

- » Examining the Editor workspace
- » Working with panels

Chapter **1**

Exploring the Photo Editor

Photoshop Elements has two workspaces: the Organizer, which we discuss in Chapter 2, and the Photo Editor, introduced in this chapter. You manage and arrange your photos in the Organizer, and you edit photos in the Photo Editor.

In this chapter, you look at the Photo Editor, where you can refine your photo-editing skills. You discover the Photo Editor's workspace in depth as well as how to access the Photo Editor's three editing modes: Quick, Guided, and Advanced. You access these three workspaces by clicking the tabs above the image window.

Examining the Photo Editor

Before you begin editing photos, you'll find it helpful to look over the Photo Editor and figure out how to move around the workspace. When the Photo Editor is in Advanced mode, you find the following (as labeled in Figure 1-1):

- (A) Menu bar:** As does just about every other program you launch, Elements supports drop-down lists. The menus are logically constructed and identified to provide commands for working with your pictures (including many

commands that you don't find supported in tools and on panels). A quick glimpse at the menu names gives you a hint of what might be contained in a given menu list. Throughout this book, we point you to the menu bar whenever it's helpful. Most of the menu commands you find in Elements 2025 are the same as those found in earlier versions of Elements.

(B) Create button: When you click the Create button to open the Create panel and choose an option, you leave the current editing mode. For example, when in Advanced mode, choose Create ➤ Photo Collage, and all the options that were available in the Photo Editor temporarily disappear when the Creation Wizard opens. To return to the Photo Editor, complete the creation or cancel the wizard. Chapter 15 guides you through the options in the Create panel.

(C) Photo Editor modes: The Photo Editor has three modes. The Advanced mode is shown in Figure 1-1. You find a detailed look at Quick mode in Chapter 8. Parts 2 and 3 of the book cover all the different features of Advanced mode, including making selections, creating composites from several images, drawing, adding text, and exploring creative flourishes with filters and effects.

(D) Features buttons: On Windows, you find three buttons in the top-right corner. These buttons are used to (1) minimize the window; (2) maximize/minimize the window; and (3) close the application. On Apple Macintosh, the same three buttons appear, but they are placed in the top-left corner of the window.

(E) Share menu: The Share menu works similarly to the Create menu and offers options for sharing your images. Chapter 14 focuses on the Share menu.

(F) Panel Bin: Figure 1-1 shows the Layers panel. You change panels by clicking the icons at the bottom of the Panel Bin. (The icons are described in item S, Panels.) *Creations* (things you make) are also contained in the Panel Bin when you click the Create button (item B).

(G) Open menu: When you have several files open in the Photo Editor, the Open menu is one way to switch among these files. To use this menu, click the down-pointing arrow adjacent to the Open button and, from the drop-down list, choose the image you want to move to the foreground. **Note:** The Open menu also offers you an option to create a new, blank file.

In Figure 1-1, several files are open, as indicated by the tabs at the top of the image window. You can also place an open file in the foreground in the image window in these other ways:

- Click a tab at the top of the image window to move the image to the foreground.
- Click a photo in the Photo Bin (see item K).
- Open the Window menu and choose a photo listed at the bottom of the menu.

- (H) File tabs:** Multiple photos opened in the Photo Editor appear in different tabs at the top of the window by default.

In technical-speak, this is a *docked* position, meaning that the photos are docked in the image window. You can click a tab and drag it down to *undock* the photo. To undock photos, you must change a preference setting in the General Preferences by checking Allow Floating Windows in Advanced mode. (See the Photoshop Elements Help file to learn more about Preferences.) Doing so makes the photo appear as a *floating window*. You might want to float windows when copying and pasting image data between two or more photos. You can also view all open files in a floating window without choosing All Floating from the Layout pop-up menu (item N). To use this menu command, you must first enable the Preferences to allow floating windows.

- (I) Tools panel:** Here you find the Photo Editor toolbox, where you click a tool and apply an edit to the photo. See “Selecting the tools” and “Selecting from the Tool Options,” later in this chapter.

- (J) Document Information Pop-up Menu:** Click to open a pop-up menu displaying document information.

- (K) Photo Bin/Tool Options:** Figure 1-1 shows the Photo Bin open. Click the Tool Options button, and a set of Tool Options replaces the Photo Bin. You can also open the Tool Options by clicking a tool in the Tools panel.

