

Tired of store-bought greeting cards? Make your own!

By Lincoln Spector
Ashby Village technology volunteer



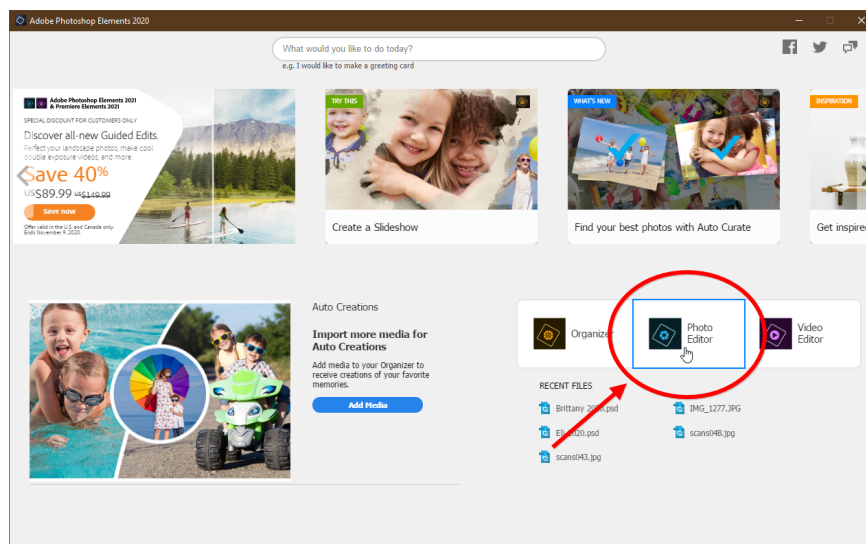
November 13, 2020

The good people at Hallmark may be talented, but they don't know your friends and family. By creating your own birthday, anniversary, and holiday cards using a computer and the Internet, you can make cards that fit you and those you want to send them to.

There are plenty of programs in which you can create a card. My preference is Adobe's Photoshop Elements - a cheaper and easier version of Adobe's professional Photoshop program. I use the Windows version; I assume the Mac one is similar. Many other programs can do the same things. But I can only give you *specific* directions for Elements. If you're using something else, you may have to figure out how to do some things.

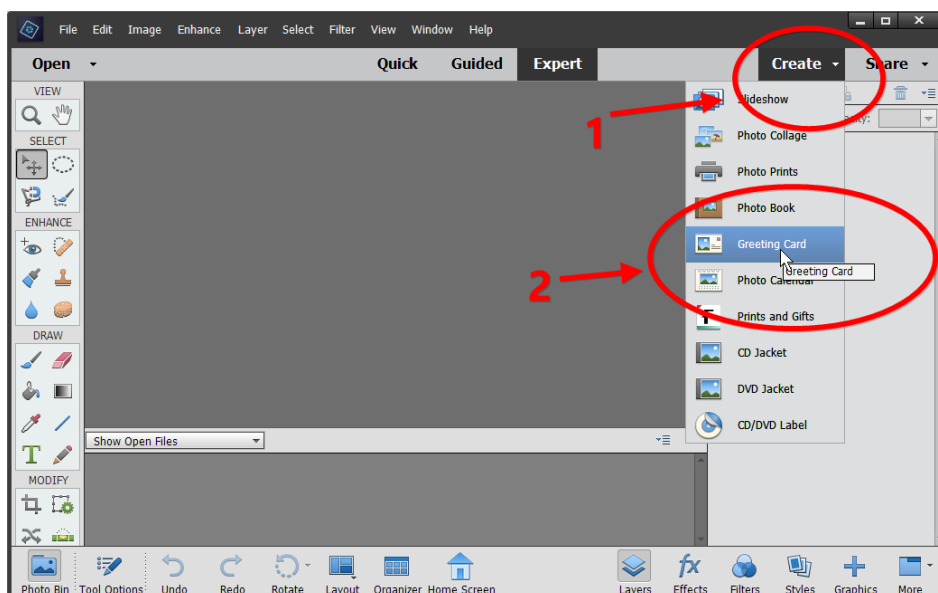
The first thing you need to do is think about the person (or people) you're sending the card too. What do they like? What sort of sense of humor do they have? Go through photos that might inspire you or help to illustrate the cards.

