

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING



by Barry Beckham

Housekeeping

Barry Beckham has been involved in Photography for over 35 years and was one of the first to readily accept Digital Photography and Photoshop some 15 years ago.

He has written and recorded tutorials for many of the UK's Digital Magazines and also wrote a book for the original version of Photoshop Elements.

The Photographers Guide to Photoshop Elements

Barry now produces high quality video tutorials on disk and via download covering a multitude of photographic skills with software like Photoshop, Photoshop Elements, Lightroom, PicturesToExe and other related software.

You only have to look at the extensive galleries at the www.beckhamdigital.com.au web site to quickly see that Barry has mastered not only the technicalities of what makes a good photographer, but also the editing skills which takes his photography to a different level.

He says that this is still not enough though and photographers need to know what makes a great photograph. Unless you know where you're heading, how will you know how to get there?

He says that successful photography is the result of a balance between photographic skills and manipulation skills. He says it's rather like a recipe. You have the ingredients (our digital negative) and you have the method (our image editing skills)

Digital has revitalised photography and even the casual snapper now takes more pictures in one year than they have taken in 10 previously. Unless you apply just a little order and thought to this subject of good housekeeping, you will be overwhelmed.

It's not a matter of if, just a matter of when and then you will really have a chore on your hands. Keeping order is remarkably easy as you will see from our guidance here. Like all things that could become a chore, the key is a minute or two everytime you download images to your computer. We really do mean, just a few minutes.

The other day I had to put some clean washing away, so as I had a few pairs of underwear I put two pairs in the cupboard in the bedroom, two pairs in separate drawers in the second bedroom and two pairs in third bedroom. Being really creative I placed one pair under the sink with the cleaning materials.

I also had a few pairs of socks, so I did the same with them, but I put them in different locations and sometimes I put them inside any old bags I could find too. Once again to be really creative I split up two pairs of socks and put each sock in a different place.

By now you know I am talking nonsense right, no-one in their right mind would do that.

Oh yes they do, it's just that some do this with their images rather than clean clothes. Images spread all over the computer with no order or thought at all. I know because I have seen it so many times. It's certainly not rare to see. Some have original images, finished images and part done images all mixed up together. Images of all different resolutions, some for printing, some for emails, some for the Camera Club competitions, part done images, abandoned images all with no order at all.

Some place images in folders with names made up on the spot that are forgotten by the next morning. I have seen people who take longer to find an image on their computer, than it takes me to do the manipulation on that image. I have even had one or two give up when they couldn't find the image they knew was there somewhere.

You cannot do creative work like this and if ever there was a sure fire way to accidentally delete and lose valuable images, this is it.



For the sake of this article I am going to assume I am talking to an amateur photographer, obviously a keen enough photographer to read this, so a hobby photographer, someone who in the next few years may shoot thousands of images. Someone whose photography is often done while away on holiday with family and friends, but maybe on dedicated photo shoots too.

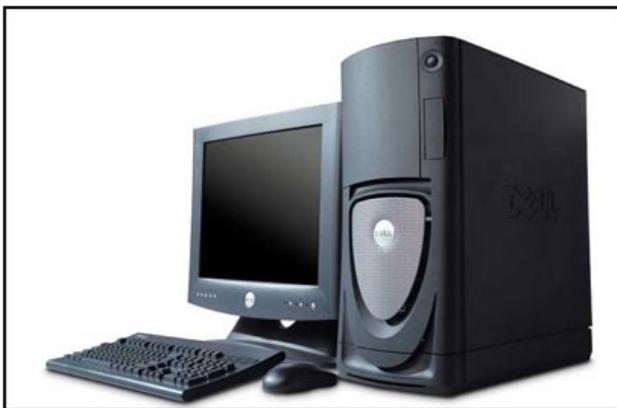
[The Good Housekeeping Answer](#)

We have the answer for you, but we need you to commit something too. All it amounts to is a minute or two every time you copy images onto your PC. It really is only a minute or two, this isn't one of those throw away remarks that really mean 30 minutes. The most important thing you need is consistency. We have to do the same thing every time so it becomes a routine and in this instance, a routine is good.

