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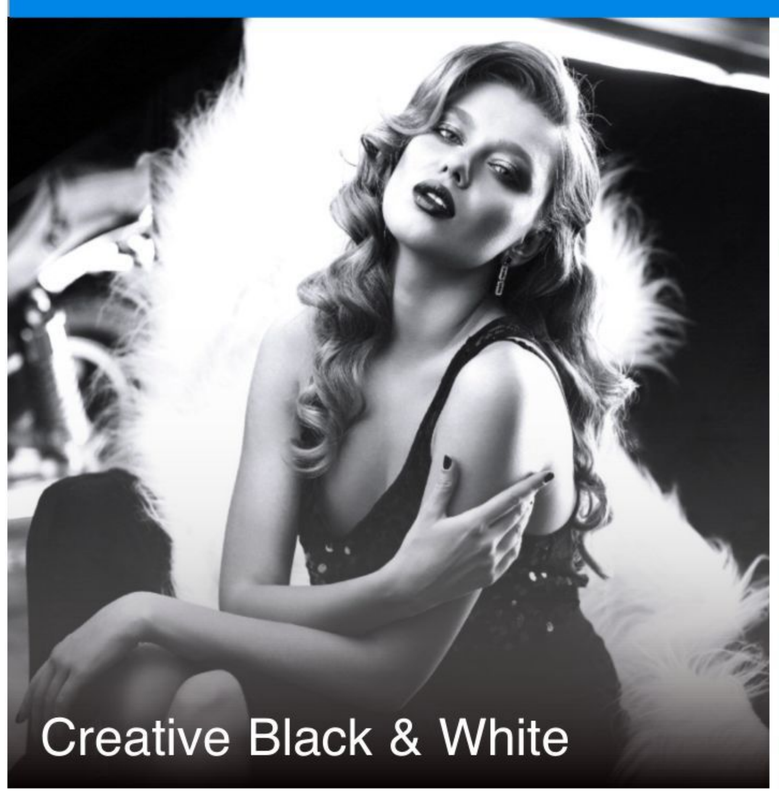

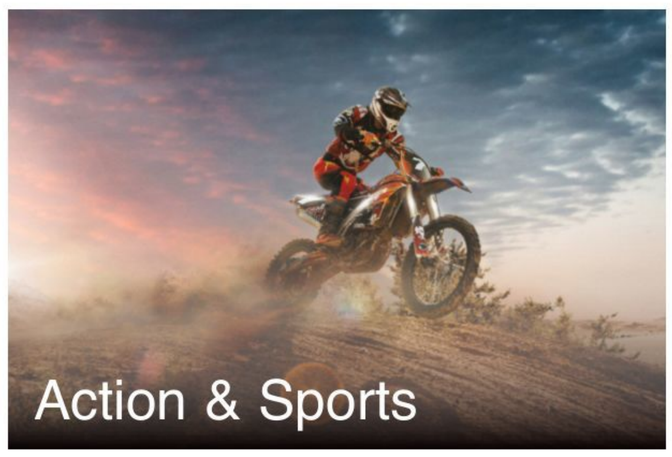

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Photoshop
THE COMPLETE GUIDE

Your photo editing journey starts here

Let us show you just how powerful Photoshop is, while discovering a range of tools and techniques that can make excellent digital artists of us all. Even if you are a beginner, Photoshop is easier to learn than you might imagine. This guide begins with the various tools and editing basics that can get you up and running in no time. The second half concentrates on some creative projects that will expand on what you've learnt and have you creating new images just like a digital professional. Mark Frost, Editor

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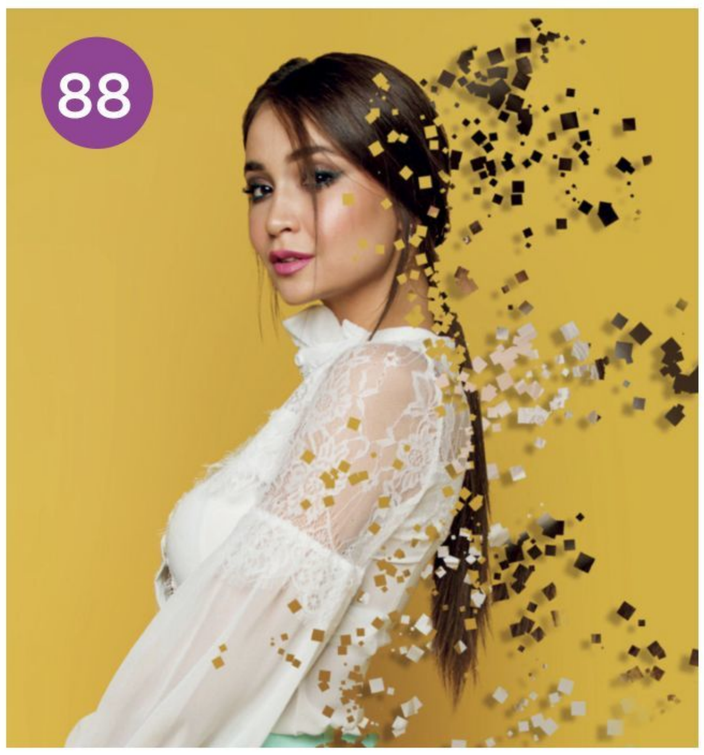
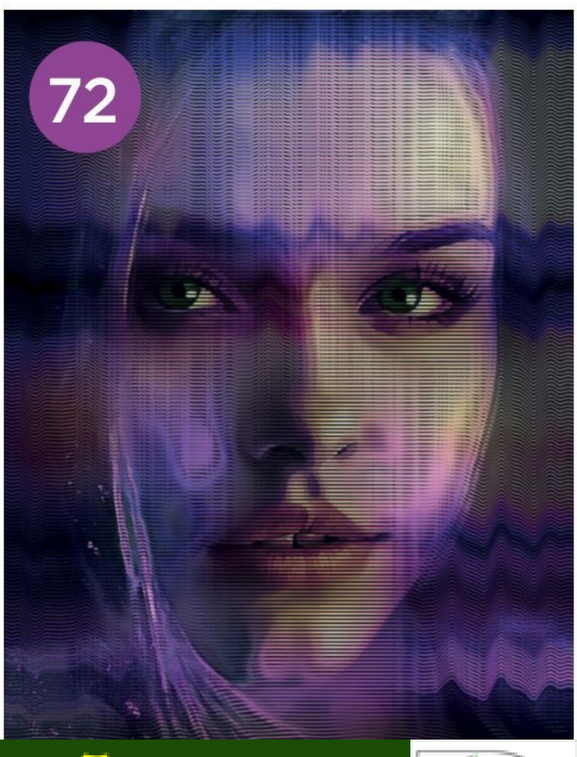
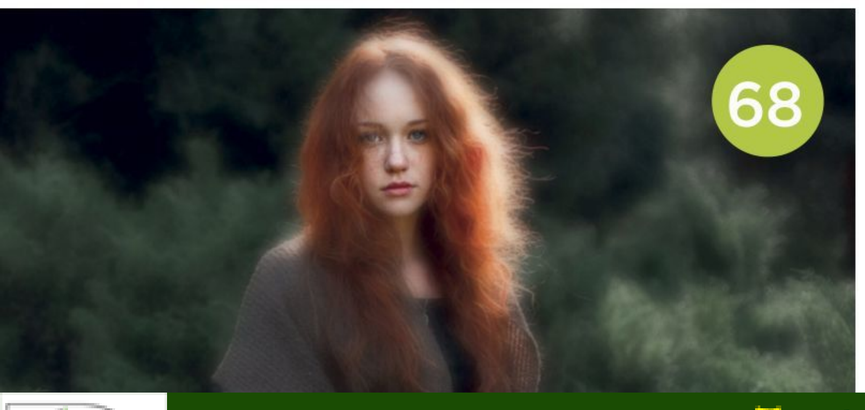
Contents

Photoshop - The Complete Guide







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What's New in Photoshop CC 2019?

8 The frame tool
8 Maths in number fields
8 Blend mode preview
9 The color wheel
9 Default text
9 Updated undo
9 Transform tool
9 Auto-commit
10 Select subject
10 Distribution spacing
10 Reference point
10 Scale UI
10 Double-click text edit
11 Content-aware fill
11 Locking the workspace
11 Go home
11 Symmetry

Uncovering Photoshop

14 The history of Photoshop
16 Main interface
18 Menus
20 The toolbar
22 Keyboard shortcuts
24 Using layers
26 Adjustment layers
28 Using layer masks
30 Selection tools
32 Making selections
34 Healing brush tools
36 Brushes, pencil and eraser

Exploring Photoshop

40 The clone stamp tool
42 Gradient fill and paint bucket
44 Modifying selections
46 Curves and levels
48 Cropping and resizing
50 Quick mask mode
52 Content-aware fill and scale
54 Adjusting exposure

Developing Your Skills

58 Contrast and saturation
60 Adding a graduated filter
62 Correcting lens distortion
64 Panorama stitching
66 Colour replacement
68 Soft focus technique

Putting it all Together

72 The glitch effect
80 Light beam effects
88 Pixel explosion
96 Making reflections
102 Star trail action
108 Wet plate portraits
114 Compositing images
122 Custom Photoshop brushes

What is Raw Mode?

130 Processing Raw files
132 Adobe Camera Raw interface
134 Adobe Camera Raw menus
136 Adobe Camera Raw workflow
138 Introduction to Lightroom CC

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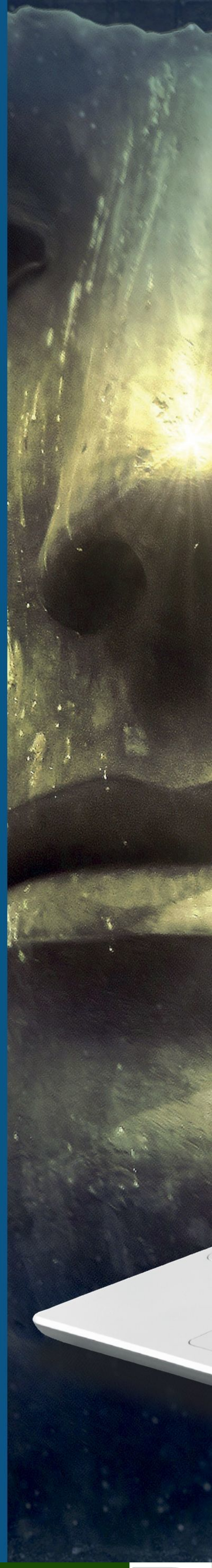
What's New in Photoshop CC 2019?

Here is the low down on some of the latest updates to Adobe's layer-based editor.



Contents

8	T he frame tool	10	Distribution spacing
8	Maths in number fields	10	Reference point
8	Blend mode preview	10	Scale UI
9	The color wheel	10	Double-click text edit
9	Default text	11	Content-aware fill
9	Updated undo	11	Locking the workspace
9	Transform tool	11	Go home
9	Auto-commit	11	Symmetry
9	Select subject		

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WHAT'S NEW IN PHOTOSHOP CC 2019?

