



Lightroom Color Labels

# Lightroom Color Labels

In this lesson, we're going to cover a specific part of my Lightroom folder organization system. The system is covered in previous lessons, but I am always optimizing my method for organizing images so this will serve as more of an update. Specifically, this lesson will focus on folder color labels, a feature that I have recently implemented. I find that it has drastically improved the way I track the status of a photo shoot and I think that you will find it extremely useful as well.

**The folder organizational system** Before diving into color labels, I want to provide a brief recap on how I organize my folders in Lightroom. Note that there is another lesson dedicated completely to folder organization.

I organize all of my images by date, so I have one folder for each year. Inside the year's folder, there is a folder for each individual photo shoot. I have a specific system for organizing these individual shoot folders.

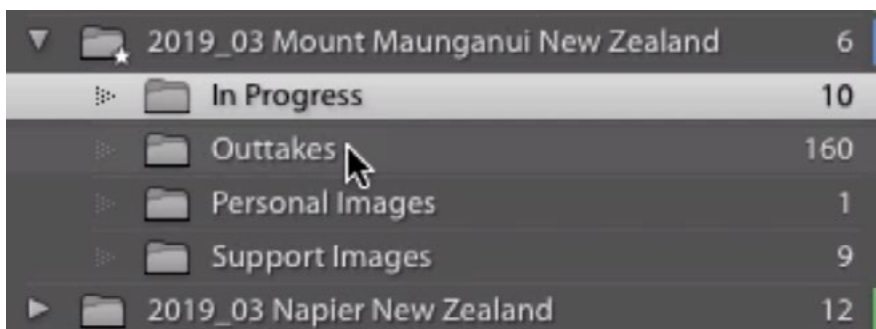
Each shoot folder contains a series of subfolders, which will include two or more of the following:

**In Progress:** This subfolder contains all images that I still need to work on.

**Outtakes:** In this subfolder, I place images that I should never need to look at again (out of focus, unusable, etc.).

**Support Images:** This subfolder will contain things like the individual images used to create panorama or HDR images.

**Personal:** If I have any family/friends images that I don't want to share with the general public, they will go in this subfolder.



In this screen shot from the Library Module, the folder titled "2019\_03 Mount Maunganui New Zealand" is the base level folder for the shoot. Inside this base folder is a series of organizational subfolders.

When I start to work on a shoot, I place all of the images into the “In Progress” subfolder. I then work my way through this folder, placing images into the other subfolders as necessary.

When an image is complete and ready to show the public, it will be moved to the base level of the shoot folder. This just means that it will not be placed in any of the subfolders.

**Show Folders in Subfolders setting OFF** In order for this system to work properly, we need to tell Lightroom to NOT display images contained in subfolders. If we click on the folder for a shoot name, we only want to see the images that are contained in the base level folder for that shoot. We do not want to see the images that are contained in the subfolders (In Progress, Outtakes, etc.). Should we want to view those images, we would need to click on the subfolder to view its contents. Additionally, we want the number next to the shoot name to represent the number of images that are contained only in the base level folder. These are the images ready to show the public. We don’t want this number to include the images contained in the subfolders. We can specify that Lightroom behave this way by clicking on the Library menu and making sure that the “Show Folders in Subfolders” setting is turned off.

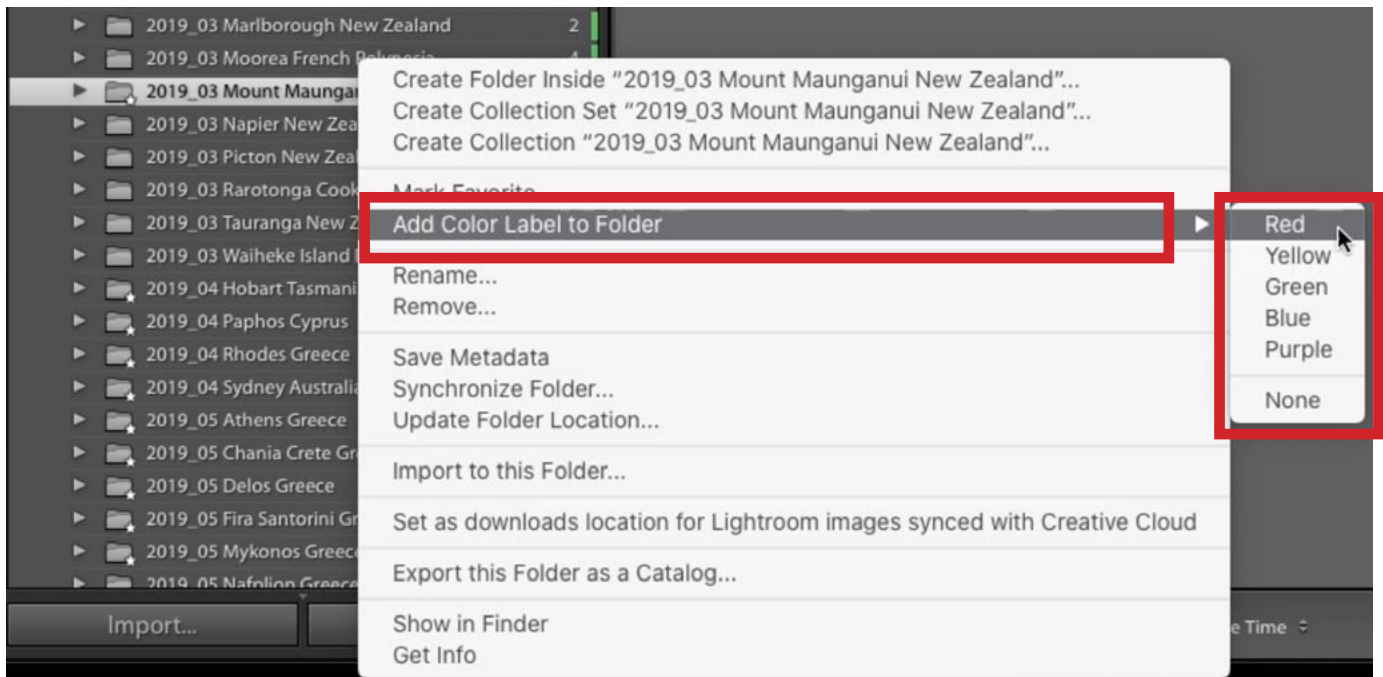
Before implementing the folder color labels, I couldn’t truly get a feel for the status of a shoot unless I expanded the base level folder and looked at the contents of the “In Progress” and “Outtakes” subfolders. By applying color labels to the shoot folders, I can quickly glance at the color and immediately know how much work is left in processing the shoot.



