

## Using tags to find photos

Finding photos with tags is discussed in depth in the next chapter, but the basics are simple.

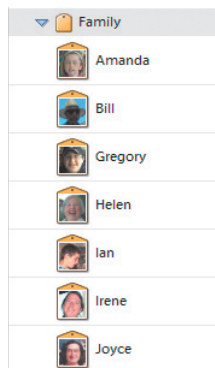
- Double-click any tag to perform a new search for all the photos with that tag.
- Click the check box to the left of a tag to add more tags to the search criteria. A binocular icon appears in the box to show that the corresponding tag is part of the search.
- To exclude photos with a particular tag, right-click on the tag and choose Exclude Photos.

Now that you know the basics, you can start experimenting with tags. But before you do much tagging, it's a good idea to think about which tags you want, and how you want to organize them into categories and subcategories.

## Designing Your Tag Set

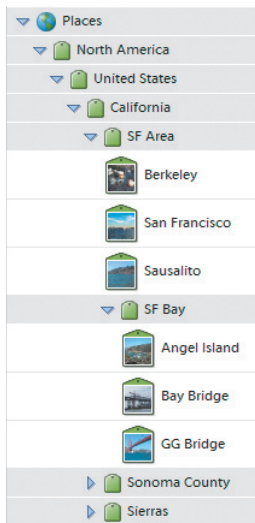
You have nearly complete freedom to design your tag set. The standard categories of People (with subcategories of Family and Friends), Places, Events, and Other are preinstalled, but you can rename or delete them. You can add as many categories, subcategories, and tags as you like.

You can make subcategories within subcategories and so on for many levels of nesting. If you don't plan to tag your photos in great detail, you may need only one level of nesting: for example, People > Family > Amanda, Gregory, and so on (**Figure 3.25**).

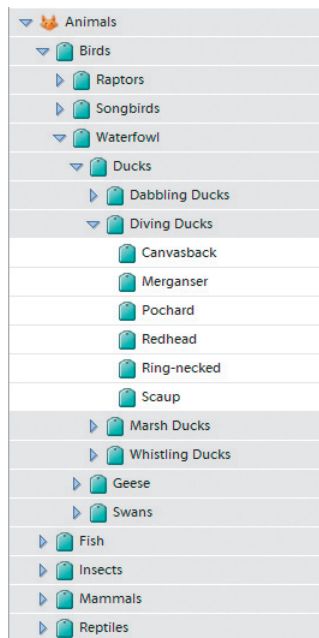


**Figure 3.25** If there are only half a dozen people in your family of whom you have many photos, you won't need any subcategories within the Family subcategory.

Deeper nesting is sometimes useful for people but is often best used for places and for special interests. You can have deep hierarchies for places you've visited and taken lots of pictures (**Figure 3.26**), or for special interests, such as taxonomies (**Figure 3.27**) for nature photographers.



**Figure 3.26** Deeper tag hierarchies can be useful for places if you want to maintain a highly structured tag set.



**Figure 3.27** If you have a hobby, like bird watching, that creates lots of photos of something, specialized tag sets such as this can be great.

Keep in mind that you can use tags in combination with each other, as well as with dates. For example, you can have a Zoo tag, a Los Angeles tag, and a San Francisco tag, and use these in combination instead of having Los Angeles Zoo and San Francisco Zoo tags. And you can use a single Greg's Birthday tag for all years, rather than Greg's 14th Birthday, Greg's 15th Birthday, and so on, since you can use the date in combination with the tag to locate photos.

You're likely to find that with experience you'll change your mind about how you want your tags arranged. Don't worry—it's easy to rearrange them. It will save you some time in the long run, though, to read the tips in this section before you do a lot of tagging.

## Using people tags

You'll probably use a lot of people tags, since the people in your photos are often what you look for. The simplest approach is to make a tag for each person in your family in the Family subcategory, and a tag for each friend in the Friends subcategory. If you take pictures of lots of people, though, the lists of tags can get pretty long. Here are three approaches to keeping the number of tags in each subcategory manageable:

- You can use a single tag for a group of people (such as the Smiths). This is especially useful if there are lots of people in that group but you don't take many pictures of any of them.
- You can delete the Family subcategory and create multiple subcategories for different parts of the family (such as Our Family, Grandparents, Grandchildren, In-Laws, and Suzy's Family).
- You can create subcategories within the Family subcategory.

In the Friends subcategory, you may want to have some generic tags to use for friends of your children (such as Amanda's Friends, Gregory's Friends) or friends from a particular part of your life (such as Garden Club, Coworkers). If you want to have individual tags for the people in these groups, create a new subcategory for each group, instead of a tag, and put tags for each person in those subcategories.

## Using place tags

Often, you'll want to find pictures according to where you took them. Place tags make this easy.

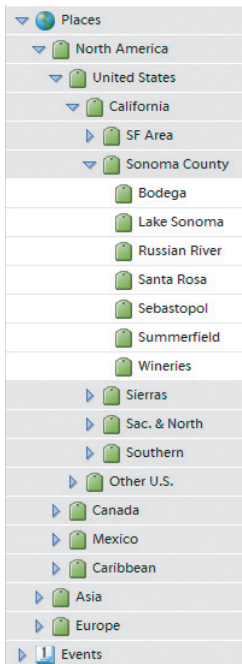
You can think about place tags in various ways, depending on how rigorous you want to be:

- Put a place tag on every photo, so that each is identified with where it was taken. This is usually easy to do (unless your place tags are very specific), since you can tag lots of photos at a time.
- Or you can put place tags only on photos that are actually *of* a particular place. For example, you might put a San Francisco tag on pictures of the San Francisco skyline but not on pictures of a birthday party at a friend's house in San Francisco.

