

Lightroom import workflow

Lightroom imports

One of the main reasons I have adopted Lightroom as my program of choice for importing and managing photos is because I need a program that is dedicated to the management of images. With Lightroom, photos have to be explicitly imported into the Lightroom catalog before you can work on them, but once they are there, they are easier to manage and retrieve when needed. With Bridge you do have the immediacy of being able to browse the entire contents of your computer, but the trade off here is that because you can browse everything, this doesn't always make it so easy to locate the photos you are specifically looking for.

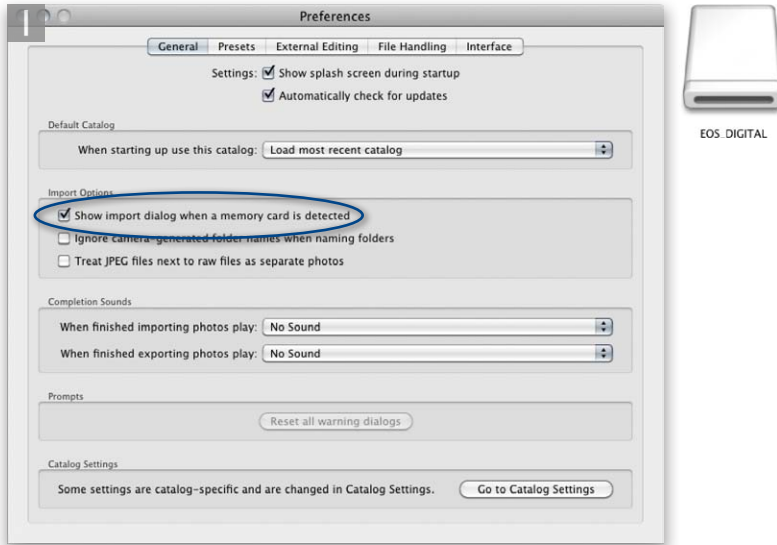
In the Lightroom Import Photos dialog you have similar options to those found in Photo Downloader, such as the ability to make backups, rename the files and apply basic metadata information. But in addition to this you have the option to apply develop settings and add custom keywords on import. You can also use the Import Photos dialog to report suspected duplicate files and prevent these from being re-imported. This can be useful if you happen to reuse a card and forgot to delete the photos that had been downloaded previously. Above all, Lightroom now offers a brand new import dialog which makes the import process even more streamlined.

After the files have been imported into Lightroom, the imported images will appear listed in the Folders panel of the Library module. This displays all the images that have been imported so far using the same disk volume and hierarchy structure as the folders that are found in the system folder organization (see step 4 on page 5). Moving files or folders in Lightroom is like moving files or folders at the system level (or via Bridge), except you must use Lightroom to do the moving. If you do this outside Lightroom, you can end up breaking the links to your master images, and this will be indicated by a '?' mark in Lightroom. One of the main features of Lightroom is that Develop module edits in Lightroom are applied in the form of metadata instructions (just like Camera Raw) and the master image originals are always preserved. To open pictures from Lightroom into Photoshop, you need to create an edit copy of the master image (with or without Lightroom adjustments) for editing in Photoshop, just as you would when opening a file from Bridge. The edit copy files are then saved back to the folder they came from and added to the Lightroom catalog.

Bridge versus Lightroom

The main thing to note here is that Bridge is a file browser, while Lightroom is a dedicated cataloging program. The times that I find Bridge most useful is when I am working on a project like this book and have hundreds of files to manage that are stored in specific book folders. The times where I find Lightroom useful is when I wish to source the master original files. The Lightroom cataloging features allow me to search and navigate these much quicker compared to working in Bridge.

Importing photos via Lightroom



1 The Lightroom preferences are accessed via the Lightroom menu (Mac) or Edit menu (PC). If you check the Show Import Dialog option when a memory card is detected (circled), Lightroom automatically launches the Import Photos dialog each time a card is inserted.



2 This shows the Import Photos dialog. Here, you can quickly scroll through the thumbnails of the images you are about to import and choose which ones to include in the import.

