



## **Workflow**

### **What is it?**

The whole process of taking an image file out of the camera into the computer and “processing” it through to the finished photo you want, can often seem a daunting task where it’s easy to do things in the wrong order and/or miss out some important steps.

Most experienced workers tackle this by using a set routine with their preferred software, typically Adobe Lightroom or Photoshop. Over time, the routine becomes familiar and quick to work through. For those just learning about digital photography, having a regular routine achieves a clearer understanding of the steps required for each image and enables faster development of the necessary skills and experience.

Such a routine is called a **Workflow**. It is simply a **checklist**, setting out in as much detail as you find helpful, the various steps and actions needed to produce good quality final images. At the most detailed level the Workflow will be software specific and may identify each of the tools used, in Photoshop for example, for every step.

### **What does it look like?**

A basic Workflow is as follows:

1. **Load images from camera to computer, catalogue & back-up**
2. **Assess each image**
3. **Crop/straighten**
4. **Adjustments to whole image**
  - 4.1. **Lighting levels & contrast**
  - 4.2. **Colour balance & saturation**
5. **Adjustments to selected areas of image**
  - 5.1. **Adding light or toning down highlights**
6. **Remove spots etc - clone /healing brush**
7. **Re-size for output and then sharpen**
8. **Save finished image**
9. **Output (print, slideshow, email etc)**

## How do I assess an image?

Perhaps the most important step is Item 2, assessing each of your images to decide what processing, if any, needs to be done to them. Time spent on this step will pay big dividends .

It's here that you decide whether the image is good enough; what is it that you like and dislike about it; how it might be improved; would a different crop help? Is it what you intended to produce when you pressed the shutter? This is an ongoing learning process for us all, whether experienced or not, but spending time here will accelerate your learning about what makes a good photo.

In your assessment you should ask the following questions:

- What am I trying to say with this photo?
- Is the composition good?
- Is it sharp?
- Is it straight?
- Does it need cropping?
- Is it bright enough?
- Is the contrast OK?
- Is the colour OK?
- Are there parts of the image that need adjusting?

## Do I need to do everything on the Workflow list?

The simple answer is NO. The workflow list leads you through the various *possible* steps in a logical order. Depending on your assessment of the image, not all steps may be needed. The importance of the Workflow is that it requires you to check the position on each item in turn, making sure that nothing is forgotten.

For example, not every image out of the camera will need its lighting levels and contrast adjusting. But it's important that you confirm whether or not this *may* be required in *every* case. If a particular adjustment is not needed, simply move on to the next step in the workflow list.

For your "special" photos, those you want to print at a large size, or those you give to friends or enter in PPS competitions, you will want to do more work to produce the best possible image. It's here that the Workflow list is so helpful.

For other images out of camera, your initial assessment may decide they don't merit further work. That's fine - don't think every image needs lots of adjustment. In many cases the image out of the camera may be just fine for what you want.

It's likely however that **every** image out of your camera will benefit from some sharpening, especially if you intend to print it larger than (say) 7"x5". Do this last just before you print and **after** you have re-sized the image.

### **Where can I find out more?**

A search in Google for Digital Image Workflow will reveal lots of sources for more reading. Here at [www.shortcourses.com/workflow/](http://www.shortcourses.com/workflow/) there is a quite detailed description of various elements of the process. Here at [www.luminous-landscape.com/tutorials/workflow1.shtml](http://www.luminous-landscape.com/tutorials/workflow1.shtml) you can see just how a detailed Workflow will look.

### **What do I do next?**

You may already use a Workflow routine, perhaps even without realising it. You might want to check the detail of the routine you use against the list set out above and perhaps those discussed in the two weblinks above.

If you don't use a set routine, you might want to try out the basic Workflow list shown above. Use it for a few weeks and see if it helps you to develop an easy flow of processing work that you will quickly adopt almost without thinking. As you get more familiar with it, you may want to adapt it or add more detail so that it becomes your own Workflow, specific to your approach and the software you use.

In particular, spend time assessing each of your images. It sounds burdensome, but you will be surprised at how quickly it becomes second nature and how little time it takes.