Up and Running with Photoshop Elements

It's tempting to jump right in, opening an image and immediately starting to work on it. But to get the most out of Photoshop Elements, it's best to take a moment to set up your preferences, familiarize yourself with the work area, and learn about the various options for getting images into the program. This "aim before you shoot" approach may not give you immediate satisfaction, but in the long run it will pay off in terms of less frustration and better images. In addition to getting you ready to work in Photoshop Elements, this chapter discusses organizing your digital images and other tasks that make using the program easier.

1

Chapter Contents

Setting Preferences

Adobe ships Photoshop Elements with preferences set in a way that may or may not suit your particular needs. Through these settings, you can change how Photoshop Elements handles a whole range of tasks, from color management to memory allocation to saving files. Let's look at some of the more important choices you can make and see what you can do to customize the program so that it works better for you.

Note: If at any point you want to reset Photoshop Elements preferences to their original settings, here's how to do so: Throw away the Photoshop Elements preferences file. Windows users will find the **Adobe Photoshop Elements Prefs** file in **C:\Windows\Application Data\Adobe\Photoshop\Elements\Photoshop Elements 2.0** (or 1.0) **Prefs.** In Windows NT/2000, the preferences are located in **C:\Documents and Settings\<Username>\Application Data\Adobe\Photoshop\Elements.** Macintosh users will find this file in the **System\Preferences\Photoshop Elements 2.0** (or 1.0) **Prefs** folder. Mac OS X users will find the preferences in the **Users\<username>\Library/Preferences\Photoshop Elements 2.0 Prefs** folder. The next time you launch Photoshop Elements, all your settings will be reset to their defaults. You can also hold down Ctrl+Alt+Shift / ⌘+Option+Shift while the program launches to trash the preferences file.

Color Settings

Every scanner, every computer system, and every printer handles color differently. In order to maintain some control over the way your digital images look in this chaotic world, you need to know how Photoshop Elements handles color.

On the Edit menu at the top of the Photoshop Elements window you'll see an option for Color Settings (shown on the top left in Figure 1.1). (In Mac OS X the Color Settings are found on the Photoshop Elements application menu, see Figure 1.1 top right.) When you choose this, you are faced with three options: No Color Management, Limited Color Management, and Full Color Management (shown in Figure 1.1 bottom and described briefly in the following sections). The default setting is No Color Management, and even if you are tempted otherwise, I suggest you keep it this way. You might be in for some surprises if you select either of the other two options.

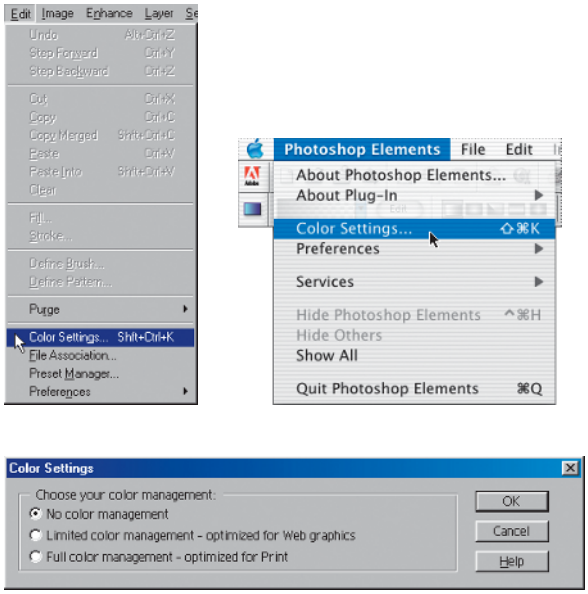

Figure 1.1: Color preferences are found on the Edit menu (top left and in Mac OS X top right). For simplicity, in the Color Settings dialog box choose No Color Management (bottom).

No Color Management

If you keep the default setting at No Color Management, you'll work in the RGB mode. *RGB* stands for red, green, and blue. These are the three colors of light that combine to make up the entire spectrum of color displayed on your monitor. In RGB mode, there is a very slight possibility that some color banding will occur when your work is viewed on some monitors. *Banding* is what happens when you create a graphic in a color space and then view the same graphic on a device that displays a smaller range of colors. (A range of colors is referred to as *gamut*. On a monitor with a narrower gamut, colors are squished, or banded together.) Even though working in RGB mode may result in some banding, I believe that the potential loss of quality on some monitors is worth it because you don't have to deal with the issues associated with Limited or Full Color Management.

Limited Color Management

If you choose Limited Color Management, you will find yourself working in a color space called sRGB, instead of just plain RGB. The *sRGB* color space is a limited color space that Adobe and others claim is good for Web work. It has a narrower gamut than the RGB color space and more faithfully represents the color capabilities of most commonly used display systems. However, the difference between the sRGB and RGB color space is slight, and many other applications that you use may not support the sRGB color space. Sure, you'll be able to open your files in those programs, but you may find some maddening color shifts.