In the Folders Panel, any color labels will appear on the right side of the folder listing.

## My Color Label System (5:40)

You can add a color label to a folder by right-clicking on the folder name and choosing “Add Color Label to Folder” from the pop-up menu. The color options are red, yellow, green, blue and purple.



To apply a color label, right-click on the folder name and choose “Add Color Label to Folder” from the pop-up menu.

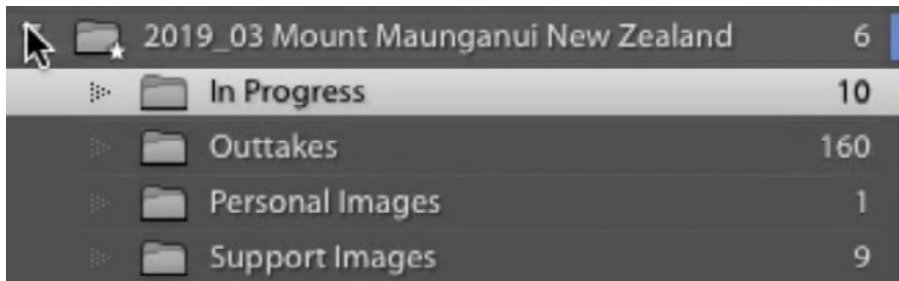
The following is my color label system:

**Green:** There is no work left to be done on that particular shoot. This means that there is nothing left in the “In Progress” sub-folder. When this is the case, I will often times delete the “In Progress” folder entirely.



This shoot folder does not have an “In Progress” subfolder. That means that I have narrowed down the shoot and processed all of the necessary images. This folder is complete, so it has a green label.

**Blue:** The shoot has been culled down completely. This means that I've narrowed the shoot down to ONLY the images that need to be worked on before being moved to the base level folder.



This shoot folder has a lot of images in the “Outtakes” subfolder and only a few in the “In Progress” folder. This means the only work left is to process the images. Therefore, the color label is blue.

**Yellow:** I have started to cull the shoot down, narrowing it down to fewer images, but I am not done with the culling process. This means there is a good number of images in the “In Progress” folder.

**Red:** This shoot has hardly been touched and has a LOT of work left to be done. The number of images in the base-level folder is likely 0 because nothing has been processed yet.

**Purple:** These are for images that are not meant to be part of my overall image tracking system. For example, I have a folder that contains photos I took of my house for insurance purposes. They're basically just for reference and not intended to be processed.

**The progression** All of my folders will start out with a red label. As I start to narrow down the number of images in a folder, the color label will change to yellow. Once I've finished narrowing the images down, the color label will be blue. The label will change to green when I am completely finished with a shoot and there are no images left in the “In-progress” subfolder.

These labels affect my mindset when I sit down to work on my images. If I feel like adjusting images, I will likely work on a folder with a blue label because I know that the shoot has already been narrowed down to the images that will ultimately be keepers. If I feel like narrowing down, or culling, a shoot, I will work on a folder that has a red label. I know this label means that the folder has needs a lot of work when it comes to narrowing down the contents to the very best images.

