

ORGANIZE YOUR PHOTOS

INTRODUCTION:

No matter what method you choose, considerable work is involved. No method will work without a plan that starts with uploading photos from your camera to the computer and assigning a meaningful, unique file number to every photo. Many cameras assign a file number like IMG12345. It does you no good to have IMG duplicated in every file, and a consecutive number isn't any help if you want to keep track of photos by date.

This lesson discusses two basic methods; (1) Database and (2) Photo Organization software. The database method requires entries in a database that can be used to search for your unique file numbers. The photo organization software method we will review requires the use of Keyword Tags. Other software may require different data.

DATABASE METHOD:

Any database software should work. I use Microsoft Works Database, but Microsoft Access is more complete. Knowledge of Windows Explorer is important unless you use a Mac computer. I use Windows 7.

When photos are transferred from the camera to the computer, tags can be added. I use a date tag that becomes the folder for the photos. It also replaces the file number assigned by the camera with the date and a sequential number which is useful for organizing your photos.

How to transfer photos to your computer when preparing photos for database organization:

1 - Insert your memory card in your computer or card reader. Autoplay should pop up.

2 – Select “Import pictures and videos using Windows.” The first time you do this you will need to click “Import Settings.” After that, the settings do not need to be changed. My settings are:

A – Import images to My Pictures

B - Folder name: Tag

C – File name: Tag

D – ✓ Prompt for a tag on import

E – **Do not** ✓ Always erase from device after importing. Note: It is better to verify that the transfer worked OK, make a backup, THEN erase the card using the camera's delete function.

F - ✓ Rotate pictures on import

G – ✓ Open Windows Explorer after import

3 – Tag the photos with the date. I use MMDDYY format and click Import.

4 – After importing, the date is now the folder number and is included in the file number of each photo.

Windows Explorer can be used to view, copy, move, and delete photos. You can add tags, create folders, and change file names. Photos should never be placed anywhere on your windows computer except in a folder in My Pictures. If your computer does not have an icon to start Windows Explorer it can be added by going to the Windows Start icon at the lower left > all programs > accessories, then right click on Windows Explorer > (1) Pin to Start Menu and/or (2) Send to > Desktop.

Start the database. My fields include MMDD, YY (Corresponds to folder location) photo number, photographer, state, region, place, description, and miscellaneous codes. If some of your photos are only stored off the computer on CD's, or a backup hard drive, be sure to include a field for CD number, etc.

Enter information for groups of images, filling in every appropriate field in the database.

To search for photos, click the filter icon  and enter your search criteria. The database will display search matches. Then locate your photos in the folder matching MMDD and YY and photo number. When done, show all database records by removing the filter. Click Record > Show > All Records.

PHOTO SOFTWARE METHOD:

There is a lot of software capable of keeping track of your photos by keyword or tag, such as Photoshop Elements, Lightroom, Ulead Photo Explorer, and ACDSee. The advantages are; no need for a separate database, you can immediately see all the photos in your search, and the search process is simple. The disadvantages are the software can "lose" the photos if you move them in Windows Explorer, and it doesn't do a good job of tracking photos stored off the computer (CD's). If a photo is "lost" Photoshop will search the computer until it finds it but this is time consuming. For practical purposes you must use your Organizer software whenever you move or work on photos. Folder and file number choices are limited by the software.

How to transfer photos to your computer when preparing them for Photoshop Elements Organizer (version 9.0):

1 - Insert your memory card in your computer or card reader. Autoplay should pop up.

2 – Select "Organize and Edit using Photoshop Elements 9.0." Elements Organizer – Photo Downloader pops up.

A - Select a subfolder format (note that most choices are by shot date, not current date, which creates a heck of a lot of folders.

B - Rename files, I choose Same As Subfolder Name + 0001. Photos will be numbered mmddyy_0001, etc. You can add a custom name here, like "wedding" or "Bear Lake".

C - Preserve Current Filename in XMP only if you want to use the original filename assigned by the camera in metadata. I see no reason to do this.

D - Open Organizer when finished, if you want to look at your photos in the Organizer.

E – Select After Copying, Do Not Delete Originals.

F – Do not Automatic Download unless you are sure you want to use the same setting every time.

G – The Advanced button has several options, including the ability to insert your name and a copyright notice in metadata. If you assigned a group custom name, it can be applied as a Tag.

3 – Click Get Media to transfer the photos to the computer.

4 – Photos are displayed as thumbnails in the Photoshop Organizer. Use the slider at the top to adjust the thumbnail size.

You can also add photos to the Organizer that are already on your computer, click File > Get Photos and Videos > From Files and Folders. Select the photos and click Open.

Click "Show All" whenever you want to see all your photos instead of a selected group.

The key to organizing photos in the Photoshop Elements Organizer is to use Keyword Tags, which can be words, a rating, or values assigned by analyzing the photo. Imported photos are automatically are tagged with the date and any custom name added in the Photo Downloader, but these are not the same as Keyword Tags. Keyword Tags can include:

A – Categories – People, places, events, and other are provided by the Organizer. You can add more.

B – Sub-categories – For example, category Trip, sub-category China.

To add a Keyword Tag, open the organizer (Organizer Bin tab in the upper right of the Editor), select photos, then click Tag selected Media in the lower right, type the Keyword Tag and click Apply. To convert the new tag to a sub-category, just drag its symbol to a category.

You can also add or delete Keyword Tags using the green + symbol and red – symbol.

You can rate your photos by clicking from one to five stars on the thumbnail.

The Organizer can also analyze photos and add some Keyword Tag information automatically, such as “long lens, high quality, and faces”.

To apply an existing Keyword Tag to photos, click the first photo, hold down the shift key, and click the last photo. Then drag the icon for the Keyword Tag to the selected photos.

There are several ways to search for photos:

1 – Drag the Keyword Tag icon(s) to the bar over the thumbnails.

2 – Click the box(es) next to the icons in the Keyword Tag panel.

3 – Type keywords in the search box.

4 – Click the number of stars to search for rated photos. You can combine this with the first three methods

To see what Keyword Tags are on a photo, simply hover your mouse over the tag icon on the thumbnail.

A COMMENT ON TAGS:

Digital cameras insert photo information in the metadata of every image. Metadata is a series of information fields hidden in all digital photo files. It can be accessed by Windows and most photo software. Tags similar to Keyword Tags can be entered in metadata using the Photoshop Elements Editor or Windows Explorer, but they are not used as Keyword Tags. Keyword Tags can be added to metadata by clicking File > Write Keyword Tags and Properties to Photos. If you switch to different organizer software, your Keyword Tags will probably not work without completing this step.