

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Masterclass

Course Notes

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I. Basic Concepts

Lightroom (LR) is a **non-destructive** image editing application. Think about your RAW and JPEG image files as your negatives and LR as your digital darkroom where you prepare your prints. Your 'negatives' are merely the sources of your prints!

The software has two basic functions:

1. **Organizing** (cataloging) and keeping track of your images. This includes copying or moving them to new folders on your computer's hard drive or onto a new external hard drive. To use the initial metaphor: LR neatly organizes your 'negatives' and allows you to label them in numerous ways that allows you to find them whenever you need them. This work is done in the LIBRARY module which you can also think of as a clever, digital filing cabinet.

2. **Editing** your images in the DEVELOP module which serves as your digital darkroom.

The fundamental principle of LR is that it never modifies your original image files. It simply places your image files onto drives and into folders designated by you. By default this is your Pictures directory and LR will create subdirectories based on the date the image was created on.

Everything else you do in LR – the keywords you add to your images, the attributes you give to your images (flags, ratings, colours) and every single editing decision you make is automatically saved in the Lightroom Catalogue file. The default location of this file is in the Lightroom subdirectory of the Pictures directory.

To return to the initial metaphor: LR is, on the one hand, a digital librarian that forever keeps track of your negatives. On the other hand, LR is the digital darkroom where you perform all your editing. This work is virtual (i.e. you are not changing the original images) and all you need to do when you're done is to export ('print') your images.

II. The Interface

Useful keyboard shortcuts:

SHIFT + F	Make the program window Full screen
TAB	Show/Hide the side panels
SHIFT + TAB	Show/Hide all panels
G	go to the Grid View (jump to the Library module)
D	go to the Develop module
F	make the current image Full screen
Z	Zoom in/out
P	Pick (the white flag) an image
X	Reject (the black flag) an image
U	Remove any flag from an image
1-5 and 0	Assign a rating (stars) to an image
6-9	Assign a colour to an image

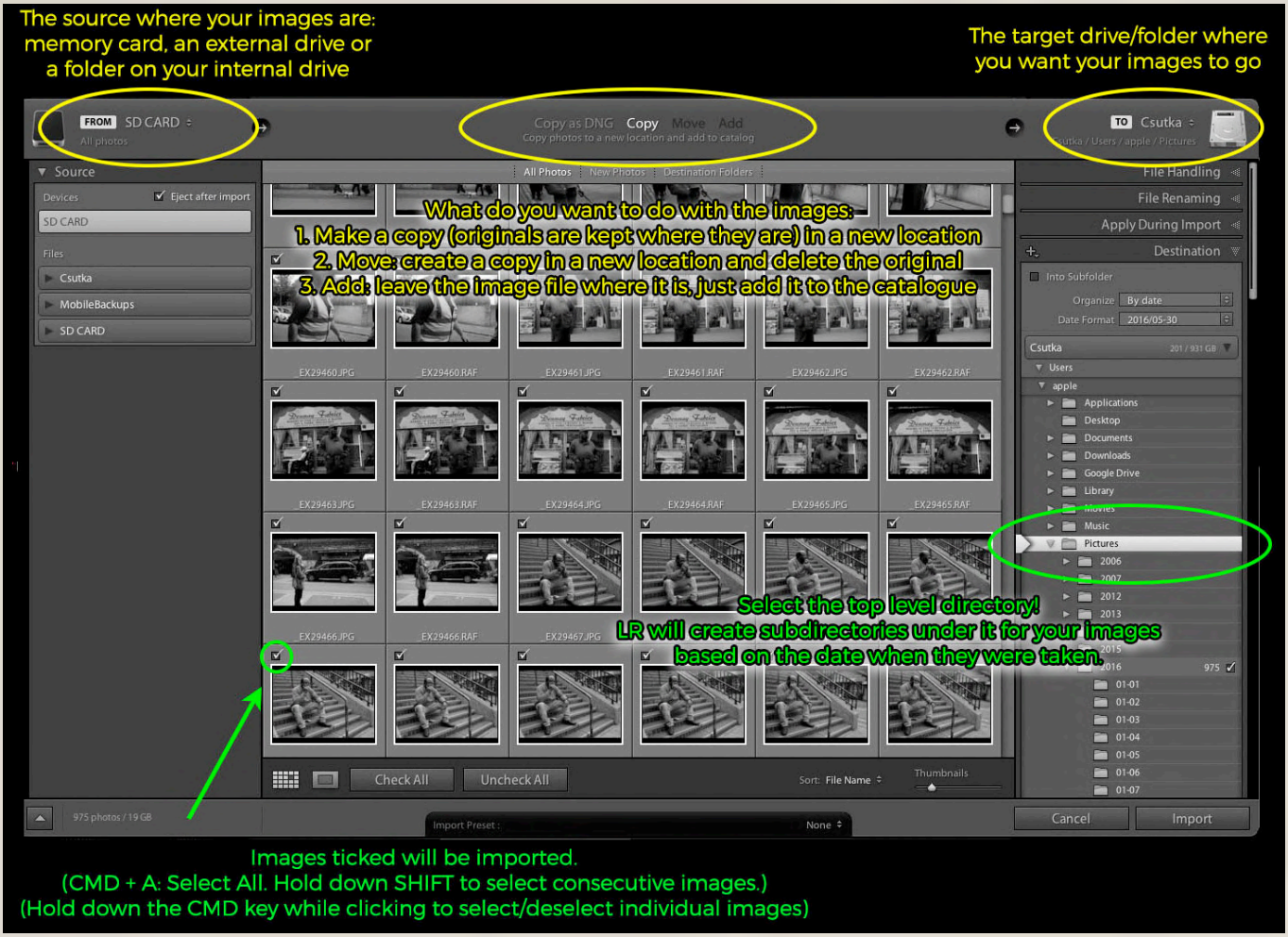
For a complete list of keyboard shortcuts go to Help in the top menu bar and click on 'Module Shortcuts…'

