

Getting Ready to Digitally Print on Fabric

by Suzan Engler

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Quilt artist Suzan Engler and host Susan Brubaker Knapp

While teaching a friend how to edit photos, she saw me just clicking away and she commented that I was ‘so brave.’ Truthfully, I was not brave at all because I had set up a system to assure I wasn’t going to destroy anything, which allowed me to freely experiment.

Here are some tips and considerations for editing images and printing on fabric, so you can be on the path to becoming ‘digitally brave,’ too!

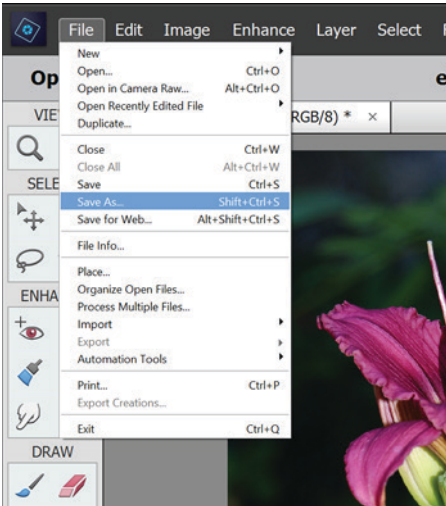
1. Sources—Photographs, images, and clipart
 - Copyright free, royalty free, Creative Commons images and clip art. Also, other online resources, CDs, and books. Check the usage rights of the images you plan to use; some rights do not extend to commercial use or require fees.
 - Text.
 - Personal photos from your camera, phone, or tablet.
2. Reasons to prepare or enhance your image with software or apps before printing
 - Look at elements in your environment in a new way. We all take photos of flowers and trees but think about unusual items such as:
 - Gravel.
 - Oil spot or antifreeze spill.
 - Spider webs.
 - Rust or peeling paint.
3. Simple steps to edit an image
 - Open an image in photo editing software or an app.

Note: *The examples shown are using Photoshop Elements 15, but many photo editing programs have similar features.*

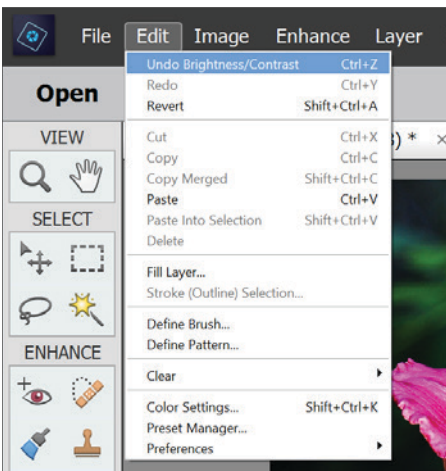
- Start with the highest resolution image you have available.

Tip: *There are programs that can resize an image up to 1000 times larger. I use ON1 Resize (<https://www.on1.com/products/resize/>).*

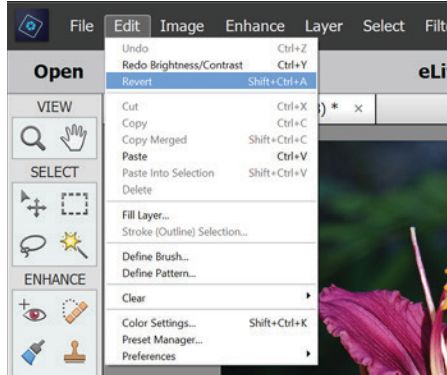
 - **The most important step:** Click *File* then click *Save As (File/Save As)* and save the image with a new file name. Now you are editing a copy of the image, not the original photo. You do not have to worry about any changes you make to this copy, just experiment away. If you do not like the end result, just open the original image and do a *File/Save As* and start the process over again.



