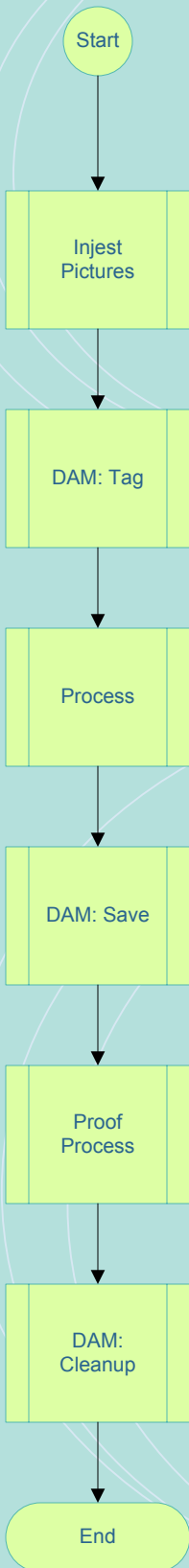


Digital Processing Workflow



Injesting pictures is a process of copying pictures from your camera on to your computer. At its simplest, you pop out the camera's memory card, drag and drop all images to a file folder of your choice. An improved process would be to use a software that comes with your camera manufacturer, and may offer a bit more in terms of deleting files from memory card after copying to hard disk, automatically backing up files to a secondary file system after copying, converting RAW to DNG etc. An example 3rd party software to do this step is "Breeze systems' Downloader Pro.

The first thing is to create a file structure for each "shoot". This can be organized by a "shoot" name (also called "collection" - synonymous to a film roll). You would typically now rate your pictures on a fixed scale (say 1-5) giving them ratings such as "Excellent", "Needs Processing", "2nd best shot if first one doesn't work", "Unusable photo" etc.. This gives you ability to filter and process only those pictures that you think are usable. Once you are done rating, you would usually filter the collection to show you only those that are 3 stars and above (or those that you wish to process) and start adding keywords to identify each picture or group of pictures. This is called "tagging". Your keywords are usually referenced as "IPTC" fields. A typical software to do this step is iView Media Pro, Extensis Portfolio, Photo Mechanic, Lightroom or Aperture.

You can often open files for editing/tweaking right from the DAM software. This is an essential step if you shoot RAW. If you shoot JPEG, much of this process is simpler and involves some basic techniques. If you shoot RAW, you can use Exposure controls, Levels, Curves and any other techniques to improve upon your picture to suit your taste - **non** destructively. Some popular RAW processing tools Photoshop ACR, Capture One, Lightroom, Aperture, Bibble, DXO and tons of others. If you shoot JPEG, you can use Photoshop or Photoshop Elements or similar tools to tweak your pictures.

Once done editing, it is recommended that you save your work. If you are working in RAW, the changes are often already saved. However, you might want to process your image in multiple tools - requiring you to save "interim" files - such as TIFFs. Examples include - Using C1 to process for White Balance and Exposure, while using Photoshop CS2 to convert image to B&W or apply a special filter (Noise Ninja) or Nik Color effects Pro, or Alien Skin Exposure. It is best recommended to create folder structures for each such conversion - while re-tagging appropriately.

The final outputs may be one or all of these types - Print, Slideshows or Web. Processing images for each of these media require a slightly different workflow process. Create sub-folders for each type of output, while copying the appropriate images into this folder. Note that all along you are working in "good color spaces" (such as Adobe RGB, Pro RGB or similar - and that you are working on 16 bit images - such as RAW or TIFFs, and it is in this step that you convert your images to a lower quality image - To JPEG and sRGB color space. (If you shoot JPEG on your camera - this is what you work with all along - so you have no conversion). Additionally, you might need to "soft proof" your output - Meaning, if you use Costco like me to print your pictures, you might have to preview and tweak your JPEGs to bump up the contrast/levels if required after you covert your color profile to the Costco's printer profile (<http://www.drycreekphoto.com/>).

Last, but not the least - you will have to save all your work - possibly into a DVD archive or similar, and re-assess your ratings. You might want to bump up some of those 3 and 4 star images to 4 stars or higher based on how your processing worked out. This ensures that all the images pull-up when you do a "search for images" based on keywords or star ratings. This is critical - if you wish to some day sell your images - and stock companies often ask specific questions such as "Do you have images of this, and that?" and you often cannot spend time and effort going over 10,000 images to see if you have the right image to submit.