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Choosing an editing program can be confusing at the best of times, but its especially difficult if youre new to the world of image editing. Most people have at least heard of Photoshop the name has even made its way into pop culture. What about Photoshop Elements? Whats the difference between the two? Whats the CC thing all about? Which program is best for you? Ill answer all these questions and more in this post, and Ill also show you how you can test out each program for yourself for free. I guess that means a bit of an introduction is in order, in case you havent read my other bio blurbs around the site. My name is Thomas Boldt, and Ive been using Photoshop for over 20 years, ever since the heady days of fruit-flavored iMacs, back before Photoshop Elements even existed. Ive used Photoshop for business and pleasure, and Ive used and reviewed many different versions of Photoshop Elements over the years, so I can offer some simple answers to your questions. What is Photoshop? Adobe Photoshop is the industry-standard image editor used by professionals around the world. Its the best image editor available for those who require the ultimate in image quality for print and screen alike. That may sound extravagant, but its true. Many developers have released competitors aimed at dethroning Photoshop, and some of them are quite good but if you look at the computers in the top advertising and design agencies around the world, theyre still going to be using Photoshop. With that in mind, its even more surprising when you learn that most people using Photoshop only use a small fraction of the tools it includes. Photoshop has become so jammed with features over the years that Adobe has actually begun to remove the video and 3D editing features, preferring to divide these features out into their own dedicated programs. When taking a few out, there are still so many features that it would be impossible to do them all justice in a single post, but Ill cover a few of the most important ones. There are excellent brush-based editing tools that can do anything you could ever want to a pixel, and probably a few things you never even knew were possible. You can create perfectly photorealistic digital art composites or manage a complete color correction workflow from a large-format digital camera all the way to fine art print in archival quality. Most recent among Photoshops incredible features are so-called Neural Filters. Its not a brain-computer interface (one day, maybe) but rather some incredibly advanced automatic adjustments, powered by Adobes machine-learning software. If youve played around with the face swap apps and Snapchat filters that have been taking the smartphone world by storm in the last couple of years, youve probably got an idea of whats possible. Neural Filters allow you to perform extremely complex edits automatically, from basic skin smoothing to completely changing a persons facial expression. You can automatically colorize black and white photos, upscale photos without losing detail, or instantly harmonize the colors between two images to create a seamless composite. Change the time and season of a landscape by moving a few sliders There are quite a few more, as well as a waitlist for additional filters that are currently in development. They may not produce high-quality results that are ready for a coffee table book, but theyve got an incredible amount of potential. Of course, there are also some people who just use Photoshop to make memes. Dramatically excessive overkill in the editing department, but probably really fun too. The ridiculously feature-stuffed nature of Photoshop is also what led Adobe to create Photoshop Elements in the first place and that was way back in 2001. Photoshop is available for Macs and Windows PCs as part of a monthly subscription plan. The cheapest plan is the Photography plan for $19.99 USD per month, which includes Photoshop, Lightroom, Lightroom Classic, and Photoshop for iPad, along with full access to Adobe Fonts and 1 TB of cloud storage for syncing data between your devices. Wait, What About The CC Name? The CC that was part of Photoshops name until recently stood for Creative Cloud, the new cloud-focused software platform that Adobe launched in 2013. Every Adobe app received a CC-branded name change at that point, and they are ready for a single-purchase model to a monthly subscription model. Unfortunately, many users were extremely displeased with this decision and there were some major issues with the new focus on cloud-based services during the early years. The cloud was still a relatively new concept at the time and services often failed to sync, which was an unacceptable headache for anyone working against a deadline. The issues are now largely resolved, but you can read an excellent summary of the situation. Photoshop CC 2019 was the last release to use the CC branding in its title, with each subsequent release named just for the year. What is Adobe Photoshop Elements? Photoshop Elements, as you might guess from the name, started out as a simplified image editor that focused on the core elements of Photoshops editing capabilities (subtle, I know!). Since it was first launched back in 2001, its gone through a new upgrade release cycle every single year, which makes using the program a well-polished experience by Photoshop Elements has a much more user-friendly interface than its more powerful cousin, and its better suited to casual users who are more focused on results rather than following the best possible image editing standards. When you first load the program, you are presented with a task-based welcome screen that lets you search a range of tutorials for step-by-step guidance and provides updated information for users who are upgrading from a previous version of Elements. Photoshop Elements also includes an organizer app to help keep track of your photo collection, as well as a bit of gentle prodding from Adobe to get you to purchase Premiere Elements for home video editing. If you choose to open the Photo Editor workspace directly instead of launching a guided tutorial, youll find that it is divided into three main areas: Guided mode, which offers step-by-step on-screen instructions for a range of image editing tasks while youre working on them. Quick mode, which has a simplified interface with limited editing tools, focusing on preset adjustments, is perfect for new users. Expert mode unlocks the full suite of editing tools for users who are ready for full control over the editing process. Interestingly enough, Photoshop Elements has even begun to add features that dramatically simplify some of the most complex edits you can make in the more complete version of Photoshop. You may not get the same quality of result, but does that always matter if the edit can be done by a novice editor in half the time it would take a pro to do the same job? While Elements has great editing features for casual users, there are some major gaps in its capabilities when compared to the full version of Photoshop. There is also no support for saving CMYK images, the color space used by most professional