Assisted Culling in Lightroom Classic

In this guide, I'm going to walk you through the assisted culling feature that Adobe introduced in Lightroom Classic starting in October 2025. This feature helps you narrow down your images to only the sharp ones, making it easier to reject subpar images. Initially designed for portrait images, it can detect subject and eye focus, but I anticipate future expansions to include other subjects like landscapes. Let's dive in and see how it works.

Accessing Assisted Culling
There are two main places to find the assisted culling feature.

●**Library Module:** In the Library module, you'll find the Assisted Culling and Culling Scores sections on the right side of your screen.

●**Import Screen:** When you click the Import button, you'll see a redesigned screen where the import options are in a pop-up menu.

Using Assisted Culling During Import
When importing, select "Assisted Culling" at the top center of your screen to analyze your images. It analyzes about 250 shots a minute. The left side of the screen shows assisted culling options, and the right side displays culling scores for each image. The culling score ranges from 0 to 100, indicating sharpness. For portraits, you'll see separate scores for subject and eye focus.

You can filter images based on these scores. For example, set the subject and eye focus ratings above 80%. The number of images that meet your criteria will be displayed as Selects at the bottom of the Assisted Culling panel.

File Handling Options
Under File Handling on the right side of the import screen, you'll find the "Do Not Import Rejected Images" option. Turning this on will exclude images that don't meet your specified focus criteria. I don't typically use focus-based culling during import because I sometimes intentionally have out-of-focus elements.
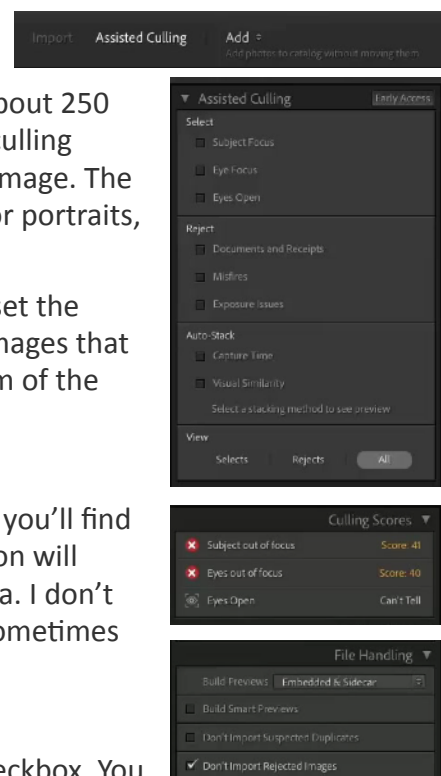
Additional Import Settings
I do, however, sometimes enable the "exposure issues" checkbox. You can also check for "Misfires," but I find this to be less reliable. The term "misfire" here doesn't refer to flash failures.

Assisted Culling in the Library Module
In the Library module, expand the Assisted Culling panel on the right to start analyzing pictures. You won't see reject/accept badges until you specify culling criteria. For instance, turning on "misfires" will prompt Lightroom to identify and flag potential misfires.

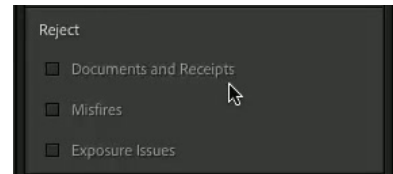**Ensuring Assisted Culling is Active**
If the reject/accept badges don't appear, choose Lightroom Classic>Catalog Settings on

Mac or Edit>Catalog Settings on a PC. Go to the Metadata tab and ensure "Analyze photos of selected source when assisted culling panel is open" is checked. There is a second checkbox that would cause Lightroom to analyze all the photos in your entire catalog file. However, I prefer to keep it focused on the current selection to avoid slowing down my computer. You can toggle this setting via the identity plate, but I keep it paused for performance reasons.
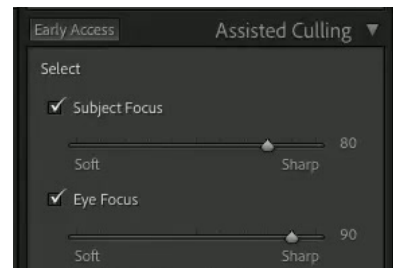
Culling Based on Document Type
I can also cull images based on whether they are documents or receipts. I often photograph model releases and IDs, so this guide helps me quickly find those. By turning on "documents and receipts," I can easily identify and view these as rejects.
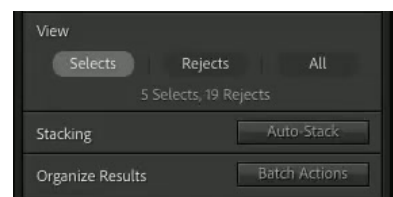
Evaluating Image Sharpness
To evaluate sharpness, look at the Culling Scores section for each image. It provides scores for subject and eye focus, as well as whether the eyes are open or closed. Enable "subject focus" and "eye focus" to filter based on sharpness. Adjust the sliders to set your desired quality standards, noting that the adjustments are in 10% increments.

Managing Selects and Rejects
After setting the thresholds, view your selects by clicking on that option near the bottom of the panel to see the images that pass your criteria. I then use Batch Actions to apply color labels. For example, I label the sharpest images green. I also label questionable images in red, indicating they need further focus inspection. This color-coding helps me quickly assess image quality.
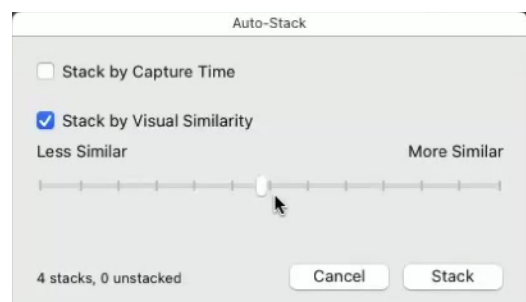
Manual Adjustments
You can manually override the automated Select & Reject determinations. Right-click the reject icon to mark an image as a select, or vice versa.

Limitations of Assisted Culling
Assisted culling isn't perfect. It struggles with group photos, where it's difficult to determine which faces are important. It's also less effective with shallow depth of field, where intentionally soft areas might lower the overall score.

Stacking Images by Visual Similarity
You can stack images based on visual similarity. This is an alternative to stacking by capture time, which is a feature that has been in Lightroom Classic for a long time. The visual similarity slider controls how closely images need to resemble each other to be stacked. Adjust it to group similar shots while separating distinct variations.

Disabling Assisted Culling
If you dislike assisted culling, you can disable it. First, turn off both checkboxes in the Catalog Settings for Assisted Culling. Then, right-click in the right sidebar of the Library module and turn off Assisted Culling and Culling Scores.

Keyboard Shortcut Issue
Some users have reported that the culling panel opens unexpectedly when using the Command L (or Control L on Windows) keyboard shortcut. This shortcut toggles the filter bar. To prevent this, simply collapse the Assisted Culling panel before using the shortcut.