

Photo editing: photo effects



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In our other guides (*see right*), we look at the range of editing features available and describe what they can do. Here, I'll take a closer look at some of the key image editing options you're likely to use most often and show you how they work.

Before you can begin, you'll need a photo software program. In this guide, I've used the free Windows Live Photo Gallery (see [How to download Windows Live Photo Gallery](#) for more information). However, you'll find that other programs such as [Photoscape](#) and [Paint.net](#) follow a very similar process.

You'll need:

- a computer
- any photos you want to edit saved in a folder on your computer or to an external storage device.

Now open Windows Live Photo Gallery and try out some of the effects.

Exposure

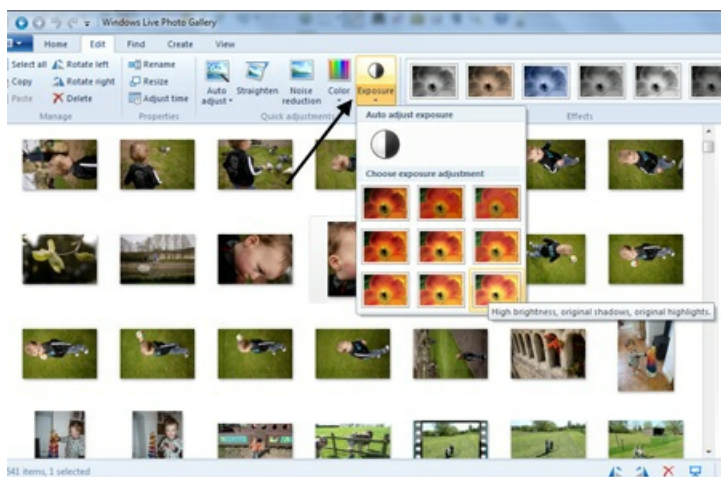
The 'Exposure' editing tool lets you correct an image that may be too dark or too bright. In the traditional darkroom, this used to be quite time consuming, but Windows Live Photo Gallery makes it very simple.

Follow these step-by-step instructions to adjust exposure

Step 1: Ensure that you're in the 'Edit' tab located at the top left of your screen. Select the image or group of images you'd like to edit. To select one image, click on it. To select a group, hold down **Ctrl** on your keyboard as you click each photo.

Step 2: When your photo or group of photos is selected, there are two ways you can correct the exposure. If you simply click the black/white circle icon shown on the 'Exposure' button, Windows Live Photo Gallery will assess your photo and make an automatic adjustment.

Step 3: If you click and hold down the small arrow at the bottom of the 'Exposure' button, you'll see a drop-down list of various exposure adjustments. Each adjustment option offers a mix of ways to alter brightness, shadows and highlights – for example, the first option provides low brightness with your original shadows and original highlights.

