

Welcome back everyone! In week three, we're going to dive into some of the more advanced editing features offered by Aperture, including sharpening, vignettes, selective adjustments, and setting up external editors and plug-ins to enhance your editing options further.

### Sharpening

Aperture has three different ways to sharpen images. We've already looked at the first option, the Definition control in Enhancements. This is always my first choice and most digital photos can benefit from at least a small boost to Definition.

Beyond this, you have Sharpen and Edge Sharpen. What's the difference between these two? In the most basic terms, Edge Sharpen works well, and Sharpen does not.

**Edge Sharpen** (below) has three controls - Intensity, Edges, Falloff. If you're familiar with Photoshop, Intensity is the same as Amount in Unsharp Mask. It controls how much, or how strong the adjustment will be applied.



Edges works like a masking adjustment - it defines the area that the sharpening will be applied to, or what is considered an edge by Aperture. Finally, Falloff controls how wide of an area is affected by the adjustment. In all three cases, higher numbers apply a more aggressive adjustment. Landscape and high detail images can generally handle higher settings than a low detail image or portrait can.

Edge Sharpen is optimized for digital images and correcting the softness that the filter in front of your camera sensor introduces, and compensates for noise reduction adjustments.

Sharpen is less capable of fine tuning than Edge Sharpen, and hence it's less useful in general. It's the adjustment that has been available from the earliest releases of Aperture and works by adjusting color contrast in your images, unlike Edge Sharpen which works on luminance contrast for a more natural result. The bottom line - use Edge Sharpen!

In any sharpening adjustment, you'll have better results by zooming in to 100%. The easiest way to zoom in is by pressing the Z key with your mouse pointer over the area you want to examine. Make your adjustments when viewing the actual size

### Noise Reduction

Noise reduction in Aperture will help offset the grainy look you see sometimes in high ISO images, or dark images that have had exposure adjustment applied to them. There are two types of noise in digital images. Luminance, which is the random film grain looking spots you see, and Color, which is typically seen as green and red specks throughout the image. Aperture doesn't really reduce the noise it finds, it merely tries to hide it. For luminance noise, this means that a blurring effect is applied to your image. Obviously, you don't want this blur to affect the detail in your image, so you need to be very careful about how aggressive you are with the reduction. To be honest, Aperture doesn't do a very good job of reducing luminance noise. The results tend to be blurry when used strong enough to make a difference. If you frequently shoot

photos that have a noise issue, I recommend looking at one of the plug-ins available, such as Nik Dfine, or Noise Ninja. Both work very well. The only drawback to the plug-in method (aside from having to spend money on them) is that they require a new version of your image to be exported/created - so your raw file is duplicated as a TIFF or PSD, and this file is what is opened in the plug-in. So, if you go with this method, or any plug-in/external editor, you'll want to make sure you do all possible adjustments in Aperture with the non-destructive workflow as possible before converting to an alternate file type.

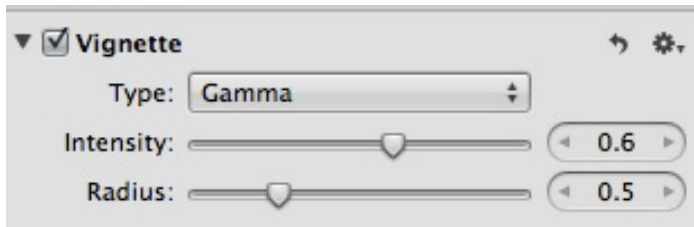


The Noise Reduction controls have two adjustments - Radius, which controls how wide of an area is affected by the adjustment, and Edge Detail which controls how aggressive Aperture is at applying the blur to mask out the noise.

### Vignetting

Vignetting can be an effective way to push the viewer's attention into the frame and to your subject, or it can be used for dramatic effect to give your image a heavy framing effect. Like many of the other adjustments in Aperture, you have two main controls - Intensity, or how strong the effect is, and Radius, or how wide the effect is.