The first approach is simpler, because you don't have to think very much about whether a photo should get a place tag or not. It doesn't, however, give you a way to find just those pictures that are *of* a place, as distinguished from those that happen to have been *taken at* that place.

If you take most of your photos of people instead of places, you may want to have just a few place tags in the Places category. But if you travel a great deal and take lots of pictures, you may want to have subcategories for each state or each country, with tags for all the places within them that you have visited.

There's no need to be terribly consistent in how you form your subcategories. For example (Figure 3.28), I have a subcategory for California, because I take pictures at lots of places there; I have another subcategory for Other U.S., because I haven't taken photos at many locations in the United States outside of California. I have subcategories for Mexico, the Caribbean, Asia, and Europe, because I've gone on trips to each of those regions.



**Figure 3.28** Place tag sets don't need to be consistent or cover the whole world.

I also have a Places subcategory called Special Places, which I use for locations that don't have so much to do with geography. In this category, I have tags for places such as Home, Beach, Office, and Zoo. I use the Beach tag for any beach and the Zoo tag for any zoo. If the beach or zoo is in a geographic location other than where I live, I'll also apply a tag for that city or country.

If you travel to a country where you're visiting lots of different cities or regions, it's usually a good idea to make a new subcategory for that country. Then you can make tags for each city or region. Or if you're really detail oriented and want to go a step further, you can nest subcategories as deeply as you want and make your tags highly specific, such as **Figure 3.29** shows for Foxy's restaurant at Great Harbour on Jost Van Dyke in the British Virgin Islands, in the Caribbean.



**Figure 3.29** You can make very specific tag sets if you want to capture lots of detail about where you've taken pictures.

## Using event tags

Most people take lots of photos at special events, such as birthday parties, Christmas, and so forth. Creating a tag for each event makes it easy to locate these photos later. Note that you can also find photos using the calendar, so you may not need to tag events such as Christmas. However, it can be useful when, for example, you want to tag tree-trimming photos from mid-December as Christmas.

Depending on how many event tags you have, you may or may not want to put them into subcategories; if you have just a few, all the tags can go directly in the Events category. I divide my events into four subcategories:

- Holidays, such as Hanukkah and New Year's
- Parties, such as Greg's Birthday and Amanda's Birthday

- Vacations, such as Baja Sailing Trip and Caribbean Cruise
- Other Events, such as Circus and Renaissance Faire

Note that there is often some overlap between places and events. Vacation tags, for example, can be eliminated if you just use the place tags for where the vacation was. I tend to use both place and vacation tags, though, so I can easily find all the photos of a place, regardless of whether I was there on vacation or for some other reason, as well as all the photos from a vacation trip, even if it was in multiple places.

**Tip** *Don't put dates in your tag names, such as Delta Trip 2003. When you're finding photos, you can use a date range in addition to the tag, so you can find the photos from a particular trip. This reduces the number of tags you need, and it also makes it easy to find the photos from all similar trips you took over multiple years (though place tags can also fulfill this function).*

### Additional categories

Not everything fits in People, Places, and Events, so the standard tag set has a fourth catch-all category: Other.

You can add subcategories within Other, but it generally makes more sense to just add more categories instead. For example, I added two new categories for my catalog:

- Animals, with tags for Cats, Dogs, Horses, Cattle, and so on
- Interests, with tags (or subcategories, if I want to further break it down with tags) such as Boats, Cars, Sunsets, and Landscapes

There are countless other categories, subcategories, and tags you may want to create, depending on your particular needs and interests. For example:

- If you're a bird-watcher, you may want a Birds category, with subcategories for each family and tags for each species.
- If you're a classic-car enthusiast, you could have a Classic Cars category, with subcategories for each car manufacturer and tags for each model.
- You can make a Photo Type category or subcategory, with such tags as Scans, Panoramas, Black-and-White, and Experimental.

## Restructuring Your Tags

After you've been tagging photos for a while, you'll probably have new ideas about how you'd like to reorganize your tags. Fortunately, it's easy to do. You can simply drag and drop subcategories into different categories or subcategories, or tags from one subcategory or category to another.

**Note** *You can't drag a tag or subcategory to a particular spot in another category or subcategory, even if you have selected manual ordering. Instead, you must first drag it to the category or subcategory, and it will appear at the end of the list of items for that category or subcategory. You can then drag it to the desired position within the category or subcategory.*

You can rename any tag, subcategory, or category by right-clicking it and selecting Edit from the menu. Via that contextual menu, you can also convert a tag to a subcategory (useful when you want to subdivide the tag) and a subcategory to a tag (if it turns out you didn't need that subcategory; this last option is available only if the subcategory does not have tags or subcategories within it).

### Tips for Improving Your Tag Set Over Time

You may want to reorganize gradually as you gain experience with your photos and the tags you're creating. Here are some helpful techniques for reorganizing tag sets:

- If a tag has too many items and you want to make it more specific, first find all the photos with that tag. Then convert the tag to a subcategory and make new tags in it that are more specific. Apply them selectively to the appropriate photos.
- If a category has too many subcategories in it, either make a deeper hierarchy, or create a new category and drag some of the subcategories to it.
- If a subcategory has too many tags in it, add multiple subcategories within it and drag each tag to the appropriate subcategory.
- To promote a subcategory to a category, first create the new category. Then drag all the tags from the old subcategory to the new category, and delete the old subcategory.