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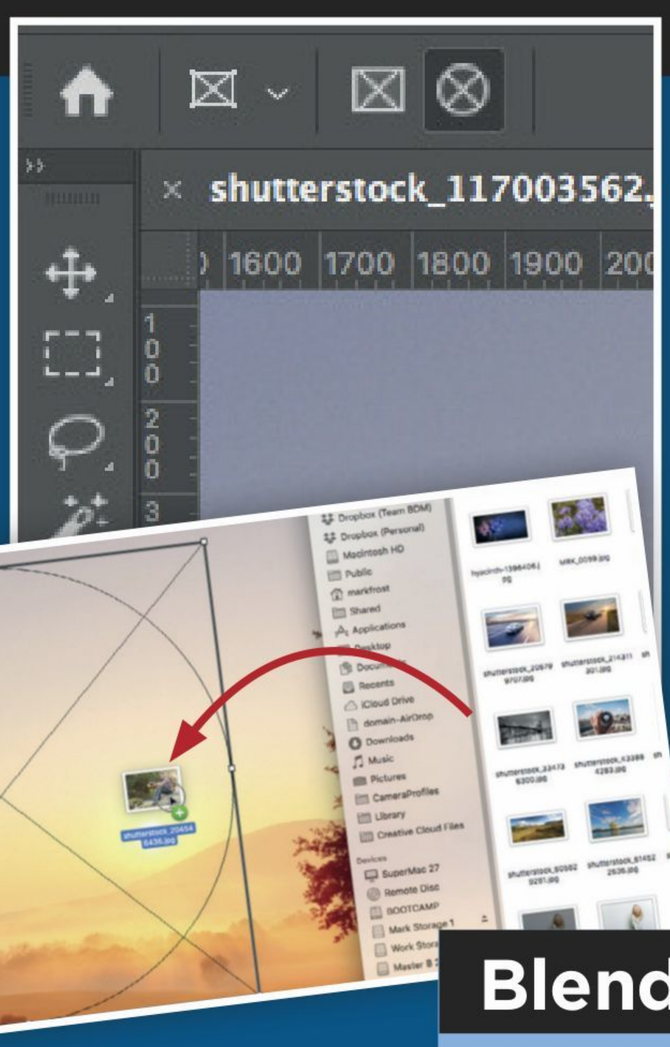
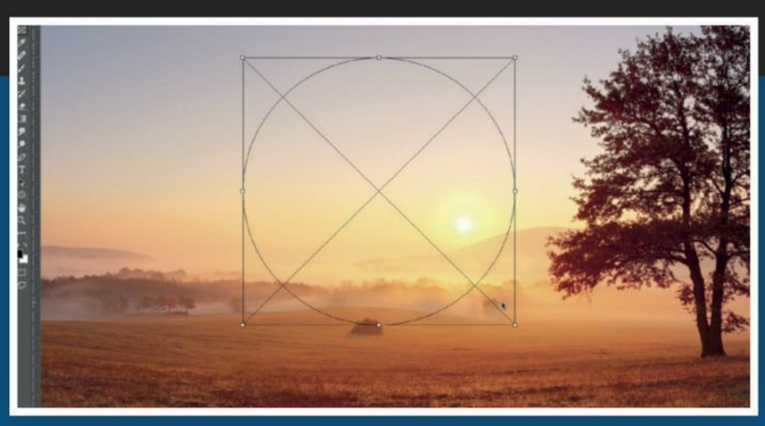
Check out these useful new features and tools

Photoshop can be considered something of an ever-expanding and complex beast. Since it was first created, every, subsequent iteration of the software has added feature upon feature. If you have subscribed to Photoshop CC, updates are a common occurrence and happen on a fairly regular basis. Sometimes the updates are subtle containing bug fixes and then there are the major updates adding new features and tools to Photoshop's arsenal. We thought it was time to take a look at the latest version of Photoshop CC 2019 (which was in its 20.0.5 release version at the time of writing) and explore some of those new features. Some are minor, while others are a little more expansive and could be a real benefit to your digital editing workflow. We'll list them for you and give you an idea of what each has to offer you, the end user.

The Frame Tool

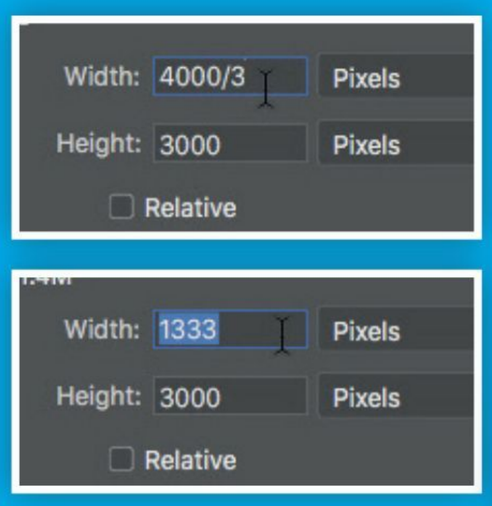
This tool is great for the quick and easy creation of rectangular or elliptical frames. Simply go to the toolbar and click the Frame Tool (K) then from the Tool options menu at the top of the screen, select your choice of rectangular or elliptical frame. You can then draw that shape on your document and make an instant frame ready for an image. You can easily drag any image onto a frame and it will automatically be sized to fit the frame you've made. Any images that you place are converted to Smart Objects, so you can edit them non-destructively. You're not limited to rectangles and ellipses either. Any shape or text you make can be converted into frames and filled with your images. Right-click on the layer that contains an item you want to convert, and choose Convert To Frame from the menu.

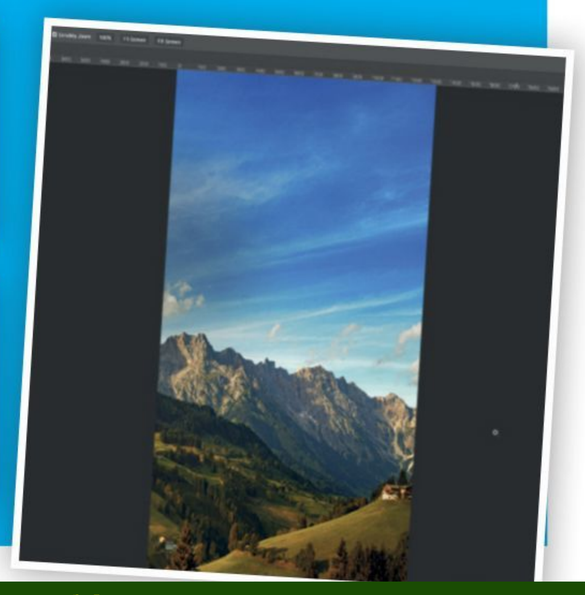




Maths in Number Fields

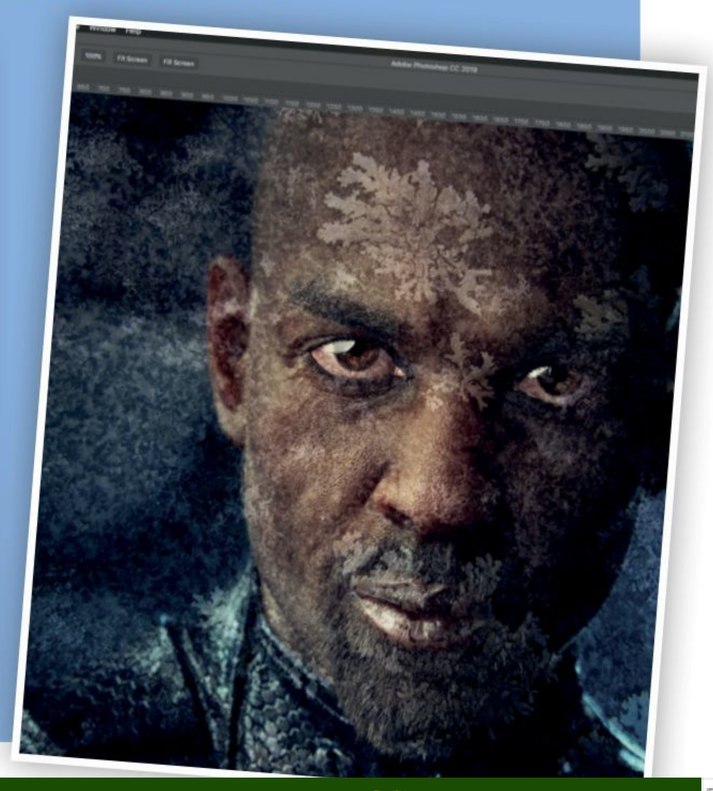
An interesting one this, basically now you can use simple maths in any numeric value input box or number field. As an example, if you have an image on a layer currently at 100% Opacity and want it to be exactly 1/12th the opacity (we're not sure who might find it useful), you can type 100/12 in the Opacity input field and the Opacity will be altered to 8% which is 1/12th the Opacity of 100%. If you have an image and want the Canvas Size to be precisely 1/3rd the width, you can call up the Canvas Size dialog box and add /3 to the Width value of your image. So, if you had a photo that was 4000 pixels wide and 3000 pixels deep and wanted the canvas to only be 1/3rd the width, adding that /3 will automatically size it 1333 pixels wide.





Blend Mode Preview

The Blend Mode preview is a handy new time saving feature that has recently been implemented. Up until now, if you wanted to know what affect a particular blend would have on your images, you had to select one and apply it. If it wasn't right, you had to undo that choice or go back in, choose a new blend mode and apply that to see the difference. Photoshop CC does away with Blend Mode guesswork. Now, if you click on the Blend Mode button and scroll through the available options, each one you roll over will be applied in real time, so you can instantly see what effect it has. It will not commit the blend you have chosen until you actually click the preferred blend. This also works when viewing the Layer Style dialog panel too. A small change, but a welcome one nonetheless.



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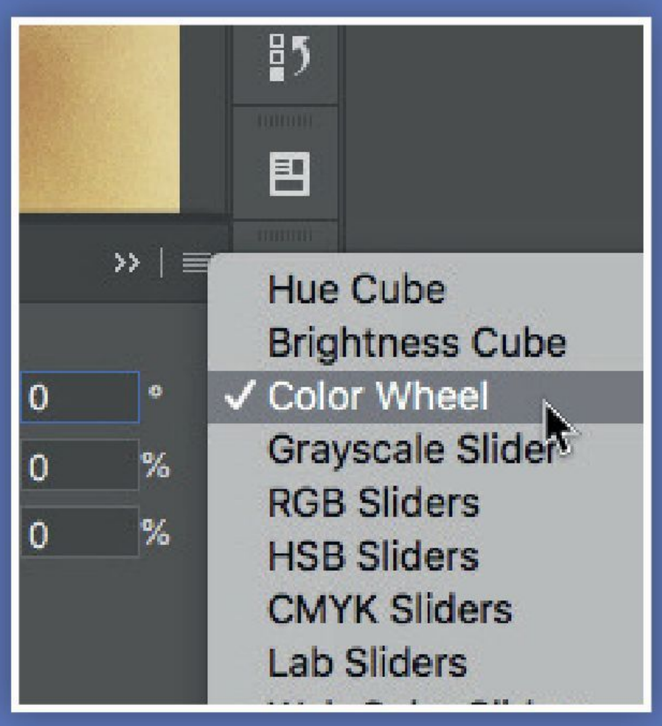
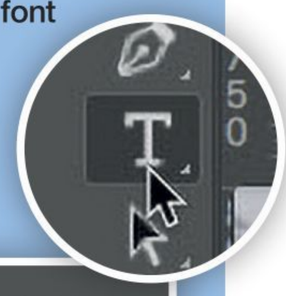
The Color Wheel

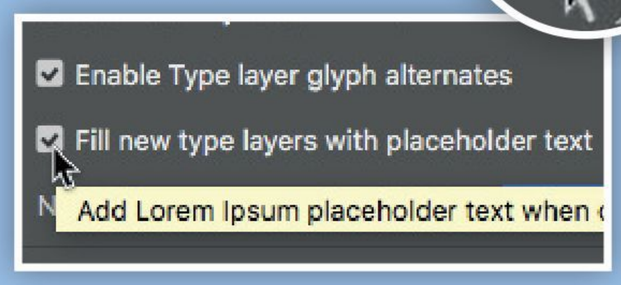
The Color Wheel is a useful new way to visualise the colour spectrum and choose colours for your artworks and design projects. It can be accessed via the Color panel fly-out menu or by pressing F6 and clicking the small Menu icon in the top right of the Colour panel. It operates by letting you control the Hue, Saturation, and Brightness of your colours. The outer wheel controls the Hue and the triangle within controls the Saturation and Brightness of the Hue chosen in the outer circle.



Default Text

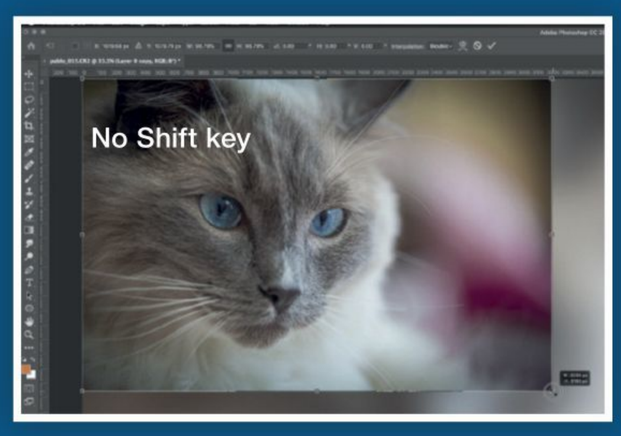
Placing a text layer within your document used to result in an empty box into which you would type your text and then format it with the correct font and type size. Now if you go to Edit > Preferences > Type, you can select the option to fill your new text layer with placeholder text

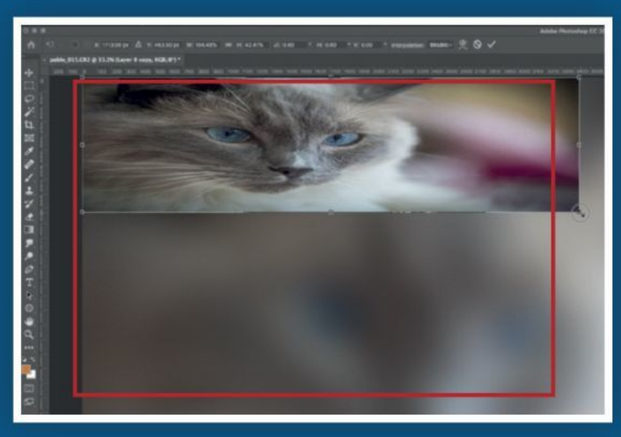




Transform Tool

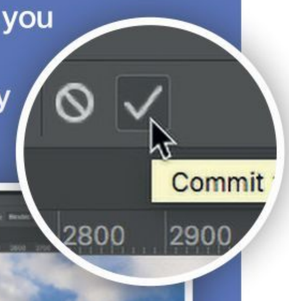
Photoshop has now swapped the methods by which you can proportionally transform your images and other layer types. The previous method was non-proportional by default. Meaning if you clicked and dragged a control point, it would scale and stretch without maintaining its original proportions. Proportional scaling was achieved by holding the Shift key as you dragged a control point. Now, in this latest version, the transformation of most layer types, such as pixel and bitmap layers, text layers, and Smart Objects is proportional by default. To transform non-proportionally, you now have to press the Shift key. Be aware that shapes and paths still transform non-proportionally.

