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HOW-TO

32 tips and tricks for Google Photos

Got Google Photos? This guide will help you get around the service like a pro.

By JR Raphael | Follow

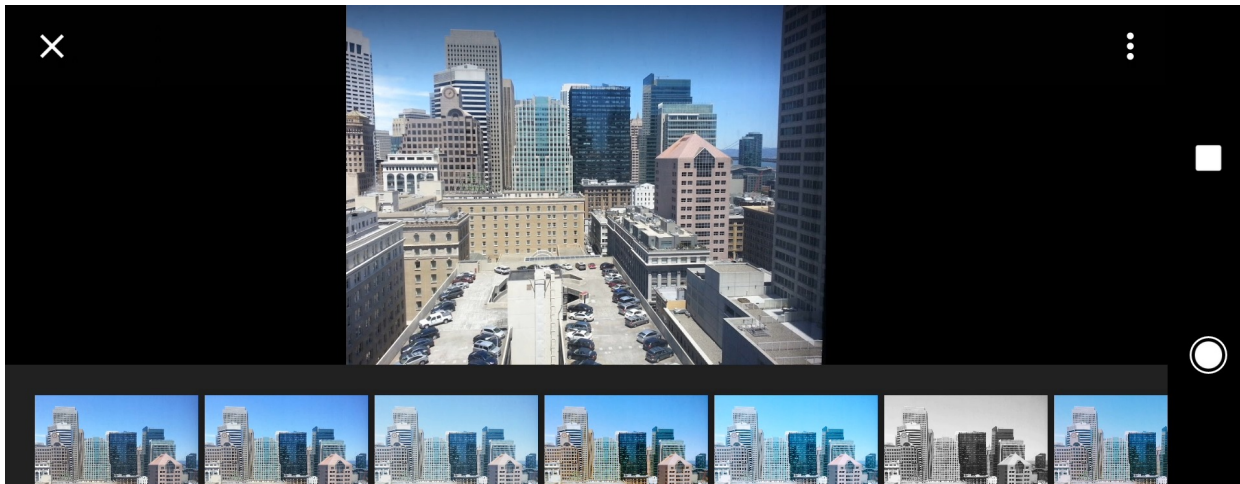
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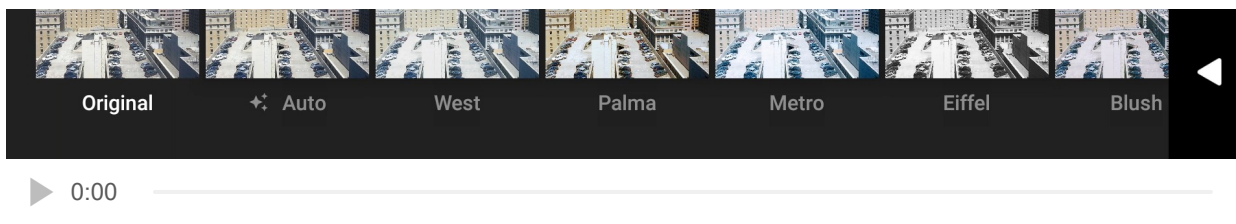


Google Photos is a great way to store your personal photos and make them available across different devices -- and with the holiday season upon us, the potential for generating lots of photos is at an especially high level. But the service is far more than just a virtual cloud locker.

Photos has oodles of options, features and possibilities for viewing, manipulating and managing your digital memories. And many of them aren't immediately obvious. Take a few minutes to scan through these tips and make sure you're making the most of your Google Photos experience.

