Questions

Q I never know what resolution or pixels I should use for my photo files. What DPI do you recommend?

A When taking a photo of your artwork, or as a reference to paint from, it is important to always get the largest file size possible. Today's cameras and phones create very large images (and file sizes). The ***resolution*** of an image is how many pixels are contained within the image.

Any image to be printed should have a resolution of **300 dpi** at the actual dimensions to be printed, a 5 x 7 inch print, for example. Any image to be used for the web should be at least **72 dpi** at 720 pixels on the largest side as some shows request (though most Apple products and many new phones display at 96 dpi). It is best practice to have a print and web file of your artwork.

You cannot add resolution after capturing the image, so the larger the original file, the larger you can make a printed copy. (See **Workflow** section).

Resolution is often displayed as ppi (pixels per inch) or more commonly dpi (dots per inch). Dots per inch refers to how images were measured before electronics—how many dots of ink per inch of paper. But dpi is commonly used to mean pixels per inch.
As a rule of thumb, print-sized files will be measured in megabytes, while web-sized will be measured in kilobytes.

Q I'm always paranoid about people wanting to steal artwork from online, especially Facebook. Watermarks look terrible. Any suggestions for protecting artwork when posting online?

A Welcome to the digital age! There is no way to stop someone from grabbing your image from the web. At the very least, anything displayed on your site can be screen captured and re-purposed. Using watermarks does mar the artwork, but placing it in the lower corner can help mitigate that.

Using your images in a slideshow or Flash-based gallery will stop anyone from downloading the file, but that is not always an option - as in Facebook.

One thing to remember is that web-sized files can't be printed with any quality, so if you size your images properly to be viewed online, the thief can only re-post the image.

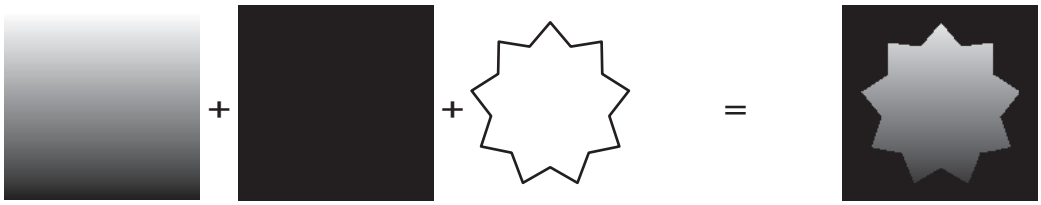
Q What are transform tools in Adobe Photoshop (and Elements)?

A The transform tools are used to change the image in direct size / shape ways, such as: Scale, Skew, Rotate, etc. If you want to rotate an image 90° you would use a transform tool. Usually, when working with family photos or pictures of artwork, you will not want to transform your images, other than scale or rotate. Using Skew or others will alter the photo.

An example of when to skew would be to make an image look like it is the cover of a book or magazine, laying on a table.

Q What are masks in Adobe Photoshop (and Elements)?

A A mask is a way to hide or reveal information on a different layer of a file. This is probably best understood with an example:



LAYER 1 LAYER 2 MASK SHAPE MASKED IMAGE

Masks are very powerful tools for creating collages or blending images into each other, or can be used to fade an image into white or black.

Q How and when might I want to use filters in Adobe Photoshop (and Elements)?

A **Filters** are ways of altering your image to create a certain look (line drawing, watercolor, posterize, etc.). Filters (and **Effects** in Elements) are tools for creativity; they provide a simple method for affecting your image in many varied ways. There are too many kinds of filters and effects to get into here, but they are very simple and fun to try out.

With your image open in the editing window of Photoshop (Psd) or Elements click on the **Filter** or **Effects** tab and click on the various options. Your image will change with each click, but the effect won't stay unless you click Apply or Enter.

You should always retain an original of your files before altering them (***See Workflow section***). Make a copy to "play around" with, just in case you alter it in ways you don't want to keep. If at any time you want to return to your original image, you can close without saving the file, or if you have an original, just start with a fresh copy - don't be afraid to try out any of the tools!

There is no limit to the number of filters or effects you can use on an image.

Q What tasks are best handled by each of icons on the left hand side of the screen of Adobe Elements? Give some tips on successfully using them.

A The icons on the left side of the editing panel in Elements are your **Tools** and they reside in the **Toolbar**. In Photoshop (Psd) the Toolbar can be moved around at your discretion (as with all control panels). These tools contain the basic ways to interact with your photo, from zooming in to selecting areas, erasing, cropping or rotating.

I can't explain all the features here. There are a lot of great tutorials on-line including:

Adobe Help files - https://helpx.adobe.com/photoshop-elements/using/topics.html

Lynda.com - www.lynda.com (a great site for professional, in-depth tutorials but is not free)

Youtube - https://www.youtube.com/user/photoshopelements

Adobe TV - http://tv.adobe.com/videos/elements/

Workflow

To get the most from your photos, either your artwork or reference images, you should dedicate yourself to a set ***workflow***. Much like the steps in creating a piece of artwork (setup, ground preparation, underpainting, details, etc) making a plan to ensure your files are the best quality and stored safely for any future use is extremely important. Think of printing a final image or sending off an artwork to a juried show as the final details of your painting - it's the foundation that makes it all possible.

Let's start at the beginning.

Getting Images Into Your Computer

You have a camera (or a phone with a camera). You want a picture of your artwork to send to a juried show or to print for post cards or a calendar, etc. When taking the photo, there are a few key things to remember:

1. **Lighting!** Make sure your artwork is properly lit. Two diffused lights pointing at angles is the best way, but a well lit space without direct sunlight is fine. Be sure to photograph the work WITHOUT a frame. You can remove the frame by cropping, but you'll have to remove areas where the frame casts a shadow on the painting as well.

2. **Color Balance.** How the work is lit will often make it more Yellow or Blue than it really is. Find an even light source if possible. For best results, use a value finder in one of the shots of your painting and then use Photoshop to even the light (more on this later).

3. **Parallax.** Be sure your painting and camera are even and straight to each other. Lay the artwork on a table and shoot from above, or make the painting as vertical as possible and use a tripod to match the camera to the painting (look closely at the edges in the camera view, the gap between the edge of the painting and the edges of the viewfinder should all be equal).

4. **Tripod!** Use a tripod to ensure focus. Even the steadiest hand can leave a shot blurry.

5. **Size Settings**. Use the highest / largest size setting your camera offers. You can never add resolution to a file, so this is your chance to get the best file possible. If you know what RAW files are, use them! If not, you could still add them and save them for a time when you or your printer might want to use them. Many cameras will shoot both JPG and RAW at the same time.

After you have a digital file (either artwork or reference photos) in your camera, the next step is to get them into your computer. Usually this involves a USB cord that came with the camera. Connect your camera to the USB on your computer and upload the files to your system.

If you use Lightroom or Elements or some other program to organize files, that window should open, otherwise drag the files into a folder that is clearly labeled (date, event, artwork, etc) so you will know where to find the files when you want to edit them.