

Digital Photography Workflow

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Workflow?

- A digital photography workflow is an end-to-end system of working with digital images, from capture to delivery.
- It is comprised of a series of inter-connected steps developed by photographers to simplify and standardize their work.
- Simplification and standardization are the two key words here, because a well-established workflow process will not only help you in simplifying and speeding up the process of working with images, but will also allow you to stay organized, improving your efficiency and bringing consistency to your work.

Steps?

1. Schedule Meeting – ASAP after inquiry
2. Receive contract & deposit – ASAP after booking
3. Schedule engagement shoot – After booking and before the wedding
4. Shoot engagement shoot – Appointment Date
5. Cull engagement shoot – 1-3 days after shoot
6. Edit engagement shoot – 1-3 days after shoot
7. Deliver engagement shoot – 7 days after shoot
8. Blog engagement shoot – 14 days after shoot
9. Send client questionnaire for the wedding – 8 weeks before wedding
10. Send pre-wedding gift – 8 weeks before wedding
11. Invoice Balance – 4 weeks before wedding
12. 1 Week Confirm – 1 week before wedding
13. Shoot wedding – on wedding date
14. Send thank you note – 1 day after wedding
15. Cull wedding – 1-3 days after wedding
16. Edit wedding – 1-7 days after wedding
17. Deliver wedding images – 14 days after wedding
18. Layout of album – 4 days after delivering images
19. Send layout to client – 4 days after delivering images
20. Approval received – 14 days after delivering layout
21. Order album – 2 days after receiving approval
22. Invoice Balance (if any outstanding) – 0 days after receiving approval
23. Send album – 14 days after ordering album
24. Thank you – ask for referral / testimonial – 1 day after sending album
25. Publish – get wedding published on a wedding blog – within 6 months after the wedding
26. Vendors – Send photos to vendors – within 6 months after the wedding

Steps?

1. Capture images.
2. Transfer and save images.
3. Edit your images.
4. Convert from RAW.
If you shoot RAW files, perform as much color and contrast control as possible in the RAW editor.
5. Rotate and crop.
6. Resize up.
7. Correct color and contrast.
8. Repair
9. Enhance.
10. Save working file.
11. Sharpen.
12. Save Archival File.
13. File Output.

Steps?

1. Set up Camera & Capture Images.
2. Backing up your image files on to at least one other storage medium (e.g. DVD or a “cloud” service).
3. Creating folders and Renaming files (to prevent duplicate file names).
4. Adding keyword “tags” (which are paramount in helping you find things at a later date).
5. Adding and analyzing metadata (also helps in finding things and recording info).
6. Ranking your images (to identify which are the best or need to be deleted altogether).
7. Creating a catalog for your images (one of the key functions of Lightroom).
8. Cropping your compositions (when needed).
9. Correcting exposure, contrast and white balance (your digital darkroom operations).
10. Add sharpening and noise reduction (if needed).
11. Create black-and-white and toned conversions (while maintaining a color version).
12. Sharing your work through prints, web pages and slide shows.
13. Effectively archiving your images in order to free up space on your main hard drive.

Steps?

The number of steps involved in the workflow process varies, but the basics consists of the following:

1. Setting up the camera and capturing images
2. Transferring images to a computer
3. Importing images into a photo application
4. Organizing and sorting images
5. Post-processing images
6. Exporting images
7. Backing up images
8. Printing or publishing images to the web

1. Setting Up the Camera and Capturing Images



1. Setting Up the Camera and Capturing Images

The workflow process starts with your camera, so your camera settings and how you take pictures will definitely impact your workflow process.

If you take pictures in RAW format, your workflow process will be a little more complicated than if you were to shoot in JPEG. Why?