Full Color Management

If you choose Full Color Management, you'll work in the sRGB color space, but Photoshop Elements will also assign an ICC color profile to your image file. A *color profile* is a universally accepted point of reference developed by the International Color Consortium (ICC). In theory, this means that when you open the file with another computer and monitor, the image will be displayed exactly as it was on your monitor. Also, in theory, if you have an ICC-compliant printer, you'll get a printout that closely matches the image on your monitor. This is fine in theory, but in reality it doesn't always work. All the devices need to understand your color profile, and if they don't you'll have an even greater mess on your hands. Later in the book I'll tell you about ways to make your printout look good regardless of whether your file has a color profile attached to it ("Using Desktop Printers" in Chapter 12).

Whether or not you choose Full Color Management, it is absolutely critical that you take a moment to calibrate your monitor. Your monitor is your canvas, and you need to make sure that when it comes to color and brightness, you are at least in the ballpark. How else will you know how much contrast or brightness to add to your carefully optimized image, or how will you know when your colors are right? Adobe makes it easy to calibrate your monitor by providing the Adobe Gamma utility. In both Windows and the Mac, the Adobe Gamma utility is located in the **Control Panels** folder. Mac OS X has its own Display Calibrator Assistant found in the Utilities folder.

The utility walks you step by step through the process of calibrating your monitor. Just make sure that your monitor has been on for at least half an hour before you start. It needs time to warm up and reach a stable operating brightness. Also make sure that your monitor is set to display at least thousands (16 bits) of colors, or the calibration software won't work.

Preset Manager

When you use a brush, gradient, pattern, or swatch, you are presented with a default set of corresponding brushes, gradients, patterns, or colors. Except for the swatches, these options appear in the options bar at the top of the Photoshop Elements window. The swatches are found in the Swatches palette. For most people, the default sets provide enough options, but you can also add or customize sets using the Preset Manager, which is found on the Edit menu (see Figure 1.2). Select the Preset Type to see the default options. To load a set of *custom libraries*, as the custom sets are called, you can click Load and select a saved library to open, or click the More icon at the top of the Preset Manager dialog box. A pop-up menu will appear with a list of choices, including the choice to reset back to the default set. You can also create your own set by Shift+clicking various brushes and clicking Save Set.

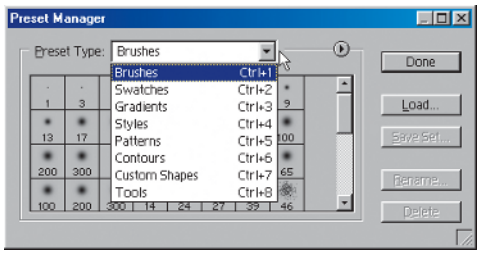

Figure 1.2: The Preset Manager, accessed from the Edit menu, controls various tool and swatch options.

Undo History States

Most of the time, when you work on the pixels of a digital image, Photoshop Elements records each step of the process in the Undo History palette. (In version 1, it's called the History palette.) You can go back to a previous step at any point, but only as long as that step remains in the Undo History palette. Photoshop Elements records 20 steps by default, but if you have enough RAM you can boost that number to as many as 100. To change the default, choose Edit ➤ Preferences ➤ General and then simply type in a new number, as shown in Figure 1.3. (In Mac OS X, Preferences are found on the Photoshop Elements application menu.)

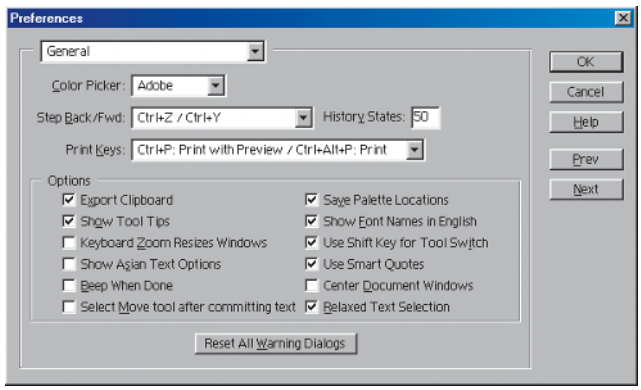

Figure 1.3: You can increase the number of history states in the General Preferences window.

Saving Files

When you save a file, Photoshop Elements by default creates an image preview (Windows) or an icon and thumbnail (Mac). Although this makes it easy to identify an image on the desktop or in a dialog box, and the saved thumbnail is used by the File Browser, it adds size to your image. If restricting file size is important to you, consider turning this option off and using only a descriptive name to identify your file. Do this by choosing Edit ➤ Preferences ➤ Saving Files. (In Mac OS X, Preferences are found on the Photoshop Elements application menu.) Figure 1.4 shows the Windows and Mac versions of the Saving Files dialog box.