Hovering with your mouse over any icon or symbol will also pop up the description and the keyboard shortcut of that particular tool.

III. The Basic Workflow

1. Import your images.
2. Look at them and flag them for later editing or deletion. The flagging system is the best tool for this: the white flag means you will want to work on the image. The black (reject) flag means you will delete that image.
3. Add relevant keywords (locations, people, themes).
4. Edit your images (in the Develop module).
5. Export your images.

IV. Importing your images



Depending on where you are storing your image files there are two basic workflows.

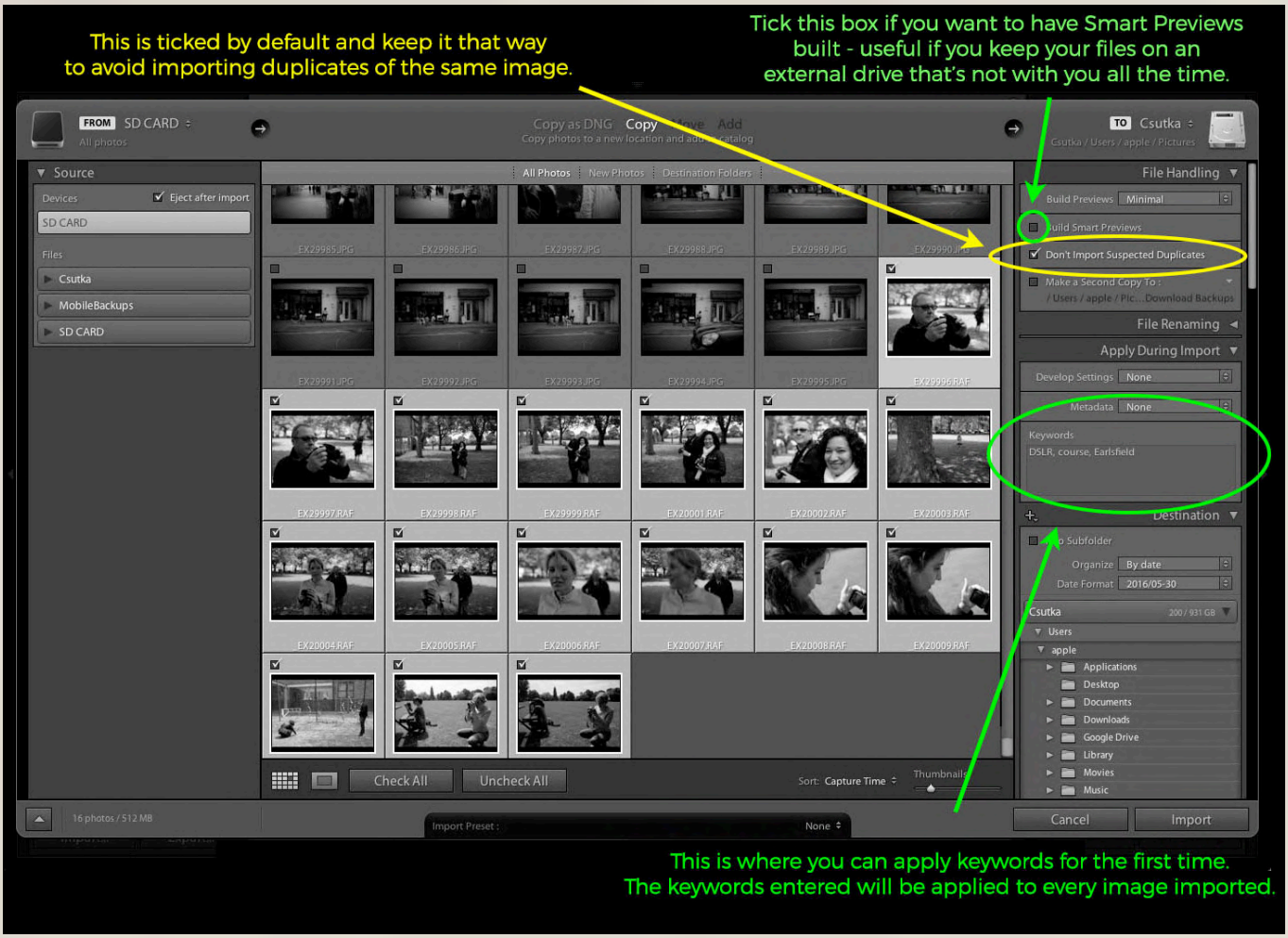
1. If they are on your computer's internal drive (practical if you still have enough free space) the Destination top level directory should be the Pictures directory on that drive.