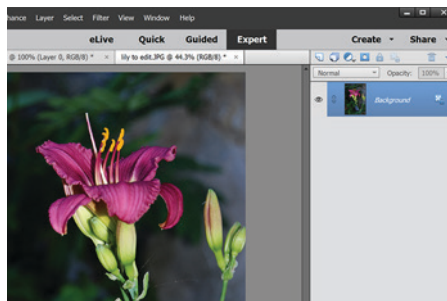
- To make changes:
 - Hold down *Ctrl* and press *Z* (*Ctrl+Z* or *Cmd+Z* for MAC) or *Edit/Undo*. Either command undoes one step at a time and can be used repetitively. When you click on Undo, it will tell you the command that it is undoing.



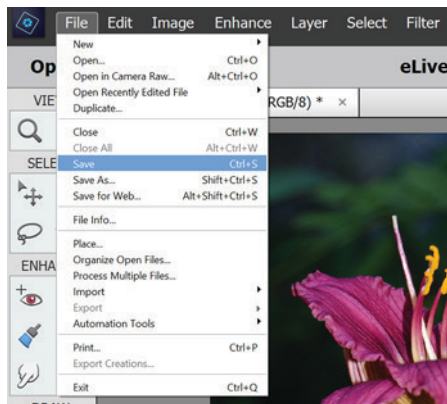
- *Edit/Revert* undoes all changes and reverts to original photo.



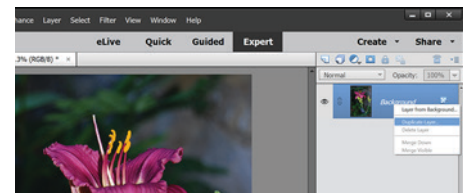
- Make sure that Expert is selected on the top menu and Layers on the bottom so that layers are visible on the right side of the screen.



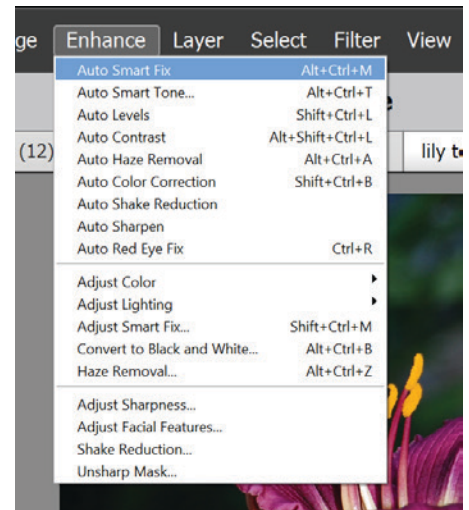
- *Save often.*



- Work in (nondestructive) layers so that changes are easier to control. Right click on the layer shown on the right side of the screen and select *Duplicate Layer*. This makes a copy of the layer. The selected layer is highlighted in blue. You can make multiple duplicates of this layer to experiment with different effects and filters.



- *Enhance/Auto Smart Fix*. This feature “fixes” the most common photo editing issues of lighting, contrast, and color.

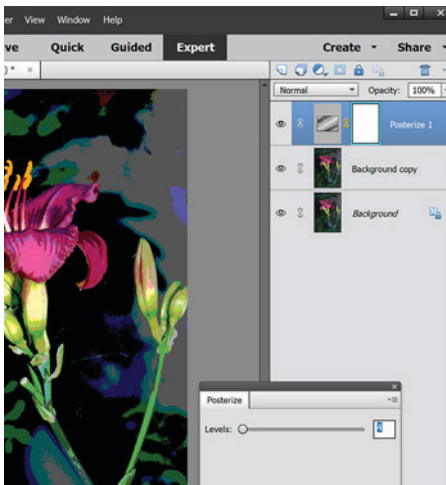
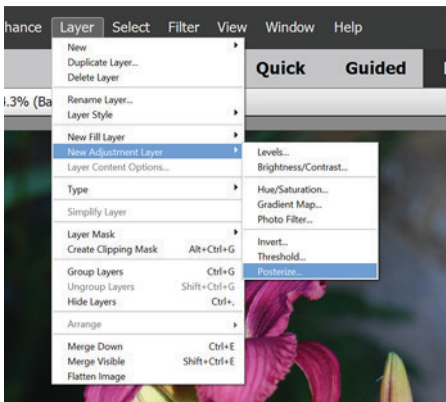


Tip: Remember, if you do not like a change you make, *Ctrl+Z* will undo it.

