A 7-step Image Editing Process

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NOTE -Terminology found in this guide may vary from that which is used in the image editing software that you are utilizing.   Specific editing tools vary amongst image editing products.

Image Editors contain various adjustment tools. Most of us learn a few of them, and then do the best we can with our photos. It should be noted that **RAW** image editors usually have a greater impact on an image's outcome than **JPEG** image editors since **RAW** images have a greater amount of data to work with.

ADJUSTMENT TOOLS
There are several basic adjustments in image editors that will clean up ninety percent of your images.
These are the basic tools required to quickly get the majority of your pictures in shape;

Crop & Straighten	**White Balance**	**Exposure**	**Enhance**
Highlights/Shadows	**Colour**	**Sharpen**	

CROP & STRAIGHTEN (Tilt)
Cropping involves selecting the important part of an image to enhance its impact. Often, it is best to begin with the Crop & Straighten/Tilt adjustments.

You can improve most images by tightening up the composition through careful selection of the key components of the image, and cutting out or avoiding areas that detract from the impact you wish to create.

If the image appears to be out of alignment with the horizon, the image can be straightened with the **Sraighten/Tilt** tool.

WHITE BALANCE
White balance is the overall colour tone of a scene which strongly influences the mood of a photo.

Start by choosing the **Auto white balance** if available. Often, there are alternative **white balance** adjusters such as; **Temperature & Tint**,   **Natural Gray**, or **Skin Tone**. Find the look that comes closest to your tastes. You can then fine-tune the colour using the adjusters.

To cool things off or to warm up the scene, move the **Temperature** adjustment tool.

EXPOSURE
Exposure adjustments can help make an image more striking.

Try the **Auto Exposure** button, if one exists. It will give you a good starting point, and then you can fine-tune the image from there manually.

If an image (and any corresponding **histogram**), is a little flat; the overall **contrast** of the scene is reduced.

A **histogram** presents a graphical view of this effect - the tones are gathered in the middle of the graph and don't reach either side. (not all image editors offer a histogram tool)

To improve the **luminance** of an image there could be adjusters for:

Exposure (highlights - displayed on the right side of the histogram),

Black Point (dark tones - displayed on the left side of the histogram), and

Brightness (middle tones).

To increase or decrease both **Black Point** and **Exposure,** move those adjustment controls. As you do that, the **histogram** (if present) shows the data moving closer to the edges of the graph.

Once the **Exposure** and **Black Point** is set, use the **Brightness** control to adjust for taste, lessen the amount to darken the middle tones.

*** NOTE: You should <u>normally</u> adjust **Brightness** <u>after</u> **Exposure** and **Black Point** adjustments. ***

These adjustments add a little "punch" to the image. As a by-product, the highlights may seem to lose some detail. There may be a **Recovery** adjustment tool which may help regain some of that highlight detail.

HIGHLIGHTS & SHADOWS

You can recover detail by using the **Highlights** and **Shadows** adjustments.

The **Highlights** adjustment lets you recover detail in the bright areas of an image. To regain more information in the dark areas move the **Shadows** control. Experiment with the **Mid Contrast** slider here, since it does bump up the contrast in the middle tones.

COLOUR

You can experiment with the **Colour** controls to adjust a photo to make it look more (or less) realistic.

If available, there may be **Hue**, **Saturation** and **Luminance** sub-adjusters to fine tune the colour.

SHARPEN

Sharpen gives the photo a crisp, clear look. There is usually an overall image **Sharpen** tool in most editors. Some image editing software also offers a specific area sharpening option.

Add a <u>little</u> Sharpening for a more crisp look overall. Be aware that too heavy an application of the sharpening tool can degrade your image.

OTHER ENHANCEMENTS (various adjustments which may be available in your software)

Enhancements help you put the finishing touches on your image. To enhance an image, move the **Definition** slider about halfway to increase detail and contrast in the mid-tones. **Red-eye** and **Spot Repair** options may also be available for fixing problem areas.

Final thoughts

Your image's **final output** (print, screen, web, tablet etc) may or may not closely resemble the edited product on your computer.'s screen. Be prepared for surprises and the need to make further adjustments.

Software Solver - *Popular Photography* Magazine

In the October, 2013 issue of *Popular Photography* magazine, Debbie Grossman lists some favourite, image-editing programs with a quick blurb about each.

Apple iPhoto - Mac only - free

Google Picasa - Mac/Windows - free

Windows Photo Gallery - Windows only - free

Adobe Photoshop Elements 11 - Mac/Windows - $$

Corel PaintShop Pro X6 - Windows only - $$

Adobe Photoshop CC - Mac/Windows - $$

The GIMP - Mac/Windows/Linux - free

DxO Optic Pro 8 - Mac/Windows - $$$

Corel AfterShot Pro - Mac/Windows/Linux - $

Apple Aperture 3 - Mac only - $$

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 5 - Mac/Windows - $$

DarkTable - Mac/Windows/Linux - free

Phase One Capture One Pro 7- Mac/Windows - $$$

Most of these software packages are downloadable from the makers' websites and most of them offer a free downloadable trial version.

There are MANY other choices of image editing software packages available.