

Very

Basic Corrections on the Computer

A Photos

The Daddy of all programs for retouching pictures is Photoshop. It does cost, though, over £600. I demonstrated using Photoshop Elements, which is only about £70. It's simpler but still brilliant.

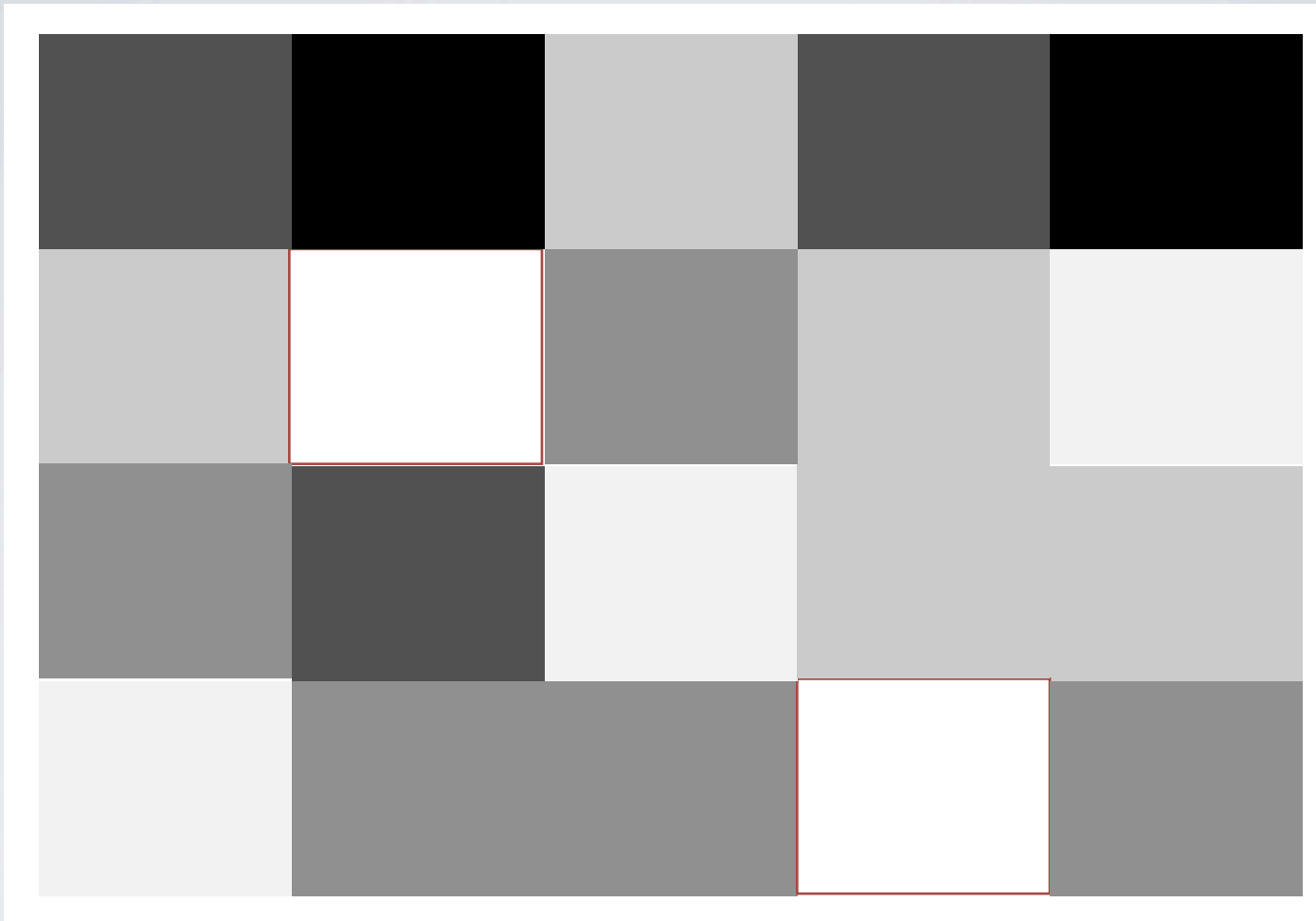
Other programs are good too.

