



Adobe Lightroom

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Adobe Photoshop Lightroom is an image editing and management software developed by [Adobe](#). As of January 2025, it is licensed for use either standalone or as part of Adobe Creative Cloud, and is supported both on desktop (Windows, macOS) and mobile platforms (iOS, Android), as well as Apple TV (tvOS). Despite its simplicity compared to other image editing software, it remains a very popular choice among photographers.^[1]

Purchase and licensing [edit | edit source]

Lightroom underwent a significant licensing transformation by shifting from a perpetual-license model (up to Lightroom 6) to a subscription-based model (Lightroom 7 and on) under Adobe's Creative Cloud (CC) ecosystem, being either standalone or bundled with other software in the suite.^[2] Before 2017, Lightroom was available as a standalone application purchased through a perpetual licence.^[2] Users

Adobe Lightroom



Basic Information

Release Year	2007
Product Type	Software
In Production	Yes

application purchased through a perpetual license.^[1] Users paid a one-time fee, granting them indefinite ownership of the software with access to updates and support for a specified period. In October 2017, Adobe officially announced that future versions of Lightroom would not be sold under perpetual licenses, instead being integrated into its CC subscription service.^[2] This strategic move aligned Lightroom with Adobe's suite of applications, all accessible solely through ongoing subscriptions. The perpetual-license option was permanently removed,^[3] forcing users to switch to a subscription model to continue using the software and accessing new features.^[4]

Transition timeline [edit | edit source]

Date	Event
May 2013	Adobe announces its shift to the Creative Cloud model, ^[5] with plans to still offer Lightroom 5 as a standalone, perpetual-license application, and no plans for Lightroom CC ^[6]
June 2013	Adobe releases Lightroom 5 ^[7]
September 2013	Adobe releases a new Lightroom and Photoshop \$10/month subscription package ^[8]
April 2015	Adobe releases Lightroom 6 under both perpetual licenses and subscription packages ^[9]
October 2017	Adobe declares Lightroom 6 to be the last standalone version of Lightroom, remaining on sale for "an undetermined amount of time", and that "Lightroom 7 will have no perpetual [license] offering" ^[2]
December 2017	Final cutoff for support and updates on perpetual licenses (on Lightroom 6) ^[2]
2018–Present	Continuous rollout of subscription-based updates and features
November 2018	Map feature becomes unavailable in Lightroom's Maps module for everyone on a perpetual license ^[10]
February 2019	Adobe stops selling and supporting standalone Lightroom 6 ^[3]
August 2022	Adobe ends support for syncing in Lightroom 6 ^[11]
December 2023	Adobe ends download support for purchased copies of Lightroom 6 ^[11]

Service Siphoning [edit | edit source]

Definition [edit | edit source]

Service Siphoning refers to the practice of converting previously standalone features or products into subscription-based services. This approach effectively forces users into recurring payments to access functionalities that were once available through a one-time purchase, often diminishing the value proposition of the original product.

Adobe's transition of Lightroom exemplifies several aspects of [service siphoning](#):

- Subscription forcing:** By making Lightroom exclusively available through the Creative Cloud subscription, Adobe eliminated the perpetual-license option, compelling users to adopt a subscription model to continue using the software.
- Access degradation:** Existing perpetual-license holders were restricted from receiving new updates and features. To access the latest tools and camera support, users had to migrate to the subscription service, thereby degrading the utility of their original purchase.
- Feature reclassification:** New functionalities, such as advanced editing tools and enhanced syncing capabilities, were

incorporated into the subscription model, positioning them as premium features accessible only through ongoing payments.

4. **Cloud-integration justification:** Adobe used cloud-based features and services as a rationale for the shift, emphasizing improved collaboration, storage solutions, and real-time updates as benefits of the subscription model.
5. **Technical lock-in mechanisms:** Implementations that tie software functionality to cloud services make it technically challenging for users to revert to standalone usage without the subscription. This includes deliberate omission of highly requested features (catalogs on network volumes, local sync for the iPad version Lightroom Mobile).

Impact on consumers [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

Professional photographers and enthusiasts [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

- **Workflow Disruption:** Long-term users experienced interruptions in their established workflows, necessitating adaptation to new software versions and subscription management.
- **Financial Implications:** Transitioning from a one-time payment to an ongoing subscription increased the total cost of ownership over time, affecting budgets and financial planning for professionals and serious hobbyists.
- **Ownership Rights:** Consumers lost the sense of ownership over the software, as access became contingent upon maintaining active subscriptions rather than possessing a perpetual license.
- **Offline Access Limitations:** Subscription models often require periodic internet connectivity for license verification, limiting offline access to editing tools compared to perpetual licenses.^[12]
- **Data Access and Compatibility Issues:** Users could potentially lose access to their own work if they cancel their subscription, as the Lightroom/Photoshop combination creates master files that may become inaccessible without an active subscription.^[13] Additionally, once images and edits reside in Adobe's cloud, switching to alternative software becomes "very difficult" due to incompatibilities.^[14]
- **Technical Issues:** Users have reported ongoing crashes and performance problems with the cloud-based versions, including buggy updates that have required public apologies from Adobe.^[15]
- **Privacy Issues:** Working with the software on multiple devices is only feasible by using the cloud service, which potentially requires images of third parties (clients, models) to be shared with the company and their cloud storage provider(s) without end-to-end encryption. In a practical environment, a model/client will not be asked for their permission for this. If they are asked and object, the photographer's workflow is disrupted. For non-U.S. citizens, Adobe cloud storage can mean that the U.S. government can theoretically illegitimately gain access to their personal data.

