



# Photoshop Elements 2

## Basics

Not so long ago, digital imaging was inaccessible to most people. Hardware and software costs were prohibitive, learning curves were steep, and the equipment available did not work well together. That picture has changed. A thriving market now exists for digital cameras, scanners, printers, CDd and DVD burners, and more. As the equipment gets better and cheaper, more people are getting involved in digital imaging. And the involvement of all kinds of people—creative professionals, hobbyists, educators, students, and just plain folks—has increased the need for smart, creative, accessible imaging software.

Ideally, that software should be relatively easy to learn and use, but not dumbed down. It should offer practical applications, but be versatile and deep enough to support creative explorations. It should integrate with the current and expected crop of digital cameras and scanners, but it shouldn't be so expensive that only institutions can afford it. But wait—I'm describing software that's already available! That software is Adobe Photoshop Elements 2.

Take a minute to read through this brief chapter for an overview of what Photoshop Elements 2 offers, what you can use it for, and how it differs from its progenitor, Adobe Photoshop.

## Overview of Photoshop Elements 2

Photoshop Elements 2 is digital-imaging software. In the broadest sense, it is a collection of tools for editing bitmap (pixel-based) digital images. The particulars of what you can do with this software tell more of the story.

The program is best known for its ability to help digital photographers in all stages of their workflow: input, editing, and output. Photoshop Elements 2 has features that can be used for:

- » Connecting with and importing images from digital cameras and scanners
- » Batch processing, including renaming, converting format, resizing, and rotating collections of images
- » Browsing, sorting, and organizing images
- » Cropping, straightening, and rotating scans
- » Fixing flash-related problems, such as red eye, lack of fill flash, and lack of backlighting
- » Removing dust and scratches
- » Repairing tears and retouching blemishes
- » Fixing exposure and contrast automatically and with manual controls
- » Correcting color automatically and with manual controls
- » Sharpening and blurring
- » Adding text in creative ways
- » Colorizing
- » Digitally framing photos
- » Enhancing with filters, effects, and layer styles
- » Removing distracting content
- » Replacing and adding content
- » Creating composite images
- » Laying out contact sheets and picture packages

- » Merging images into panoramas
- » Building Web photo galleries
- » Making slide shows in PDF format
- » Preparing photographs for email distribution

An important point, and one that I think the official publicists don't make strongly enough, is that Photoshop Elements 2 is not just for photographers. All of its features can be used in other contexts, making it just as valuable to someone whose goal is to generate art, illustrations, educational materials, designs and layouts, promotional materials, brochures, portfolios, or any graphic creation.

Yes, the program can be used to create personal projects, and it includes recipes for performing common tasks, hints, and some automatic features that make it accessible to the non-professional. At the same time, in the hands of a professional, it produces professional results. The bottom line is that if you know how to use Photoshop Elements 2, as you will by the end of this Complete Course, the possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

## How Photoshop Elements 2 Compares to Photoshop

The Adobe Photoshop Elements feature set and interface are based on those in the full version of Adobe Photoshop. In addition to the features mentioned above, Photoshop Elements 2 includes drawing and painting tools, vector-based type and shape tools, customizable brushes, selection tools, layers, filters, adjustments, tool options, Web-related features, and lots more.

The first question many people ask about Photoshop Elements 2 is how it compares to Photoshop, the flagship of digital image editing. The answer is that there are some features that are unique to Photoshop and some that are unique to Photoshop Elements.

For the most part, the Photoshop features that you won't find in Photoshop Elements are higher-end tools and functions, like curves, paths, and controls for accessing channels and masks. After all, Adobe has to justify the significant price difference between these programs.

Don't let the lack of some high-end features discourage you. Workarounds can achieve what some of these absent features would offer. For example, as you work through this course, you learn workarounds for accessing layer masks and information in hidden channels.

A fair comparison of Photoshop Elements to Photoshop is by no means a one-way street. Photoshop Elements 2 has features that are not included in the current version of Photoshop (Photoshop 7), most of which are aimed at making the interface easier to use and understand. Unique features of Photoshop Elements 2 include the following:

- » Selection brush for quickly selecting pixels
- » Quick Fix window for correcting photographs
- » Red Eye brush
- » Fill Flash adjustment
- » Backlighting adjustment
- » Shortcuts bar
- » How To palette of image-editing recipes
- » Hints palette with tool and palette explanations
- » Thumbnails that visually describe each filter, effect, and layer style
- » PDF Slidemaker
- » Photomerge for making panoramas

This is just an overview of what Photoshop Elements 2 has to offer. You learn much more about its features, functions, and potential as you work through this book.