Photoshop opens with a big window that I find pretty much useless...except an icon that says *Photo Editor*. Click that to get started.

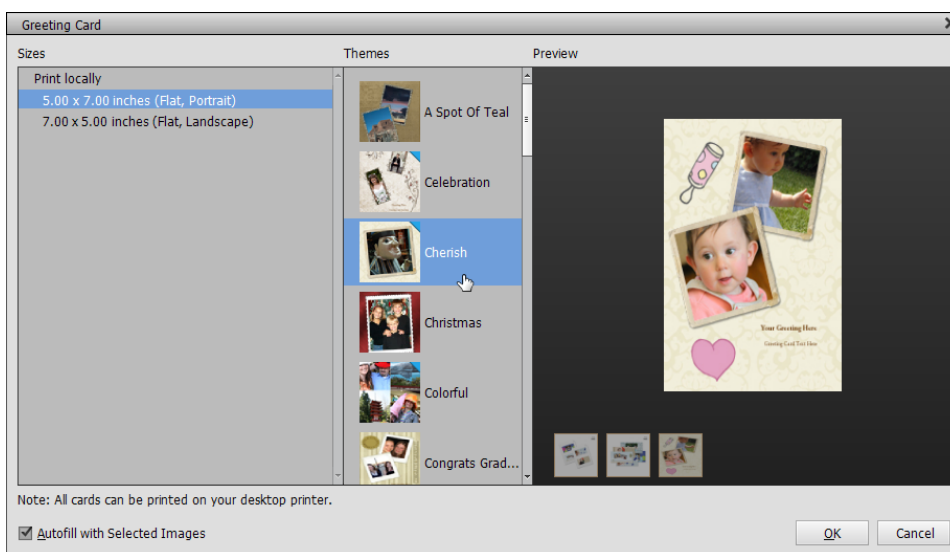


The Easy Way

Elements has a very simple way to create a greeting card. (1) Click *Create* near the top-right corner of the window, then (2) select *Greeting Card*.



From here you can select one of many themes.



Once you select a theme, click *OK* and you can put in your desired photos, resize them, and change the text (no one wants a greeting card with the words "Your Greeting Here.") Once you've created the card, you can save the card as a .pse file for future editing. You can also save it as a .pdf, which is a good choice if you're going to send it over the Internet.

A lot of the photos below contain members of my family. To keep their privacy, I'm blurring people's faces.



Making a more personal card

But what if none of Photoshop's themes fit what you want to say? Then it's time to create a whole new card from scratch. It's more work, but it's more personal. Here's an example I made from scratch:



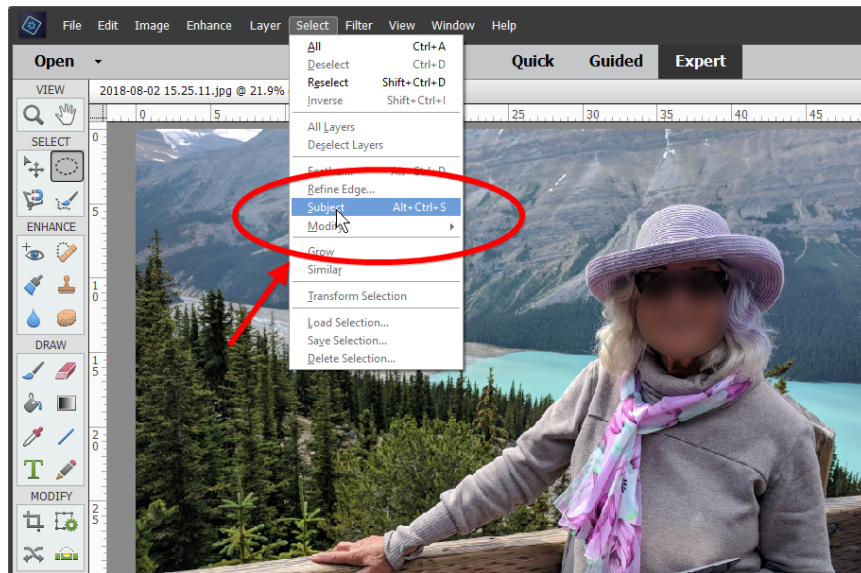
Start by searching the web for the right background - something that fits what you want to say. These could be *fireworks*, *seascapes*, *forests*, or even just search for *backgrounds*. Look for high-resolution images - at least wider than 1,000 pixels; preferably 2,000 or more.

