



The Amateur's Guide to Professional Photography

Are you an aspiring photographer looking to hone your craft and develop as an artist? You're in luck. In this eBook, we've got everything any amateur will need to enhance their photographic skill set and expand their artistic horizons. With the help of professional photographers across all styles and formats, we'll give you the tools you need to take your photography to the next level, training your artistic eye and building on your technical knowledge - with expert insight from the professionals along the way. After that, the rest is up to you.

Your photographic journey begins here.

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The Practical Skills

The Photo Composition Breakdown

Professional photography is a fine art - and while art is by nature open to interpretation, that doesn't mean there isn't a formula for strong aesthetics. By understanding the rules of a 'perfect' shot - and knowing when to bend or break them - any amateur photographer can crack the composition code. Welcome to your photo composition cheat sheet, helping aspiring photographers to create some scientifically pleasing shots.

BEGINNER TIPS

The Rule of Thirds

The Rule of Thirds dictates where photographers should place their subject in a picture. Imagine your shot is divided into nine equal segments by two vertical and horizontal lines - photographic lore states that the most aesthetically pleasing compositions happen when your subject sits on these lines, or their intersections. Moving your subject off-centre makes for a more visually fascinating image - but don't be a slave to the Rule of Thirds. You'll know when the shot's right.

Leading Lines

The eye instinctively follows lines - and by expertly placing natural lines in your shot, you can guarantee that all eyes are on your subject. The idea is to make sure that viewers have no choice but to look where they're supposed to. By using walls, roads and buildings to lead the eye to your main focal point, you can control perspective and give your shot an exciting three-dimensional quality.

Framing

Another expert way to get eyes on a picture's focal point is to use an aspect of your subject's surroundings to 'frame' it, and subsequently draw attention to the right place. 'Frames' are easy to find in nature, with trees and archways working perfectly to isolate your subject from the rest of the image.

Aspect Ratio

You might be naturally drawn to take photos in either portrait or landscape mode 100% of the time - but to really do each one of your images justice, you've got to choose the aspect ratio that's right for the scene at hand. If you're looking to capture a wide shot of sweeping valleys and rolling hills, landscape's your best bet - whereas portrait mode is ideal for up-close-and-personal people shots where the key is to eliminate any unnecessary background noise.



Layering

To photograph rural and urban landscapes to their full potential, you'll need to think consciously about how to capture as much of the scene as possible - and that's where layering comes in. Create a sense of depth in your photography by exploiting not only your subject but any background elements which help to produce an elaborate layered effect across the fore, middle and background. This is a more difficult image for the eye to make sense of, and therefore a more intriguing one.



"I love layering my images and filling the frame up as much as possible, but everything in the frame needs to serve a purpose, and help drive the narrative forward. In this instance, there are four potential 'stories' happening - the Bride having her hair done, one of the assistants is leaning against the wall, maybe a little bored, as she waits for the next job to do, the Mother of the Bride having a laugh about something with the make-up artist, and the two Bridesmaids in deep debate. Moments like these happen in an instant, so it's key to frame your shot in advance and keep firing off frames until you feel you've captured that Decisive Moment."

Kristian Leven, kristianlevenphotography.co.uk



Visual Balance

By adhering to the 'Rule of Thirds', you can place your subject off-centre for an unlikely composition. The only problem with this is that you can be left with a large amount of negative space which can be jarring to look at.

Keep the aesthetic equilibrium intact by balancing the 'weight' of your subject with another object for satisfying symmetry.

Negative Space

On the other hand, if you've got a taste for the unconventional, you can use that negative space to great effect. When working with a small subject, it's easy to persuade yourself that the subject should occupy the entire shot - when, in fact, the composition can be infinitely more dramatic if you get creative and give your subject some room to breathe. This way, your photographs can say much more by saying much less.

Perspective

Pay particular attention to the angle from which you're shooting your subject. For portraits, head-on can be great, but doesn't offer anything unique or innovative. Experimentation is key, so try capturing your subject - whether it's a portrait shot, landscape or whatever else - from an unconventional angle, giving your photo an extra dimension and a real sense of personal perspective.