printers, and other color management options are also missing. For casual users, this wont matter much, but it would be a dealbreaker for most professionals and artists who care deeply about the exact color reproduction. Photoshop Elements is available for a one-time purchase of $99.99 USD (but it often has a discount) for both Macs and Windows PCs. While it does require signing up for an Adobe account, there is no monthly subscription requirement. Which is Right for You? This can be a hard choice, but heres the decision in a nutshell: if youre running a business or aiming for professional-quality results, take the plunge and learn Photoshop CC. If you just want to be able to edit your vacation snapshots and create fun pictures to share with friends and family, Photoshop Elements is a better choice. If youve never edited any photos before and youre not sure if youre going to enjoy the process or not, its probably better to start with Photoshop Elements. The Guided and Quick modes in Photoshop Elements will help you get started with image editing, and then you can switch to Expert mode once youre more familiar with the program. If you want the absolute best of the best, then invest the time and energy to learn Photoshop. Its the gold standard for image editing, and theres a good reason for that: its the most powerful option available. Theres also nothing stopping you from starting out with Photoshop Elements and eventually upgrading to the full CC version if it turns out that you really like photo editing. Additionally, there are free trials available for both programs, so you dont need to choose based on my recommendations alone. If youre still not sure after reading this article, download each trial and give the program a test drive to see which one you like better. Photoshop Elements Free Trial Adobe Photoshop Free Trial A Final Word Phew, that took a bit longer than I thought it would, but I hope youve got a better idea of the difference between Photoshop and Photoshop Elements, and you know which one is better suited to your needs. If youre still struggling to make up your mind, reach out in the comments and the PhotoshopBuzz community is happy to give you a hand! However, you do it, happy Photoshopping! About Thomas Boldt (Last updated on January 9th, 2023) Whats the difference between Photoshop and Photoshop Elements? Is one more valuable than the other? Well answer these questions in this head-to-head comparison of these two Adobe applications. For comparing Photoshop and Photoshop Elements, well be looking at how well each one fares in common usage and rate them on a scale of one to five. Both programs are used primarily for photography edits. On that level, well consider how editing photos stack up for each programs layout, functions, workflow, and the support they offer. Photoshop is one of Adobes most famous graphics applications. The program has been around since 1990 and has left quite the mark on the work of graphic editors. How many times have you heard someone in your lifetime use the phrase Photoshopped? Photoshop started as a Mac-exclusive piece of software that mainly focused on editing photographs. The program is now capable of graphic design, digital artwork, and animation, becoming far more than a mere photo editing app. The app has robust tools to accomplish everything from photography edits to digital illustrations. The program has grown to feature aspects of animation and video. Theres a high level of customization with available plugins. The monthly subscription price is expensive. Requires a heavy-duty computer to handle such power. Considering the steep learning curve, its not the most straightforward program to learn. Photoshop Elements is essentially the consumer version of Photoshop. That means that its targeted more at novice users than professionals. This aspect is highlighted by a simplified interface and fewer tools and features to sort through. Elements are just one of many Photoshop iterations that have popped up, such as the mobile version of Photoshop Express. Photoshop Elements has existed since 2001 as the cheaper alternative for the most common of photo-editing functions. Just like Photoshop, Elements has also evolved with its features. Elements is a cheap investment in Photoshop with a one-time payment and no monthly subscription. The application is easy to use for the most common photography projects. The simplified software makes it an easy recommendation for beginners. The features of Photoshop Elements are somewhat limited when compared to the professional version of Photoshop. The plugin support is severely limited when compared to Photoshop. While Photoshop Elements doesnt require a subscription, you still have to pay if you want to upgrade to the next version. 1. Interface Winner: Photoshop Elements. With a more straightforward design, the interface of Photoshop Elements is easy on the eyes. 2. Tools Winner: Photoshop. The unique tools in Photoshop can aid in any project beyond that of photo edits. 3. Features Winner: Photoshop. Photoshops many features have made the program expand into the areas of animation and video. 4. Workflow Winner: Photoshop Elements. With simplified tools, making edits in Photoshop Elements is a fast and easy experience. 5. Plugins Winner: Photoshop. The abundance of handy plugins in Photoshop can accommodate any project. 6. Price Winner: Photoshop Elements. With a one-time payment, Elements is a much cheaper investment than Photoshop. The 3D features are also convenient if you find yourself working with 3D animation and need to create just the right texture or bump map for your 3D objects. One of Photoshops best features is the Camera RAW filters, at least for photographers. This filter functions similar to Lightroom as it will allow you to edit specific areas of color, contrast, and more within your photograph. Its a speedy little filter using sliders and real-time previews. We also cant forget to mention the Timeline feature that allows you to create animations. Its perfect for either making an animated gif of images or a frame-by-frame animation clip. Theres no limit to the type of video you can produce within Photoshop, making it a bit of an animation program as well. Considering the wealth of projects you can develop in Photoshop, its hard not to recommend it for just about any industry. Thats why were giving it a perfect score. Photoshop Elements is great for beginners seeking basic photography edits. Weve already mentioned the Red Eye and Whiten Teeth tools as a real time-saver. But theres also the handy Adjustments Panel that simplifies even more common edits. Its a bit more standard. That simplifies even more common edits, that allow you to make quick clicks and drags. Its far more pleasing to use than going through the bulky Camera RAW filter of Photoshop for a similar effect. It should be noted that Photoshop Elements does have the ability to create animations. These animations, however, are limited to a handful of presets to create the illusion of your photos being in motion. Its a handy feature for making social media posts that come alive but not much more than that. Photoshop Elements is a bit limited