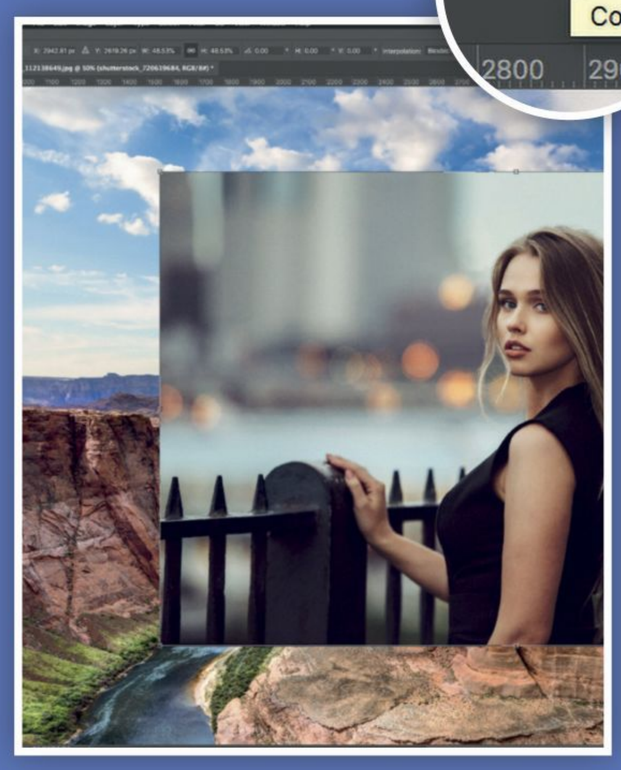




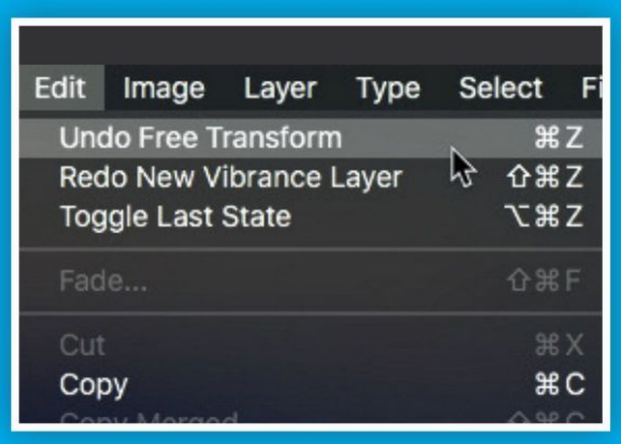
Auto-Commit

This is quite a simple one, but also one that does away with a potentially annoying trait of older versions of Photoshop, which was to display a pop-up asking if you wanted to commit the change you just made before you could move on to the next part of your workflow. Your other option was to hit the Enter key on your keyboard to commit a change you had just made, or go up to the top options menu bar and click the Commit button. Now, if you crop or transform, Auto-commit will be applied when you select a new tool, or select anything outside the currently active image or text.





Updated Undo



The Undo function has been updated once again, after a couple of odd functionality changes. In older versions of Photoshop you could press Cmd (Ctrl on PC) + Z to step back and undo multiple steps. Then they decided to change that and you had to press Cmd + Z for the initial undo and then press Cmd + Alt + Z to keep stepping backwards. In the 2019 version, if you press Cmd + Z now, you go back one step each time you use that command. Whereas pressing Cmd + Shift + Z, will step you forward each time. Hopefully Adobe will finally settle on which version they prefer, so we can settle down and memorise a keyboard shortcut that remains unchanged from here on.

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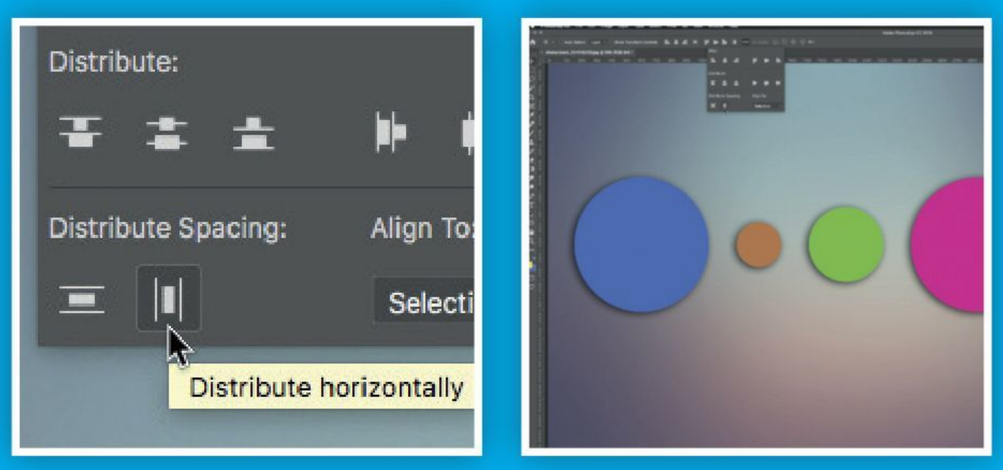
Select Subject

This is a new option available to you when you select the Quick Selection Tool or Magic Wand Tool. Before making any selections with those tools, click on the Select Subject button in the top options panel and then wait as Photoshop analyses the image. It will then automatically select what it thinks is the main subject. The accuracy of the selection may depend on how complex the image is and how prominent your main subjects are. You can still refine the selection afterwards, if necessary.

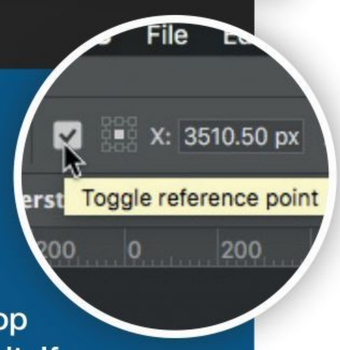
Distribution Spacing



Although Photoshop already has the available options to distribute objects on layers by spacing their centre points evenly, if objects were different sizes, the gaps between each item would vary. Now, if you have a number of different sized items on layers and you want to have them evenly spaced, you have two new options in the form of the Distribute Spacing buttons. Choose between Distribute Horizontally and Distribute Vertically. Select all the layers you want to distribute and then click on the distribution method of your choice. All the items, despite being different sizes, will be spaced with the same sized gap between them.

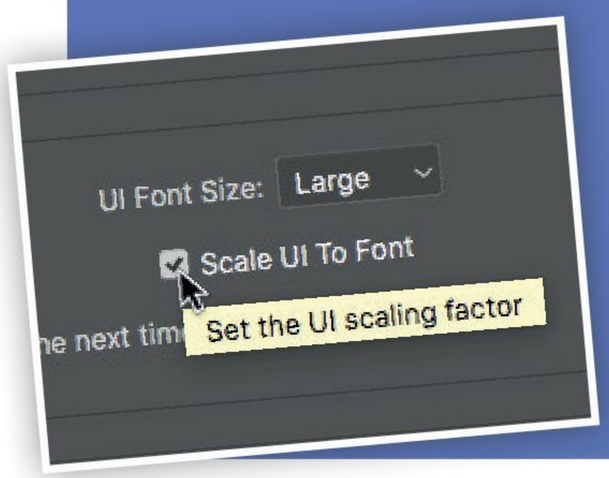
Reference Point

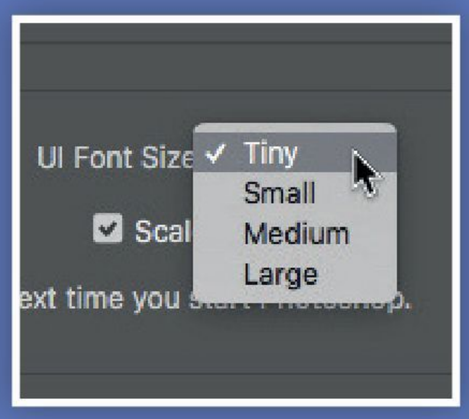
In previous versions of Photoshop, each time you clicked on an image, or text item, to move or transform it, you would see a small crosshair appear in the centre of the image. This was the movable reference point that would serve as the centre of rotation, or scale, for the active item. Now, in Photoshop CC 2019, Adobe has decided that it is hidden by default. If you want the reference point to be visible on every active item, you can go to the Tool options menu and click the Toggle Reference Point button.



Scale UI

This is a chance to exercise some control over the Photoshop user interface and scale it independently of your other applications. If you go to Edit > Preferences > Interface, you will see the new option to Scale UI To Font. You have several font sizes from which to choose, these are: Tiny, Small, Medium and Large. When you choose a preferred font size, in order to see the changes you've made you will have to restart Photoshop. For example, if you have originally had the Tiny UI font chosen, when you select Large and restart, you will see how the UI has scaled to accommodate the larger font size. The toolbar and all the other panels will also be bigger to allow for the lager text sizes being used.





Double-click Text Edit

Adding a text layer to your document remains the same as ever, but originally, if you wanted to edit a text layer, it meant having to select the Horizontal Text tool and then edit the text box in question with the Text tool active. Now you can simply double-click your chosen text with the Move tool and you can begin to edit it without the need to switch tools.

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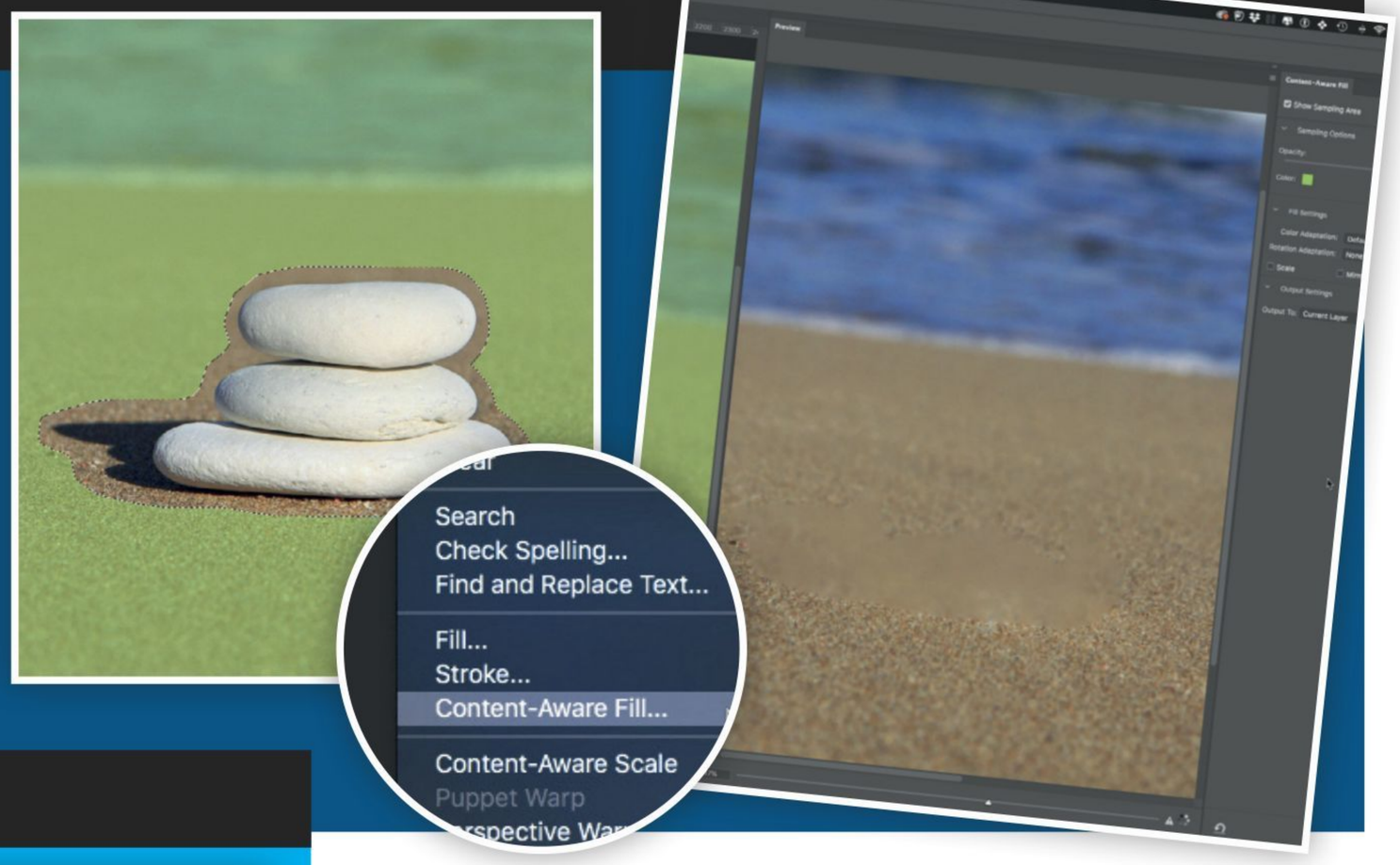
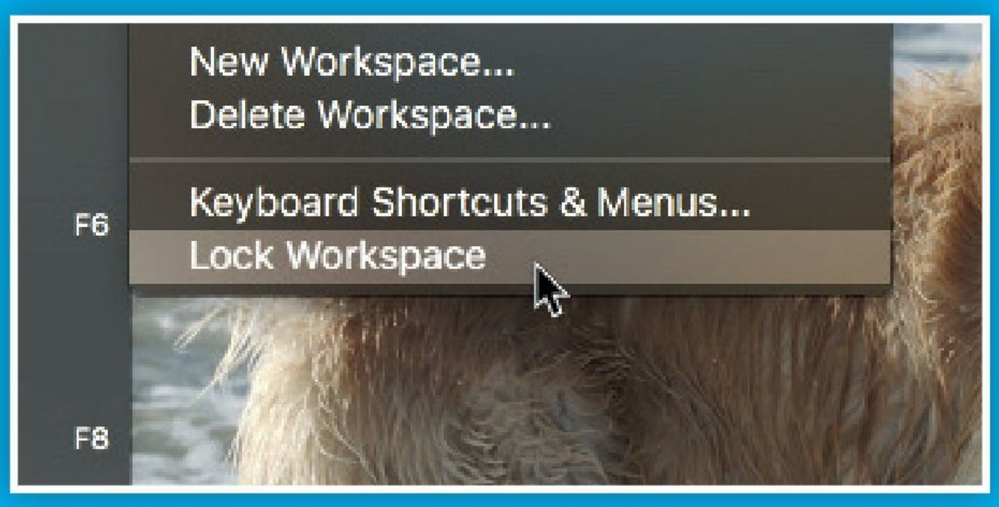
Content-Aware Fill