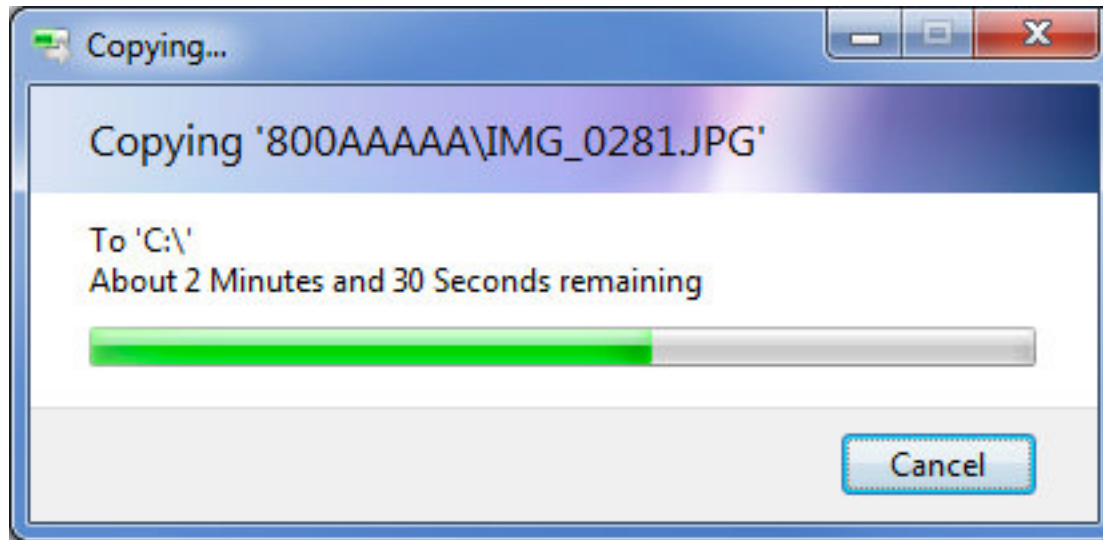
Because RAW images require you to process them before they become usable for print or publishing. RAW files also take up a lot of space, which will certainly slow down your import, export and backup processes.

If you shoot in JPEG format, you need to decide what color profile to use, what compression and image size to use, what white balance settings to use and more.

Both have their advantages and disadvantages (see JPEG vs RAW article <https://photographylife.com/raw-vs-jpeg>), but you will have to decide what works best for you.

In addition, if you decide to shoot HDR or panoramas, you will have to shoot in brackets/sequences, which will add another step in your workflow process to process HDR images or stitch panoramas. Therefore, you should decide in advance what settings you want to use in your camera and how you want to capture images.

2. Transferring Images to a Computer



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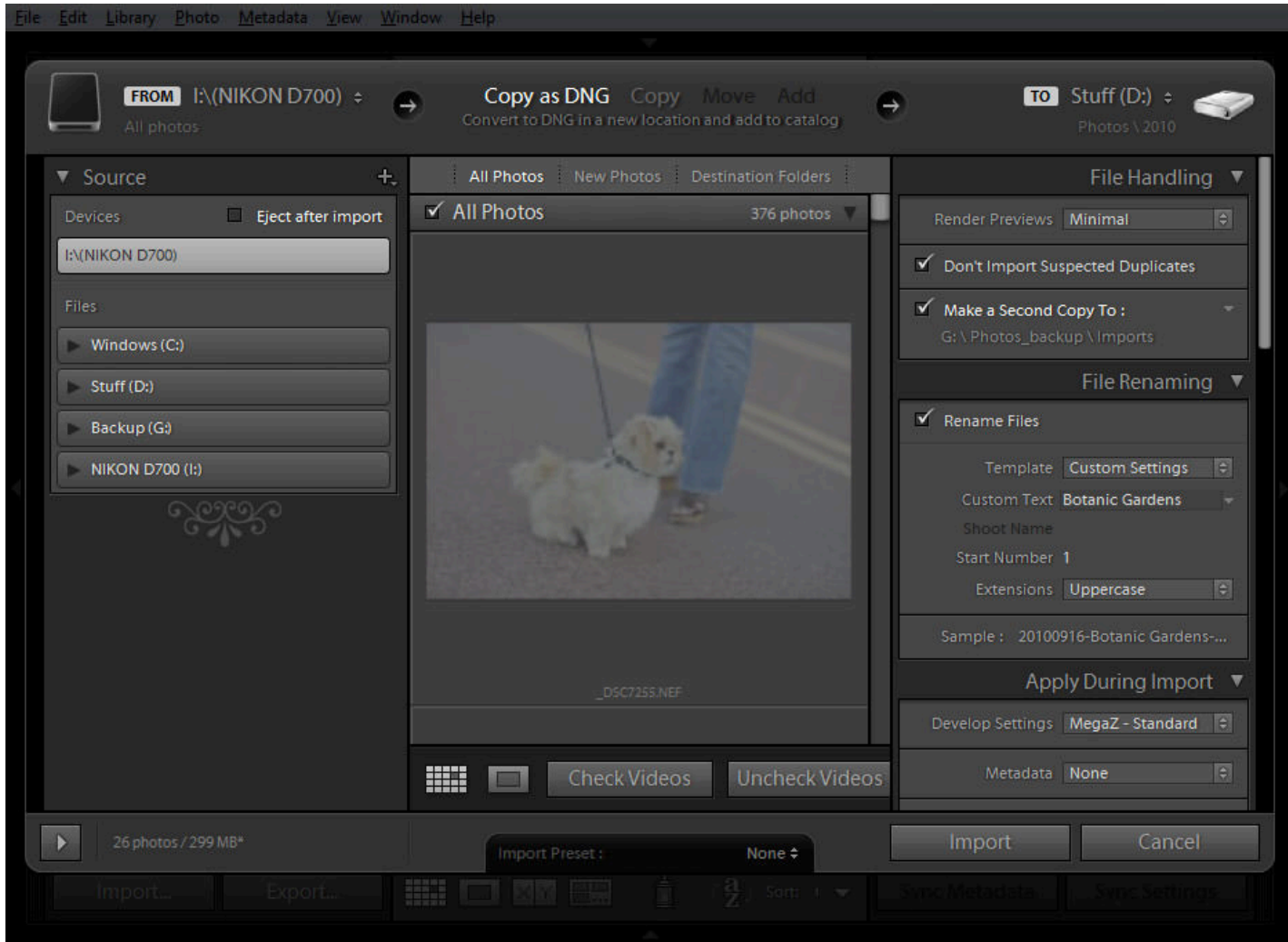
There are many ways to transfer images to your computer.