Symmetry & Patterns

Whether man-made or natural - visual patterns make for beautiful images. By identifying patterns in your environment and making them a part of your composition, you can all but guarantee a visually stimulating photograph. Using symmetry, or rather asymmetry, to your advantage, you can give the image an even more complex and exciting result - and avoid distracting elements to keep all eyes on your expertly-composed shot.

Cropping

If you want your subject to get the attention it deserves, don't give viewers any choice but to look at it. By cropping tightly around your chosen subject, you can eliminate any unnecessary distractions and create a composition that's all about the focal point - guaranteeing the viewer's undivided attention.



1. The composition of an image ought to be dictated by the subject matter and the feel or mood you are trying to convey. For instance, if you want to convey loneliness, you could shoot a figure in a landscape showing a wide view of the context. Don't put the figure dead centre though as it is more pleasing for the figure to be off-centre, perhaps a third of the way in from the edge of the frame. By the same token, if you are shooting an expressive face or a child with a cheeky expression, it makes sense to compose the image where the face is fairly prominent in the frame.
2. Drama can be conveyed with close-ups, tight crops and low camera angles. Again, if this is the feel you are after, there is no point in being a good distance from your subject where none of the drama can be felt.
3. A shallow depth of field is very forgiving when applied to people pictures as it gives the image a slightly filmic feel. It feels less digital, looser and more naturalistic. Compositionally, it allows you to shoot the subject in a context but that context is not that clearly defined because your aperture is wide open. That means it's handy when you are shooting against a busy backdrop and want to be able to isolate the subject away from the backdrop.

Ashley Jouhar: Photographer and Image Source Group Creative Director, ashleyjouhar.com

Now you know the rules, it's time to get out there and break some of them.



Lens Love

A photographer is only as good as their creative toolkit, and that includes their lens of choice. Newcomers to the world of photography may be a little hesitant on committing to one lens, curious to explore the full spectrum before settling down - and if that's you, we're about to break it down to make your search for the perfect lens a little easier. First things first.

BEGINNER TIPS

Focal Length

Focal length is measured in millimetres and describes the zoom capabilities of a lens, with a higher number meaning bigger zoom - whereas a lower focal length is better suited to wide shots. Put simply, the higher your lens' focal length, the less you will be able to capture - and the closer you'll be able to get.

Maximum Aperture

Maximum aperture, measured in f-stops, refers to the maximum amount of light gathered by your lens - with larger maximum apertures capable of letting in much more light. Your maximum aperture can be used in low-light contexts and produces a shallower depth of field, creating an image where only your focal point is shown in crisp focus.



"The thing to remember about depth-of-field is that when you're looking through your lens you're seeing everything at the smallest f-number the lens has (could be f/4 or f/5.6). This is the way cameras work - they only close the lens down to your chosen aperture during the split second after you've pressed the shutter. This lesson is only important for medium-long lenses (50mm to 500mm range), as they have a much shallower depth of field.

So imagine you're looking at a flower above through your viewfinder with a long lens setting. If you focus on the flower, the background will look nicely blurred as in the left-hand image, because your long lens will show you it at the smallest f-number the lens has (could be f/4 or f/5.6). But watch out - if you have your aperture set at f/16 or f/22, you'll see the flower image on the left, take the picture and walk away - then when you get home, you'll notice that you actually ended up with the picture on the right! If you wanted the picture on the left, you'd have had to change the aperture to the smallest f-number the lens has (could be f/4 or f/5.6).

This is why I always emphasise this when teaching landscape photography - check your screen after every shot! So to recap, your camera doesn't act like a 'what you see is what you get' when you have a medium-long lens on. Check your screen carefully and re-take if necessary."



The Wide Angle Lens

Wide angle lenses generally have a focal length of 24-35mm - available as either primes or zooms, and with either a fixed or variable maximum aperture. The wide angle lens, as you might expect, gives you a significantly wider field of view, and can achieve a particularly low minimum focusing distance - ideal for those up close and personal shots.

