

# Hands On— Photography



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## HANDS ON PHOTOGRAPHY: PHOTO STORAGE AND ORGANIZATION — PART II

In the Summer 2011 issue, I talked about the importance of photo storage. Perhaps equally important is the organization of your digital files. By managing your digital files, not only do you make it easier to find specific photos to print, scrap, and share, but you also ensure that future generations will be able to identify their ancestors and that they are able to search through and enjoy photos easily.

In today's digital age, you may find that you are taking more photos than ever before. Because there is little cost difference in snapping 10 photos or 100 photos, we tend to click away, resulting in an overwhelming number of photos to sort through and organize, before we are able to print those that we wish to save.

Here are a few tips for easy photo organization:

### Delete, Delete, DELETE!

The advantage to taking so many photos is that you improve your chances of capturing that perfect shot. The disadvantage is that you end up

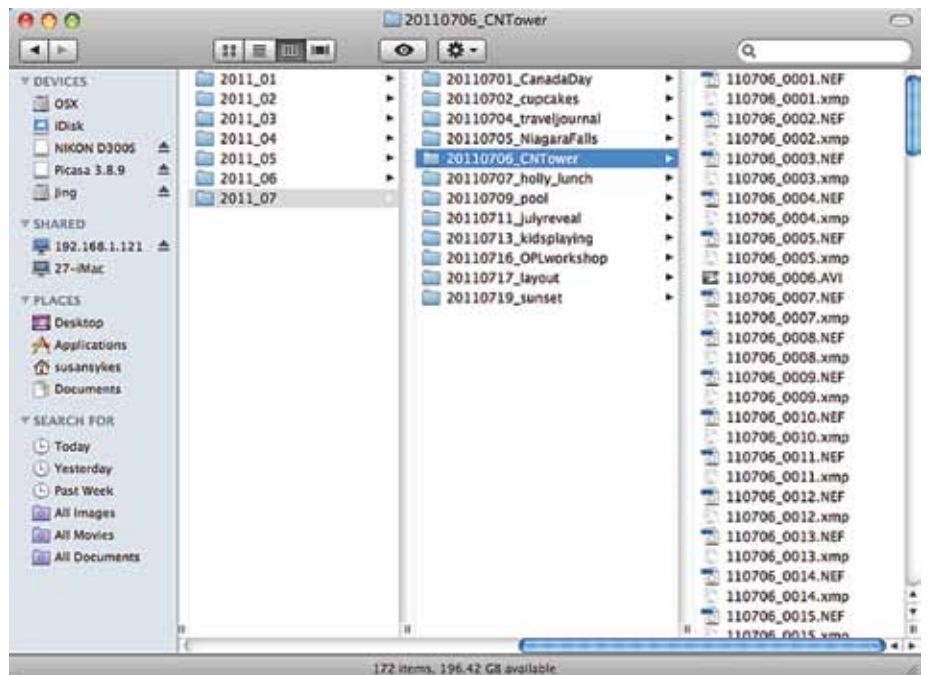


Figure 1

with duplicate photos or many under- or over-exposed photos while you are playing with your camera settings. I try to delete these immediately from my card while shooting. Not only does it save space on my memory card, but it also saves time when uploading photos. You may feel uneasy about deleting photos right away: after all, it's not like film where if you get rid of a photograph, you can always have it

reprinted. However, it's a good idea to cull your photos to remove any unwanted ones. This frees up more space on your hard drive, while making the organizing process that much easier. The only reasons for keeping a blurry or under-/over-exposed photo is if it is the only photo that you have of this subject or if it "tells a story." Sometimes, a bad photo is better than none at all.



Figure 2

## Use the Right Tools

There are many software programs to help organize your photos. Several of the popular photo-editing software programs also have photo organization capabilities (see sidebar). All of these programs give you the option to tag or label your photos with keywords, so you can filter through them when searching for specific photos. The more keywords you use to tag a photo, the easier it will be to find it later!

To make it even easier, some of the newer versions of these programs include facial recognition technology to tag subjects in your photos. The more you tag the same person, the better the computer becomes at identifying that person, which means less tagging for you in future.

Prices vary among these programs, so be sure to research which one will meet your needs. Many offer a free trial version to download, which will allow you to test drive them before purchase.

## Invest Your Time (Figure 1)

Some people choose to upload their images from their memory cards to their computer or external hard drive after every session; others wait and upload when their card is full. Whichever method you choose, the important thing is to invest time in the sorting process. It will save you time in the long run.

There are different methodologies you can use to sort your photos. You can sort chronologically by date, by event, by subject, or a combination of all

three. Determining how you will search for photos later will help you decide on a method of sorting.

For example, I sort my photos using a method that allows me to see at a glance the dates and events or subjects of my photos:

- I have a folder on our external drive called Photos.
- Within that folder, I create a new folder for each year.
- Each year is then further sorted into months.
- When I upload photos, I go to the current month's folder and create a new folder for each day, named with the date and event or subject (i.e. 20110906\_1stDaySchool).

Others may choose to sort their photo by subject matter. For example, all vacation photos would be sorted in a folder, titled Vacations. Within that folder, there may be additional folders for each year or location, depending on the user's needs.

## Tag, You're It! (Figure 2)

Once you have determined a sorting method and your photos have been uploaded, it's best to immediately tag them with your keywords. If you don't, you run the risk of facing the daunting task of tagging hundreds, or even thousands, of photos later. Take a few minutes when uploading and save yourself the headache later!

Most programs make tagging simple and easy to do. In the Adobe programs, it's just a matter of clicking

## Software Tools

**Picasa**  
[www.picasa.google.com](http://www.picasa.google.com)

**iPhoto**  
[www.apple.com/ilife/iphoto/](http://www.apple.com/ilife/iphoto/)  
(bundled with iLife)

**Adobe Bridge**  
[www.adobe.com/products/bridge.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/bridge.html) (bundled with Photoshop)

**Adobe Photoshop Elements**  
[www.adobe.com/products/photoshopel/](http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshopel/) (free trial available)

**Adobe Photoshop Lightroom**  
[www.adobe.com/products/photoshoplightroom/](http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshoplightroom/)  
(free trial available)

**ACDSee**  
[www.acdsee.com/](http://www.acdsee.com/)

on a photo or group of photos and clicking on a tag that you created. For instance, after our summer vacation trip to Niagara Falls with our friends the Lepage, I uploaded my photos to the appropriate folders, using Adobe Bridge. I then created tags called "Niagara Falls," "Summer Vacation," "Family," "Connor," "Aili," "Travel," and "Friends." After highlighting all of the images in the folder, I clicked on the following tags: Niagara Falls, Summer Vacation, and Travel. I then highlighted all of the images that included the Lepage family and clicked on "Friends." Similarly, I added additional tags to photos of my children. It took just a few minutes, but will save me time when I'm searching for a photo of the kids with the Lepage family on our trip to Niagara Falls, by using filters to sort my photos.

While the task can seem insurmountable at the beginning—especially if you have years of photos to tag—remember to start with baby steps! Get in the habit of sorting and tagging photos as soon as you upload, and then set aside small blocks of time each week to tackle the rest of your photos. By working in 30-minute blocks, you will whittle away at your collection, while managing your time effectively. Regardless of your organization method, the important thing is to just do it! Happy sorting!