



CREATIVE
RAW

CREATIVE DARKROOM

ASSESSMENT SCORECARD

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The most important step you can take right now to improve the quality of your processing is to gauge your current skills in the digital darkroom...which will tell you exactly what you should focus on next for the biggest improvement in your workflow. This Darkroom Scorecard has been designed to help you figure out exactly what your next step should be.

It will take you about 10 minutes to complete, and I promise the results will help you identify the biggest roadblocks in your workflow, and how to overcome them. Once you're done filling out the scores, take a moment to record the reasons why you gave yourself the score you did. This will lead you to some useful insights.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	SCORE NOW	REASON FOR THIS SCORE	NOTES
PORTFOLIO	I have a few images that I am somewhat proud of, but most of them are dull and unfulfilling.			I am very proud of a few images and I enjoy sharing them with others, but I consider them "lucky" photos. Most of my portfolio are not images I consider "excellent" or special, and my process is random and unstructured.			I have a solid portfolio of images that are strong in composition and are somewhat unique, but they lack a certain "something". I know they can be better, but I'm not sure how.			I have an excellent portfolio of images that are solid in composition, creatively fulfilling, and are of fine-art quality. I often receive praise for my work, and have won competitions and/or sell my art.					
WORKFLOW	I have no direction or foresight in the darkroom, and each processing session is excessively long and confusing. My workflow lacks structure and clarity.			I find success with some parts of my workflow...but it is largely random and lacks forward momentum and clear direction. I typically have to settle for result that is "good enough" because I don't know the next steps.			My workflow is generally smooth from start to finish and regularly gives me images I am happy with, but I know there is room for optimization. Some parts still have unpredictable results, and I have to make several attempts to get my image where I want it.			My workflow is highly optimized and gives me consistent results, and I know the exact steps I need to take to create my best images. I understand the importance of making multiple passes (like how painters will "build" up their colors) and will revisit my image several times to fine tune color, tone, and depth.					
CREATIVE PROCESSING VISION	When I bring an image into the darkroom, I have absolutely no creative vision and lack inspiration. I am completely lost on to move forward, aside from simple corrective techniques.			I know a few creative techniques based on what I've learned from tutorials, but the results are unpredictable and are usually random tactics that often don't work well together. I don't understand WHEN I should use certain techniques, and lack a structured workflow.			I can identify my creative vision and intent clearly by "listening" to the photograph, but the exact tactical steps I need to take in order to manifest that vision are not always clear. Images that are creatively fulfilling are not always intentional, and are instead randomly produced.			I have a crystal-clear vision before I process and know the exact steps to take in the darkroom that will get me that image. My "creative compass" is aligned, and I have developed a unique "style" to my work that is recognizable.					
IMAGE ORGANIZATION	I have no system for organizing my image files and I am not sure where most of them actually are and/or have several duplicates scattered around.			I can usually find most of my images, but not always. I don't utilize keywords, collections, or other metadata - or at least not adequately. My image backups are random and I'm not sure how secure they are.			Most of my images are organized into a sensible system, and I use keywords and collections to group them by common attributes. This makes it easy to find the images I'm looking for, but it can take a lot of time to organize new images.			I've created several keyword and collection hierarchies, and use smart collections to automate the organization process at import. I can find any image I want instantly, and it takes very little time to organize new images. I'm highly confident that my backup system is secure in case of theft/damage.					
CORRECTIVE PROCESSING SKILLS	I find it difficult to correct my images (i.e. spot removal, sharpening, clipped detail), and there are often distracting areas that I can not fully remove.			I know how to correct some parts of my image, but it takes much trial and error...and I typically have to settle for subpar results.			I can almost always remove any distractions and correct any mistakes in exposure, but there are a few situations that I still struggle with - and sometimes, the path to correction is not always clear.			I can always correct any mistake or remove any distraction, and the results are seamless. If a new situation presents itself, I can foresee the exact steps I need to take in order to enhance my image flawlessly.					