Subject: This one's all about the background, so buildings, landscapes and group shots are a breeze with a wide angle lens. Or for a unique portrait shot, use wide angle lenses to place your subject in a contextual background.

The Telephoto Lens

A telephoto lens generally has a focal length beyond 70mm - some even surpassing 135mm - offering an incredibly narrow field of view. This makes them perfect for capturing faraway subjects and finer details, bringing distant objects closer and compressing the sense of distance between various components. The narrow depth of field afforded by a telephoto lens allows your central subject to stay in focus, while both the foreground and background remain blurry.

Subject: Ideal for sports and wildlife photography where you'd struggle to get up close and personal with your subject, as well as portraits and landscapes in need of a sense of relative scaling.

"Definitely spend as much as you can - glass is so much more important than sensors! My go-to lens would have to be the 50mm f1.4. I love the soft look that you get from prime lenses and I could shoot pretty much a whole wedding on that one lens. One of the great advantages of working with prime lenses is that you zoom with your feet and this discipline really makes you feel at one with your equipment and knowing what its strengths and limitations are. I generally shoot at f2 - f2.8 for most things so this again gives a distinct look that works beautifully for portraiture."

Stu Cooper, cooper-photography.co.uk

The Macro Lens

Macro lenses are capable of production ratios beyond 1:1, meaning your subjects can be photographed to scale. The term 'macro' is generally attributed to any lens used for extreme close-ups, with a focal length of 40-200mm. With macro, photographers can achieve an exceptional level of sharpness and detail, although with a lesser depth of field than other lenses - meaning very little of the image will be in focus.

Subject: The macro lens' close-up capabilities make it ideal for nature and wildlife photography, as well as portraits - credited by their ability to enhance subjects with their superior sharpness ideal focal length.

The Fisheye Lens

Less conventional than telephoto or macro lenses, fisheyes are essentially ultra-wide angle lenses, capable of some powerful visual distortion - producing a hemispherical or panoramic image. Lines of perspective are bent spectacularly with a fisheye lens, giving your subject a trademark convex look. The fisheye lens generally has a focal length of 8-10mm for circular images, or 15-16mm for a full frame image.



Subject: Originally known as “whole-sky lenses”, fisheyes are capable of capturing an immense field of view - making them an offbeat but legitimate choice for street, landscape and art photography - as well as being a favourite among scientific photographers when capturing the heavens.

“The one type of lens that had the greatest impact on my photography and how I see structure in the world was the shift lens.

Many assume that you can 'fix' image geometry perfectly well in Photoshop afterwards. Well, you can to some extent, but it misses the advantage of being able to accurately compose your images, or being able to take multiple shots and simply stitch them for wider coverage.

There are two sorts of architectural photographers: those who understand shift lenses, and those who want to be an architectural photographer.

For more information, see [this introduction to tilt and shift lenses.](#)”

Keith Cooper, northlight-images.co.uk

With the help of the right equipment, combined with a trained artistic eye, photographers can excel in in any medium and begin to develop a style that suits their approach and perfectly complements their skillset.



Image by Joe Cornish



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The Style Guide

Traditional vs. Digital: the Debate

Whether you're a fledgling photographer or professional in training, there's no denying the benefits of experimenting with different mediums. Technological advances mean that digital SLRs are achieving greater functionality with each new model, but the debate rages on as to whether the hi-tech digital cameras of today can ever compete with the authentic retro feel of traditional film.

Vintage Vibes

Film photography is considered by many to be a dying art, a primitive practice reaching the realms of obsolescence - but defenders of old-school photographic techniques argue that the ritual of traditional photography is art in its purest form. While the nostalgia of darkrooms and chemical prints undoubtedly plays a part here, many professional photographers argue, with some success, that the traditional way quite simply makes for a better picture.

BEGINNER TIPS

Light

Film thrives in natural light and is infinitely more forgiving when it comes to overexposure - meaning you won't find the blown out highlights you get with digital.

Colour

Film doesn't work in the linear way that digital does, which makes it far preferable to digital photography when it comes to natural colour and light blends.