Corel Paintshop Pro, Serif PhotoPlus, even The Gimp which is free !

Picassa is a free download from Google and is excellent for organising your pictures as well as having some useful basic retouching tools.

For Mac users iPhoto is similar to Picassa.

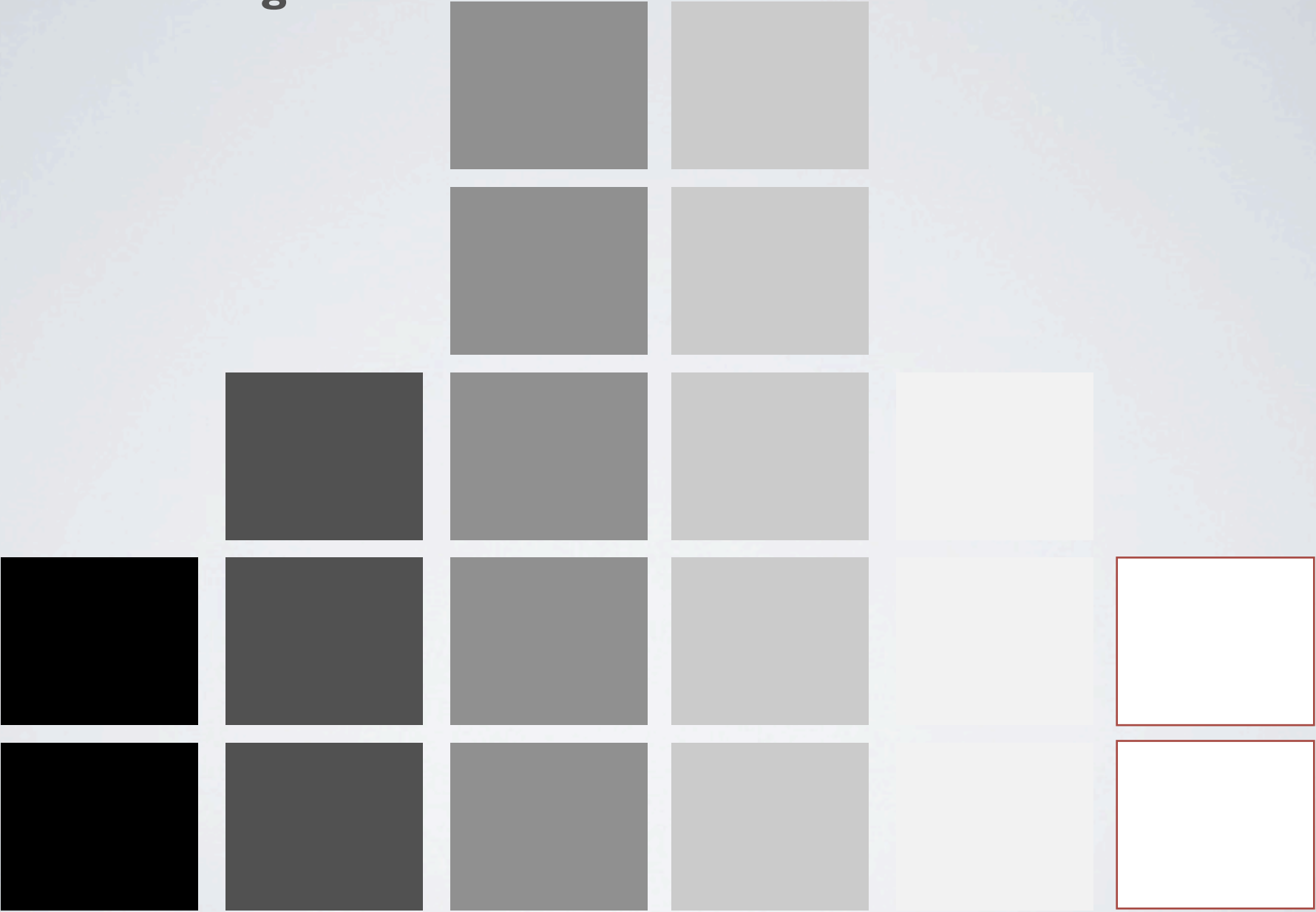
- A digital picture is made up from thousands or millions of tiny elements called **pixels**(short for Picture Elements).
- Each pixel has its own colour and brightness. Together these pixels make up a complete picture, with all its colours and brightnesses. A normal picture will contain white pixels, black pixels and every possible shade in between, all spread about the picture
- If you count up all the black pixels, the nearly black ones, the grey ones and every other one up to white, then plot them, you get a chart called a **histogram**



