

Using the Photo Downloader

As you learned in Chapter 1, Elements includes a special program for getting photos from your camera or card reader onto your computer: the Adobe Photo Downloader. The pros and cons of the Downloader are discussed on page 19 of the book. If you decide to give the Downloader a test drive to see if it fits the way you work, here's what you need to know to get started.

Launching the Downloader

The Mac version of the Downloader is a shy program that you may never even notice unless you go looking for it. You can call up the Downloader from either Elements (File → Adobe Photo Downloader) or Bridge (File → Get Photos from Camera). No matter where you start, you get bounced over to Bridge and you see the dialog box shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1:

You can tell the Downloader to watch for incoming photos and launch automatically whenever you attach a camera or card reader to your computer. To set it do that, just click Yes in this window. If you later decide you don't want the Downloader popping up all the time, go to Bridge CS4 → Preferences → General → Behavior, and turn off "When a Camera is Connected, Launch Adobe Photo Downloader."

If you don't want to auto-launch the Downloader, you can get rid of this window by turning on the "Don't show again" checkbox.

Once you make your choice in that dialog box, the Downloader appears. The top part of the window shows a list of the connected devices the Downloader has found. If you have more than one camera or reader connected, choose the one you want from the pull-down menu. If you don't see your camera in the list, choose Refresh List. If you *still* don't see it after that, try unplugging your camera and then plugging it back into the computer. Once your camera appears in the list, you also see a thumbnail of the first photo on the memory card that the Downloader is reading.

NOTE: If you're doing a direct camera download, remember that you have to choose your camera's correct settings for transferring photos, or the camera won't show up at all.

Downloading Your Photos

Now that you've gotten the Downloader and your camera or card reader talking to each other, it's time to download your photos. The window you see when the Downloader first opens is what Adobe calls the "Standard dialog," (shown in Figure 2). This is what you use when you want to import all the photos from a card without applying any special metadata (there's more about metadata in the next section and on page 55 of the book).

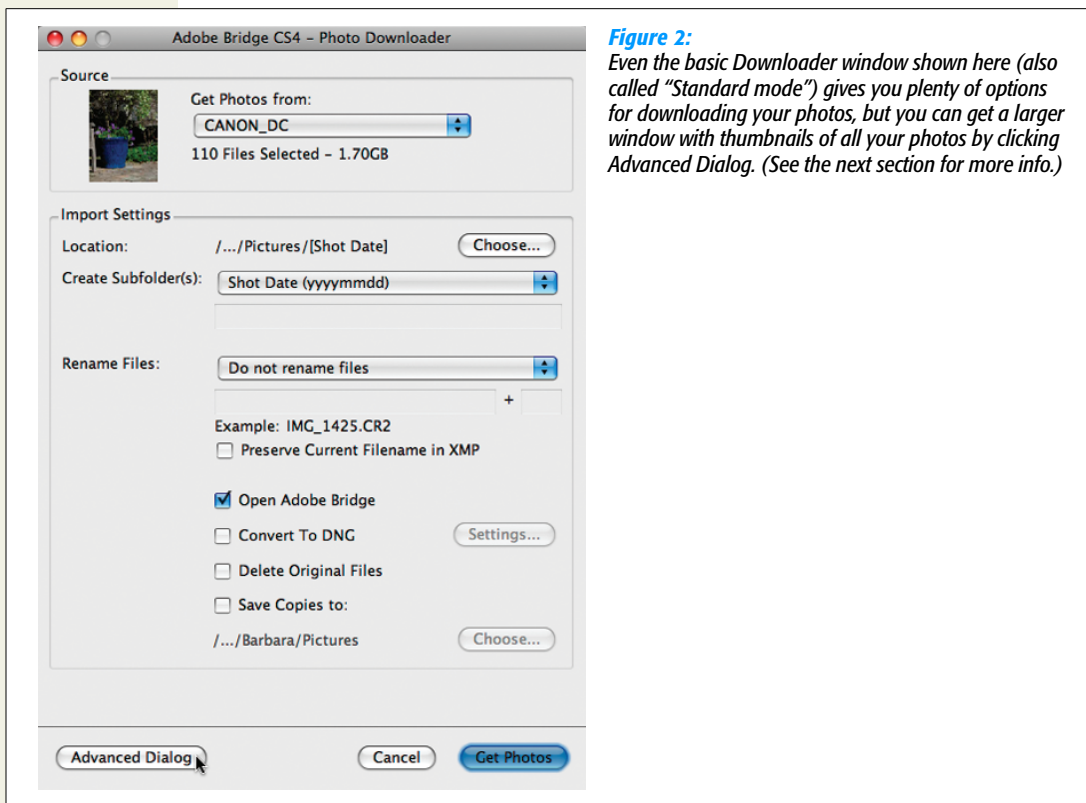


Figure 2: Even the basic Downloader window shown here (also called "Standard mode") gives you plenty of options for downloading your photos, but you can get a larger window with thumbnails of all your photos by clicking Advanced Dialog. (See the next section for more info.)