Grain

The photographic 'perfection' of digital is also its downfall. Film gives you that hazy, grainy quality that, for whatever beautiful and mysterious reason, makes for a gentler, more aesthetically pleasing shot.



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"Cartier Bresson talked about the "decisive moment" to create great pictures. Photographers on digital no longer look for the decisive moment. While one image at this time would capture everything, now there may be dozens to look through and decide, with photographers deciding later on what the decisive moment actually is."

Robert Bedson, north-light.co.uk



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Image by Joe Cornish

"It has been some years since I 'switched to digital' (Oh, how I hate that phrase!). Except I never thought of it that way. In my mind, I have never stopped being a film photographer. It's just that the last several thousand pictures I have made have been digital ones. It has taken me a long time to figure out how to get the best from it, but I think I may be getting there. Maybe once I have, I will return to shooting film.

Film is a strongly flavoured medium. Sure you can tweak it, but has an embedded character of its own, its tonal relationships, grain, colour, shadow and highlight shades and tints. Especially transparency, but even negative as well. By comparison a digital raw file still awaits preparation, and a spell in the post production 'oven'. OK, in some cases this means very little work at all, but to me this is the defining difference. A high quality digital file has amazing potential, and using the myriad tools of post-production as it is now one can emulate a film very closely, in almost every aspect, or simply create a completely new look. Because of that, it is important to have a background philosophy of photography. I really love that aspect of digital, the flexibility of it, and the emphasis to look within and ask yourself, 'What am I trying to say; what is this image about?'



Image by Joe Cornish

“The downside of digital is that it appears so easy, but in reality it is anything but easy to create a memorable and meaningful result. I would say that is easier on film. Film already has an identity built in. When you select a film on which to shoot, you are 'buying in' to that identity and you can use it to great effect to define the style and quality of your work. It's also very format specific. The technical camera large format tranny film 'look', and 35mm rangefinder neg film 'look', say, are simply worlds apart. Those distinctions are far more blurred with digital, due to the extraordinary resolution discrepancies of different sensors.

The world of photography would be a far poorer one with the demise of film, and it is to be hoped that demand for it remains strong enough to keep going. It's still the best way to learn a photographic method, especially with regard to understanding exposure and lighting (as it is so unforgiving). And for anyone interested in high quality image making with a technical emphasis, large format film in a view camera keeps such a practice affordable.

Digital photography has made photography more accessible and, in the way it works, it is arguably more akin to human vision and more flexible, so expanding the range of possibilities enormously. But it is not a quick fix, nor does it make you an instant expert, and this remains a big problem in the world of photography, for it has so severely undermined professional photographic practice. The medium itself is innocent of this damage though, it is simply a fascinating and exciting revolution in methodology, and still improving year on year.

Overall, the flexibility of digital imaging and the incredible capabilities of the latest cameras makes digital a slightly better bet for me personally as a working professional. I do think that I am more experimental, creative, and productive with it. But for the fine art photographer, I can still see the unique character and look of film may give it the edge. Long may there be a choice.”



Digital Love

What digital photography may lack in anticipation and traditionalism, it undeniably compensates for in efficiency. Beginner photographers looking for instant results and a quick turnaround will find a friend in the digital approach - with no need to be at the mercy of the production and printing processes. The ability to see the outcome of every shot instantly is an unquestionable convenience, and the storage capability of memory cards versus a roll of 35mm film with 16 shots is a total knockout.

The 'what you see is what you get' perspective certainly works in digital's favour, with both the photographic process and printing procedures offering an instantaneous result.

BEGINNER TIPS

Quickness

With digital cameras, you will see how your photograph will look on the camera's display, allowing you to flick through all of the shots you've taken at the touch of a button, you can even take images from digital file to physical print in a matter of minutes.

Adaptability

Digital gives you the freedom to spontaneously switch between colour and black and white, as well as the ability to make technical adjustments to adapt to your surroundings - such as altering the ISO when the light changes - so you can achieve that flawless shot.

Post-Production

If you don't have easy access to a traditional darkroom, you may prefer the ease and wide functionality of digital post-production. The enormous range of editing tools and software available makes altering and enhancing your digital images easy and instantaneous.