Suppose your picture looked like this.

Now re-arrange all the shades of grey to stack them with the black on the left and each shade lighter to the right.

This is a **histogram**





A histogram of a picture on the camera

- Before you open a picture to work on it remember that you won't want to obliterate the original picture by saving the new one over it, just in case you change your mind about what changes you've made.

You can do this in two ways :

- Open the picture in Photoshop but before doing any changes "Save As" with a different name.
- Or you can find the file and and make a copy of it. Then open the copy in your editing programme.

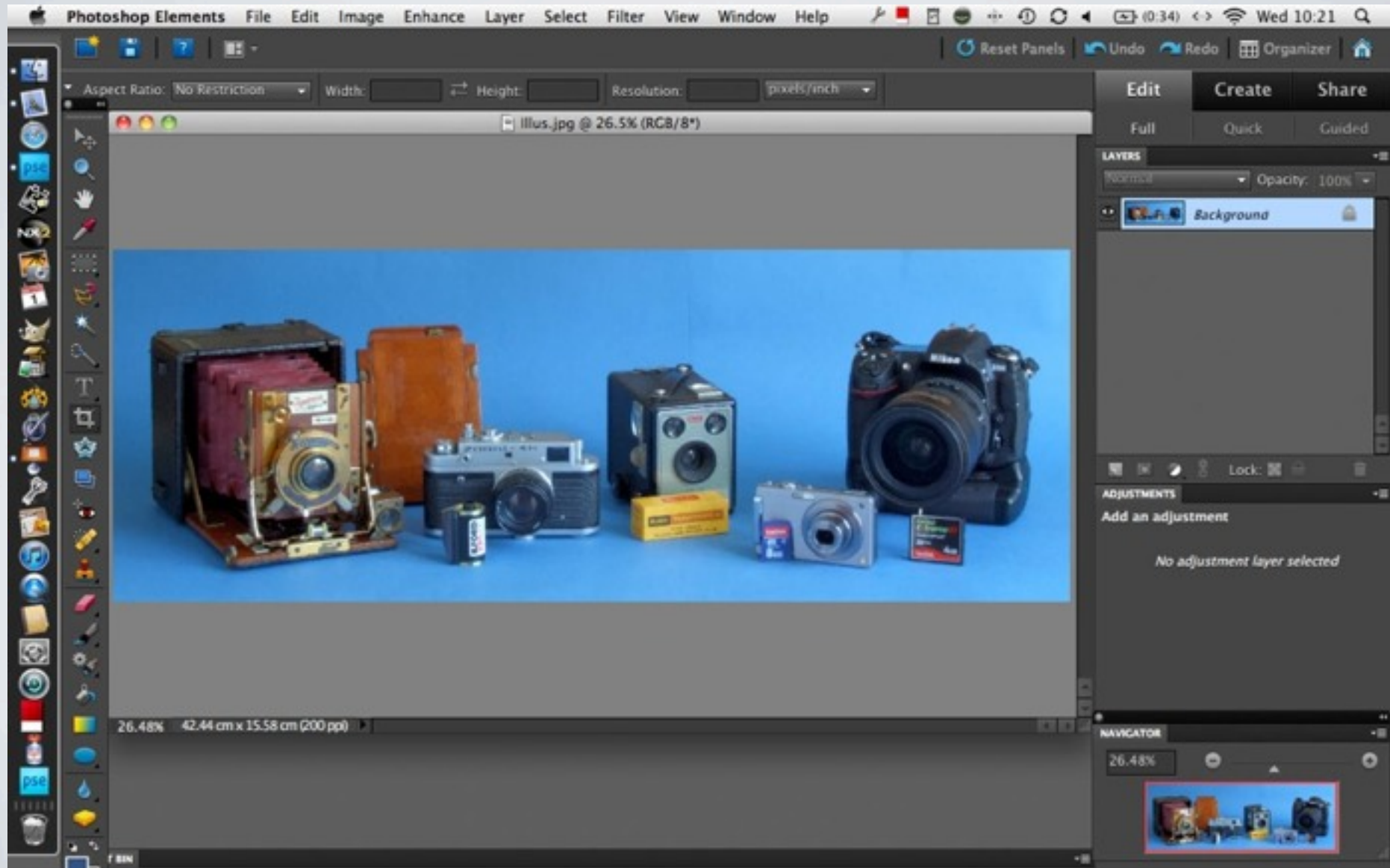
Starting to Use Elements

Photoshop Elements is a good programme for we beginners because it has excellent features to help you understand and use it easily.

I'm suggesting how to improve a picture but there are umpteen ways to do the same thing and many ways to find the commands for them.

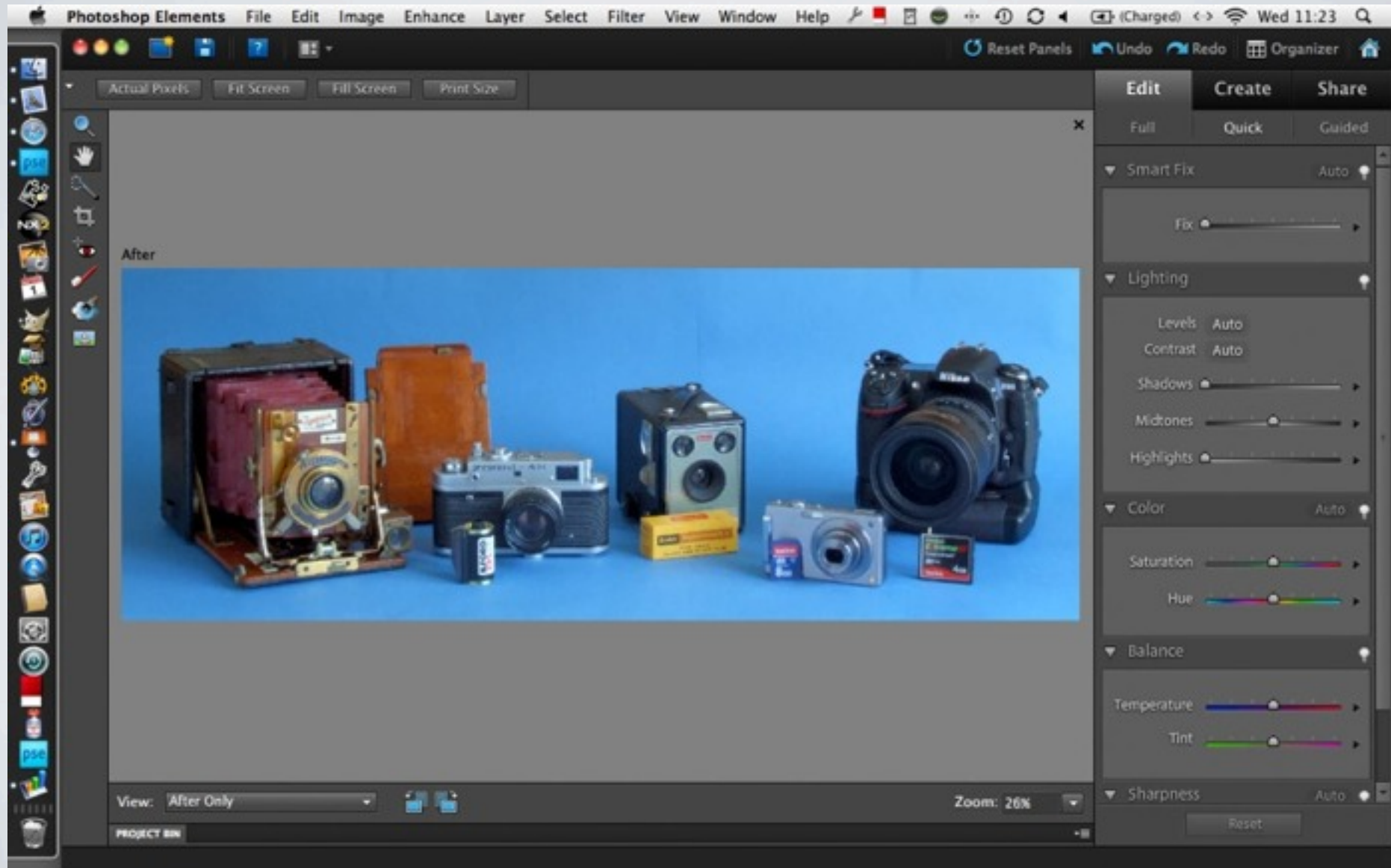
You can edit your picture in any of three modes, by clicking on the tabs in the top right corner of the screen.

