

## CLASS #1: Cropping

- Why crop?
- Rules of composition
- Let's crop
- More about aspect ratio
- Saving your file
- Homework

### WHY CROP?

Cropping is the first step in the photo-editing process. There are very few photos that would not benefit from a little cropping. One of the first things you should look at when thinking about editing a photo is, "Does it convey what I want it to convey?" Decide what you want the subject of the photo to be, and, by cropping, remove anything that distracts from the subject. Here are two photos that illustrate my point. The man behind the backstop was rude enough to stand in my photo—drinking his coffee! I cropped this photo to make my little friend, the batter, the center of attention. The man is still there, but he isn't the first thing your eye goes to.

### A Little Cropping Action



Your eye goes to the coffee drinker



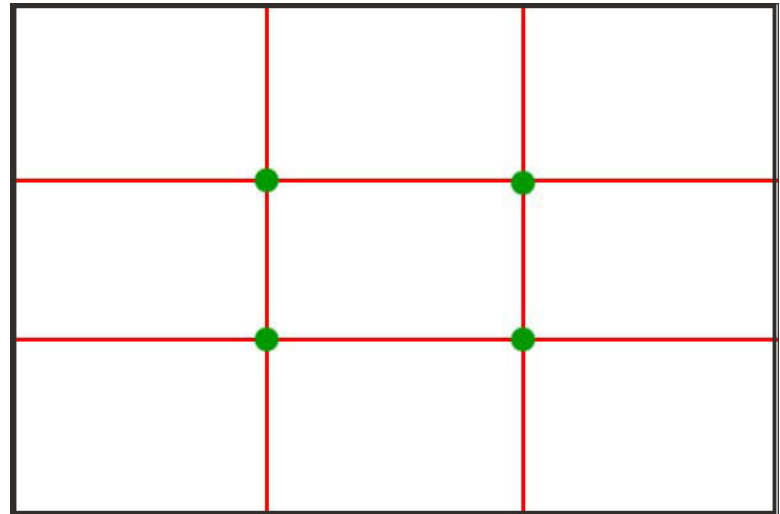
Your eye goes to the boy at bat

## RULES OF COMPOSITION

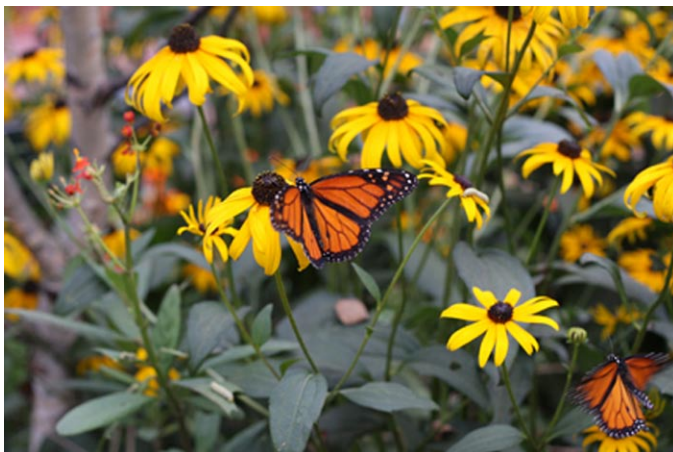
There are two rules of composition that apply to cropping your photos.

The first rule is the rule of thirds. With the rule of thirds, you divide the crop area in your mind: divide it into two evenly spaced vertical lines and two evenly spaced horizontal lines creating a grid of nine sections.

For a pleasing composition, the focal point of your photo should fall at one of the line intersections. Following this rule makes your photo interesting and pleasing to the eye. (Of course, as with anything else, there will be a few exceptions to this rule, but it is true MOST of the time.)