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*Image by **Tim Wallace***

"The debate of film versus digital photography is one that has been prevalent ever since the development of the first digital camera.

Large-format film still has a place for serious landscape photographers, but few people have the time, skill level, or budget to work film out to this level, with many photographers now showing a preference for digital SLR cameras. Here are Digital Photographer's top reasons for going digital:

Processing costs are much lower

With a digital photo, you can use your computer and photo-editing software to retouch and enhance your pictures. Once the initial cost of buying the software is out of the way, the only other expenditure comes if you want to print your images. With analogue, the film itself can be expensive and hard to source and there are added costs needed to process it after the shoot.

You have more creative control

Using an image-editing program, you can apply special effects, lens-correction, perspectives and colour tones much more easily than if you were to edit your images manually in a darkroom. More importantly, if you don't like the outcome, you can simply revert back to the original and start again. The possibilities are quite literally endless!



Get instant feedback over images

While many film photographers used Polaroid cameras for instant feedback on their shoot before committing to a full roll of film, with digital photography the LCD screen on the back of the camera can be used for instant feedback on images.

Easily share shots

The rise of social media and apps, such as Instagram, help to illustrate the popularity of photo sharing in the digital age. Electronic distribution of images are quicker than regular mail or overnight delivery services, but it's also more convenient.

More accessible

There are many people who previously would have thought themselves too unskilled to take up photography as a hobby. In the age of the digital revolution, with affordable DSLRs, online tutorials and magazines to encourage the development of skills, the field for talent and creativity has been well and truly opened."

Digital Photographer

Photographic Fusion

The beauty of photography as an art form is in its fluidity. The abstract potential of film combined with the seemingly infinite capabilities of digital post-production methods allow for a perfect marriage of old and new - borrowing the numerous assets of both mediums. By scanning traditional prints for digital editing and printing, you can capitalise on both the gratifying ritual of traditional photography, while exploiting the post-production potential of the digital format - allowing you to make complex and compelling images guaranteed to please.



The A-Z of Travel Photography

Travel photography is the ultimate way to sink your teeth into the planet's innumerable aesthetic marvels. By mastering the art of travel photography, you can experience the complete cultural spectrum and keep a piece of it for yourself when you move on. But for those of you with a taste for travel and a thirst for photographic knowledge, you'll know that travel photography is much, much more than just spontaneous snaps with a disposable - and here's what separates the professionals from the amateurs.

Preliminary Research

If you want to ensure you make the most of your location, conduct some preliminary research before you make the trip. By identifying aesthetic landmarks, natural marvels and points of interest, you'll have your photographic agenda sorted before you even arrive - leaving you free to soak up your surroundings and travel off the beaten track in pursuit of the perfect shot.

As a photographer, you'll want to concern yourself less with tourist hotspots and more with the obscure corners of your destination which are guaranteed to be packed with cultural richness and one-of-a-kind aesthetics. This is the key to ensuring that your images have more than just the makeup of an exceptional photograph, but also the character of a unique and authentic experience.

"Remember when you're shooting for a travel story, nobody wants to see the 'grip and grin' shots at dinner. These are snapshots--perfect for posting on Facebook, but nothing that should be used in an article. Avoid posed photos and get people doing things, action shots. If you're going to shoot a famous building or nature scene, put someone in the photo to give it some life. It will still be that iconic view of Yellowstone falls or the Eiffel tower, but with a person in the photo - there is more to the image.

Remember to zoom in. Photos for websites are usually small, and you will create a better image by zooming in, or cropping tightly. Often people shoot street scenes of people walking away from them. Nobody wants to see the backs of people, they want an engaged subject doing something, looking right at you. Get closer in general - when an editor looks over a big group of images in a Google Plus gallery, their eyes go toward the close-ups. Make sure to get right in there tight, and also try to shoot from different places, low down and high up. People generally look better looking up at the camera than from a lower position."