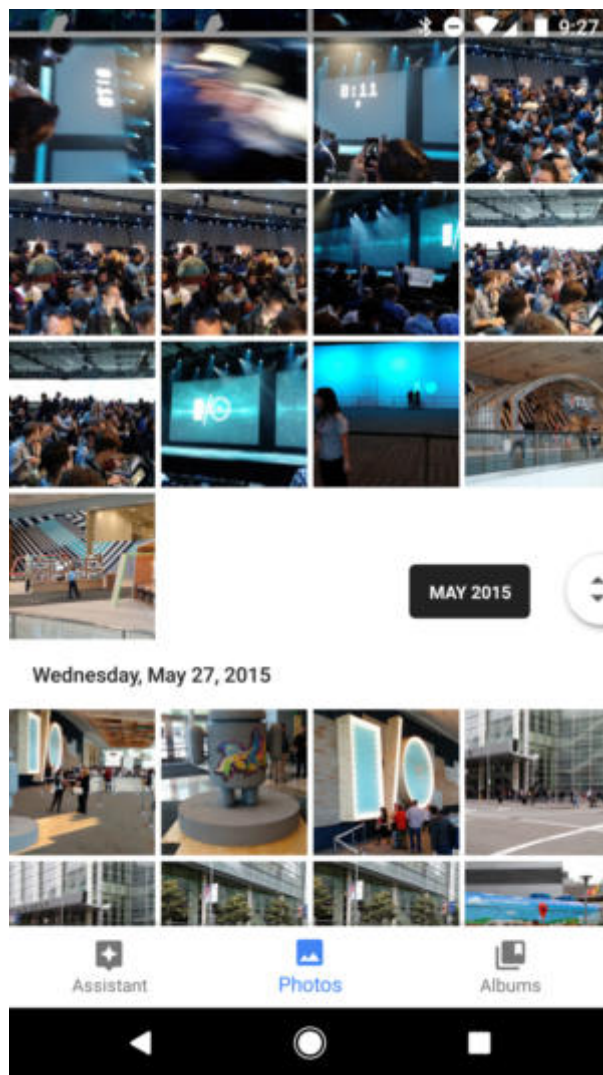
(Note: Unless otherwise specified, all tips should work on any device/platform where Photos is available.)





Getting around

1. Move through Photos faster with keyboard shortcuts: From the [desktop website](#), press Shift-? to get a list of available commands.
2. Find the Photos view that works best for you: In the mobile app, try pinching in or out on the main gallery to make the thumbnails smaller or larger. You can choose from four different views.
3. Aside from changing your view, pinching can help you move throughout the Photos mobile app. Once you've found your way to the closest possible view, pinching "out" (by moving your fingers apart) on any individual image will open that image in full. And pinching "in" (moving your fingers together) on any image (while viewing it in full) will always take you back to your main image list.
4. Not a fan of pinching? The Photos mobile app also has a hidden swipe-based shortcut: While viewing any image in full, simply swipe up or down on the screen to jump back to your main image list. Who needs that blasted Back button, anyway?



When you're scrolling through Photos on your phone and want to jump to a specific date, use the quick-scroll icon on the right side of the screen.

5. When you're scrolling through Photos on your phone and want to jump to a specific date, touch the quick-scroll icon on the right side of the screen. Then just move your finger up or down to fly back in time faster than a flux capacitor would allow.
6. The next time you need to select a bunch of consecutive photos from your phone, don't do the one-tap-at-a-time dance. Instead, touch your finger to the first photo until it becomes highlighted, and then -- without lifting -- drag your finger up or down to quickly select a whole set of images.
7. Flawless as I know you are, you may one day discover you deleted a photo by accident. Take note now: Photos has a "Trash" folder that's accessible via the app's main menu. Every axed image stays there for 60 days and can be recovered with a couple quick taps or clicks.

Searching and discovering

8. One of Photos' greatest strengths is its image-sorting intelligence. You can use the search bar at the top of the app to find photos based on all sorts of terms -- month, season, location or even objects or general themes.