Older versions of Photoshop's Content-Aware fill option were originally accessed via the Shift + F5 Fill option and had few options for you to tweak. Now there is a brand new, dedicated Content-Aware workspace that you can access with more tools and functions available, as well as a live preview of the fill results before you have to commit to it. You can access the new fill tool by going to Edit > Content-Aware Fill. The screen you are presented with enables you to choose what areas of your image can be targeted, and used as sampling areas, for more accurate fill results. A mask overlay can be modified, with the tools provided, for the best seamless results. Each time you change the parameters, the live view will update so you always know what your end result will be.



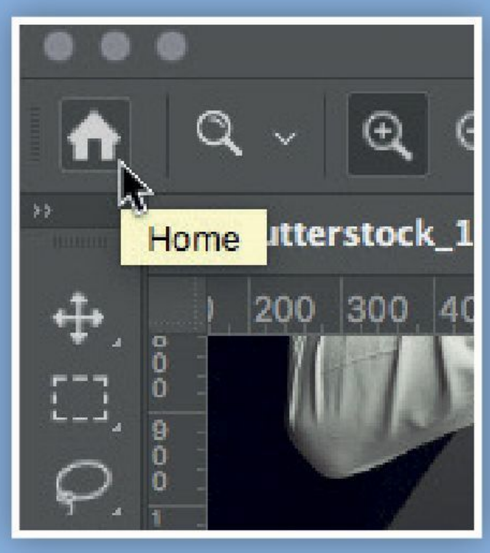
Locking the Workspace

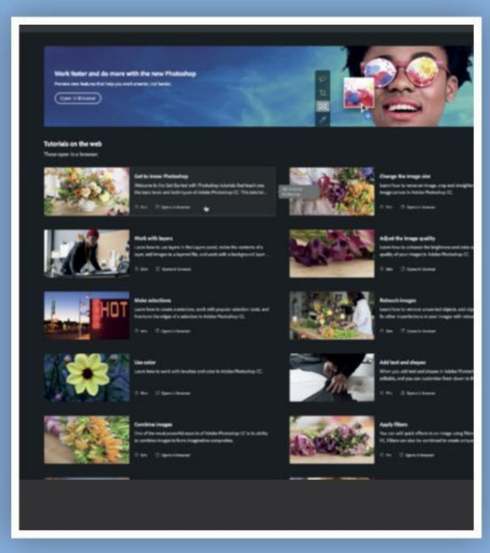


Found under Window > Workspace > Lock Workspace, this feature simply locks down all workspace panels so they can't be dragged and moved by accident while you are working. This appears to be particularly useful if you are working with Photoshop via a tablet and stylus and are in danger of dragging items around by leaving the stylus too close to the tablet surface. One thing to note however, is that if, for example, you currently have any floating panels, they can still be dragged and docked with any locked panels and will be retained there until you turn the Lock Workspace option off.

Go Home

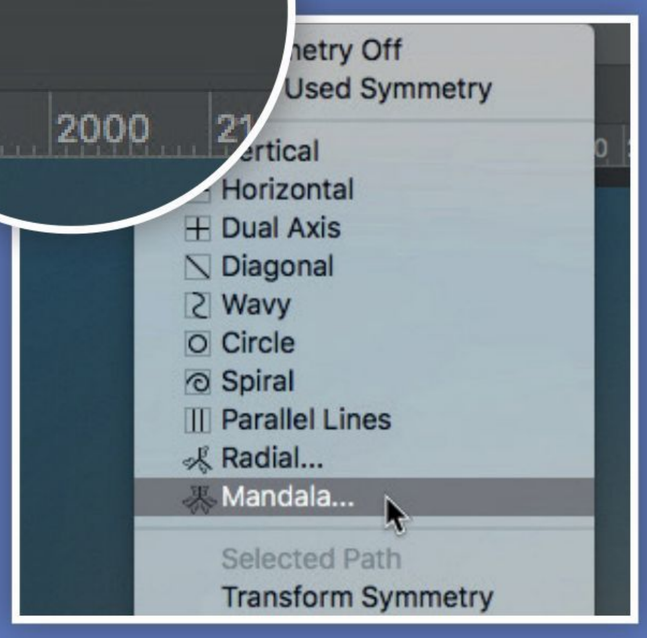
While you are working in the Photoshop workspace, you will now see that there is a small Home icon in the top right of the Tools options menu. If you click this, you will be taken to Photoshop's Home screen. You can access it at any time while working on a current document, or each time you start Photoshop. Using the Home screen, you can quickly access current working documents, Click on the Learn options and choose from an array of tutorials on the web or dig deeper via Adobe.com. Also, if you are a Lightroom user, you can view any LR photos you may have and import them.

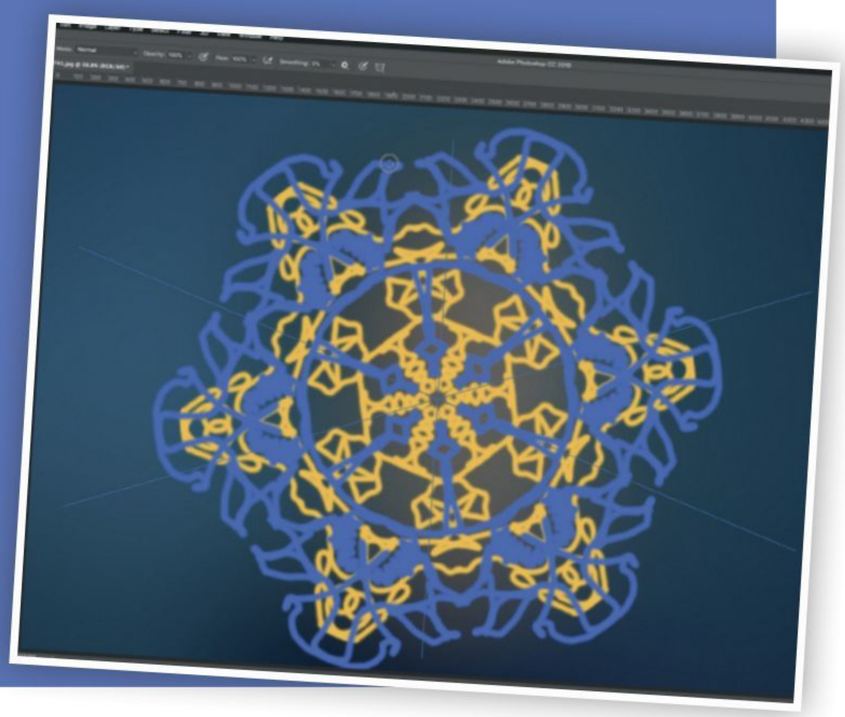




Symmetry

This feature has been implemented to work alongside your Paint Brush, Mixer Brush, Pencil, and Eraser tools. Click any of these tools and in the top options menu bar, you will see a Butterfly icon. If you click and hold it, a small dropdown menu will appear and you can choose from a number of symmetry options including Diagonal, Wavy, Mandala, and Spiral. Certain options let you choose how many lines of symmetry are used and then, as you paint, the strokes are reflected in each line of symmetry, a bit like a kaleidoscope. Others, such as circle, create a circular path along which your brush strokes follow. You can make some very delicate and intricate patterns with theses options.





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Uncovering Photoshop

Adobe Photoshop is a very complex piece of software. Even people who use it every day as part of their profession may only use a fraction of its capabilities and mastering its subtleties can take time. We can teach you some useful skills and help you to get more out of this fantastic program. Let's look at the main tools that Photoshop has on offer.

Contents

14	The history of Photoshop	26	Adjustment layers
16	Main interface	28	Using layer masks
18	Menus	30	Selection tools
20	The toolbar	32	Making selections
22	Keyboard shortcuts	34	Healing brush tools
24	Using layers	36	Brushes, pencil and eraser

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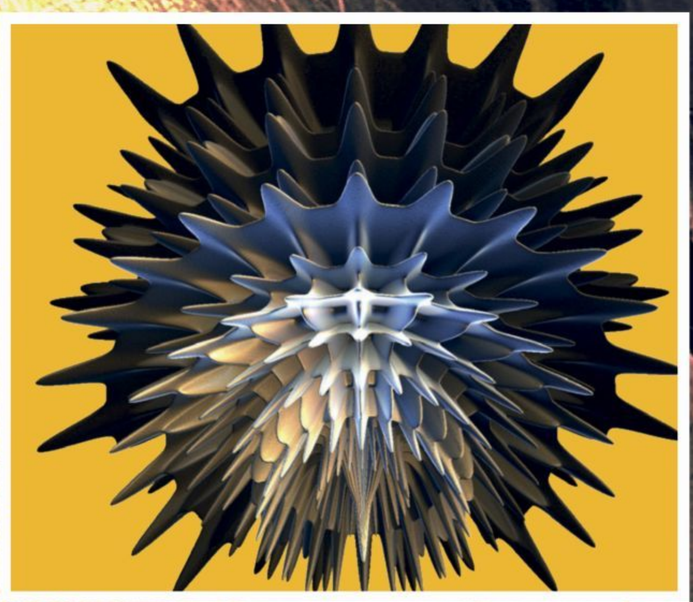

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The history of Photoshop

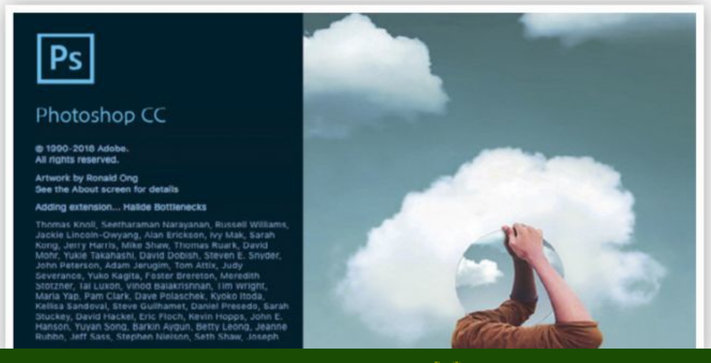
Before we begin, here's a little background information

Thomas and John Knoll created Photoshop in 1988 with the release of Photoshop 1.0 following in February 1990. It is a raster graphics editor and has become the predominant industry standard for digital image editing.

At its heart, it has a suite of tools that allow the user to edit, assemble and compose images using multiple layers and masks. It is this use of layers and masks that are the core features of Photoshop's power. Such layer-based editing means you can build very complex images and create incredible works of art using this method.