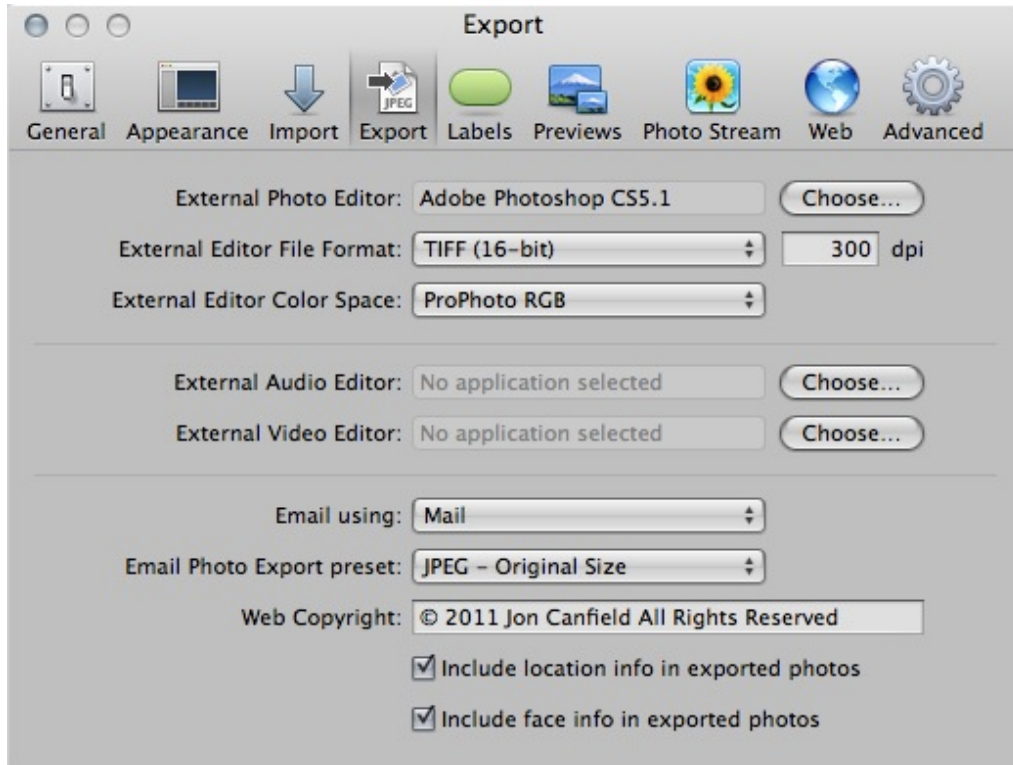
With Vignette, there is also a Type control - Gamma and Linear. Gamma is the most effective for photo use, it applies the vignette based on the light levels, giving a more natural look similar to the light falloff you see with a lens. Linear applies a gradient type vignette that is less natural looking, but can be used effectively when you want a harder darkening.



### Working with External Editors

Sometimes you need to go beyond what Aperture can offer you. For these times, you can assign external editors, such as Photoshop, Logic, and Final Cut as image, audio, and video editors. To do this, select Aperture > Preferences.

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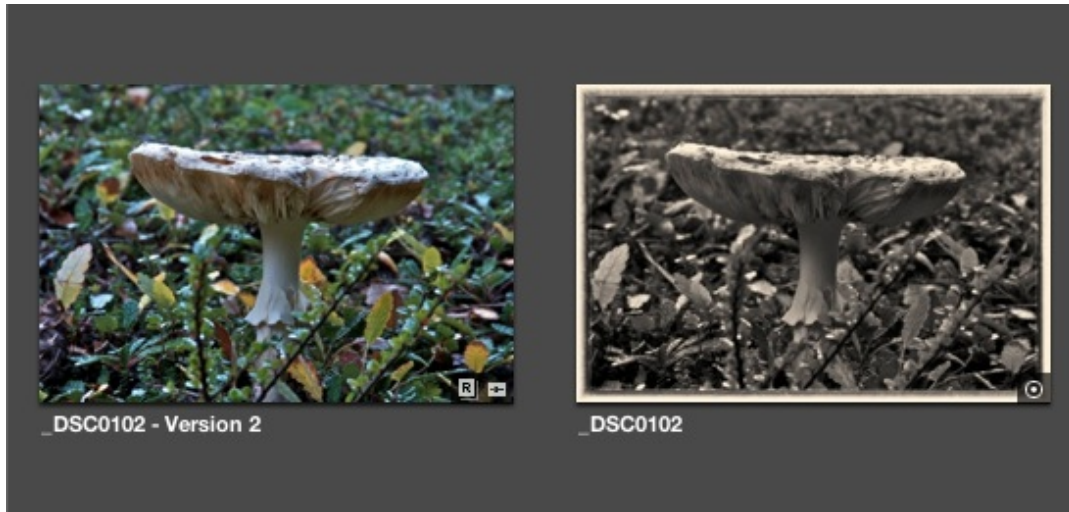


Once in the Preferences dialog, click on Export. Click on Choose for one of the editor types, in this case, I selected Photoshop as the External Photo Editor. Navigate to the Applications folder in the dialog that opens, and select the program you want to use.

It's important to note that when you work with an external editor, or a plug-in, that Aperture first converts your image to a finished file, such as TIFF or PSD, or JPG (depending on the settings you selected in the Export Presets). This file will have all of the adjustments you made in Aperture applied to it, and will be created in your Library next to the original image. So, you should be sure to do any possible editing in Aperture where you have the non-destructive edits available before going to an external program.

When you've completed editing in Photoshop or your plug-in, Save the file - do NOT use Save As. When you use Save, the updated file is shown in your Aperture library. If you choose Save As, you'll need to reimport the file and will have yet another copy of the image to manage.

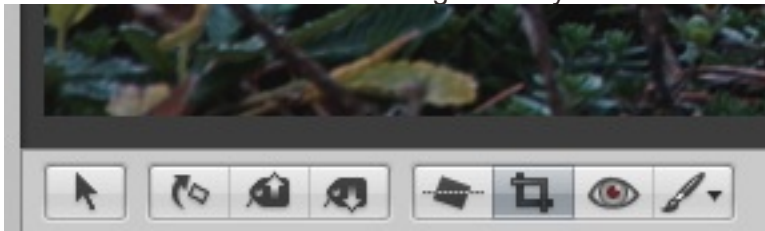
Aperture identifies externally edited files with a badge in the lower right corner of the image:



You'll also notice in the above image the R symbol. If you shoot and import both JPG and RAW files, you'll be able to tell which is which by the R or J badge shown on the image thumbnail.

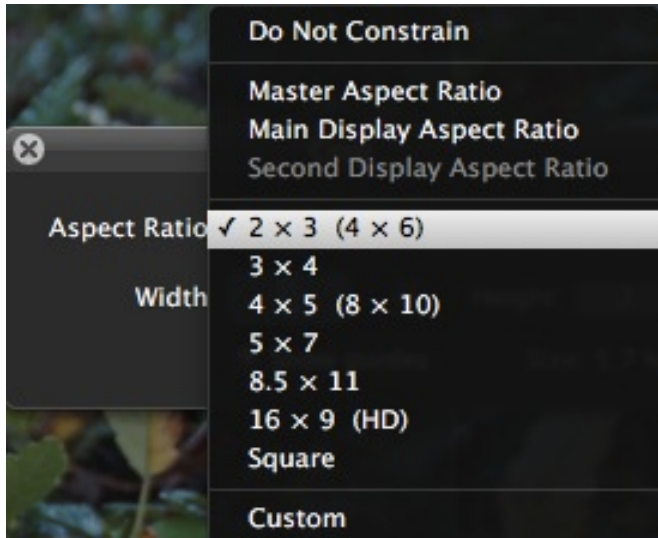
### Cropping and Straightening

Finally, we'll take a look at cropping and straightening images in Aperture. You can access the Crop and Straighten tools from the Adjustments drop down menu, but it's easier to click on the tools in the toolbar below the image when you're in the Develop mode.