*Here is a photo of a monarch butterfly just as I took it, rather cluttered and uninspiring with the butterfly smack in the center of the photo.*



*Here is the same photo cropped, with the butterfly taking up more of the space and situated at one of the intersections. I think it's a lot more interesting and pleasing to the eye. Do you?*



The second rule is to fill the frame. The main focal point of your photo should fill as much of the frame as possible. This is fairly self explanatory but not always easy to do with your camera. Here's where Photoshop helps a lot!

*This is a cute photo of my grandson and his daddy.*




*In this instance, I wanted to highlight the special closeness between the two of them rather than focus on where the photo was taken. After the crop, the tender moment between the two of them is the focus of the photo with the background cropped out and their sweet kiss filling the frame.*




## LET'S CROP!

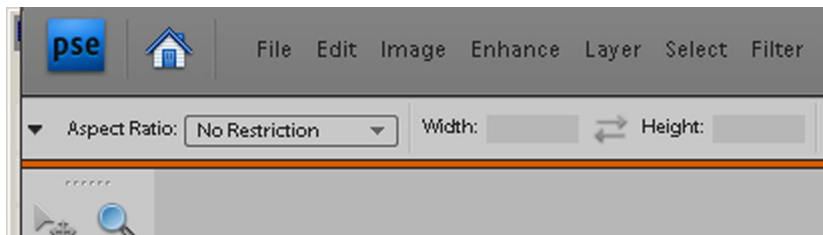
With these rules in mind, let's open Photoshop and get cropping! The directions and screenshots that I use will be for PSE (Photoshop Elements) 7. All of these directions will work in PSE 3 to 6 and Photoshop but you may have to search a little to find the tools and menus.

We're going to be using the crop tool (  ). It provides a quick and simple way to improve the composition of most photographs. So let's go!

1. Open a photo of your choice. From the menu bar at the top of the page, select >File >Open and navigate to one of your photos. Either double-click the photo or highlight it and click "Open." Your photo is now in your workspace!
2. The number one rule when working on any photo is: **always work on a duplicate!!!!!!!** If you decide that you don't like what you have done to the photo, you want to be able to revert to the original. There are several ways to do this. An easy way is to go to the menubar and select >File >Save As and

save your photo with a new name. I like to use the original name of the photo and add "dupl" to the end (Ex: original photo is DSC04555.jpg, duplicate is DSC04555dupl.jpg or spring21.jpg is spring21dupl.jpg). A box will pop up with JPEG options. For now, click OK, no matter what it says. Now you are good to go, working on your duplicate photo.

3. From the toolbar on the left, select the crop tool. 
4. When you choose the crop tool, the "aspect ratio" choices will appear on the left of the menubar at the top of the page.



5. Using the aspect ratio allows you to crop the photo while keeping in mind the relationship of photo length to photo width. The first box of the aspect ratio gives you several standard aspect ratio settings in a dropdown menu.
  - Click on the dropdown menu and choose "4 x 6 inches"
  - Position the crop tool on the photo in the upper left corner of the area that you want to keep.
  - Hold down the left mouse button and drag over and down to choose the area of the photo you want to keep. As you drag your crop tool, it will automatically size itself to a ratio of 4 by 6. When you release the mouse button, you will see a "bounding box," around the area you have selected. The area being removed will appear darkened.
  - To keep this crop, you would click on the green checkmark BUT FOR NOW click on the little red circle with the line across (under your cropped area) so that your photo returns to its original size.

6. This time, in the dropdown menu of the aspect ratio, choose "No restriction."
  - Now you will type in the little boxes. For a vertical photo, set the width to 2 and the height to 3 **OR**, for a horizontal photo, set the width to 3 and the height to 2. The first box will change to "Custom" because you have defined a custom ratio for cropping.
  - Position your crop tool in the upper left corner of the area you wish to crop and drag down.
  - This time as you drag your crop tool, it will automatically size itself to the ratio you set.
  - Again, click on the red circle to cancel this potential crop and let your photo stay at its original size.
  