We are going to describe the system that has worked for us for well over 10 years now, probably nearer to 15. So if it didn't work for us we would have kicked it into touch years ago. We didn't, we are still using it and it still works.

What we need to consider

- 1. Where are we going to save all our original images when we get back from a photo shoot. What I am referring to here is where on our computers hard drive?*
- 2. Where will we save our finished images, those images that have been tweaked in our image editor and we consider them completed images. Once again, where do we save these on our computer?*
- 3. How do we back up these originals and finished images, so there is never any fear of losing anything, but without turning this into some lifetime's work that takes up so much time there is none left for photography.*
- 4. How do we catalogue our images so we can find what we want quickly and easily or just do a bit of browsing when we feel like it. Again, we need to be able to do this without it turning into a chore or a lifetime's work. It needs to be quick and simple and we like quick and simple, it's a bit like me really.*
- 5. How do we make sure that when our hard drive fills up, which it surely will at some stage. We can delete the oldest of our original images/ finished images safe in the knowledge that they are securely saved elsewhere.*



I was recently approached by a Camera Club member who was obviously confused with this subject and they asked me if they should save their images in Lightroom or Photoshop.

We don't save any images in Lightroom or Photoshop. We save our images onto hard drives on our computer. We may use Lightroom, Photoshop or Elements to help us save them, but it's not the image editing programs that decides where or how the images will be saved, you do !

Most programs we install will have default settings and generally speaking, if you don't specify a location for your images the software will place them into your Pictures Folder. This is the folder created by your operating system when it was installed. The problem

here is this folder is in the worst possible place.

It's located on your C drive, the same drive where your operating system, your programs, your web browsing files and your emails are all stored. If any drive on your computer was ever going to experience a problem that became impossible to recover from, it's likely to be the C drive. Particularly if the problem is caused by a software issue, a virus or an operating system crash.

In addition, any hard drive can fail at any time. They are a mechanical device just like the starter on your car. That starter could last the lifetime of the car or fail within weeks of leaving the factory. It happens with mechanical parts and your hard drives are mechanical parts. However it's fair to say that any problem you may have with a failed hard drive is more likely to be on your C drive, but not exclusively.

So, **DON'T STORE ANYTHING OF VALUE ON THE C DRIVE.** Keep that solely for your operating system and your programs only. If the worst ever happens and you have to format and restore windows, your images will be perfectly safe.



Desktop Users - What do you need?

If you buy a new PC, have a second hard drive put into your machine. Its not expensive when considered with all the other costs of the PC and it's almost essential if you're a keen photographer.

That drive can now be dedicated to your Photography, but it can double as storage for other work too like slide shows, word documents etc etc. However, working on a separate internal drive means you always know where your images are and they are safer there than on the C drive.

If finances allow, have a third drive installed for even greater safety and reliability.

These drives can be retrofitted quite easily to an older PC and if you're enthusiastic enough to read this, then you should be considering this option. Your also going to need an external hard drive and blank DVD's.



The reasons for the drives will be explained later and you will see the logical way we use them. They are not a luxury we can side step, we need them. Buy the largest capacity drives you can afford. Would you buy a car with a 5 gallon fuel tank, not having enough storage is much the same.

Laptop Users - What do you need?

It's not possible for you to have second or third hard drives installed inside your laptop, so you will need at least 2 external drives, one to store your images and one for backup, plus blank DVD's. Buy the largest capacity drives you can afford.

Rule one

Whether you're a laptop or a desktop user **NEVER** store finished, part finished, email image or any others images with your originals. Keep your originals completely separate from **EVERYTHING**. This is 15 years of experience talking here.

A friend recently wanted my advice on how to proceed with an image he had been working on in Photoshop. When he opened up Photoshop's Bridge, but it could easily have been the Elements Organiser or Lightroom's Catalogue, I could see a dozen versions of the image.