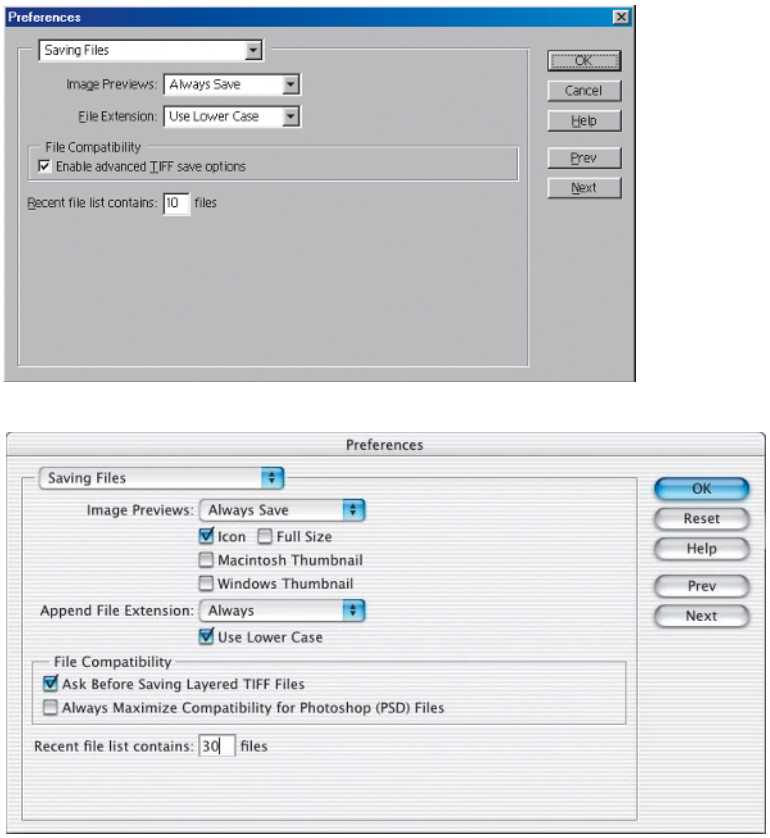

Figure 1.4: Optimize file size by paying attention to the options in the Saving Files Preferences dialog box. The Windows version is on the top, and the Mac version is on the bottom.

Note: The File Browser ("Getting Digital Images into Photoshop Elements," later in this chapter) creates and displays its own temporary thumbnail version of an image, regardless of whether the image file was saved with an image preview or icon/thumbnail. However, if an image preview or icon/thumbnail is saved, the File Browser displays quicker.

If you are creating a lot of JPEG images for the Web or for e-mail transmission, you should probably turn off the image preview options (Windows) or icon and thumbnail options (Mac). Not only will this save file size, it will also lessen the chances that your JPEG will become corrupted and unreadable.

In the Saving Files Preferences dialog box, you also have the choice of whether to Always Maximize Compatibility for Photoshop (PSD) Files. If you want to save up to a third of your file size, I suggest you turn this option off. If you leave this option checked, Photoshop Elements creates a second file, one with the layers (if you have any) flattened. You need this only if you are planning to use Photoshop version 2.5 or earlier, which is unlikely. Keep in mind that turning off backward compatibility affects

only PSD files, not GIFs or JPEGs. However, according to Adobe, the File Browser will create thumbnails more quickly if this option is left on. So your decision about whether to enable this option depends on which is more important to you, file size or performance.

You can also choose to turn off "Ask Before Saving Layered TIFF Files." In version 1 this choice reads "Enable Advanced TIFF Save Options." If you leave this option selected (which is the default), you'll have the choice of saving layered TIFFs or applying JPEG compression to a TIFF. Unless you are absolutely sure you'll never want to do this, leave this option checked. (If you are wondering what the purpose is of creating a layered TIFF file, it so happens that some web browsers can read them. This could be useful for anyone who wants to share layered image files over the Web.)

By default, the recent file list (found under File ➢ Open Recent) includes 10 recent files. In the Saving Files Preferences dialog box, you can change this default so that Photoshop Elements displays up to 30 recent files.

Units and Rulers

Photoshop Elements displays dimensions in inches by default. You can change that setting to centimeters, millimeters, or pixels in the Units & Rulers dialog box (Edit ➢ Preferences ➢ Units & Rulers; in Mac OS X, preferences are found on the application menu). See Figure 1.5. (Picas, points, and percent will be useful for only a select few users). You can also change these preferences in the Info palette. When I am working on images destined for the Web, I always use pixels; otherwise, I leave my setting at inches.

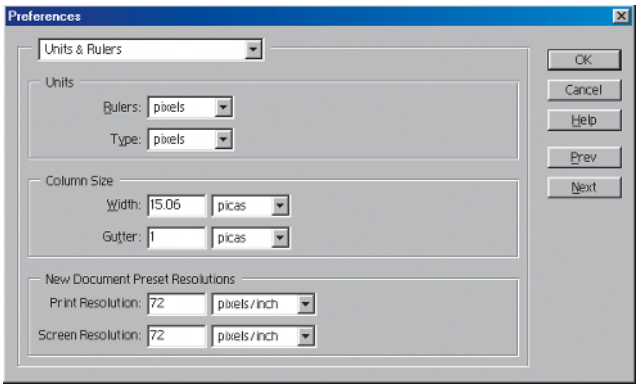

Figure 1.5: Choose an appropriate measuring system in the Units & Rulers dialog box.

Plug-ins

When Photoshop Elements is launched, it automatically searches for a folder called **Plug-Ins** in the application folder. Plug-ins are mini software programs developed both by Adobe and third-party vendors to add various functionalities to Photoshop Elements. You also may be using another program that uses compatible Photoshop plug-ins. You can tell Photoshop Elements where to find and open those plug-ins as well by going to Edit ➤ Preferences ➤ Plug-Ins & Scratch Disks (see Figure 1.6). (In Mac OS X, Preferences are found on the application menu.) You can also hold down Ctrl+Shift / ⌘+Shift while Photoshop is starting up, and then choose an alternate plug-in directory.

