



Lightroom Desktop Laptop Workflow

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In this lesson, we're going to explore how to work with Lightroom on two computers: a desktop (as your home computer) and a laptop (as your travel/on location computer). Keeping the two machines in sync can take a bit of work and you have different options for how to accomplish this.

Catalog Options

Simple: Pure Travel Catalog With the simplest option, you would create a new, separate Lightroom catalog every time you leave home and work on your laptop.

Intermediate: Master on External Drive With this option, you would use one Lightroom catalog file and leave it on an external hard drive that travels between your two computers.

Advanced: Master & Master + Travel With the advanced option, you would have a master catalog (the one you consider most up-to-date) on your desktop computer and then travel with a copy of that catalog on your laptop, adding new photos to the catalog as you are out traveling. When you get home, you will have to sync the master catalog on your laptop to the one on your desktop.

Alternative: Use Bridge for Travel With this option, you would not use Lightroom at all on your Laptop. You would instead use Bridge to view your images and Adobe Camera Raw to edit them. When you get home, you would import the images to Lightroom.

Now let's take a closer look at each of these choices, including the details, execution and pros and cons of each.

Simple: Pure Travel Catalog

With this option, you would create a new catalog for each trip.

Advantages

- Simplicity
- Small catalog sizes (They only contain the images that you're shooting on that particular trip.)
- New images can be contained on internal laptop drive

Disadvantages

- No easy access to photo archive

Tips

- Create template catalog with presets, keywords, etc. Each time you leave for a trip, copy this catalog folder to your laptop so the presets and preferences are always consistent.

Workflow Create a master catalog that stays on your desktop computer. This is the catalog that will contain all of your past photo shoots and it's the one you'll be returning to each time you come back from a trip.

Create a new catalog on your laptop computer each time you leave to create more images. If that new catalog file is based on a template, it can have all of your preferences, keywords, presets, etc. already inside of it. Add all new images captured during your trip to this catalog.

When you return to your desktop machine, import the images from the laptop catalog. To do this, go to the File menu and choose Import from Another Catalog. Then direct it to the new catalog you had been using on the laptop. You can move the catalog to your desktop by using a memory card, external hard drive, etc.

Intermediate: Master on External Drive

With this option, the one catalog is stored on a single hard drive and the hard drive simply moves between machines.

Advantages

- Easy file management (You never have to worry about the catalog file getting out of sync.)
- Access to full photo archive
- Easy to keep in sync

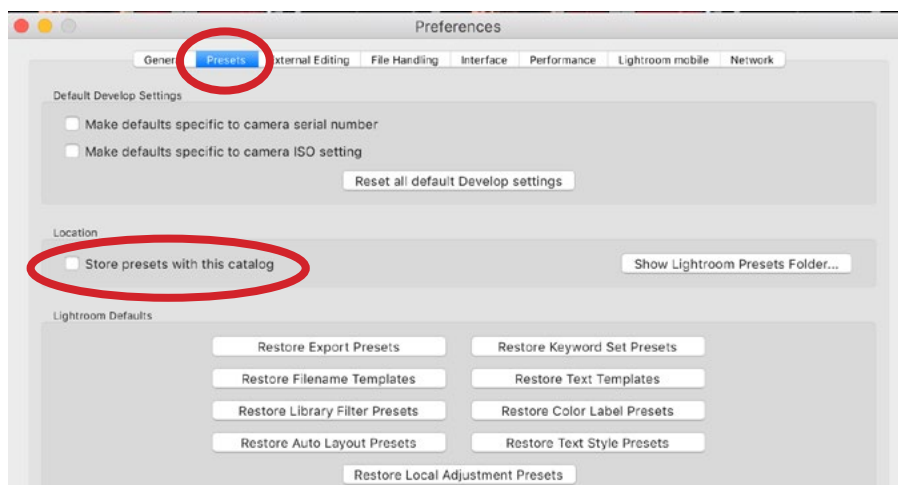
Disadvantages

- External hard drive could get damaged/dropped
- Difficult to work on planes and other small spaces

Tips

- Back up catalog before switching machines

Workflow In Lightroom, open the Preferences dialog, click on the presets tab and then turn on the “Store Presets with Catalog” check box. This will ensure that when you open the catalog on a different machine, the presets will go along with it.



If you keep a single catalog that’s stored on an external hard drive, be sure to open Lightroom’s preferences and turn on the “Store presets with this catalog” check box.