Max Hartshorne, Editor at GoNOMAD.com



Technical Skills

Travel photography isn't really about the gear - but that doesn't mean that exceptional adventure shots won't require some photographic prowess. By guaranteeing that you're using all of the technical skills at your disposal, you can be sure to come out with stunning travel shots to rival the paid professionals.

Here's the scoop:

BEGINNER TIPS

- Use Aperture Priority mode (Av) - this helps you achieve maximum depth of field, ideal for sweeping landscape shots that are sharp from front to back
- Use a telephoto lens for natural portraits of locals - this way you can blur distracting backgrounds and keep the focus on your subject
- Get creative with composition. Obey the Rule of Thirds and try placing your subject in the left or right area of the frame, rather than dead-centre - and try incorporating leading lines which point to your subject. These little tricks will make for an infinitely more satisfying composition
- For subjects in motion, increase your ISO to achieve a perfect action freeze-frame
- Shoot in RAW - this way, your image will contain much more data than a standard JPEG where your post-processing options are limited

An Audible Voice

As a travel photographer, your purpose extends beyond capturing good-looking scenes on camera. The greatest weapon in your arsenal is an ability to convey concepts and make statements through photography – delivering powerful messages through images on your travels. This potential to have two-dimensional media work as a stimulating, multi-sensory art form is an exciting thing and perhaps the most rewarding aspect of photography.

While travelling, it's inevitable you'll come into contact with diverse and fascinating cultures. Some will be enlightening and inspiring, where the circumstances of other communities across the world can be a frightening eye-opener. Professional travel photographers accept the role of documenting and delivering these rich stories – creating images that not only look good but really say something.

Authentic Wanderlust

The paramount component of winning travel photography is a love of new experiences and a commitment to adventure. More important than having the right gear and even doing your research is to approach travel photography with a sense of wonder and eagerness to explore and capture your findings and highlights as you go.



Ignore clichéd agendas and generic travel brochures - the beauty of authentic travel photography is in the personal journey, taking your own routes and finding your own landmarks, stumbling upon the obscure corners of your destination and looking under the proverbial rocks to find something no-one has looked at from your perspective before. Embrace your inner adventurer and any photograph you take on your travels will serve as a reminder of your experience.

"First, forget about equipment. A lot of folks get caught up in a race to get the biggest and best gear, and forget that the key part of photography is in fact the photographer. Sure, specific shoots might require specific gear, but if you're out and about trying to capture your experiences, the camera you have is most likely perfect. Even if it's just the one in your phone.

Far more important than gear is the story you tell with your photos - and that's where the art comes in. Ask yourself what you're trying to tell your audience - the person who will be looking at your photo. How will you capture their imagination, share your adventure, and make your image stand out in a world that is increasingly crowded with distraction? Get that right, and everything else will follow."

Laurence Norah, findingtheuniverse.com



Image by Joe Cornish



Photographic Fearlessness

"Photography is about sacrifice and never settling for the easy shot. Photographers miss dinner for great light, cover themselves in mud to get the right angle, and climb mountains for the right perspective. When it comes down to it, if a shot is easy to take or a location is easy to get to, chances are it's been done 1,000 times before. Explore every angle of every subject and remember that it's generally the most challenging one that offers the most interesting scene."

Brendan van Son, brendansadventures.com

Rules were made to be broken, and that's especially true with photography. Achieving exceptional travel shots means thinking outside the metaphorical box - so take risks with your composition and especially with your subjects. Rather than contributing to the generic universal portfolio by photographing the same tourist attractions that have been snapped a thousand times before, find people or places or things that are unique and evocative - with their own sense of character and authentic photographic potential.

Spend some time ignoring the Rule of Thirds, defying photographic norms and taking chances in pursuit of that perfect shot.



Image by Joe Cornish



The Professional Treatment

Must-Have Software: Your Photo Editing Toolkit

While the world of digital photography is a vast and varied one, there's a whole other universe to explore when it comes to post-processing. Once you've gone through the intensive and immersive process of capturing your subjects - be it traditionally or digitally - it's time to take your photos to the next stage.

Photographic editing is the process of altering, enhancing and perfecting your images with the help of the right software - and by mastering professional programs like Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom, you can transform your already exceptional images into finished works of art.

