

Lightroom Workflow & Editing — Workbook

This workbook pairs with every module of the Lightroom Workflow & Editing course, giving you structured exercises, planning worksheets, and checklists to build your real-world system as you learn. Work through each section after completing the corresponding module — the exercises are designed around your actual shoots, not hypothetical scenarios. By the end you will have a catalog structure, a preset pack, and an export pipeline running in your own Lightroom installation.

Catalog Architecture & Import Fundamentals

Design and document the catalog structure, folder hierarchy, and import settings you will use for all future shoots.

Exercise: Catalog Audit & Rebuild Decision

If you already have a Lightroom catalog, audit it against the standards from this module. If you are starting fresh, design your catalog from scratch. Work through the prompts below to document your decisions before making any changes.

- Where is your catalog currently stored (exact path), and does that location meet the requirements — internal SSD, not cloud-synced? If not, what is your new location?

- Do you currently have multiple catalogs? List each one and describe what it contains. Based on the one-catalog approach, which would you merge into a primary catalog and which (if any) would you keep separate?

- Write out your folder hierarchy for new imports in the format Year > Month-Day-JobName. Give three example folder names based on upcoming or recent shoots.

- What backup schedule and destination will you use? Name the backup drive, its current available capacity, and how you will confirm backups are running each week.

Worksheet: Import Settings Configuration Sheet

Fill in each field to document your standard import settings. This becomes your reference card when setting up a new machine or training an assistant.

Catalog file path (full path, including filename)

Image storage root folder (drive label + path)

Folder naming convention (write the exact pattern, e.g. YYYY > MM-DD-ClientName)

File rename pattern (write the exact pattern, e.g. YYYYMMDD-ClientName-####.cr3)

Copyright metadata preset name

Copyright text (your name, year, rights statement)

Develop preset applied on import (name of preset or 'None')

Backup frequency and destination path

Preview rendering setting (Standard / 1:1 / Minimal)

Checklist: Catalog Setup Verification Checklist

- Catalog .lrcat file is stored on internal SSD (not external drive, not cloud-synced folder)
- Backup schedule is set to 'Once a day, upon starting Lightroom' in Catalog Settings
- A backup destination on a separate physical drive is configured
- Copyright metadata preset is created with your name, URL, and rights statement
- File rename preset is saved and tested on a batch of 10 images
- Folder naming hierarchy is documented and applied to your first import
- Smart Collection group 'Working' is created with at least 3 dynamic collections (e.g., Unedited Stars, Awaiting Export, Client Delivered)
- Keyword hierarchy has at least 3 levels with Subject > Category > Specific structure
- One test import of 20+ images completed using the full import preset and verified in Grid view

Raw Editing Fundamentals: The Lightroom Develop Sequence

Apply the correct editing order to real images from your own shoots and document the decisions behind each panel adjustment.

Exercise: Editing Order Walkthrough on Three Images

Choose three images from a recent shoot: one portrait, one landscape or architecture, and one image shot in challenging mixed or artificial light. Edit each one in Develop mode following the exact order from Module 2. For each image, write a one-sentence note explaining the most important adjustment you made at each stage.

- For your portrait image: what was your starting exposure reading (histogram left/right bias), and which Basic panel sliders moved the most? Did you use Masking on sharpening, and what value did you set?
- For your landscape or architecture image: describe how you used the Tone Curve — did you build an S-curve, a matte lift, or a per-channel color curve? What tonal impact did it have?
- For your mixed-light image: how did you set white balance — Auto, a preset Kelvin value, or the eyedropper on a neutral? Which HSL sliders did you need to use to correct any remaining color cast?
- Compare your three final edits. Which editing order step made the biggest visible difference across all three images? Which step did you find least intuitive, and what will you do differently next time?

Worksheet: Develop Module Settings Reference Sheet

Fill in your personal baseline settings for each panel based on your most common shooting conditions. These become your starting-point notes for when you set up a Base Preset.
Most common shooting ISO range

Exposure: typical starting adjustment (EV range you usually apply)

Highlights: default setting for outdoor portrait (value or 'depends — explain')

Shadows: default setting for indoor available-light portrait

Whites/Blacks: do you set with Alt/Option clipping preview or by eye? Note your preference.