Photoshop's Strengths

- Photoshop is a pixel-level editor. Where Lightroom allows you to adjust pixels in an image, Photoshop lets you move them and manipulate them in a way that's nothing short of magical.
- Photoshop allows multiple layers to be applied to an image. You can keep images and edits on separate layers and modify them accordingly and independently. This is the basis of non-destructive editing.
- It's huge. Mind-bogglingly huge. The toolbox alone is the stuff of legend and contains everything the professional designer and photographer would ever need from a piece of software.
- You can record specific actions within Photoshop, allowing you to apply those actions to other images with a click of a button.
- You're able to blend many different layers together, masking areas of an image to protect it from being edited, even down to the pixel level.
- Almost anything is possible in Photoshop. If you can imagine a scene, then you're able to turn your wedding photos into a dramatic space battle or have a picture of the kids playing with a T-Rex. Remove objects, add objects, touch up skin tones, the list goes on and on.



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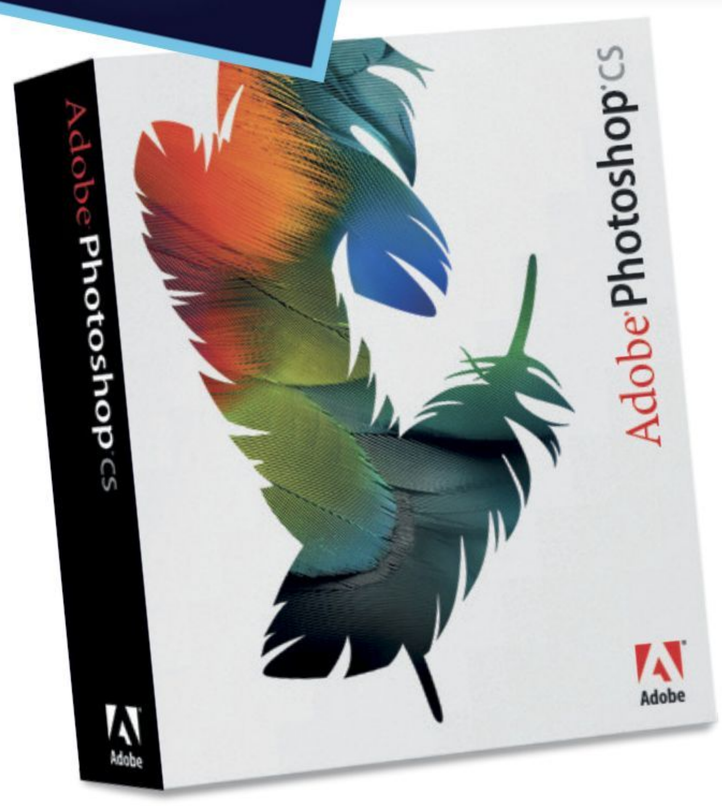
Photoshop: The Power to Create

The Tools for the Job

Photoshop also has a large variety of tools that allow the user to edit their images in numerous ways. Broadly speaking, the tools cover areas such as drawing, painting, navigation, content selection, text, masking and retouching. Many of the tools have additional variants that allow you to perform different tasks and functions.

As well as the ability to create pixel-based images and art, it can also create and manipulate text and handle a number of vector graphic formats, including EPS files and Adobe Illustrator files. Older styles of Photoshop had extended versions that allowed the creation and handling of 3D graphics, whereas Photoshop CC, the cloud-based subscription service version, has 3D capabilities built in as standard. It can also, to a limited degree, import and edit video files.

The program's main functionality can be enhanced with the addition of numerous, small add-on effects and programs called plug-ins. Although Adobe has a number of plug-ins, such as Adobe Camera Raw, it is mainly third party companies that develop them. Most of the plug-ins require specific versions of Photoshop to run, but a few of them can also act as stand-alone image editing applications.



Formats and Versions

When a Photoshop document is saved, it creates a default file that has the .PSD file extension. This stands for Photoshop Document and it contains all of the layers, adjustments, masks, transparent items and other content that make up the finished document. There is another Photoshop file format known as .PSB, which stands for Photoshop Big. This is a large document format that lets you use vastly increased image dimensions and file sizes.

Throughout its life, the program has undergone a large number of updates and version numbers. In 2003, the version numbers were replaced with CS plus a number, to reflect its current Creative Suite branding in use at the time. It wasn't until 2013, when Adobe changed its business model to subscription-based rental and the introduction of the Creative Cloud brand, that CS was replaced by the suffix CC. At the time of writing, Photoshop is in stable release CC 2019 (20.0.5).

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Main Interface

This is Photoshop's graphic user front end

Photoshop has a great interface, with a dark slate grey work area, slightly lighter menu and palette bars and sharp white text. It looks great and really makes photos stand out from the background. Let's see what it has to offer.

Menu Bar
You'll find all the menu options here and many more nested menus to control all aspects of Photoshop. Read on for more details.

Tool Palette
Here you'll find your main editing tools. The following pages look at the individual tools and what you can do with them.

Tool Option Bar
For each tool on the palette there are options, such as brush size or softness. You'll find them in this area.

Document Window
Each window you open will have its own tab to identify it. It includes the document name, current scaling and colour space being used.

Document Details
Here you'll find the compressed and real size of your document. You can also call up other information such as document pixel dimensions.

Active Image
The new interface provides a larger area to work on your images, with a darker background colour.

USEFUL TIP
You can set up your own workspaces to reflect the way you work and save them so that you can quickly switch from one to another.

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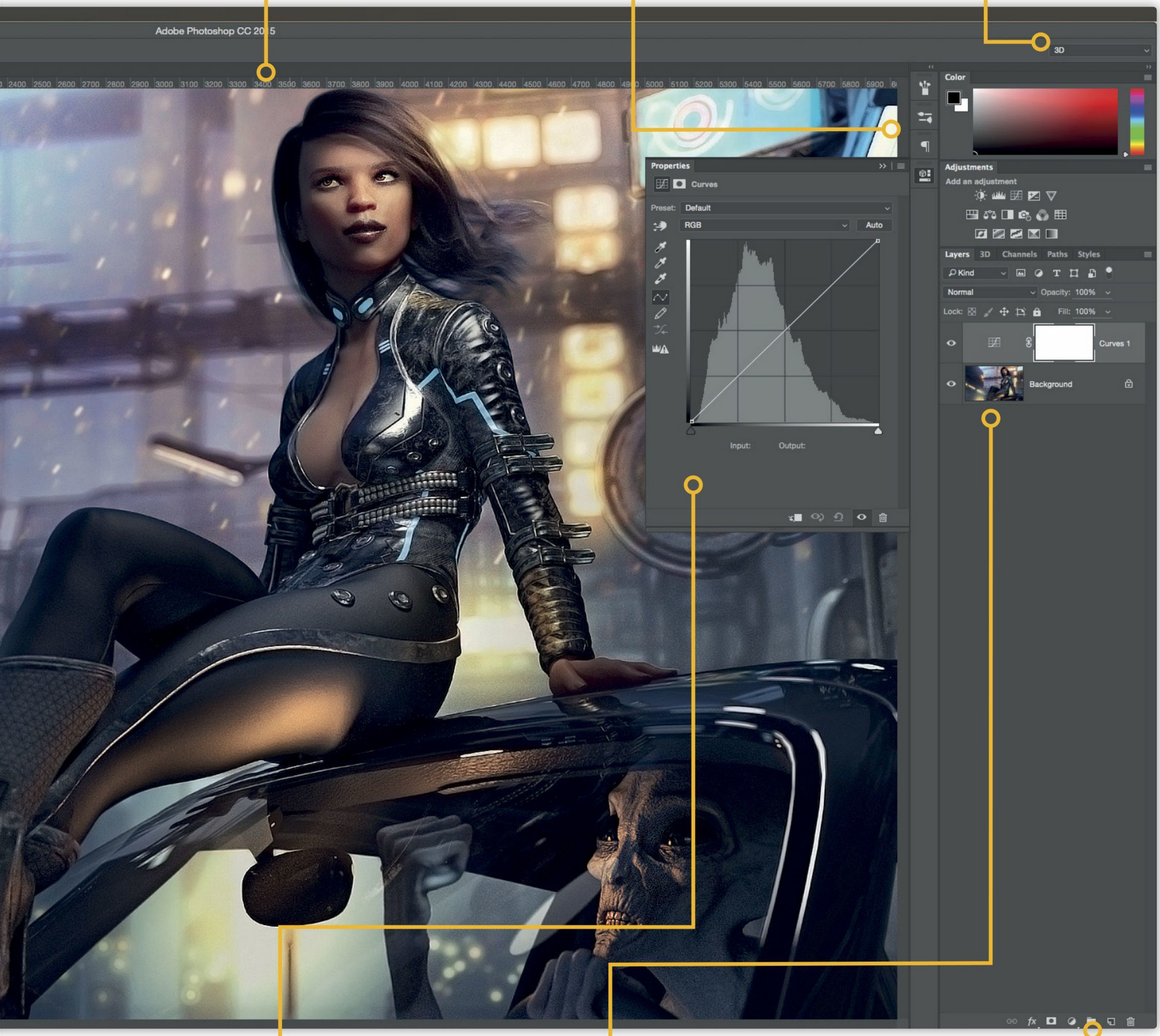
Rulers
Use these to accurately measure positions on your image and drag guidelines from here to help line up text and layers.

Palettes
There are a number of interchangeable palettes available, which you can choose from the Window menu.

Workspace Option
Choose between preset workspace arrangements, including 3D workspaces and other user options.



Fly-out Palettes
You can set up your own custom list of frequently used palettes and access them by clicking on these buttons.

Layer Palette
Here you'll find the layers of the image you're currently working on. Layers at the top of the stack will appear above those below.

Layer Options
Here you can add effects, layer styles, adjustments and other options to your currently active layers.

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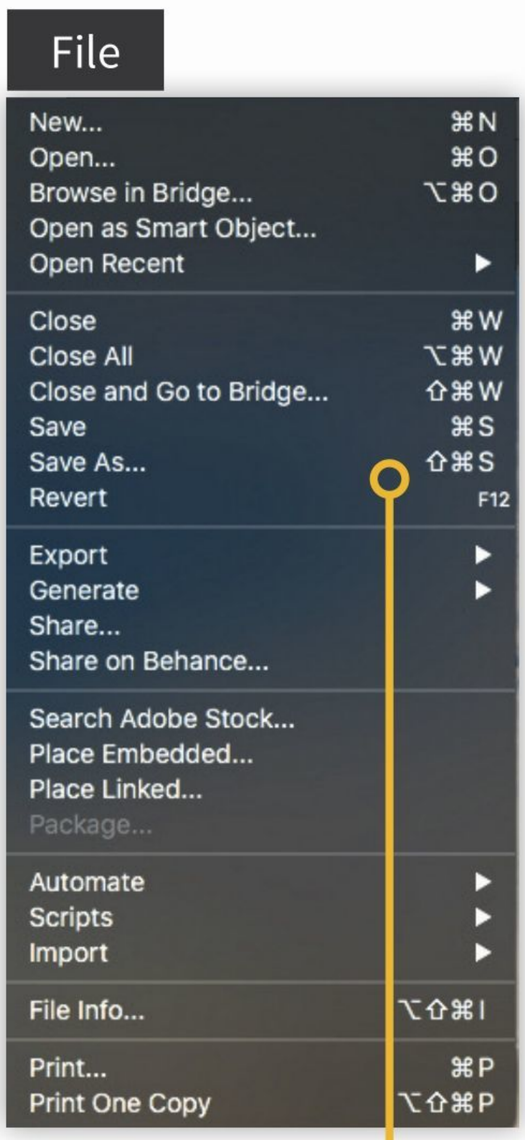
Menus

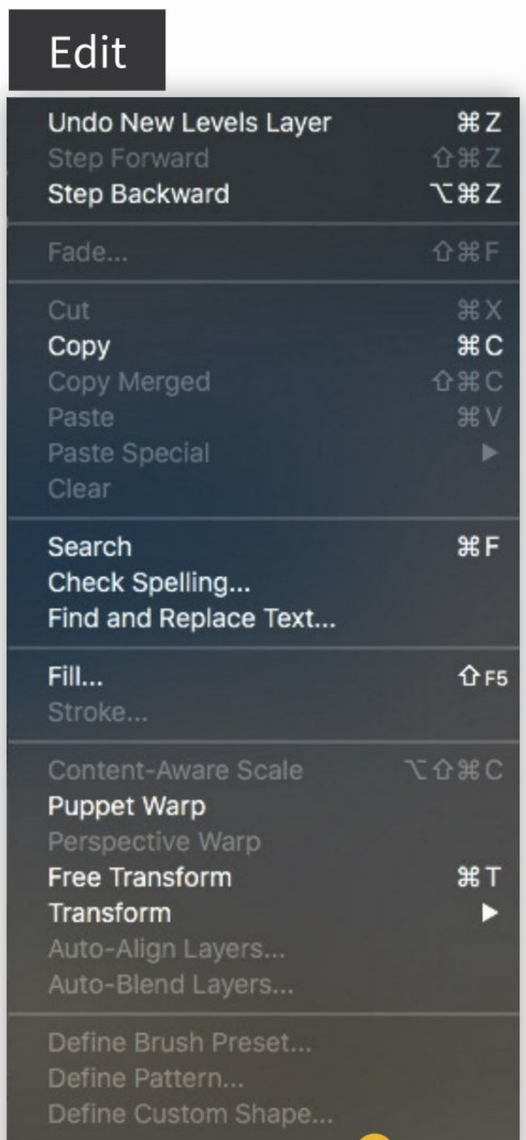
One look at the menus and you begin to understand Photoshop's complexity and versatility

The main interface of Photoshop has no fewer than eleven menus and a Help option, each with many options and with many additional nested sub-menus. It's vital to become familiar with the contents of the most important ones, because once you know where to look for everything you'll be able to work more quickly, efficiently and confidently. Let's take a look at some of the key menu listings.



