

The Lightroom Queen

Hi David!

Welcome to your March Lightroom newsletter.

In this edition...

If Lightroom sometimes feels a bit overwhelming, you're not alone. With so many tools—and now AI features too—it's not always obvious *what to do first*.

The good news? A simple change in your editing order can make everything feel faster and smoother.

Is There an Optimal Lightroom Editing Workflow?

Yes—there is a recommended workflow that can improve both performance and efficiency when editing in Lightroom. While Lightroom's non-destructive editing means you can adjust settings at any time, the order in which you apply certain tools can make a noticeable difference—especially when working with AI-powered features.

Some steps are naturally better done early. For example, if you're merging photos into an HDR or panorama, you'll want to do that first so you're working on the final combined image, not individual source files.

The other main reason is AI processing. Many AI-powered tools—such as Denoise or Remove—may need to recalculate after certain changes, so applying them in an efficient order can save significant time.

Working in an optimized sequence can:

- Improve performance
- Reduce recalculations (especially with AI tools)
- Help you make clearer editing decisions

Recommended Editing Workflow

For the best balance of performance and flexibility, we suggest the following order:

1. Merge Photos (HDR or Panorama)
Create the image you actually want to edit.
2. HDR Processing
Complete any additional HDR adjustments if required.
3. Enhance Tools (Denoise, Raw Details, Super Resolution)
These define the actual pixels you'll be working with.
4. Distraction Removal – Reflections.
5. Distraction Removal – People.
6. Generative Expand (currently in Camera Raw Tech Preview).
7. Remove Tool (Generative Remove, Content-Aware Remove, Heal, Clone).
8. Lens Blur.
9. Lens Corrections.
10. Crop & Geometry.
11. Profiles (primarily Adaptive Profiles)
Other profiles can be changed later without triggering AI recalculations.
12. Global Adjustments (Light/Tone, Color, etc.).
These remain flexible but may benefit from being applied after core processing.
13. Masking
Can impact performance, especially with complex or multiple masks.
14. External Editing
Send to Photoshop or other editors once your Lightroom work is complete.

What Happens If You Work Differently?

None of it is set in stone; it's just to save you time. If you don't mind waiting for it to do repeated AI updates, and you understand that anything like People Removal and Generative Removal will generate a different result each time you have to update them, then you can do what you like. Doing steps 1 & 2 very early makes the biggest material difference.

That said, there are a couple of practical considerations:

Crop later rather than earlier: Some AI tools (like Remove) now operate only within the cropped area. If you crop early and later expand the crop, previous removals may no longer look correct.

Tip: In Lightroom Classic, you can make a quick crop to test composition, then create a virtual copy (Photo > Create Virtual Copy) as a reference. Reset the crop, continue editing, and reapply it at the end.

Exposure checks: Although exposure is shown as step 12, it can be helpful to temporarily boost exposure early on to evaluate whether an image is worth further work.

Summary

This workflow is designed to maximize performance and minimize unnecessary recalculations—particularly with modern AI tools.

That said, workflows are always personal. Once you understand why this order works well, feel free to adapt it to suit your own editing style and priorities.

Want to learn more?

If you'd like to take your Lightroom skills further, we have plenty of resources to help you along the way.

Our two books cover everything you need to know, whether you prefer the traditional or cloud-based workflow. The eBook and web versions are updated with every release, so you're always learning the latest features.

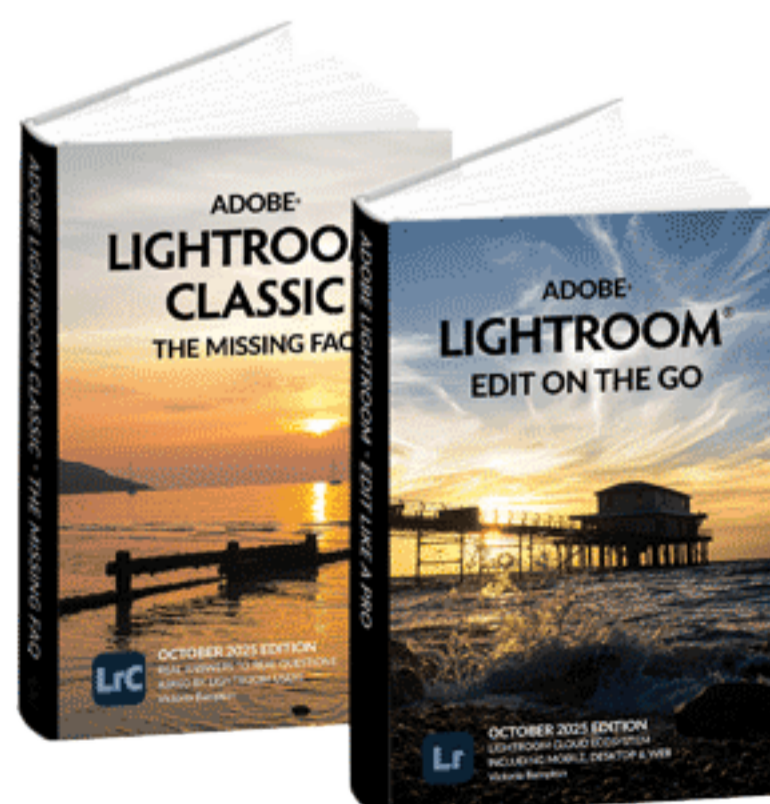
[Lightroom Classic - The Missing FAQ](#) covers the traditional catalog-based version of Lightroom, including editing, catalog management, and all the different modules.

[Lightroom - Edit on the Go](#) focuses on the cloud-based ecosystem, including *Lightroom Desktop*, *Lightroom Mobile*, and *Lightroom Web*, helping you edit anytime, anywhere.

You'll also find a wealth of free tips and tutorials on our [blog](#), and you can search for specific topics anytime.

And if you get stuck, come and join us on the [forums](#)—our team of experts (and friendly community) is always happy to help.

Learn to get the best out of your version of Lightroom—at your own pace.



We look forward to being back in touch with you next month!

Victoria & Paul



[VISIT THE WEBSITE](#)



[LIKE ON FACEBOOK](#)



[FOLLOW ON TWITTER](#)