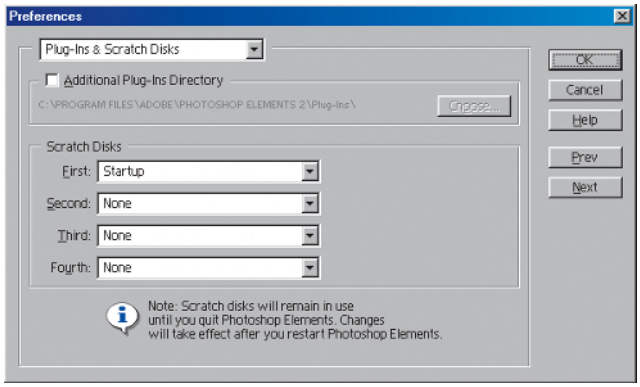

Figure 1.6: Manage plug-ins and scratch disks through the Plug-Ins & Scratch Disks dialog box.

Memory

If you don't have enough RAM, Photoshop automatically creates and uses a portion of your startup hard drive as a scratch disk. It's never as fast or as optimal as having enough RAM, but if you have a large hard disk you'll avoid the dreaded "out-of-memory" warning. If you have more hard drives, you can assign scratch disks to them by going to Edit ➤ Preferences ➤ Plug-Ins & Scratch Disks (see Figure 1.7). (In Mac OS X, Preferences are found on the application menu.) Choose the drive that is the fastest and has the most contiguous free space to use as your primary scratch disk. You can create up to 200GB of scratch disk space. To change your scratch disk, hold down Ctrl+Alt / ⌘+Option while Photoshop Elements is starting up.

The Memory and Image Cache preferences settings allow you to specify how much memory you want to use for Photoshop Elements. The cache levels affect the speed of zooming and drawing, and the Use Cache for Histograms setting affects how quickly histograms display. These settings are best left at the default levels for most projects.

Note: Sometimes cameras and other devices that mount themselves on the desktop as hard drives will show up as valid options in the Memory Preferences dialog box. It is important that you do not choose them. They are usually small in size and are slow. You should choose only devices that are real hard drives and not removables such as zip drives.

Customizing and Organizing the Work Area

Look at anyone's desk and you'll see variations in the way people like to work. It's the same with the Photoshop Elements work area. One person might prefer a desktop tiled with palettes, whereas someone else might find this cluttered look distracting. With Photoshop Elements, palettes can be stacked and tiled.

The Work Area Revealed

Look at Figure 1.7. It shows the entire work area of Photoshop Elements, including the opening splash screen. This is how your screen should look when you first open the program (taking into consideration the differences between the PC and Mac platforms).

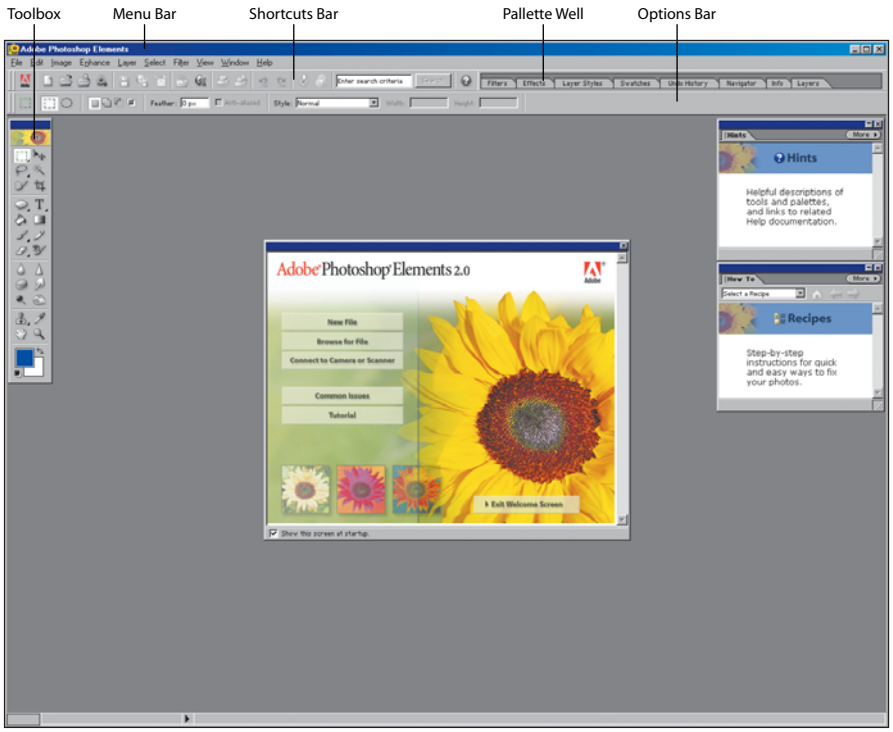

Figure 1.7: The Photoshop Elements work area.