File

The most important options here are New… to create a new document, Open… to open an existing document, Save to save your current project in its default file format and location and Save As… which gives you the option to save in a different format or location and to change the file name. Also in the File menu are the important Automate and Scripts sub-menus, which provide advanced batch processing and automated editing options.

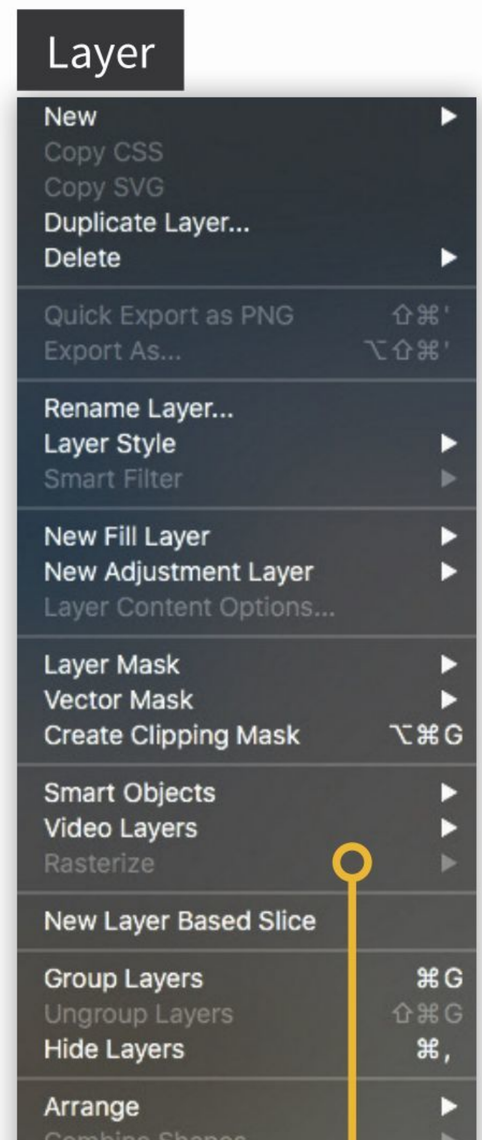


Edit

The Edit menu has many features you'll find familiar if you use a word processor, including Copy, Paste and Cut functions and even a spelling checker, although you'll probably find it quicker to use the keyboard shortcuts for these. You'll also find the useful features Fill, Stroke, Content-aware Scale, Puppet Warp and Free Transform, as well as the colour profiles and Preferences sub-menu.

Image

The Image menu is where you come to make changes to the whole image, including Mode (colour type), Image Size, Canvas Size and Image Rotation, but the most important thing you'll find here is the Adjustments sub-menu, which Adobe could probably have made into a separate main menu in its own right. Under Adjustments you'll find all your main image controls, such as Brightness/Contrast, Levels, Curves, Hue/Saturation and many more. You'll find many of these duplicated on the Adjustment Layer palette.



Layer

Layers are a vital feature of Photoshop. The most important options here though are New, which lets you create and name a new layer and New Adjustment Layer, which adds a non-destructive editing layer to your image. The Merge and Flatten options can also be found here along with Mask and Slice options.

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Type

Add Fonts from Typekit...
Panels
Anti-Alias
Orientation
OpenType
Extrude to 3D
Create Work Path
Convert to Shape
Rasterize Type Layer
Convert Text Shape Type
Warp Text...
Match Font...
Font Preview Size
Language Options
Update All Text Layers
Replace All Missing Fonts
Resolve Missing Fonts...
Paste Lorem Ipsum
Load Default Type Styles
Save Default Type Styles

Type

The latest version of Photoshop includes many new text presentation and handling options. Most of these can be found in the fly-out Character and Paragraph panels on the right of the screen or accessed from the Panels option at the top of the menu, but others can be found here, including 3D text, warping and special foreign language options.

Filter

Last Filter ^⌘F
Convert for Smart Filters
Filter Gallery...
Adaptive Wide Angle... ⌥⇧⌘A
Camera Raw Filter... ⇧⌘A
Lens Correction... ⇧⌘R
Liquify... ⇧⌘X
Vanishing Point... ⌥⌘V
3D
Artistic
Blur
Blur Gallery
Brush Strokes
Distort
Noise
Pixelate
Render
Sharpen
Sketch
Stylize
Texture
Video
Other
Nik Collection
Browse Filters Online...

Filter

Photoshop CS6 and Creative Cloud saw a major overhaul of the Filters menu, with many new options, including the amazing Adaptive Wide Angle feature. There's the ever-popular Liquify filter, automatic lens distortion correction, as well as a huge range of other filters and effects. Don't go too wild though, most of them are best used sparingly!

View

Proof Setup
Proof Colors ⌘Y
Gamut Warning ⇧⌘Y
Pixel Aspect Ratio
Pixel Aspect Ratio Correction
32-bit Preview Options...
Zoom In ⌘+
Zoom Out ⌘−
Fit on Screen ⌘0
Fit Artboard on Screen
100% ⌘1
200%
Print Size
Screen Mode
✓ Extras ⌘H
Show
✓ Rulers ⌘R
✓ Snap ⇧⌘;
Snap To
Lock Guides ⌥⌘;
Clear Guides
Clear Selected Artboard Guides
Clear Canvas Guides
New Guide...
New Guide Layout...
New Guides From Shape
Lock Slices
Clear Slices

View

The View menu is home to the basic viewing controls such as zoom level, but again you'll want to control those using shortcuts to save time. You'll also find the very useful controls for the Snap functions, including guide lines, essential when you're laying out a design or composing text on an image.

Window

Arrange
Workspace
Find Extensions on Exchange...
Extensions
3D
Actions ⌥F9
Adjustments
Brush Settings F5
Brushes
Channels
Character
Character Styles
Clone Source
Color F6
Glyphs
Histogram
History
Info F8
Layer Comps
✓ Layers F7
Learn
Libraries
Measurement Log
Navigator
Notes
Paragraph
Paragraph Styles
Paths
✓ Properties
Styles
Swatches
Timeline
Tool Presets
✓ Application Frame
✓ Options
✓ Tools
✓ landscape 065.jpg

Window

This isn't a menu you'll be using constantly, but it does hold some very useful features, such as the Arrange and Workspace sub-menus, which allow you to control the layout of tabs, windows and the various tool palettes and panels.

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The Toolbar

Let's take a look at Photoshop's main editing tools

The main elements of the Photoshop Toolbar haven't changed all that much since the introduction of Layers and the Move tool with version 3.0, back in 1994. The shape has changed a bit, elongating into a single column to take advantage of today's larger monitors and a few more tools have been added, but anyone who's familiar with any previous version of Photoshop will soon feel right at home.

USEFUL TIP

Most of the tools in the toolbar have alternative options, denoted by the small arrow below and right of the icon. Click and hold on the icon to see the pop-up alternative menu. This diagram shows the alternative menus for each tool. You can move the Toolbar around by dragging the border at the top, or switch back to the old two-column look by clicking the double arrow.

MOVE
MARQUEE
LASSO
MAGIC WAND
CROP
EYEDROPPER
SPOT HEALING
BRUSH
CLONE STAMP
HISTORY BRUSH
ERASER
GRADIENT
SMUDGE
BURN
PEN
TYPE
PATH SELECTION
LINE
HAND
ZOOM
EDIT TOOLBAR
SWITCH COLOUR
SET COLOUR
QUICK MASK MODE
SCREEN MODE

Move

Used to move pixel information on the active layer or selection. You can also create multiple layouts using the Artboard feature.

Move Tool	V
Artboard Tool	V

Marquee

The Marquee is used to select an area of the active layer. Alternative options include an elliptical shape and single row or column selections.

Rectangular Marquee Tool	M
Elliptical Marquee Tool	M
Single Row Marquee Tool	
Single Column Marquee Tool	

Lasso

The Lasso is also used to make area selections from the active layer, but this time the shape can be irregular, marked out by clicking or drawing a line around the area to be selected.

Lasso Tool	L
Polygonal Lasso Tool	L
Magnetic Lasso Tool	L

Magic Wand

Yet another area selection tool, this one can select an area based on its colour. The alternative option is Quick Selection, which as the name suggests can be used to paint an area into the selection created.

Quick Selection Tool	W
Magic Wand Tool	W

Crop

The Crop tool has seen a major overhaul in Photoshop CS6, but it still does the same job. Use it to select one area of an image and discard the rest.

Crop Tool	C
Perspective Crop Tool	C
Slice Tool	C
Slice Select Tool	C

Eyedropper

The Eyedropper and its extensive list of alternatives provide you with tools that can tell you more about the image you're working on, such as colour values, sizes and even a tool for counting objects in an image.

Eyedropper Tool	I
3D Material Eyedropper Tool	I
Color Sampler Tool	I
Ruler Tool	I
Note Tool	I
Count Tool	I

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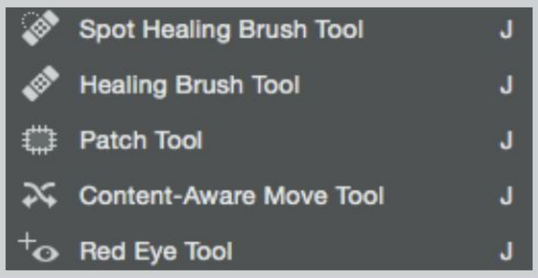
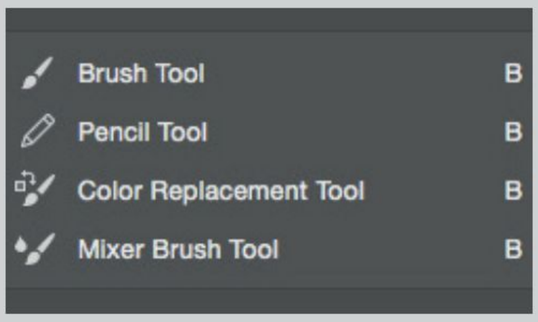
Spot Healing

Another tool that has seen some changes in the latest version, the Spot Healing tool is for removing small blemishes such as stray hairs or dust spots from your images.



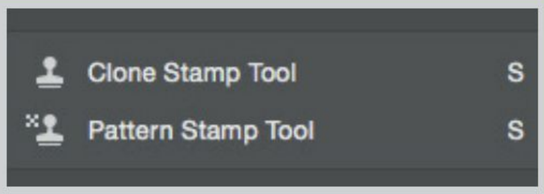
Brush

The Brush tool is one of the most basic and most useful for all types of image editing, painting and drawing. Alternatives include the equally useful Pencil tool, as well as colour replacement and colour mixing.



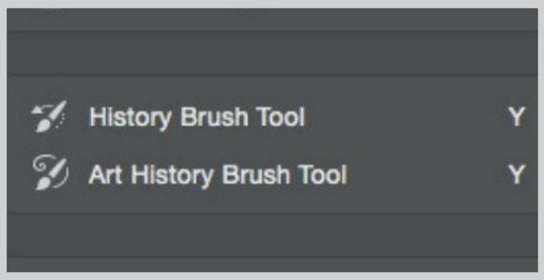
Clone Stamp

Clone Stamp is used to copy one area of an image onto another. It can remove any unwanted element in your image.



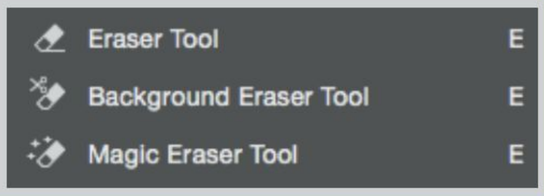
History Brush

Used in conjunction with the History palette, the History Brush can be used to selectively restore certain areas of an image to a previous state. It's useful if you're making a change to an image.