So what are the benefits of editing?

BEGINNER TIPS

Control

While factors such as colour, light and contrast may be outside of your photographic control during the shooting process, photo-editing puts the power in your hands.

Capabilities

With an extensive host of features and functions available with major photo editing software packages, the possibilities are virtually endless.

Creativity

If realism isn't your thing, the power of photo editors allows you to transform faithful or accurate images into abstract artworks.

Adobe Photoshop CC

The big daddy of photo-editing software, Adobe Photoshop is the ultimate in post-processing power - helping professionals and amateurs alike to alter and enhance their images to spectacular effect. The programme's latest incarnation - Photoshop CC, is a new and improved instalment with all of the latest editing capabilities at the touch of a button - or the tap of a touchscreen, depending on your platform of choice.



In Photoshop, you're able to open your image files and make just about any adjustments you want - from colour, brightness and contrast adjustments to advanced layering techniques and intricate retouches. With everything from frills to fundamentals, Photoshop users can bring their images to perfection and even into entirely new photographic dimensions.

With a ton of new features when compared to CS6, this is a new and improved version of the ultimate photo-editing giant.

"If you're interested in digital photography, chances are it's not just about taking pictures but what you do with them afterwards that interests you to. As a professional, I use both Lightroom and Photoshop for different reasons. Both of them can help you get more out of your images - from cropping, fixing colour casts and exposures both are exceptionally powerful tools.

If you don't have that many images to manage then Photoshop might be the way to go. In its simplest form you can crop, rotate and get rid of blemishes but equally it is an exceptionally advanced piece of software which can take years to understand. By creating layers you can change an image but can always revert back to the original. Photoshop allows really advanced techniques such as cloning, liquifying, clipping and vectors.

You can also buy any number of Photoshop actions to 'paint' your images with. This can help you to develop your style so long as you are consistent with what you choose to use on your images. Although you can batch process in Photoshop, it's more than likely that you'll work on one image at a time.

If you have a lot of images you want to work on, this is where Lightroom really comes into its own. It's great for consistency between images as you can view them all together by creating a catalogue. Once you've tweaked one image, you can then sync images taken in a similar light with the press of a couple of buttons. Et voila, processing time is reduced drastically. It's always better to get things spot on at the camera stage - but if you do make mistakes, Lightroom & Photoshop can help you to resolve some of the issues you may have."

Alexandra Davies, alexandrajane.co.uk

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom

Photoshop Lightroom is a revelation in the photo-editing sphere, with a suite of sophisticated editing tools and capabilities available on your tablet or smartphone. Lightroom is ideal for photographers on-the-go, offering the same extensive functionality in a compact mobile format.

In addition to editing options covering everything from tone and colour to brightness and contrast, Lightroom gives users the option to efficiently organise batches and folders of images - then share them instantly on various sites and social networks. Syncing easily with the desktop version, Lightroom mobile is effective, instantaneous and easy - ideal for both fledgling photographers learning the editing ropes and seasoned professionals with a need for speed.



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"Adobe Lightroom has been a revelation for me. It's awesome for cataloguing, keywording, processing and uploading to my website and social media. I've been using it for a number of years now and using it day-in, day-out you really become proficient with it. It works seamlessly with Photoshop, which is useful, but on most of my work I find the develop module in Lightroom enough.

I have an awesome website which is important when you are pitching to clients in a saturated market. Designed and built by myself, with functionality such as hidden galleries with passwords, it means I can upload images for clients and they can preview them online and download full resolution files. Lightroom also lets me manage how I send my files to print, offering me a variety of export options for me to send my images onwards to my professional print lab. It's important to me to have a workflow all the way to the client – the easier it is, the more time I can spend shooting.

As an amateur, some of this might sound like too much – and you don't have to do it all, but Lightroom gives you the choices. Processing images can be fun – seeing what effects you can make, and recreating the scene as you saw it rather than as your camera recorded it. You can even make photo books or share the pictures straight to email. I always advise students to publish their photos too, and having a website is a great way to do this. You never know, someone might see something they like and want to buy it from you!"