Full gives the most control but requires the most knowledge



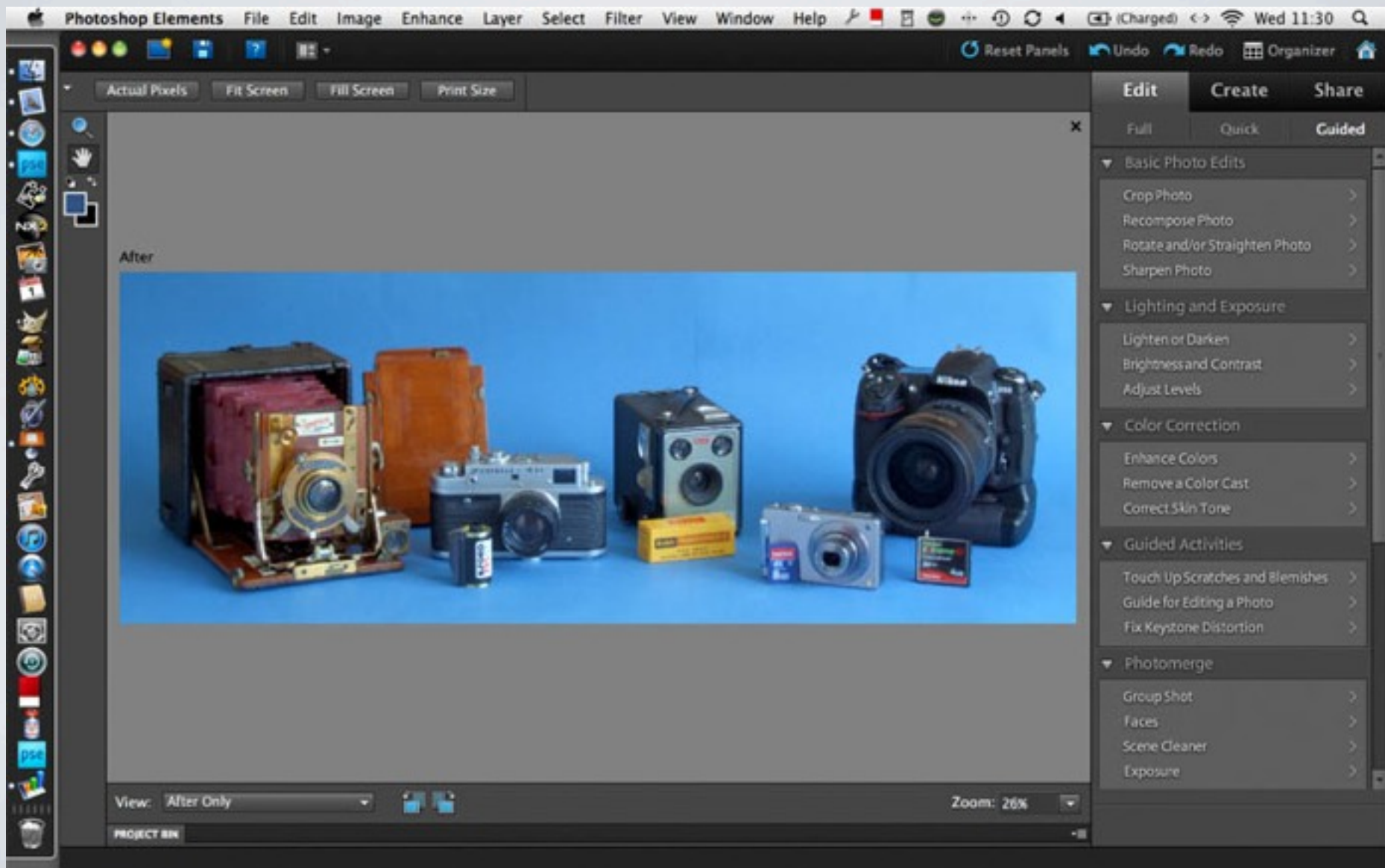
Quick

is simpler to operate and has all the basic tools



Guided

leads you through each step and explains them



Tips for Adjusting Levels

- Pull the **right**-hand slider in to brighten the **highlights**.
- Pull the **left**-hand slider to make the **shadows** darker and richer.
- Move the **centre** slider to adjust the **mid-tones**. You can make them darker or lighter.
- To see the result tick the “**Preview**” box.
- If you don't like the result click “**Cancel**”.

- **Brightness** is a measure of how light or dark the picture is.

You can adjust this on the computer.

- **Contrast** is a measure of the difference in brightness between the lightest and darkest parts of the picture.

For example, black writing on a white page is very high contrast.

Grey paint on an off-white surface is low contrast.

You can adjust this on the computer too.

Tips for Adjusting Brightness and Contrast

- After setting Levels I suggest you go for “**Contrast**” next. Move the slider left or right to change the balance between dark and light parts of your picture
- To see the result tick the “**Preview**” box.
- Now adjust “**Brightness**”. Take care not to lose detail in the very dark or very light areas.
- If you don't like the result click “**Cancel**”.

Tips for Adjusting Colour

- Click on **Enhance / Adjust Color / Remove Color Cast**

Now click on an area you think should be a neutral grey.

Try a number of areas until you like the result.

There are other ways to change colours but try this first.

- If you don't like the result click on **"Cancel"**.
- Before trying any adjustments you might like to try **"Auto"** to see what the computer thinks would be an improvement.
It might save you some time and you can always cancel it.
Go to **Enhance** and click on **Auto Smart Fix**.
Not nice? Then cancel it via **Edit / Undo Auto Smart Fix**

Tips for Straightening Images

- Click on the “**Straighten**” tool in the toolbar. It looks like two small picture frames, one overlapping the other.
To get the horizon level find something in the picture that you want to be horizontal. Now click and drag a line across the picture. When you let go the image will rotate until the line is horizontal.
To cancel it it got to “**Edit / Undo Straighten Image**”.
- To make something vertical, do the same but then hold down the “**Control**” key as you release the left button.
The line you’ve drawn will be rotated to make it vertical.