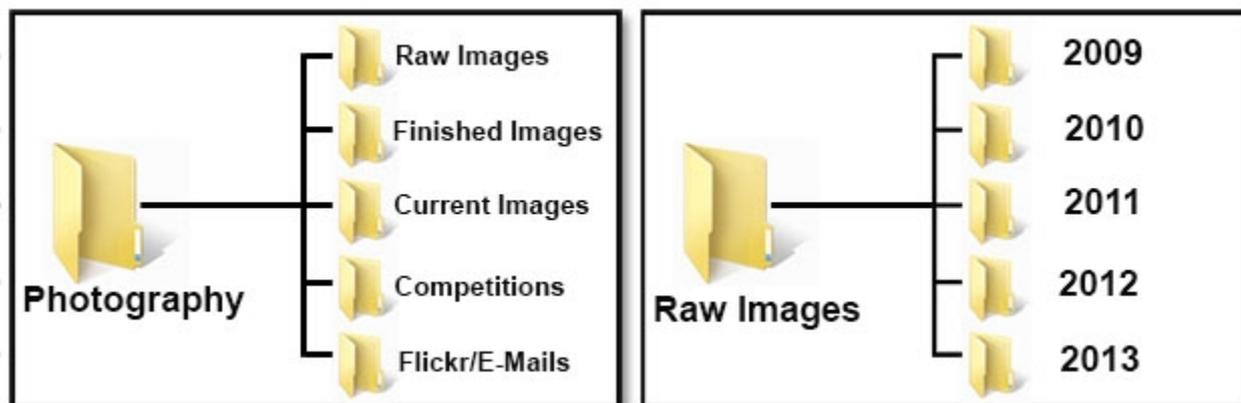
Some images went wrong so he started again, but left the old ones there. One or two he sent to me as emails so there were a few versions of those too. One or two were cropped, some were not. Remember we were looking at these images as thumbnails and they all look the same like that. Just finding the image he had left for me to see was a frustrating process. Hence the advice never to mix the images you're working on with originals.

Unfortunately some software seems to take a delight in trying to do just that, but you should decide where images are stored, not some boffin who wrote the code for your software.

Your first steps

Identify one of the internal drives as your photo storage area or an external drive if you're a laptop user. Remember you can rename these drives if you wish to Working drive, Back-up etc to make them easier to see in the file tree. We need to create some

storage folders on those drives and obviously you can choose the names you like, but here are some examples that we use. Create one folder on this hard drive called Photography or something like that



Raw/Original Images - This folder is created within our Photography folder (above left) I shoot only Raw images, so they are the only files that are ever saved into this folder. Whether you shoot Raw or Jpeg or a mixture of both, they are your originals and they are all we will ever save into this folder.

Finished Images - This folder is also created within the Photography folder and here we only EVER put finished high resolution images, never those images you have resized for email or other projects. Finished High resolution image only in this folder.

Current/In Progress - This is for those projects that are part done or ones you want to come back to later. Work in progress.

Competitions - If you belong to a Camera Club and enter projected image competitions you might want to create a folder called Competitions. - Only images you select for that purpose go into this folder. This not only makes them easy to find, but it also keeps a record of what you have entered. Otherwise you will forget.

Flickr/E-Mail Images - This folder will be kept solely as your storage area for images you re-size for that purpose. These are small files, can be kept a fair time and usually we find we may need them again anyway.

