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 - ⊞ cmtest
 - ⊞ Faithful
 - ⊞ Faithful - Auto Tone
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1 Hour 1000 Pics

Supercharge your Lightroom Workflow

an eBook by Chris Marquardt



Histogram

ISO 400 32 mm 1 / 4.0

Original Photo

Basic

Tone Curve

HSL / Color / B&W

Hue Saturation Luminance

Luminance

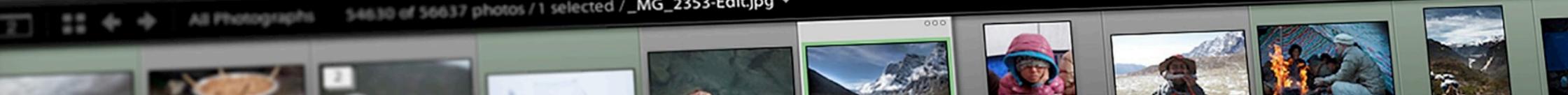
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1 Hour 1000 Pics

Supercharge Your Lightroom Workflow

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1st issue Jan 2014

Screenshots, layout, written by: Chris Marquardt

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www.chrismarquardt.com

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Please help spread the word! Tweet, post, blog, the official hashtag for this book is #1hour1000pics

Thanks for helping squash some bugs: Dave M, Bill D, Robert V

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1. About The Author

Hi, I'm Chris. I'm a photographer, videographer and an educator, based in Hannover, Germany. I'm probably best known for *Tips from the Top Floor* (TFTTF), a weekly podcast about photography and my weekly appearances on Leo Laporte's *Tech Guy Show*, a US-wide syndicated radio show. I have produced TFTTF since early 2005 and as of writing this book, it has reached over 600 episodes, discussing virtually everything about photography.

I also hold workshops and photo tours around the globe, having taken photographers up to all three Mt. Everest Base Camps, taught in Japan and I will be taking photographers to Iceland and India in the near future.

I was one of the first Lightroom users back in 2007. I actually started using it when it was still in beta. Since then there have been countless enhancements to the software, but its core hasn't changed: Adobe Lightroom is a photography hub that has become essential throughout my entire workflow, from importing pictures, managing and sorting them, making enhancements, and even outputting them to all manner of different formats, including slide shows, videos, and web pages.

If I'm not working on assignments, teaching or travelling, I play bass, or enjoy my other passion, cooking.

Find me online at www.chrismarquardt.com, www.tipsfromthetopfloor.com and www.discoverthetopfloor.com.



2. About This Book

This book is 100% about photography workflow in Lightroom. It's about getting through a lot of pictures in a very short time. About making the right decisions quickly.

If you are overwhelmed by the thousands of pictures that have accumulated on your hard drive over the years, unmanaged and in dire need of work, then this book is for you.

If you have stopped taking photos because you can't bear the thought of adding any more pictures to that huge pile, then this book is for you.

If you're looking for an elegant way to get some consistency into your workflow and speed things up dramatically, then this book is for you.

If you want to learn to sort, tag, rate and enhance a thousand pictures in only one hour, then this book is for you.

Ideally you should be familiar with Lightroom and its basic concepts. I will try my best to leave any version specific things out¹.

This book is not for you if you want to learn how to retouch portraits, make landscape pictures pop or create the most breathtaking black-and-white conversions using Lightroom.

This book is for you if you want to speed up your Lightroom workflow. It will not cover the artistic side like retouching photos.

¹ At the time of writing this book, Lightroom is at version 5.3

3. Digital Backlog Syndrome

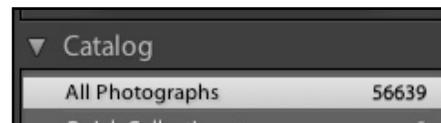
I often get emails from listeners, telling me the same sad story: “I’m hesitant to take any new photos, because there is a huge pile of unsorted pictures waiting for me at home, that I have not even begun to look at. I know that adding new images to that pile won’t make things better.”

It’s become so common that I’ve even coined the term Digital Backlog Syndrome (DBS) for it. At a time when we’re surrounded by overflowing inboxes, be they email, voice mail, SMS or even social media, the constant stream of pictures pouring out of our cameras becomes yet another inbox-style chore to be performed daily. This is still a relatively new problem, exacerbated by the growth and popularity of digital photography

Photography has lost its financial fear factor. Prints were once an expense, but pressing the shutter button on a digital camera doesn’t cost anything anymore. What most people don’t notice is the cost of piling up images and the time and attention they’ll require in the future. Instant gratification with the effort coming later.

I’m a victim to the same way of thinking.

I see a similar progression with many other photographers. Does this look familiar?



First you keep all your pictures in a folder on your hard drive.

Once that folder starts to get too full, you sort the pictures by date, making a sub folder for each month, at the same time putting your photos further out of reach.

Digital Backlog Syndrome (DBS) is a condition where you dread taking new pictures because of the mountain of old ones that are in dire need of work.