You can always crop or shrink images. A photo of your own might work, as well.

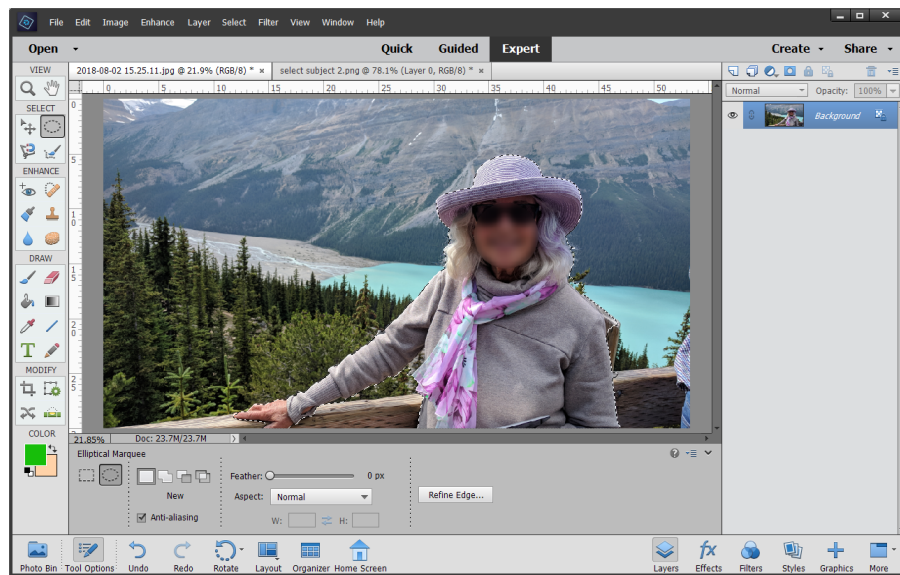
You obviously want to place one or more people in the card. Select a digital photo of the person you want on the card. But now you have to separate the person from the rest of the photo.

Drag the photo into Elements. The background and photo will be on different tabs.

Elements has a simple way to separate the person from the rest of the photo. With the photo in Elements, click *Select>Subject*.



In theory, Elements recognizes the photo's main subject, and selects it. If Elements can't figure out what is the subject, crop any other people (or pets) out of the photo. After a few seconds, a line of animated dashes show what is and is not selected.



The result is probably not perfect. If you're a perfectionist, you may want to manually retouch the selection. Elements has several tools for this. You'll find them near the left-top corner of the Photoshop window, in the Select box.