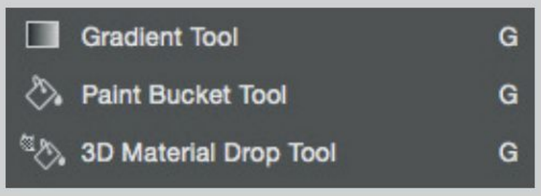
Eraser

As the name implies, the Eraser tool is a special brush that can delete an area of an image, layer or selection.



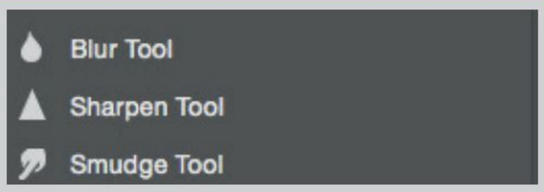
Gradient

The Gradient tool can apply a fill-in to an area that fades gradually from one colour to another.



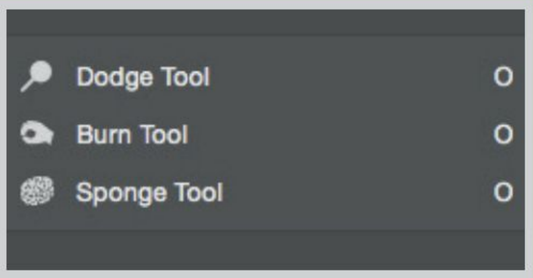
Smudge

The Smudge tool, along with its alternatives, can be used to blend and alter colours and details in the image.



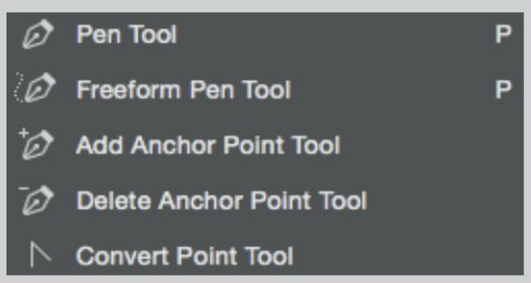
Burn

Burn and its alternatives Dodge and Sponge, are based on photographic darkroom techniques and are used to selectively lighten, darken images.



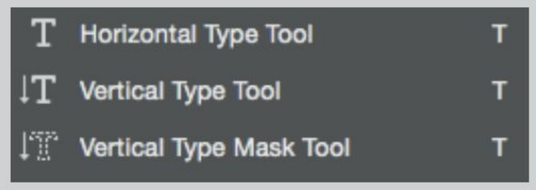
Pen

The Pen tool is used to draw smooth curves for lines or selections, using something called Bezier curves. They can produce great results.



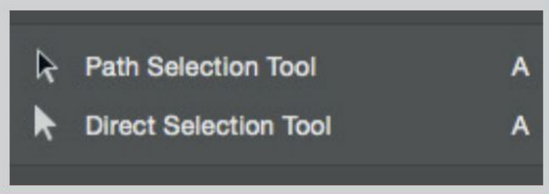
Type

The Type tool is another area that received a major overhaul in version CS6. It is now part of a powerful text system.



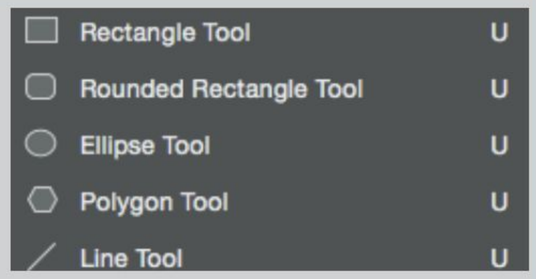
Path Selection

Paths are used for many purposes in Photoshop. Use this tool and its alternative to select a path to use.



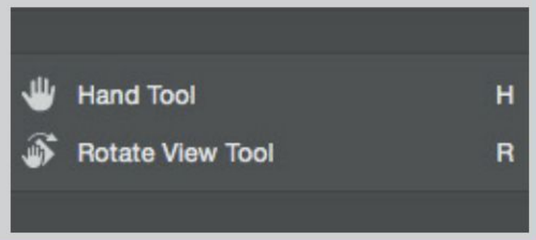
Line

The Line tool and its alternatives are used to create shapes and paths on your images. It is very useful for graphics work and adding arrows and custom shapes.



Hand

The hand tool is used to navigate around a large image. It is most often used via its default keyboard shortcut, the space bar.



Zoom

This tool simply zooms in to an area of the image. Again it is most often used via a shortcut, in this case CTRL + or CTRL -.

Edit Toolbar

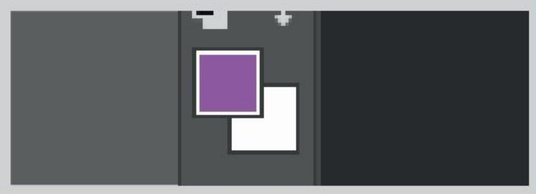
The Edit Toolbar enables you to customise your toolbar to add or remove tools to your specific requirement.

Switch Colour

Clicking on this swaps the current background colour for the current foreground colour.

Set Colour

Clicking here brings up the colour chooser palette, which lets you choose the foreground or background colours.

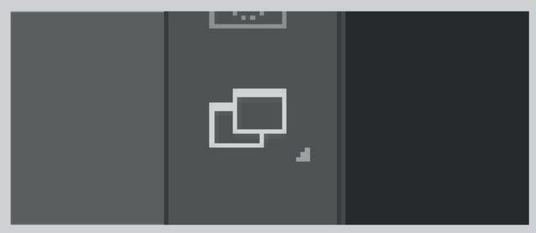


Quick Mask mode

The Quick Mask mode is a great way of making complex selections using the drawing and painting tools.

Screen Mode

Click here to switch between the current screen mode and a full-screen view of your current image.



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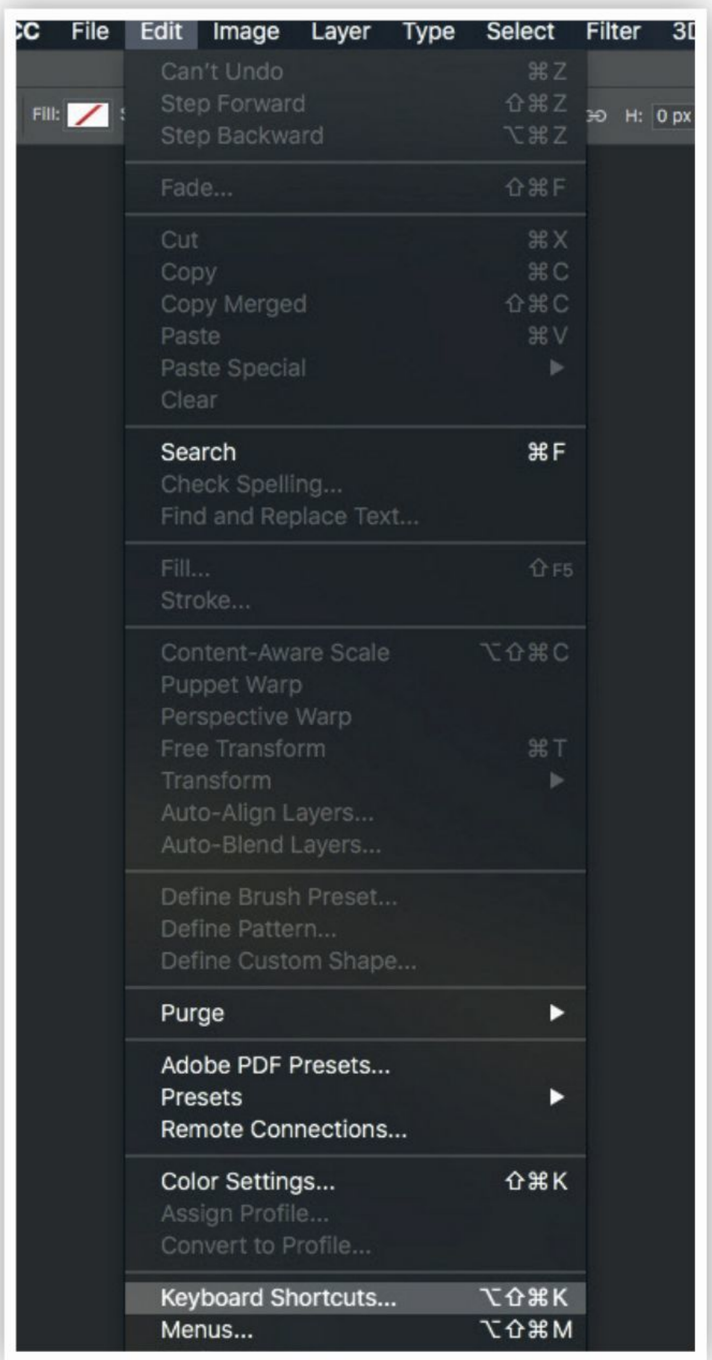
Keyboard Shortcuts

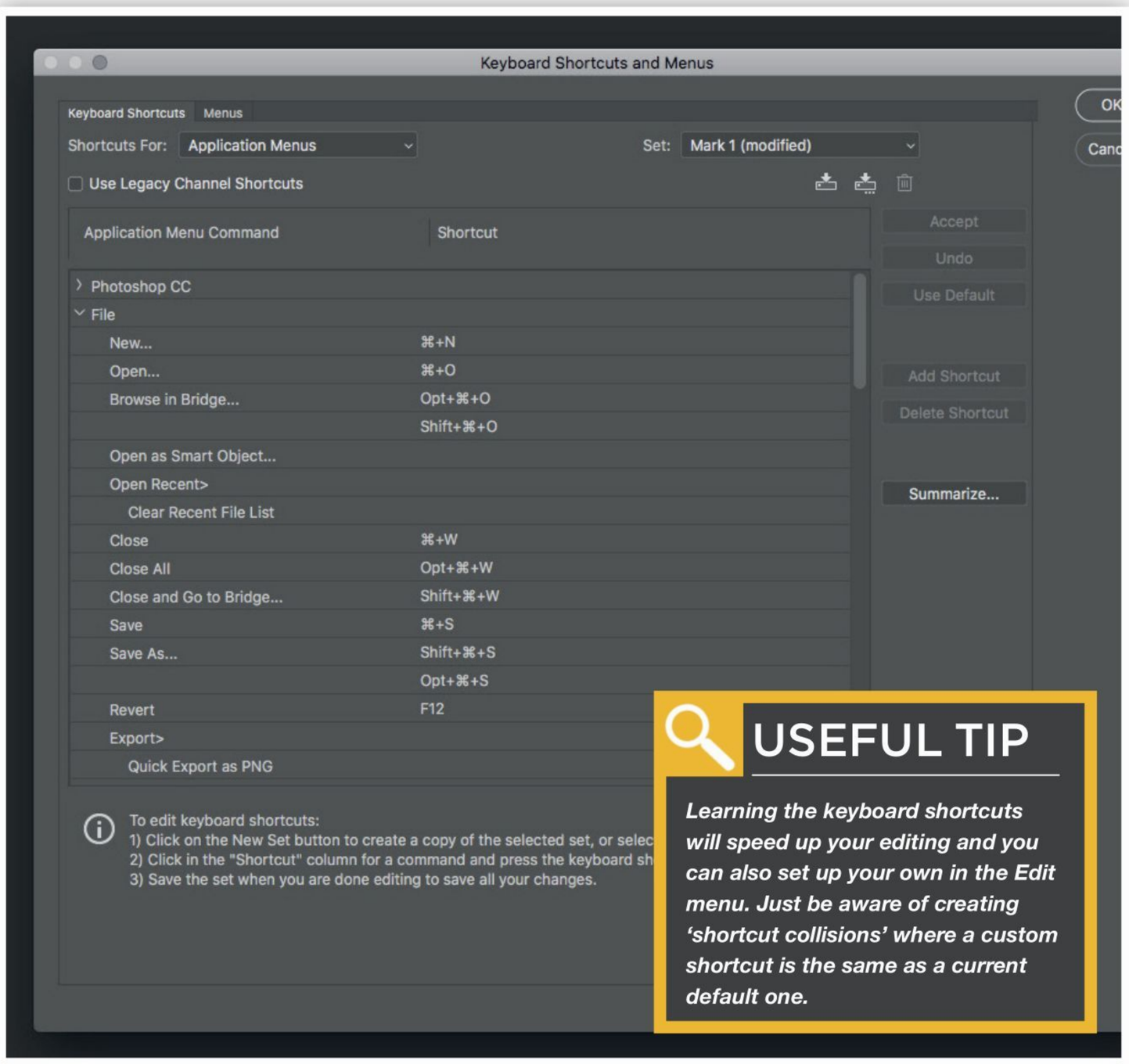
There's always a quicker way of doing almost everything in Photoshop

One of Photoshop's best features is its huge list of fully customisable keyboard shortcuts. Almost all of the program's functions can be accessed quickly by pressing various combinations of keys and once you learn those shortcuts your workflow will speed up immensely. You can even make up your own for your most frequently-used operations.