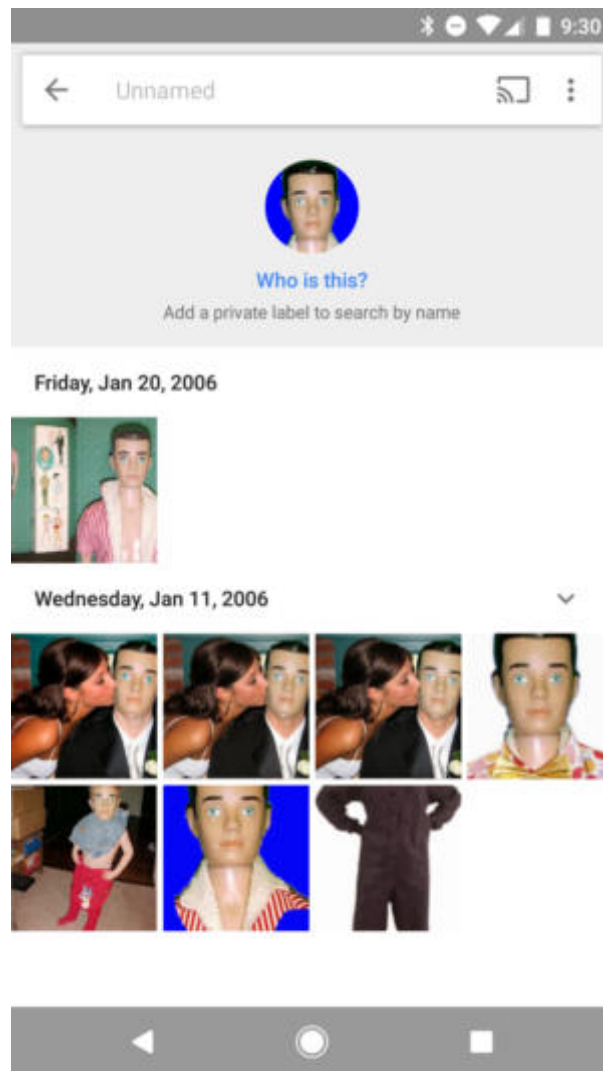
Some interesting search term ideas to get you started:

- flowers
- baby
- wedding
- concert
- dancing
- winter
- Paris
- Halloween
- birthday
- beach
- water
- food
- baking
- dogs
- selfies
- blue (or any other color -- try it!)

Note that if you've never used Photos before, it may take a little while for newly added images to start appearing in searches.

9. Prefer browsing over freeform searching? You can go to the Albums tab (accessed on the left side of the desktop website or the bottom of the mobile app) and then look at the carousel at the top to scroll through common terms specific to your collection.

10. Google Photos can also help you find images based on who appears in them -- even if it doesn't know every person's name. Go to the Albums tab and select "People" to see a list of faces from your collection. If you want to be able to search for someone by name, just tap her face, select "Who is this?" and put in whatever name or nickname you prefer. That name will then appear whenever you start typing the first few letters into the app's search bar.



If you see someone's face showing up in two different places within the "People" section, it's not difficult to correct the error.

11. In theory, Photos recognizes how a person ages over time and groups all the photos in which he appears together -- but in reality, it doesn't always get it right. If you see someone's face showing up in two different places within the "People" section, first use the naming process described above to make sure the person is properly labeled. Then tap the second place where the person appears, select "Who is this?" and select his name from the list to correct the error.

12. You can also manually remove images from a person's grouping by clicking or tapping the menu icon in the upper-right corner of the screen and then selecting the option labeled "Remove results." Select the out-of-place photos, then select the blue "Remove" button that appears in the upper-right corner.

