Quick Tips for Photography
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The Sharpen Tool

The Sharpen Tool is available in both Photoshop and Elements. It is one of the best ways to do selective sharpening because you can control the area sharpened very precisely. This tool is sized and used just like the regular Brush tools.

You will find the Sharpen Tool located in the tool groups on the panel left of the main workspace in Photoshop and Elements. Note that in Elements you will need to be in "Expert" mode (previously called Full edit). Each tool group has a small arrowhead in the lower right corner. The Sharpen Tool is located in a group with the Smudge and Blur tools. The Smudge Tool (icon like a drop of water) is often the default tool showing for the group. Right click [Mac - Option click] on the small arrowhead and the tool group selections will appear. The Sharpen Tool looks like an isosceles triangle. Click on it to make it the active tool. Once you select the Sharpen Tool you will see some controls appear at the top of the work space in Photoshop. The controls in Elements tend to move around with the different versions. Your controls for the tool may be at the bottom of the work space. Set the Blend Mode for Luminosity. This way you are sharpening only the lightness values and not touching your color. Set the strength at around 15%. You want to apply sharpening selectively and build it up by making a second or even third pass over an area rather than applying it full strength and then trying to dial it back.

I always work on a separate (composite) layer so that if I mess up, I can delete the layer and start over. For that reason I never check the Sample all Layers box.

The Protect Detail box was introduced with Photoshop CS5 and Elements 10 (I think). I know it is in Elements 12. If you have it, make sure it is checked. This will significantly reduce the possibility of creating rough edges (aka jaggies) when you sharpen an area more than once or twice. If you have an earlier version of either program that does not have the Protect Detail box, limit your application of sharpening to only a couple of passes on any one area.

sRGB for Your Camera - Quick Explanation and Hints

There are two places where sRGB can be set. The first is in your camera. It is generally one of the first settings in the menus. Your options are typically sRGB and AdobeRGB. At the GLPA photo course we recommend that you leave the camera set in sRGB until you are ready to do a lot of printing of your own images with a printer. If you capture your images using sRGB when you go into your photo editing software you won't see an option to convert to sRGB because you are already there.

The second situation is where you have your camera set to capture images in AdobeRGB. In this case you will need to convert images that you want to use for projection, display, or competition on computer monitors, TVs, etc. from AdobeRGB to sRGB. This will be the last step you do in the photo editing process (even after sizing and sharpening) before saving the image. If you are in AdobeRGB your photo editing software should show you the option for converting the image to sRGB.

Some additional special issues may arise with Lightroom. If anyone would like an explanation please drop me an e-mail at mrcloran@comcast.net

Elements Quick Tips - Composition Aid

Are you having problems visualizing the rule of thirds while you work on your latest digital masterpiece? While the classic Golden Mean may not be a hard and fast rule, pleasing composition very often helps an image get that little bit extra when the scores are handed out. For a quick visual reference point try this simple trick.
Go to Edit > Preferences > Grid. Where is says "Gridline" type in 33.33 and change the drop down box to "Percent". Next change the "Subdivisions" box to 1. Now click OK to accept the changes. If you want a little help on where the subject is placed while you are working on an image, go to View > Grid. This will turn the gridlines on and you will have an overlay that shows the rule of thirds complete with "crash point" intersections. When you are done with it, just go back to View > Grid once more to turn it off.