The first part is physically connecting your SD/CompactFlash card to your computer, which you can do with a card reader or by connecting your camera with a USB cable.

The second part is the actual process of copying files from your card/camera to your computer.

This is where you have many different options to do this. You could use your operating system to copy the files to a particular folder on your machine, or you could use software like Adobe Bridge, Lightroom or Aperture to handle this process.

3. Importing Images Into an Application

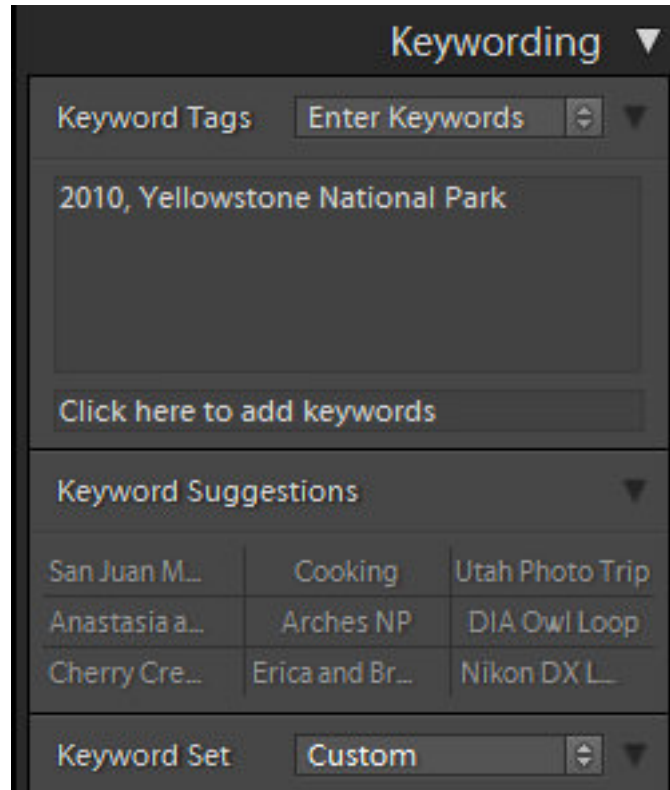


3. Importing Images into an Application

This step depends on how you handle the process of transferring images to your computer, because some software will do both in one step. For example, if you use Adobe Photoshop Lightroom or Apple Aperture, these programs will both copy images to your computer and import them into a photo catalog at the same time, saving you a step.