- *Layer/New Adjustment Layer*. This adds layers that impact all layers below but does not permanently change those layers. Adjustment layers have settings that can be changed at any time and can be turned off and on as desired by clicking on the eyeball associate

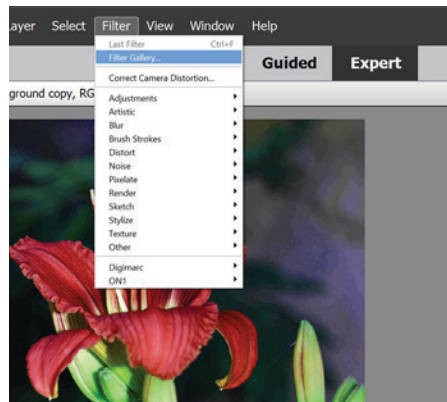
with the layer. The adjustment layers I use most often are:

- *Hue-Saturation* with a Saturation setting of +25%
- *Adjust Lighting/ Brightness Contrast* with a Contrast setting +25%
- *Posterize* with a Levels setting of 25-30.

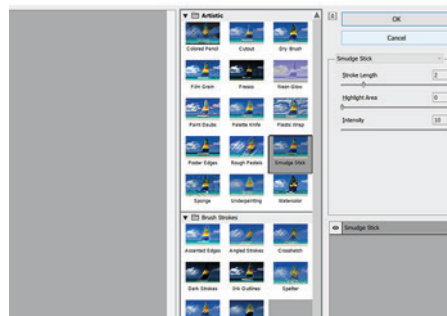


• *Filter Gallery*

- The Filter Gallery provides many filters that can be applied to an image layer. Multiple filters can be applied to the same layer but I prefer to apply one filter per layer to keep things simple.

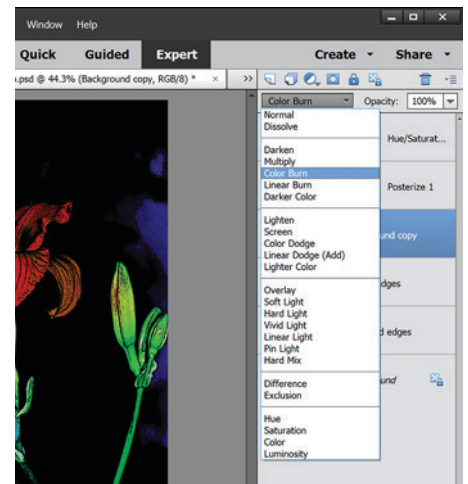


- Click on the layer on which you want to apply a filter, and then click *Filter/Filter Gallery*.

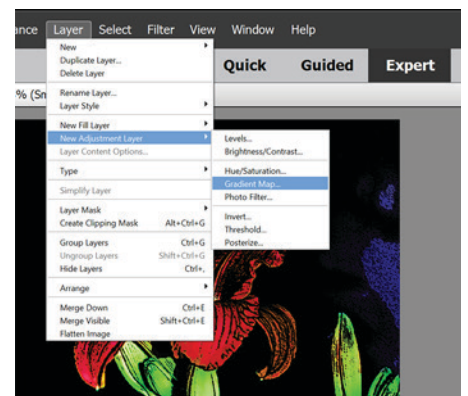


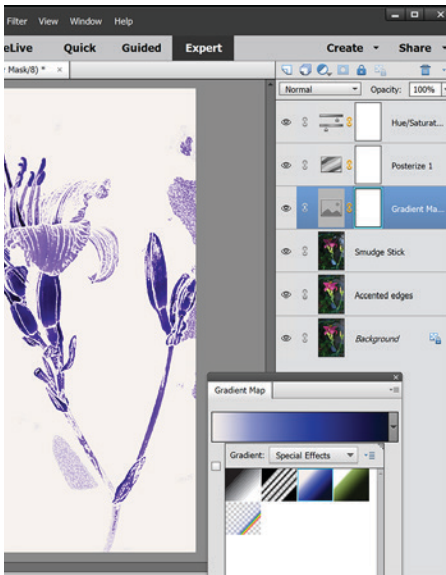
- Click on any filter to see a preview of how your image will look with that filter applied. When you find a filter you like, click *OK* to apply the filter, otherwise click *Cancel* to leave the layer unchanged.

