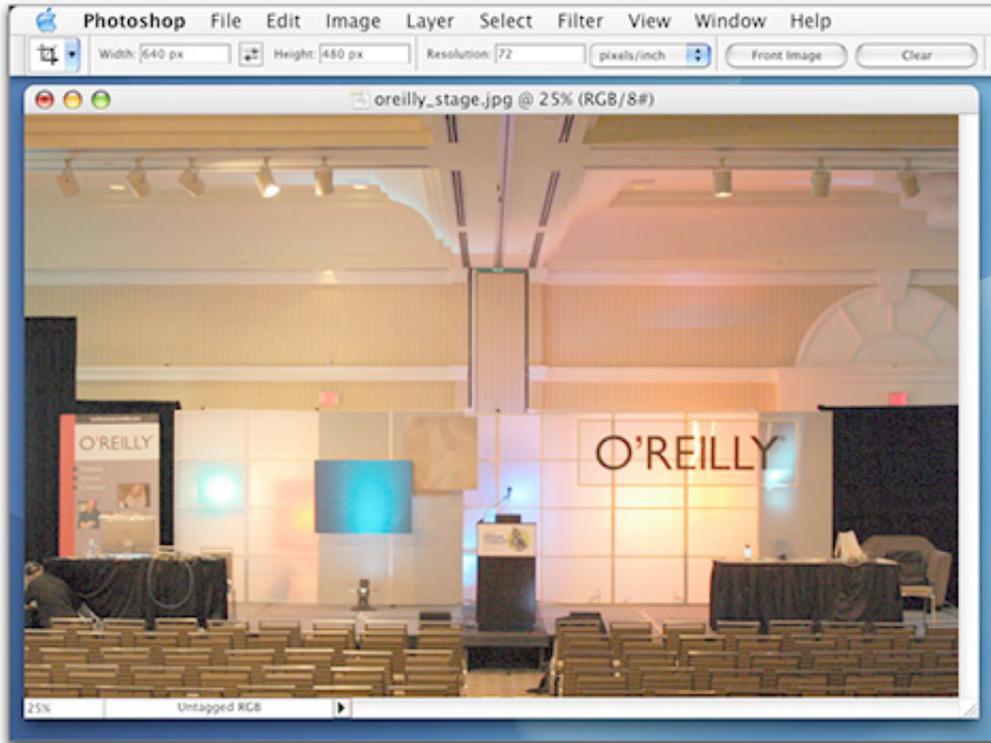
## Crop and Resample in One Step

*(Photoshop Elements 2 & 3, Photoshop CS)*

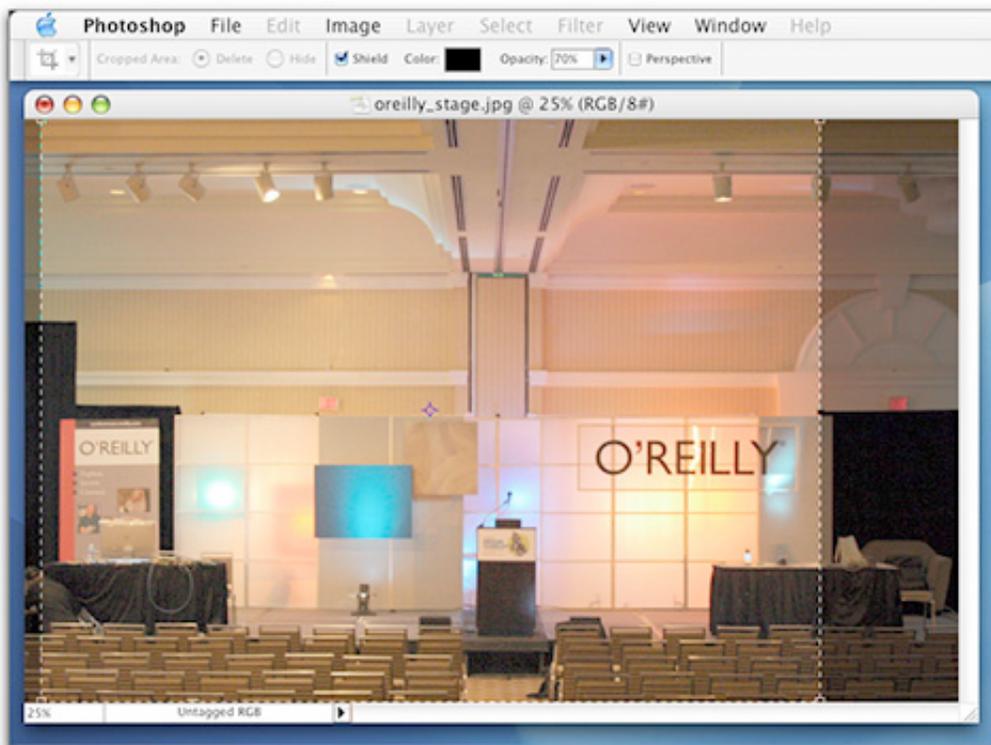
Here's another resampling trick. This time I'm going to show you how to simultaneously crop and sample down.

Open a picture and click on the cropping tool. You'll notice that a new menu appears on Photoshop's top toolbar. This is a contextual menu that changes depending on the tool you select. When working with the cropping tool there are three settings I

want you to adjust: Width, Height, and Resolution. For this example, I've entered 640 pixels, 480 pixels, and 72 ppi, respectively.