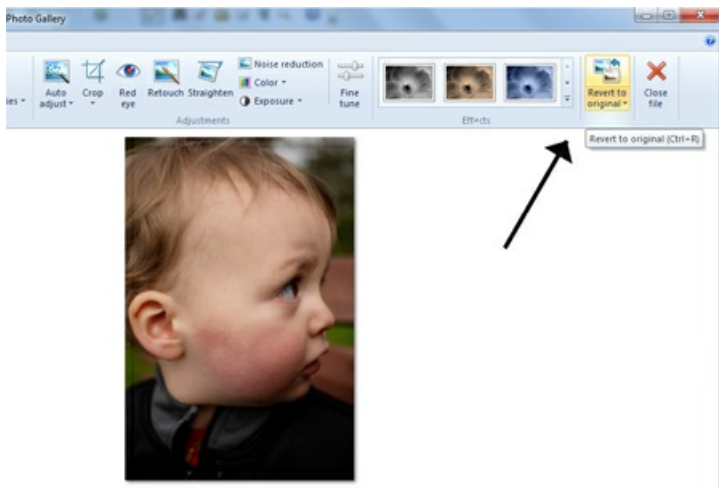


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Color

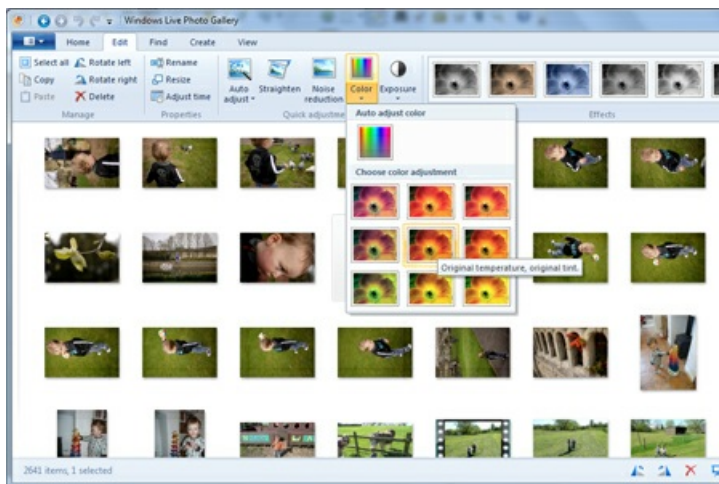
Many people also like to change the colour in their photos. This is because cameras can often be fooled by tricky lighting (particularly electric tungsten lighting) and produce unnatural-looking green or red tones in images.

Follow these step-by-step instructions to adjust colour

Step 1: To correct your colour, click **Edit** at the top left of your screen. Select the image or group of images you'd like to edit (as described above).

Step 2: Much like the 'Exposure button', if you click the rainbow icon on the 'Colour' button, Windows Live Photo Gallery will assess the colour in your photo and make an automatic adjustment.

Step 3: For a more tailored adjustment, click and hold down the arrow at the bottom of the 'Color' button. A drop-down list will offer you a range of options combining different colour temperatures and tints.



Click the 'Color' option that looks best. As before, any change can be undone by clicking **Revert** to original.

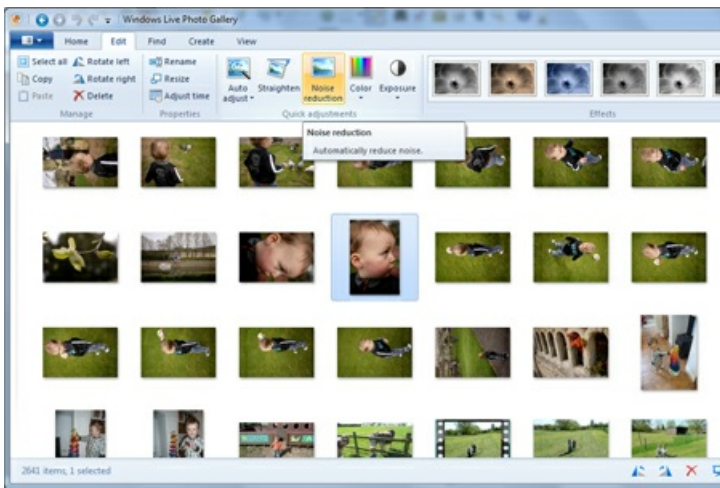
Noise reduction

'Noise' is the name for the little specks you sometimes see throughout an image taken in low light. This occurs because your camera is trying very hard to compensate for the lack of light. If you want to make prints of your photos, noise can prove quite annoying.

Follow these step-by-step instructions to reduce noise

Step 1: Again in the 'Edit' tab, select your photo or group of photos.

Step 2: Next, click **Noise reduction** at the top of your screen. Windows Live Photo Gallery will then assess your photo and automatically try to smooth over any noise in your photos.



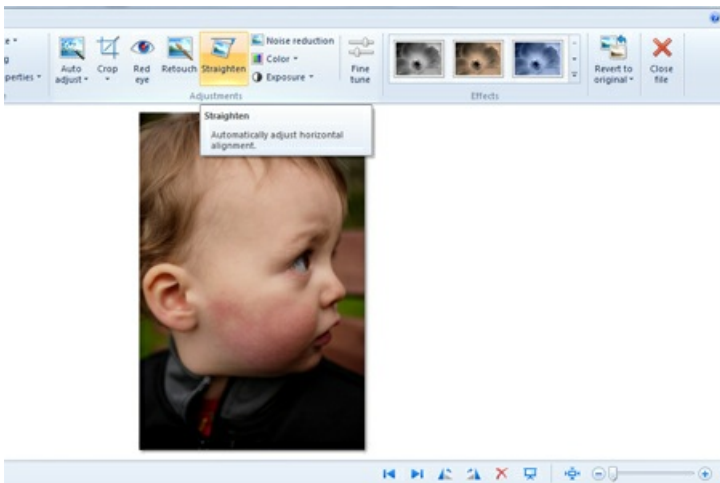
Straighten

Another key photo editing option is the 'Straighten' tool. How many times have you taken a picture that's crooked? This is particularly obvious in shots taken at the beach where a clearly defined horizon may look horribly wrong.