Then, you will need to quit Lightroom and copy the entire catalog folder to an external drive. You want to copy the entire folder because it contains not only your catalog file but also the previews that allow you to view your pictures even when the main hard drive is not connected. It’s also important that

you copy this folder when Lightroom is not running. Next, you will delete the Lightroom catalogs from both your desktop and your laptop. This will ensure that you never open the wrong catalog. You'll always open the catalog that's contained on the external drive. Now, you can move the external drive between machines for regular use of the catalog. When you shoot new images, store them on that same external drive. If you store your photo archive on a different drive connected to your desktop computer, then drag the files from your travels to that drive within the Lightroom folder list upon returning. It's important that you use Lightroom to move the files. If, instead, you moved them using your computer's operating system, Lightroom will no longer be able to locate them. With this workflow, if you use Windows, you'll need to watch out for the letter assigned to the hard drive changing.

Advanced: Master & Master+Travel

With this workflow, you will copy the master catalog to your laptop and add to it while traveling.

Advantages

- Access to full photo archive
- Can live on internal laptop drive

Disadvantages

- Challenge to keep both machines in sync
- Syncing can be time-consuming
- Problems occur when you make changes to both catalogs before sync
- Easy to end up with laptop and missing previews

Tips

- Export travel shots as a catalog before syncing back

Workflow To work using this method, you'll need to copy your full master catalog from your desktop to your laptop. Make sure that you copy the Smart Previews file from your desktop to your laptop as well. Upon return, you'll export your new captures as a separate catalog. Then, go to the master catalog on your desktop, go to the File menu and choose Import from Catalog in order to update the desktop machine master catalog. If you happened to make changes to your archive images (your older files that existed before the trip), then you'll need to import the entire catalog.

Alternative: Use Bridge for Travel

If you decide to use this alternative workflow, you will adjust your images using Bridge and Camera Raw while on your laptop and then import the images to Lightroom when you return to our desktop, along with the .XMP files that include the adjustments.

Advantages

- Simple
- Zero problems with syncing on return

Disadvantages

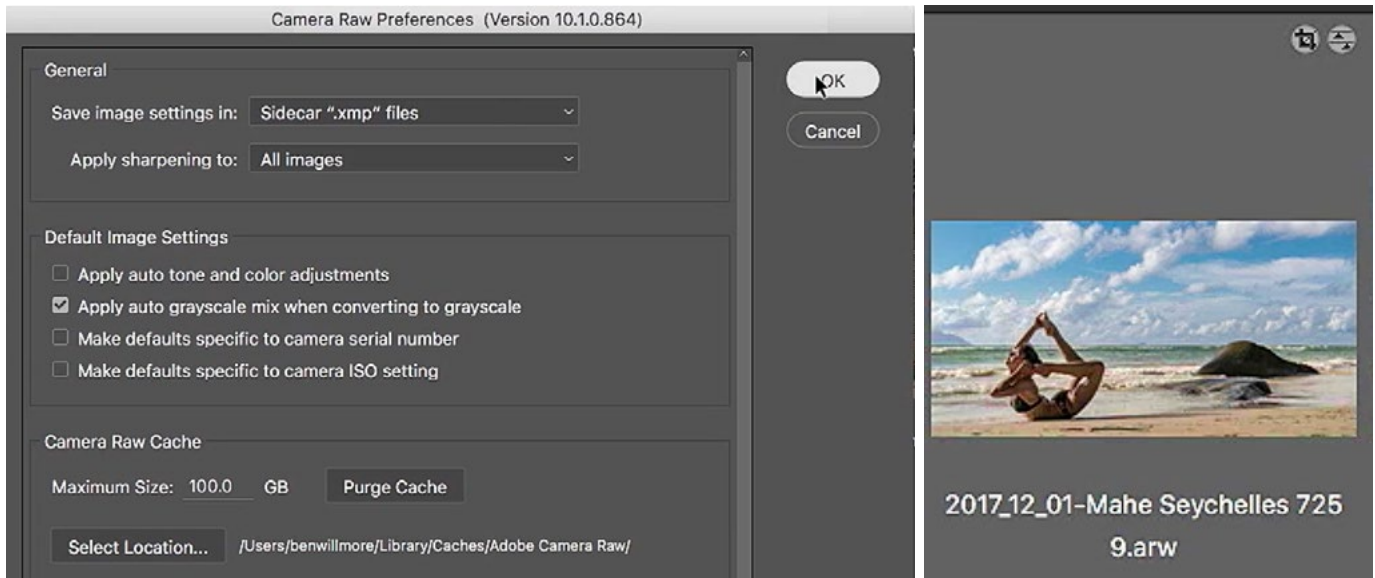
- Cannot use Collections, Virtual Copies, Smart Previews, etc.
- The Camera Raw interface may seem less familiar than Lightroom
- Camera Raw offers no preview for adjustment presets

Tips

- Set Camera Raw preferences to use sidecar files

Workflow Keep Lightroom on your desktop computer and keep Bridge/ACR on your laptop computer. In Camera Raw, change the Preferences to save .XMP files. These .XMP files will include develop settings, keywords, ratings, etc. Upon return-

ing to your desktop machine, copy the entire folder to your photo archive drive. On your desktop, open Lightroom and click the Import button to import the new images (using the Add setting at the top of the Import dialog) from their new location on the photo archive drive. As long as you specified that Camera Raw save .XMP files, all of the adjustments/edits to your images will stay intact when you import them to Lightroom.