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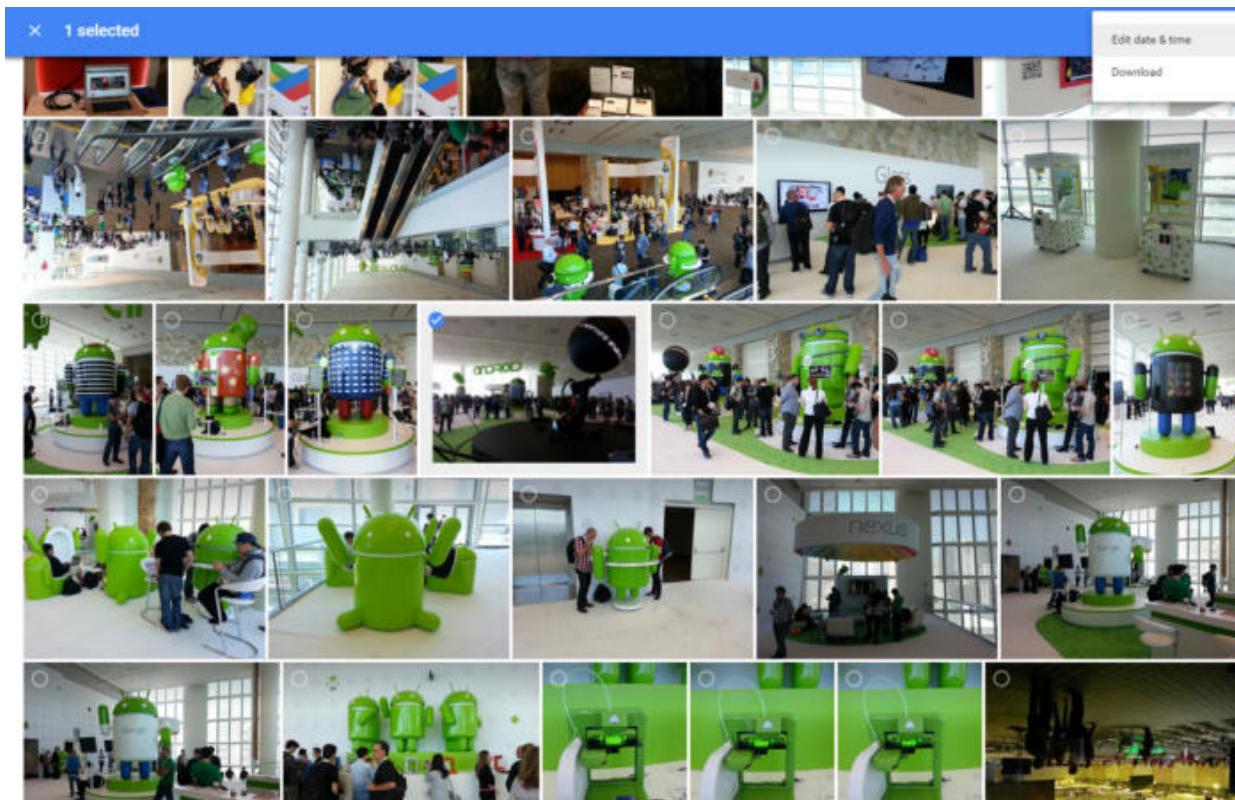
13. If you're hunting for something specific in your collection, try using multiple search terms together -- "dog and park," for instance, or "Mom and Dad." You could even find photos of your daughter in pink by searching for her name (provided you've labeled her, as described in tip 10) and the word "pink."

14. Feeling lazy? You can search your Google Photos by emoji (yes, really!). Try 🕶️ for photos involving glasses, for instance, or ❤️ for photos involving hearts.

15. You can find the photos you uploaded most recently by going to the Photos website and clicking the search bar -- then clicking the link labeled "Show More" followed by "Recently Added."

Organizing and optimizing

16. If you see some images out of order in your collection, odds are they were captured with the wrong date. (Perhaps, ahem, someone forgot to set the clock correctly on his or her camera?) Not to worry, though: There's a quick fix. From the desktop site, select the photos in question (by clicking the checkmark in the upper-left corner of their thumbnail), then click the menu icon in the upper-right corner and select "Edit date & time."



You can change the date of a photo on the desktop site by selecting the photo and then clicking on the menu in the upper right corner.

17. Keeping all your smartphone photos backed up to the cloud is smart, but watch out: All that data transferring can take a serious toll on your mobile device's stamina. Do your battery a favor and set Photos to back up only when your phone is charging. Just head into the app's settings, tap "Back up & sync" and then look for the option labeled "While charging only."

18. Want Photos to back up images beyond just those taken with your phone's camera -- pictures you've downloaded, perhaps, or screenshots you've captured? Go back into the app's settings, select "Back up & sync" and then "Back up device folders." Flip the switch on any folder there to have its contents automatically and continually synced with your Photos library.

