

How to Create a Composite Image

A composite image is one that contains all, or elements of, more than one photograph. For competitions that require more than one image as a set or panel (such as a triptych) it is a way of showing your images as a single item rather than allowing the audience to guess who-did-what and in what order.

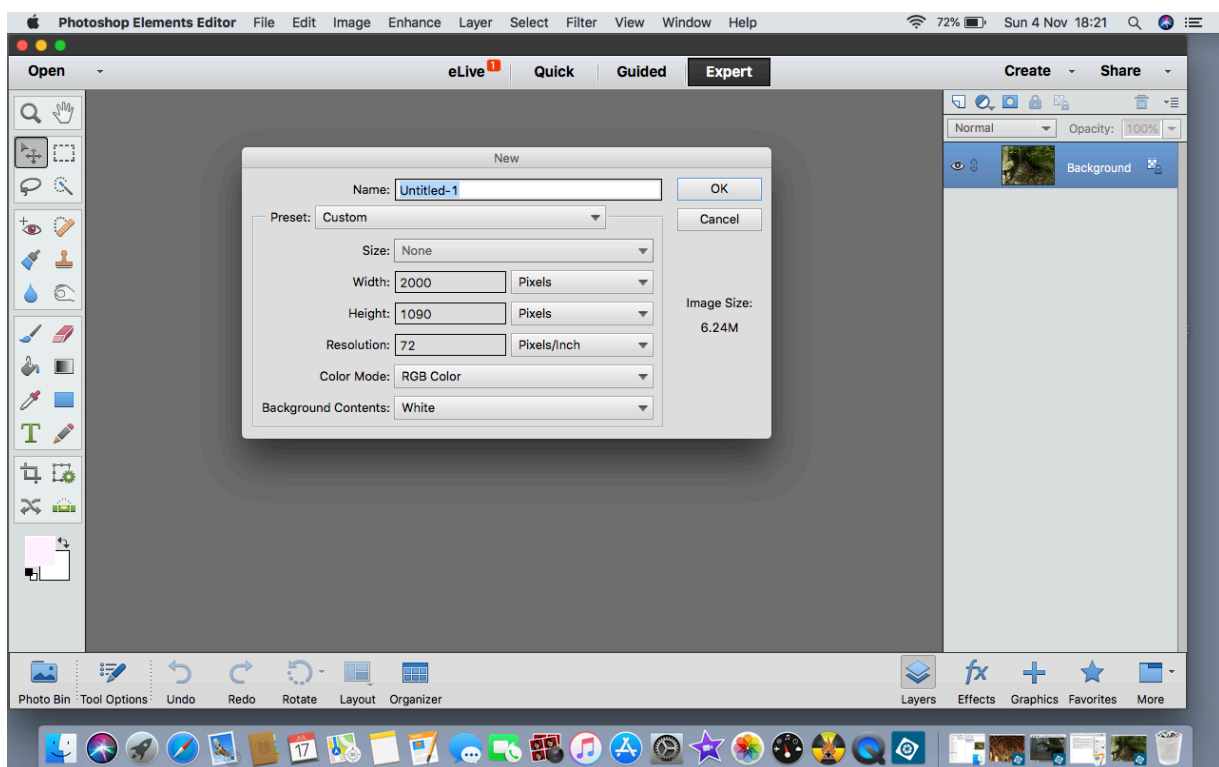
This tutorial uses **Photoshop Elements 13**, but should work with the majority of PS Elements versions. The technique should be possible in most other photo editing programs - except Lightroom - but may require working out according to the menus and vagaries of the program you are using!

The base-technique will work when you want to composite images together as well - when you work in Layers to manipulate photographs creatively. It is a 'starter' tutorial.

