Standard Adjustments in Adobe Camera RAW

Camera RAW is designed to work in order of the screens presented.

This is how I use it after watching a presentation by Gary Guest and a couple of online tutorials.

Open an image in Camera RAW.

The image I am using as an illustration is a hard one to process due to the following
- pure white abdomen on the spider
- slightly indistinct eyes (not out of focus, the lens is white with a dark iris buried in this.)
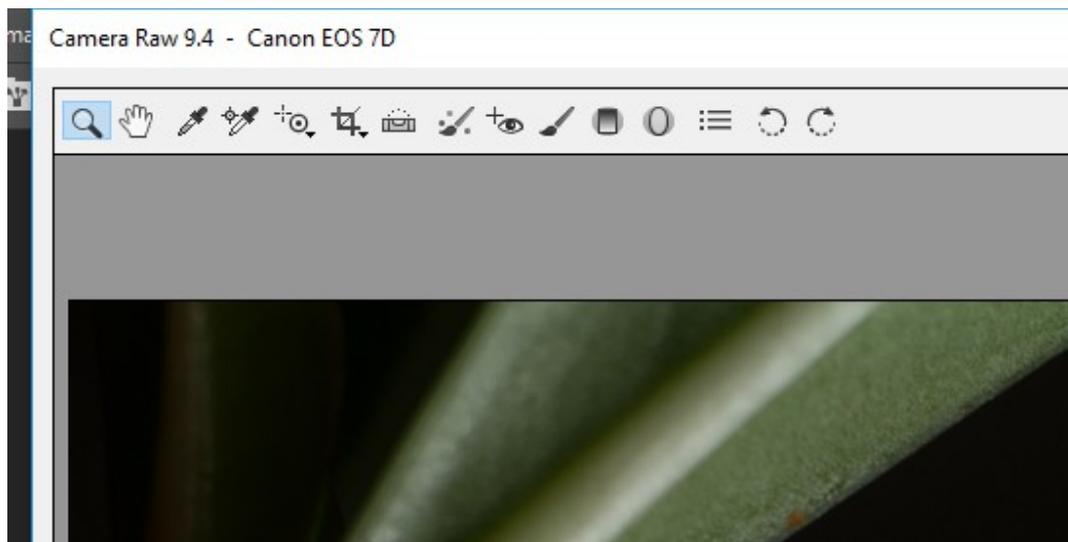

Image opened and top bar of Camera RAW shown.
Across the top the adjustments are;
- *Magnify* (better to use Control and + or -)
- *Move* tool (can use Space and right click)
- *White Balance.* Use this eyedropper and click on in this order;
  Something mid grey
  Something pure white
  Something pure black
  Note the colour changes.
  Fine adjust with the Temperature and Tint sliders.
- *Colour picker* (Ignore)
- *Targeted Adjustment Tool* – look up on the net
- *Crop* – don't crop here, use the crop tool in Photoshop.
- *Level* Good and easy to level horizons.
  With buildings use on verticals
- *Spot Removal* Good for skin blemishes but is a brute force tool.
- *Red Eye* Good but can do better manually
- *Adjustment brush* Use this LAST to make fine adjustments before opening in Photoshop.
- *Graduated fiter* OK in landscapes. Use with care.
- Ignore the rest of the tools.

What the tabs on the top right side are.
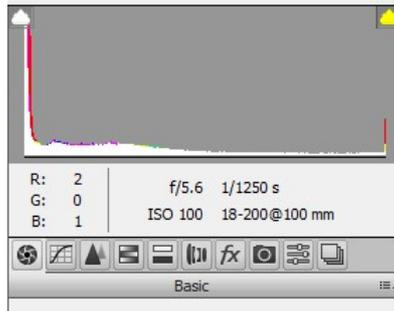
Histogram
Shows the range/amount of colours in the image.
Light to the right, dark to the left.
The two triangles are over and under exposure warnings that can be turned on and off.
Below that are the settings the image was captured at.

Basic (The lens Iris)
The first set of adjustments which look after brightness, colour, contrast and some detail.

Curves (Curves diagram)
I usually use a curves layer in Photoshop as it is able to be readjusted as you need and has a mask to block out areas you don't want changed.

Detail (Sharpening, sharp triangle)
See later page.

HSL (Hue, Saturation and Luminance) Three bars.
Leave this set on Saturation (the middle tab) and use it to fine tune individual colours with more or less saturation.

Split Toning (Two bars)
Play with this to see how it affects colours.

Lens Correction (Lens elements)
Powerful tool.

