

# Jump Start RAW Processing in ACDSee Pro

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## What is a RAW file?

A RAW file can be thought of as a digital negative. It is called RAW because it contains all the sensor data that your camera has captured, without it being changed in any way. A RAW file is similar to a film negative. This means that before it can be viewed, it must be processed to develop it into an image file. Most digital cameras used by professionals and advanced amateurs are capable of creating RAW files.

## Why do photographers like RAW files?

RAW files have the following benefits:

- They have a larger dynamic range (12 bit vs. 8 bit), which provides a greater chance of recovering details from the dark areas of an image.
- They contain all the camera sensor data, as well as the camera settings that you chose, giving you the ability to make better exposure/tonal adjustment decisions.
- It is possible to correct white balance, even if the camera settings were not correct when the photograph was taken.
- It is possible to optimize sharpening and noise reduction.

## How is RAW processing different from normal image editing?

Unlike normal editing, RAW processing occurs in separate stages. In ACDSee Pro, RAW files are preprocessed to make them visible in the Browser or Viewer. (You can turn off preprocessing, if you want to apply your own processing from the original RAW file.) Select the file that you want to work with, and then use the RAW Processing Edit Panel to select custom processing settings (exposure, color, sharpness, and noise). Click Save As to process the RAW file using the selected settings and save the image in JPEG or TIFF format.

You can open the JPEG or TIFF image in Edit Mode and correct shadows and highlights, color casts, and so on. It is important to remember that at this stage you are applying edits to an image that has already been processed using default preprocessing settings or any custom settings that you selected.

In ACDSee Pro you do not edit a RAW file. The original RAW file deliberately remains untouched to preserve image data, and your processing settings are saved to the ACDSee Pro database. Each time you open the RAW file, the saved settings are re-applied. The advantage of this approach is that you can apply many different settings to the same RAW file, to produce different effects, or to refine your processing settings.

## How does ACDSee Pro RAW compare with Adobe Camera Raw?

When you compare the same image in two different RAW converters (software applications), you are essentially comparing apples and oranges. This is because no two RAW converters use the same parameters to develop an image. Before you can compare images, you need to ensure that you are comparing an apple to another apple, and to do so, you need to adjust the settings so that they match across the applications.

The instructions below show you how to adjust these settings in ACDSee Pro and Adobe Camera Raw. However, you can make similar adjustments in any RAW converter.

## To adjust ACDSsee Pro and Adobe Camera Raw:

### 1. Turn off all default preprocessing settings in both converters.

The first step is to turn off any preprocessing settings used to make the image visible, so that you return the photo to its RAW state. After this, you fine-tune the exposure settings to ensure they are the same in both applications.

In ACDSsee Pro, select the RAW file, then click Tools | RAW Processing to open the RAW Processing Edit Panel. On the Exposure tab, clear the Preprocess Exposure check box, then click Reset to remove the pre-exposure adjustments ACDSsee Pro uses to make the image more visible. You may need to adjust the Midtones (gamma) to about 2.2. This adjustment will bring the image closer to the unprocessed brightness level used by Adobe Camera Raw.

In Adobe Camera Raw, press Ctrl+U, which is the shortcut key to turn off Use auto adjustments. On the Adjust tab, drag the sliders for Exposure, Shadows, Brightness and Contrast to zero. Select the Curve tab, and from the Tone Curve drop-down list, select Linear.

### 2. Set the same white balance options in both applications.

The second step is to ensure that the white balance settings are the same in both applications. If you need to adjust the white balance, we recommend that you use the Custom white balance option. You can then use the temperature and tint sliders to ensure that both applications deliver exactly the same result. Both applications have As Shot as the default white balance option.

In ACDSsee Pro, select the Color tab of the RAW Processing Edit Panel. Notice that the cursor changes to an eyedropper when you hover over the image. Click a white or gray object in the image, and then set the white balance using the Temperature and Tint sliders.

In Adobe Camera Raw, select the Adjust tab. Use the eye dropper to select the same white or gray area of the image that you selected in ACDSsee Pro, and then use the Temperature and Tint sliders to set the white balance to the same values.

**NOTE:** ACDSsee Pro white balance presets (Sunny, Cloudy, Shade, Tungsten, Fluorescent, and Flash) and their respective temperature and tint values do not currently match the same settings in Adobe Camera Raw. Both applications have the same temperature and tint values, but they do need further adjustment in ACDSsee to achieve precisely the same result.

### 3. Configure color management settings to match in both applications.

In the third step, you need to ensure that color management settings match by using the same input color space and working color space. Typically, Adobe RGB 1998 is used as the working color space.

In ACDSsee Pro, on the RAW Processing Edit Panel, select the Color tab, then select Use a working color space. From the drop-down list, select the color space profile you wish to use, for example, AdobeRGB1998.icc.

In Adobe Camera Raw, ensure that the Show Workflow Options is checked, then from the Space drop-down list, select Adobe RGB (1998).

The images should now look very similar. You may observe a slight color difference which is attributable to the different image rendering engines used to develop the RAW images.

# Optimizing RAW workflow in ACDSee Pro

## Generate RAW image previews (RIPs)

Generating RIPs speeds up viewing. In the Browser, select the RAW files, then click Database | Generate RAW Image Previews. The RIPs are generated and stored in a cache. (If you want to generate RIPs for RAW files that are in different folders, go to the Folders pane and click the easy-select checkbox beside each folder containing RAW files. The RAW files display in the Browser. You can then select them all (Ctrl+A) and click Database | Generate RAW Image Previews.)

## Process your RAW images

Select an image, and then click Tools | RAW Processing. Use the Exposure, Color, and Detail tabs to adjust exposure, white balance, sharpness, and noise. The RAW Processing Edit Panel contains an integrated control that you can use to adjust levels and curves on one interface. This gives you unparalleled flexibility in adjusting the brightness level and contrast of your images. You can save the settings that you selected as a preset to apply to other images.

## Save files in another format

Once you have processed your RAW image, you can save it as a JPEG or TIFF, or update the RIP with your new settings. (The RIP is updated when you click Done in the RAW Processing Edit Panel.)

## Batch process your RAW images

You can also use the Batch RAW Processing tool to apply presets to hundreds of images at one time. Select a group of RAW files, and then click Tools | Batch RAW Processing. Select a preset, and then click Process to quickly process the RAW files.

## Clean the RIP cache

If you are going to archive your RAW images and no longer need to view them, you can clear the RIP cache. In the Browser, click Tools | Options, and then click RAW Image Preview. Click the Empty cache button, then click OK.

## Archive

RAW files and the processing settings are saved separately. Before you burn your RAW images to a CD, export the processing settings for your RAW files. In the Browser, select the RAW files that you are archiving. From the Database menu, choose Export | RPP Files. The processing settings for the selected files are exported from the database and saved as RPP files. Burn the RAW files and RPP files to the CD.