The nice thing about using such software, is that you can customize/ fine-tune the import process and tag images with certain keywords / metadata and even push some image-processing presets to each image upon import, which will save you even more time in your workflow. How to import images in Lightroom: <https://photographylife.com/how-to-import-photographs-in-lightroom>

4. Organizing and Sorting Images



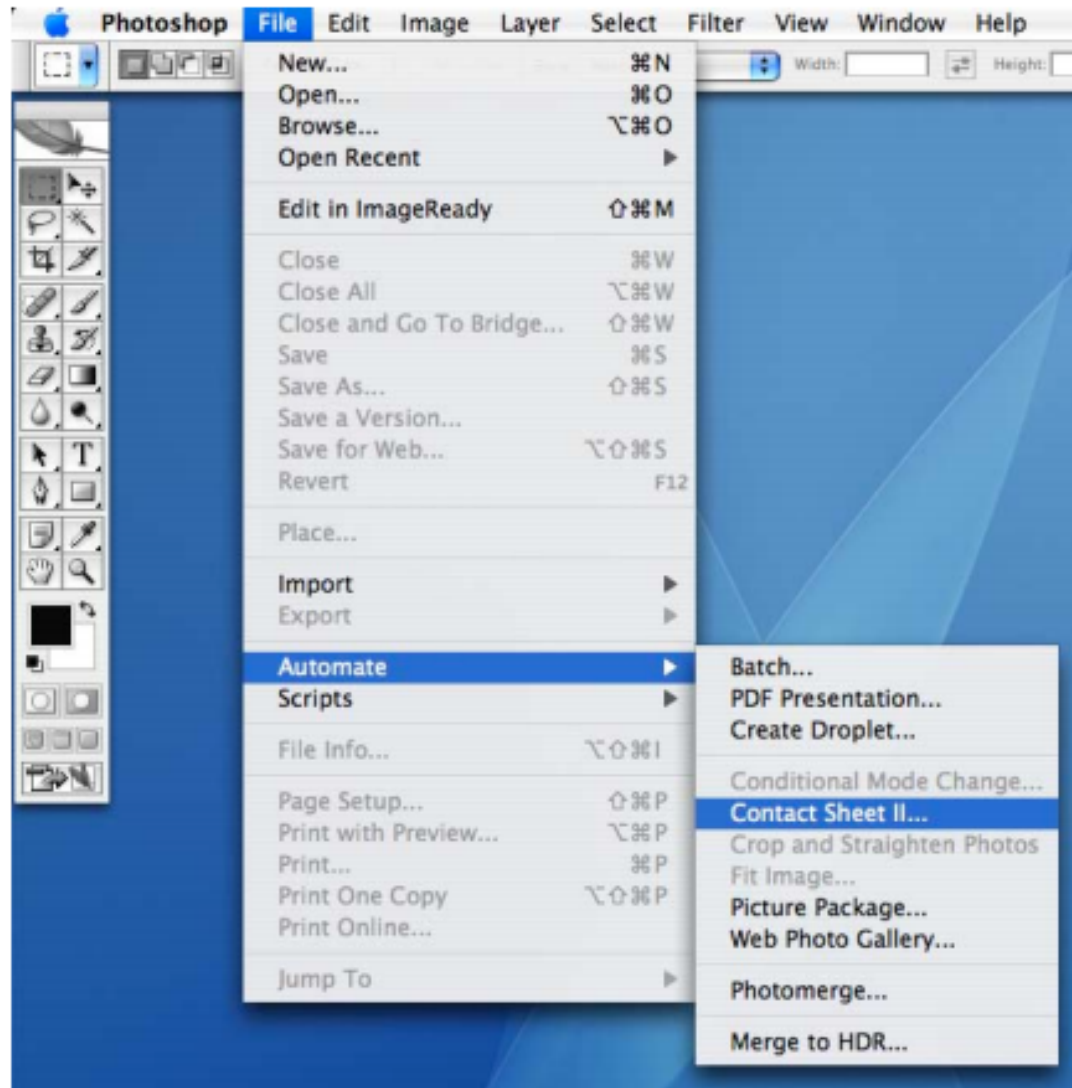
4. Organizing and Sorting Images

Once your images are on your computer, you need to decide how you want to organize and sort them, so that they don't end up scattered all over your hard drive. How to organize your photos: <https://photographylife.com/how-to-organize-pictures>

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom or Aperture, offer many options to keep your photographs organized.