When that stops being enough, you create sub folders for events or days under each month, and at this point you begin losing track.

Next you create a folder for each year, putting the Jan, Feb, Mar, ... folders in there, and end up with overwhelmingly complex, large folders that are too daunting to even think about sorting!

After several years, you start to get lost. Yes, the pictures are sorted nicely into folders and sub-folders and sub-sub-folders. And as long as you know exactly which day of which month of which year a specific picture was taken, that's just fine.

But if you happen to forget the exact date of the photograph you're looking for, (and let's be honest, nobody can remember the date of each photo across an entire collection) you'll be lost.

4. Folders vs. Database

Moving to Lightroom means moving away from a purely folder-based structure to one that is database-driven. What that means is that instead of the date, you now have a whole host of additional data that you can search by. The way Lightroom works is that it keeps pictures on one side, i.e. in a folder with sub-folders, and a database with all the rest of the information somewhere else.

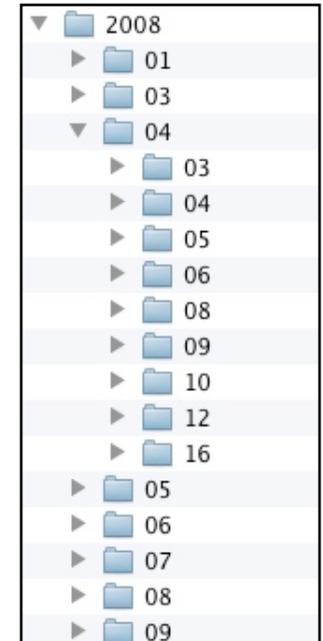
You can tell Lightroom what folder structure it should use for the pictures. In my case it is still by year/month/day, but I rarely (if ever) interact with those files directly in the operating system (Finder on the Mac, Explorer on Windows).

The reason I rarely use folders is that Lightroom uses an incredibly efficient database called the Catalog. In this Catalog, Lightroom keeps meta information for all of your pictures, enabling a different, and more intuitive, kind of search.

Here are some examples of that meta data:

- The time and date that the picture was taken
- Where the picture sits on the hard drive
- Geographical information
- Aperture/ISO/shutter speed of the picture
- The camera's serial number
- The address of the photographer
- Keywords/tags for the picture

With all of that information at your fingertips, it is very easy to quickly find a picture based on any of those values.



Imagine you are looking for a specific picture of your daughter, let's call her Amy, that you took at a birthday party a few years ago. But all that you remember is that it was a great picture. Instead of manually sifting through folders after sub-folder ("I believe it was in 2004. Or maybe in 2005? Let me check May. Hmm, not there, oh wait, didn't we switch that party to June one year?"), you just tell Lightroom to look for all pictures between 2004 and 2005 that have the keywords *Amy* and *Party* and there it is.



This approach is amazingly fast and efficient. Tens of thousands of pictures are now at your fingertips, only a search-term away. What once took hours of frustrating, memory-straining back-and-forth can take a fraction of the time.

Capture Time	08:46:18	⋮
Capture Date	16.03.2012	→
Dimensions	2700 x 1801	
Cropped	2700 x 1801	→
Exposure	1/80 sec at f / 9,0	
Focal Length	80 mm	
ISO Speed Rating	ISO 500	→
Flash	Did not fire	
Make	Canon	
Model	Canon EOS 5D Mark II	
Lens	EF24-105...4L IS USM	→
GPS		→

The only thing required of you to make it happen is this: stick to a workflow when importing and sorting your pictures. Tag them. Weed them out. Be fast. That's exactly what this book is about: to teach you an easy to follow workflow that will turbo-charge the way you work with your photos.

At the end of the book I will also show you a way to shoehorn your old pictures into this structure, so they don't feel left out, and give you a better way to organise your already scary collection.

Database-driven systems have many advantages over folder-based systems, especially when it comes to managing lots of data.

5. What's Holding Us Back?

If it's so great to use this database-driven approach, why aren't we all doing it?

Well, psychology can be quite the enemy.

First, most of us don't like change. The unknown scares us. If you've grown up using the folder-based system, chances are that you want to keep it this way. Seeing your files – especially more personal, important ones like photos – in the Finder on your Mac or in Explorer on Windows feels more like having control over them. Trusting a system that moves them around for you and hides some of that complexity can be scary.

The good news is that today those systems are very solid and robust. As an added incentive to take the plunge, Lightroom regularly offers to back up your catalog. One of the first things I do after a fresh Lightroom install is to go to the *Catalog Settings* and set *Back up catalog* to *Every time Lightroom exits*. This way every time I close Lightroom, it asks me to back up the database. Most of the time I decline, but whenever I've made big changes or imported a new project, I click OK and let it make a backup.

The other good news is that if you set Lightroom to *Automatically write changes into XMP*², even if you lose the database, you can still recover the edits that you made, albeit not the full edit history.

In general, it is always a good idea to have backups of both your pictures and your Lightroom catalog.