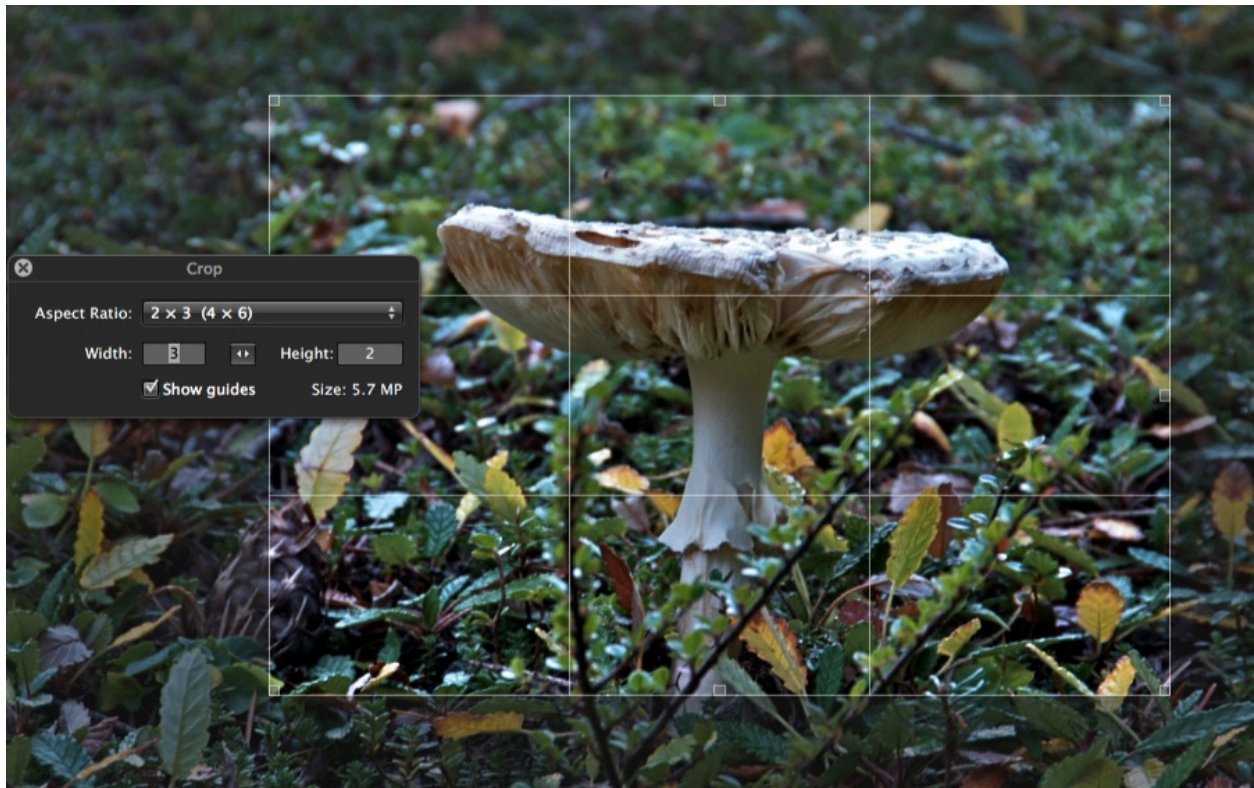


Along with crop and straighten, you have quick access to red eye and adjustment brushes from this toolbar. Even easier still is to just press the C key for crop or G for straighten (my guess is G is for Guide, which you see when you're using this tool). Demos of both of these tools are in video part 3 this week.

While you can use one of the presets in the crop tool for sizing your image to fit specific dimensions, such as 8x10 or other standard size, I generally prefer to crop with no constraints, letting the image dictate the dimensions needed, and then cutting a custom mat to fit. That's not always practical though, so you may choose to use one of these standards.



If you have a specific size you need, you can create a custom size size by typing in your dimensions in the edit fields.



Straighten works by showing a grid for your image as you drag the mouse pointer up or down. If you need to straighten, do this prior to cropping because the tool crops as well - in order to keep the image borders filled (image rather than empty space), it will crop the image down with changes to the angle.

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The image above has a very subtle adjustment, while the version below shows how much of the image will be cropped with a larger adjustment:



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### Assignment

Your assignment for the week is three images. I'd like to see two of your images use the techniques covered this week - with sharpening applied, one using selective adjustments - either black and white with selective color, or some other type of adjustment using the painting tools, and finally, one of your most challenging images to edit using any adjustments you feel are appropriate. Please be sure to include the adjustments used with your comments to help me identify and make suggestions.