Tool Options enable you to specify how the selected tool works. For example, the Tool Options for the Brush tool, as shown in Figure 1-2, enable you to select from a few different brush styles, set the size of your brush, and much more. (You discover how the specific tools work in the relevant chapters later in this book. For example, you find out how the Brush tool works in Chapter 12, which covers drawing, painting, and typing.)

Each tool in the Tools panel supports various tool options. To return to the Photo Bin, click the Photo Bin button at the bottom left of the window.

- (L) Undo/Redo:** These commands are so useful that they have an extra-prominent place in the Photo Editor interface. You can also press Ctrl+Z (⌘+Z on the Mac) for Undo and Ctrl+Y (⌘+Y on the Mac) for Redo.

- (M) Rotate:** Click the Rotate Left tool to rotate counterclockwise 90 degrees. Click the down-pointing arrow on the Rotate tool and choose the Rotate Right tool to rotate a photo 90 degrees clockwise.

- (N) Layout:** When you have multiple photos open in the Photo Editor, the Layout pop-up menu enables you to choose how the photos display in the image window (such as rows, columns, as a grid, and so on). To return to the tabbed view, choose Default from the Layout pop-up menu.

- (O) Organizer:** Click the Organizer button to open the Organizer, which we cover in detail in Chapter 2. Elements makes it very easy for you to toggle back and forth between the Organizer and the Photo Editor by clicking their respective buttons at the bottom of the windows.
- (P) Home Screen:** Opens the Elements Home Screen window.
- (Q) Media Window:** This window shows the active document.
- (R) Panels:** Click the icons to open the panels that include Layers, Effects, Filters, Styles, Graphics, and a category named More, which opens the More panel.
- (S) More panel:** To open additional panels, click the three dots to open a pop-up menu of choices. The panels you open from the Panel Options menu appear as floating windows and can't be docked in the Panel Bin.

The description of the Photo Editor workspace is brief in this chapter. We discuss most of the options you have for using tools, panels, and menu commands in later chapters. For now, try to get a feel for what the Photo Editor provides and how to move among many of the Photo Editor features.

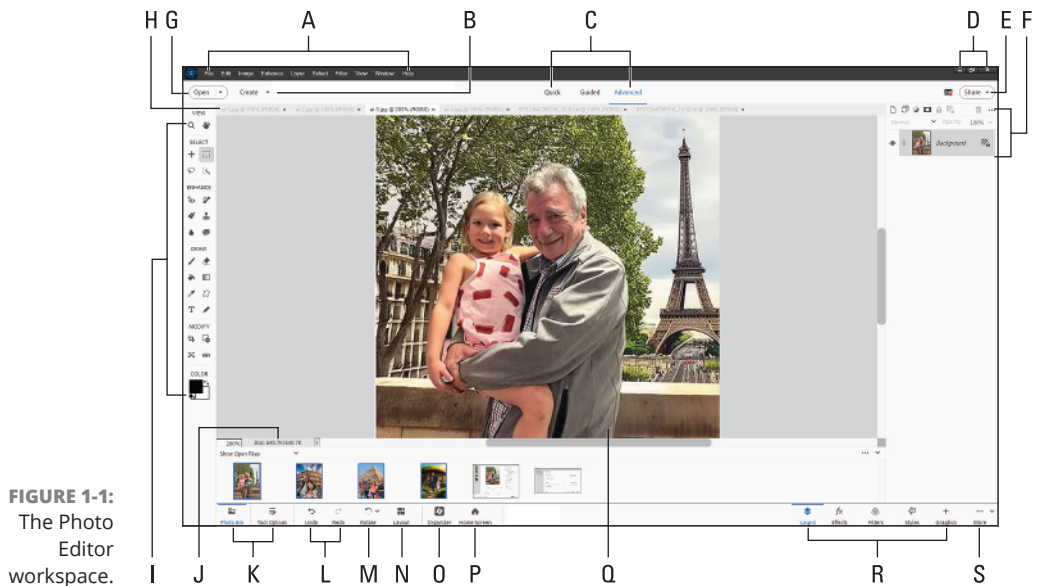
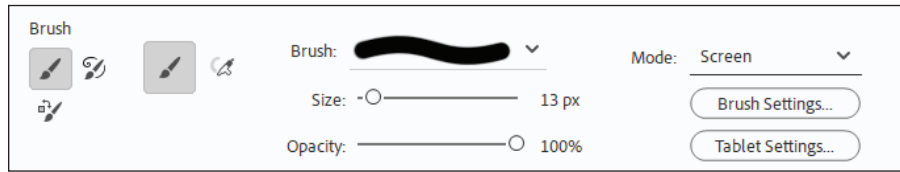


FIGURE 1-1:
The Photo
Editor
workspace.