7. Now, try one more time, this time, from the aspect ratio dropdown menu, choose "No restriction."
  - Position your crop tool in the upper left corner of the area you wish to crop and drag down.
  - This time as you drag your crop tool, it will choose an area based on how wide or how long you drag the cursor. The area has no preset ratio at all. You can make a tall thin selection, a short fat one or anything in between!
  - You can adjust the size of the bounding box by pulling out any of the little squares around the edge.
  - You can move the entire crop selection marquee around the image by clicking inside the crop selection and dragging it to a new position. Or you can simply move the bounding box by using the arrow keys on your keyboard. I prefer this method as the lighted area moves with the bounding box.
  - This time we're going to actually accept the crop by clicking on the green checkmark under the bounding box. The extra parts of the photo go away and only the cropped area remains.

## ***something to think about***

With all this being said about the virtues of cropping, be careful when you are cropping that you don't always remove everything from the background that may be of interest in the future. Some of my favorite vintage photos of my family include cars, furniture, and other items from the era in the background. They add to the charm!

## **MORE ABOUT THE ASPECT RATIO**

Why is the aspect ratio important when we resize our photos?

It's important to select an aspect ratio that corresponds with the shape and proportions you'd like the photo to have. If you want to crop a photo and have it professionally printed as a 4" by 6" photo, you must use the 4 by 6 ratio. If you use a different aspect ratio, you may have to stretch or "squish" the photo to get it to fit a 4 by 6 print. Note: the aspect ratio does not set exact photo size, but, rather, it sets the proportion of width to height. If you need a square photo, you need to use an aspect ratio that is equal for height and width, or, again, your photo image will be misshapen. You cannot resize a rectangular image into a square or a square image into a rectangle without creating some very interesting (and probably unwanted) results!

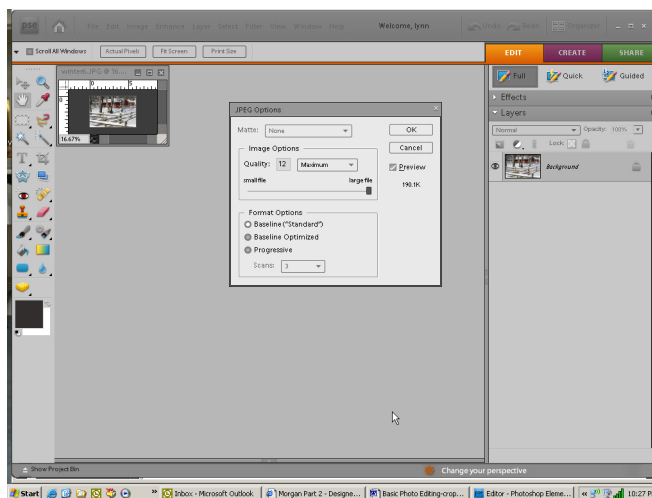
*This rectangular photo . . . would look like this if I tried to make it square!*



## SAVING YOUR NEW FILE

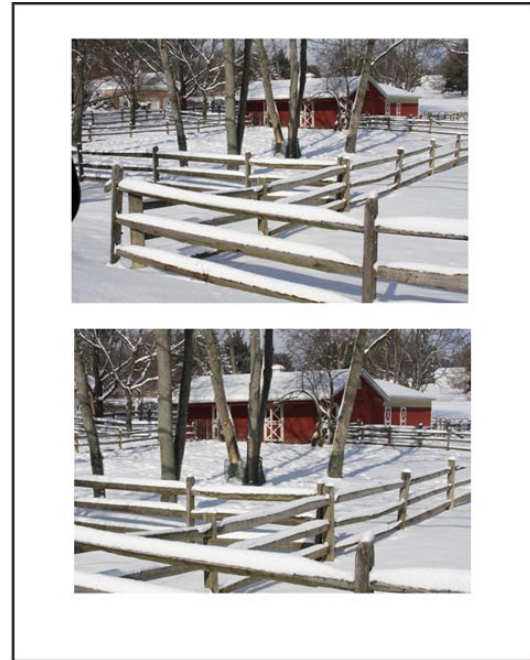
Now it's time to save this file. I like to save the cropped file with the same name as the original with a descriptor added, such as orangebutterflycrop1 or something similar.