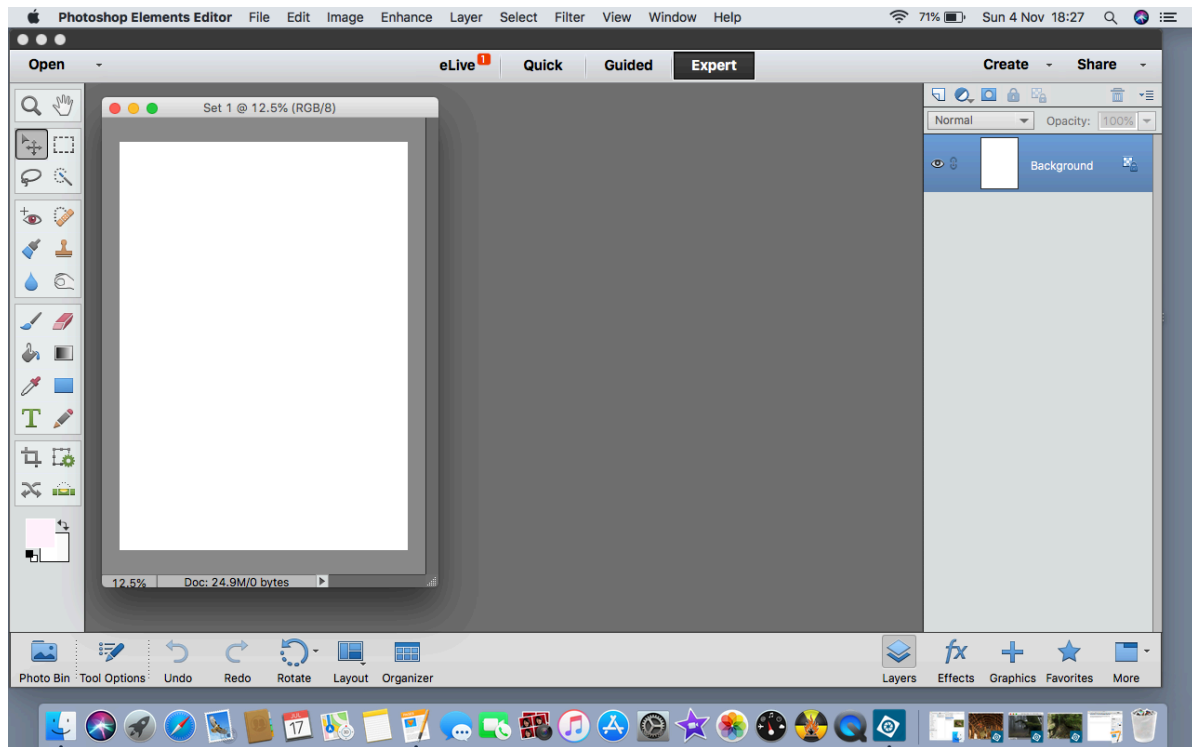
First prepare your photographs, and save the files with the sRGB profile as required in club competitions. It will make life easier if you also save a low-resolution version at 1600x1200 pixels and 72dpi of each image.

Open the images in your editing program, but minimise them (yellow minus sign at top left of the image) to leave a clear page. This tutorial will work with 3 images, but the technique can be used for more than that number if needed.

Click on File, New, Blank to bring up the new document dialogue box.