Photo by Ted Padova, with a Generative AI background

FIGURE 1-2:
Tool Options
provide
more editing
features
for tools
selected in the
Tools panel.



Examining the image window

Not surprisingly, the image window's tools and features are most useful when an image is open in the window. To open an image in the image window, shown in Figure 1-3, follow these steps:

1. Choose File ➤ Open.

The standard Open dialog box appears; it works like any ordinary Open dialog box that you find in other applications.



REMEMBER

2. Navigate your hard drive (by using methods you know to open folders) and then select a picture.

If you haven't yet downloaded digital camera images or acquired scanned photos and want an image to experiment with, you can use a sample image. Both your operating system and Photoshop Elements typically provide sample images:

- On your operating system, you can typically find sample images in your Pictures folder, which is one of the default folders in both Windows and macOS installations.
- In Elements, you can store photos anywhere on your hard drive and access them in your Organizer.

3. Select a picture and click Open.

The photo opens in a new image window in Elements.



REMEMBER

You can open as many image windows in Elements as your computer memory can handle. When each new file is opened, a thumbnail image is added to the Photo Bin at the bottom of the workspace (refer to Figure 1-1).



FIGURE 1-3: The image window displays an open file undocked within the Elements workspace.

Photo by Courtney Jensen; Model: Hudson Jensen

Notice that in Figure 1-1, filenames appear as tabs above the image window when the windows are docked and not appearing as floating windows. Additionally, photo thumbnails appear in the Photo Bin. To bring a photo forward, click the filename in a tab or simply click a thumbnail in the Photo Bin. To close a photo, click the X adjacent to the filename or choose File ⇨ Close.



TIP

To close a photo in the image window but keep it open in the Panel Bin, click the Minimize button on a floating document window in the top-right corner (Windows) or the center button in the top-left corner (Mac). Note that in order to minimize the photo and keep it in the Photo Bin, you must set the General Preferences (Ctrl/⌘+K) to Allow Floating Documents in Advanced Mode. Make sure the documents are in floating windows and then you can minimize them individually.



REMEMBER

By default, all document windows are attached within the Elements document window. You can change the document windows to *floating windows* (meaning that they are free floating and unattached to the document window) by choosing Preferences and, in the General Preferences, selecting the Allow Floating Documents in Advanced Mode check box. Floating windows are available only when you're using the Advanced mode in the Photo Editor.

Here's a look at important items in the image window, as shown in Figure 1-3:

- » **Filename:** Appears above the image window for each file open in the Photo Editor.
- » **Close button:** Click the *X* to the right of the filename (Windows) or the left of the filename (Mac) to close the file.
- » **Scroll bars:** These become active when you zoom in on an image. You can click the scroll arrows, move the scroll bar, or grab the Hand tool in the Tools panel and drag within the window to move the image.
- » **Magnification box:** See at a glance how much you've zoomed in or out.
- » **Information box:** You can choose what information this readout displays by choosing one of the options from the pop-up menu, which we discuss in more detail later in this section.



TIP

When you're working on an image in Elements, you always want to know the physical image size, the image resolution, and the color mode. (Size is the physical size of the image. Image resolution is the number of pixels in your image. Color mode is a mode such as RGB for red, green, and blue, grayscale for black and white, and so on.) Regardless of which menu option you select from the status bar, you can quickly glimpse these essential stats by clicking the Information box (not the right-pointing arrow but the box itself), which displays a pop-up menu like the one shown in Figure 1-4.

» Sizing the Window:

You can also resize the window by dragging any corner in or out when the image is undocked and not viewed as a tab.

Width: 6720 pixels (22.4 Inches)
Height: 4480 pixels (14.933 Inches)
Channels: 3 (RGB Color, 8bpc)
Resolution: 3 (RGB Color, 8bpc)

FIGURE 1-4:

Click the readout on the status bar to see file information.



TIP

To undock windows, press Ctrl+K (⌘+K on the Mac) to open the Photo Editor Preferences. Click General in the Left pane and select the box where you see Allow Floating Documents in Advanced Mode. You must be in Advanced mode to view documents undocked.