At the top is the *menu bar*, which contains drop-down menus for performing tasks. On the Enhance menu, for example, you'll find ways to modify the contrast and color of your digital image. Unlike most of the other components of the work area, the menu bar can't be moved or altered in any way.

Below the menu bar is the *shortcuts bar*. You can position the pointer over any icon in the shortcuts bar and its name will appear. Here you'll find buttons for common commands such as Open, Print, Save, and Undo, and easy access to version 2's Color Variations and Quick Fix. There is also a Search field for using keywords to access the help database. You can move the shortcuts bar and dock it at the top or bottom of the screen by dragging the gripper bar at the left edge. You can also hide the shortcuts bar by deselecting Window ➢ Shortcuts from the menu bar.

Just to the right of the shortcuts bar is the *palette well*. Palettes help you modify and monitor images. You open a palette by clicking its tab. A palette will remain open until you click outside it or click the palette's tab again. When a palette is fully open, it takes up valuable monitor space, and that's why the palette well is a handy place to keep palettes when you aren't using them. You can also drag a palette's tab to move the palette from the well to any place you want on the screen ("Docking, Stacking, and Resizing Tool Palettes," next). Palettes will automatically adjust closer together or farther apart in the palette well depending on the size and resolution settings of the monitor.

Below the shortcuts bar and palette well is the *options bar*, which contains various options for using a selected tool. The options bar can also be moved by using the gripper bar at the left edge. As you select a tool from the toolbox, different options will appear in the options bar. Some settings are common to several tools, and others are specific to one tool.

To the left of the work area is the *toolbox*. The icons in the toolbox give you access to various tools for creating and editing images. When you position the pointer over an icon in the toolbox, the name of the tool appears. When a tool is selected, more information about the tool appears in the Hints palette. (To see this information, you must have the Hints palette open.) An icon with a small arrow in its lower right corner indicates a group of tools. When you select one of these icons, the tools it provides appear on the options bar. You can also click and hold the mouse on one of these icons to display a pop-up menu of the tools it provides.

Docking, Stacking, and Resizing Tool Palettes

When you open Photoshop Elements for the first time, the Hints and How To palettes are undocked and open on the desktop. You can tuck them neatly away in the palette well by simply clicking the Close icon on the palette title bar. You can move a palette to and from the palette well and the work area by dragging the palette's tab. You can also dock palettes together on the work area by dragging one palette's tab onto the body of the other palette (see Figure 1.8).

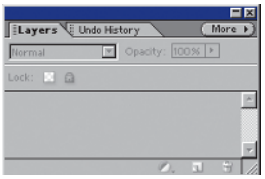

Figure 1.8: For easy access, dock palettes together on the work area.

Personally, since I use them so much, I group the Layers palette and the Undo History palette together and keep them undocked and readily accessible on my work area. When I want them out of the way, I collapse the palette window by double-clicking the palette's tab (in Windows, double-click the palette tab).

Note: Selecting Window ➤ Reset Palette locations will place all palettes back in their default locations.

The Welcome Screen

When you open Photoshop Elements, you are greeted with a Welcome screen. Through this screen, you can quickly open an existing image file or create a new one. You can acquire an image from a scanner or digital camera or have instant access to Adobe's online tutorials. The window disappears when you select an option on it or start to work on an image, but you can get it back at any time by selecting Window ➤ Welcome.

Changing the Canvas Color

The default color for the Photoshop Elements canvas area is gray. Gray is a good choice because it is neutral and doesn't interfere with the colors of most digital images. At times, however, you might want another canvas color. For example, you can choose a color that approximates the color of a web page background you are designing for. That way you can see what your image will look like once it is on the Web. Figure 1.9 shows the default canvas and a custom canvas.

Figure 1.9: The default canvas color is gray (left). But you can change the canvas color to a color of your choice (right).

To change the color of the canvas, do the following:

1. Choose a foreground color. In this case, I've chosen gold, the background color for many of the pages in my website, **www.cyberbohemia.com.**
2. Select the Paint Bucket tool ( ) from the Tools menu. (Make sure that Fill to Foreground is selected in the options bar and not Fill to Pattern.)
3. While holding the Shift key, click inside the canvas.
4. To restore the canvas to its original color, use the Color Picker to set the RGB values to 192, which will produce 25 percent Gray, and repeat steps 2 and 3.

Shooting Digital: Must-Have Accessories

Digital camera salespeople will eagerly try to sell you dozens of camera accessories. I recommend that you take the following four accessories seriously:

- Extra rechargeable batteries
- As much extra digital memory as you can afford
- A lightweight tripod
- A polarizing filter, to increase color saturation of most daytime shots

Little else will be as consistently useful, except maybe a sturdy camera bag to hold everything in.