Now, all I have to do is drag the cropping tool across the image to select the area I want to keep, as shown in the following figure. Notice how the selection area is constrained to the proportions that I set in the contextual menu. When I double-click in the selected area, Photoshop will crop the image to the dimensions I've indicated and set the resolution too, all in one stroke.



You can whip through an entire batch of pictures in just minutes by using this technique. Keep these few tips in mind:

- After cropping, use Save As to give the file a new name. You might want to add crop or some other description of the action to the filename to help you remember that this is a processed image. Always keep your original master safe and sound.
- When you're finished with a batch of photos, be sure to hit the Clear button in the contextual menu bar. This will remove

your custom settings, enabling you to crop at any size you want in the future.

- If you want to crop by inches or some other measurement, use that determiner in the Width and Height boxes. So, to make 4"x6" prints at 150 ppi, enter 4 inches, 6 inches, and 150 ppi, respectively. This is a great way to prepare a batch of images to send to a print service.

Most pictures need some sort of cropping to improve their composition. With hyperspeed cropping, you can do so quickly and resample at the same time.

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## Eliminate Backgrounds with the Extract Filter

*(Photoshop CS)*

In "Digital Photography Hacks" I dedicate an entire chapter to Photoshop magic. I cover all sorts of stuff from brightening teeth to softening facial lines, but one of the most difficult tasks is to separate a subject from its background. There are many tools you can use, such as the eraser, but they often lead to hours of tedious clean up to get the image just right. In Photoshop CS, tucked away in the Filter drop down menu is Extract. Why this is considered a filter is beyond me, but regardless of where it's located, it's a powerful collection of tools you might want to explore.

Once you have your image open in Photoshop, simply click on Filter -> Extract and you'll be greeted with a new work area. You have a collection of tools on the left side of the work area and some settings for them on the right. The Adobe Help menu does a good job of explaining what is what.

The process is quite simple. First you use the Highlighter tool to outline the subject you want to extract. Make sure you "close the loop" and highlight the entire subject without any gaps. If your subject has relatively smooth edges, check the Smart Highlighting box. It chooses the correct brush diameter and assists you with drawing a clean outline.



Then use the Fill tool (bucket icon) to fill the inside of the area you've highlighted. Simply click once to fill.

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You can sneak a peek of how things are looking by clicking the Preview button. If all is well, click the OK button and Photoshop will place your extracted subject on its own layer. If you need some more work before clicking OK, use the Cleanup and Edge Touchup tools to tidy things up before making the final extraction.



I recommend that you don't work with your original image when using this tool, instead, make a copy, then extract to your heart's content and not worry about losing your master image. You still have to work carefully, but having a dedicated environment with its own set of tools can be a real time saver for this normally tedious tasks.

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# Photoshop CS Tool Keystrokes

Looking for the right tool sometimes is a time consuming, frustrating experience. These keyboard shortcuts will help you work faster.

## Tool Keystrokes

Did you know that you can quickly switch among your tools by using simple one-key commands? Here's the list from A to Z.

- Path/Selection Tool -- A
- Brush/Pencil Tool -- B
- Crop Tool -- C
- Default Colors -- D
- Eraser Tool -- E
- Cycle Screen Modes -- F
- Gradient/Paint Bucket Tool -- G
- Hand Tool -- H
- Eyedropper Tool -- I
- Healing Brush/Patch Tool -- J
- Slice Tool -- K
- Lasso Tool -- L
- Marquee Tool -- M
- Notes Tool -- N
- Dodge/Burn Tool -- O
- Pen Tool -- P
- Quick Mask -- Q
- Blur/Sharpen/Sponge -- R
- Clone Tool -- S
- Type Tool -- T
- Shape Tool -- U
- Move Tool -- V
- Magic Wand Tool -- W
- Switch Colors -- X
- History Brush Tool -- Y
- Zoom Tool -- Z

## Toggle/Adjust Tool Commands

Some tools share the same keystrokes, so you have to use a toggle command to switch between them. You can also use the keyboard to adjust a particular tool, such as make a brush bigger or smaller. Here's a list of some of the more common keystrokes.

- Hand Tool Toggle (from any other tool) -- Space bar
- Zoom In Toggle -- CMD + Space bar
- Zoom Out Toggle -- Option + Space bar
- Brush/Pencil Tools Toggle -- Shift + B
- Eraser Tools (switch among) -- Shift + E
- Gradient/Paint Bucket Toggle -- Shift + G
- Eyedropper/Sampler/Measure (switch among) -- Shift + I
- Healing/Patch/Color Rep. (switch among) -- Shift + J
- Slice/Slice Select Toggle -- Shift + K
- Lasso Tools (switch among) Shift + L
- Rect./Elliptical Marquee Toggle -- Shift + M
- Notes/Audio Annotation Toggle -- Shift + N
- Dodge/Burn/Sponge (switch among) -- Shift + O
- Pen/Freeform Pen Toggle -- Shift + P
- Blur/Sharpen/Sponge (switch among) -- Shift + R
- Clone/Pattern Stamp Toggle -- Shift + S
- Type Tools (switch among) -- Shift + T
- Shape/Line Tools (switch among) -- Shift + U
- History/Art History Brush Toggle -- Shift + Y
- Decrease Brush Size -- [
- Increase Brush Size -- ]

- Decrease Brush Softness by 25% -- Shift + [
- Increase Brush Hardness by 25% -- Shift + ]
- Previous Brush -- <
- Next Brush -- >
- First Brush -- Shift + <
- Last Brush -- Shift + >

## Final Thoughts

I hope these few simple Photoshop tips will help you work faster and enjoy this powerful application just a little bit more.

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