2. If you are keeping your files on an external drive (once you've run out of free space on your internal drive) the Destination top level directory should be the Pictures directory on the external drive. If you don't yet have such a directory, create one in the Finder / Explorer.

Special scenarios:

1. If you do not want to move your image files physically, i.e. you want to keep the folder structure you have created before you started working with LR, you can choose to Add your files to the LR catalogue. Your files will stay where they are but LR will from that point on 'know' about them.

2. If you'd like LR to reorganize images on a given drive using its own, date-based filing system the Source and the Destination drives will be the same. Select the folder containing the images on the Source drive, select the Pictures directory on the Destination drive and choose **Move**.



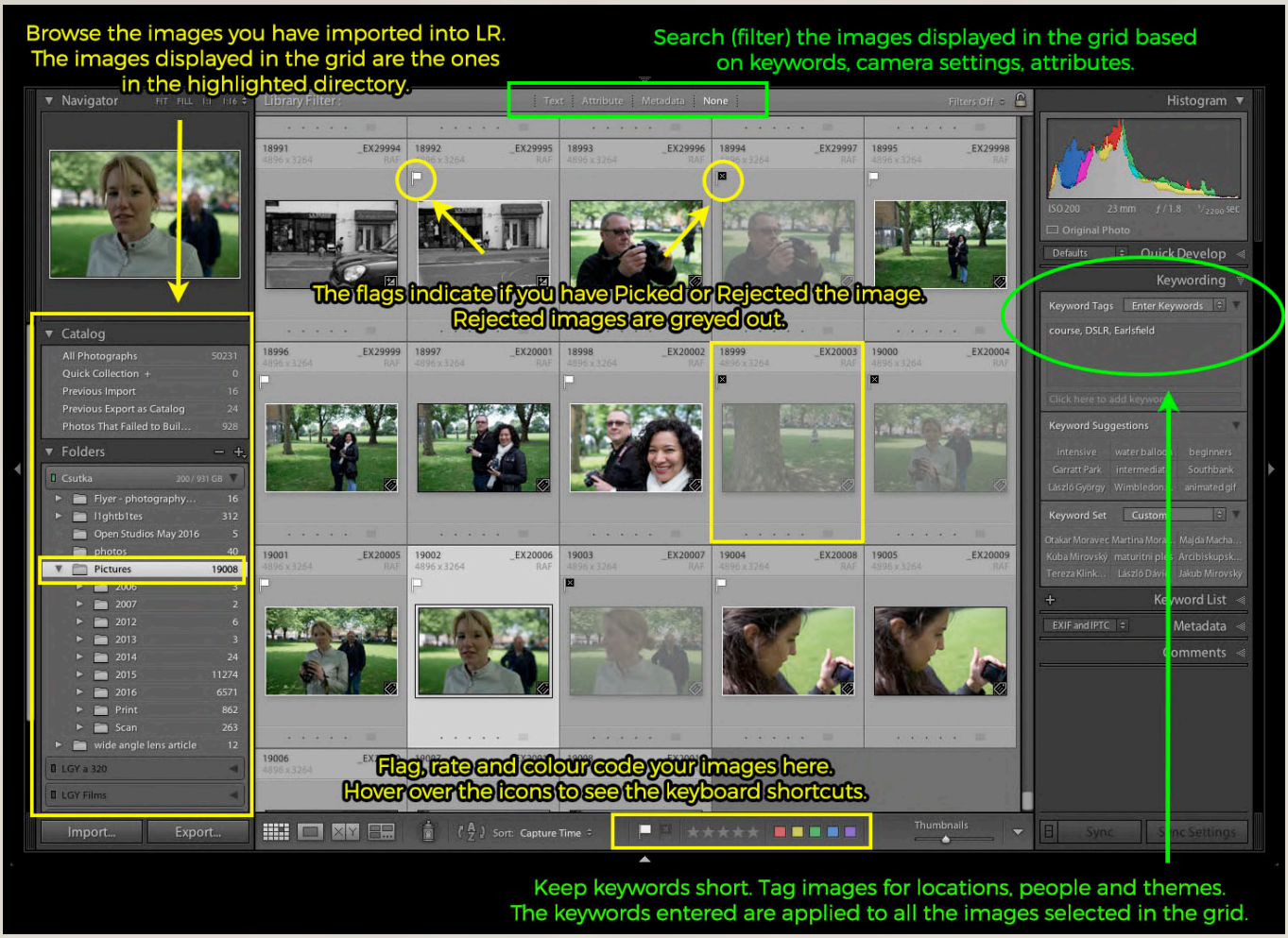
Import options:

- Smart Previews are thumbnails that allow you to edit your images even when you do not have the 'original negatives' with you. It is a great feature for those who have their image files on an external drive and want to keep working on them even when that drive is not with them, e.g. when you're travelling only with your laptop. If you do not tick the box at this stage, you can always have Smart Previews built (or deleted) later in the Library > Previews menu.

- An incredibly important box to keep ticked is the Don't Import Suspected Duplicates option in the File Handling tab. This will prevent you from accidentally importing the same images several times and will keep LR from cluttering up your hard drives. Trust it, but double-check it. LR has been known not to recognize duplicates once in a blue moon.

- The Destination tab. When you start importing your images, you should pick the style you want LR to use when it creates and names the folders it will place your images files in. It is not a vital decision, pick the style you prefer. What's important is that you stick to that style. If you don't, images taken on the same date will end up in different folders. LR will still keep track of them, but you may get confused.

V. The Library Module



Working in the Library Module

The Library is where you organise your images. The work you put into it pays off very soon: you will be able to find your photos even years from now!

Recommended workflow:

1. Especially on a small screen, toggle between the full screen image (shortcut: F) and the grid (shortcut: G) to flag them, this will help you find the images you want to edit or delete later.

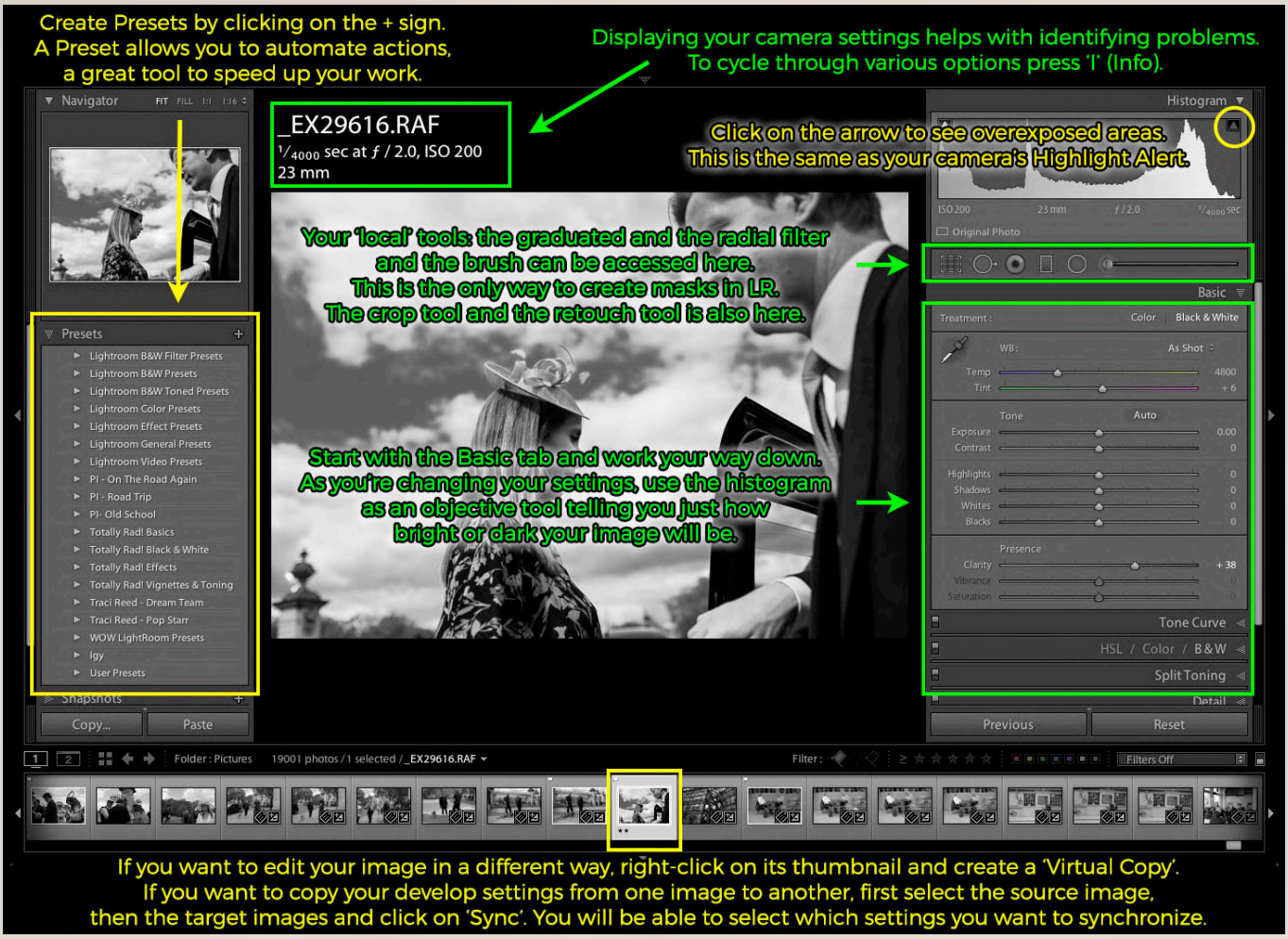
2. Add relevant keywords. Select multiple images to apply the same keyword to all of them at once.