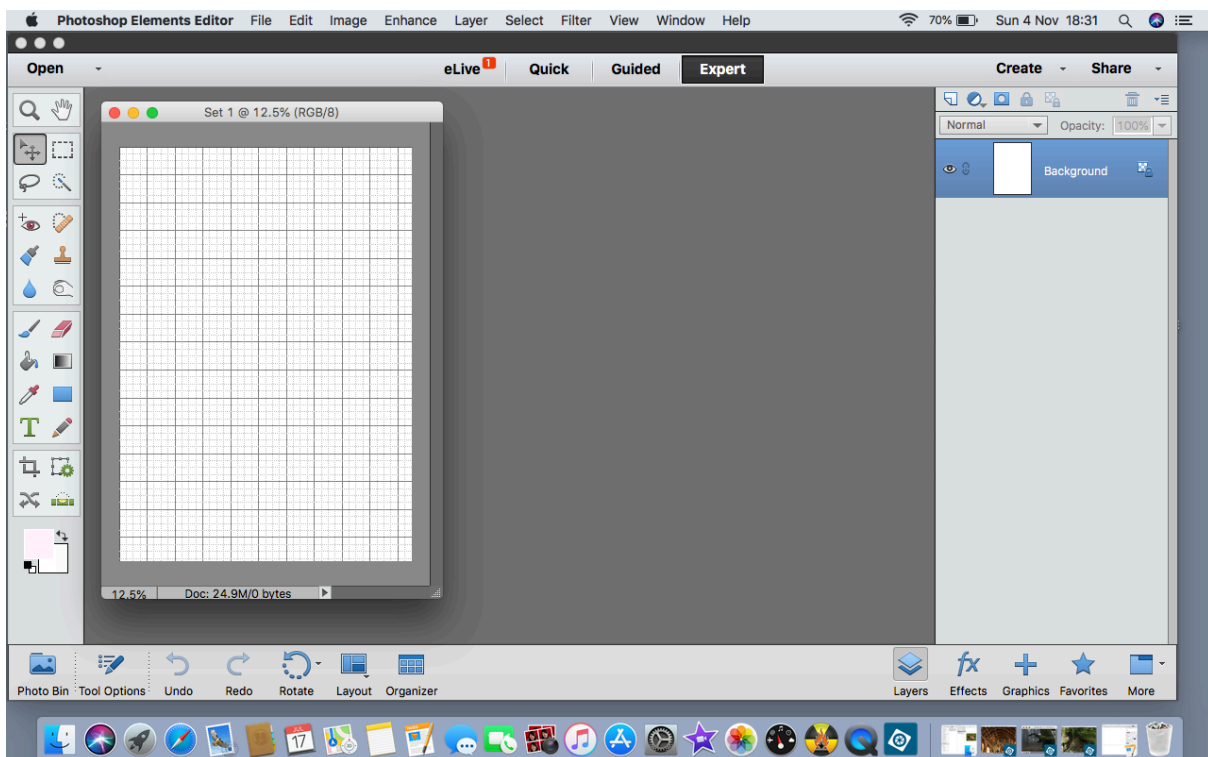


In the box, give the document a name such as Set 1 (as required for the competition is a good idea). Choose A4 under International Paper Sizes, and white for the paper background. 72dpi is all that is necessary for projected resolution. You