## Applying the Color Label System (13:05)

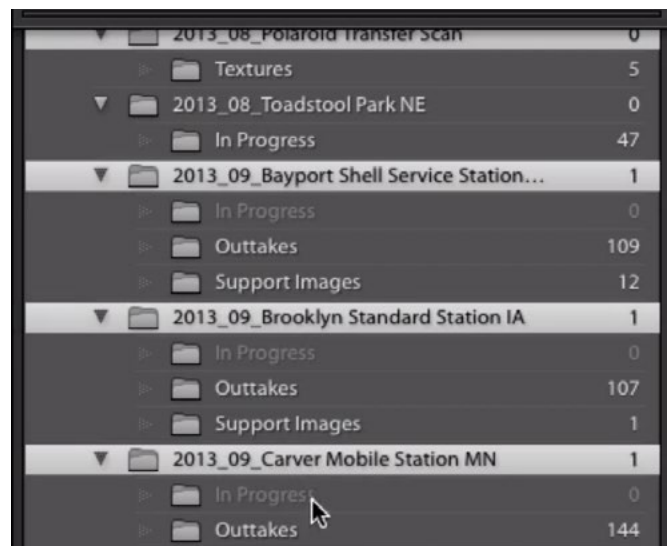
Now let's look at how this system can be applied to a large archive of existing images. In the video example, I have an entire year that has not yet been color labeled. All of the shoot folders are contained inside the year folder (2013).

I want to be able to look at the contents of all the shoot subfolders contained within the base folder (2013). Instead of expanding each folder one by one, there is a trick. If you hold down the Option key (Alt on Win), and click on the little disclosure triangle to the left of a folder name, it will not only expand that folder, but it will also expand all of the subfolders contained INSIDE that folder as well.

**Add green labels** The first thing I'll do is scroll down through all of the shoot folders, looking for any folders I would consider to be done. These are the folders that either have zero images inside the "In Progress" folder have no "In Progress" folder at all. I'll click on these folders to highlight them, holding down the Command key (Ctrl on Win) in order to select more than one folder at a time. Once all of the appropriate folders are selected, I'll right-click on the name of one of the folders and a menu will pop up. From this menu, I'll choose "Add Col-

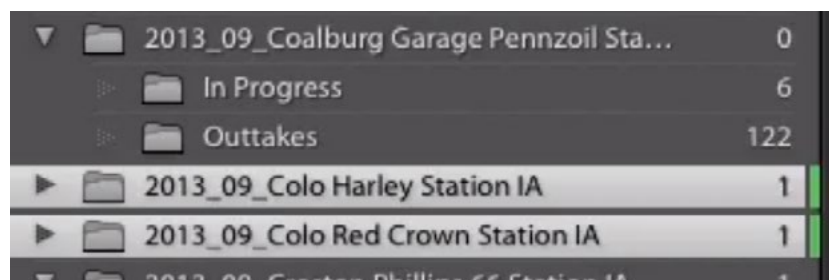


**All of the shoot folders within the base level folder (2013) have been expanded.**



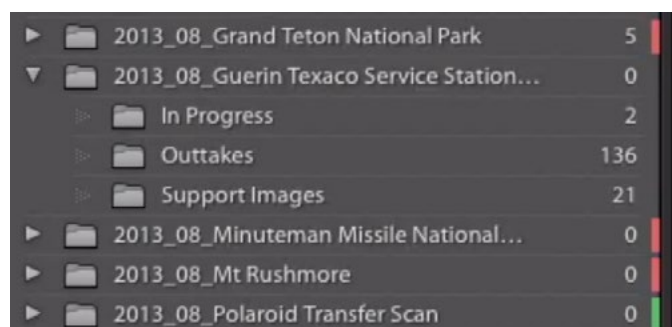
**I am selecting all folders that have no images in the "In Progress" subfolder (or that have no In Progress) folder at all. These will get a green label.**

or Label to Folder” and then select the Green option. Then, I’ll collapse all of these folders because I know that I no longer need to reevaluate their subfolders.



The folders were labeled green and then collapsed so we can no longer see their subfolders.

**Add red labels** The next thing I’ll do is scroll down the folder list, looking for folders that should obviously be red. These will be the folders that have a large number of “In Progress” images. Likely, the number of “In Progress” images will be higher



Folders with a lot of “In Progress” images were labeled red.

than the number of “Outtakes” image. Again, I will select all folders matching this criteria by holding down the Command key (Ctrl on Win) and clicking on the folder names. Once all appropriate folders are selected, I’ll right-click on one of the folder names and choose the red color label. Again, I will collapse all of these folders because they no longer need to be evaluated.

**Add blue and yellow labels** Next, I will scan the folder list for any “In Progress” folders that have a very low number. If I find one, I’ll click on the folder to view its contents. I want to see whether the folder has been narrowed down, so I am looking to see if there are multiple images of the same scene. If I see a lot of repeat scenes, it means that I have not yet narrowed down the folder. In this case, I would apply the yellow label. This tells me that I still need to cull down the folder.

If the number of “In Progress” images is very low and there are not repeat scenes, then the base folder will get the blue label. This tells me that I no longer need to narrow down the folder of images. Instead, the only work left is to process the images.



## **Tackle the Label System One Day at a Time (32:12)**

When I decided to take on this color labeling system, I committed to tackling one year's worth of images per day. I found that it took me about 15 minutes to complete a year. This way, I was able to label all of my images within a few weeks, without letting it consume too much of my time each day.