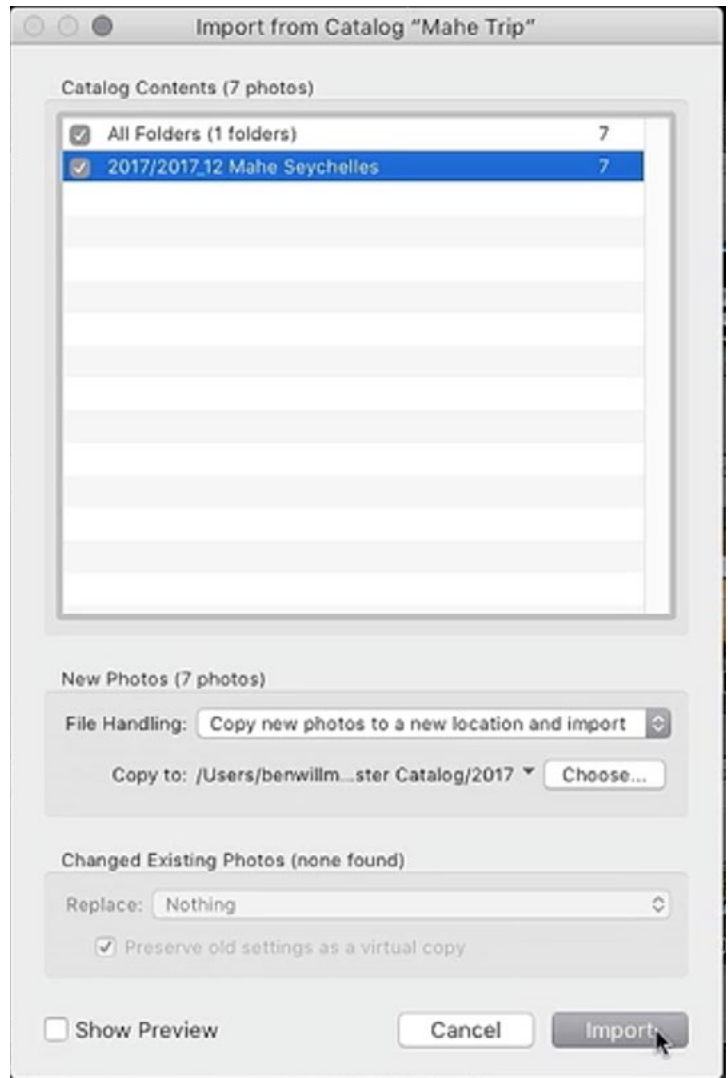


To ensure that Camera Raw saves .XMP files, go to the Adobe Bridge menu at the top of the screen and choose Camera Raw Preferences. (If you are using Windows, this will instead be under the Edit menu.) In the Preferences dialog, change the “Save images settings in” menu to “Sidecar .xmp files” and click OK. When viewing an image thumbnail in Bridge, you can tell if it had edits that were saved into an .xmp file because there will be an icon (or icons) above the top right corner of the thumbnail. These icons indicate whether the image has been adjusted or cropped.

Importing a travel catalog into your master catalog

Let’s say you are using the first, simple method for working with catalogs. You keep your master catalog on your desktop machine at home and then create a new catalog on your laptop for every remote shoot. When you come home to your desktop machine, you will need to take that travel catalog and import it into your master catalog. First, you’ll need to get the travel Lightroom catalog folder

