

THE CROP TOOL

This is one tool available in all image editing programs. It is useful for: quickly removing unwanted information at the edges of an image (aka distracting stuff!), recomposing a shot for a stronger image, straightening vertical or horizontal things (horizons or buildings or people), or correcting perspective in your image (PS only), and even adding more canvas around your image.

I will discuss using this tool in Photoshop. The tool behaviour and options are similar in Photoshop Elements. As with all tools, just below the Menu bar at the top of your screen is an Options bar for the tool you have selected. Let's explore the crop tool options for a minute.




The icon for the crop tool, located at the left of your options bar is really self explanatory as you can see in the illustration above.

Just to the right of the icon in the options bar, is a down facing arrow. Click on it to get a number of preset crop dimensions to crop an image to a certain size. In Photoshop, these presets also include a print resolution. If you select one of the presets, I recommend you undo the 300 that shows up in the

resolution box in your options bar. Select this number and press backspace or in Photoshop you can press CLEAR on the right. I don't have anything in the resolution box. Later, when I am determining what my output is, I resample my image the way I want. When cropping an image for sending in an e-mail and you certainly don't want to interpolate up!

If you have selected 8 x 10 inches from the presets and your image is a landscape you want 10 x 8 inches, simply click on the arrows between the width and height. This reverses the dimension numbers.

Photoshop remembers the last settings used in any of your tools. If you have just opened your crop tool and haven't looked at your options bar, tried to crop and get something you don't want, exit this crop by pressing the Escape key, (top left of your keyboard) or click on the circle with a line through it . If you have first noticed that the dimensions are not what you want, press the CLEAR (PS only) key at the right of your options! In Elements, highlight the dimension numbers and Backspace to clear them.

You do not need any numbers in your height and width fields. This gives you complete freedom to crop to any dimensions. To **crop an image**, have the crop tool selected, click and drag across your image to create the crop marquee. You don't have to be exact at this point. Adjust the marquee by pulling each side out, or pushing it inwards. You can also pull on a handle at the corner of your marquee. To constrain the proportions of your crop, hold down

shift as you drag. To move the crop to another position in your image, put your pointer inside the box and drag the crop to where you want it inside your image.

Let's talk about **straightening an image using your crop tool**. Drag the tool to get the crop marquee. Next, align one of the crop edges with whatever you want to straighten. It would be a top or bottom edge of the marquee if you were straightening a horizon; or if it was a building wall, you would use one of the side edges. Then to rotate the marquee, position your cursor outside the bounding box near one of the corners (the cursor turns to a curved arrow) and drag one way or the next, at the same time watch your edge in relation to the line you want to be aligned with. Once you have the crop marquee lined up with a straight edge, drag the edges of your box outward to suit this image.

To complete the crop, do one of the following:

- press Enter(Windows) or Return(Mac); or
- click the Commit button ✓ in the options bar; or
- double-click inside the cropping area.

When you have a photo looking up at a building and the top is greatly smaller than the bottom, it is possible to **correct altered perspective with your crop tool**. (Not available in Elements)

You need to be able to see your complete image to use this. Activate the Full Screen mode by pressing the F key. Now drag the crop box around the image. Once this is done, the Options bar changes. In the middle is the word PERSPECTIVE with a box beside it. Check this box! On your image, drag any corner of the crop box inwards or outwards. For example to get the top of a building or structure to match the size of the bottom, drag each top corner outward. When edges are vertical, complete the crop as outlined above. Photoshop crops what is outside your crop box.

How you can use the **crop tool to expand the canvas** around your image is next.

First, make sure your background colour is what you want around your image. The foreground and background colours are located towards the bottom of your tool bar. If you want a colour other than what you see on the square underneath the top one, double click on it to bring up the colour picker. From this, or your image, select a colour you wish to add around your image by clicking with your eyedropper on said colour. Click OK in your colour picker.

Start by dragging the crop marquee edges to fit the image. Then, drag the edges of the crop box outward from your image as far as you need or want. To constrain the proportions of your image, hold Alt and Shift at the same time as you drag the corner of the marquee. Otherwise, try to get the

edges fairly even on each side. Now, just complete the crop as outlined above. Voila! Cool edges.

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