

When to Use Tags or Collections in the Photoshop Elements Photo Organizer...

Tags or Collections?

There are several ways to think about the differences between tags and collections.

- Tags are specific where collections are general. If you took photos at a birthday party, you will want to use tags to identify the people in the individual photos by name. You may also want to tag them as a birthday event, but you would probably use a collection to group all of the photos from one particular birthday party
- Tags are more permanent where collections can be temporary. Although you can use tags to flag several photos you want to use in a specific project, it's usually better to use a collection. The tags panel tends to get unwieldy very fast, so it's best to avoid tags when a collection will do. When your project is complete, you can delete the collection.
- Use tags to identify the content of your photos.
- Use collections as a container for holding similar groups of photos
- One other important difference between tags and collections is that photos in a collection can be arranged into a custom order. When you select a group of photos using tags, they are displayed according to date, import batch, or folder depending on what is selected from the arrangement menu. When you select photos from the Collections pane, they can be dragged and dropped into new positions. These positions will determine the order of the items when you create projects like slide shows or Web galleries. A small number in the top left corner of the thumbnail shows the item's position in the collection.

Rating Photos and Searching with Tags in Photoshop Elements Organizer...

As you've been working on tagging your photos, you may have come across some photos you haven't seen in a while -- some favorites you'd like to share with others, and perhaps some that you'd rather not let anyone else see! No worries... Photoshop Elements can help you address both of these situations.

Earlier in this series, I encouraged you to use the favorite's tags whenever you encountered pictures you especially liked, but what I didn't mention was that there are also built-in tags that enable you to rate your favorites. If you don't yet have any photos tagged as favorites, go ahead and tag several of them with the Favorites tag now so we can experiment with searching with tags.

► The easiest way to clear all previous searches and start a new search is to double-click on a tag. Go ahead and double-click "Favorites" in the tags palette to show all your favorite photos.

The photo browser will restrict the view to only show photos that have been tagged as favorites.

At the top of the browser, the find bar will show you which tags you have searched on. To the right, it shows you how many matching items were found. The status bar will also

show the number of items found. In the find bar you can also reverse the results to show only non-favorites, by unchecking the "best" box and checking the "not" box.

Click on the tiny arrow next to the favorites tag in the tag palette to expand it. You'll notice there are tags for attaching star ratings to your favorites. Notice the binoculars icon is a light gray for the star rating tags, but a darker gray for the top-level Favorite tag. This is showing you that the star tags are all included within in the search for Favorites. If you like, go through your Favorites now and apply star ratings to them.

Now suppose you want to look at Flowers, but only your favorite flowers. (If you don't have any Favorite pictures tagged as flowers, replace "flowers" with something you do have as you work through this exercise.)

We don't want to double-click the flowers tag this time, because that would clear the favorite search, and we want to see photos that are tagged as flowers AND favorites. There are two ways you can restrict your favorites search to show only flowers:

- Click the box next to the flowers tag so it shows the binoculars.
- Drag and drop the flowers tag up onto the find bar.

Now you should be seeing all your favorite flowers. Notice the find bar now has another option -- "close" matches. Checking the "close" match box will show you photos that have any of the tags listed in the find bar. In this case, it is showing me all my flower pictures, regardless of whether they are favorites or not. The close match checkbox works differently in different situations, but its primary purpose is to expand the results of your search, so if you're not seeing what you want, give it a try. You can read more about it under "Finding Photos" in the help topics. Personally, I've never had a reason to use it, so don't get too hung up on it.

Tags can also be used to exclude photos from search results. Let's just suppose that one day I am so mad at my husband that I can't bear to look at his face. Easy fix... I just right click on the "Russ" tag and choose "Exclude photos with Russ tag from search results." Now I can scroll through my photos without fear of seeing his face and flying into a fit of rage. ;-)

Another time the exclude function can be useful is when you want to find pictures of one person alone. I assume you all have a tag for yourself under the "People" category. Go ahead and perform a search on your name. You'll notice that any photo tagged with your name is shown, regardless of whether you are with other people or not. Needless to say, it would be a tedious task to right click and exclude every other person tag in your whole tag hierarchy. Luckily, there is an easier way... While the search of your name is still active, right click the "People" category and choose "Exclude photos with People category in search results." Poof! All the photos of yourself with other people in them are gone and you are left with just yourself. Notice that when you exclude tags or categories from a search, they will appear in the find bar with a red circle-slash icon.

I hope you are beginning to see the benefits of tagging your photos and searching with tags!