Getting Digital Images into Photoshop Elements

There are several ways to get your images into Photoshop Elements:

- File ➢ Open opens all compatible file formats. This brings up an Open dialog box with controls for locating and previewing files.
- File ➢ Open Recent opens up to 30 of the most recently viewed files.
- File ➢ Import gives you access to any plug-in module compatible with Photoshop Elements. You may need to install the specific plug-in yourself. See the documentation for your scanner or digital camera for more instructions. You can also use Import to bring scans or digital camera images directly into Photoshop Elements. "Frame from Video" is a quick and easy way to bring in individual frames from Quicktime movies, or just about any video footage that QuickTime (Mac) or Media Player (Windows) supports.
- File ➢ Browse is one of the most useful ways of opening and managing digital images in Photoshop Elements. The upper left pane of the File Browser dialog box displays the folders on your computer. When you click on a folder, any images contained in it appear as thumbnails on the right (see Figure 1.10). Click on a thumbnail to see information about that image in the lower left pane of the dialog box. Right-click / Ctrl-click on a thumbnail to display a pop-up menu with options such as Open, Delete, and Rename. To open an image, either double-click on its thumbnail or select Open from the pop-up menu. To open multiple images, hold down the Shift/Ctrl key while clicking to select them, then double-click on any one of them or select Open from the pop-up menu. The File

Browser dialog box also provides an easy way to manage your image files. Move a file into a different folder by dragging its thumbnail from the right side of the dialog box into a folder on the left, or copy it to a different folder by holding down the Ctrl/⌘ key while dragging. You can rename many files quickly by renaming one and then pressing Tab to move from one image name to the next.

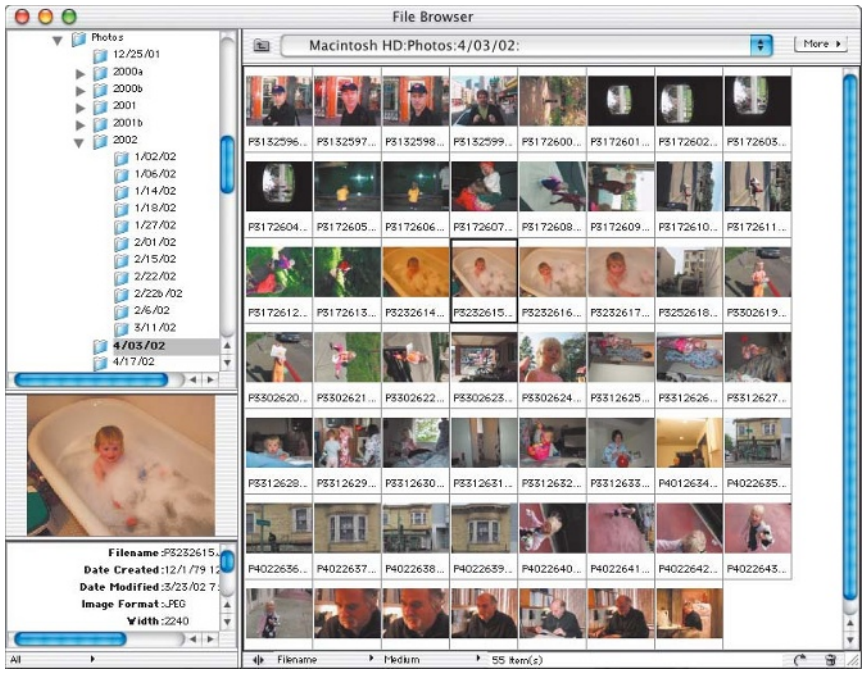

Figure 1.10: View before you open.

Note: Photoshop Elements will open most image file formats, even high-end prepress formats. (If an image is saved in the CMYK color mode, Photoshop Elements will ask if it is OK to convert to RGB before opening.) Open digital images saved in the Photoshop Elements file format directly from the desktop, Explorer (Windows), or Chooser (Mac) by double-clicking on the image icon or file name. However, you may need to open other file formats from within the Photoshop Elements application.

Photoshop Elements 2 has a command you can use to create a new file containing an image from the Clipboard. If you make a selection in an image using any of the marquee selection tools and then copy that selection (Ctrl+C / ⌘+C), you can then create a new file containing that selection by selecting File ➤ New from Clipboard. In version 1, if you want to make a new file from a selection you have to select, copy, create a new blank file (File ➤ New) and then paste your selection into the new file.

Changing the Image Orientation

If your digital image opens with the wrong orientation, the first thing you'll want to do is change it (see Figure 1.11).

Figure 1.11: Some digital images open sideways (left). Rotate the canvas (right) before you start work.

To re-orient your image, do the following:

1. Choose Image ➤ Rotate from the menu bar. Then, depending on which way your image lies, choose either 90° Left or 90° Right.
2. Don't worry if you get it wrong. I always confuse my left and my right! Just undo your mistake by using one of the various Undo controls and try again ("What Do You Do When You Mess Up?" later in this chapter).

Note: You can also change the image orientation from within the Quick Fix dialog box (Enhance ➤ Quick Fix).

Knowing Your File Size

Just as you wouldn't lift something without knowing its weight for fear of injuring your back, you shouldn't begin working on a digital image without knowing its pixel size. Why? The larger the image, the more the pixels, and the more "processing" power it takes to do even the simplest tasks.

How do you determine file size?