To download in Standard mode:

1. Tell the Downloader where to put your downloaded photos.

In the upper part of the Import Settings section of the window shown in Figure 2, click the Choose button and, in the window that opens, select the folder where you want to save your photos. You can create a new folder, if you want.

You can also create a subfolder for this download. For instance, if you usually put your photos in your Pictures folder, you can create a subfolder with a custom name (choose Custom Name from the Subfolder pull-down menu and type a name), or use today's date or the shot date in a variety of formats. If you don't need a subfolder, choose None.

2. If you want, rename the photos as you download them.

If you'd rather your photos have more descriptive names than, say, *IMG_1439.tif*, this option is for you. The Rename Files menu lets you choose from a custom name (choose any option involving a custom name and a box appears where you can type the name), today's date, the shot date, a combination of a custom name and a date, or the same name as the subfolder.

All the naming choices give you photos named whatever you chose plus a sequential number. The numbers normally begin with 0001, but you can type another starting number in the box in the window. You might do that if, for example, you're adding photos to a folder that already contains some photos named with the same convention. That way, your new photos won't have duplicate names if you start with the next number after the last one you've already used.

NOTE: If you're renaming your photos, consider turning on the "Preserve Current Filename in XMP" Option. This puts the original file name into the images' metadata (see page 55) so that if you ever need to find a photo by its original numerical name, you can do a metadata search for it.

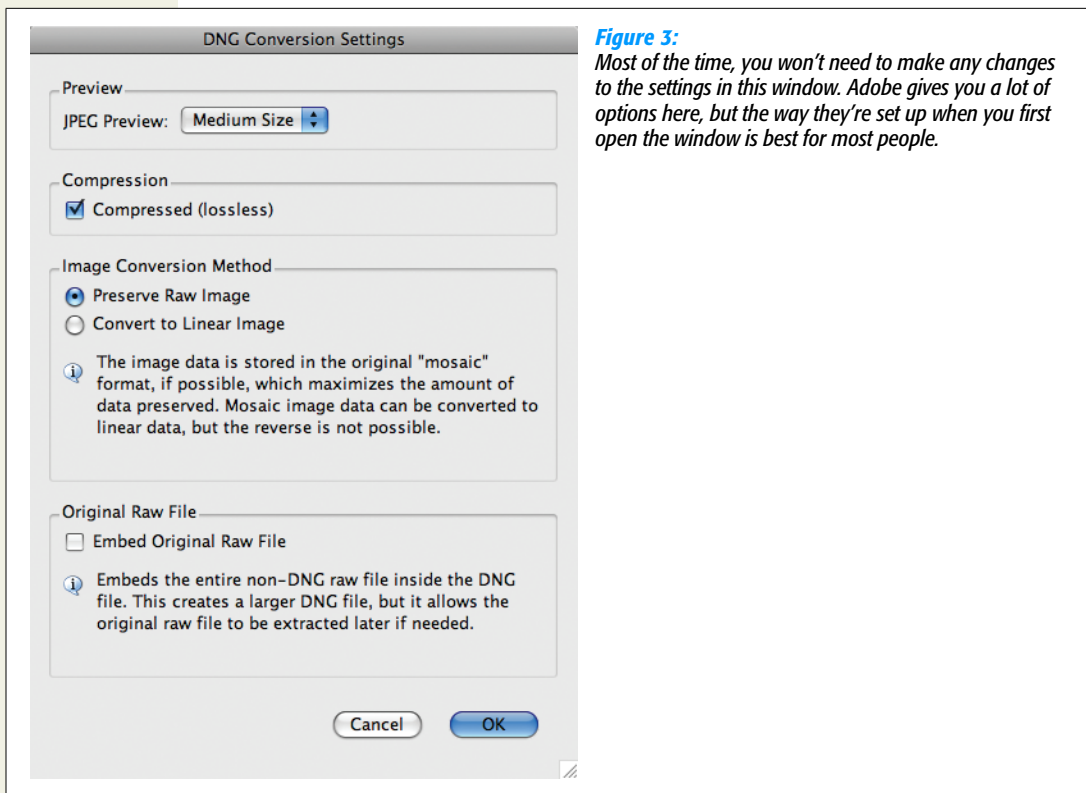
3. Choose any other options you wish to use.

You can have Bridge launch automatically so you can browse through your latest import; you can convert your photos to DNG format (if they're Raw files—more about this in a minute); or you can have Elements save copies of the files to another folder (for archiving, for instance). Just turn on the checkbox(es) for the option(s) you want.

4. Download your photos.

Click Get Photos, and the Downloader copies your photos from the memory card to the location you chose in step 1. If you chose to have Bridge open automatically, the Bridge window shows you the current download, so you can add keywords (page 56) or reorganize your photos.

As mentioned in step 3, if you're downloading Raw files, you can convert them to DNG format as you import them. (You can read more about what DNG is and why you might want to do this on page 249 of the book.) If you decide to convert to DNG as you import your photos, you have a number of choices for the settings used by the DNG converter. To see them, click the Settings button to the right of "Convert to DNG". Up pops the dialog box shown in Figure 3.



