

# 20 ..... Week

## WORKING ON A PROJECT

To create a thematically coherent project, you need to have a clear vision and a real understanding of what it takes to communicate a story concisely and with passion.

### In this module, you will:

- ▶ **establish what a photo project is** and how it can benefit your artistic development;
- ▶ **learn the formula behind a successful photo story** by studying how to research, shoot, and edit a wedding project;
- ▶ **engage your critical faculties** by editing and ranking a selection of images;
- ▶ **experiment and explore** by shooting the same subject in all seasons, undertaking a creative self-portrait, and photographing a carnival;
- ▶ **look back at your work** to evaluate what could be improved upon and to seek an outlet for your completed project;
- ▶ **improve the organization** of your images by using keywords;
- ▶ **confirm what you've learned** about planning, executing, and completing a project.

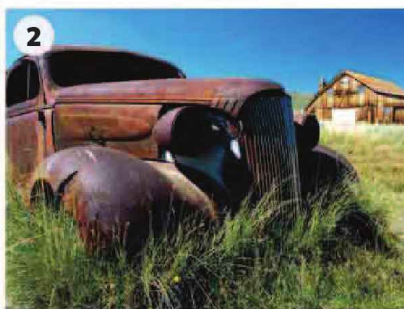
Let's begin...





## ▶ TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

# Which project suits you?



Embarking on a photography project lets you explore a subject in depth and will help develop your skills and style as a photographer. See if you can match these concepts with the correct images.

**A Shapes in nature:** Choose a geometric shape and look for naturally occurring examples.

**B Time passing:** Show the effects of weeks, or even years, passing.

**C Learn a new language:** Look for letters in an urban setting, and use them to spell a sentence.

**D Unusual family portraits:** Capture family members in a fresh way by focusing on details.

**E Humor:** Look for mishaps, contrasts, and funny expressions.

**F Low light:** Wait for nightfall and photograph illuminated buildings and objects.

**G A different view:** Shoot architecture from a new angle.

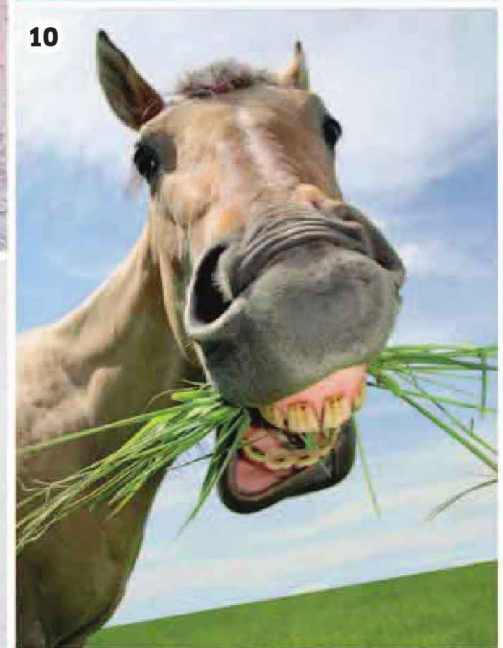
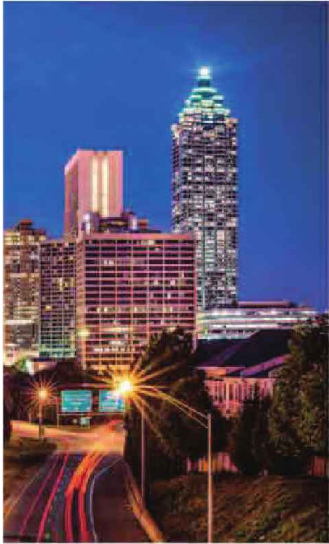
**H Look skyward:** Search high and low for a fresh interpretation of the traditional landscape.

