

Woking Photographic Society

Clarification on rules for image processing (August 2026)

This note clarifies our rule on image processing concerning the addition or alteration of pixels. It was last revised in August 2026.

Following a summary of the general rule, specific advice for each popular image processing software tool is included. If yours is missing, please let us know and it will be added. Here is a list of the software currently covered:

- Lightroom Classic
- Adobe Photoshop
- Affinity by Canva
- Topaz

The specific advice given for each software tool is subject to the general rule. In case of doubt or conflict, the general rule applies.

Key Principle

All elements of a final image must have been derived from images that you have captured photographically yourself. Processing – including both traditional and non-generative AI – may be used to transform these elements, or to derive new pixels from them. The addition of elements which have not been derived from your own photographs is not permitted, whether that be via generative AI, creation of synthetic elements e.g. vector graphics, or inserting images obtained from elsewhere.

Summary of general rule

Permitted

Any content derived from your own photographically captured images (where the capture device has not added content to the image).

Any **modification** of these pixels, with or without the use of non-generative AI (noise reduction, sharpening, masking, tonal edits, dehaze, etc).

By exception to the general rule, and aligned with the SPA position, your image may include a flood-fill background (e.g. plain black) and a keyline around the image.

Not permitted

It is not permitted to introduce content that is not derived from your own photographically captured images or to use any tool, feature, or workflow that introduces such content.

This table lists examples of what is not permitted but may not be exhaustive. If in doubt, please check with the committee.

Category	Examples
Generative AI	Photoshop Generative Fill, Luminar AI Augmented Sky, ON1 Sky Swap, GIMP-ML, dedicated Generative AI tools and assistants e.g. Copilot, ChatGPT, Dall-E, StableDiffusion, MidJourney, Gemini etc., Grok
Replacement skies	Adobe sky library, Luminar sky packs, ON1 sky library
Stock images	Unsplash, Pixabay, Pexels, Adobe Stock
Royalty-free assets	Magazine CDs, downloadable images and overlays, texture packs
Clipart / Picture Tubes	Corel PaintShop Pro assets, GIMP clipart
AI extended canvas	Photoshop Generative Expand, Luminar background extension
Computer-generated graphic element	Lines, blocks, circles and other vector graphics
Any pixel not derived from images captured by the photographer	Regardless of source or licence

Note that graphic elements generated or sourced by computer are not permitted to form new pixel content. This includes lines, blocks, circles, gradients and any other vector graphics. Similarly, text layers should not be added. It is however permissible to use such vector graphics to define a mask, for example to control the scope of adjustment layers, as long as the inserted items are entirely your own photographic creation.

For example, it is not permitted to include a yellow disc vector graphic, to represent the sun, that you have created in Photoshop or any other graphics software. However, it is permitted to create such an image, print it out, photograph it, and then blend it into your image, as the pixels are captured in your camera. This is a new SPA rule introduced for clarification in June 2026.

The Detail Check

Sometimes it is not obvious if generative AI is being used by a tool. However, if you take a look at your processing result and there is detail there that quite simply wasn't in your original images, and could not reasonably have been derived from them, then generative AI has probably been used and you cannot claim those elements to be your own work.

However, if the visible detail is a modified version of what was in your original image, then this is more likely to be acceptable. If in doubt, please feel free to check with the committee.

Lightroom Classic

Not permitted

Lightroom Classic itself has very few "content-adding" tools, but the following are not permitted.

- Any plug-in or preset that includes AI-generated content, or otherwise uses any content that was not sourced from your own images.
- Linking from Lightroom to other applications where non-permitted tools are then used.
- Any tool that generates content that was not derived from your image – including any that offer a **Use Generative AI** option when that option is selected e.g. Remove Tool, or any that clearly states Generative AI may automatically be used.

Permitted

Most traditional tools in Lightroom Classic are permitted

- Masks, healing, cloning, noise reduction, sharpening, colour grading.

Adobe Photoshop

Not permitted

Photoshop contains many tools that *can* introduce non-photographer pixels. These are not permitted:

Generative AI tools

- Generative Fill
- Generative Expand
- Remove Tool (when it uses generative AI to invent background)
- Generative Object Creation
- Generative Replace

Content libraries

- Sky Replacement tool (built-in Adobe sky library)
- Clouds, trees, sun flares, or other elements from Photoshop's built-in libraries
- Patterns or textures that include photographic content not created by the author

Third-party content

- Downloaded skies (e.g., from Skylum, ON1, etc.)
- Royalty-free overlays (smoke, fog, bokeh, textures)
- Clipart or graphic elements not created by the photographer
- Stock images used for compositing

Permitted

These do *not* introduce foreign pixels:

- Curves, levels, colour grading
- Dodging and burning
- Cloning and healing (using your own pixels)
- Liquify
- Sharpening
- Noise reduction
- Non-generative filters (blur, distort, etc.)
- Frequency separation
- HDR merge (from your own bracketed shots)
- Panorama stitching (from your own images)
- Astro stacking (your own lights/darks/flats/bias)

Affinity by Canva

Not permitted

Canva Stock / Online Assets

- Photos, illustrations, clipart, textures, backgrounds, skies

Affinity Assets containing photographic pixels

- Sample images, photographic textures, graphic elements with pixel

content

Sky Replacement using supplied skies

- Any sky not photographed by the author

AI tools that generate new pixels

- AI object insertion, AI background generation, AI canvas extension

Stock Panel sources

- Unsplash, Pixabay, Pexels, Canva Stock

Any imported external pixel content

- Royalty-free overlays, downloaded skies, clipart, PNG elements, photographic frames

Permitted

- Adjustments (curves, levels, HSL, exposure, etc.)
- Cloning and healing (using your own pixels)
- Dodging and burning
- Liquify
- Noise reduction
- Sharpening
- Non-generative filters
- Live filters
- Blend modes
- Masking
- Tone mapping
- HDR merge (your own bracketed shots)
- Panorama stitching (your own images)
- Astro stacking (your own lights/darks/flats/bias)

Topaz

Topaz products are rapidly changing and include many AI models designed to enhance images significantly but some of these use generative AI to do so. You will need to check on the model's precise behaviour. In general:

Not permitted

- Topaz Photo AI "Enhance Resolution" when it invents detail not present in the original
- Topaz Photo AI "Object Removal" when it generates invented background. If the tool fills in areas using generative AI, those pixels are prohibited.
- Topaz Face Recovery (some modes use generative AI).

Permitted

- Optical corrections
- Noise reduction (DeNoise AI)
- Sharpening (Sharpen AI)
- Lens blur correction
- Colour/contrast/tone adjustments
- Non-generative upscaling
- RAW model enhancements
- Super-resolution that only upscales without inventing new content