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You must import photos into the Lightroom catalog to begin working with them. Importing tells Lightroom what photos are in the catalog, and whether they are imported directly from a camera, hard drive, memory card reader, or other storage device. During import, you can choose either to move or copy the photo files into a specific folder, or reference the photo files in their current location. As photos are imported, you can rename them, apply Develop module adjustments to them, embed metadata and keywords, and even back up the original photos to a different folder.

After they are imported, Lightroom adds the photos to the catalog and starts building previews and cataloging metadata. Unless manually removed, the previews and metadata stay in the catalog, even if you move the corresponding photos off your computer to archive them at a different storage location. Thumbnail previews appear in the Grid view and Filmstrip, and folders containing the imported photos appear in the Folders panel of the Library module. You can't import the same photo at the same location into Lightroom multiple times unless you first delete the photo from the catalog.

The visual import window allows you to preview, select, name, and add information about the photos you want to import. To import photos into Lightroom, follow these basic steps:

1. Connect the camera or memory card reader to your computer.
2. In addition to cameras and memory card readers, Lightroom imports photos from any folder on the hard drive, CDs or DVDs, and other storage devices. You can also import photos from another Lightroom catalog or from Photoshop Elements.

To have Lightroom start automatically when you plug in a camera or card reader, choose Lightroom > Preferences (Mac OS) or Edit > Preferences (Windows). In General, look under Import Options and select Show Import Dialog When A Memory Card Is Detected.

3. Select the location of the photos to import.
 - To bring photos into the catalog, do any of the following:
 - a. Click the Import button in the Library module.
 - b. Choose File > Import Photos And Video.
 - c. Drag a folder that contains photos or drag a group of photos into the Grid view of the Library module.
4. Use the Source panel on the left side of the import window to navigate to the folder that contains the photos you want to import.
5. Choose how to add the photos to your catalog.
 - a. In the center of the import window, choose whether to

import photos by referencing them, by copying or moving them to a specified directory, or by copying photos as Digital Negative (DNG) files. If you copy or move photos, specify where to put them using the Destination panel on the right side of the window.

6. Preview and select photos. - Using the previews in the center of the window, select the photos that you want to import.
7. (Optional) Back up your photos as they're importing.
8. If you're copying or moving photos into the catalog, specify whether to make a one-time backup of the original photos as they're imported.
9. Select the type of previews to display.
10. Standard-size previews provide higher quality photos in the Grid view. Selecting Minimal uses the embedded previews in photos and initially displays photos faster.
11. (Optional) Give your files a custom name.
12. When copying or moving photos into the catalog, Lightroom by default imports photos using their current filenames. You can customize the name by choosing an option from the File Renaming panel. For example, you can add a sequence number.
13. 9. Click Import.
14. Lightroom displays a progress bar in the upper-left corner of the window as it imports the photos. Then it renders thumbnails in the central area of the Library module.