Chris Davies, chrisdaviesphotography.com

Both Adobe Photoshop CC and Lightroom are available as part of a [Creative Cloud](#) plan from less than £9 a month, allowing you to transform your photos from raw images to expertly sculpted works of art - ready for the all-important printing stage.



Professional Photo Printing 101

The most rewarding part of any photographic adventure is when it all comes together in the printing stages. If you've taken the time and care to find the optimal lens for your objective, take or break the rules of composition and experiment tirelessly on the hunt for that perfect shot - your beautiful images need the post-processing treatment they deserve. And that means going professional.

But what exactly should you be looking for in truly *professional* photo printing?

1. Professional Choice

With professional printing, the options are practically endless - as long as you choose the right provider. Rather than being limited to the basics of running your images through a standard inkjet printer on to consumer level paper, crossing your fingers and hoping for the best A4 printout possible, full-service professional photo labs offer a near-infinite variety of printing options.

Being able to choose from professionally framed or mounted prints, stunning canvas wraps and acrylic blocks gives you the freedom to display your quality images with quality results. And when you're ready to kick-start your photography career, you can even opt for a professional photo album to show off your first ever portfolio. The wide range of printing options, only available with a professional lab, means that every one of your images can find the presentation quality it deserves.

2. Professional Care

Professional printing services come with some perks - not least the guarantee that every image that goes through the lab will be given exclusive attention. You won't get this exclusive treatment with just any professional printing service, but premier printers are dedicated to offering the highest level of quality, meaning that they won't let you do your photos the injustice of turning them into substandard prints.

Here are a few common issues that you can avoid with the right printing service:

BEGINNER TIPS

- Aspect ratio issues - you need a professional printer that will check each image that goes through the lab, making sure that every photo is being printed in the right size and orientation for the image format
- Poor print quality - these guys are the professionals, meaning a core element of their service is to promise exceptional quality every time. So as long as your image is high resolution, your prints should follow suit
- Substandard treatment - the professional printing elite guarantee that every one of your images will be treated respectfully and printed with love and care



3. Professional Quality

Most importantly of all, a truly professional photo printing service guarantees your expertly-crafted images the stunning photographic quality you're entitled to. If you've taken the time to capture images bursting with sharpness, vivid colour and dramatic contrasts, you want to be sure that your prints reflect the quality of the shot.

The limited capabilities of standard photo labs don't award you the control over the final outcome, meaning you're all but guaranteed to lose quality during the printing process. Chain printers don't have that personal love of photography that the professionals do, and that's always evident in the end product.

The important thing to remember is that all images are created equal, meaning professionals and amateurs alike deserve the same superior quality in the finished product. Professional photographers swear by professional printing, and here's why:

"For me personally, as a photographer, there is nothing on earth that can compare to the power of a well-printed photograph - and in an age where there are endless options open to us, it's easy to sometimes look for the cheapest or easiest. I started out as a printer years ago, and in many ways, this has an impact on how I shoot today so I know the value of a 'good quality print'.

I first met with Jeff Heads, the print manager at Digitalab, over 7 years ago - and ever since then, all the important work that I have printed has been through there. Not only because it's important for me personally to know and trust who prints my work, but also because I need consistency and the best quality possible - and that is what I get from Digitalab. There is no point in a client investing thousands in a shoot, and the photographer investing countless time into creating the perfect image, for it to be thrown to the wind in this final and incredibly important stage.

My best advice for people starting out would simply be that they should choose carefully how and where to have their work printed, and look at it as an investment rather than a cost. This is your hard work, so treat it with respect and others will reap the benefits of that. Also make sure that you understand the process, colour profiling, working on a correctly calibrated monitor. Quality prints are a pure joy and far exceed the view of our work on even the most expensive monitors - so embrace your work and invest in the best prints that you can."

Tim Wallace, ambientlife.co.uk



digitalab

professional photo lab



*Image by **Tim Wallace***

After that, it's time to reap the rewards of your experimentation and hard work.
Then do it all over again.