may wish to swap the paper measurements around to create either Landscape or Portrait backgrounds, depending on how you want to present your composite. Click OK.



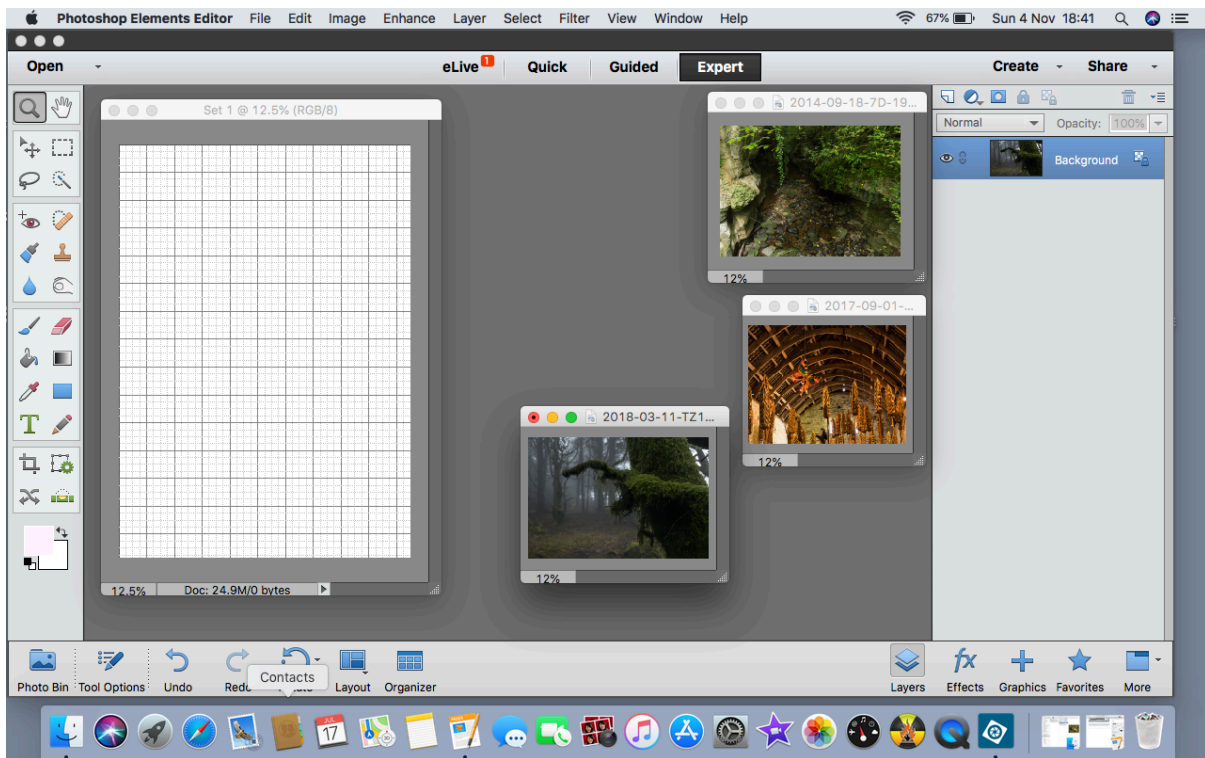
This creates your base document - in this case it is in Portrait alignment.