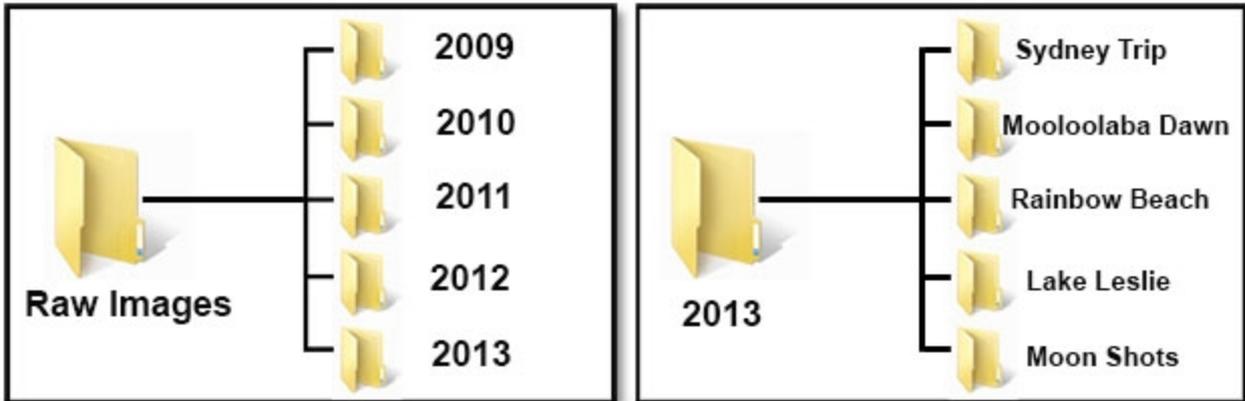
Obviously there is some flexibility in how many folders you create, but you can see where we are headed here in our diagram above. Mixing different formats and resolution images just isn't sustainable.

Before we go any further create another folder inside the Raw Images and Finished images folders and name that the current years date. You can see what our established drive looks like above right, but the number of years you're able to store on this drive will depend on the size of your hard drive and how many images you shoot. As long as you have a couple of years, that will be fine.

Downloading Raw/Original Images - The Process

We have just come back from a day out and we have a flash/media card with about 100 original images on it. For now we will use a simple manual method and the first step is to place the card in the card reader.

We usually get a window open to allow us to open the folder to view the files. Open the folders on the media card and you can use Ctrl+A to select all the images on the card. Right click among the images and choose copy.



Now, browse and open the folder you called Raw/Original Images and then open the current year's folder. In our example above left you can see previous years of course. Inside the current year folder make another folder and give that a name relative to the images you're about to download. The place you shot the pictures, the person you photographed, something like that. Keep it simple and you can see a sample of our drive above right. Right click into the folder you just created and named, then choose paste. Those images will download into this folder.

As soon as those images are on your first hard drive, copy exactly what you have above to your back-up drive. The files and folder structure should be a mirror image. Without that you will lose track at some stage. Your backup drive must look identical to your main storage area. As soon as that is complete you will have peace of mind because your images are now stored in two places. Two separate drives one on the PC one off. Laptop users will use both externals.



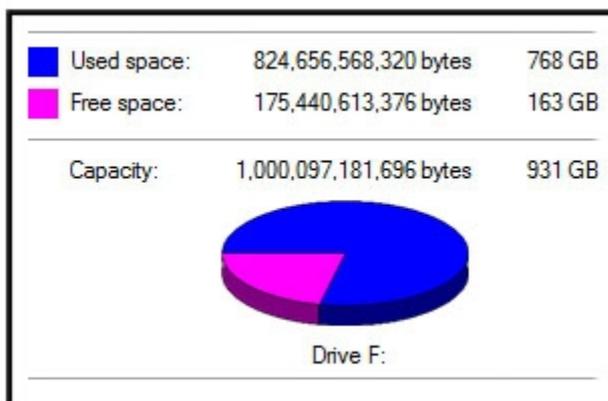
Now these same images need to be saved onto a DVD and named in exactly the same way as the images you have stored on both hard drives. However, we only have 100 images and it's a bit of a waste to write a DVD for 100 images. In this instance, allow your original images to build up on your hard drive. By now you already have them stored in two places, so they are pretty safe. When you have about 2-4 gig of images write them to a DVD, but add the folder titles to the disk front.

Now, you have your images in 3 places. Desktop users have the images on one internal drive, one external drive and the DVD. Laptop users have images on two externals and one DVD. So we now have the best of all worlds. We have the images on our main photography drive where they are convenient to get to and we are safe in the knowledge that another copy resides on another drive, Plus we have our DVD as well.

Why do we need a times 3 backup

Because after a while your main working photography drive will start to fill with images and files and there will come a time when you will have to delete the older of these images to make space for new ones. It may take a year or two if your drives are large, but that time will come. Working in the way we have suggested makes it easy for us to manage this. Typically we will take the oldest of these images and delete them with confidence.