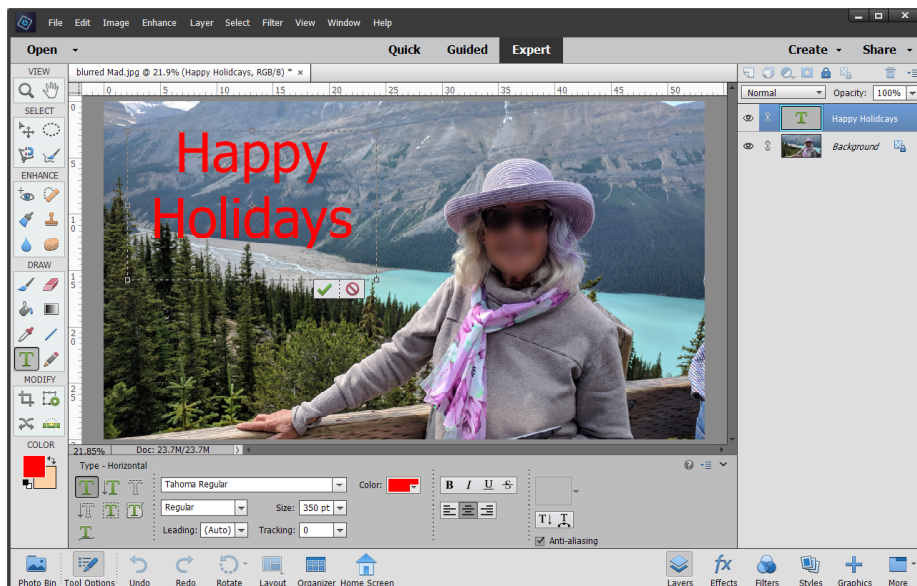


When the image is properly selected, copy the selected image (Ctrl-C in Windows), then return to the background tab, and paste (Ctrl-V) the selection of the person in front of the background. You can use the Move Tool (in the Select box) to move and resize the person in front of the background.

Of course, you don't have to be limited to one person. If you can't get the family together for one photo, just find good photos of all of them and put them all in front of a background.



But don't forget about words. Click the big green **T** on the left, then drag over the part of the picture where you want to have text. Then type. Text options appear once you've clicked the big **T**. You can pick a font, text size, color, and so on.



Elements has many other text tricks, but I don't have room for all of them.

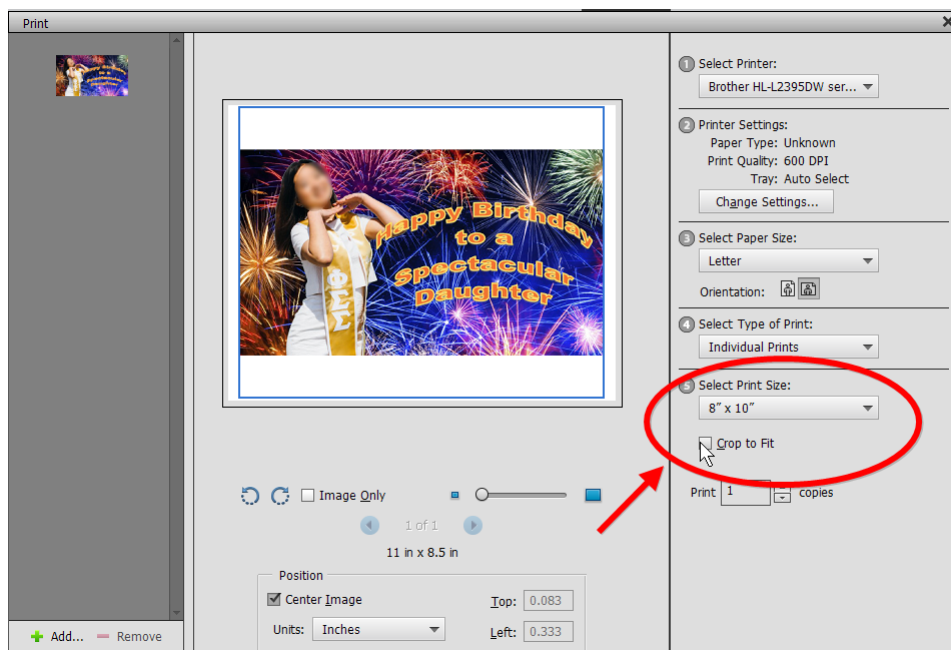
How to deliver the card?

So, you've created your card. How do you get it to the person or people you want to share it with?

If you have a color printer, that's the obvious solution. I suggest you use glossy, photo paper.

It's a little bit tricky to print from Elements. Select *File>Print* or press **Ctrl-P**; either one will bring you to Element's Print dialog box.

If you want the image to be as large as possible, for Select Print Size, select 8" x 10", and uncheck *Crop to Fit*. Select your color printer and press the *Print* button.



Otherwise, you can use a local print shop. You'll want to save the card to a .pdf. You do this not by saving the file but by printing it. Use the instructions above, but for Select Printer, select *Microsoft Print to PDF* - or any print to PDF option your computer has. Once you have the PDF, e-mail it to a local print shop with instructions (such as glossy, photo paper). Within an hour or two, you'll be able to go to the shop and pick up the print(s).

With the pandemic, I've switched to e-mailing the card to its recipient(s). No fuss, no cost, and you know that no one with unclean hands touched it.