Now that you're familiar with the overall image window, we want to introduce you to the Information box's pop-up menu, which enables you to choose what details appear in the Information box. Click the right-pointing arrow to open the menu, shown in Figure 1-5.

Here's the lowdown on the options you find on the pop-up menu:

- ✓ Document Sizes
- Document Profile
- Document Dimensions
- Current Selected Layer
- Scratch Sizes
- Efficiency
- Timing
- Current Tool

FIGURE 1-5:

From the pop-up menu on the status bar, choose commands to show more information about your file.

- » **Document Sizes:** Shows you the saved file size.
- » **Document Profile:** Shows you the color profile used with the file. Understanding color profiles is important when printing files. Turn to Chapter 13 for more information on using color profiles.
- » **Document Dimensions:** When selected, this option shows you the physical size in your default unit of measure, such as inches.
- » **Current Selected Layer:** When you click a layer in the Layers panel and choose Current Selected Layer, the layer name appears as the readout.
- » **Scratch Sizes:** Displays the amount of memory on your hard drive that's consumed by all documents open in Elements. For example, 20M/200M indicates that the open documents consume 20 megabytes and that a total of 200 megabytes is available for Elements to edit your images. When you add more content to a file, such as new layers, the first figure grows while the second figure remains static. If you find that Elements runs slowly, check your scratch sizes to see whether the complexity of your file is part of the problem. If so, you might clear some of your history or merge a few layers (see Chapter 7) to free space.
- » **Efficiency:** Indicates how many operations you're performing in RAM, as opposed to using your *scratch disk* (space on your hard drive). When the number is 100 percent, you're working in RAM. When the number drops below 100 percent, you're using the scratch disk.



TIP

If you continually work below 100 percent, it's a good indication that you need to buy more RAM to increase your efficiency. If you have multiple applications open, quit all other programs to conserve RAM.

- » **Timing:** Indicates the time it took to complete the last operation.
- » **Current Tool:** Shows the name of the tool selected from the Tools panel.



REMEMBER

Why is the information in this pop-up menu important? Suppose you have a great photo you want to add to your Facebook account and you examine the photo to find the physical size of 8 x 10 inches at 300 pixels per inch (ppi). You also find that the saved file size is more than 20MB. At a quick glance, you know you want to resize or crop the photo to perhaps 4 x 6 inches at 72 ppi. (Doing so drops the file size from more than 20MB to around 365K.) Changing the resolution dramatically reduces the file size. For now, realize that the pop-up menu shows you information that can be helpful when preparing files for print and display.

Don't worry about trying to understand all these terms. The important thing to know is that you can visit the pop-up menu and change the items at will during your editing sessions.

Uncovering the contextual menus

Contextual menus are common to many programs, and Photoshop Elements is no exception. They're those little menus that appear when you right-click, offering commands and tools related to whatever area or tool you right-clicked. If you have a one-button mouse on the Mac, press Ctrl+click to open a context menu.



TIP

The contextual menus are your solution when you're in doubt about where to find a command on a menu. You just right-click an item and a pop-up menu opens.

Because contextual menus provide commands related to the tool you're using or the object or location you're clicking, the menu commands change according to the tool or feature you're using and where you click at the moment you open a contextual menu. For example, in Figure 1-6, you can see the contextual menu that appears after we create a selection marquee using the Rectangular Marquee Selection tool and right-click anywhere in the image window. Notice that the commands are all related to selections. Other selection tools, like the Quick Selection tool and Magic Wand, offer you different menu choices from a contextual menu.



FIGURE 1-6:
A contextual menu for a selection.

Selecting the tools

More often than not, clicking a tool on the Tools panel is your first step in editing operations. (If you're not familiar with the Tools panel, refer to the upcoming Figure 1-8.) In panel hierarchy terms, you typically first click a tool on the Tools panel and then use another panel to fine-tune how the tool works.

Sometimes when you select a tool in the Tools panel, you find additional tools in the Tool Options area. For example, you may click the Rectangular Marquee tool in order to access the Elliptical Marquee tool in the Tool Options, directly below the image window. The Brush tool, Impressionist Brush, and Color Replacement tool, plus the Brush Mode and Airbrush Mode, are all shown in Figure 1-7 and are all in the Tools panel; and the Rectangular Marquee tool and Elliptical Marquee tool appear in the Tool Options panel when one of those tools is selected. See the following section for more about the Tool Options area.