If you want to show the grid, click on View and choose Grid:

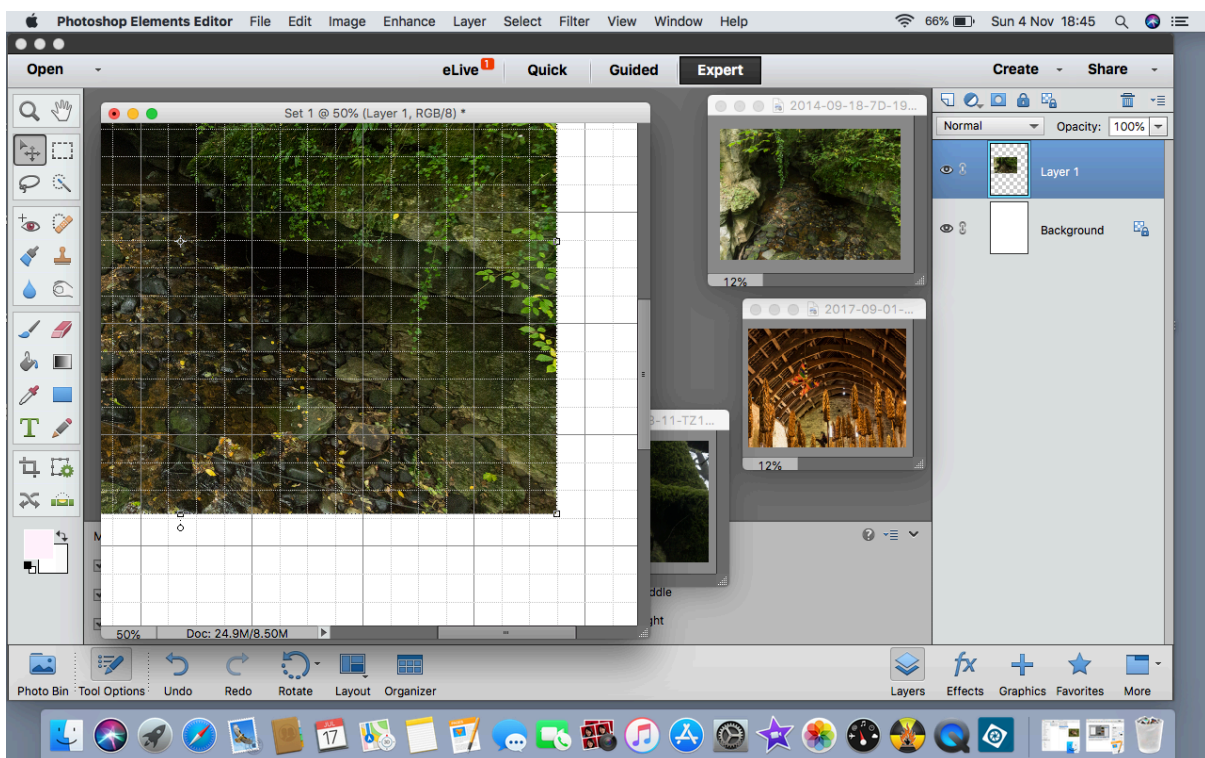


It isn't strictly necessary, but can help you make a more precise arrangement of your images.

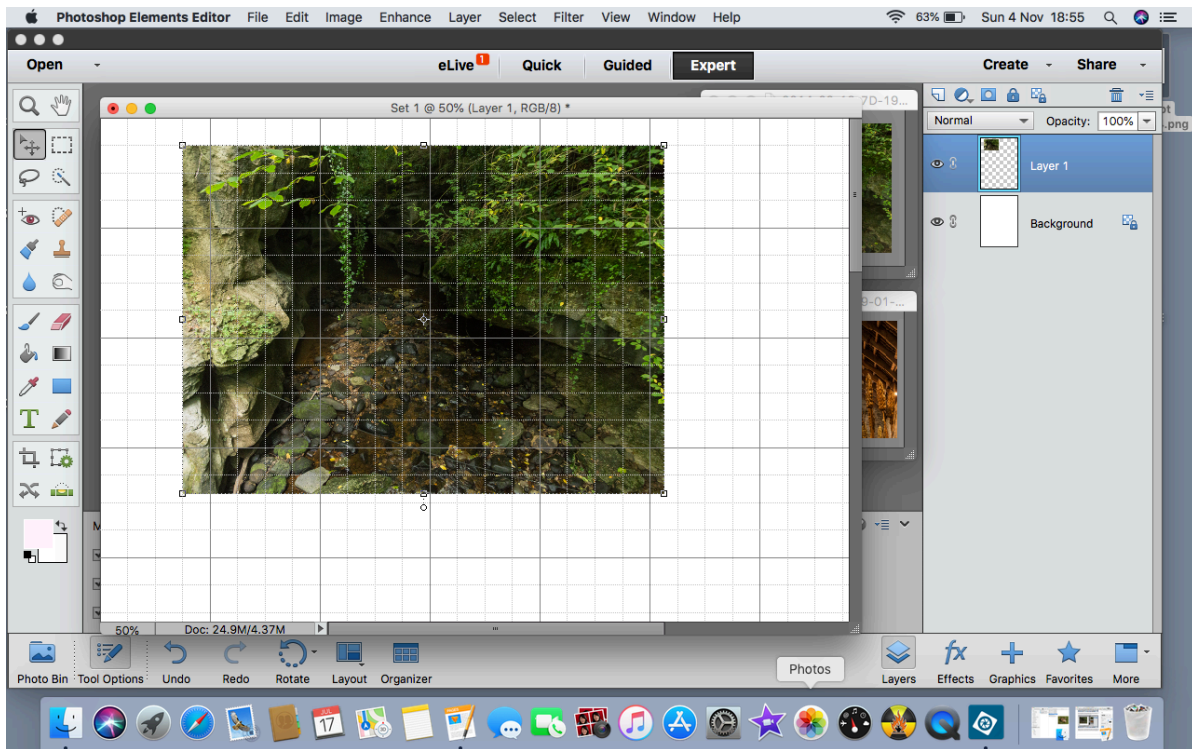
Now enlarge your images back onto the page - it is helpful to make them as small as possible in the view. You will only be dragging them around, so don't need to see them at full size.



Quick way to change size is to click on the bottom left corner (a figure) of the photo, and type in 10 or 12 and click 'enter' - this will resize the image to 10% or 12% of the original photo. However, increase the size of your document to around 50%.