**I Self-portraits:** Express yourself with unconventional self-portraits.

**J Sit and wait:** Catch people in public places for some off-the-cuff picture opportunities.

ANSWERS

- A/7: Red starfish in blue water
- B/2: Rusting car, California
- C/6: Letter "P" painted on a wall
- D/4: Feet sticking out from a quilt
- E/10: Horse making a funny face
- F/3: Nighttime skyline, Atlanta
- G/1: Skyscrapers in Chicago
- H/8: Fluffy clouds in a blue sky
- I/9: Silhouette selfie
- J/5: Man on a park bench



NEED TO KNOW

- A project requires discipline, so dedicate 30 minutes to it each day—make the most of time spent commuting or waiting in line.
- You need to be flexible: if your project takes a new turn, go with it. The results are sure to be interesting.
- Before starting a project, you need to consider the amount of time and money you are prepared to spend on it.
- Set achievable goals and check each one off as you reach it. Make your goals short-, medium-, and long-term.
- Sharing your project with friends makes you more likely to complete it—so the more people you tell, the higher the potential success rate.



*Review these points and see how they relate to the issues raised in this module*



## ▶ UNDERSTAND THE THEORY

# The perfect photo story

If you remember that every good tale has a beginning, a middle, and an end, then communicating your message via a series of images will seem much more manageable. If you take a special occasion as an example, you can see how planning, structure, shot variety, and editing all have a part to play in the success of your project.



## SUBJECT RESEARCH

It's important to have a clear idea of what you'd like to achieve with your photo story before you start, whether you're shooting an event, animals, people, or a journey. If you take time beforehand to visualize how a subject will look under different lighting and weather conditions, you'll save time later.



For a wedding, talk to the couple about their expectations and visit the location before the day to plan backdrops and lighting setups.

PLANNING



BEGINNING



MIDDLE



## SHOT VARIETY

Movie directors use a variety of camera angles to tell their story, such as the establishing shot (which sets the scene), the medium shot (which features two characters interacting), and the close-up (which draws attention to details). By varying your viewpoint and focal length, you can do the same.



You might like to mix medium shots of the couple with close-ups of the groom's boutonniere and the bride's accessories.



## TIGHT EDITING

Take more memory cards than you think you'll need and save the editing for later. Afterward, when you sit down at your computer, make sure each picture works as a standalone image and also adds to the project as a whole.

Don't include too many multiples of the same image, since this could dilute your message.



**Pro tip:** In photography, the word “series” denotes a set of pictures showing related content (the images are all based around a theme), while “sequence” describes a set of pictures taken in quick succession (the images are all part of the same story).



## STORY STRUCTURE

All stories need a structure—whether in the form of a fairy tale, a novel, or a photography series. It can help to draw a storyboard, sketching out how the plot will be introduced, developed, and concluded.



A classic wedding story would start with the bride getting ready (the beginning), showcase the ceremony (the middle), and continue right up until the time when the couple leaves for their honeymoon (the end).



## SKILLS REQUIRED

Storyboarding your project and then realizing you don't have the necessary skills to bring it to fruition can be disheartening, but it can also be a great opportunity



to learn something new. Go online and research different techniques, listen to a podcast, or sign up for a photography webinar.

You may need to practice your panning skills if you want to capture the moment when the newlyweds make their exit.



END



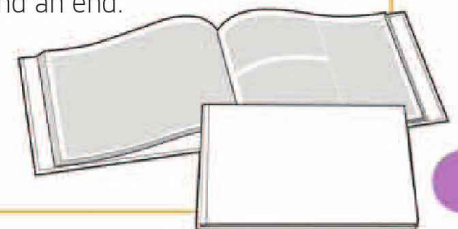
## OUTLETS

Now that you've made a captivating body of work, make sure your photos actually get seen. Create a collage, online slideshow, book, exhibition, or album of your work. The end result should communicate your vision and artistic intention, while also showing the passion and dedication you've applied to the job.



## PHOTOBOOKS

The presentation of your images is critical when you're creating a photobook or photo album. Consider how one image will impact on another, and vary the pace by juxtaposing long shots with close-ups or by inserting white space after a run of fast-moving action. Remember to include a beginning, a middle, and an end.





## ▶ LEARN THE SKILLS

# Editing a photoshoot

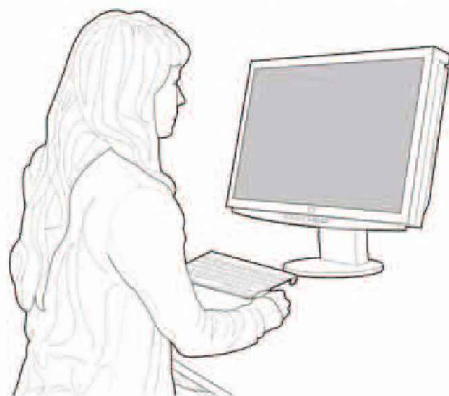


Editing your work is one of the photographer's toughest jobs. When you've made an emotional connection with a subject, or overcome technical challenges to produce a picture, it's hard to look at your files objectively. However, you need to take a step back and use a combination of personal judgment and computer software to edit your work.



## 1 Distance yourself from your photographs

Copy your photos onto a computer and leave them for a few days before reviewing them. It's never a good idea to go through your images right after a photoshoot.



## 2 View your images

Open the images on your computer using image-editing software. This will allow you to adjust your pictures without losing any of the original data.



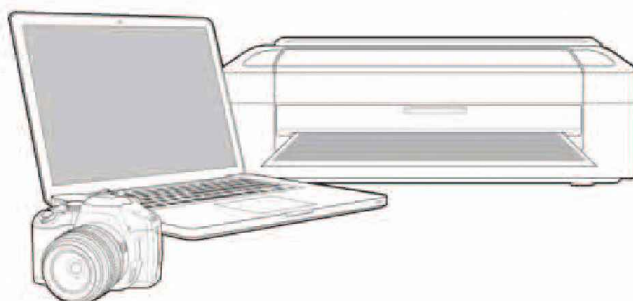
## 6 Seek advice from trusted people

Show your images to family, friends, and, if possible, other photographers, and try not to be offended by their comments. Constructive criticism has the potential to make you a better photographer.



## 7 Make prints

Print out your images to assist you in a final cull. Tape these printouts to the wall and live with them for a while to see if your opinions change.



**Where to start:** Import your images from a recent photoshoot to an image-editing program of your choice. Make sure your monitor is calibrated and that the room is lit by natural daylight (or a daylight-simulation bulb).

**You will learn:** How to check your photos for faults, how to rank them according to preference, how to seek the advice of friends and colleagues, and how to order your photos into a satisfying sequence.



### 3 Look for faults

Use your image-editing program to check for major faults, such as lack of sharpness, poor composition, or excessive noise. Identify any images that could be improved by editing, and put them aside for later.



### 4 View similar images side by side

If you have pictures with nearly identical content, compare them by viewing them side by side. Some editing programs let you zoom in to check the focus on both pictures simultaneously.



### 5 Mark your images with flags or stars

Rank your pictures with flags or stars so you can organize them quickly.



### 8 Reorder the prints to get the right sequence

When sequencing your work, bear in mind that most good stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Consider the rhythm of your book and judiciously insert white spaces as part of your design. These will give the viewer a chance to pause as they view your images.



#### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- It's hard to look at your own work objectively, so show your images to people you trust.
- Ranking your pictures will allow you to organize and retrieve them easily.
- Printing your pictures can help you create a sequence.

A sequence of images arranged to show a tour through the Scottish countryside.



## ▶ PRACTICE AND EXPERIMENT

# Taking on a project

Setting yourself an achievable goal will boost your photographic skills, confidence, and creativity. The six assignments here look at shooting the same subject over the course of a year, taking a self-portrait, forming a street alphabet, capturing emotions, joining a street carnival, and picking a color theme. Try one, or all six.



### OBSERVE THE SEASONS



**HARD**



**1 YEAR**



**BASIC + tripod**



**OUTDOORS**



**OUTDOOR SUBJECT THAT WILL NOT MOVE DURING THE YEAR**

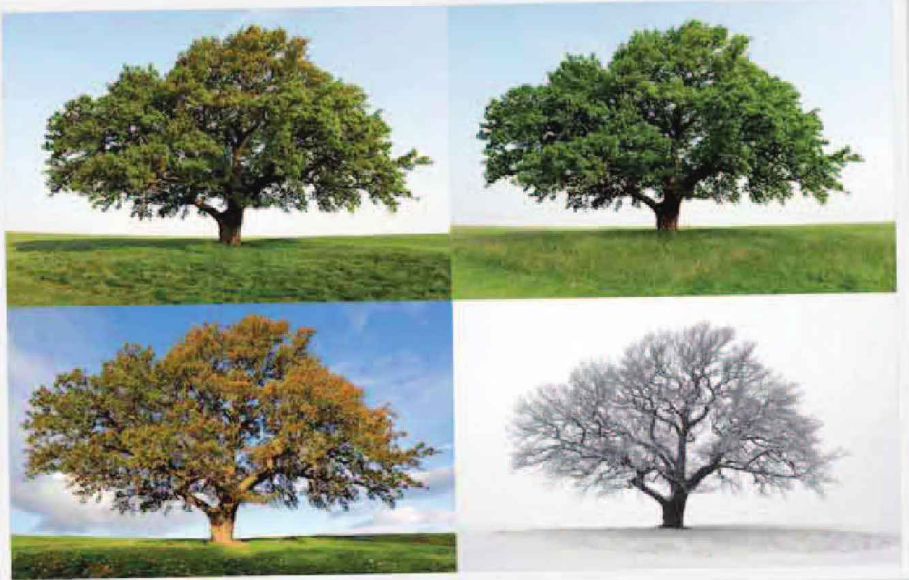
**Shooting the same subject in all four seasons** can lead to images that express very different moods.

- **Choose** an object that's unlikely to move throughout the year, such as a tree.

- **Use** a sunrise/sunset app to work out how the path of the sun will affect your subject during the project.

- **Record** the exact spot where you took your shot with the GPS system on your smartphone or mark it on a map. Once the first picture has been taken, note the focal length of the lens you used and the height of the tripod.

Different seasons lead to surprisingly diverse pictures.



### GEAR: RAIN COVERS

When you're out in all seasons, you're going to encounter an occasional rain shower, so it's worth investing in a protective cover for your photographic equipment. Rain capes, weather shields, and storm jackets are good tools for keeping your camera and lens dry, and they're lightweight and inexpensive too.





**Pro tip:** You can create an unconventional self-portrait by shooting your own reflection in a mirror or a pond, by focusing on parts of your body rather than your face, or by capturing your face from an unusual angle.



## LEARN A NEW ALPHABET

MEDIUM

2 HOURS

BASIC

OUTDOORS

AN URBAN SCENE WITH SIGNS AND LETTERS



**We are surrounded by letters**, but few of us notice the “secret” language hidden in architectural details and everyday objects on the street.

- **Leave** the tripod at home, since it might cause an obstruction. Handholding your camera will also allow you to act fast if you see a “letter” you like.
- **Use** a shutter speed roughly equal to the focal length of your lens, such as 1/60th of a second for a 50mm lens.
- **Go further:** try to make letters out of abstract forms, such as the double arch of a bridge for “M” or a crack in the wall for “Z.”



## TAKE A SELF-PORTRAIT

MEDIUM

1 HOUR

BASIC + tripod, remote release or self-timer

INDOORS OR OUTDOORS

A STAND-IN OBJECT

**Creating a meaningful picture of yourself** requires patience and planning.

- **Find** an object to “stand in” for you, such as a chair. Switch to manual focus and train your lens on this object—autofocus would focus on the background and record you as a blur.
- **Set** the Drive mode to Self-Timer plus Continuous (or use a remote release). Go to your position and then take a series of shots.
- **Experiment** with poses and props.

Take a range of images in varying light conditions.



## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- When you want to return to the same location in different seasons, you need to mark the exact spot where you set up your tripod.
- Self-portraits give you the opportunity to tell a story about yourself, so feel free to use props and various poses to get your message across.
- Once you start looking, you’ll find letters of the alphabet everywhere.



### SHOW SOME EMOTION

MEDIUM

INDOORS OR OUTDOORS

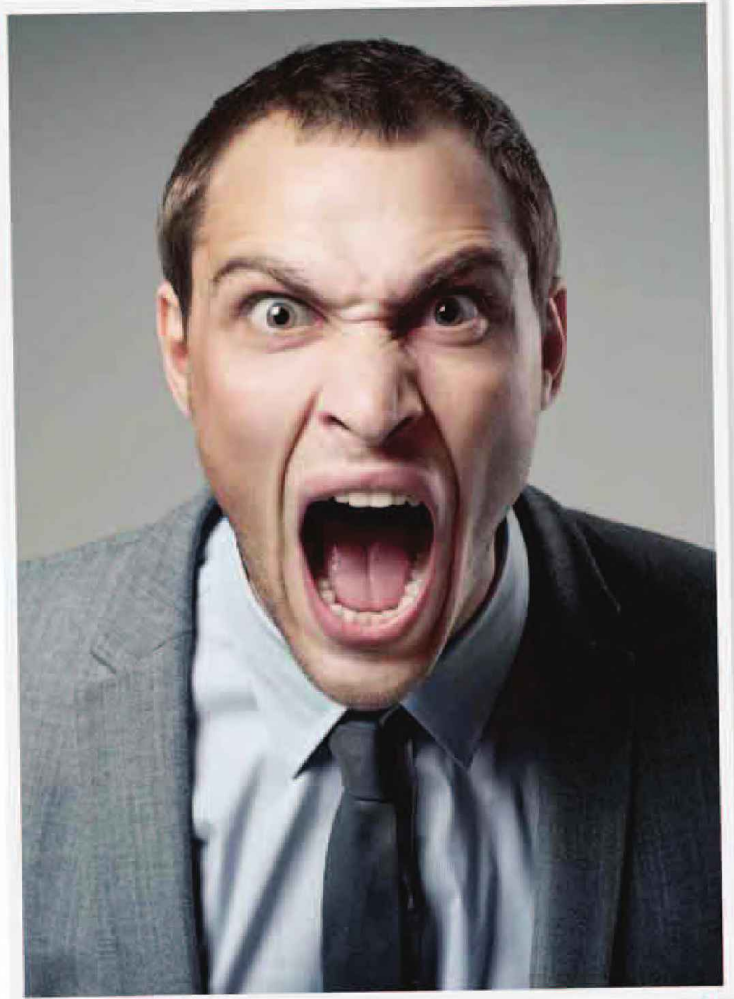
1 HOUR

MODEL

BASIC + tripod

**Photographing emotions** can be tricky, but you can obtain striking portraits by asking friends to pose for you.

- **Get** everything ready beforehand so you won't be fumbling around during the shoot.
- **Switch** the camera to Aperture Priority and choose an f-stop that will throw the background out of focus while keeping your subject's facial features nice and sharp.
- **Select** an AF point that covers the most important part of the subject's face—usually their eyes. Set the Drive mode to Continuous.
- **Ask** your subject to think of a time when they were particularly angry, frightened, or unhappy, and press the shutter-release button halfway to get the focus, then take the shot. Try using Continuous Drive to capture a sequence of shots as their emotions change.

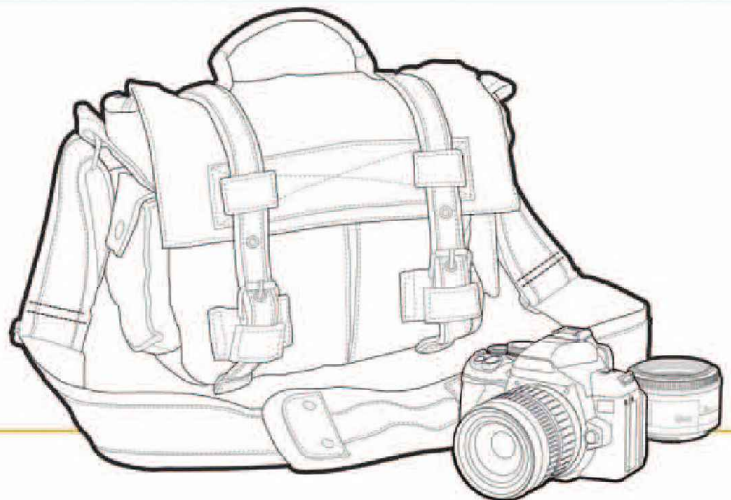


This model has tried out an extreme emotion.