when compared to Photoshop for features. The limitation of basic photo edits and illustrations is a bit of a hindrance. Since the program does well in those areas, however, were only deducting one point. Winner: Photoshop. Photoshops many features are strong enough to be useful for just about any creative project. The Camera Raw filter, versatile Timeline for animation and 3D effects for textures are the real standouts of the app. All of these features just blow Photoshop Elements right out of the water. While Photoshop can accomplish a lot, it does take a while to figure it out. For example, if you wanted to create an animated GIF, youd have to enable the timeline window and learn how to make each frame. It can take some time to figure out these settings. Photoshop just has so much functionality that youll have to customize and retool the interface to suit your needs. If you know youll be drawing a lot in the program; you may want to have the brushes in a mini-window. If youre working designing graphics, you may need the layers window to be more significant. While Photoshop can accomplish a lot, it takes a lot of learning to take advantage of that versatility. This applies not only to the interface and tools but even the components of graphic design and animation. Its why we had to deduct two points in this area. Photoshop Elements has been designed to get around the learning curve of Photoshop. This means theres less hunting for tools, effects, and presets. Less time searching for the right features means make editing photos a speedy experience. Photoshop Elements organizes the interface into three different tabs: Quick, Guided, and Expert. If you have a good idea of the specific edits you want to make, select Quick for a refined look and simplified icons. If you need a bit of help finding the right features, Guided is the workspace that helps you out the most. For speeding up much of the photography process, Expert gives Elements a perfect score. Winner: Photoshop Elements. The process of editing photos in Photoshop Elements is easy that it is recommended for any skill level. Whether youre a pro who needs edits finished quickly or a first-timer who wants to take a whirl at post-production, Elements accommodates both. Its a great choice for a smooth workflow. Given that Photoshop is used widely in various industries, plenty of plugins have popped up to accommodate any project. If you need another type of brush to make your illustrations look more like paintings, consider installing the GrutBrushes plugin. If you need some more colorful presets for your photos, consider the ON1 Effects plugin. And those are just the free plugins. If youre willing to pay, there are some top-tier premium Photoshop plugins to consider. A strong premium plugin to consider is Aurora HDR if you want to make your HDR images look even better with more precise controls. Fluid Mask 3 takes a lot of the grunt work out of removing background if masking is an issue. You can find these plugins on both the Adobe website and third-party developers. For so many options, plugins get a perfect score for Photoshop. Photoshop Elements does have some plugins but nowhere near as many as Photoshop. While its unlikely most users of Elements will want to pursue plugins, it would be nice to have those extra options. Unfortunately, theres not much support for the plugins you can get with Photoshop. Photoshop plugins work with Elements? Adobes website doesnt say which ones will or wont work. Youll have to test them by attempting an install. Based on the information in Adobes forums, theres not a lot of accurate information in plugin support from the many developers and users. So not only are there a limited number of plugins that work with Photoshop Elements but theres also uncertainty, leading to us deducting two points. Winner: Photoshop. Photoshop has not only the most plugins available but also the most stability. The plugins present are exceptionally powerful at making Photoshop run much smoother with common and uncommon tasks. Photoshop wins the plugin category for offering a mix of both variety and versatility. Photoshop can only be purchased in the form of a subscription. The cost is $20.99/monthly with an annual plan. Thats a cost that can add up over time. Thankfully, you can save on this cost if you go for the Photography Bundle. The bundle includes Photoshop, Lightroom, and Lightroom Classic for only $9.99/monthly with an annual plan. This is an absolute bargain. The only catch is that the Photography Plan only gives you access to 20GB of cloud storage space. This differs from the singular Photoshop plan that gives you 1TB. If youd like 1TB, itll cost you another $10, bringing the cost to $19.99/monthly. Lightroom is cheaper than most Adobe applications. Most Adobe Creative Cloud apps dont have such bundles that make them cheaper. That being said, were deducting a point for the long-run expense that can make this app a costly investment. Photoshop Elements has always been a one-time purchase. Theres no subscription required. All you have to do is pay $99.99 once and the program is yours for life. The only caveat is that you will have to pay to upgrade to the next version. The good news is that you can get a discount if you decide to upgrade. Its not a big discount but its a lower price to keep yourself updated on the most advanced version of the program. Photoshop Elements is still a cheap investment, even if you have to pay more upfront. Since the product will save you money in the long run, were tacking on half a point. Winner: Photoshop Elements. Theres a comparatively low investment for those using Photoshop Elements. If youre willing to use the current version of the program for multiple years, you could end up saving a lot of money over the monthly subscription model. Photoshop Elements is the winner for requiring you to pay month-to-month. Photoshop Photoshop Elements Projects Photography, Digital Illustration, Graphic Design, Animation Photography, Limited Animation Plugins Available Many Few Best Suited For Industry Professionals, Moderate Photographers, Graphic Designers Beginner Photographers, Non-Photographers Price $20.99/monthly or $9.99/monthly on the Photography Plan $99.99 once The choice between Photoshop and Photoshop Elements ultimately comes down to your skill level. If youre new to using Photoshop or graphic editors in general, Photoshop Elements is the obvious choice. Its cheap, easy-to-use, and is best suited for novice photographers or those who just want to edit a handful of family photos. If you know youre going to be using Photoshop professionally in your career, Photoshop is your best option. Its ideal that you get used to this industry-standard program considering how widely it is used. Adobe Fresco vs Procreate: Head-to-Head Battle (2023) Is Photoshop Photoshop Elements differs from Photoshop as being more of a consumer-grade version of Photoshop. It has fewer features and is targeted at non-photographers for its simplified tools and interface. The price is also a one-time cost rather than the subscription model of Photoshop. Is Adobe Photoshop Elements free? Photoshop Elements is not available