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IMAGE PRINT QUALITY	My images never have that "polished" look, and my prints will often be inconsistent in color and tone, and lack the vibrancy I see on the computer screen.			I can make basic quality improvements, such as sharpening or noise removal, but generally, print still look flat, unfinished, or muddy...and the colors are often different from what I see on the computer.			My prints often come out close to what I see on the computer and are "wall worthy", and the image quality is clean. However, they are still missing "something" that makes them jump from the paper.			My images are free of any impurities and always come back tack-sharp and with a great tonal range. I never have issues with color inconsistency, I know how exactly how to control color vibrancy, and can predict how different papers will affect my colors and tones.					
COLOR GRADING	I have little understanding of color balance and harmony, and don't know how to correct colors consistently - let alone change them creatively. They often lack the vibrancy I saw in the field and are underwhelming. I will often resort to using presets/actions and hope for the best.			I have some manual control over color HSL (hue, saturation, and lightness), and can make basic enhancements....but have difficulty grading colors that are different from what they are. Improvements to color harmony are hit or miss, and my images often feel disjointed.			I rarely use presets and actions for color grading, and have a firm understanding of color harmony and theory. I can usually determine which colors I want to change/enhance and to what degree, but sometimes my results are unexpected or otherwise fall short. They lack a certain harmony and/or intensity that I see in other photographs.			I can consistently create vibrant colors with great ease, with no reliance on presets or actions. My color grading will bring great harmony to my images, and I have direct control over the intensity. I use advanced techniques (like luminosity masks and blend modes) to refine my color grading and to enhance the quality. People often say that my images explode with color, but do not seem unnatural or abrasive.					
CREATING THE ATMOSPHERE	I rarely consider the "atmosphere" of an image and it has no direct influence over my processing choices.			I know the principles of atmospheric perspective and a general idea of how to enhance the atmosphere, but the correct techniques to get those results are often lost on me.			I use several techniques (i.e. Orton effect or light painting) to enhance the atmosphere, but the results are somewhat inconsistent. I can't always determine whether the image is an appropriate match for the technique....and I have difficulty tailoring the effects to compliment the content of my image. My results are generally hit or miss.			I know exactly what techniques will enhance the atmosphere, and can easily control the quality and scope. I can adjust local parts of the atmosphere that contribute to the overall mood of the frame, and my changes work cohesively to express my vision.					
LIGHT AND SHADOW	I only have a basic understanding of light and shadow, and can't visualize how changing the tones can enhance the image - let alone know how to do it.			I understand the concept of dodging and burning and how that can direct the eye through the image, but I don't know how to do it well.			I'm able to dodge and burn to enhance the composition and direct attention onto certain focal points while subduing others, both globally and locally. I notice a great improvement in my composition, but my results often lack a certain refinement and the quality of my brushwork can be improved.			I can expertly dodge and burn any image - both color and black and white. I know how to control light and shadow in local areas of my frame, and how they work together to direct the eye through the composition. I know how to tailor my brushwork with luminosity masks and groups, and will use blend modes and colors to prevent muddy detail and loss of contrast.					
LUMINOSITY MASKS	I don't really understand how luminosity masks work or when to use them, but know that they are a great benefit to landscape photography.			I've used a few luminosity masks to overcome specific challenges, but don't know how to use them creatively. My results are often muddy or otherwise have unexpected side effects, I don't understand where they came from or how to overcome them.			I often use luminosity masks to control my adjustments to specific tonal ranges, and understand exactly how a luminosity mask is created (what the "marching ants" mean). I will use luminosity masks to refine my dodging and burning and color grading, but it can sometimes be difficult to create a mask that exactly selects the area I want to adjust.			I can use luminosity masks to enhance other adjustments besides tones (such as color grading), and will use advanced tools to further refine the selection to the exact areas I want to adjust. I will also use luminosity masks to enhance my exposure blending and other techniques where I am combining different exposures (composites, focal blends, sky replacements), and my results are always seamless.					

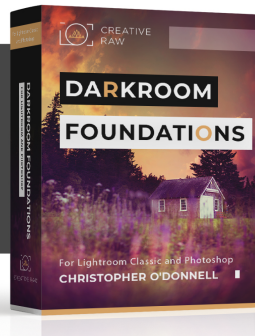
TOTAL SCORE	SUMMARY

Review your "reasons" for each section. If you could improve one thing, right now, about your processing workflow...what would it be? What would be the easiest step you could immediately take to get there?

When finished, feel free to email me your results and I can help you outline some milestones to work towards and the necessary steps to get you there.

ADDITIONAL

RESOURCES



Includes Video & Practice Files!

DARKROOM FOUNDATIONS: LIGHTROOM & PHOTOSHOP

In this free introductory course, you will understand the basics of Lightroom and Photoshop from a landscape photography perspective, setting you well on your way to mastering the darkroom and creating your very best photographs.

[Click Here to Learn More](#)



If you're in search of a more comprehensive learning experience, you may be interested in The Darkroom for Landscapes. This training program is much more than an online course - it's a transformational experience that dives deep into the most advanced techniques of Lightroom and Photoshop.

Enrollment opens up only a few times a year, so most likely it's closed at the moment...but you can sign up for the waitlist to be the first to know when the doors open again.

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