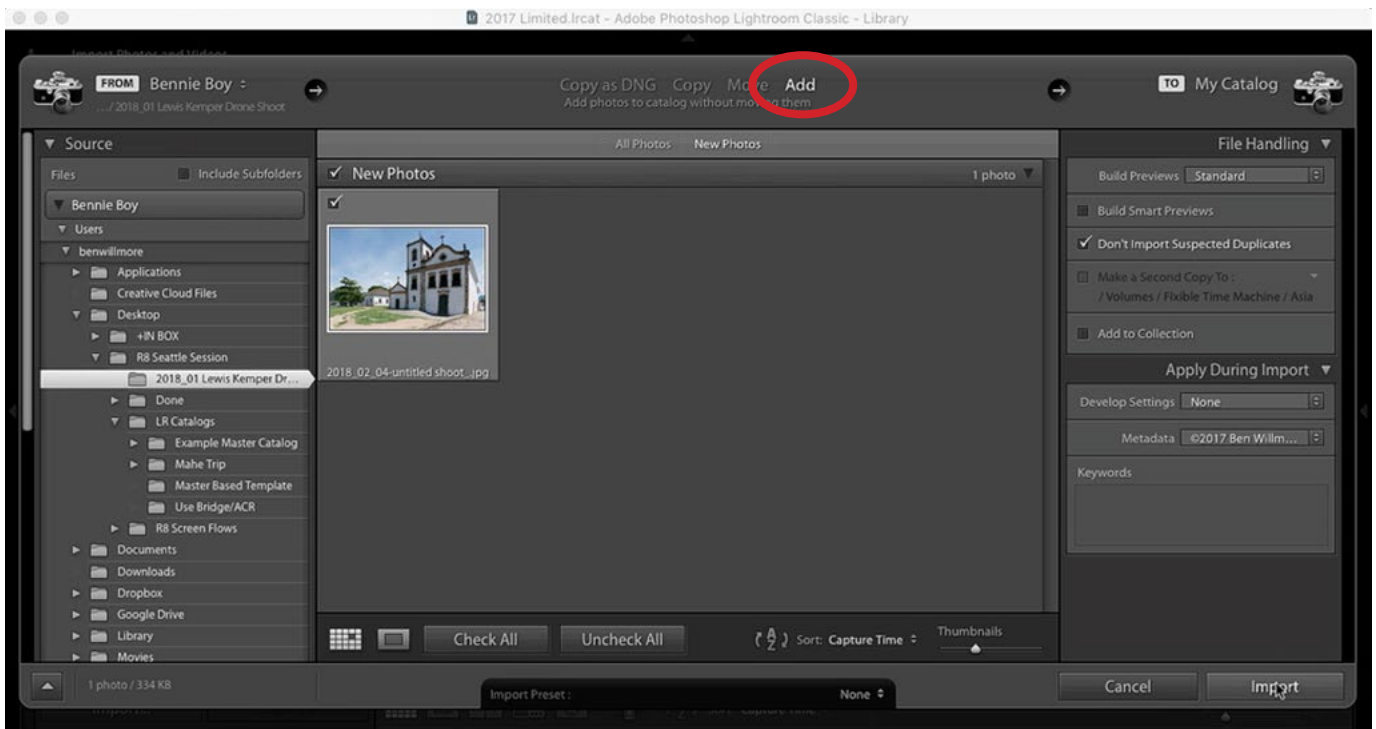
(the one from your laptop) and make it accessible to your desktop machine. You can do this by using a USB drive, an external hard drive, Airdrop (if you're on a Mac), etc. Then, open Lightroom on your desktop machine, go to the File menu and choose Import from Another Catalog. You'll be prompted to navigate your hard drive to the location where you placed the travel catalog. An Import dialog will appear, comparing the current catalog with the one you're importing. It will list the contents of the catalog, letting you know how many new photos there are (photos that are not already in your photo archive catalog). Use the File Handling menu to specify what should be done with these photos. We're going to choose to "Copy new photos to a new location and import." That's because we want the image files to be stored in the folder containing our photo archive catalog images. Use the Copy To setting to specify that location. If you turn on the "Show Preview" check box in the lower right corner of the dialog, the Import dialog will expand to show thumbnail previews of the images you're about to import. Click the Import button in the bottom right corner. The new images will then be added to your existing archive photo catalog.



This is the Import dialog you will get when you go to Lightroom's file menu and choose to "Import from another catalog."

Importing images that were initially adjusted with Bridge/ACR

If you use Bridge and ACR to work with your newly-shot images on your laptop computer, you'll need to import those images into your main Lightroom catalog when returning to your home desktop machine. Move the image folder[s] to the location you would like them to exist within your photo archive folder, open Lightroom and click on the Import button in the bottom left. Use the Source panel on the left side to navigate to the new folder of images. Since the images are already in the desired location, click the Add option at the top of the Import dialog. The Add option will leave the images where they are. It will just make it so they show up in the Lightroom catalog. Click the Import button in the bottom right corner of the dialog. When imported, the images will contain all of the adjustments you made within Bridge and Camera Raw, as long as the Camera Raw preferences were set to save .xmp files.



When importing images that were already placed in the desired location on your hard drive, use the Add option at the top of the Import dialog.