FIGURE 1-7:
Additional
tools within a
tool group are
available in the
Tool Options.



An additional tool that makes use of artificial intelligence in Photoshop Elements is the Remove tool. The tool appears in the same area as the Spot Healing Brush. Click the Spot Healing Brush and, in the Tool Options, select the Remove tool. To remove an object in a photo, draw with the Remove tool around the item you want to remove. When you release the mouse button, click the check mark, and the Photo Editor does its best to fill the removed area with the background. For more on the Remove tool, see Chapter 10, which covers artificial intelligence (AI) tools.



REMEMBER

Keep in mind that if you don't find a tool in the Tools panel, look in the Tool Options for additional tools within a tool group.

You can easily access tools in Elements by pressing shortcut keys on your keyboard. For a quick glance at the key that selects each tool in the Tools panel, look over Figure 1-8.



TIP

The following tips can help you find your way around the Tools panel with keyboard shortcuts:

- » **To select tools within a tool group by using keystrokes, press the respective key to access the tool.** For example, press the L key to select the Lasso tool. Press L again to select the Magnetic Lasso tool — the next tool in the group. Press L again and you select the Polygon Lasso tool.
- » **Whether you have to press the Shift key to select tools is controlled by a preference setting.** To change the default setting so that you need to press Shift, choose Edit ⇨ Preferences ⇨ General or press Ctrl+K. (Choose Adobe Photoshop Elements Editor ⇨ Preferences ⇨ General or press ⌘+K on the Mac.) Then, in General Preferences, deselect the Use Shift Key for Tool Switch check box.
- » **The shortcuts work for you at all times, except when you're typing text with the cursor active inside a text block.** Be certain to click the Tools panel to select a tool when you finish editing text, or select the Commit blue check mark to end using the Text tool.

The tools are varied, and you may find that you don't use all the tools in the Tools panel in your workflow. Rather than describe the tool functions here, we address the tools in the rest of this book as they pertain to their respective Elements tasks.

Selecting from the Tool Options

When you click a tool on the Tools panel, the Tool Options box appears at the bottom of the workspace and offers you choices specific to the selected tool. (Refer to Figure 1-7, which shows the Brush tool options.) In addition to providing you with choices for selecting tools within a tool group, you can adjust settings for a selected tool.

You can find many of these fine-tuning adjustments in the Tool Options for most of the tools you select in the Tools panel.