Follow these step-by-step instructions to straighten an image

Step 1: Select the photo or photos you would like to straighten as per the method described above.

Step 2: Now click **Straighten**, the icon for which is a crooked picture frame.



Windows Live Photo Gallery will automatically straighten your image according to where it believes the horizon to be.

Fine tune

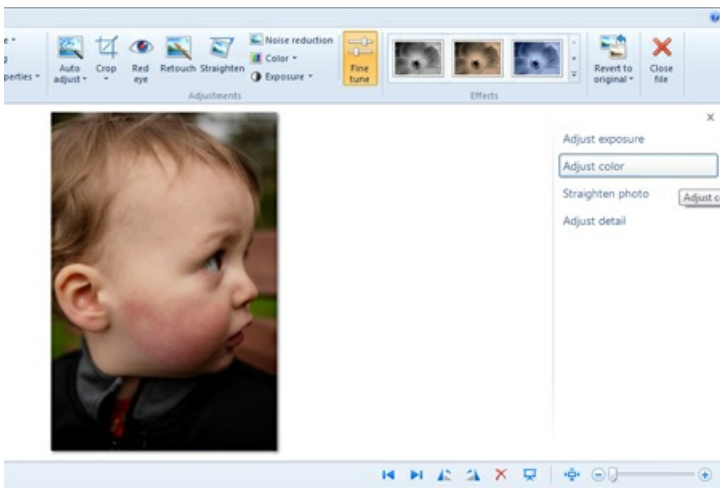
While many of the other editing tools rely on Windows Live Photo Gallery's judgement, the 'Fine tune' option gives you total creative control.

Follow these step-by-step instructions to use the 'Fine tune' tool

Step 1: In the 'Edit' tab, double click on an image to make it larger.

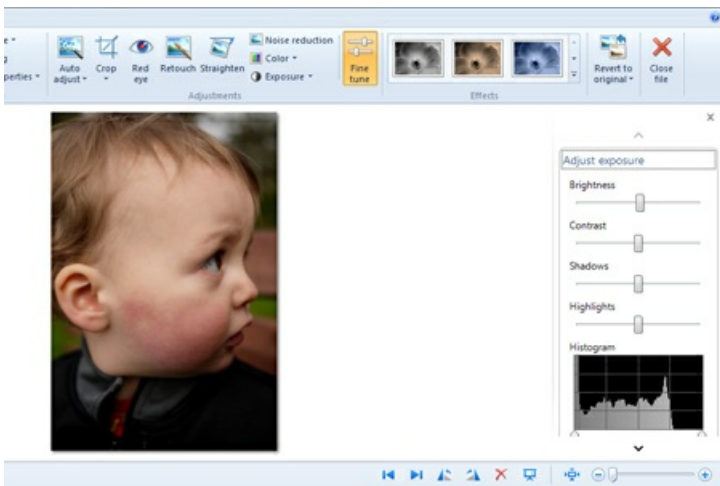
Step 2: You'll now notice a slightly expanded range of 'Adjustment' tools. Chief among them is the 'Fine tune' tool. Click **Fine tune**.

Step 3: On the right side of your screen, you'll now see four options: 'Adjust exposure', 'Adjust color', 'Straighten photo', 'Adjust detail'. All but the last of these options we've previously been able to achieve automatically. But if you think Windows Live Photo Gallery's automatic adjustment went too far or not enough, now is your chance to make it better. Click on the adjustment you'd like to make.



Step 4: One or more slider tools will appear allowing you to, for instance, sharpen detail or increase contrast. Simply drag the slider to the left or right until you get a pleasing effect. Windows Live Photo Gallery will show you a preview of the effect on your photograph as you drag the slider.

In the 'Exposure' adjustment, for instance (*see below*), you can fine tune brightness, contrast, shadows and highlights. In the 'Color' adjustment, you can affect color temperature, tint and saturation. 'Detail' lets you sharpen or reduce noise. And 'Straighten' offers you a single slider which rotates your picture as you drag the slider back and forth.



All adjustments aren't final, of course. Clicking **Revert to original** will undo any undesirable changes.

Jeff Meyer writes about camera techniques and other aspects of photography for PhotoRadar.com.

Next steps

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