for free, but it doesnt require a subscription. The app is one of the few offered by Adobe that you can buy for one cost of $99.99. Once youve paid that, you own that version of Photoshop Elements for life. If you want to upgrade to the next version, you can get a discount. Can I get Photoshop for free? Photoshop can only be used for free legally in the form of a seven-day trial. The trial will give you access to all of Photoshops many tools and features. When that time passes, youll then have to pay for the monthly subscription price to continue using the application. Is Photoshop good for beginners? Photoshop takes some getting used to as it has a bit of a steep learning curve. You will have to look up some guides and tutorials to find your way around the program. Its worth learning, however, as the program is an industry standard used in various fields. Its not exactly beginner-friendly, but it is valuable for beginners to master. What are some alternatives to Photoshop? Photoshop has had plenty of alternative programs pop up since its inception. One of the most popular and free ones comparable to Photoshop is GIMP, which is great for both editing photos and drawing. If youre seeking just to edit photos, consider Adobe Lightroom for the easiest and quickest way to edit photos. Other alternatives to consider include Affinity Photo, Photopea, and Pixelmator Pro. Is Photoshop Elements good for beginners? Photoshop Elements is an excellent choice for those just starting to use graphic design and photo editing software. The app has simplified many of the tools to tweak photographs enough to learn and use with little instruction. Its also a good investment considering you only have to pay a one-time cost instead of paying for a monthly or annual subscription as you would with Photoshop. Mark McPherson has been working as a video editor and content writer for over ten years. His background started in animation and video editing before shifting into the realm of web development. He also branched out into content writing for various online publications. Mark is an expert in video editing, content writing, and 2D/3D animation. The naming similarities between Photoshop and Photoshop Elements can be confusing a little bit, but each app is intended for a different type of image editing project. Photoshop is an extremely powerful image editor that has become the industry standard app across many digital art disciplines. It offers professional-grade editing features, cutting-edge AI tools, and an impressive range of third-party plugins for expanding its capabilities. However, it can be quite intimidating for new users to learn, and it is only available as a monthly subscription. As you probably guessed from the name, Photoshop Elements is a younger cousin to Photoshop that focuses on the core elements of image editing (see what they did there?). It provides a much more user-friendly approach to image editing, with a simplified interface and plenty of guided tools that make it easy to perform complex editing tasks. Photoshop Elements is available with no subscription required. We have included in the digital arts for over 20 years, Ive been working with Photoshop and various other image editing apps during that entire time. If that doesnt clear up which app is best for your needs, then lets take a closer look at how each app functions. In this comparison, Ill look at the user interface for each app, compare their different approaches to image editing, and explore the various editing tools that are available in each one. Last but not least, well also explore the pricing differences between the two apps. About Photoshop Elements Adobe Photoshop First Released 2001 1990 Price $99.99 USD (one-time payment) $9.99 USD / month, bundled with Lightroom User Skill Level Casual Home Users Professionals AI Tools Yes Yes Guided Editing Yes No Templated Projects Yes No Media Library Tools Yes No Advanced Color Management Yes No Photoshop and Photoshop Elements have a number of similar features, but they each have their own unique approach to them. This makes it a bit hard to declare a clear winner in almost all of the categories below, but heres what were going to compare between the two: the user interfaces, their automatic and manual editing tools, media organization options, and pricing. One of the biggest differences between these two apps is how they actually look when youre working with them. Photoshop Elements divides its features into a few different sections: Guided Mode, Quick Mode, and Expert Mode. Guided Mode is designed for absolute beginners and provides step-by-step instructions for applying complex image edits. Quick mode features a reduced toolset used for very basic manual edits, and once youre more comfortable with manual editing, you can switch to Expert mode for even more manual editing options. While Photoshop Elements interface is much easier to use for beginners, it is starting to look a bit clunky and outdated, and it could definitely use a modernized refresh. This is a minor issue, but the UI hasnt changed much in the last 5 versions if not more which is a very long time in the user interface design world. Photoshop has a much more complex interface, filled with a never-ending array of tool panels, info panels, properties panels, and more. This allows its users to completely customize the interface to their current needs, and you can save as many different configurations as you want. Switching between the different UI layouts only takes a few clicks, so you can switch from your photo editing workspace to your typography workspace to your digital painting workspace without interrupting your workflow. Of course, this complexity can also be intimidating for new users, and many people feel a bit overwhelmed the first time they open Photoshop. Winner: Tie. Photoshop Elements is great for beginners, but Photoshops flexibility is better for professionals. Adobe has invested heavily in AI tools over the last several years, but each app takes advantage of this in different ways. Photoshop Elements uses AI for applying complex automatic adjustments with only a few clicks, projects that would take an extremely long time to produce by hand. You can add motion to the water in a still image of a waterfall, add an animated overlay, or completely replace the sky with a more dynamic one. You can also instantly remove unwanted objects from your image or make a precise selection around your subject in one click. While these projects sound cool, its important to remember that Adobe chooses the very best image results for use as their marketing images, and the quality of the results you get will vary depending on the contents of the image youre editing. Photoshop uses AI too, although its focus is on automating the more tedious aspects of manual editing. It helps improve automatic object detection, which can be used for creating complex selections with a single brushstroke, selecting the sky in a photo in a single click, automatic background removal, and other time-saving tricks. Photoshop also incorporates simple, practical AI-powered tools such as enhanced denoising and upscaling, which are extremely helpful when