Profile stores the characteristics of individual lenses and allows simple correction of the image to a "perfect"image profile.
Colour This is where you can remove Chromatic Aberration.
Note that when doing this you should work with the image well blown up to see the effects at work.
Manual. Where distortion is corrected.
There are both automatic (*Upright*, the boxes at the top) and manual (*Transform*, the centre sliders) to straighten the image.
Vignetting (light and dark) can be added here but it is better to use the one in Effects.

Effects (*fx*)
Very self explanatory.

Camera Calibration. (Camera picture)
Where presets are set up.

Presets (Multiple Sliders)
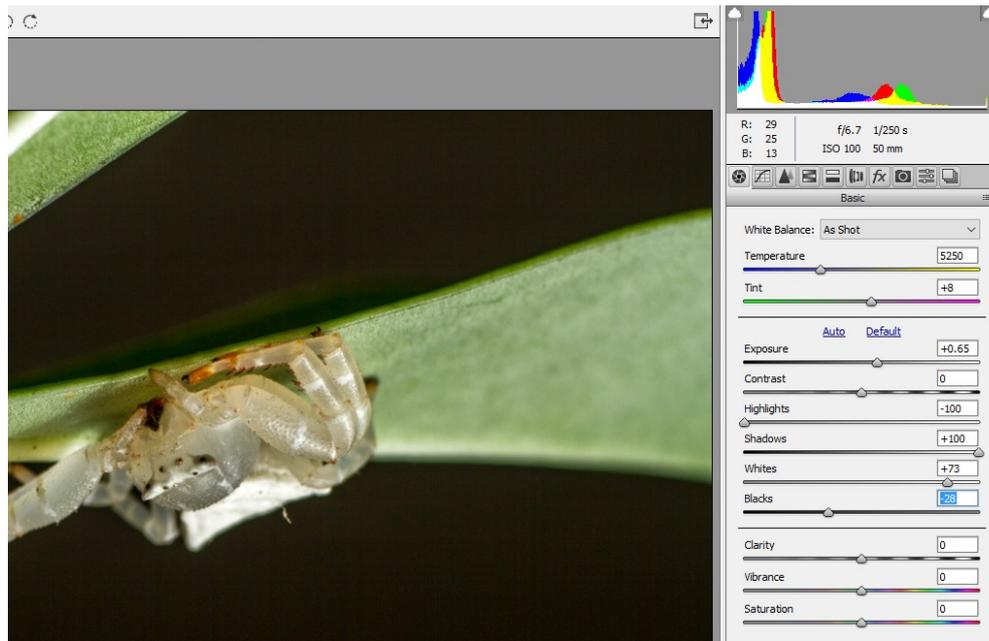Import presets and store them here.
Saves a considerable amount of work if applying a standard look to multiple images.

Snapshots (Stacked photos)
Powerful tool to allow multiple versions of an image.
Best to do an online look at this one.

BASIC ADJUSTMENTS.

Increase/decrease *Brightness* to have a readily viable image to work on.
Leave *Contrast* if it is reasonably OK at this stage.

Adjust *Temperature* and Tint to get correct colouring in the image.

Take *Highlights* to -100 and *Shadows* to +100.
Holding *ALT,* increase *Whites* until there are minor highlight warnings.
Anything with a highlight warning no longer contains any information/detail as it has been "blown out".
Note that when you let go of *ALT* or the mouse the warning screen will revert to normal view.
Holding *ALT*, decrease the *Blacks* until the beginning of black warnings.
This will indicate areas of the image with absolutely no information at all showing.

(Check your before/after view at the bottom if you want to see the difference.)

Flick *Clarity* backwards and forwards to see what sharpening will do to the image.
Leave it set to "0".
It is better to sharpen in the sharpening screen.

Vibrance and *Saturation*.
Vibrance works on the muted colours in the image, ignoring the very saturated ones.
This gives a better and more realistic effect than *Saturation* that simply increases all colours evenly to the point of "saturation".
(After using *Vibrance* or *Saturation* it is sometimes handy handy to go straight to the *HSL* tab and reduce oversaturated colours [especially green and red] using the centre *Saturation* panel.)