Here's what the various settings mean:

- **JPEG Preview.** Use this pull-down menu to change the size of the JPEG image that serves as a preview so you can see your Raw image without converting it (so it's visible in programs like Bridge, for instance, rather than just in the Raw converter [see page 232]).
- **Compression.** Unless you turn this off, your DNG files will be compressed to make them smaller. This compression is "lossless," meaning you don't lose any data, unlike with JPEG compression (see page 62).

- **Image Conversion Method.** Use one of these two radio buttons to choose between preserving the image as a Raw (mosaic) image or converting it to a linear image. This is pretty technical, but what you need to know is that you almost always want to preserve the Raw image. The only time there's an advantage to choosing "Convert to Linear Image" is when you need to send a DNG file to someone who will open it using a really old version of Adobe's Raw converter (version 2.4, say). The very earliest versions of the converter may not be able to open the DNG otherwise. The rest of the time, this isn't a good thing to do, since it makes irrevocable changes to the file, as the dialog box warns you.
- **Embed Original Raw File.** This puts a copy of the original Raw format file in the DNG file so that you can extract it later if you want that version rather than the DNG file. Doing this makes for a very large DNG file.

As explained in Figure 3, you can usually ignore these settings except in very special circumstances.

The Downloader also has a larger window, called the Advanced Dialog, which gives you more choices for downloading photos. It's explained in the next section.

Advanced Downloader

For most people, the Standard Downloader window works just fine. But what if you don't want to import every photo from a card, or you want to add metadata to your photos as you import them? For that, you need to switch over to the Advanced Downloader window (Figure 4).

The Advanced window lets you decide which photos to import, as explained in Figure 4. Most of the rest of the settings are exactly the same as those in the Standard dialog (explained in the previous section) with one important exception: You can choose to add metadata to your photos as you import them. (If you need a refresher on metadata, see page 52.) This is a great way to add copyright or usage permissions info right into your photos as you bring them onto your Mac.

You have three ways to add metadata in the Downloader:

- **Metadata Template.** If you've already created a metadata template (see page 52), just choose it from the pull-down menu and it'll be applied to all the images you download.
- **Creator.** If you want your photos to list you as the author, type your name here.
- **Copyright.** Use this box to type any kind of copyright information you want added to your images.

You can add one kind of metadata or any combination of the three, but if you choose a template you may not need the other two, since they may duplicate information already in the template.

In all other ways, using the Advanced dialog is exactly the same as using the Standard dialog, and your choices are identical.

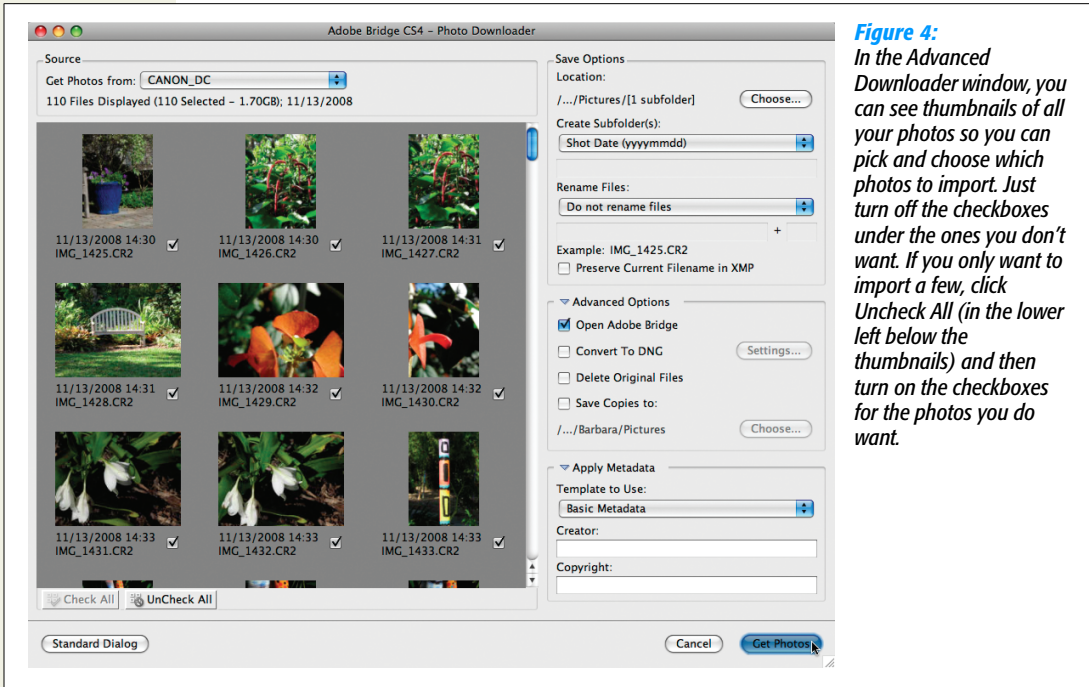


Figure 4:
In the Advanced Downloader window, you can see thumbnails of all your photos so you can pick and choose which photos to import. Just turn off the checkboxes under the ones you don't want. If you only want to import a few, click Uncheck All (in the lower left below the thumbnails) and then turn on the checkboxes for the photos you do want.