

# Ten Steps to Making a Beautiful Print

Some of the steps I list in this section will feel familiar to you, but I'll also talk about a new concept or two that I haven't discussed before, including ICC profiles. I'll get to those in a minute. First, here's my basic overview for creating beautiful prints at home.

1. Capture the best images possible with your camera.
2. Calibrate your computer monitor to these standards: Target Gamma = 2.2, White Point = 6500. (See *Calibrating Your Monitor* earlier in this chapter.)
3. Upload your images from your camera and select your favorites using the Bridge workflow I cover in Chapters 2 and 3. Fine-tune those candidates using Adobe Camera Raw as I discuss in Chapter 4.
4. Power up your printer and load the paper you want to use. While you're getting your feet wet with this process, I recommend that you use paper your printer manufacturer supplies because you probably have an ICC profile for that paper already loaded on your computer; more on this later.
5. Open the image in Photoshop. Go to the Page Set Up dialog box (File→Page Set Up) and make sure your printer is selected in the Format for pop-up menu. Also choose the paper size and the orientation. Leave scale at 100 percent. Click OK.
6. Now you're ready to print. Open the Print dialog box (File→Print). Here's where you're going to take the voodoo out of printing. First, make sure the correct printer is displayed at the top of the dialog box. If not, change it. The number 1 should be displayed in the Copies field. Also double-check the paper orientation.
7. You're going to choose a few more bits of information, including the following (you can adjust to taste later):

**Position** Center Image is the common choice for position, but you won't have to do anything here because of the option you're about to select in the Scaled Print Size area.

**Scaled Print Size** Turn on the Scale to Fit Media checkbox and make sure the print resolution is 150 ppi or more. If your print resolution is less than 150 ppi, your image isn't big enough for a photorealistic print. You'll have to either reduce your paper size or find a bigger image. I recommend a resolution of at least 240 ppi.

**Bounding Box** You should not turn on this option unless you want a dark line to print along the perimeter of the image.

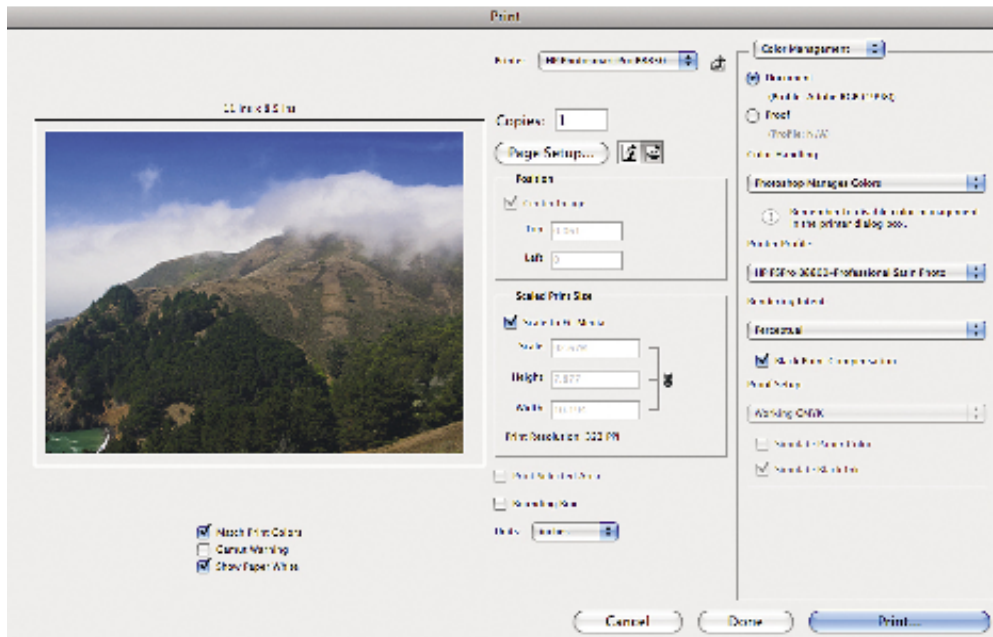
**Color Management** This option should appear at the top of the second column. If it isn't displayed, choose it from the pop-up menu. Click the Document radio button, and the color profile you established earlier in your workflow will display. A safe bet for printing is Adobe RGB 1998 because it's a reasonably large color space.

