

GUIDE TO STRUCTURED CRITIQUE OF YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS USING PHOTOSHOP

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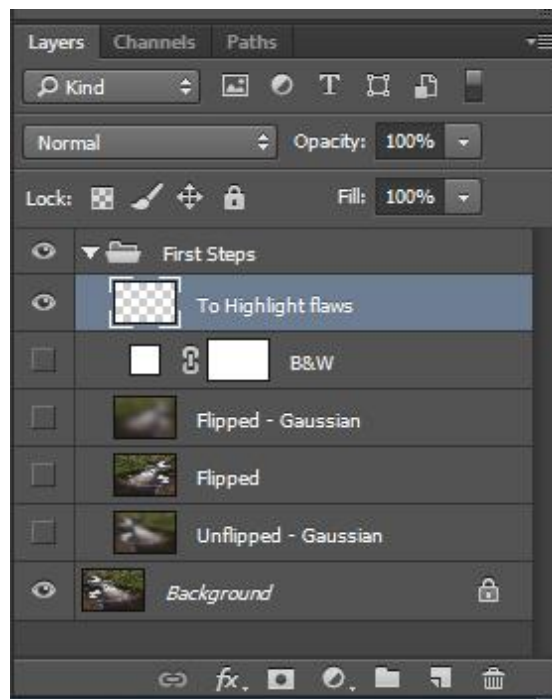
This guide talks you through the “First Steps” Photoshop Action and how it will help you with looking critically at your photograph, by checking the composition first, before looking at the small details in the photograph.

You will need the action loaded into Photoshop, see the guide “Importing Actions into Photoshop” which talks you through loading the action into Photoshop for you to use.

The action “First Steps” is designed to be run before you begin editing or creation of any layers on your photograph. So, select the “Background” layer and run the action “First Steps” from which ever action group it is stored in.

It will create several new layers in a group, above the back ground layer. A Gaussian Blur dialogue box will also appear, move the slider to blur out the detail in the photograph so you can see the composition and tone of colours within your image, without blurring the photograph so much that you lose composition elements. i.e. lose the bark and leaf detail from a tree, but the shape remains, all be it blurred. A second Gaussian Blur layer is created later in the action, with the same settings.

Once the action as completed, your layers pallet, should look something like below –



Right, into the detail. I'll describe the idea behind each layer and other functions of this technique where to crop and zoom out. You can do any of the steps below in the order that suits you, but I would suggest you do the highlighting of flaws last, as this could be time consuming, some of the flaws may be cropped out of the photograph as you work through the steps below.

Remember that you are looking at your photograph critically, with the aim of saving yourself time(not editing images that are unsalvageable, editing the photograph with an idea to the outcome you want), money(editing is completed before you click the print button) and to produce the best image possible. Don't be afraid to NOT edit an image if you feel it is not up to or can reach the required standard for your audience.

The task descriptions below should make that process easier for you.

Layer/Test	Description
Background	This is the original image.
Un-flipped - Gaussian	By blurring the image, you have removed the detail and are looking at the colours, tones and blurred shapes within the photograph. Use this layer to see where your eye's rest, is it on the subject you want the viewer to be looking at? Is it on some other bright area in the photograph? Is there something distracting you, i.e. very dark area, distracting colour, very bright area?
Flipped	This is a flipped version of the background layer, to see if the composition works better from the other direction.
Flipped - Gaussian	As "Un-flipped – Gaussian" layer, but with the photograph flipped.
B&W	Turn this layer on see if the image works a black and white image. You're looking for good tones and textures, without the colour information. Also can be applied over the Gaussian blurred layers as well.
Test " ZOOM OUT"	This is a test to see if the photograph will work small. Ask yourself, does the composition work well, are you lead through the frame easily or does it look messy and clutters.
Test "Crop"	Use the crop tool, to creatively crop the tool until you find the composition that works best for your photograph.
To Highlight Flaws	Use this layer to mark any compositional elements that need to be altered and once you are happy with all of the above, to start highlighting the small things within the frame. These could be items of litter to be removed, skin blemishes to be removed or dust spots on the centre. I would suggest you do the fine detail last, as you may have cropped some of them out of the frame or even decide not to edit the photograph if there is too much work required.

The above is not a complete list of tasks and you may wish to add checks to the above list. If you do, please let me know as like you I am always keen to learn.

Please remember that these layers are created for you to check the composition and then fine detail of your image, once you are happy you have highlight all the changes you need to make to the photograph, you can delete these layers or even hide them, by clicking on the eye button next to the "First Steps" group. Each layer can be activated and de-activated quickly likewise.