Sharpening.
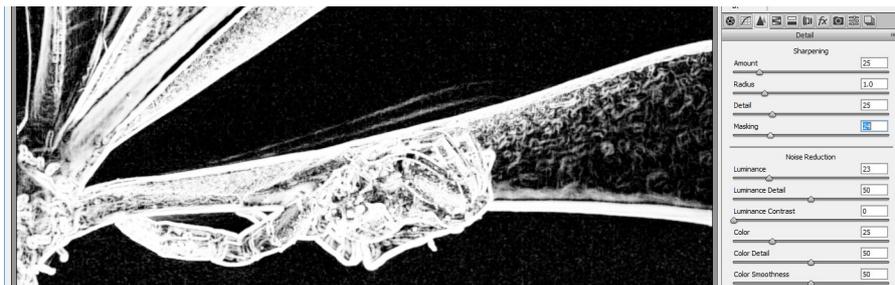
Click on the Detail tool bar.

First, holding the *ALT* down increase the *Masking* slider.

At first, the screen will be white and then a line drawing of the image will start to show through.

As the amount of Masking is increased, the areas to be sharpened will show more clearly in white with the areas that do not containing detail requiring sharpening will be black.

Sharpening areas without detail is simply introducing noise.

Keep increasing the *Masking* until only the part of the image you want to sharpen is showing.

Then, clicking *ALT* on and off, you will be able to see how the sharpening is working on the image. Increase *Amount*, *Radius* and *Detail* as required.

In *Noise Reduction* adjust the *Luminance* slider to between 15 and 35 (usually 25 to 30) to remove chroma noise without softening the image too much.

Finally.

Now go back and do final tone adjustments in the *Basic Screen* with *Temperature* and *Tint*.

Use the *Adjustment Brush* to fine tune any part of the image as required.

Open into Photoshop.

Crop in Photoshop ensuring that the *Delete Cropped Pixels* box is turned off.

This allows you to re-crop larger later if you want to without having to go back and redo the image from the start.

Note adjustments these may not work well on skin tones.
They may have to be "scaled back"to achieve realistic tones.

Saving Files;

Before you start thinking of saving files, you need to take the image.
As the above adjustments work best with a RAW file, you should use RAW to capture your images.
I shoot in RAW plus jepg.

What do you keep?

Casual.
For a "quick and rough"lot of images (School fete or Bookweek, etc.) I separate the jepgs and quickly process and output them.
I delete most of the RAW files (space) and only keep the best prospects to work on later.
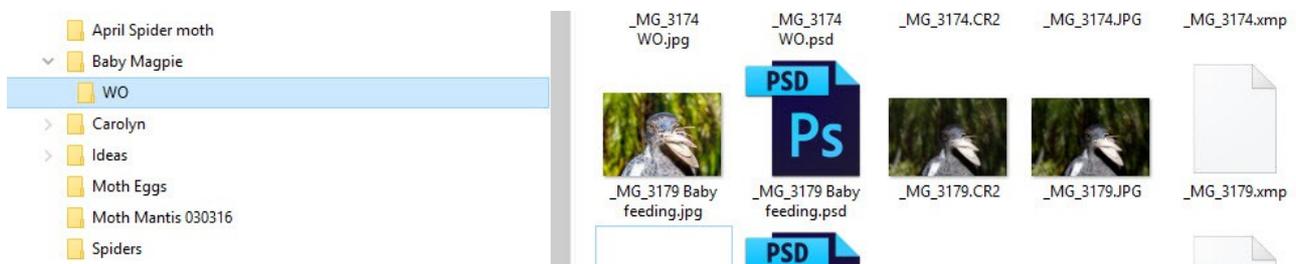
Camera Club.
Everything is processed from a RAW file as shown above.

Naming Files.
I normally keep the original image name from the camera as part of the file name.
If it is a "Possible"image it just gets the suffix "WO"added.
If I think it is a good image I name it.

I keep 5 files for each good image.
In order from the left in the illustration;
A good "jpg"copy of the image.
The complete "psd"Photoshop file that has had any unused layers removed.
Original Canon "CR2"Camera RAW file.
Original "JPG"file from the camera.
The "xmp"file.

Why keep these?
_MG_3179 Baby feeding.jpg   Allows instant viewing of the image without needing to open a "psd"file to see the output/printable image.
_MG_3179 Baby feeding.psd I print from Photoshop so I need this file to sort the size and resolution of the image. I can go back and alter the image at any time without having to redo the whole thing from scratch.
_MG_3179.CR2   If I have to redo the image (or want to do it differently) I have the original Camera RAW file to work from.
_MG_3179.JPG   Again, an original file to work from.
_MG_3179.xmp This is a Photoshop file. It is the Camera RAW settings recorded so when you reopen the image in Camera RAW the settings are already there.

If I do multiple copies or variations of the same image I only keep one "psd"file.
This is the one with all the changes because I can simply step back through the image to where I took the "JPG"from. This saves space.