



August 2026 ACR & LRC Updates

In this lesson, I'll show you the recent updates to Adobe Camera Raw and Lightroom Classic, focusing on the new features and improvements from August 2026.

Key Concepts

1. Disable Generative AI Tools (00:00): This preference lets you hide generative AI features in Adobe Camera Raw, which is useful for contest submissions or if you're working for news agencies.
2. Improved VectorScope (04:37): The VectorScope has been refined and now displays RGB values when the histogram is hidden, which helps with precise color matching.
3. Color Grading Wheel Orientation (08:00): You can now choose to display the red component of the color wheel at the three o'clock position, matching the familiar layout of the Color Grading panel.
4. Render to DNG (10:19): This feature bakes in all adjustments and creates a new DNG file that behaves like a TIFF. It's useful for specific editing scenarios.
5. Color Samplers (12:04): Adobe Camera Raw now includes color samplers, similar to Photoshop, so you can read RGB values in specific areas of the image. Their behavior is a bit different though.
6. Automated Blemish Removal (23:42): There's a new semi-automated tool in Adobe Camera Raw that quickly identifies and removes skin blemishes, which can save a lot of time.
7. Lightroom Classic - Blemish Removal Workflow (30:42): You can use the Camera Raw blemish removal feature from Lightroom Classic by saving metadata to the files and opening them in Camera Raw.
8. AI Masking Enhancements (42:29): Lightroom Classic's AI-based masks now include Feather and Edge controls for more refined mask adjustments.
9. Render to DNG in Lightroom Classic (48:19): This feature is now available in Lightroom Classic, just like in Camera Raw, for creating a flattened DNG file.
10. Catalog Data Recovery (52:34): Lightroom Classic can now automatically detect and try to recover corrupted catalog data files.
11. Crop Mask Opacity (54:19): You can control the opacity of the cropped-out areas right inside the crop tool.

Adobe Camera Raw Updates

This section covers the new features available in Adobe Camera Raw, version 18.5.

Disabling Generative AI Tools

There's a new preference in Adobe Camera Raw that lets you disable all generative AI tools. This comes in handy if you're submitting images to contests that restrict AI, or if you just want a cleaner interface without those features.

To disable generative AI tools:

1. Navigate to the gear icon in the upper right corner of Adobe Camera Raw.
2. In the preferences window, under "Generative AI," uncheck the "Enable Generative AI features" box.

If you disable these features, you won't be able to edit images that already have generative AI applied unless you re-enable the preference. Tools like the Remove tool or the Crop tool's generative expand will fall back to non-generative methods such as Content Aware Fill.

Improved VectorScope and Color Wheel

The VectorScope has been refined further. You can now see the RGB readouts directly on the VectorScope even when the histogram is hidden.

To show the VectorScope:

1. Right-click (or Control-click on a Mac) on the histogram area.
2. Select "Show VectorScope."



Additionally, you can reposition the red component of the color wheel in the Color Grading panel to the three o'clock position so it matches the layout you're used to.

To change the color wheel orientation:

1. Right-click on the color wheel in the Color Grading section.
2. Select "Show Red at three o'clock."

This change is purely cosmetic and lines the interface up with what you'd expect from other color grading tools.

Render to DNG

The "Render to DNG" feature creates a flattened TIFF file inside a DNG wrapper. It makes all your current edits permanent and creates a new file while leaving the original untouched.

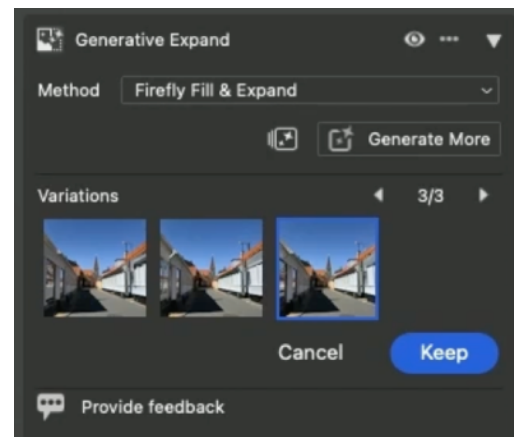
To use Render to DNG:

1. Make sure your filmstrip (thumbnails) is visible at the bottom of the screen.
2. Right-click on the image you want to process.