White Balance method for portraits: Auto / Preset / Eyedropper / Custom Kelvin

White Balance method for landscapes: Auto / Preset / Eyedropper / Custom Kelvin

Sharpening Amount: your default for base ISO portraits

Sharpening Masking: your default value for portraits

Luminance Noise Reduction: your default for ISO 3200

Color Noise Reduction: your default starting value (most shooters use 25)

Do you use AI Denoise (Enhance > Denoise)? At what ISO threshold?

Checklist: Develop Module Proficiency Checklist

- Can read a histogram and identify highlight/shadow clipping without enabling the clipping overlay
- Have applied the Basic panel in the correct order (Exposure > Highlights > Shadows > Whites > Blacks > Contrast) on at least 5 images
- Have used Alt/Option drag to set Whites and Blacks clipping points on at least 3 images
- Have set a custom white balance using the eyedropper on a grey card or neutral surface in at least 1 image
- Have built a custom S-curve in the Point Curve editor on at least 1 image
- Have used the Targeted Adjustment Tool (TAT) in the HSL panel to adjust skin tones by dragging directly on the image
- Have applied Color Grading shadow/highlight split on at least 1 image and noted the hue/saturation values used
- Have used Alt/Option drag on Masking slider and confirmed the mask shows only edges/texture, not smooth skin areas
- Have run AI Denoise on at least 1 high-ISO image and compared result to manual NR sliders

Presets: Building, Organizing, and Selling Your Signature Look

Build your first signature preset from scratch, document it, and create a minimum viable preset pack ready for distribution.

Exercise: Build Your Signature Preset

Follow the Matte Film Preset walkthrough from Lesson 3.1 as a starting point, then personalize it to reflect your own aesthetic. Work on a well-exposed, neutral-white-balance raw portrait — not a tricky image. Document every adjustment you make so you can reproduce the look from memory.

- Describe your preset's visual identity in one sentence — what emotion or time period does it evoke? (Examples: warm golden-hour nostalgia, clean editorial cool-tones, moody desaturated film noir.)
- List every panel you modified and the key values you used. Which panels did you deliberately exclude from

the preset save so they don't override a photographer's base exposure?

- Apply your completed preset to 5 very different images (different times of day, different subjects, different cameras). On which image did it work best? On which did it fail, and why?

Worksheet: Preset Pack Planning Sheet

Plan a 5–10 preset pack that has a coherent theme and is commercially viable. Fill in every field before building the individual presets.

Pack name (evocative, 2-4 words)

Target buyer (describe the photographer — portrait shooter, travel blogger, wedding photojournalist, etc.)

Visual theme / mood in 1 sentence

Number of presets in the pack

Preset names (list each one)

Which panels each preset will include (list per preset or describe the pattern)

Sample images needed for previews (describe 3 scenes you will shoot or already have)

Planned price point (\$)

Planned distribution channel (your website / Gumroad / Creative Market / all three)

One sentence describing what makes this pack different from the top 3 competing packs on Creative Market

Checklist: Preset Pack Launch Checklist

- At least 5 .xmp preset files created and tested across 10+ diverse images each
- Each preset excludes Exposure/WB panels so it applies as a relative style layer
- Before/after JPEG preview images prepared at 2048 px wide for each preset (neutral before image, styled after)
- Folder structure created: Lightroom_Classic/ and Lightroom_Mobile/ subfolders with all files
- INSTALL.pdf or INSTALL.txt written with step-by-step Classic + mobile installation instructions
- LICENSE.txt written specifying personal vs. commercial use terms
- Pack tested by installing on a second machine or second Lightroom catalog to confirm clean installation
- Gumroad or Creative Market product page created with preview images uploaded
- Price set and payment processor confirmed (test transaction completed)

Exercise: Adaptive Preset Exploration

Apply three built-in Adaptive Presets (labeled with 'A' badge) to a portrait image. After each application, open the Masking panel and inspect the auto-created masks.

- For the first Adaptive Preset applied: describe the three masks Lightroom created. Did the Subject mask accurately capture the person's hair and edges, or were there areas it missed?
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- Use the Brush tool to refine one of the AI-generated masks on a detail the AI missed (hair wisps, a hand at the frame edge, translucent fabric). Describe what you added or removed.
- After experimenting with the three Adaptive Presets, describe one scenario where Adaptive Presets would save you significant time versus manually masking — and one scenario where you would still build the mask by hand.