19. Since all your smartphone photos are backed up to the cloud, you can safely delete your phone's local copies whenever you need to free up some space. Just look for the option called "Free up device storage" in the Photos app's settings to get started. (The app may also automatically prompt you to do this if your phone's storage gets low.)

20. Let's face it: Uploading a ton of images from your computer to the cloud can be a real chore. Take the pain out of the process by snagging [Google's free desktop uploader tool](#), available for both macOS and Windows. The program makes it possible to batch-transfer images; it also gives you the option to automatically sync new images whenever a camera or card gets plugged into your system.

21. Google has a handy tool for "scanning" your old printed photos directly into your collection via your phone's camera. It's called [PhotoScan](#), and it works with most any Android or iOS device.

22. Google Photos may generally be a cloud-centric service, but if you feel more comfortable keeping a local copy of your entire image collection, there is a way. First, you'll need to download and install the free [Google Drive app](#) for macOS or Windows. Make sure it's set up to sync everything in your Drive to a folder on your computer.

Next, head to [the Drive website](#), click the gear icon in the upper-right corner, select "Settings" and then check the box next to "Create a Google Photos folder." That'll put a folder with all your photos into your Drive storage. And since you already have Drive set to sync with your computer, that folder will always remain backed up and synced -- both ways -- with your corresponding local folder.

23. For a one-time batch download of your entire collection -- without the ongoing two-way sync -- visit [Google's Takeout tool](#).

Sharing and showing

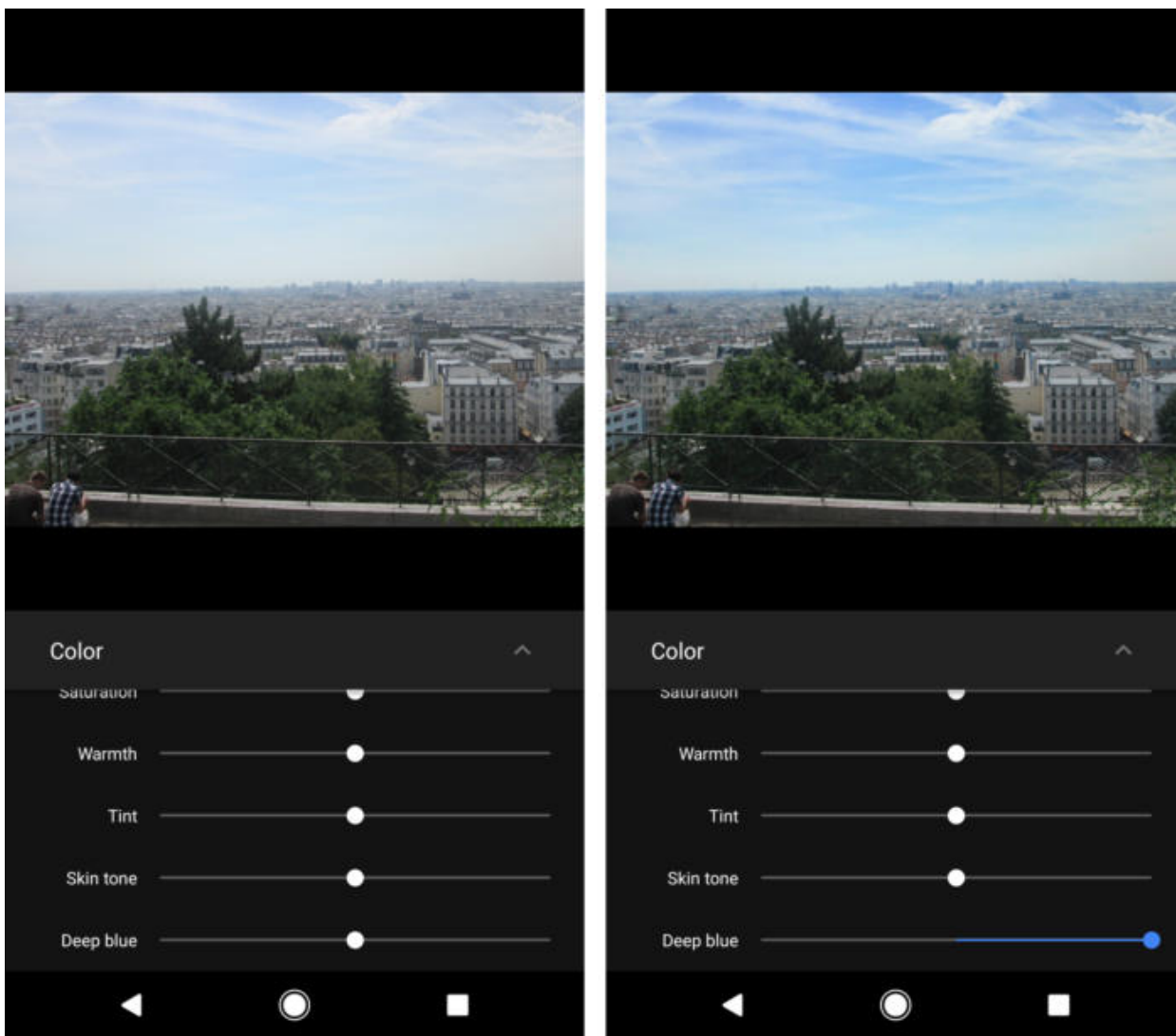
24. Photos makes it easy to share your images with anyone -- whether they use the service themselves or not. The simplest way is to select any image or images, tap the share icon at the top of the screen and then select "Create link" from the mobile app or "Get link" from the website. Anyone you send the link to will be able to view the photos and optionally add them into their own Photos collection (if they do use the service).