You can do everything from adding keywords to such things as ranking your favorite images with stars, labeling images with colors, creating custom image groups and much more. The nice thing about using Lightroom and Aperture, is that all image information is stored in a database, which makes the process of locating specific images very easy. How to organize photos in Lightroom: <https://photographylife.com/how-to-organize-photos-in-lightroom>

5. Creating a Contact Sheet



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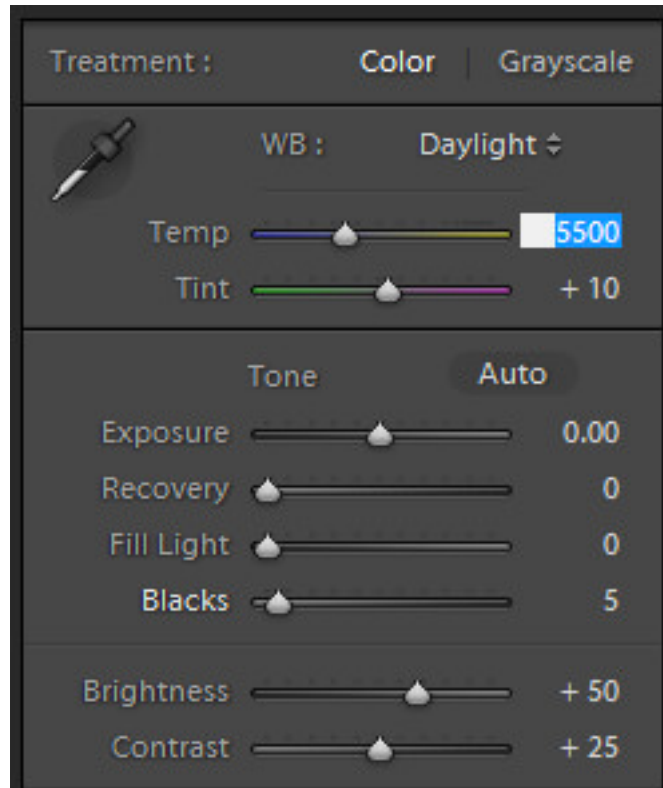
In traditional darkroom photography a contact sheet was created by placing the strips of developed negative film directly in “contact” with the “sheet” of light sensitive photographic paper. This would then be exposed to light and developed. It was a quick method of being able to see ones photos in the positive. The photographer could then decide which images to invest more time on to enlarge and develop.

In the digital darkroom, we no longer need to make a positive from a negative, but it is helpful to see all of ones images side by side to make decisions about which ones to keep and work on and which images can be discarded.

It is also a good way to see if there is some overall problem occurring with your photos. For instance a color tint problem will become obvious if all your images have a blue tint or yellow tint.

Since we are working from positive images you could remove any obvious failures before creating the contact sheet. This will allow you to make larger images on the contact sheet.

