



PSSA Photography and AI *Statement* FAQ

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Q: May I use Content Aware Fill in Photoshop?

A: The Content-Aware Fill function in Photoshop is permissible as it utilises pixels from the user's own photograph to seamlessly complete the rest of the image. It operates similarly to manual cloning but generally achieves a higher level of precision and quality than most users might accomplish manually. However, this functionality is prohibited in categories designated as Non-Manipulation.

Q: May I hand paint my own background in Photoshop?

A: Authors are permitted to create their own background in Photoshop using either the standard round brush or custom brushes developed by themselves. If required, authors must be able to provide the necessary components, such as the Photoshop background file, for review by the Salon Committee. Additionally, authors should be prepared to demonstrate the process of creating the background to verify that it is their original work.

Q: May I use Photoshop Brushes?

A: Authors are permitted to use the standard round brush in Photoshop, adjusting its properties as needed to achieve their desired outcome. However, they are not allowed to purchase and use pre-made custom brush sets, such as a flower brush set, and present the work as their own. Instead, the author may photograph their own flowers and create a custom brush set from those images. It is essential for authors to retain their original photographs used in this process to demonstrate how the brushes were created, thereby verifying the authenticity of their work.

Q: May I use the Use Generative AI on the Remove panel in Lightroom?

A: The **Generative AI** feature in Lightroom operates differently depending on its usage. When used without a prompt, it generally draws from the surrounding pixels within authors' own photographs to fill gaps or make adjustments, which is permissible. However, when used with a prompt, it may incorporate elements generated from the AI's training data, potentially introducing "foreign" pixels that were not part of the original image. This usage is not allowed.

Q: May I use tools like Topaz DeNoise and Sharpen AI or other similar tools?

A: Topaz DeNoise AI and Sharpen AI are not classified as generative AI. Rather than creating new content, they refine and enhance the existing pixels within the original image.

- **DeNoise AI** minimises noise while preserving fine details, leveraging AI models trained on real photographic noise patterns.
- **Sharpen AI** improves image clarity by correcting motion blur, missed focus, and general softness, refining edges for a sharper result.

Both tools operate by analysing and adjusting the pixels already present in the image, ensuring they remain within the category of enhancement rather than generation.

Q: May I use Photoshop Plugins?

A: Yes, **Photoshop Plugins** can be viewed as recipes for modifying an image—predefined methods that automate complex editing tasks. If authors understand the underlying techniques, they could theoretically achieve similar results manually using adjustments, filters, and layer effects. However, plugins enhance efficiency by saving time and ensuring precision, which may be challenging to replicate manually, particularly for intricate enhancements or specialised effects. Authors must ensure that the plugin does not introduce elements that are not their own work, such as textures or borders.

Q: May I use Photoshop Actions?

A: **Photoshop Actions** are predefined sequences of editing steps designed to automate repetitive tasks, improving efficiency and precision. Their use should align with both the context and intent of the work.

If the action is created by authors, it is regarded as their own work, reflecting their unique creative choices and processes. However, using pre-made actions crafted by others raises a more complex issue. While applying such actions to an image can still be attributed to the author, originality standards may be compromised if the action incorporates stylistic elements created by another party, such as brushes or textures.

To maintain compliance, authors must ensure that the action does not introduce external elements or effects that could compromise the originality of their work. Creating and customising actions independently remains the most reliable way to retain full ownership of the final image

Q: Can I use things like light flares in Photoshop?

A: Using flares or similar **pre-made elements** in Photoshop is considered the addition of external components that are not inherently part of the original photograph. If authors create the flare effect from scratch—such as manually designing a light effect or using a self-made brush—it qualifies as their own work. However, if the flare is sourced from a pre-made overlay, stock image, or plugin, it introduces foreign pixels that are not allowed.

To ensure compliance, authors should exclusively use flare effects that are either manually crafted or derived from elements they have photographed themselves. Retaining the original photographs used in the creation process is crucial for demonstrating authenticity and verifying that the elements are their own work.

Q: Why may I sharpen a nature photo, but I may not blur the background?

A: The distinction lies in preserving the authenticity of the original scene in nature photography:

- **Sharpening:** Enhancing an image's details involves refining elements already present in the photograph. This practice is generally acceptable, as it does not alter the reality of the scene but instead improves clarity. Care must be taken not to over-sharpen, as this can introduce artefacts such as white lines that were not part of the original image.
- **Blurring the Background:** Applying a blurred background during post-processing

constitutes a significant alteration to the original image. While it mimics effects achievable in-camera, such as a shallow depth of field, digitally creating this effect is considered manipulation and is prohibited in non-manipulation categories.

These guidelines ensure that the photograph remains a truthful representation of the scene as originally captured. To achieve a blurred background authentically, using techniques like a wide aperture in-camera is the preferred method for maintaining compliance with these standards.

Q: May I darken the background in a nature photo?

A: Excessively darkening the background in a nature photograph is considered manipulation because it alters the natural lighting and environmental context of the scene. While adjustments to exposure or contrast are generally acceptable for refinement, artificially darkening the background beyond its original state can affect the mood, visibility of details, and even the perceived habitat of the subject.

In non-manipulation nature photography, the goal is to present the scene as it was observed in the wild. Significant alterations that impact the authenticity of the environment, such as unnatural darkening, may create an unrealistic separation between the subject and its surroundings, making the final image less faithful to reality.

To maintain compliance, background adjustments should be limited to subtle tonal refinements rather than drastic changes that could misrepresent the original scene.

Q: May I use a vignette in a Non-manipulation category?

A: In non-manipulation categories, with the **exclusion of Nature**, PSSA allows a very subtle vignette. The objective is to maintain the authenticity of the scene as it was naturally captured.