processing high ISO images or recomposing shots while maintaining image resolution. There are also face-aware liquify/warp tools that dramatically speed up the portrait retouching process and several more advanced AI tools in the Neural Filters section. Last but not least, Photoshop now includes a generative AI tool for creating new photorealistic content using simple text prompts. Functioning much like the popular Midjourney and Dall-E generative AI systems that took the world by storm over the last few years, this technology holds a lot of promise, although it remains to be seen if it can live up to the hype and provide high-quality results. Winner: Tie. Once again, Photoshop Elements focuses on creating fun results easily, while Photoshop prioritizes productivity and image quality. Just because these apps have fancy automatic tools doesnt mean that you need to use them for everything. Some editing tasks just need to be done by hand, and fortunately, both Photoshop and Photoshop Elements have excellent brush-based editing tools. Photoshop Elements offers a user-friendly approach to manual editing tools in its Quick and Expert modes, dividing colorful tool icons into separate sections to help orient new users. Youll find all of the most important tools, such as clone stamping, healing, burn/dodge tools, and the paintbrush, as well as options for placing text and basic vector shapes. As youd probably expect, Photoshop takes a more complex and capable approach to the same tools, with a few extra specialized options included that arent available in Photoshop Elements. Youll also get more control over your brushes, including an impressive range of customization options for use with pressure-sensitive graphics tablets, which can dramatically alter how every brush-based tool operates. Winner: Photoshop. Photoshop Elements is bundled with a secondary program known as Elements Organizer. Similar to Adobe Bridge, this app acts as a media library management tool for keeping track of all your images and editing projects. It offers plenty of organizational options such as photo albums, facial recognition so you can find all your photos of a certain person, GPS location sorting, keyword tagging, and more. In comparison, Photoshop does not expect you to use a companion organizer app, presumably because Lightroom provides a lot of these functions, and the two apps are bundled together in almost every Creative Cloud subscription plan. Anyone with an Adobe account can download the free Bridge app that does a similar organizational job, but its not integrated with Photoshop the same way that Elements Organizer is integrated into the Photoshop Elements home screen. Winner: Photoshop Elements. One of the biggest differences between these two versions of Photoshop is their pricing structure. It might seem like a small thing, but this issue caused a great deal of trouble when Adobe switched the professional version of Photoshop to a subscription-only model. This means that you pay a minimum of $9.99 USD monthly for access to Photoshop. In fact, you cant buy a standalone version of Photoshop at all and if you stop paying, then you are no longer able to open or use the app. Photoshops monthly subscription does come bundled with several other apps, including Lightroom, Lightroom Classic, and Photoshop for iPad, as well as access to Adobe Fonts, Adobe Stock, and at least 20 GB of online storage space in the Creative Cloud. More storage space is available with more expensive plans, of course. Photoshop Elements is one of the few Adobe apps that are available as a one-time purchase, priced at $99.99 USD for each new version. If youre happy with your current version, theres no need to upgrade, and you can use the software you purchased forever. If you do choose to upgrade, existing customers get a slightly discounted price of $79.99 USD but only if they have the most recent previous version of Elements. Winner: Tie, depending on personal preference. I think the subscription model provides good value for businesses, but many home users understandably dont want to deal with it. Photoshop Elements is the perfect choice for anyone who wants to focus on the fun results of image editing without spending too much time on the details. If you want to polish up family photos and holiday snapshots in just a few clicks so that you can quickly share them with friends, family, and social media, then Photoshop Elements is the ideal solution. The full version of Photoshop is intended for enthusiasts and professional image editors who need the best tools available for image editing. If youre willing to invest the time to learn advanced tools and techniques for image editing, then Photoshop can deliver unparalleled image quality in your final results. Here are a few other questions that often come up when discussing Photoshop vs. Photoshop Elements. This really depends on what you want to do with your images. If you want to share fun pictures with your friends, family, and maybe your social media accounts, then Photoshop Elements is probably good enough for your needs but it may not be capable of handling more demanding professional tasks. No, you dont have to buy Photoshop Elements every year, but you will need to purchase the latest version if you want access to the latest features. There is an upgrade discount available to existing customers, but it only applies to users who upgrade from the most recent previous version. The upgrade discount for Photoshop Elements is roughly 20% off the regular price. The upgrade price for purchasing Photoshop Elements is $79.99 USD instead of the standard $99.99 USD price for new customers. Photoshop Elements and Photoshop are aimed at two very different sections of the image editing market, so its up to you to decide which one is right for you. Photoshop is geared for beginners and casual editors who want to have fun with their images, while Photoshop is the only real choice for professional image editors who demand the best in precision and image quality from their editing software. Do you have a question about Photoshop or Photoshop Elements that I didnt answer in this comparison article? Let me know in the comments below, and Ill do what I can to help out. When it comes to image editing, both Photoshop and Photoshop Elements are popular tools, but they cater to different needs and skill levels. Photoshop is widely recognized as the industry standard for professional designers and photographers, offering advanced features for creating and manipulating complex images. On the other hand, Photoshop Elements is designed for beginners who want a more user-friendly option for organizing, editing, and sharing photos. In this article, well compare Photoshop vs. Photoshop Elements to help you understand which tool is better suited to your needs, covering key differences, features, and use cases. Photoshop vs Photoshop Elements What is Photoshop? Photoshop is a popular graphic editing software used to create, edit, and enhance images. It was originally developed by Thomas and John Knoll and has become a standard in the design and photography industries. The software was first released in 1990, with its latest stable version launching in 2022. Photoshop offers a vast array of tools for editing, such as shape tools, selection tools, clone stamp tools, pen tools, and more. These features allow users to perform detailed photo retouching, image manipulation, and creative graphic design work. Advantages of Photoshop It is a highly professional photo editing tool that simplifies advanced editing. It supports almost all image formats, making it versatile for various operating systems, providing flexibility for users. Photoshop features numerous templates and design resources to kickstart projects. Photoshop produces high-quality images suitable for both digital and print media. Disadvantages of Photoshop It is only available via subscription (monthly or yearly), with no one-time purchase option. The software is resource-intensive, requiring significant memory and storage space. What is Photoshop Elements? Photoshop Elements is a simplified version of Photoshop designed for non-professional photographers and hobbyists. It is a user-friendly editing tool that offers basic to intermediate features for photo enhancement and creation. Developed by the same team behind Photoshop, it was introduced to cater to users who need essential editing capabilities without the complexity of advanced software. The latest stable version was launched in 2021 and is available for both Windows and Mac operating systems. Advantages of Photoshop Elements The interface is intuitive and easy to use, making it accessible to beginners. Offers automated editing tools and guided edits to speed up the editing process. Requires less processing power, making it suitable for systems with lower specifications. A single license allows installation on both Windows and Mac, offering flexibility. Disadvantages of Photoshop Elements It doesnt support exporting images in CMYK color mode, limiting print design capabilities. Keyboard shortcut customization is not available on Mac versions, reducing workflow efficiency for some users. Heres a well-structured and easy-to-understand comparison table between Adobe Photoshop and Photoshop Elements: Aspect Adobe Photoshop Photoshop Elements Definition A pixel-based image editing software used to create, edit, and manipulate images. A photo management software focused on processing and managing images with built-in effects. Pricing Subscription starts at $20.99 per month. Available for a one-time payment of $69.99, no subscription needed. Creative Cloud Integration Part of Adobe Creative Cloud, enabling seamless access to other Adobe apps and services. Not part of Adobe Creative Cloud, functioning as a standalone application. Photo Organization Uses Adobe Bridge for organizing and managing photos. Comes with a built-in organizer for managing and sorting photos by date, tags, and more. Plugins Support Supports a wide range of plugins for extended functionality. Supports a limited number of plugins, focused on basic enhancements. Target Audience Primarily used by professionals and large-scale industries. Designed for beginner photographers and hobbyists. Customer Base Has a large and established customer base, being a decade-old industry-standard software. Relatively newer software with a smaller customer base. System Requirements Requires high memory with at least 2 GB RAM for smooth performance. Lightweight software that requires only 1 GB RAM. Conclusion Photoshop and Photoshop Elements serve specific purposes depending on the users needs and experience level. Photoshop is ideal for professionals and advanced users who require powerful tools and extensive features for complex design and photo projects. On the other hand, Photoshop Elements offers a more simplified and affordable option for beginners and casual users who want to manage, edit, and enhance their photos without needing a steep learning curve. By understanding the differences between the two, you can make an informed decision about which software is best suited for your creative projects. Whatever your job is, youll find its the best helper for you. Today, were going to talk about two versions of Adobe: Photoshop and Elements. One is for mid-to-high-level editors, and the other is easier to use. These 2 applications are very similar: good power, time-saving, lots of features, and use AI functions. But there are differences as it is. As a bonus, weve also prepared a Photoshop alternative for you. Read the rest of the article to find out what it is. Exclusive Tools of Endless Possibilities in One Editor EXPLORE NOW! What is Adobe Photoshop? The idea of Adobe Photoshop is to correct an image, improve its perception, and give photos and videos clarity and harmony. The program allows you to edit your photos in any style thanks to the advanced features of the editor. And even though it takes quite a long time, the result is a colorful image created from many layers. So think, exciting vs natural, Adobe Photoshop vs Adobe Photoshop Elements. The Main Features of Adobe Photoshop Improving the quality of scanned, and printed images, eliminating color defects during shooting; Creating multilayer images with the ability to edit each one separately to convey color depth, working with complex graphics; Assembling photographs and pictures, individual elements into collages; Restoring old pictures, photo retouching; Working with sketches and drawings; Wide choice of tools for processing text elements (fonts, effects, filters); 2D and 3D model processing, adding textures, working with graphics; Creation of interesting graphic elements for printing, design, site design, and so on; Preparation for printing on the printer or the Internet and instantaneous publication of files; Working with standard formats for raster and vector images; Coloring black and white files; You can also add, and change the style of texts thanks to the advanced text formatting. In a word, Adobe Photoshop is right for you if you work with photo editors for a long time or if you need to manually change the image, or if you like complications. But if you are just getting started with editors, then Photoshop doesnt suit you. Alternatively, we recommend Luminar Neo, an AI-powered photo editor. It offers tools similar to Photoshop, including generative features, but its automated processes make it much more convenient, especially for beginners. Also read: Best Apps to Remove People from Photos What is Photoshop Elements So, what is Adobe Photoshop Elements? This is a simplified version of Adobe Photoshop, with a limited number of features and a minimalistic interface. If you are at an entry-level with graphics editors, then this program will suit you perfectly. Once you decide to open your program workspace, you will see the modes in which you will work: Guided edit mode. Use this mode if you need to apply preset effects. It provides you with step-by-step instructions for editing your images so you will never lose the change you want. Quick mode. Use this mode if you want to change a photo quickly, as sharpen it or change the color. The list of tools in this mode is limited. Expert mode. This mode gives you full access to the tools, it makes your retouching more flexible. This mode