3. Using the search function (CMD/CTRL + F) find images. You can search for anything: keywords, dates, camera and lens settings, attributes.

4. Scrolling down in the left panel, you can create Collections based on filtering rules (search criteria). Smart Collections are a fantastic, flexible way of creating albums from trips, for clients, etc.

5. You can add the Rating Stars and the Colours at any stage. Come up with a simple system that you can remember.

VI. The Develop Module



Working in the Develop Module

The left panel contains your presets. If you're not working with them, close this tab to maximize the image on the screen.

The right panel contains all your tools. There are 8 tabs, the keyboard shortcuts for them from top to bottom are CMD / CTRL + 1, 2, 3, 4, ...

Useful keyboard shortcuts:

I	Show the Info (camera settings) overlay
R	The Crop tool
X	Rotate the Crop tool's orientation (landscape/portrait)
O	Show the Overlay mask when you're editing one
T	Show/Hide the Toolbar
H	Show/Hide the edit pins for the masks

If you select several images in the Filmstrip, you can Synchronize your settings, i.e. copy them from one image to several others.

Image Editing Tools and Principles

Less is more. You know you did a good job, if you look at a photo a week after you first edited it and think that you haven't edited it at all.

To see the effect of your editing, toggle individual tabs on/off a few times using the switch on the left side of the tab.

- **Cropping** (X): the tool allows you to work with fixed image aspect ratios which is a nice, classical approach. The 'Bubble level' tool allows you to straighten your horizons.
- **Spot removal** (Q): great for removing tiny zits, specks of dust but LR is not meant for large-scale retouching. For that you need Photoshop.
- **The Graduated, the Radial Filter and the Brush**: incredibly powerful tools, the digital equivalents of the age-old darkroom technique of Dodge and Burn. Allows fine-tuning the brightness, contrast and colour of well-defined areas of the image.

To modify your filters make sure you display the edit pins (shortcut 'H' to toggle then on/off) and click on the pint you want to modify. The create a new filter/mask click on 'New'.

- The **Clarity** slider in the Basic tab increases local contrast. A great way to make your images 'punchier' just don't overdo it.
- The **Lens Corrections** tab allows LR to correct the main geometrical aberrations of your lens. Click on 'Enable Profile Corrections' in the Profile tab and select to lens from the drop-down list. The tools in the Basic tab can correct some of the perspective distortions typical of architectural photography.

And a final piece of advice: **Shoot RAW**!

RAW files contain a lot more information than compressed JPEGs and allow you more flexibility in editing. Several camera settings that are burned into a JPEG are metadata for a RAW file, which means that you can alter these without any loss in quality. Amongst these are your **White Balance** and the **Picture Style** (e.g. colour or b&w) settings.

HAPPY EDITING!

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