You can do this without any concerns because you know that the same images are stored in two other places. Should you want them back at any time, the easiest route is via the external hard drive, but you also have DVD too. It's a disaster if you get two years down the road, need to delete images and you're then not sure if they were all backed up correctly. Now you have a major chore on your hands to find out and you can now see why we need consistency and why people get themselves into a real mess with this part of their photography.



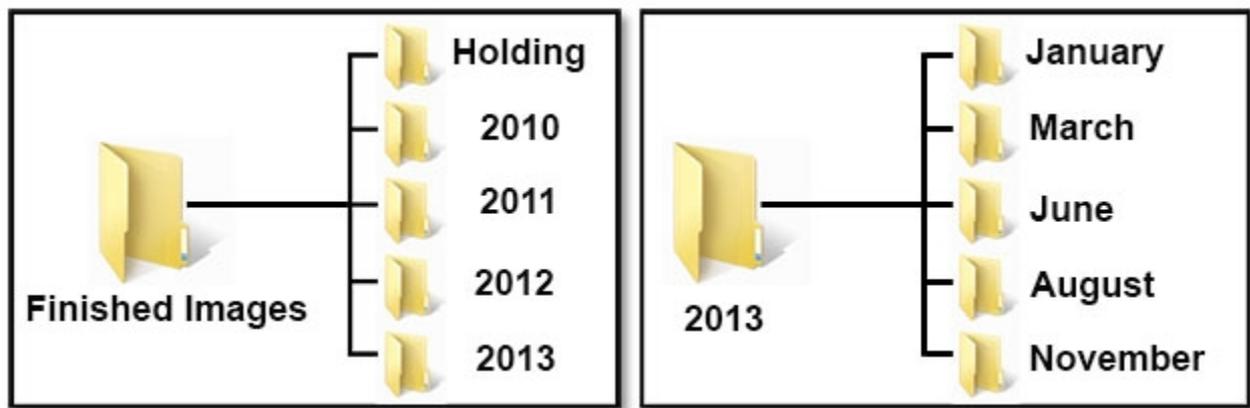
That deals pretty effectively with all the images you shoot. You have a procedure for downloading them, you know exactly where they are going to be stored and you have a back-up regime in place. Simple

Finished Images

As you complete images, save them into your Finished images folder, but place them in a holding file within that finished images folder. Call it Finished Holding as an example, because we will need a place to store finished images until we have enough to write to a DVD for longer term storage.

Don't forget to back-up this holding file to your other hard drive periodically or you will only have your finished images in one place for a while and that is asking for trouble

What to do when you do have enough images to save on a DVD



Firstly, don't be too particular about filling every DVD to the maximum. Its safer to just add 2 gig of images, but this will depend on the size of your images (mega-pixels in your camera) and how many images you shoot. (DVD disks are cheap)

Let's assume it's November when you're doing this, create a folder called November and place all the images you want on your disk in that folder. Write the images to the DVD and label it Finished November 2013.

On your photography drive and your backup drive you place the November folder inside the relevant year of your finished images folder Eventually you may open up your Finished Images folder and see folders for 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Open up the 2013 finished images folder and you may only have a few folders in there, one for January, March, June, August and November. It depends how many images you create and therefore back-up. This will determine how many folders you may have per year.

You're now in a pretty secure position with your finished images building up within yearly folders on your photography drive, so they are very convenient to get to, as they should be. You also have a mirror image of those folders on your other back-up drive and on DVD.

Now you can feel a little bit smug, because the only thing that can get you now is if your house burns down, but I am sure that won't happen.