1. From the top menubar, select >File >Save As.
2. In the "Save In" dropdown box, navigate to the folder in which you'd like to save your new cropped photo.
3. In the file name box at the bottom, give your file a name.
4. Then choose the file extension ".JPG" to save this as a photo file.
5. A box will pop up with some .JPG options. Choose a quality of 12-Maximum for excellent printing quality. Baseline-Standard should already be chosen as the default at the bottom of the box. Click OK and your file will be saved!



## HOMEWORK

Here is your "assignment." When you are finished it will look like one of these examples:

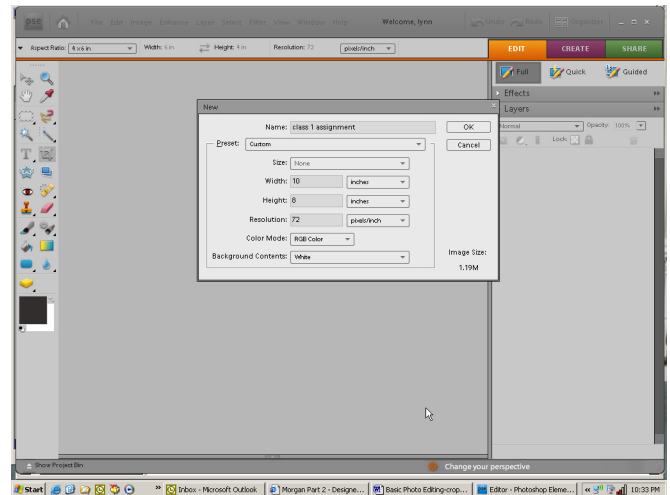


1. Find a photo that needs to be cropped. Duplicate it. This will be your "Before" photo.
2. Using the directions above, crop it using either a 4x6 ratio if it is a vertical photo or a 6x4 aspect ratio if it is a horizontal photo. Save it. This will be your "After" photo.
  - Now we will create a document, a box on which to put both the "Before" and the "After" photos. Here's how you do this:
  - From the menubar at the top, select >File>New>Blank File
  - A new window will open. (See screen shot below.)
  - In the Name box, type in: Class 1 assignment.
  - Set the preset to "Custom."



- If your photos are vertical, set the width as 10 inches and the height as 8 inches **OR** if your photos are horizontal, set width to 8 inches and height to 10 inches.


- Set resolution to "72," color mode to "RGB color," and background contents to "white." Note: We are using a resolution of 72 ppi (pixels per inch) because we're preparing this image to be seen on a computer screen. If we were printing it, we'd need a higher resolution of 300 ppi in order to get a good quality. Screen displays look good with lower resolution



- Click OK. A white box to contain your finished document will magically appear on your screen! Actually, this is a canvas upon which you may add photos, type, and shapes.

#### 4. On this document, you will place both your original photo and your cropped photo. To do this:

- From the top menubar, select >Window >Images >Cascade. This will allow us to put the box and both photos on the screen at the same time and be able to see them all. While we are putting this document together, you can move either of your photos or the white box by placing your cursor at the top (next to the file name), holding down the mouse button and dragging it.
- Open your "Before" photo by selecting >File>Open and navigating to your "Before" photo. Either double-click on it or highlight it and choose "Open."
- From the top menubar choose, >Image >Resize >Image Size.
- For "Document Size," set the width to either 6 or 4 depending on your photo's orientation. The "Height Aspect" of your photo will be chosen automatically. (Don't worry about what number appears in the "Height Aspect" area.)
- Be sure that the "Resample Image" box is checked at the bottom of the page, and set the resolution to "72."