is suitable for those who are ready to control each editing process themselves. Now that you are more familiar with the differences between Photoshop Elements, its time to list the tools. The Main Features of Photoshop Elements Changing the size of images; Processing RAW images; Slideshow creation; Creating collages; Adding blur, changing image colors; Correcting shadows and light; Retouching and photo correction; Adding and editing tactics; Creating and editing shapes; Adding filters; Working with layers; Automated coloring of photos; Selecting objects with a click of a button; Automatic skin smoothing; Creative photo design using patterns; Deleting unwanted objects. So, if you're just starting on photo editing and don't want to spend half your life editing your photos, Elements is perfect for you. It also has ready-made templates and modes that will make this work fast and enjoyable. Streamline Your Workflow with All-in-One Auto Photo Editor Get Started Now! What is the Difference Between Photoshop and Photoshop? In fact, these are two versions of the same program. Photoshop Elements is a lighter version of Photoshop. Elements has fewer features and is designed for novice editors or amateurs. Below you will learn more about the difference between Adobe Photoshop and Photoshop Elements. Adobe Photoshop Elements is the Difference Between Adobe Photoshop and Photoshop Elements Feature Photoshop Photoshop Elements Tool KitContains a huge number of plugins, focused on basic enhancements. Target Audience Primarily used by professionals and large-scale industries. Photoshop is for medium and advanced professionals; it has a lot of features and is more expensive. Elements is a lighter version of Photoshop. Elements has fewer features and is designed for novice editors or amateurs. Below, you will learn more about the difference between Adobe Photoshop and Photoshop Elements. Feature Photoshop Photoshop Elements Tool KitContains a huge number of features, for professional use. Focused on such as Lasso, Magic eraser, Magic wand, Clone, Masking, 3D text support, Layer options, Blending, Subject selection, and the Dodge tool. A lighter version with fewer features; however, it includes unique tools such as Moving Photos with Animations, Adjust Facial Features, Duotone Effect, and Colourize Photo. Color Modes Supports Duotone, CMYK, Lab-channel, Multi-channel, RGB, Grayscale, Bitmap, and Indexed color modes. Primarily supports RGB, Grayscale, and Indexed color modes; does not support CMYK or Lab-channel. File OrganizerUses Adobe Bridge for file navigation and organization. Utilizes Elements Organizer, which is integrated into the software. Pricing ModelAvailable only through a subscription model (monthly or yearly as part of Adobe's Creative Cloud). Offers the option to buy or upgrade the program without a subscription, allowing for a one-time purchase. Workspaces Provides six workspaces tailored for different tasks: 3D, Essentials, Graphic and Web, Motion, Painting, and Photography. Offers three user modes ranging from simple to advanced: Quick, Guided, and Expert. As you can see, Adobe Photoshop and Photoshop Elements have key differences. They are two completely different sets of programs. They are the only thing they have in common is the graphic interface. When to Use Each Tool If, after reading the above, you are still undecided about the program you need, then the Adobe Photoshop vs Elements struggle continues. Let's discuss again briefly which program and for whom is suitable. Who and When Can Use Adobe Photoshop It is very easy to use Photoshop for professionals who have been editing photos for a long time. Beginners will have to go through several tutorials in order not to get lost in the variety of editing features. You'll find the Adobe website to have full control over their images and know how to use the tools available. It is also chosen for the fact that you can take a photo, cut, glue, add characters, change the background, add gradients, and get an unreal scene, which, with enough processing, will be hard to differentiate from the real one. That's why when choosing Photoshop Elements, choose first and get exactly that result. Who and when can use Photoshop Elements In Elements, you can do only minimal photo processing. This program is more suitable for those who are just learning or who like a more natural photo or who like to take pictures, edit and add photos to social networks or print them. It has a limited number of tools and effects, but those that are available are quite suitable for high-quality photo processing. But there is one more feature that many Elements users enjoy, it's the morphing photos feature based on AI. It's also good for lovers of a lot of time processing photos. Is Photoshop Elements worth it, considering Photoshop has more features? Think about whether you need all the advanced functionalities or prefer a simpler photo editing program. And for yourself, you can try the free version and decide which version suits you best. Let the Adobe Elements vs Photoshop battle begin! Enhance your Workflow with Luminar Neo As a final note, we'd like to encourage you to take a closer look at Luminar Neo, a software we mentioned earlier. If you're seeking a fresh alternative, this might be the right choice for you. Luminar Neo works as a standalone program or as a plugin for Adobe products. This software boasts powerful AI tools, presets for photo editing, and effects that can be layered with masks. It has all the tools to make your photos bright and mesmerizing. You can add different lighting, fog, and clouds, retouch portraits, add sharpness, and contrast. The important thing is that It makes the result look eye-catching. It supports RAW files fully, allowing for exceptional photo quality with just a few clicks. Additionally, updates are frequently released, ensuring the software stays current. For more, check the link below. After All, What's Better for You comparing Photoshop and Photoshop Elements, what will be better for you? Adobe Photoshop and Elements are both good at editing photos. But which will be perfect for you. And, of course, payment. In the case of Elements, you have to pay only once and it will upgrade. But money is not the main thing. The main thing is what emotions you get when you work with the program and from the result that you get at the end. Now, by the end of our article, I hope the answer to the question "Photoshop Elements vs Photoshop?" is found. Credit: Kamil Zajaczkowski / Shutterstock.com Millions of people trust Photoshop as their photo editing software of choice, and if you're thinking of joining them, then you've got two main packages to pick from: Photoshop, and Photoshop Elements. While a quick look at the respective pricing will tell you one is more advanced than the other, it can be difficult to know exactly how they differ in terms of the details, and to figure out which one you actually need. That's where this guide comes in. While there's too much included in both of these software programs to give a head-to-head on every single feature of each, we've finished reading it, you should have a good idea of what makes Photoshop different