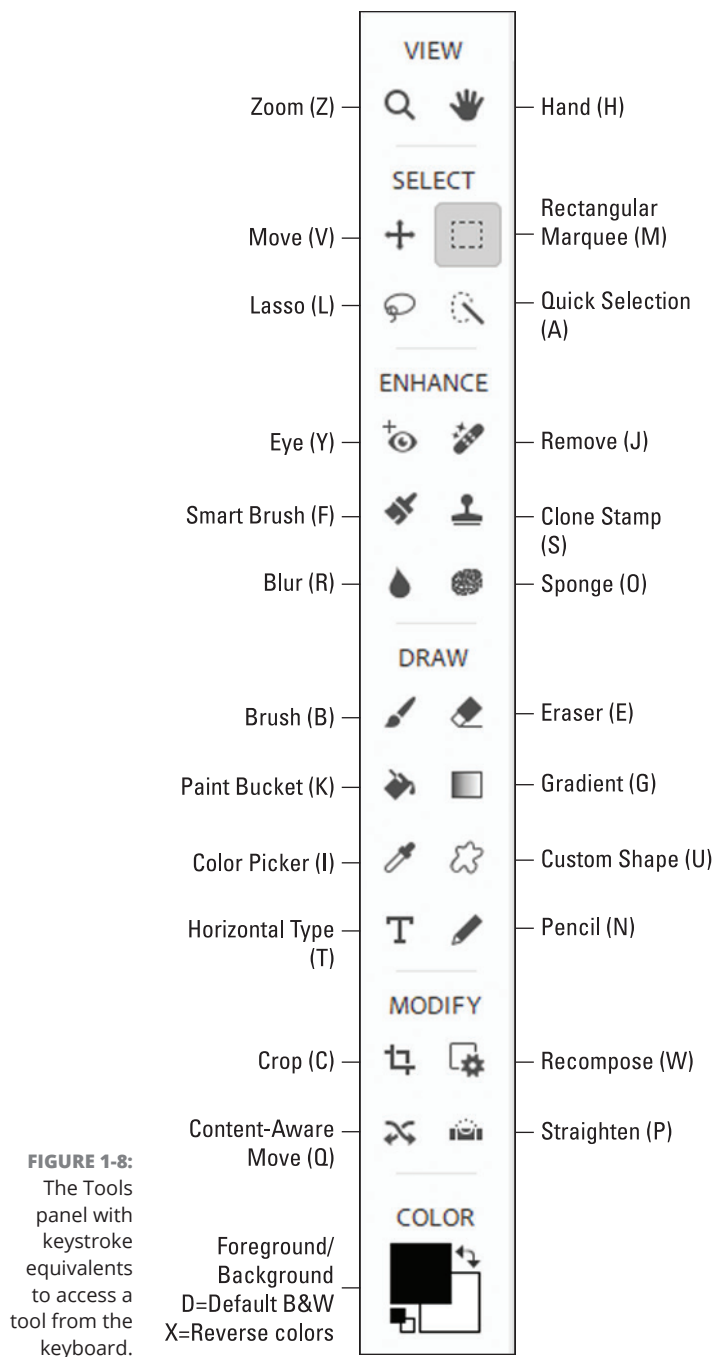


FIGURE 1-8:
The Tools panel with keystroke equivalents to access a tool from the keyboard.

Playing with Panels

The panels are where you control features such as layers, effects, and more. In the Photo Editor, you open these panels in the Panel Bin:

» **Layers:** The Layers panel displays all the layers you've added to a photo. We talk much more about layers in Chapter 7. For now, look at how the different panels are designed. In the Layers panel, you find various tools at the top left and an icon with horizontal dots in the top-right corner, to the right of the Trash icon (as shown in Figure 1-9).

You can select multiple layers and click the folder icon at the top of the Layers panel to create a new layer group. All the grouped layers are nested in a folder.

When you click the icon at the top right, a pop-up menu appears (see Figure 1-10), which shows menu items supporting the tasks you perform in the Layers panel.

- » **Effects:** At the bottom of the Panel Bin, click the *fx* button to open the Effects panel. The Effects panel contains tabs offering a number of choices for applying a number of different effects to your pictures. You simply click an effect thumbnail you want when you edit the photo. We cover applying effects in Chapter 11.
- » **Filters:** Click Filters to open the panel where you can apply a number of different filter effects to the open image. For more on using Filters, see Chapter 11.
- » **Styles:** Click Styles, and you find a drop-down menu listing numerous styles. Open a category and click a style to apply to an image. In some respects, this panel behaves similarly to Filters. For more on Styles, see Chapter 11.

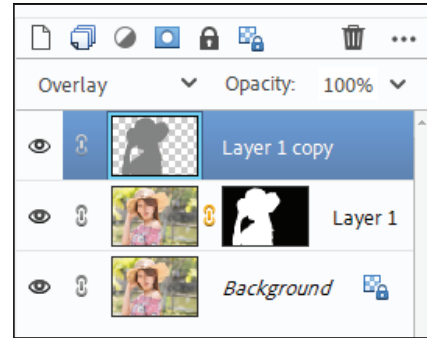


FIGURE 1-9: The Layers panel with a Background and three layers.

Layers Help	
Help Contents	
New Layer...	Shift+Ctrl+N
Duplicate Layer...	
Delete Layer	
Delete Linked Layers	
Delete Hidden Layers	
New Group...	
New Group from Layers...	
Collapse All Groups	
Rename Layer...	
Simplify Layer	
Clear Layer Style	
Link Layers	
Select Linked Layers	
Merge Down	Ctrl+E
Merge Visible	Shift+Ctrl+E
Flatten Image	
Panel Options...	

FIGURE 1-10: The Layers panel pop-up menu.

- » **Graphics:** The Graphics panel contains several menus where you can choose among a huge assortment of graphic illustrations that can also be added to your photos. For more information on using the Graphics panel, see Chapter 11.
- » **More:** Click the down-pointing arrow at the bottom of the Panel Bin to the right of the More button, and a pop-up menu opens, allowing you to choose additional panels. The Layers, Effects, Filters, Styles, Graphics, and Favorites panels are docked in the Panel Bin and can't be removed.