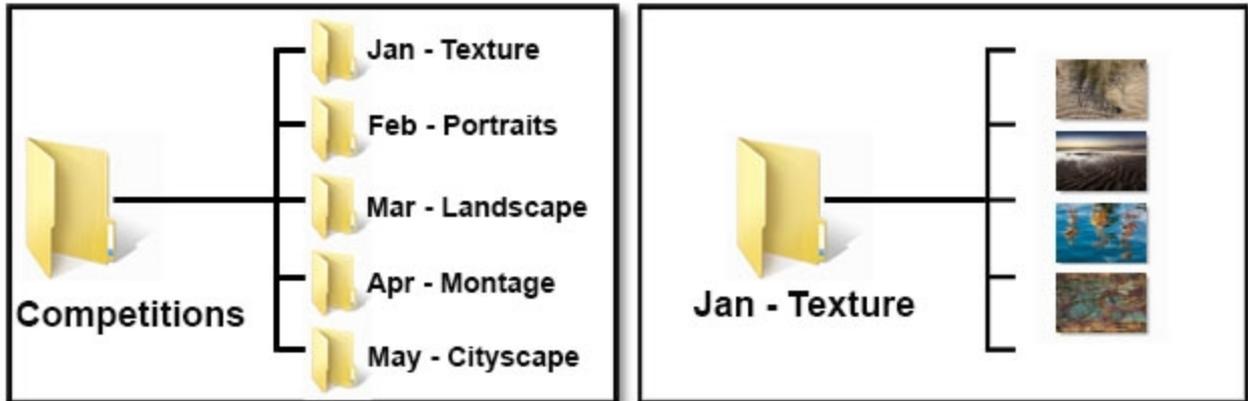
Camera Club Competitions

Now here we have a very useful folder if you are a member of a Camera Club and enter projected image competitions. Within your competitions folder create a folder for each competition for the year. Quite often clubs have set subjects so if you label the folders as we show below left, you're not going to be scrabbling around halfway through the year trying to recall what the next set subject is.

In addition to that you can drop potential competition images into these relevant folders as the year progresses. (above right) Each folder will hold your selections so that when the time comes to submit your images, you may have a number of images from which you only need to select one or two. This is a pretty good position to be in.

Delete the images you don't submit and now you have a record of what you entered and

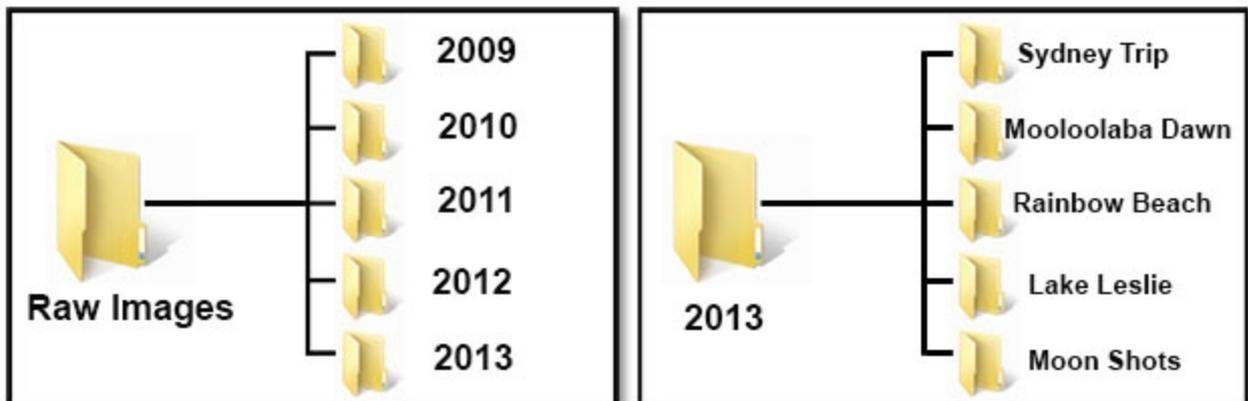
when you entered it.



Images taken on Major Holidays or special Photo Shoots

Sometimes when we come home from holiday or a week away, we may have images stored on a laptop, external portable hard drive or a number of flash cards. The images are likely to have been taken in many different places and on different days.