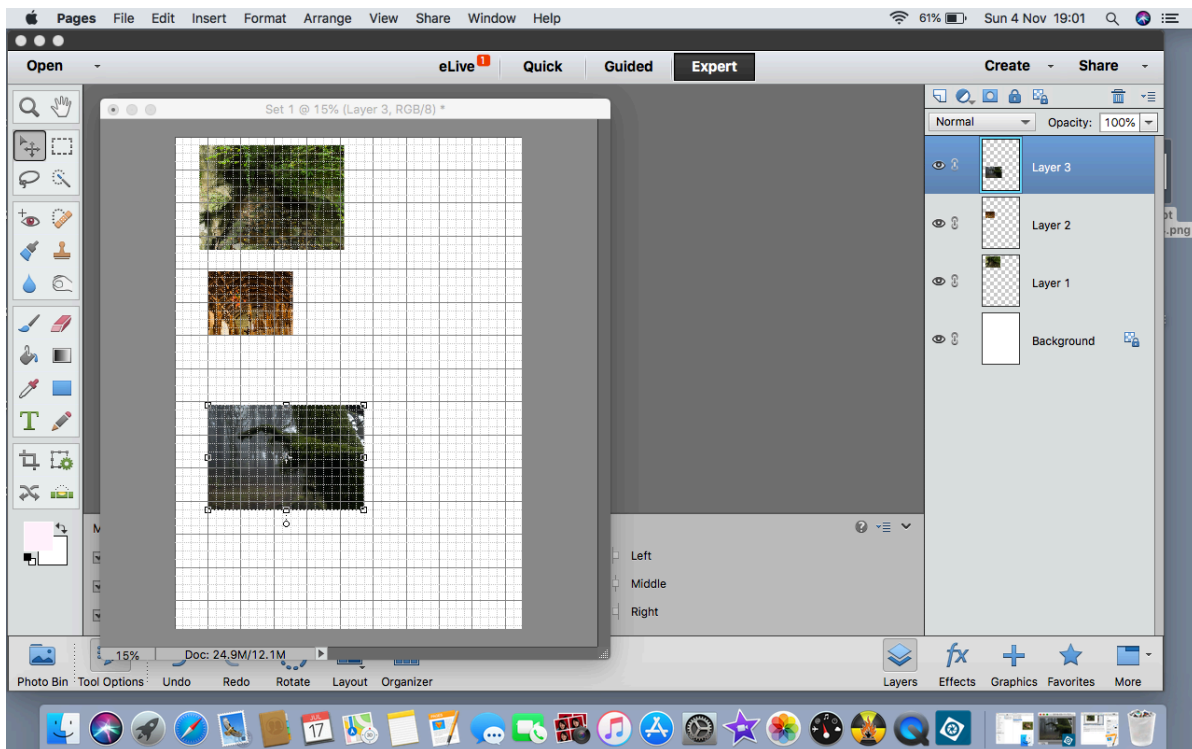


Now pick the Move tool - the 'cross' at the top left of the tools panel. Click and Drag the first image into your document. This will create a layer for that image. 'Handles' should show - the small square boxes at the corners of the image. Click and drag to resize the image (this should automatically constrain it proportionally so you don't have it turning into a strange shape). Click on the green tick when the image is about the required size.



Still using the move tool, click and drag the whole image to roughly the required place on the document.

Now repeat all those actions for the rest of the other images. Once you have all the images on the document you can either close them or minimise them - its a good idea to minimise them in case something goes wrong. You can now refine the placement and sizing of the images - but first resize the document so that all of it is visible on screen.



Remember to click on the layer that applies to the photo you are working on - it is very frustrating to get no response because you've forgotten to choose the right layer!

Once you are happy with the document, go to View and untick 'show grid' to remove it from view.

Then go to Layer - Flatten Image. Then go to Image and image resize, and make the whole document match the required size for your entry (currently 2018 that is 1600 x 1200 pixels - and NO MORE THAN 1200 pixels high for any image whether landscape or portrait).

Save your image - you may want to give it a different name to the document you created or leave it as is.

The finished document should look something like this:

