

# Basics of Photo Editing

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A picture is worth a thousand words. And with the range of editing software and technology available on the market today, you might say photos have upped their worth a thousand fold. A nicely edited photo could be worth a million words (or a million dollars, in some cases)!

Half the battle when it comes to good photography lies in the editing. Blips, wrinkles, shadows, blurs and even colours can all be altered so realistically that an objective viewer would be none the wiser. Bad photography can be transformed, and bad photos can be salvaged. Magic can be made with a few clicks of the mouse or swipes of the tablet.

Fortunately, you don't have to have thousands of dollars' worth of high-tech editing software and gadgetry to boost your photo quality. All you need is a basic editing program and knowledge of the elements of basic editing. ([GIMPshop](#) and [iPhoto](#) are good free alternatives to Photoshop.)

Here are four basic editing elements you need to make a photo look good.

### **Cropping**

The cropping tool allows you to adjust the framing of your photo to alter its composition. Want to get rid of that pesky photo-bomber or that unsightly building in the corner of your shot? Cropping will eliminate those nuisances in the far regions of the original photo. You can crop to any height and width you desire, giving you the ability to change a photo from a horizontal aspect to a vertical, and vice versa.

### **Colour Correction (or Balance)**

There are many options for colour correction in advanced editing software, but the simplest function is to uniformly balance the histogram. A histogram is a fancy word for the spectrum of colours that compose your photo, and it is unique to each photo. Your editing software will read the histogram, and the level adjustment function allows you to stretch or compress the histogram to brighten, darken or saturate the colours.

### **White Balance**

This function is a kind of colour correction that specifically targets whites. You know a photo is not properly white balanced when it appears too “blue” or too “yellow.” Simply adjusting the white balance (many editing programs have an automatic adjustment function that takes care of it with one click!) will do wonders. Try it and you'll see what a huge difference it makes to the tone of your photo.

### **Sharpening**

This function can bring out subtle detail in your photos, and can make out-of-focus elements seem more focused. While sharpening can do wonders for some photos, for others, the sharpening effect can introduce unwanted distortion or graininess. Some blurry photos just aren't salvageable with digital image sharpening, but for those that are, use this tool sparingly. Just the minimum sharpening is recommended for maximum effect.

Any tricks and tools beyond this aren't often necessary for basic photography. Tools to blend, stamp and selectively adjust specific parts of your photos will require you to dip your toes into more advanced photo editing.