The panels you open from the pop-up menu shown in Figure 1-11 open as floating panels. These are your options:

- **Actions:** Actions enable you to automate a series of edits to your pictures. In Figure 1-11, you can see the Actions that are supported when you open the More menu and select the Actions tab. As with other panels, a pop-up menu is supported, and it offers Load, Replace, Reset, and Clear options so that you can modify Actions.

Elements still doesn't support recording your own series of editing steps and capturing the steps as an Action. However, most of the Actions that are created in Adobe Photoshop can be loaded in Elements.

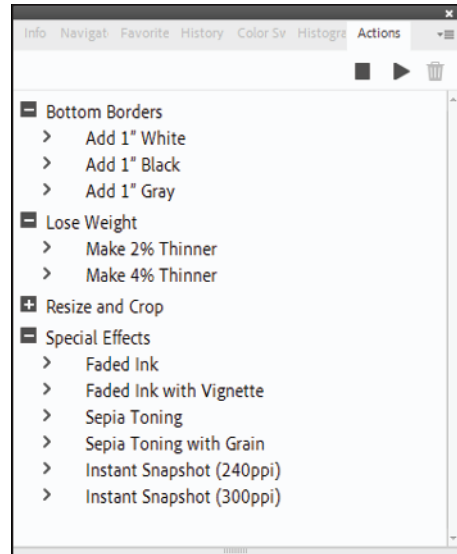


FIGURE 1-11: Actions panel opened in a group of floating windows.



TIP

You can find a number of free downloadable Actions on the internet. Just search for *Photoshop Actions* and explore the many downloads available to you.

- **Adjustments:** The Adjustments panel works only when you have an Adjustment layer. For details about using the Adjustments panel and Adjustment layers, see Chapter 7.

- **Color Swatches:** This panel displays color swatches you might use for coloring and painting that we cover in Chapter 12.
- **Favorites:** Opens the Favorites panel where you find a list of items you designated as a favorite edit.
- **Histogram:** Open this panel to display a histogram of the photo in the foreground. We talk more about histograms in Chapter 9.
- **History:** Choose this item to display the History panel. You can go back multiple steps to, for example, undo edits from many previous steps.
- **Info:** The Info panel provides readouts for different color values and physical dimensions of your photos.
- **Navigator:** The Navigator panel helps you zoom in and move around on a photo in the image window.
- **Custom Workspace:** When you choose Custom Workspace, you can dock and undock panels. This option enables you to configure a custom workspace to your liking.

» **Create/Share panel:** These panels also exist in the Organizer. Click Create at the top left of the Panel Bin to open the Create panel in the Photo Editor. In both the Photo Editor and the Organizer, the Create button opens the Creations panel, which you use for making a number of creations such as calendars, photo books, greeting cards, photo collages, and more. The Share panel contains many options for sharing your photos. We talk more about making creations in Chapter 15, and we cover using the Share panel in Chapter 14.

When you open the additional panels as floating windows, the panels are docked in a common floating window. You can drag a panel out of the docked position and view it as a separate panel or move it to the docked panels.



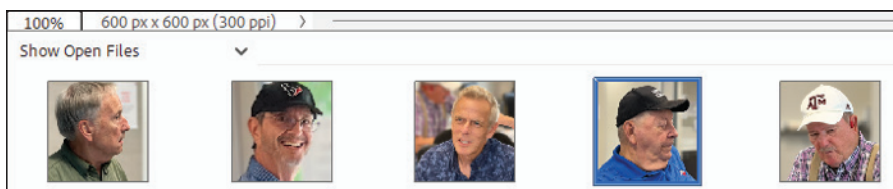
REMEMBER

When you open a panel in either the Organizer or the Photo Editor, you find other options available from tools, drop-down lists, and a menu you open by clicking the icon with horizontal lines in the top-right corner of the panel.

Using the Photo Bin

The Photo Bin displays thumbnail views of all your open images (see Figure 1-12). You can immediately see a small image of all the pictures you have open at one time, as shown in Figure 1-12. You can also see thumbnail views of all the different views you create for a single picture.

FIGURE 1-12:
Open the
Photo Bin
Options
pop-up menu
to display
various actions
you can
perform
on pictures
open in the
Photo Bin.



Photos by Ted Padova



TIP

If you want to rearrange the order of the thumbnails in the Photo Bin, you can click and drag any thumbnail to the left or right.