**Color Handling** Photoshop Manages Colors is still my favorite Color Handling setting. But I've noticed that printers are doing a better job of color management these days, so you might want to experiment with Printer Manages Colors too. For now, though, let Photoshop do the heavy lifting.

**Printer Profile** This can be a rather large pop-up menu displaying a variety of color profiles that are loaded on your computer. Look in the list for the printer/paper stock profile you've loaded in your printer. These are actually specific profiles for the various papers (often ICC profiles). They're added to your system when you load the printer software.

This is an important choice because it helps your printer accurately interpret the calibrated information it receives from the computer.

- **Rendering Intent** Set it to Perceptual
  - **Black Point Compensation** Turn on the box.
8. Click the Print button. Photoshop may present you with a secondary Print dialog box; this scenario varies depending on the type of printer driver you have loaded on your system. If Photoshop does present you with a secondary Print dialog box, everything should pretty much be all set. But it doesn't hurt to nose around a bit. I usually double-check the Paper Type/Quality setting. This listing is usually in a pop-up menu in this secondary dialog box. Once I'm there, I make sure the paper type is the same as what I've loaded onto the paper tray, and that the quality level is set at Best. If those two parameters check out, click Print again and your printer should go to work. Within minutes, you should be holding your first print of the day.



The Print dialog box.

9. Review the first print in the type of lighting in which it will most likely be displayed, such as window light, halogen light, and so on. Does it look good? It should, but if it doesn't and you want to adjust the tone or color, return to step 3. At this point, you should consider making a duplicate of your master image and adding print to the filename. This gives you the latitude to play with tone and color for the specific paper you're printing on without tainting the original image.
10. Sharpen the print (this is an optional but sometimes amazingly effective step). Once you've completed your final adjustments and you feel like the picture is ready for prime time, consider sharpening it a little. I recommend that you zoom out to 50 percent to better visualize the resolution of the print that'll emerge from your printer (monitor is 100 ppi and print will be 150 ppi or 240 ppi). Then use Smart Sharpen (Filter→Sharpen→Smart Sharpen). In Smart Sharpen, choose Lens Blur from the Remove pop-up menu, with a low Radius setting (1 or 1.5 pixels) and a higher Amount setting (25 percent or 50 percent). You may have to adjust to taste, but these are good starting points for making prints.

Make your final print. Be sure to leave the print accessible after printing so that you can enjoy it and learn more about your image as you view it over time.

Very few things are more satisfying than having a tangible print of your image.

## **A Word About Printer Profiles**

The most notable new concept in this workflow is the Printer Profile selection. Often, these are ICC profiles (International Color Consortium). These bundles of information help your printer match the data from your computer to the inks and paper you're going to use. Most photo printers load a set of these profiles onto your computer when you install the driver. I recommend that you start with the paper available from your printer manufacturer because those will be the profiles initially available to you.

### **Tip: Shop Smartly for Paper**

Some independent paper stocks can be just as good as brand names for considerably less money. Red River Paper, for example, offers paper that comes in a variety of surfaces, produces great prints, and is often less expensive than printer manufacturer paper. Plus, you can usually download printer profiles from the company's website ([www.redriverpaper.com](http://www.redriverpaper.com)) for your particular photo printer.

Independent paper companies often make profiles available on the Web for their papers too. They match to the most commonly used photo printers. So, if you want to go that route, look on the website of the company whose paper stock you're interested in, and see whether a profile for your printer is available. The company will also tell you how to load the profile onto your computer.

If you're truly ambitious, you can make your own profiles using systems sold by companies such as X-Rite which specialize in color calibration. To start, however, I recommend that you stick with stock profiles available with your printer software or available online until you feel comfortable with your print setup.