### GEAR: CAMERA BAGS FOR STREET PHOTOGRAPHY

Shooting street events calls for a compact, lightweight camera bag that doesn't shout "photographer" to would-be thieves. There's no need to carry more than one dSLR and a couple of lenses for this kind of work, so a messenger bag will do the job. Choose one with plenty of padding, removable internal dividers, and a wide strap to distribute the load on your shoulder. It's also a good idea to make sure it's showerproof too.





## JOIN THE PARTY

MEDIUM

OUTDOORS

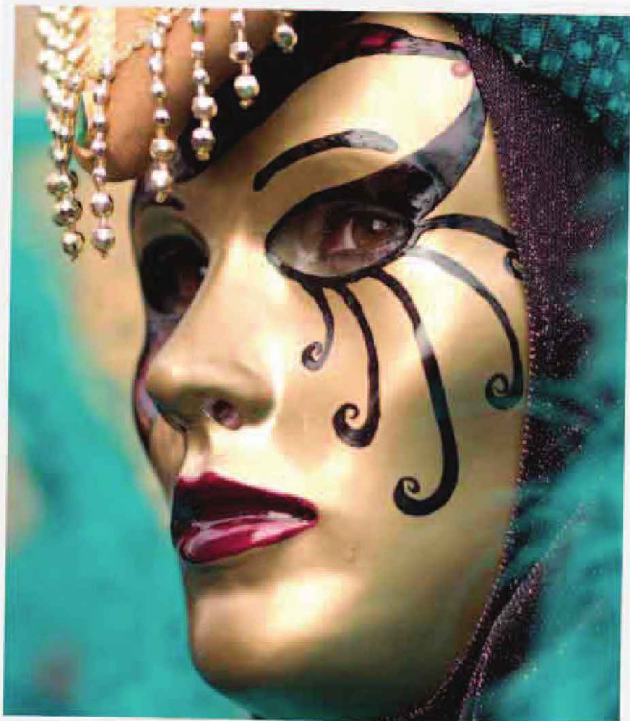
2 HOURS

STREET PARTY  
OR CARNIVAL

BASIC

**One of the great things about carnivals** is that people expect, and often like, to be photographed. This removes some of the fear associated with street photography.

- **Plan** carefully. Get a map of the route, and arrive early to secure the best vantage point.
- **Leave** your tripod at home: it will slow you down and could be a hazard. Instead, make use of any nearby walls or benches to steady the camera.
- **Select** a fast shutter speed if the action is moving quickly, but, if you're shooting portraits, consider using a wide aperture to throw dull backdrops out of focus.



Masked revellers at carnivals make great subjects for portraits.



## PICK A COLOR

EASY

INDOORS OR OUTDOORS

45 MINUTES

OBJECTS LINKED BY  
COLOR OR THEME

BASIC + tripod

**Shooting a series of images** based around one strong color, such as red, can produce countless images if you're willing to think a little differently.

- **Think** laterally. Shooting red objects is easy enough, but how about capturing someone who is seeing red (very angry), or in the red (in debt)?
- **Try** using the same format, such as panoramic, across the set, or add an effect, such as a vignette, to each image to emphasize the connection.



*The edges of this frame have been darkened using vignetting*

## WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- When shooting a portrait, get everything ready before the subject arrives.
- Carnivals provide the perfect opportunity for fast, energetic photography, but they are no place for a tripod.
- If you've chosen a project based on a color, you don't have to be too literal.



## ▶ ASSESS YOUR RESULTS

# Reviewing your project

Having learned how a project can help you develop your technical skills and individual style, it's time to choose some of your favorite images and run through the following checklist.



### Have you managed to find enough time?

Working on a personal project can feel self-indulgent, but there are ways to free up time without neglecting friends, family, or work. To get this dawn shot, you'll have to get up while others are still in bed.



### Are the parameters too limiting?

Try not to be blinkered; embrace new chances as they arise. If focused only on leaves and small details, you may miss the opportunity to capture a beautiful mossy trunk.