Market and industry implications [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

- **Precedent Setting:** Adobe's shift set a precedent for the software industry, influencing other companies to adopt subscription-based models and reshaping consumer expectations and industry standards.
- **Competitive Landscape:** Competitors faced pressure to adjust their pricing and licensing strategies in response to Adobe's transition, affecting broader market dynamics and encouraging the emergence of alternative software solutions.

Community and user response [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

Feedback and criticism [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

Users expressed significant dissatisfaction through various channels, including Adobe Community Forums, social media platforms, and direct feedback. Industry coverage reported a strongly negative reaction from photographers, with LightStalking warning that "there are going to be... disgruntled photographers" once Adobe ended Lightroom's standalone option.^[16] Common grievances included:

- **Lack of Licensing Choice:** Users were frustrated by the removal of the perpetual license option, feeling coerced into a subscription model that did not align with their usage patterns. PetaPixel noted that some users "reacted... with disappointment, accusing Adobe of reneging on its prior promises" to keep perpetual licenses available indefinitely.^[17]
- **Increased Long-Term Costs:** Many users highlighted that the subscription model resulted in higher cumulative costs

compared to the one-time purchase of perpetual licenses. PhotographyLife described community outcry when Adobe even hinted at doubling plan prices, saying the "reactions were obviously very negative," with many threatening to abandon Creative Cloud if costs rose.^[15]

- **Impact on Established Workflows:** Professionals reliant on Lightroom for their business workflows found the transition disruptive, as migrating to a subscription model required adjustments and potentially impacted productivity.

Alternatives and adaptations [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

In response to Adobe's shift, some users explored alternative software solutions offering perpetual licenses or more flexible subscription terms, such as:

- **Capture One** [↗](#): Provides single-purchase licensing options alongside subscription models.
- **Affinity Photo** [↗](#): Offers a one-time purchase model without subscription commitments. However, while it can process raw images, it is more of a Photoshop alternative than a Lightroom one.
- **Darktable** [↗](#) and **RawTherapee** [↗](#): Open-source alternatives that remain free and perpetually available.

Others adapted by integrating Adobe's subscription model into their business practices, balancing the benefits of continuous updates and cloud features against the recurring costs.

Adobe's response [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

Adobe provided several justifications for the transition, emphasizing the benefits of the Creative Cloud model:

- **Continuous Updates:** Subscribers receive regular updates, ensuring access to the latest features and improvements without additional costs.
- **Cloud Services Integration:** Enhanced collaboration, cloud storage, and synchronization across devices were touted as significant advantages of the subscription model.
- **Flexible Access:** The ability to access Lightroom and other Adobe applications from multiple devices under a single subscription was presented as a convenience for users.

Adobe has defended and adjusted its strategy in light of user feedback. It continued to support the desktop (Classic) version and even incorporated it into a new plan: an Adobe blog (Dec 2024) explained that the original \$9.99/month (20 GB) plan would be retired for new customers, while the 1 TB Photography plan (still \$9.99/month) was expanded to include Lightroom Classic.^[18]

In response to privacy and AI concerns, Adobe emphasized that "you own your content" and that it "never trained generative AI on customer content".^[19] Tech media reported Adobe's clarifications that it only accesses user files to enable advertised features (e.g. Neural Filters) and explicitly "does not access, view or listen to" content stored locally on users' devices.^[20]

External links [\[edit | edit source \]](#)

- [Adobe Lightroom Official Website](#) [↗](#)
- [Creative Cloud Subscription Plans](#) [↗](#)
- [User Discussions on Lightroom Transition](#) [↗](#)
- [Adobe's New Lightroom and Photoshop Package - Michael Frye Photography](#) [↗](#)
- [Thoughts on the Adobe Creative Cloud - Michael Frye Photography](#) [↗](#)
- [Adobe Community Forums: New Creative Cloud Subscription with Single App](#) [↗](#)
- [Hi, where to buy Lightroom as "Perpetual" fixed license - Adobe Community](#) [↗](#)
- [There needs to be a perpetual license option for enthusiast photographers - Adobe Community](#) [↗](#)
- [Lightroom Queen Forums: CC/Photo and Perpetual License Discussion](#) [↗](#)
- [Photography Life, Lightroom Classic and Lightroom CC Announced Subscription only](#) [↗](#) — Has Screenshots from Adobe website before the tranistion to subscription only.

- ↑ Condon, Mark (12 Dec 2024). "What Photo Editing Software Do Photographers Use in 2024? (Survey Results)" [↗](#). *Shotkit*. Retrieved 16 Mar 2025.
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- ↑ Hogarty, Tom (6 May 2013). "Lightroom and the Creative Cloud" [↗](#). *Adobe*. Archived from the original [↗](#) on 10 May 2013. Retrieved 16 Mar 2025.
- ↑ "Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 5" [↗](#). *Adobe*. Archived from the original on 11 Jun 2013. Retrieved 16 Mar 2025.
- ↑ Shankland, Stephen (4 Sep 2013). "Adobe to offer Lightroom, Photoshop for \$10 a month" [↗](#). *CNET*. Retrieved 16 Mar 2025.
- ↑ "Adobe Photoshop Lightroom CC" [↗](#). *Adobe*. Archived from the original on 22 Apr 2015. Retrieved 16 Mar 2025.
- ↑ "How to Re-enable Google Maps View in Lightroom Classic 6.14" [↗](#). *Robert Reiser Photography*. 30 Nov 2018. Retrieved 16 Mar 2025.
- ↑ 11.0 11.1 "End of Support | Lightroom 6 Downloads and Syncing" [↗](#). *Adobe*. 31 Dec 2023. Retrieved 16 Mar 2025.
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