

PREPARING AN IMAGE FOR PUBLICATION

STEP 1: GET THE IMAGE INTO THE COMPUTER, DELETE AND BATCH RENAME

Scan the image at a resolution and size slightly higher than you think you're going to need. You can throw away information in Photoshop but can't just make up new information. Or download the images from a digital camera or Photo CD. If you are using Photoshop 7 or higher, use the File Browser or Bridge to select all of the images that you plan to keep. If there are images that are not of a quality suitable for publication, they can be deleted from Bridge. Select all of the images that you plan to keep and choose Batch Rename from the menu. Work with a standard naming convention for all publication images – my suggestion is Event_Date_Photographer's initials_Serial Number.Extension. Do not use any periods or /\ in the file name. You may need to abbreviate. Do not work with images directly off the media card or camera – download to the hard drive first. Rate the strongest images with a single star (Command + 1 on a Mac or Control + 1 on Windows.)

STEP 2: FILE INFO FOR CAPTIONS AND CREDITS

Under the File menu select File Info and enter your photo credit and caption information into the author and description fields. You can also enter this data in the metadata fields directly in Bridge.

STEP 3: LEVEL, ROTATE AND CROP

Use the ruler to level the photograph. This is done by drawing the ruler along a horizontal or vertical line that should be at 0 degrees or 90 degrees. Go to Image – Rotate Canvas/Image Rotation – Arbitrary and click OK. Rotate the canvas so you can see the image facing the right direction, if necessary. Then use the cropping tool to crop out unnecessary portions of the photo. Cropping should only be done to strengthen the composition of the photograph.

STEP 4: IMAGE SIZE

This is found under the Image menu. Uncheck the Resample Image box so that you link height, width and resolution. Then change the resolution to the PPI you need for your publication. The file size at the top of the window should stay the same or get smaller – never larger! Remember that PPI should be 1 1/2 to 2 times the LPI for your publication. For newspapers, this is usually 160 PPI. For yearbooks and magazines, the resolution should be 300 PPI.

STEP 5: CLEAN UP BRIGHTNESS, CONTRAST AND COLOR BALANCE USING LEVELS

Although you can do the same thing a little more precisely with Curves, adjusting levels is a little easier to understand. If the image is an RGB file, change to the Red channel and adjust the highlight arrow and the shadow arrow until they are at the end of the graph. Do the same to the Green channel and then the Blue channel. Then pay careful attention to the mid-tones. Even on the best photo, moving the midtones arrow (gray) to the left (towards the shadow) will improve the way the photo reproduces. Moving the midtones arrow to the left brings out more detail in the dark areas. Do not adjust the separate channels if the image has a very dominant color, for example a scene with a swimming pool or at sunset – adjust these images only in RGB, not in the separate channels.

STEP 6: DUST, SCRATCHES, DODGE AND BURN, RED EYE, SHADOWS/HIGHLIGHTS, ETC

Use the clone stamp, the healing brush and other tools to remove dust spots and scratches from the image. Most images from a digital camera will not require this step. You can copy

the red eye data from the blue channel and paste it into the red channel to remove most red eye. Photoshop 9 (CS2) and higher have a red eye tool built into the program. You can use Shadow/Highlight under Image - Adjustments to also help bring out more details in the shadows and highlights.

STEP 7: UNSHARP MASK/SMART SHARPEN

Unsharp Mask helps bring out the places where shades of gray intersect, improving the reproduction quality. However, the effects should be hardly noticeable on the screen. An amount of 50–70 percent, with a radius of 1 and a threshold of 0 levels works for the average photo from a digital camera. Use 70–90 percent for an image that was scanned from a negative or print. This step should be done after steps 1–6 have been completed. You can also use the Smart Sharpen tool instead.

STEP 8: COLOR MODE

Most yearbook companies are now asking schools to leave images in RGB format, but newspaper publishers still generally require color images to be in CMYK format. For Grayscale images, go back to the channels palette, select the channel that has the best tonal range and then trash the other two channels. Or you can choose “Desaturate” under the Image - Adjustments menu. Try both options to see which one looks best. Or in Photoshop 10 and higher, you can now use the Black and White option under Image - Adjustments. Whichever process you use, you will always go to Image - Mode and change the image to Grayscale. The Photoshop window must indicate that the photo is “Gray” and not “RGB”. Check Levels (Step 5) after converting to Grayscale.

FINAL PHOTO

The final photo, in Grayscale or CMYK mode for print or RGB mode for Web/screen display, should have a good contrast range - a good black, a good white and good shades of gray in between. The subject should fill the frame and should be sharp.

STEP 9: SAVE AS

The final photo should be saved in a format that's compatible with the software you're using for publication. For InDesign, PageMaker and QuarkXPress, that usually means TIFF. InDesign can also work with Photoshop files (PSD). If you are doing any type of cutout or COB, save the file with transparency as a PSD file and InDesign will be able to see this transparency. EPS files also work well but are larger. For photos that are going to be viewed on the Web, in PowerPoint or on CD, JPEG or PNG will work. PNG will maintain transparency if you have done a cutout. Only save the image once as a JPEG. Multiple saves as JPEGs can dramatically reduce the quality of the image.

These steps are based on an article written by Bradley Wilson for C:JET magazine, a JEA publication.