Psychology can be quite the enemy, especially when it comes to trusting a system and letting it take care of moving files around on your behalf.

² also in the *Catalog Settings* under *Metadata*

6. Delete Or Not Delete?

Every single time I stand in front of a class and ask them “do you delete pictures?” about half of them raise their hands, while the other half looks at me as if I come from a different planet. Yes, for some of us throwing things away can be very hard, especially if we aren’t sure if doing so might turn out to be a huge mistake years later.

The often cited argument against deleting pictures is that one of those photos might later prove to be really valuable. The one example that I hear is Dirck Halstead’s photo of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky hugging at a 1996 fundraiser, which, of course, later turned out to be worth a lot.

When I ask for a second example, there is usually none.

The reality is much more mundane: unless you’re a professional photographer who thoroughly tags every single picture either for stock or press use, chances are that the majority of your old pictures will sit on your hard drive and never be looked at again. Why?

Because there are so many of them, they lack order, and they are so cluttered that going through them down the road just isn’t fun.

I’m firmly of the opinion that deleting the right pictures is a good thing, and over the course of this book, you will learn why that is not such a bad idea. Hitting that delete button can be an enormously liberating experience that has the potential to free you up in other areas.

Trust me. The workflow that I will introduce you to is going to make it much easier for you to let go.

Deleting pictures can be enormously liberating. You should try it one day. Of course a good workflow will help you making it a much less scary prospect.



Of course there is the argument of hard disk space. Some claim that they have all the hard drive space they'll ever need and that storage space is constantly getting cheaper. Whilst space is often convenient, it makes it easy to forget the importance of storing your data in at least a few locations. If you don't, you may end up with no data at all.

7. Backups

Let me place you in a scenario: You're an enthusiast photographer and every weekend you find the time to go out and shoot. Let's assume you take 300 pictures on a weekend. That is 15,600 pictures in one year. You use a modern DSLR and of course you only shoot RAW, which means that each picture will take up an average of about 30 Megabytes. In the end that will leave you with almost 500 Gigabytes of pictures over the course of one year.

Hard drives crash and take your data with them, that's a fact. To make that prospect less scary, we make backups. If you're on a Mac, all you have to do is attach an external drive and Time Machine will automatically do the trick for you³.

To cover 500 Gigabytes of pictures per year, you would need an additional 500 Gigabytes of hard disk space, making that 1 Terabyte in total.

But I mentioned a third copy being important. What good is a backup if the external disk sits right next to your computer? A house fire or any other disaster which affects your home, would wipe out both, which is where an offsite backup comes in. These can be online, or a second external hard drive that you swap out once a week and keep in the office.

The point is that anybody who is serious about their photos should be taking steps to ensure their information is safe, stored well, and organised.

We have the tendency to pile up many tens of thousands of pictures and the sizes tend to become quite unmanageable, especially if we want to keep regular backups of everything.



³ I don't have any first-hand Windows backup automation experience, but I've heard good things about Crashplan and Genie Timeline

A few years ago I experienced first-hand the effects of not backing up, when I lost half a year's worth of photos due to a faulty hard drive that was less than a year old.

Taking 300 pictures per week as an amateur photographer (and even this estimate is on the large side) can easily be ten times the size for a professional. 3000 pictures a week is not unusual when you make a living from photography. That would quickly amount to 15 Terabytes in just one year. Over decades you're talking about hundreds of terabytes of photographs. With so much potentially valuable information backing up becomes a necessary chore that we should be performing regularly.

Which is why I suggest we better find a more efficient way to shrink that pile.

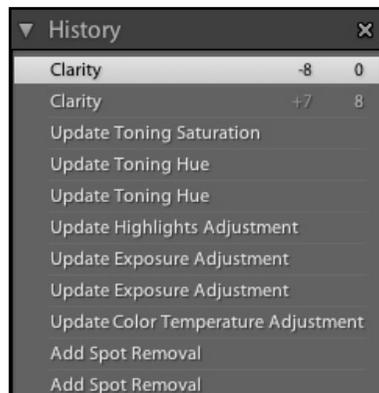
8. Non-Destructive

Before we dive into the workflow, here is one important piece of information that you need to keep in the back of your mind: Anything that Lightroom does with your pictures is non-destructive.

Non-destructive means that unless you explicitly instruct it to do so⁴, Lightroom will not alter the original pictures on your hard drive, regardless of whether they are in the JPG, TIF or RAW format.

This means that whatever you do with your pictures, you have the safety of knowing that you will **always** be able to undo anything you've done to them.

Whatever you do with your pictures in Lightroom, you will always be able to revert your changes to the original state.



Realizing that you're unable to totally mess things up is key to helping you work on your pictures at a very fast pace.

⁴ to my knowledge there is only one way to allow Lightroom to alter your originals: in the *Catalog Settings*, you can tell Lightroom to *Write date or time changes into proprietary RAW files*

9. Two Hats

Lightroom has a variety of different modules, the two that we will look at for this book are the *Library* and the *Develop* module. These two modules are appropriate for different types of people.

I tend to liken working in the Library module to doing book-keeping. The Library is where you manage your pictures, where you rate them, organize them, tag them, filter them, put them into groups, or search them, pragmatic, methodical tasks that we typically attribute to the left hemisphere of our brains.

That is so not me. I love to dive into the development process right away. Oh look at that sky. How would that feel if it had a bit more contrast? Hmm.. maybe black-and-white works better? Let's try an ND grad filter on that building, maybe clone out the twig that's coming in from the right?

But what I had to learn is that by doing that, by giving in to that “Oh Shiny!” part of my personality, I'd never end up finding the real gems within the hundreds of pictures that I brought back home. I never discovered the really good ones, because the mediocre ones ate up all of my time. I always got fixated on the wrong pictures and then simply ran out of time.

Typical DBS in full flow.

By forcing myself into book-keeper mode I completely changed that. Now when I work on pictures, I put on my book-keeper hat first, for just as long as is necessary, and do the diligent busywork that is a part of my workflow. Only when that's done do I move on to the more creative (and more fun) parts of my workflow. As a result I end up only working on the pictures that are really worth it and I have so much more time to dedicate to my best pictures, rather than the mediocre ones.

To following a fast and effective workflow it helps to learn to switch roles between “book-keeper mode” and the creative and artist side of things.

10. Amateur vs. Pro

Someone once said: “The difference between an amateur and professional photographer is the size of the waste basket” and there’s so much truth in this seemingly obtuse sentence. Everyone takes bad pictures, not just the amateurs. The truth is: most of your pictures will be bad pictures. That’s normal.

The secret is in not showing the bad ones. The secret is in making a selection and sticking with it.

You’ve taken 20 pictures of a beautiful flower? Guess what. If you post all of them on Flickr, chances are that nobody will look at them because you are flooding them. You may feel that each of those pictures has individually different qualities, but realistically nobody is going to look at each one of them the way you do. It’s worth remembering that photography is powerful because it can have an immediate, complex, and powerful impact in a single image.

However, if you make a choice, if you take that one really great picture where the light is perfect and the background works really well and the exposure and focus are spot on, then that picture has a much greater chance of getting a response.

By cluttering your photo streams with mediocre photography (remember, everyone takes mediocre pictures), you dilute the impact and presence of the really good ones.

If you leave out the clutter and concentrate on the best of the best, you’re giving them a wonderful stage and helping them to shine.

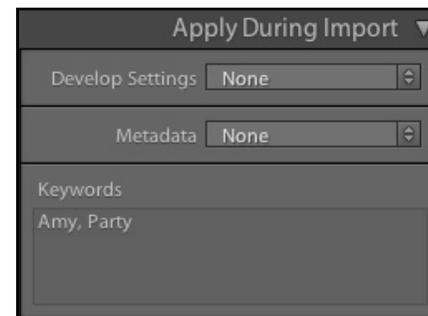
The workflow presented in this book will help you to achieve that: to weed out the chaff and bring out the pictures that people will remember.

Professional photographers know how to sort the good from the bad pictures. They have also learned to resist the temptation to show every single picture to the world.

11. Importing Pictures

Before we talk about the three-phase method, let's assume we have just returned with 1000 pictures from a photoshoot. The first thing we need to do is get the pictures onto our computer. There is nothing particularly important to watch out for during the import with regards to this part of the workflow, but there are still a few points to note that will make your life much easier in the future when you need to find these imported pictures again.

1. **Tag the pictures during import.** Even though it's not important for this part of the workflow, you might want to make it a habit to assign keywords during the import. Think "Birthday Party", "Amy", "San Francisco". This way it'll be much easier for you to find them later. It also helps if the date and time on your camera are set correctly.
2. **Create a collection.** This will help you keep your pictures together. Here's the easiest way to do that: after the import, while still in the *Previous Import* scope, select all pictures that you just imported (CMD-A on the Mac, CTRL-A on Windows), then in the left sidebar hit the + button next to *Collections*. In the popup menu select *Create Collection* and give the collection a name. Before you click *Ok*, make sure you have *Include selected photos* checked.



Tagging your pictures during import is not a requirement for this workflow, but it will tremendously help you to later find your way around in your library.

Tip: If you want to group multiple collections, for example all of Amy's birthday parties, you can create a *Collection Set* and then drag the respective collections into it.

12. The Three-Phase-Method

One of the reasons it's so hard to make a selection and bring out your best work is what I jokingly like to call ADOS. It stands for *Attention Deficiency Oh Shiny* and it simply means that we're easily distracted. And I clearly include myself here!

The other reason I think selecting photos is hard is that we take so many pictures these days that it easily feels that boiling them down to the essence is impossible.

Well, it doesn't have to be impossible and here is why:

By splitting the process up into three distinct phases, each of which handles some section of the complexity, you will have a much easier time getting through the process.

