



Taming the PC’s most powerful graphics application and exploding some popular myths

From removing unsightly power lines to replacing a miserable face with a smiling one or simply recovering the brightness and contrast lost by the bad decision of your camera’s automatic exposure, photo

editing can enhance and transform your photos.

The tools, which perform these miraculous feats, are said to be difficult even for graphics professionals. Is it realistic then to point



beginners to the graphics superstar as the place to start? Just as most of the World uses Microsoft Word for simple letter writing so I maintain you should use Photoshop (or Photoshop Elements 2/3/4) for photo editing.

Photoshop competitors have tried in vain to come up with a 'simple' solution 'for the rest of us'. There are dozens of pretenders and the list gets longer every day. Mostly shipped free with Digital cameras, these programs take just as long to learn but don't actually deliver, leaving you stuck in a side street with no option but to go back to the main road and start again—with the program you should really have used from the outset. The road is wider and longer but it does lead to your destination.

The secret is not to try to 'Master' programs like Word or Photoshop but to focus only on the tools within these monsters that you need to perform a specific task. Learning tools and functions that

will rarely if ever be used is a huge waste of time and effort—especially because if they are not used they will quickly be forgotten.

When writing a letter you are probably using less than 10% of the functionality of Word. To edit a photo the fraction for Photoshop is even less, developed as it was for professional graphics designers, the photo tools are a part of the total. This 'Swiss army knife' of graphics also offers numerous ways to achieve the same outcome—resulting in, what is known in the business as, a 'Steep learning Curve'. But back to the map analogy, once you have been shown a route from a. to b. you do not need to know any of the ten other ways of getting there.

'Being Shown' is also critical in this kind of learning. Just as you would not learn to drive a car from a book, nor is it effective to attempt to learn Photoshop from its tutorial, help files or from the many

bandwagon idiots guides. There is no substitute for being shown what to do and then doing it yourself. Describing the powerful 'Clone Stamp' or 'Magic Wand' in print, apart from taking many pages, would leave most readers glazed eyed and none the wiser, in demonstrating what they do and how they do it the penny drops in seconds.

Photoshop in a day—for beginners—sounds like a tall order, and it is, but Photoshop for photo editing in a day—for beginners, is an achievable and very worthwhile goal.

Peter Turner runs one-day photo editing workshops at Marsh Studio Hungerford

see www.photo-edit-courses.org