Batch Editing and Export Pipelines

Build and test an end-to-end batch editing and export workflow on a real shoot, then document your export presets for every delivery scenario.

Exercise: Batch Edit a Full Shoot Using Hero Image Sync

Take a real shoot of 50+ images (or simulate one using any existing shoot in your catalog). Apply the hero image batch editing approach: identify lighting conditions, edit one hero image per condition, sync to the batch.

- How many distinct lighting conditions did you identify in your shoot? List each one (e.g., 'harsh midday backlight', 'open shade', 'window light left side') and the number of images in each condition.
- For each lighting condition, which sync method did you use — Sync Settings, Auto Sync, or Match Total Exposure — and why? Was there a condition where you needed to use more than one method?
- After syncing, how many images needed individual manual tweaks (± 0.3 EV exposure correction, custom WB adjustment, local adjustment for a blown highlight)? Express this as a percentage of the total shoot.
- How long did the total editing process take for this shoot? Compare that to your estimate of how long it would have taken editing each image individually.

Worksheet: Export Preset Configuration Sheet

Document every export preset you create. Fill in one row per preset so you have a permanent reference for each delivery scenario.

Preset Name

Intended Use (Web / Print / Client Proofing / Stock / Social / Archival)

File Format (JPEG / TIFF / DNG / Original)

Color Space (sRGB / Adobe RGB / ProPhoto RGB)

Quality Setting (for JPEG, 0–100)

Long Edge Pixel Dimension (or 'Full Resolution')

Resolution (PPI)

Output Sharpening: Type (Screen / Matte Paper / Glossy Paper / None)

Output Sharpening: Amount (Low / Standard / High)

Metadata Included (Copyright Only / All / None / Custom)

Watermark Applied (Yes / No — if yes, describe overlay)

Export Destination Folder

Post-Processing Action (None / Open in Finder / Run Script — describe)

Checklist: Export Pipeline Readiness Checklist

- [] Named export preset created and saved for web/social delivery (sRGB, 2048 px, 85 quality)
- [] Named export preset created and saved for print/client delivery (Adobe RGB, full resolution, 100 quality, 300 ppi)
- [] Named export preset created and saved for client proofing gallery (sRGB, 1200 px, 75 quality, watermarked)
- [] All three export presets tested on 10 images each and output verified (file size, dimensions, embedded profile confirmed in Preview or Bridge)
- [] At least one Publish Service configured (Flickr, Pic-Time, Pixieset, or equivalent plugin)
- [] A test gallery published via Publish Service and verified accessible via the gallery link
- [] Slideshow template created with logo overlay, black background, and at least 5 slides exported as PDF
- [] Print module tested: one 4x6 contact sheet generated for a 12-image set and sent to PDF proof
- [] Batch edit workflow timed on a 50+ image shoot and personal benchmark recorded (minutes per 100 images)

Your Action Plan

1. Week 1: Audit your existing catalog (or create a new one from scratch) — set the correct location, enable daily backups, and create your copyright metadata preset
2. Week 1: Set up your folder hierarchy and file rename convention; do one complete test import of a recent shoot using your new settings and verify every image lands in the right folder with the right filename
3. Week 1: Build your keyword hierarchy (3 levels minimum) and create your first 5 Smart Collections in a 'Working' folder
4. Week 2: Edit 10 images from a portrait shoot using the full Basic panel sequence in the correct order; record the adjustments in your Develop Module Settings Reference Sheet
5. Week 2: Build one Tone Curve (S-curve for portraits OR matte lift for a filmic look) and apply it to 20 images to see how it behaves across different exposures
6. Week 2: Use the TAT in HSL to refine skin tones on at least 5 portrait images; note the hue/saturation/luminance adjustments that work for your subjects
7. Week 3: Build your first signature Base Preset (lens corrections, noise reduction, masking) and apply it on import for your next 3 shoots
8. Week 3: Build your first Style Preset using the matte film method; test it on 10+ diverse images and refine until it is consistent
9. Week 3: Set up and test your complete export pipeline — create all named export presets and verify the output of each on a real set of delivered images
10. Week 4: Run a full batch edit on a 100+ image shoot using hero image sync; time the process and aim to complete editing under 45 minutes
11. Ongoing: Refine your preset over the next 20 shoots; after each shoot note one thing the preset did well and one thing to adjust