6. Post-Processing



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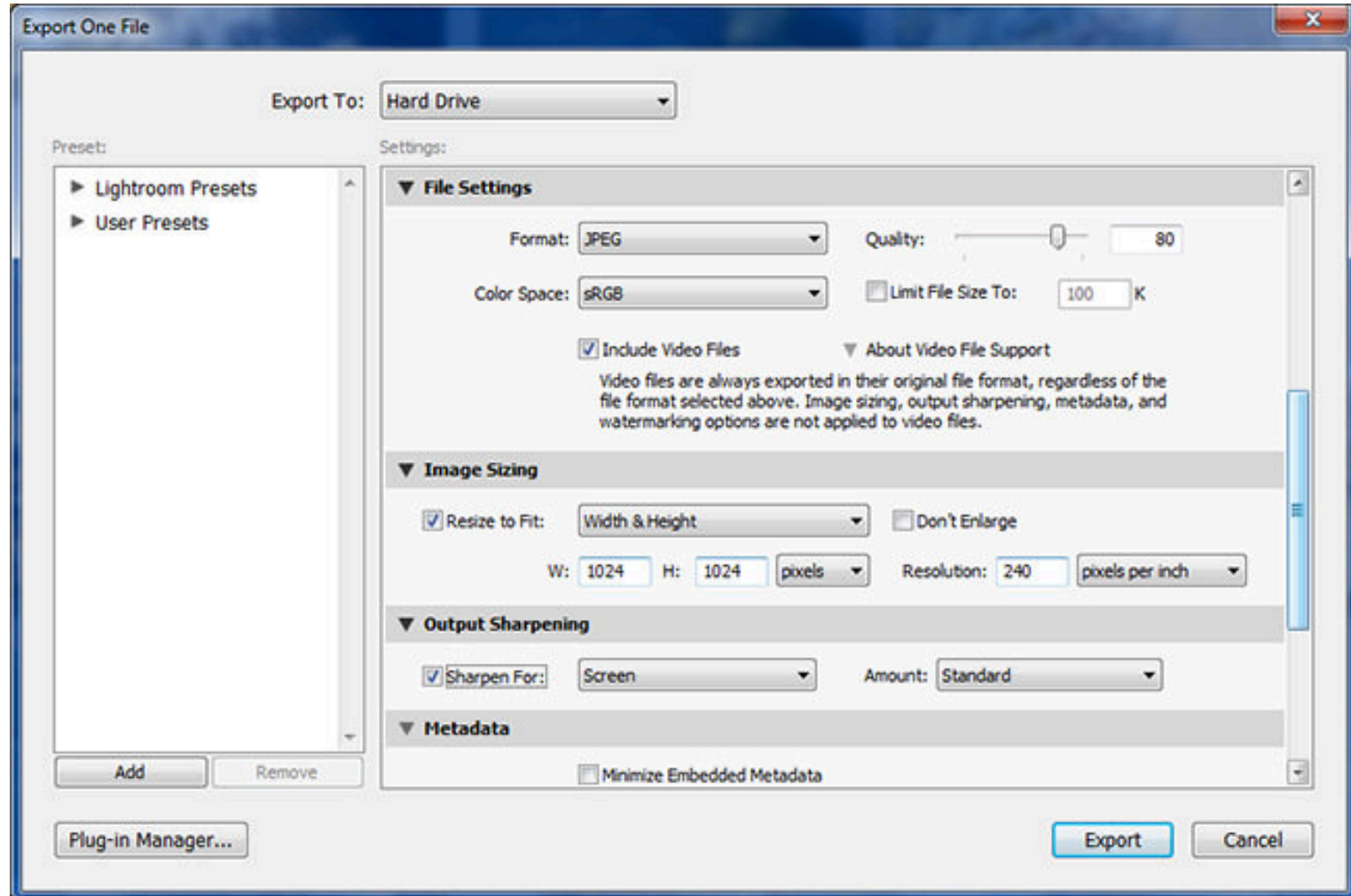
This step can be a quick one second change to fix an exposure problem or an extensive process that might take hours to perfect.

Usually done in Lightroom type application or Photoshop

The workflow depends on whether an image needs further work in Photoshop or not.

Post-processing articles and techniques: <https://photographylife.com/post-processing-tips-for-beginners>

7. Exporting Images



7. Exporting Images

The next step is to export those images for print or web publishing. Again, there are many variables to consider here. If you are printing an image, you have to find out which image formats the printing company can work with. They might ask for TIFF files with Adobe-RGB color space, or they might only accept JPEG files in sRGB color space. Another important factor is image size and how big you want to print.

If you are exporting your images for the web, like publishing your photographs on your blog, Flickr, Smugmug, etc., you have to decide what image dimensions to use during the export process and pick sRGB as the color space. Another consideration is to remove EXIF data from your images, if you do not want others to see what settings you used when you took those pictures. <https://photographylife.com/how-to-delete-exif-data>