- *Blending Modes*: Blending Modes are set to Normal by default and impact the way a layer blends with the layer beneath it. For this example, I chose *Color Burn* which greatly increased the intensity of the colors (compare Figure 11 and Figure 12). Blending modes can be changed at any time by clicking on a layer and then click on the *Blending Mode* drop down box.

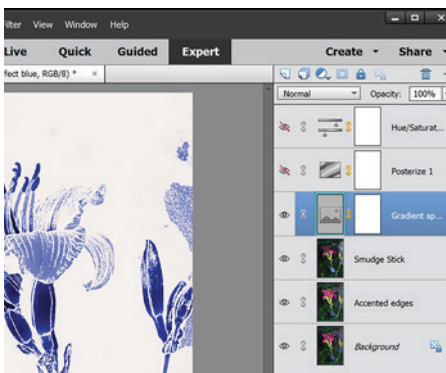


- *Layer/New Adjustment Layer/ Gradient Map*: Gradient Maps apply washes of color.





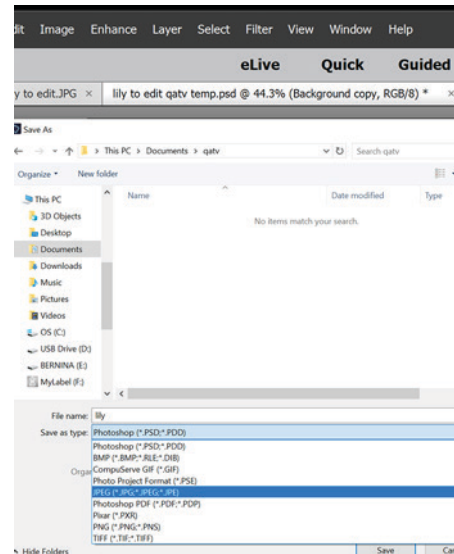
- Click on the down arrow on the dropdown box to see the various gradient groups. Each gradient group has different color options. I selected *Special Effects* and clicked on the blue box and click *Enter*.



- For the final image, I turned off the Hue/Saturation and Posterization layers by clicking on the eye associated with each layer.

Now, experiment! Add more layers and try out different blending modes and filters. Take notes on what you try or rename each layer with a descriptor, so you know what you did on that layer. There are so many variables that it can be difficult to identify exactly what options you used on any given layer.

When you have an image you like, click on *File/SaveAs*, give a file name and select a file type of JPEG. A JPEG is what you will print either from your home printer or send to an online printing service.



- Determine size to print
 - Cotton shrinkage approx. 1%–5% width and/or lengthwise 2"/yard.
 - Allow for shrinkage caused by quilting.
- Print at home—Supplies and products
 - Jacquard Silk or Cotton Rolls or sheets.
 - Prepared for dyeing fabric (PFD) ironed to freezer paper.

- I use an Epson printer and pigment-based inks (not dye-based inks); Ultra Chrome ink.
 - Check out Archival ratings of pigment-based ink.
- Online printing services
 - Multiple sizes and quantities available—fat quarters, fractions of a yard, or yardage.
 - Some services provide image editing capabilities on their website.
 - Size requirement of images: Most prefer 150 dpi images.
 - What could possibly go wrong?
 - Print sample first to verify everything prints the way you want.
 - Streaking: Caused by low ink or clogged printer ink heads.
 - Color too light/dark: Image prints differently than it displays on your technology. Re-edit the image and try again.
 - Spots: Can be caused by dust on the fabric during printing (use a lint roller before printing) or tiny spots in the image from the editing process.
 - Skewed images: Fabric pulled through the printer incorrectly.
 - Ink flecks off: Use Inktense pencils or Fabrico™ Tsukineko® ink markers to cover white spots.

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