3. Select "Render to DNG."

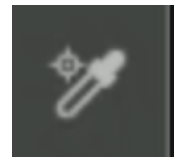
This is especially useful when you want to expand a crop using generative fill and make sure the AI doesn't look at content outside the original boundaries. For example, if you crop in on a building, rendering to DNG first lets the generative expand tool treat the new space as a clean extension without being influenced by the original edges.

Important Note: After you render to DNG, the image is no longer a raw file, so you lose the benefits of raw editing—like recovering highlight or shadow detail as effectively. Do all your raw adjustments before you render to DNG.



Color Samplers

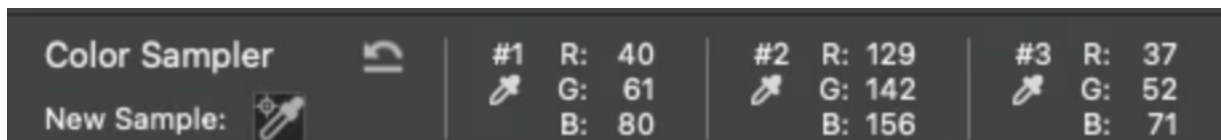
Adobe Camera Raw now includes a Color Sampler tool, similar to the one in Photoshop. You can place up to nine samplers on your image to read RGB values in specific areas.



To use the Color Sampler tool:

1. Locate the new icon in the lower right corner of the ACR interface (it looks like a turkey baster with a crosshair).
2. Click on the tool to activate it.
3. Click on different areas of your image to place samplers. The RGB readouts will appear in the upper left panel.

To remove individual samplers, hold down the Option key (Alt on Windows) and click on the sampler you want to delete. The reset symbol removes all of them.



I find these samplers less useful in ACR than in Photoshop. In Photoshop, color samplers give you two sets of RGB values—before and after adjustments—which makes them great for precise color matching. In ACR they only show the current RGB values, and I found them inaccurate and confusing when trying to match edits. Sometimes they even produced a "zero" output value.

Automated Blemish Removal

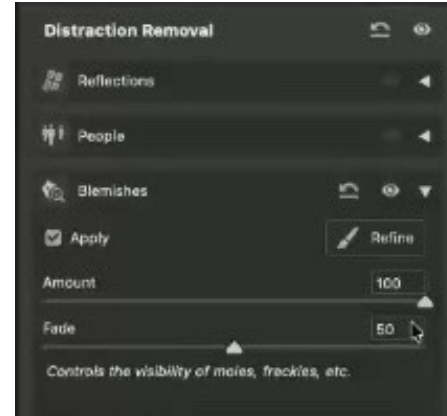
A major new feature is the automated blemish removal tool. It identifies and removes skin blemishes and can save you a lot of time.

To use the Blemish Removal tool:

1. Make sure your image is in RGB mode (CMYK will disable the Camera Raw filter).

2. Select the "Remove" tool from the toolbar.
3. Choose the "Blemishes" option.
4. Click "Apply."

You can adjust the "Amount" slider to control how aggressively the tool removes blemishes. It prioritizes larger issues first and then works on smaller ones as you increase the value. Use the "Fade" slider if you want to keep natural features like birthmarks or freckles, or just tone them down a bit. The "Refine" option lets you manually restore areas that got over-edited or clean up spots that were missed.



The tool works really well on faces, but it may not perform as well on bodies or in images where faces aren't the main focus. It also struggles with out-of-focus areas or shots that aren't primarily focused on the face.

Lightroom Classic Updates

This section covers the new features and changes in Lightroom Classic, version 15.5.

