

Hootio PhotoBot User Guide

Prepare a Lightroom Classic catalog for a human edit, either after Hootio Smart Import or directly from an existing catalog.

Guide date: 9 October 2026. This guide follows the current Hootio and PhotoBot source. Your installed release may show slightly different labels. PhotoBot produces an editable catalog copy; inspect it in Lightroom before exporting finished photographs.

1. Before the first job

Required to finish Smart Develop and previews: PhotoBot's **HootioPhotoBot.Irplugin** must be installed, enabled in Lightroom Classic, and confirmed by **Check again** before the job starts. A plugin folder on disk alone is not a working connection.

1. Install Hootio PhotoBot and Lightroom **Classic**. Launch each once, sign in to PhotoBot with your Hootio account, and finish any Lightroom first-run screen. The cloud-based Lightroom application is not the Classic catalog host.
2. In Lightroom Classic, open **Edit** → **Preferences** → **General** (Windows) or **Lightroom Classic** → **Preferences** → **General** (Mac). Under **Import Options**, clear **Show import dialog when a memory card is detected**. This stops Lightroom's own card-import window appearing when you connect cards for Hootio. In **Default Catalog**, avoid **Prompt me when starting Lightroom** if PhotoBot will open Lightroom during an unattended run; choose the intended catalog or **Load most recent catalog**. [Adobe's preference guide](#).
3. Keep a real Lightroom catalog backup schedule. An exit backup dialog can still appear. Complete it or choose its one-time skip option when the workflow is waiting, then return to PhotoBot. Do not turn backups off permanently just to remove a prompt. [Adobe's backup guide](#).
4. Keep the catalog, its **.lrcat-data** companion, original photos and work drive reachable. Allow room for PhotoBot's temporary JPEG exports and a new catalog copy. Do not open the intended output copy in Lightroom while PhotoBot is applying results.

2. Connect the PhotoBot Lightroom plugin

PhotoBot uses its own **HootioPhotoBot.Irplugin** to ask Lightroom Classic to render analysis images and build previews. Hootio Smart Import itself no longer ships or requires the old Hootio Previews plugin.

1. PhotoBot checks the connection on launch. If setup instructions appear, use **Open plugin folder** and note the folder it shows. Otherwise open **Settings** → **Plugin setup....**
2. In Lightroom Classic choose **File** → **Plug-in Manager** → **Add** and select the **HootioPhotoBot.Irplugin folder**, not an individual file. Enable the PhotoBot plugin.

3. Return to PhotoBot and choose **Check again**. If an old copy is still loaded, reload or disable and re-enable the registered plugin, or restart Lightroom, then check again. A folder on disk alone does not mean Lightroom has loaded the plugin.
4. On Windows, the installed plugin is under the PhotoBot application directory. On Mac, the installer places it at **/Library/hootio.photobot/HootioPhotoBot.lrplugin**; use PhotoBot's shown path if your package differs.

The plugin is needed for both direct PhotoBot jobs and Hootio's Smart Develop handoff. Leave Lightroom available while it exports or builds previews; respond to any visible catalog picker or backup dialog.

3. Route A: start with camera cards in Hootio

1. In Hootio **Workspace Settings**, set **Photo Workspace** and **Video Workspace** even for a photo-only import. Set separate backup folders when wanted, then choose a folder name and **Save Settings**.
2. Under **Lightroom Catalog**, enable **Create / update catalog**. Choose a Lightroom **.xmp** import preset in Hootio's Lightroom settings, or intentionally choose **None** for default adjustments. Save before the run that creates the catalog. The preset is a baseline; PhotoBot's later adjustments are separate.
3. In the main window select the camera cards. If importing one card at a time, use the same Photo Workspace and enable catalog creation for the last relevant card. Check every shooting-date folder if the cards span different days.
4. Under **PHOTOBOT CONNECT**, select **Smart Develop**. Hootio opens its PhotoBot options dialog; choose face exposure, face white balance and optional automatic leveling, plus their limits or targets. Select **Build previews** if you want both Standard and Smart Previews on the adjusted catalog. Previews require Smart Develop.
5. Keep PhotoBot installed and signed in. Hootio checks PhotoBot account readiness before copying when Smart Develop is selected, but that check does not confirm Lightroom has loaded the plugin. Complete **Check again** in PhotoBot first. Click **SMART IMPORT** and respond to the actual device, readiness or account notices. Wait for copied media, catalog creation, PhotoBot processing and selected previews to finish in **Task queue**.
6. Open the newest **completed** PhotoBot-adjusted catalog in the photo date folder's **Lightroom Catalog** directory. Check that originals are online and review representative exposure, white balance, leveling and previews. If VideoBot options were also selected, check VideoBot's own queue separately.