If you store them in different named folders it can be harder to track them down. If you look at the example below right you will see a folder called Sydney trip. For us this was a lengthy trip and we downloaded all the Raw files to this folders in Date order, but within Sydney Trip. When we come to use Photoshop's Bridge or Lightroom to assist us, these programs will date the folders automatically for us, so it's very convenient and simpler than it sounds when described in words.



So if we opened up the Sydney trip folder we would see quite a few sub-folders all in date order. To give you some idea how we can use these dated folders. I recently wanted some images I shot of rock formations to make our [Montage tutorial DVD](#). I could remember they were taken on the way back from Sydney.

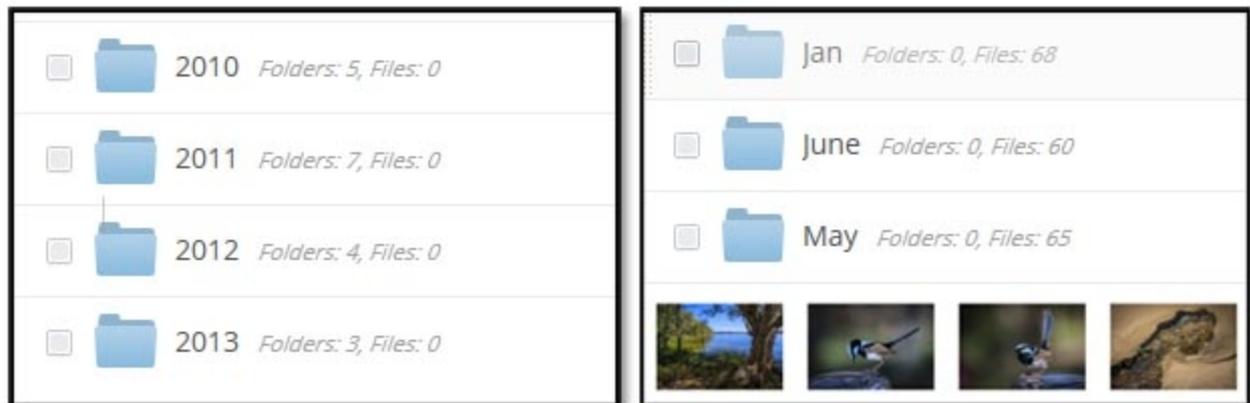
We took a week or more to get back from Sydney stopping at various places, but I knew it was not long after we left Sydney, no more than 2-4 days. So straight away I had a good idea where they were. A few folders down the list in the Sydney Trip folder. You can see that this method allows us to find our images over many years and with thousands stored and this is before we introduce any catalogue systems like Lightroom.

Cloud Storage for finished images

There is another option that we have just started using as well as that we have described above. We can now purchase secure, backed up storage on line with companies like Dropbox or as in our case Mediafire and this is a great way to store photographs and it appears to be the way of the future. It would be particularly good for family pictures, because it would give the family access to the images wherever they were in the world.

As an added security and also convenience we upload our finished images to MediaFire. For \$2.50 per month we have 50 gig of storage space. That is a colossal amount of space for the money we pay. So, when we complete a folder of finished images, we follow our usual storage and back-up regime, but now we have added cloud storage too.

The images take a while to upload, but they upload in the background and not prevent you from continuing to work on your computer. In our case we use the space simply for storage, but I can create a click-able link and send it to you that would allow you to download one image, or in fact a whole folder of images.



You can see how useful this could be to store family photos. The security and backup operated by these cloud systems are at least equal to anything we can come up with and I guess probably better. Above left you can see our files as they appear on MediaFire. They will have the same date file structure as on our own back-ups on our PC.

If we open up our 2013 folder on MediaFire above left you can see the contents above right and we can even see our images as thumbnails. Downloading one of my high resolution images from a 21MP camera stored with Mediafire as a Jpeg took 4 seconds.

It's best to store images in the Cloud as Jpegs, because of the size of the folders you may have to upload. If you store your images as Tiff files or PSD files on your PC, the image processor in Photoshop will convert those images to Jpeg automatically, we just run the image processor via File >Scripts > Image Processor and save them in the same place. It creates a second folder with the jpeg images.