Where you may have 1000 pictures on import, you might be left with 500 pictures after the first phase and maybe after the second phase that number will be reduced to just 50 pictures. The final phase could whittle that down further to your 20 to 30 best pictures.

The best part? All of that can be done within one hour. It might take a little bit of practice, but it's definitely possible to work like this regularly. I do it all the time. 4500 pictures shot by two photographers at a wedding boiled down to the 200 very best photos in just 4 hours.

Let's dive in!

Splitting up image management into three distinct phases will help you break down a huge task into many small ones that are very easy to follow.

Phase I - The Quick Sweep

This first phase of the process is picking the pictures that you definitely want to keep. Sounds easy, and actually is. All you do is use the P key to pick the pictures you want to keep. Be generous. See something you're unsure about? Select it. Use your gut feeling. Be fast! Don't hesitate or overthink. If in doubt, choose it. Remember: none of the choices that you make at this point are permanent. All you're doing is marking pictures for inclusion in the next workflow phase. But there is also an important psychological component to this step⁵.

1. **Pick the keepers:** Go through the list of pictures and pick the ones you want to keep, using the P key. This will add a white flag to each selected picture.
2. **Three golden rules:** Be fast, be generous, use your gut feeling
3. **No worries:** Don't worry about picking the wrong pictures, you're not making any permanent decisions here

At this stage, the time I usually take is at most one second per picture. It may take you slightly longer until you get the hang of it, but not much longer. Think beforehand about what pictures you realistically won't use. Pictures that I never pick at this point are usually: pictures with camera shake, accidentally out of focus pictures, pictures where the framing is off, pictures where the timing isn't good, pictures that don't speak to me.



⁵ you have two ways to do this: there's the positive way, where you pick the pictures you want to keep (P key), or there is a negative selection, where you mark for rejection the pictures that you don't like to keep (the X key). I personally believe (and several photographer psychologists who have been on my workshops agree) that a positive approach ("I like you. I like you too. I really like you") is much better than a negative one ("I hate you. You're ugly. I want to delete you".)

I **will** select pictures that have even a remote chance to be useful to me, be it for documentary purposes or as pictures that I want to show in a gallery one day.

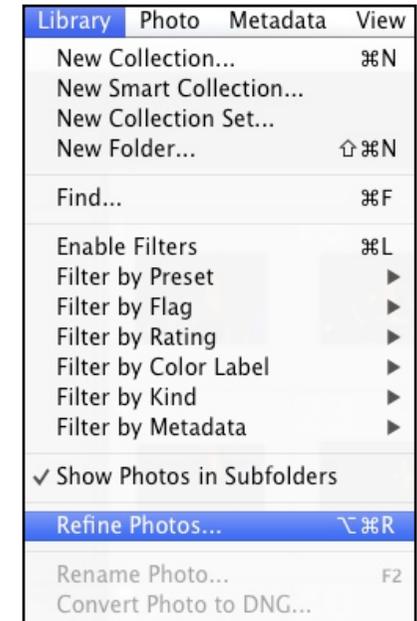
At the end of this selection process I will typically have about half of the pictures flagged with white flags, leaving the other half unflagged.

Now comes the crucial step: go to the *Library* menu and select *Refine photos...* - I still don't know why Adobe chose this name for the command, but it's hard to guess what it does. And the German translation *Fotos verbessern...* (literally, to 'improve photos') make even less sense!

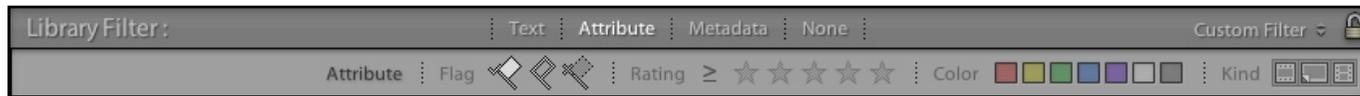
Let me tell you what it actually does: it flags all unflagged pictures for rejection (as if you had pressed the X key on them) and it unflags all currently picked pictures (as if you had pressed the U key on them). It pretty much inverts the selection we just made: all pictures we didn't pick get rejected, all pictures that we picked get unpicked.

"But why didn't we make a negative selection in the first place?" I hear you ask. The footnote on the last page says it all. It's a psychological thing and it works. You'll like your pictures more if you're looking for their qualities, rather than their flaws. Trust me.

If we use about one second per picture, we can get through our 1000 pictures in roughly 16 minutes.



The crucial step: From the *Library Filter* menu at the top of the *Library* view, select *Attributes*⁶. This will set the filter so you don't see the pictures marked for rejection. They are still there, the filter just makes them invisible.



Tip: If you shoot many bursts, perhaps to increase your chance of getting a shake-free picture at slow shutter speeds, or if you shoot a lot of bracketed shots, or if you tend to shoot many pictures of the same object, just to get a choice of different framing options, the Compare tool (N key) will come in handy. It allows you to compare multiple similar pictures of the same object.