You'll also see an option to let other people add their own photos into the album -- if, say, you're sharing photos from a family event and want everyone to be able to contribute.

25. Need to manage or delete a shared album? Open the app's main menu and select "Shared." Select whichever album you want, then tap the menu icon in the upper-right corner to find sharing options along with the option to delete the album entirely.
26. If you want to be sure your location is never included with any images you share, go to Photos' main settings and look for the item labeled "Remove geo location" from the mobile app or "Remove geo location in items shared by link" from the website.
27. Got a TV with Chromecasting capability? Show off your photos on the big screen by tapping the cast icon in the upper-right corner of the mobile app (it should appear anytime a cast-ready TV is available). Once you're connected, just tap any image to have it beamed to your television. If you want to have multiple images display in a slideshow, open an image (either from your full collection or from an album) and then tap the menu icon in the upper-right corner of the screen and select "Slideshow."

Editing and remixing

28. Photos has some powerful tools for tweaking and editing images. While viewing any image, select the pencil icon on the screen to see a range of one-touch refinishing tools as well as more detailed controls for fine-tuning and cropping. (For fine-tuning, after you select the middle icon -- the one that looks like a series of sliders -- be sure to click or tap the down-facing arrows next to "Light" and "Color" in order to see all the available options.)
29. Who says a gray day has to be dreary? While editing an image with sky in the background, go to the fine-tuning tab and then tap or click the down-facing arrow next to "Color." The slider labeled "Deep blue" will let you make a pale sky appear more blue without affecting the rest of the photo.



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30. When you tap the option to save an image after editing, take note that your newly modified version will replace the original. If you want to save it as a copy instead, avoid the large "Save" command and instead tap the menu icon in the top-right of the screen to find the "Save copy" option.

31. In addition to regular edits, Photos lets you make super-simple movies, animations and collages from any set of images and/or videos. Just select the items you want, select the "+" option at the top of the screen and then choose what kind of creation you want to try.

32. Don't forget to peek at Photos' Assistant tab from time to time. The service leaves all sorts of interesting treats for you there -- everything from automatically generated animations, collages and highlight videos to "this day in history"-style flashbacks from

your collection. It'll also create instant albums from related images and offer to fix photos that are flipped the wrong way.

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