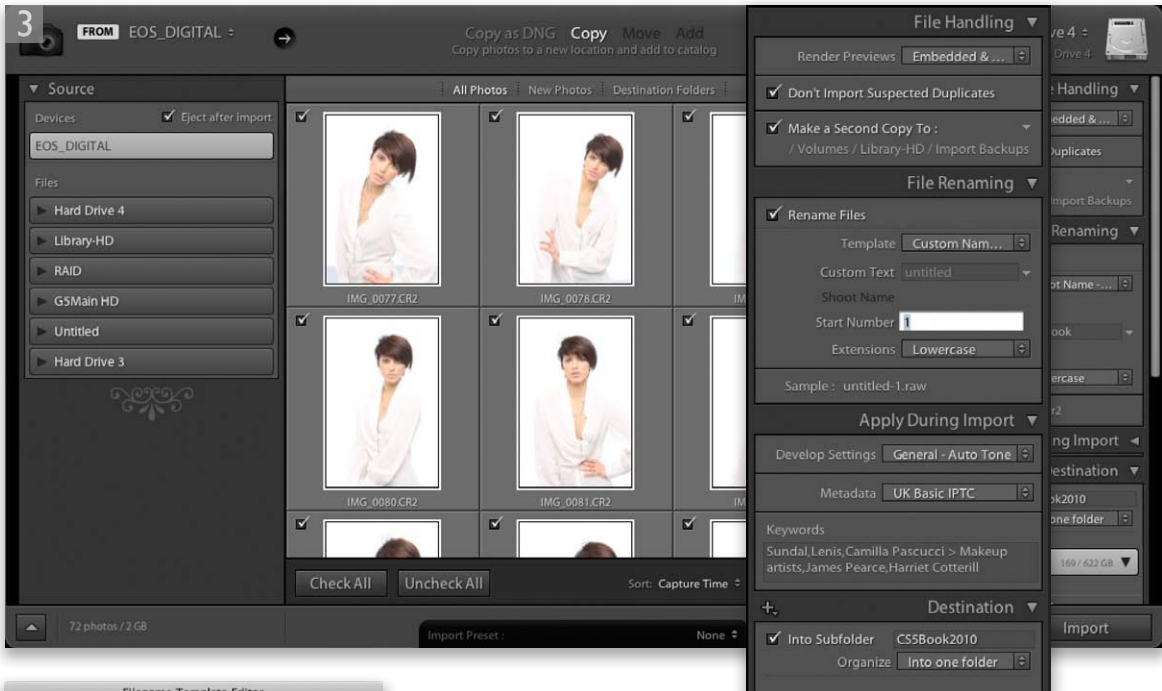


Figure 1 The Filename Template Editor offers far more versatile options for creating file renaming templates. And, more importantly, Lightroom keeps track of files as they are imported and will auto-update the renumbering until you next change the Import Photos settings.

3 If importing from a camera card, the quickest option is to select the 'Copy' option shown here. Alternatively, you can select 'Copy as DNG'. This makes a duplicate copy of all the images that are on the memory card and converts them to the DNG format.

In the File Handling panel we have the Render Preview options. Choosing 'Standard-Sized Previews' may slow down the import process as it forces Lightroom to render previews of the images before displaying them in Lightroom. 'Minimal' is a much faster option, while Embedded & Sidecar files makes immediate use of previews that may already be embedded in the files that are to be imported. As mentioned on page 148, checking 'Don't Import Suspected Duplicates' is a good idea as it can help prevent you accidentally importing files twice. You can also check the 'Make a Second Copy To' option and choose a folder to store backups of the files as they are imported.

The File Renaming panel makes use of file renaming templates such as the one shown in Figure 1. Here, you can enter custom text for use in the file renaming plus set a start number for the numbering sequence.

In the Apply During Import panel you can apply a pre-created Develop setting (such as a Lightroom/Camera Raw image adjustment) at the import stage. Copyright and contact information can be added by selecting a pre-created metadata template from the Metadata menu. Custom keywords can add information relating to the image collection you are about to import. As you type in the first few letters of a keyword, Lightroom will try to auto-complete it for you and pop a menu of possible keywords. This can help you avoid spelling mistakes and be consistent in your keywording.

In the Destination panel I prefer to organize the imported images into a single named folder. Once you have configured all the import settings, you can click Import to start copying the images to the computer.



4 As the images are imported the thumbnails will start to appear one by one in the content area. You shouldn't normally encounter any problems when importing files from a camera card, but if you choose the Copy as DNG option, you will be alerted to any corruptions in the files as they are imported. Once you have successfully imported all the images across to the computer and backup drive (if applicable) you can now safely delete all the images that are on the card, eject the card and prepare it for reuse.

A Lightroom/Photoshop workflow

The following workflow applies to working in Lightroom and Photoshop, and I have included this here in order to illustrate an alternative approach to incorporating Camera Raw style processing within a Photoshop workflow. In this example you can see how Camera Raw adjustments are applied at the beginning stage to optimize the master image. An Edit copy is opened in Photoshop and when the retouching is complete, you can use the Develop controls in Lightroom to further edit the copy image, such as applying a black and white conversion.



1 The Lightroom/Photoshop workflow starts off in more or less the same way as the Camera Raw/Photoshop workflow. Here, I selected a photo from the Lightroom Catalog, went to the Develop module (shown here) and applied some basic image adjustments to optimize the tones and colors. When I wanted to take the photo into Photoshop, I went to the Photo menu and choose Edit in ⇨ Edit in Adobe Photoshop (**⌘ E** [Mac], **ctrl E** [PC]). This opened the selected master photo in Photoshop as a pixel image copy of the original master, ready for me to edit. When I saved the image this added the copy photo to the catalog (in the same folder location) and added an '-Edit' suffix to the file name.



2 I could then use Photoshop to further edit the Edit-copy pixel image that was rendered from Lightroom.



3 As the rendered 'Edit' image was worked on in Photoshop and saved, the Lightroom catalog preview was updated. In Lightroom, I was able to apply further edit adjustments in the Develop module. In this instance I was able to use Lightroom to convert the photo to black and white, rather than adding an extra adjustment layer in Photoshop. As you can see, I was able to achieve a nice strong black and white conversion using Lightroom.