The result of phase I: you have reduced 1000 pictures to 500 pictures

⁶ if you don't see the *Library Filter* bar, it's probably hidden. Unhide it by pressing the backslash (\) key

Phase II - It's Full Of Stars

Now that we have the count down to 500 and have thus halved the perceived size of the big pile of pictures, how would you like to boil them to less than a tenth of what's left? Yes, I'm talking 20-30 pictures. Here's how:

Again, these are simple rules. In this phase every single picture will receive a rating from one to three stars. Don't worry, we will get to the four and five star ratings later.

1. **One star:** * means the picture has documentary value. Not bad enough to delete, but probably isn't something you want to show in public.
2. **Two stars:** ** means the picture is ok, but needs work.
3. **Three stars:** *** means you like the picture a lot already. Might need work, but not much.



And remember, no cheating! In phase II every picture gets at least 1 star. If it doesn't deserve one, hit the X key and it'll automatically go on the reject pile.

There are several reasons why I only use three stars at this point. Reason 1 is again a psychological one. Too much choice slows us down and this is about speed. Too much choice [has a surprising tendency to make us unhappy](#). Reason 2 is that in the next phase we need room to improve and if at this point we've already used up all our options, we won't have anywhere to go.

With a bit of practice, this rating phase can be very fast, especially if you use keyboard shortcuts. The 1, 2 and 3 keys will set the picture rating to the respective number of stars. Use the cursor keys to

advance, or if you hit CAPS-lock (or hold the shift key), Lightroom will even auto-advance to the next picture for you, once you've assigned a rating.

Don't be worried if you don't exactly know which of your pictures are good and which aren't. For beginners in particular, it's perfectly normal to not be sure. In that case, all you need is a bit of practice to develop and hone your instincts, and then enough experience to trust them.

The crucial step: in the *Attributes* tab of the *Library Filter* bar, select *Rating ≥ **** - or in short, tell the filter to hide all pictures that don't have three stars.



What you have now effectively done is this: first you reduced the amount of pictures from 1000 to about 500, then you reduced them further to about 30. Your exact numbers may vary, but that's what it often turns out to be for me.

By setting the filter to only show you pictures with three stars or more, you are masking out all the other pictures. They are still there, but they won't bother you at this point because they are hidden from you.

And the math again: 500 pictures, one second each, that's about eight minutes. We are at 24 minutes now.

The result of phase II: you have reduced the size of your selection down to about 30 pictures. And you still have over 30 minutes left. Which takes us to phase III.

Phase III - Spit & Polish

You now have a massively reduced amount of pictures that you have to deal with. A mere 30 out of the 1000 that you started with that you can fully concentrate on. This is the point where you take the book-keeper's hat off and put your creative (and presumably hand-knitted) hat on and start making your already nice three-star pictures look even nicer.

To do that, you need the develop module. Simply hit the D key and you're there. Fix the crop, rotation, exposure, shadows, highlights, colors, ... have at it. Do whatever it takes to make your pictures shine. And you have over a minute per picture to do it.

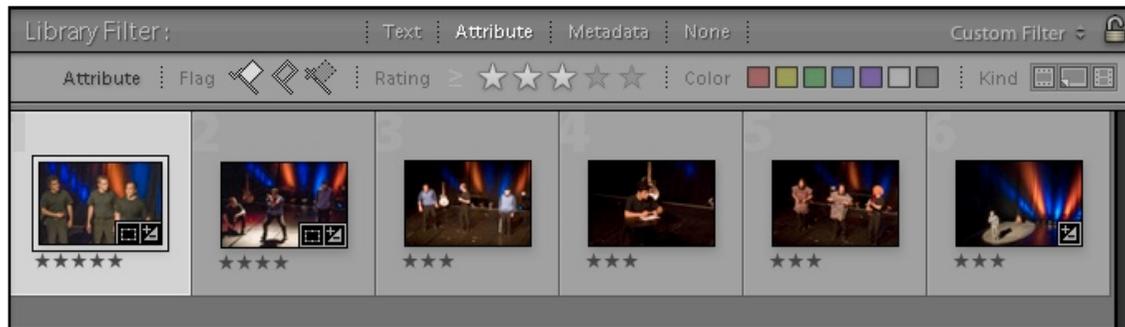
If you are experienced, that's plenty of time to make the obvious changes pictures need. If you are still learning (and trust me, even the experienced learn something new every day), then take your time. You can still be sure that at this point you are working only on the right pictures.

This is also the place where those four and five star rating come in. If you are finished polishing a picture, you have four choices: leave it at three stars, take it down a rating or raise it to four or five.



The new ratings:

1. **Four stars: ****** means I'm happy to share this picture with the world, be it on my website, my blog, flickr, Google+ or any other public place.
2. **Five stars: ******* means that this is gallery / portfolio material. This is the quality of picture that I'd show a prospective client to get them to hire me.