### Do you lack inspiration?

If you're struggling to settle on a project, stay close to home and take a picture of a family member every day for a prescribed length of time.



### Have you thought of a suitable outlet?

You could turn your project into a book or an online showcase. Or, if you have a series of food shots, such as this one, you could create a recipe book for friends and family.

“Photographic projects can be as **short** as an afternoon or as **long** as a lifetime.”

GEORGE BARR

20

WEEK



**Do you have the necessary skills?**

Don't worry if you don't quite have the technical skills for a project: use it as an opportunity to learn. For an image like this, you would need to master HDR (High Dynamic Range).



**Is the subject worthy of a project...**

...or should it be a standalone image? If you're shooting cupcakes, for example, you might also like to include images showing the making and eating of the cakes.



**Are your files organized effectively?** Use keywords to organize your images. This image is tagged with the terms "beach," "Florida," "umbrella," and "chair." What other terms could you use?



**Are you struggling to edit your work?**

Sharpen your editing skills by looking at as many pictures as you can until your work is of as high a quality as this shot of an Ethiopian tribeswoman.



## ▶ ENHANCE YOUR IMAGES

# Adding keywords



When your image archive consists of just a few photographs, it's tempting to ignore adding keywords in the belief that your pictures will always be easy to find. But fast-forward a few months and your archive will be teeming with images of a similar content and style. By applying keywords as soon as your files are imported, you will make them easy to locate and save yourself hours of frustration later.



A collection of bird photos taken over just a couple of months.



### 4 Add more detailed keywords

To add Sub Keywords to the set, right-click (or ctrl-click) on one of the Keyword sets, select New Sub Keyword and add your word. Repeat as necessary. For this exercise we have chosen "Owls," then "Falcons."



### 5 Delete irrelevant keywords

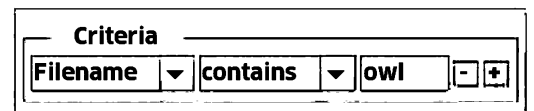
Many of the preset keywords will be irrelevant, so you can safely remove them. To delete one, hover over it, right-click (or ctrl-click), select Delete, then OK.

*List of keywords with unwanted entries deleted*



### 6 Search using keywords

Once you've assigned your keywords, you can use them to locate images by selecting the Edit drop-down menu and then Find. In the dialog box, check that Criteria says Filename, Contains, and the Keyword you wish to search by (in this case "Owl"). Click Find. You can refine your search by pressing the plus sign and adding extra criteria.



**Pro tip:** When you're looking for files using the Find dialog box, you can select Keywords in the drop-down menu under Criteria and use the plus sign to add a series of keywords to search by. You can also search by star rating.

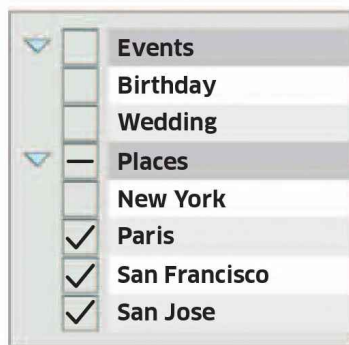
## 1 Locate the Keywords tab

Open Photoshop and then Adobe Bridge. In Bridge, Select a folder of images to add keywords to and click on the Keywords tab.



## 2 Apply preset keywords

Look down the list of preset keywords, which are arranged in sets. To assign one, simply click on a thumbnail, and check the box next to the word.



## 3 Create a new Keyword set

To create a new set, click on the New Keyword (+) icon at the bottom of the panel. Rename the folder, keeping your terminology quite general—for this exercise we have simply called it “Birds.”



This image would use the keywords “owl,” “portrait,” and “perch”.

## THE METADATA PALETTE

The Metadata palette in Bridge contains useful information about each image listed under three headings: File Properties, Camera Data (Exif), and IPTC. File Properties describes information relating to the file itself, such as its resolution, file type, and size. The Camera Data (Exif) section covers technical information for the image, such as the exact focal length of the lens used, the shutter speed, and the ISO setting. Finally, the IPTC section contains user-generated information, such as copyright details.

Image metadata showing technical information.