Blemish Removal Workflow from Lightroom Classic

The blemish removal feature isn't built directly into Lightroom Classic's Develop module, but you can still use it by going through Photoshop and Camera Raw.

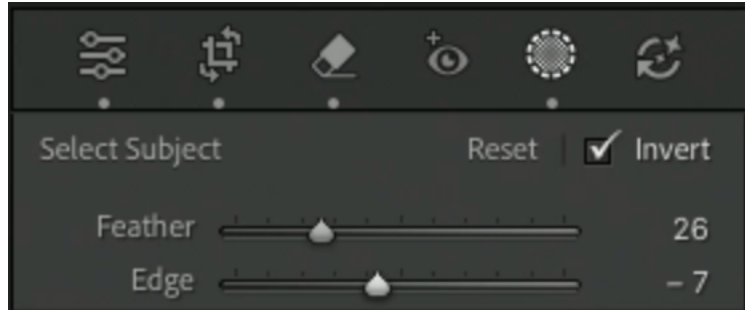
To perform blemish removal starting from Lightroom Classic:

1. Make any desired basic adjustments in the Develop module (shadows, clarity, white balance, etc.).
2. Go to the "Metadata" menu and select "Save Metadata to File." This creates an XMP sidecar file with your Lightroom edits.
3. Open the image in Photoshop. If it's a raw file, it will open in Adobe Camera Raw.
4. In Camera Raw, use the "Remove" tool's "Blemishes" option to edit the image.
5. Click "Done" in Camera Raw. This updates the XMP file.
6. Back in Lightroom Classic, you may see an upward-pointing arrow indicating a metadata conflict, or you can manually choose "Metadata" > "Read Metadata from File" to bring in the changes.

Caution: The blemish removal edits you make in Camera Raw do not show up as a distinct step in Lightroom Classic's history or under the retouching tools. You can't undo them individually inside Lightroom's retouching interface. You can still revert to a previous state using the history panel, though.

AI Masking Enhancements: Feather and Edge Controls

New "Feather" and "Edge" controls have been added to AI-based masks in Lightroom Classic. They match the controls that were previously added to Adobe Camera Raw and give you more precise control over mask boundaries.



To use Feather and Edge controls:

1. Create an AI-based mask (Select Subject, Sky, Background, etc.).
2. With the mask selected, you'll see the "Feather" and "Edge" sliders.
3. Adjust the "Feather" slider to soften the transition at the mask edge.
4. Adjust the "Edge" slider to expand or contract the mask boundary.

These controls are especially useful for creating refined edge masks or for fine-tuning selections around complex areas like railings or fine details. You can apply the settings separately to different parts of a mask if needed. Right now they're available for AI masks such as Select Subject, Sky, Background, People, Landscape, and Select Object.

Render to DNG in Lightroom Classic

You can now "Render to DNG" directly from Lightroom Classic, the same way you can in Adobe Camera Raw. This creates a flattened DNG file with all your current edits baked in.

To Render to DNG in Lightroom Classic:

1. Right-click on the image in the Library module.
2. Select "Edit In" > "Render to DNG."

While the feature is available, its usefulness in Lightroom Classic is limited right now because it doesn't include the generative expand functionality that ACR has. It can still be handy for certain retouching scenarios where you need to avoid edge artifacts from previously cropped-out areas.

Catalog Data Recovery

Lightroom Classic can now automatically detect issues with the "LR catalog data" file—the one that stores information for AI features and masks—and attempt to recover or recreate any missing data. This runs as a background process to improve overall stability.

Crop Mask Opacity Control

When you're using the crop tool in Lightroom Classic, you can now control the opacity of the masked-out areas (the parts of the image you're cropping away).

To adjust crop mask opacity:

1. Activate the Crop tool.
2. Right-click within the cropped area.
3. Use the "Crop Mask" options to turn the mask off, set it to 100% opacity (completely hidden), or choose an intermediate level.

Additionally, when you use the Transform feature to straighten images, Lightroom Classic now displays a checkerboard pattern for areas that are no longer rectangular, instead of a plain white background.