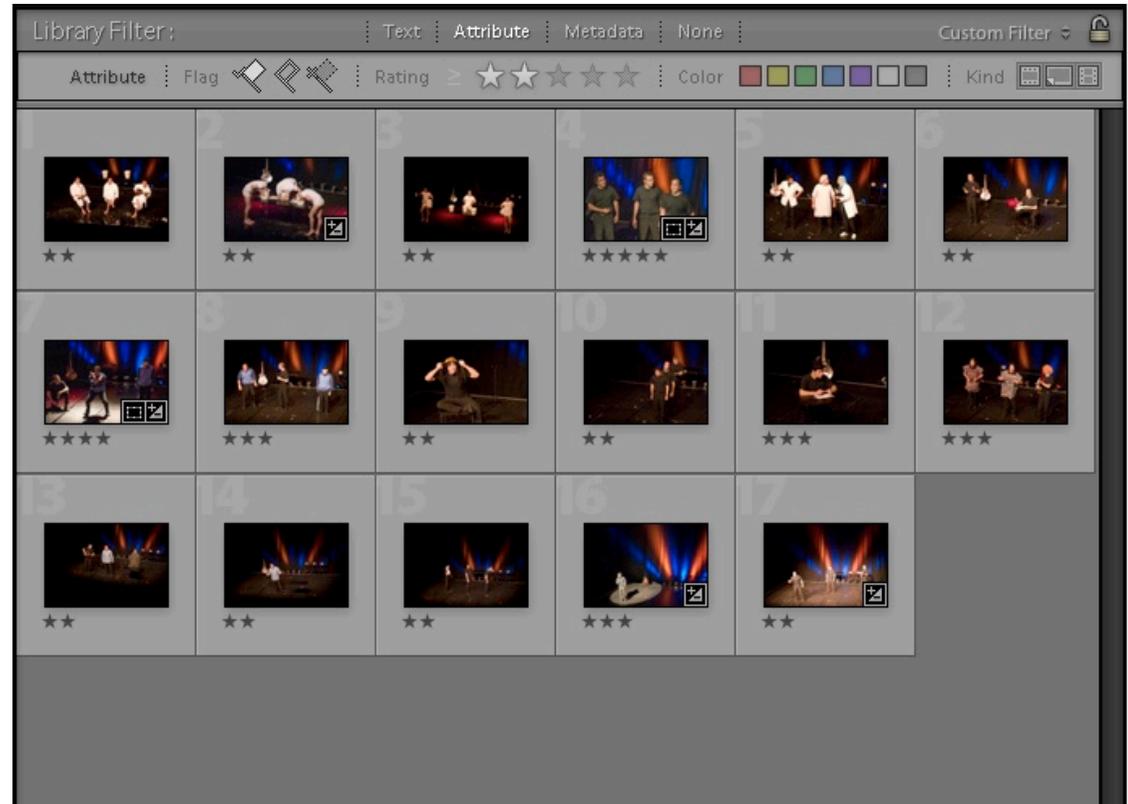


There's nothing wrong with demoting a picture to two stars at this point or even mark it for rejection. Actually that's quite normal. You zipped through those 1000 pictures so quickly, there is always a chance that you didn't judge some of them correctly in the first place. You may find that alongside your other 'top picks' the flaws in some of your photos are a bit more obvious.

By the end of this, you will have distilled the 20 best pictures out of your 1000.

13. Open Up The Filter

If at the end of this process you still have time left, open up the filter from *Rating* \geq *** to *Rating* \geq ** and work on your two-star pictures. Again, if you feel you mis-judged any of them, there is nothing to stop you from raising a rating up to 3 or more stars or from demoting down to a 1-star picture.



14. Adapt As You Go

Of course you will make mistakes during the process. That's inevitable when working at such a speed. And that's where Lightroom's non-destructive nature comes in really handy, because none of your choices are permanent. Not yet, at least. Keeping that in mind all the time while you work is one of the key reasons that being this fast is not a problem: you can always fix things later.

That's where the Clean-Up phase comes in.

It is inevitable that you will make mistakes when working this fast. Mistakes are to be expected and have been factored into this workflow.

15. Clean-Up

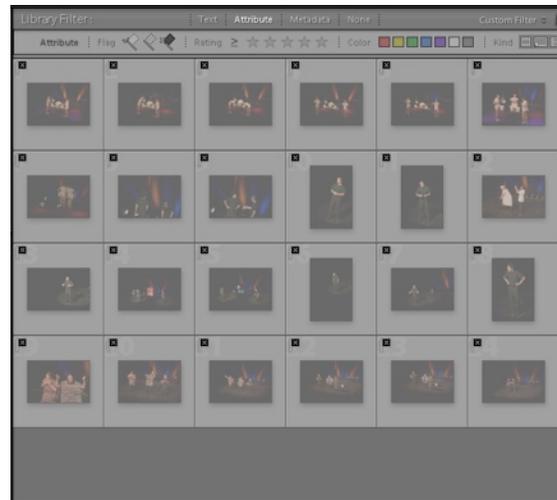
This is the unofficial fourth phase, and it's a step that is really important to me.

I make a point to let some time pass before I perform this, typically a week or more, sometimes even a few months.