Look at the bottom of the Photo Elements application window (Windows) or document window (Mac) and look at the middle section (see Figure 1.12). If you click the triangle in the status bar and choose Document Sizes, you can get information on the amount of data in the selected image. Document Dimensions displays the size in pixels. The number to the left is the approximate size of the saved, flattened file in the Photoshop format. The number next to it is the file's approximate size, including layers. If an image contains only one layer, the numbers will be the same. These numbers

are useful to know when working on an image within Photoshop Elements. However, the numbers aren't representative of the file size of the image if it is saved in other file formats such as JPEG or GIF. For that, you'll either have to leave the program and check the file size where it's stored, or open Photoshop Elements' Save for Web plug-in and check the file size in the lower-left corner.

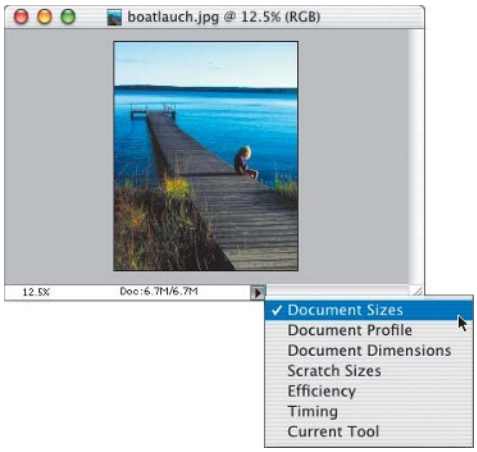

Figure 1.12: You can readily view image size data by choosing Document Sizes.

Using a Contact Sheet to Organize Images

Once you start saving digital images, you'll quickly need to find a way to manage them. You'll be asking yourself, "Now in which folder, which hard drive, which Zip drive, did I put that darn thing?" Descriptive names help. So does Photoshop Elements' File Browser, which enables you to view all the contents of a folder.

Another thing that can help manage images is the Contact Sheet tool in Photoshop Elements. Although it is not interactive—that is, you can't click on an image to bring up the original file as you can with the File Browser—you can catalog your images and then print out the results for easy reference.

Here's how I made the contact sheet shown in Figure 1.13:

1. I chose File ➤ Print Layouts ➤ Contact Sheet (in version 1, File ➤ Automate➤ Contact Sheet II). The Contact Sheets dialog box appeared (shown on the right in Figure 1.13).
2. I clicked Choose (In Windows, Browse) and selected a folder from my hard disk.
3. Under Document, I kept the default document dimensions. A resolution of 72dpi is adequate for a sheet I'm just using for reference, so I kept that setting too.
4. Under Thumbnails, I kept the default settings for how the thumbnails would be placed on the page. I also selected Use Filename As Caption; this labeled the thumbnails by using the source image filenames.
5. I clicked OK and printed out the result (shown on the left in Figure 1.13).

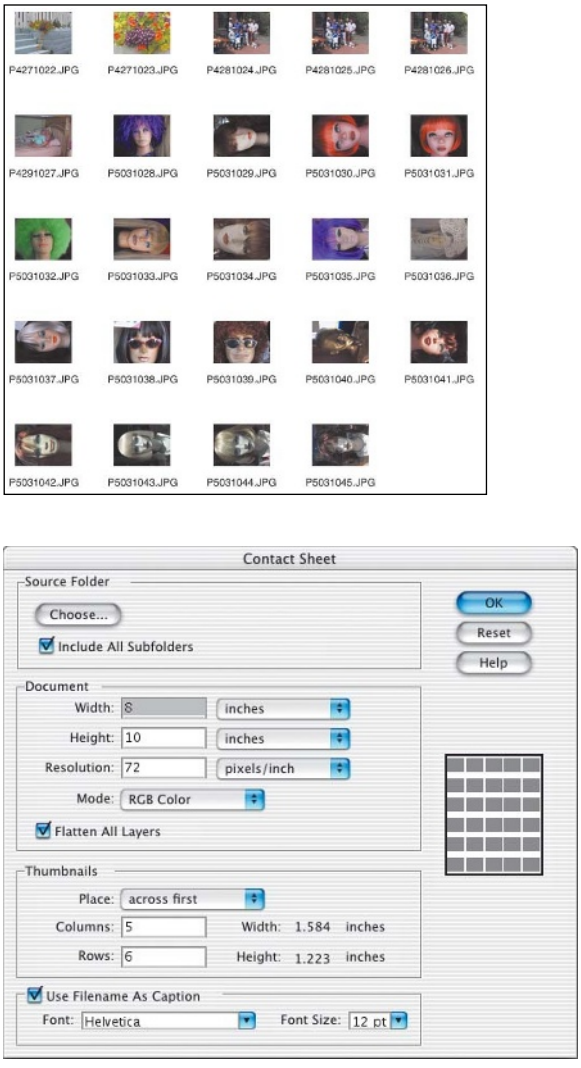

Figure 1.13: Contact Sheet (top) helps organize digital images. On the bottom is the Contact Sheet dialog box.

What Do You Do When You Mess Up?

It's comforting to know that when you are working within Photoshop Elements, it's difficult to permanently damage a digital image. There is hardly a mistake you can make that can't be fixed by using the Undo History palette or the Undo command. Even if you accidentally save a copy of your work, as long as you haven't closed the file you can revert to a previous version. (Undo History is simply called History in version 1.)