Hootio Smart Import and basic catalog creation are free. PhotoBot's project allowance is separate. The PhotoBot account screen and current authorization notice govern whether a new adjustment job can start. A failed PhotoBot task does not undo media already copied by Hootio.

4. Route B: process an existing Lightroom catalog directly

1. In PhotoBot, drag an existing **.lrcat** into **Your Catalog**, or use **Browse**. Check the selected path and the displayed **Adjusted Catalog** output path. Make sure Lightroom can find the original photos.
2. In **Developing Options**, select face exposure, face white balance, automatic leveling and optional similar-photo grouping. Set maximum exposure, face brightness, face warmth and maximum rotation to suit this shoot. Start conservatively and plan to review skin, mixed lighting and tilted frames.
3. Click **Develop catalog**. Review the account or project-credit notice before confirming a new job. PhotoBot uses Lightroom to render analysis JPEGs, processes them, and writes approved adjustments to a new catalog copy; it does not overwrite the source catalog or original photos.
4. Wait for the job's actual completion status. If wanted, click **Build Standard + Smart Previews** for the latest successfully adjusted catalog. Wait until both preview totals complete. Preview generation does not fall back to an older adjusted copy after a failed new job.
5. Open the adjusted catalog in Lightroom and finish your own review, cropping, local edits, color, ratings and final exports.

The first adjusted copy is named like **Wedding-hootio.lrcat**; later successful versions use **-hootio-v2.lrcat**, **-hootio-v3.lrcat** and so on. Keep its **.lrcat-data** companion and source photos with it. **Existing projects...** can reopen a local version or locate an existing catalog copy.

5. Understand the result and previews

PhotoBot estimates face exposure and face white balance where it has enough evidence, and can level photographs within the selected angle limit. Some photographs may be left unchanged or flagged for review. The adjustment catalog remains editable; it is not a rendered delivery gallery. Similarity grouping helps review a shoot but should be checked by the photographer.

When previews are selected, PhotoBot builds **Standard (2048 px)** and **Smart Previews** for the adjusted catalog. Standard and Smart counts can advance at different rates. Keep Lightroom and the media drive available until both finish. A successful media copy, a created Hootio catalog, an adjusted PhotoBot copy, completed previews and exported final photos are separate milestones.

PhotoBot saves temporary analysis files in a **HootioTemp/photobot-<job>** folder beside the catalog. Its **Clean local cache files...** action can remove files from completed jobs. Keep unfinished checkpoints and temporary files until recovery is complete. Do not manually delete an adjusted catalog, its **.lrcat-data** or a checkpoint while a job is active.

6. Resume an interrupted job

Symptom	Next action
Plugin not ready	Open PhotoBot Settings → Plugin setup... , enable the shown folder in Lightroom Plug-in Manager, then Check again
Lightroom opens a catalog picker or backup dialog	Choose the intended catalog or complete/skip this one backup, then return to the waiting job
Original photos are missing	Reconnect the source drive or restore the original paths before retrying Lightroom export
Adjusted catalog is open during apply	Close that adjusted copy in Lightroom and choose Retry catalog apply
Processing stops or reports partial results	Use Unfinished jobs... → Resume selected job ; the saved checkpoint keeps the job's original settings
Hootio task queue pauses	Fix PhotoBot's reported issue, then use Hootio Retry and continue ; do not reformat the source card

Closing the PhotoBot window normally hides it to the tray while processing continues. Use the tray icon to reopen it. **Exit** cancels processing and waits for the checkpoint; on the next launch use **Unfinished jobs...** Starting **New job** after changing settings makes a new result version rather than silently changing a partially completed job.

7. Final handover checklist

1. Check Hootio's copied, existing and failed counts for every card, plus separate backup results. Open sample original files. Keep cards until required copies are verified.
2. Confirm the latest Hootio catalog or PhotoBot **-hootio** copy is **completed**, not merely queued or partially applied. Preserve its **.lrcat-data** and the original media paths.
3. If previews were requested, verify both Standard and Smart Preview totals. Open the result in Lightroom Classic and inspect several difficult photos, not only easy examples.
4. Export finished photos from Lightroom after your own review. PhotoBot does not deliver final JPEGs just because catalog processing reached 100%.