Lightroom will do the same for you when we export a batch of images. We could even create a pre-set to do this for us. It will convert 6 or 60 images from any file format to Jpeg, using the compression you select. Simple

PC users - That Third Internal Hard Drive

Earlier in the article we said that it's very useful to have a third hard drive built into our computer. In this section let me tell you how we use that third drive. Firstly Laptop users could adopt this approach, but would then need 3 external hard drives rather than the two we suggested.

Think of this third drive as a belt and braces approach. Even as amateur photographers we will sometimes have a project that demands extra care and attention to the protection of the images. For example, we were recently asked to document a 90th Birthday flight in an old Tiger Moth Aircraft. It's not possible to re-create something like that if we accidentally lost the images in some way. Wedding pictures are another example.

The work I put into the making of a tutorial disk adds up to many hours of work, so this is another prime example where I can make sure this work isn't accidentally lost. There is an old saying that says *If it's possible for something to happen, then at some stage it will.*

Unlikely you may think, but there are many people who have been in this position to regret the fact that it takes only seconds to start the computer copying from one drive to another. How much time are we saving by not doing that?

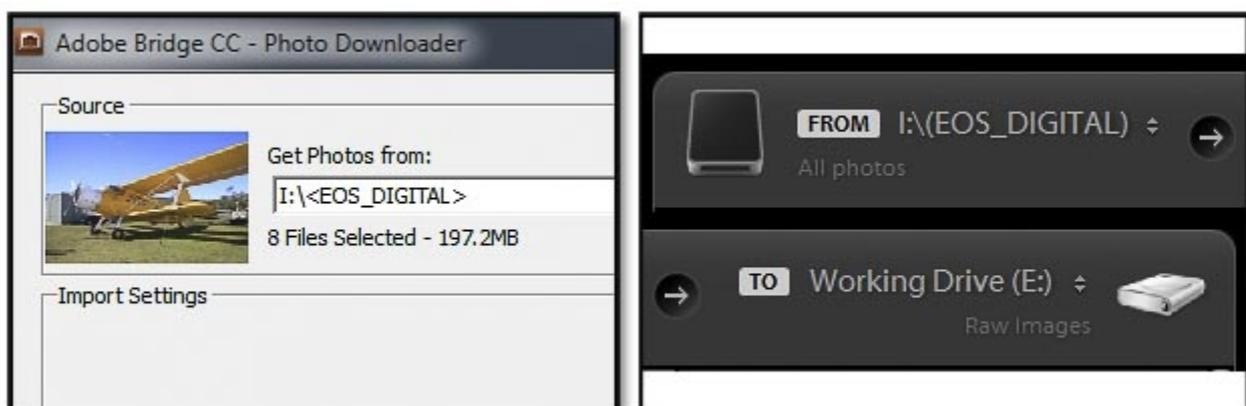
Importing Images with Photoshop or Lightroom

What we are talking about here is using these programs to assist us in downloading images to our computer, but also to add key words to aid searches. In relation to Lightroom we can create a Catalogue and many photographers use Lightroom just for this purpose.

The one thing we would say about key words and catalogues is this. If there is any doubt that you may not keep the key words and catalogue up to date, then it's a waste of time to even start. This is one of those things that **MUST** be done religiously every time you download images to your computer. Having said that, it's not anywhere near as daunting or time consuming as you may imagine.

[Our videos](#) demonstrate this using both Lightroom and Adobe Photoshop's Bridge

Aside from catalogues and key wording, Lightroom and Photoshop's Bridge will allow us to apply our own copyright meta-data pre-set to every image we Import.



Name of the creator, E-mail address, web site address are just a few of the options. This is useful to some, maybe not to others.

As we import images, both Lightroom and Photoshop allow us to also identify another hard drive location apart from our main one to back-up the images. So, here we have a great way to make our first level backup at the same time as we import the images. It will not get much easier than this.

When I look back at this article it looks far more complicated than it actually is. A simple file structure is the core, key words are the icing on the cake. Check out all this above in a download that consists of 6 Videos that run for 130 minutes.

[Good Housekeeping](#)