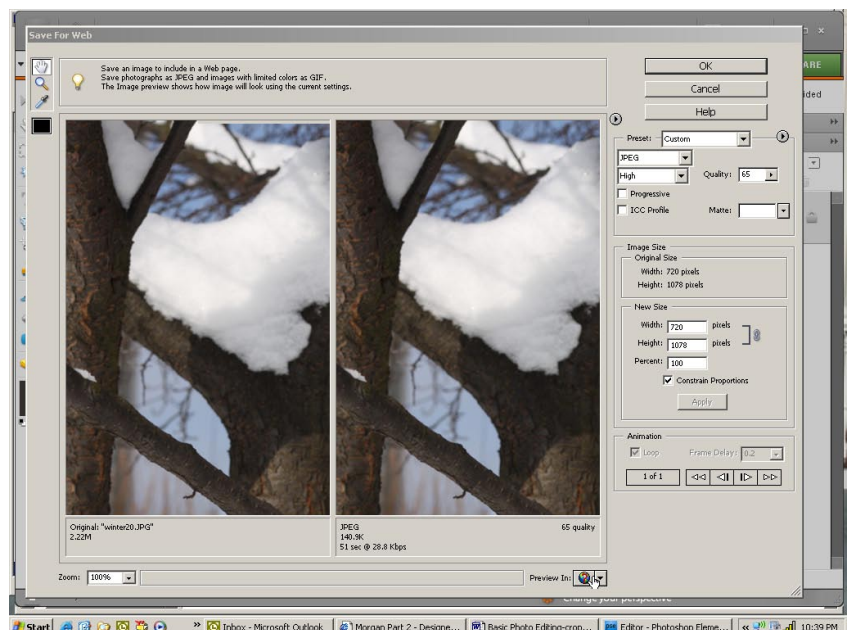
- Make sure the Move tool (  ) from the side toolbar is selected. Then you can drag your “Before” photo onto your new canvas by positioning your cursor on the photo, holding down the mouse button, and dragging the photo onto the white box. You can move it around on the canvas by holding down your mouse button, clicking anywhere inside the photo and dragging the photo until it is positioned where you want it.
- Follow the same directions (b through f above) for your “After” photo. Now you should have both photos on the canvas, as in the example on page 8.

We’re almost done!!!

## ***prepare your homework to post on “Get It Scrapped!”***

When both photos are on your canvas, you will want to prepare it for posting in the Get It Scrapped! gallery. Remember—for screen viewing, you can use much smaller files than when you want a quality print—which we’ll discuss in another class. Here’s how to do this:

1. Select the >Layer menu at the top of the page. Go all the way to the bottom of the dropdown menu and click on >Flatten Image.
2. Go to the top menubar and choose >Image >Resize >Image size. In the Pixel Dimensions boxes at the top, set whichever aspect (height or width) is bigger on your white box to “600” pixels. The other aspect should automatically become the right size. Click OK.
3. From the top menubar, select >File >Save for Web. Two copies of your white box will appear side by side like this:



4. In the menu box on the right side of the screen, choose:
  - Preset: "Custom"
  - Under Preset, choose "JPEG" from the dropdown menu
  - Under JPEG, choose "High"
  - When you click on the Quality box, it will become a slider. As you move the Quality slider to the right, watch the size under the white box on the right. It should be as large as possible without going over 150K. Click OK.
5. A box will pop up prompting: "Save Optimized As:" Click the dropdown menu and choose "My Documents."
6. At the top of the box, choose the little folder with a red dot on it. Right click on the folder to rename it and call it "Photo Editing Homework." Click anywhere in the white space to finish the renaming.
7. Click on the "Photo Editing Homework" folder.
8. Click inside the "File Name" box at the bottom. Type in "Class One," and click "Save."
9. Your file is now ready to upload. Congratulations!

In your description, when you post your homework, please tell us why you cropped your photo the way you did. I look forward to seeing your great examples!