The reason for letting time pass is that it is hard to make a good judgment if memories of the photo shoot are too fresh. When viewing a photo, the viewer will not experience the same thing that you experienced when you took the picture. You will still remember all the sensory inputs that are no longer there in the two-dimensional photos: the smells, the sounds, the climate and whatever else may skew your judgment.

So after at least a week, sometimes a month or even more, I will go through the rejected pictures, the ones that I didn't initially pick and filter out during the process of boiling them down. My experience is that I mostly agree with my initial choices, but every once in a while, I will find photos that I scratch my head about and think "why on earth did I choose that one to be rejected?!"

If at this point I decide to rescue a picture, the U key will unflag it and the number keys will star it.



Having a clean-up phase built into this workflow means you have a planned way to iron out mis-picks that you made earlier in the process.

And here comes the scary bit: Actually deleting the rejected pictures from my hard drive. Despite this long process and the multiple checks, it can still be a worrying task to permanently remove pictures. This is done in Library mode by pressing CMD-backspace on a Mac, CTRL-backspace on Windows.

16. Getting Your Old Pictures On Board

People often tell me that they would really love to adopt this workflow, but that they still have thousands and thousands of old pictures sitting on their hard drives that are not tagged, sorted or rated.

I don't see that being a problem, if anything, it's a huge opportunity to practise this workflow. Take a bunch of old pictures, maybe that time you got a new camera and tried it out on a Sunday afternoon in the park. Or decided to play around with some settings you'd never used before. Maybe those subjects that you revisited many times afterwards.

Pretend these are fresh pictures, select them in the *Library* view, click the + sign in the left sidebar's *Collections* section, make sure that *Include selected photos* is checked and you are off to the races!

Now you have a methodology and a guideline. Phase I - Phase II - Phase III - Clean-Up.

At the end of it you should have a decent chunk of your library taken care of.

Rinse, repeat, and sooner rather than later you will have made a real dent in your collection of pictures and you'll begin to reap the benefits of having a trim, fast and easy to navigate catalog.

Plus, you'll sleep better at night :)

Using the workflow from this book to get your old pictures into a managed state is also a great training ground that allows you to safely learn.

17. tl;dr

Too long, didn't read? Here is a quick reference:

1. Import your pictures. Make sure you add keywords during the import.
2. Create a collection with all your newly imported pictures.
3. Phase I: Pick the pictures you want to keep. Be fast and generous, pick about half of them. Library -> Refine photos. Set the attributes filter to hide the pictures that are marked for rejection.
4. Phase II: Apply star ratings to the remaining pictures. Give each picture between one and three stars. No picture remains unstarred at this point. Set the attributes filter to only show you three-star pictures.
5. Phase III: Put on your creative hat and work on the three-star pictures. Adjust the ratings as appropriate.
6. If you still have time left, open up the filter to include pictures with two stars.
7. After some time, review the pictures that you marked for rejection. If you can't find any obvious mis-picks, delete them from your hard drive.

18. Outlook

There are a lot of things that may come out and help us get even faster with this process in the future.

Automatic face recognition is one of them. Already present in many areas, it could help us by tagging people and pictures for us.

Automatic geo tagging may also become a popular addition as more cameras integrate GPS chips to help us automate some of the tagging and make things faster and more consistent. Many smart phones have done this for years now.

Of course there is no automated system to my knowledge that knows what your intentions for a photo are, that has good taste when it comes to aesthetics and can tell you how much potential a specific image has or how many stars it should get. But by repeating this workflow over and over, you will quickly develop a habit of treating your pictures in a way that will keep the clutter at bay and make it so much easier to quickly pull out the very best pictures that you took of your daughter Amy over the last 10 years.

19. Resources

1. [Discover Lightroom - Video Workshop with Chris Marquardt](#). A 6.5 hour video workshop that covers virtually every single aspect of Lightroom, including a 1.5 hour long chapter about the workflow in this book.
2. Lightroom Video Workshops in German. [Adobe Photoshop Lightroom](#) (part 1) - [Lightroom 3 für Fortgeschrittene](#) (part 2) - [Neu in Lightroom 4](#) (part 3).
3. [Discover the Top Floor - Photo Workshops and Tours with Chris Marquardt](#). Face to face photo workshops and photo tours, ranging from local events to photography tours to Iceland, the Himalayas and more. Most of these workshops and tours include a section on working with Lightroom.
4. [Photography Tips from the Top Floor](#). A weekly podcast about photography by Chris Marquardt, where he answers listener questions ([ask yours here](#)), picks interesting photography topics and once in a while he invites a guest on the show.
5. [The Tech Guy Radio Show with Leo Laporte](#). Almost every week around 12:33 Pacific Time, Chris joins Leo Laporte live on his US radio show to bust a photography myth or to review a photo assignment.
6. [Happy Shooting](#). A weekly photography podcast in German, co-hosted by Boris Nienke.
7. [Chris Marquard's Personal Website](#)