Here are your choices if—and when—you mess up:

- The simplest way to undo an action you've just made is to click the Step Backward button ( ) in the shortcuts bar or use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Z / ⌘+Z. This button is connected to the Undo History palette, and each time you click it you move backward through the various recorded states in the Undo History palette. You can continue stepping backward this way until you reach the end of the recorded states in the Undo History palette. To redo the operation, click the Step Forward button in the shortcuts bar ( ) or use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Y / ⌘+Y. (You can customize the keyboard command by choosing Edit ➤ Preferences ➤ General.)
- You can also go directly to the Undo History palette to correct mistakes (see Figure 1.14). By default, the Undo History palette records 20 states, or changes, to your image. You can increase this number in the Preferences window ("Setting Preferences," earlier in this chapter). States are added to the palette from the top down, with the most recent state at the bottom. The name of the tool or command you used is included. To undo a mistake, simply select a state above the one you want to redo, and the Undo History palette will revert your image to that state.

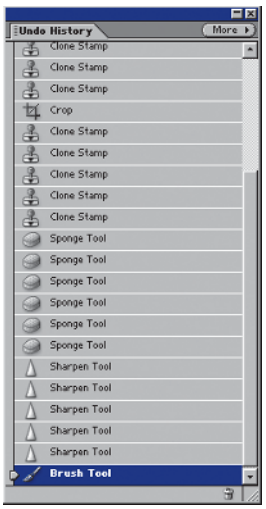

Figure 1.14: Almost every action you take is recorded in the Undo History palette as a state. By selecting a state, you undo all the states after it.

- You can also choose Edit ➤ Undo from the menu bar. Or you can use the keyboard command Ctrl+Alt+Z / ⌘+Option+Z. To redo, choose Edit ➤ Redo or use Crtl+Alt+Y / ⌘+Option+Y. When you use Undo you can only undo/redo the most recent action; you can't step sequentially back and forth like you can with the Step Backward/Step Forward command.

Note: It may seem as though Undo/Redo is a redundant option, since Step Backward and Step Forward are available. However, Undo/Redo exists because there are a few actions that don't show up in the Undo History Palette (and therefore can't be undone or redone with Step Backward/Step Forward). For example, if you are painting with the Brush tool and you change the size of your brush, this action is not recorded in the Undo History palette. To change your brush size back to its previous setting (before you use the Brush tool) you'll need to use the Undo command. Situations where only Undo/Redo will do are few and far between; for most tasks, the Step Backward/Step Forward commands give you the most flexibility.

- As a last recourse, you can always revert to the last saved version. To do this, choose File ➢ Revert. If you decide this isn't what you want, you can always undo Revert in the Undo History palette.

Note: Fixing a mistake is easy, but most people will find a way to mess up so badly that the methods just described won't help. I can't give you a good example, but trust me, it'll happen, and it will probably happen when you are working on a really important digital image. That's why throughout this book you'll see that I strongly advocate creating a copy of your digital image and working on that file. It won't matter as much if you mess up because you'll always have an original to go back to.

Where Do You Go for Help?

Within Photoshop Elements, there are several ways to get specific help on specific subjects without ever taking your eyes off the screen. Adobe has provided some of the best screen help I've ever encountered, and because Photoshop Elements is such a powerful program, with so many features, I encourage you to use the help whenever you have a question about a particular tool or feature.

- The Hints palette, located in the palette well and shown in Figure 1.15, automatically displays an illustration and description about any palette or tool your mouse pointer is on. If you click the More button located in the upper right of the Hints palette, you are taken to an even more comprehensive HTML-based system, complete with a searchable database. (The More button is available only when the palette is undocked from the palette well.)

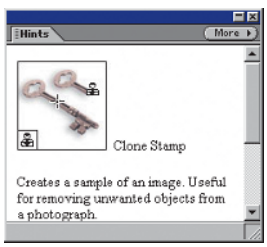

Figure 1.15: The Hints palette tells you about palettes and tools.

- On the Help menu, you'll find Help and Photoshop Elements Tutorials, both of which are HTML-based help systems that are very useful. Help is a hyperlinked version of the printed manual, with a powerful index and search engine so you can quickly get the answer to just about any Photoshop Elements question. The tutorials walk you step by step through various tasks using images that come on the program disc.
- If you position your mouse over a tool or palette and hold it there, a tiny pop-up box will appear telling you the name of the tool and what keyboard shortcut (if any) to use.
- The How To palette (called Recipes in version 1), located in the palette well, is full of useful step-by-step instructions including "recipes" that help you enhance text, correct color and brightness, design web graphics, and retouch photos. Adobe plans to make more How To recipes available online, so be sure to check their website, **www.adobe.com**, to download the latest recipes or just select Download New Adobe Recipes, which is the last option in the drop-down list at the top of the Recipe palette. Remember, the screen help is useful but it's no substitute for solutions-oriented books like this one!

Note: There are many useful keyboard shortcuts in addition to those mentioned in this book and the Adobe resource material. A good source for this information is a list compiled by Don Fukushima and found on Jay Arraich's site at **www.arraich.com/elements/keyboardshortcuts.htm.** The main part of Jay's site is also a good source for a whole range of other Photoshop Elements tips and techniques: **www.arraich.com/elements/psE_intro.htm.**