from Photoshop Elements and which is right for you. Adobe Photoshop versus Photoshop Elements 2025: Pricing and Basics There are several pricing options for Photoshop. Credit: Lifehacker Photoshop is Adobe's flagship photo editing software, catering for professionals and advanced users. While it has a steeper learning curve than Photoshop Elements, it's by no means inaccessible to beginners, though if you're not going to make full use of the superior feature setwhether now or at some point in the future it's hard to justify the higher cost. That cost is a monthly subscription either $59.99 a month for everything in the Creative Cloud Suite (including Illustrator, Premiere Pro and so on), or $9.99 a month for just Photoshop and Lightroom, another Adobe tool for organizing photos and videos that comes with a selection of commonly used editing tools as well. It's a natural companion to Photoshop, but it's a separate program. Your $9.99 also gets you 20GB of cloud storage, and you can upgrade that to 1TB for $19.99 a month. If you stop paying, you can't use the program. Meanwhile, Adobe Photoshop Elements 2025 uses the more conventional single payment method, and can be yours for $99.99. Photoshop Elements comes with Organizer, for getting your photos and videos in order, and the Editor, for actual image manipulationit's a bit more of an all-in-one package for editing and organizing. However, that $100 only gets you a three-year license: After that point, you can still use the Organizer component, but not the Editor. You could argue you're effectively paying $33.33 per year in subscription fees, considering that three years down the line you'll need to buy Elements again (though the upgrade price is usually less). Photoshop Elements includes an Editor and an Organizer. Credit: Lifehacker Photoshop Elements is friendlier to beginners, and while it doesn't have all the advanced tools in Photoshop, it does have its own impressive range of features and functions. For a lot of casual photo editors, Photoshop Elements is going to do just fine. In the next section I'll go into a bit more depth as to what you get in each package. For most people, it would make sense to try Photoshop Elements first and see if that meet their needs, then upgrade to Photoshop if it does not. The good news is that seven-day free trials are available for both Photoshop Elements and Photoshop, so you can give each a go before paying. The Photoshop interface is more complex and more customizable. Credit: Lifehacker As I said above, it would take an article many times longer than this to cover everything in these programs, but I can give you the highlights. All the essentials are included in both packages. If you're editing photos on a large-scale basis where you'll need to change the size and format of your pictures, adjusting brightness and contrast and other variables, and erasing background elements What you can do with Photoshop Elements 2025Let's start with Photoshop Elements, and the latest 2025 version. If you've ever wanted to swap out a background, or change the color of someone's t-shirt, or create a background blur effect, or remove scratches on a photo, Elements makes this possible most of the time it only takes a few clicks of the mouse (you're able to remove an object from a picture simply by scribbling over it, for example). Photoshop Elements makes it easy to have fun with your pictures too (by scrawling text on top of them, for example). Other tasks made simple by Photoshop Elements include adjusting skin tones, adding filters, combining multiple pictures together, pick out individual objects for editing, extend backgrounds with the help of AI, add motion effects to objects, and move, duplicate, or resize objects. You can drop in text effects, work with multiple layers, apply gradients, and apply a bunch of filters to your images too. There are three sections to the Photoshop Elements interface. Credit: Lifehacker You can do all of this in Photoshop as well, but the workflows are both more involved and more versatile: It'll take you longer to do, but you get more control over the finished result. That's really the core difference with a lot of features, in that Photoshop Elements offers more hand-holding and makes more of the editing choices for you (which may or may not be what you're after). The extra stuff you can do in Photoshop So what exactly is extra in Photoshop? It's all that, but it can be combined in more ways and with more control, for example. You get more tools, including the pen tool for drawing vector paths, smart filters and more options for layers and masks. Another important point is that it supports non-destructive editing, where changes can be made and tried out again. Photoshop also offers more AI goodies, including AI image generation and tools for 3D modeling (which Elements doesn't have). Another important point is that it supports non-destructive editing, where changes can be made and tried out without affecting the original. Photoshop versus Photoshop Elements comparison stick to a broad overview, because otherwise it can quickly become overwhelming. Some of the differences are quite hard to wrap your head around, if you're not heavily into the design field. Photoshop is more complex to use When it comes to process casual users, that extends to the interface as well. There's a lot more complexity to the Photoshop interface, and you can customize it in a much greater extent by arranging the panels and the tools you need into places where they're most accessible, and keeping everything else out of the way. With Photoshop Elements, there are actually three views in the Editor part of the program: Quick, Guided, and Advanced (which is in fact still pretty basic, but gives you a view of all the tools and options). As you go through these views, you're progressively given less help in terms of getting the results you want With Photoshop Elements will guide you through a lot of operations if you need it to. Photoshop Elements gives you more help with each edit. Credit: Lifehacker As someone who spends a lot of time in Photoshop, switching to Photoshop Elements really feels like going to a more rudimentary option, even if a lot of the same tools and features I need are presentyou come up across more guardrails. Of course that's going to be what some people want, which makes Photoshop Elements a perfect choice for them. If you think you're ever going to be using image editing workflows in your professional life, it makes sense to go with Photoshop, if you can afford it: No employer is ever going to ask you if you're handy with Photoshop Elements, whereas being capable in Photoshop is something that can be helpful in a lot of different industries.On the other hand, if you're only looking to make easy and impressive edits at home, then Photoshop Elements makes a lot more senseyou do need a reason to go for the more expensive option, so if you can't find that reason, opt for Elements. It might be a good idea to think of some of the photo tricks and edits you want to be able to do, then have a look at how they're handled in both applications.

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