Tips for Improving Sharpness

- Sharpening **will not** resurrect a poorly focused image. It is usually done after you've made all of the other improvements you want. The idea is just to make the image a touch crisper.

- Having selected your image go to **Enhance / Unsharp Mask**".

- Keep "**Radius**" and "**Threshold**" low (say less than 2) and play with the "**Amount**" slider until you like the effect.

If you increase sharpness too much it puts haloes around detail and looks poor.

Give just enough to crisp up the image and no more.

- Keep checking the result by clicking the "**Preview**" box on and off.

- If you don't like the result you can always cancel it.

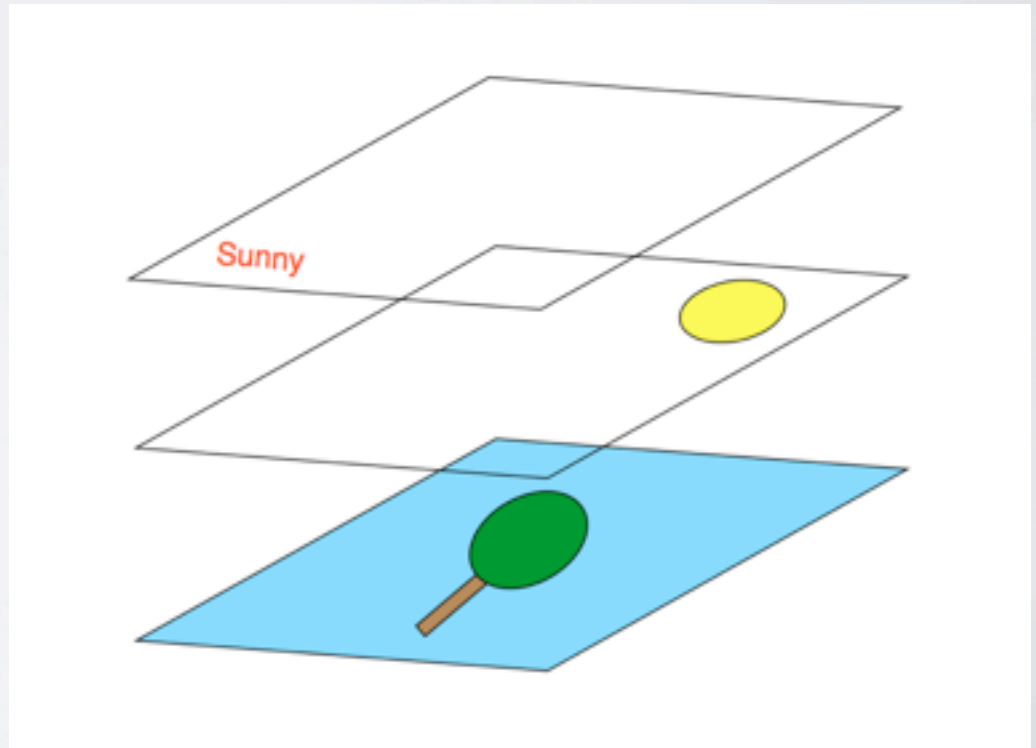
Layers

- Layers allow some very complex and clever alterations and they have the benefit of keeping the original image intact.
- They are like layers of clear film placed above the image. When you look at the pile from above the top objects or effects cover the lower ones.

Layer 2

Layer 1

Background



- But you can do far more than add objects.
- Adjustment Layers let you change the Levels, Brightness, Contrast, and so on yet the original image is still there as the Background. If you don't like the effect you just turn off the Layer and your picture reverts to what it was.
- There are other kinds of layers for more complex alterations.
- Photoshop can save the layers in a **psd** file so you can leave your computer and open up the picture later to continue working on it.
- If you save it as a **jpeg**, though, the layers are lost.

Summary

- Whether you use layers or not I suggest you start off by making corrections in the following order :

Levels

Brightness and Contrast

Colour

Straightening

Cropping

Retouching faults (e.g. spots or unwanted details)

Sharpening