8. Backing Up Your Images



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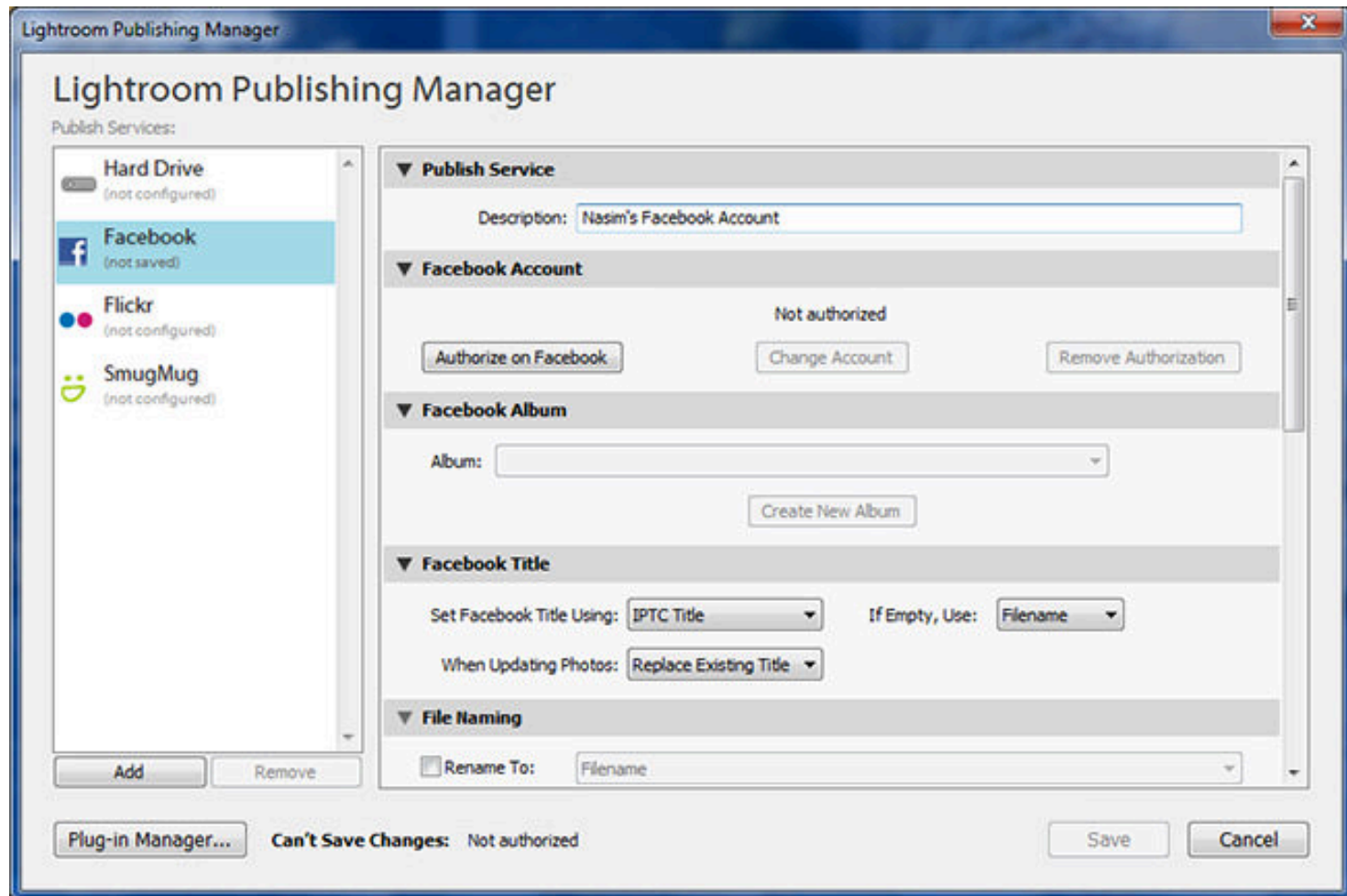
If you have not been backing up your images, you should definitely come up with a backup plan as soon as possible.

How good is your workflow if your hard drive crashes and you lose all of your precious photographs?

“I used to back up my images to a single external drive once a week before, but after losing some very important images when my hard drive crashed in the middle of the week, I now have a redundant setup with two mirrored hard drives and I back up to a different external storage device after every photo shoot. On top of this, once every month I take my external drive to an off-site location and duplicate its contents to another drive. This might sound like an overkill, but I know that my photos are safe and I won't lose them”.

Don't forget to back up your Lightroom/Apeture catalog as well. Remember, backing up just your photographs or just your catalog is not enough – you need to back up both.”

9. Printing or Publishing for the Web



9. Printing or Publishing for the Web

For printing, take your exported images and upload them to the printing company's website (if they allow you to do that) or copy/burn the files to a thumb drive/CD. If you have a printer and you want to print images yourself, you might not need to export images from Lightroom/Aperture or whatever software package you are using – most of them support printing right out of the application and give you all the tools you need for printing.

As for web publishing, again, if you use Lightroom or Aperture, they either already come with a built-in functionality to publish directly to Flickr, Smugmug, Facebook and other popular websites, or you can install plugins that will allow you to do that. If you have a website or a blog that you want to publish your photos to, you will need to use the exported images from step 1.7.

Sources & References

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Remove EXIF data from your images: <https://photographylife.com/how-to-delete-exif-data>