Customising Shortcuts

You'll find the Keyboard Shortcut preferences menu at the bottom of the Edit menu, although naturally it has its own keyboard shortcut, Alt+Shift+Ctrl+K. You'll find an exhaustive list of all Photoshop functions, broken down into category headings matching the names of the main menus. You'll find that many operations already have their own default shortcuts. You can easily change these, or even add your own new ones. To apply a shortcut to an operation, first locate it in the list and then click in the space to the right of the name. You'll see a small text window appear and the next key or combination of keys that you press will appear here. If the combination is already used by another shortcut you'll see a notification warning you of this and asking if you want to proceed with the change. If you click Accept the new shortcut will be applied immediately. Take care when making your own shortcuts that you don't accidentally overwrite some useful defaults.





USEFUL TIP

Learning the keyboard shortcuts will speed up your editing and you can also set up your own in the Edit menu. Just be aware of creating 'shortcut collisions' where a custom shortcut is the same as a current default one.

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Some Useful Default Shortcuts

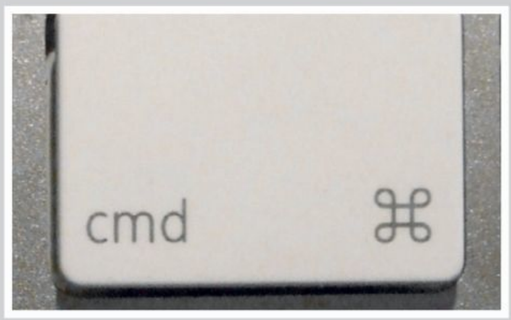
Here are some of the more commonly-used shortcuts for image editing. There are many more of course, but it's worth taking the time to memorise these ones. You'll work efficiently and they'll make your life a whole lot easier.

CREATE NEW DOCUMENT control + N	**REDO LAST STEP** shift + control + Z	**INVERT SELECTION** shift + control + I	**PASTE FROM CLIPBOARD** control + V
CREATE NEW LAYER shift + control + N	**LEVELS** control + L	**ZOOM IN VIEW** control + + =	**COPY TO CLIPBOARD** control + C
CLOSE CURRENT DOCUMENT control + W	**CURVES** control + M	**ZOOM OUT VIEW** control + — _	**CUT TO CLIPBOARD** control + X
CLOSE ALL DOCUMENTS alt + control + W	**INCREASE BRUSH SIZE** }]	**FIT ON SCREEN** control +) 0	**FREE TRANSFORM** control + T
SAVE CURRENT DOCUMENT control + S	**DECREASE BRUSH SIZE** { [	**100% ZOOM** alt + control +) 0	**TURN SNAP ON OR OFF** shift + control + : ;
SAVE AS control + shift + S	**BRING CURRENT LAYER TO TOP** shift + control + }]	**SHOW RULERS** control + R	**SELECT ALL ON CURRENT LAYER** control + A
UNDO control + Z	**MOVE CURRENT LAYER UP** control + }]	**SHOW OR HIDE GRID** control + " '	**DESELECT ALL** control + D
UNDO LAST STEP alt + control + Z	**MOVE CURRENT LAYER DOWN** control + { [	**SHOW OR HIDE GUIDES** control + : ;	**HELP** F1

Important Note

On a PC the Ctrl key for your shortcuts looks like this on a standard Windows keyboard. If you use a PC and you see an instruction in this title to use a Cmd key, then just use Ctrl instead.

On a Mac computer the Ctrl key is replaced by the Cmd key on a standard Mac keyboard. If you use a Mac and you see an instruction in this title to use the Ctrl key, just use your Cmd key instead.



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Using Layers

Understanding layers is fundamental to Photoshop editing

The concept of Layers was first introduced with Photoshop 3.0 in 1994, and has become the very core of Photoshop image editing, as well as being imitated by every other image editing program on the market. Layers are exactly what they sound like; the elements of the image are stacked up and displayed in descending order. Since layers can include transparency, lower layers can be visible through higher layers.

Effects, adjustments and operations can be applied to individual layers, or to all the layers at once. You can: move layers around relative to one another, change the order of layers in the stack, turn layers on or off and delete layers, without affecting the others. Some people seem to have a hard time getting their head around the concept of layers, so the best way to think of them is as a pile of glass panels with the elements that make up the image painted onto them, with you looking down on them from above to see how they stack up.

Layers have a number of advantages. For one thing, the ability to change one element on one layer without affecting the other layers means that you can edit your image non-destructively. For example if you want to perform an operation on a layer but you're not sure how it's going to turn out, just make a duplicate layer, set the original to be invisible, then do your editing on the copy. If you don't like the result, you can simply delete it and go back to the original.

There are four main types of layer. There are Pixel layers, which contain the graphical elements of the image. There are Text layers, which contain text information which can be edited and resized. There are Vector layers, which contain vector information such as shapes and work paths, and then there are Adjustment layers, which contain embedded commands that affect the layer immediately below. We'll look at Adjustment layers in more detail on the following pages.

There is a downside to using layers, and that is the file sizes they generate. Adding layers and the information that goes along with them massively increases the size of the file, so when you've finished editing and you want to save the picture you've created, it's usually a good idea to Flatten the image, which merges all the layers together into a single image.

USEFUL TIP

Click on a layer, press and hold the Shift key on your keyboard and click on another layer to multi-select a number of layers.

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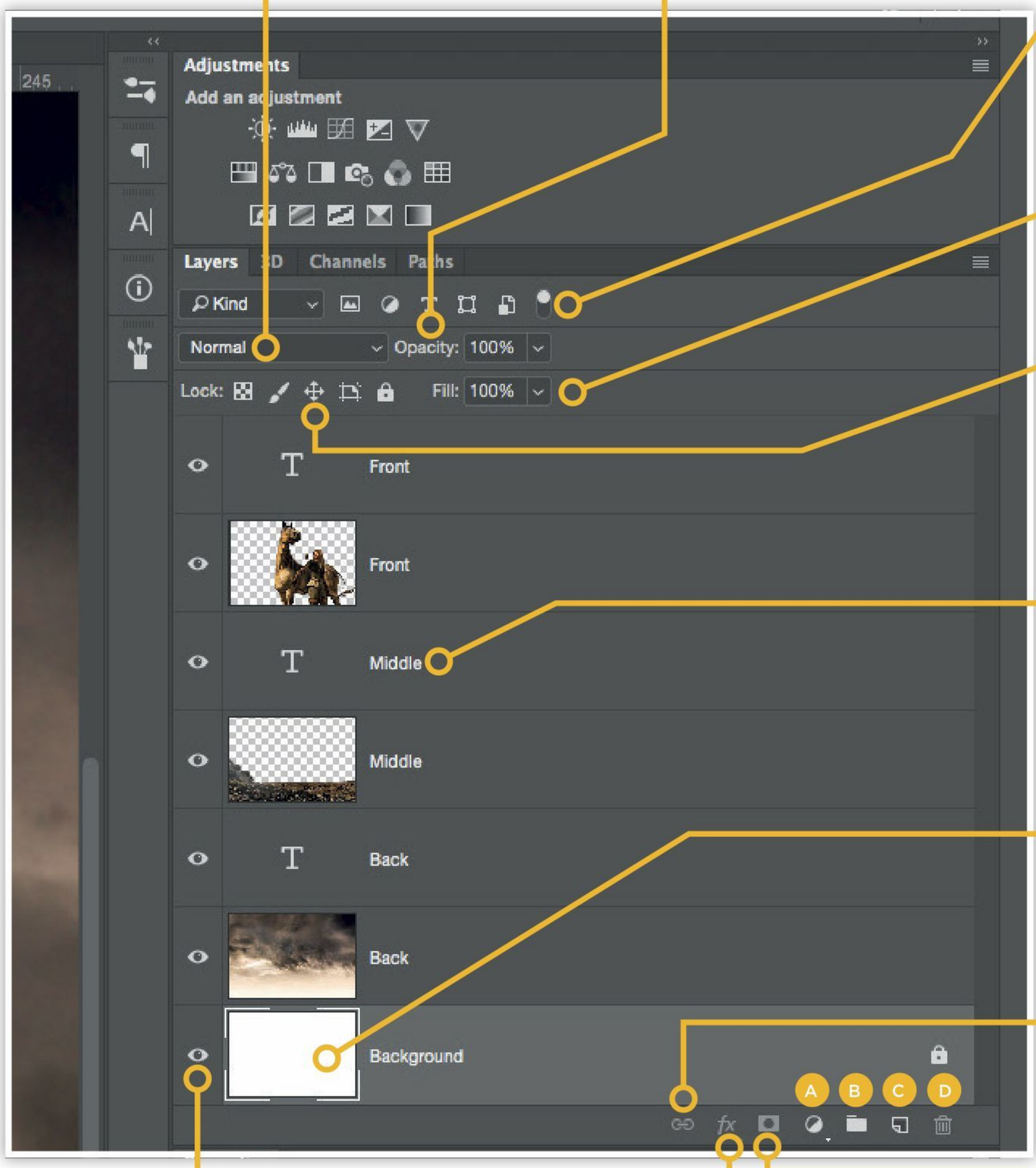
The Layer Palette

Knowing your way around the Layer palette is vital if you want to make the best use of this feature.

Blend Mode
Determines how the layer interacts with the layer below it. Can be changed for every layer one by one, or for a group.

Opacity
Controls how transparent the layer is, and how much of the layer below will show through. You can use the slider or numeric value.

Layer Filters
Choose to display only one type of layer, or all of them, and by selecting the drop-down you can select the order in which you show them.



Fill
Similar to Opacity, but only works on pixel information, ignoring blending options and layer effects.

Layer Locks
By clicking on these buttons you can lock the layer from any further activity. Transparency, image pixels and position can be locked independently of each other.

Text Layer
There are several different types of layer. Text layers, not surprisingly, contain text characters.

Background
The Background layer is the default bottom layer, and always starts off locked when you open a new Photoshop document.

Link Layers
Highlight a few layers and then click this button to link the layers. Transform and Move commands will affect all linked layers.

Visibility
Clicking on the eyeball simply renders the layer and all its effects invisible. Also, Alt + left-click to view that layer on its own.

Layer Styles
This panel lets you add effects such as drop shadow, bevelled edges, inner glow, gradient overlay and much more.

Layer Mask
Add a mask to a pixel-based layer, to reveal or conceal information, using black to conceal or white to reveal.

A Adjustment Layer
An alternative to the main layer menu, and here you can add all the adjustment effects such as Levels, Brightness and Contrast and Saturation.

B New Group
Creates a new layer group, into which you can drag and drop layers, which helps you to organise layers in a big complicated composition.

C New Layer
Clicking on this button creates a new blank layer directly above the currently active layer.

D Delete Layer
Does exactly what you'd expect it to do. Click to delete the currently active layer, or drag a layer onto the button to delete it.

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Adjustment Layers

A great way to edit your images without damaging them

Although there are many editing options in the Image > Adjustment menu, they all have one thing in common. When you apply them to an image the effect they have is destructive, because they discard information from the original image. For example, if you apply Curves, the Hue/Saturation, then add a Photo Filter effect, that's three operations that have discarded information, each one degrading your image quality. If you apply an operation repeatedly, such as multiple Curves corrections, you'll actually be able to see the degradation. The only way to undo the damage done by these modifications is to revert to an earlier version by using undo or the History palette, but that also undoes all your subsequent editing as well. This degradation is much worse with 8-bit than with 16-bit images, since there's less information to start with.

It's impossible to avoid this image degradation altogether, but by using Adjustment Layers we can reduce it as much as possible. Adjustment Layers sit above the pixel layer in the stack and their effects are applied in real time as the layers are displayed. That way if you change your mind about an effect, or wish to change it after it has been applied, your alteration doesn't have any further effect on the layer below it and the image degradation isn't applied until the layers are merged when flattening the image.

You can apply Adjustment Layers in several ways. First, you'll find a list of available layers in the Layer > New Adjustment Layer menu. Second, if you have the Adjustments palette open (it's open in the default interface workspace) you can click on the button for the layer you want to apply. Third, you can click on the middle button at the bottom of the Layer Palette. All of these offer exactly the same list of options and produce the same results.

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The Adjustment Layer Palette

Click on any of these buttons to instantly create a new adjustment layer.

01 **Brightness/Contrast**
Edit image tonal range.

02 **Levels**
Adjust colour and tonal range.

03 **Curves**
Adjust points through the tonal range.

04 **Exposure**
Adjust an images' exposure range.

05 **Vibrance**
Enhance less saturated colours first.

06 **Hue/Saturation**
Alter Hue, Saturation and Lightness.

07 **Colour Balance**
Add colour to shadows and highlights.

08 **Black and White**
Convert to monotone or greyscale.

09 **Photo Filter**
Add custom colour cast to images.

10 **Channel Mixer**
Create tinted or greyscale images.

11 **Colour Lookup**
Add preset colour effects to images.

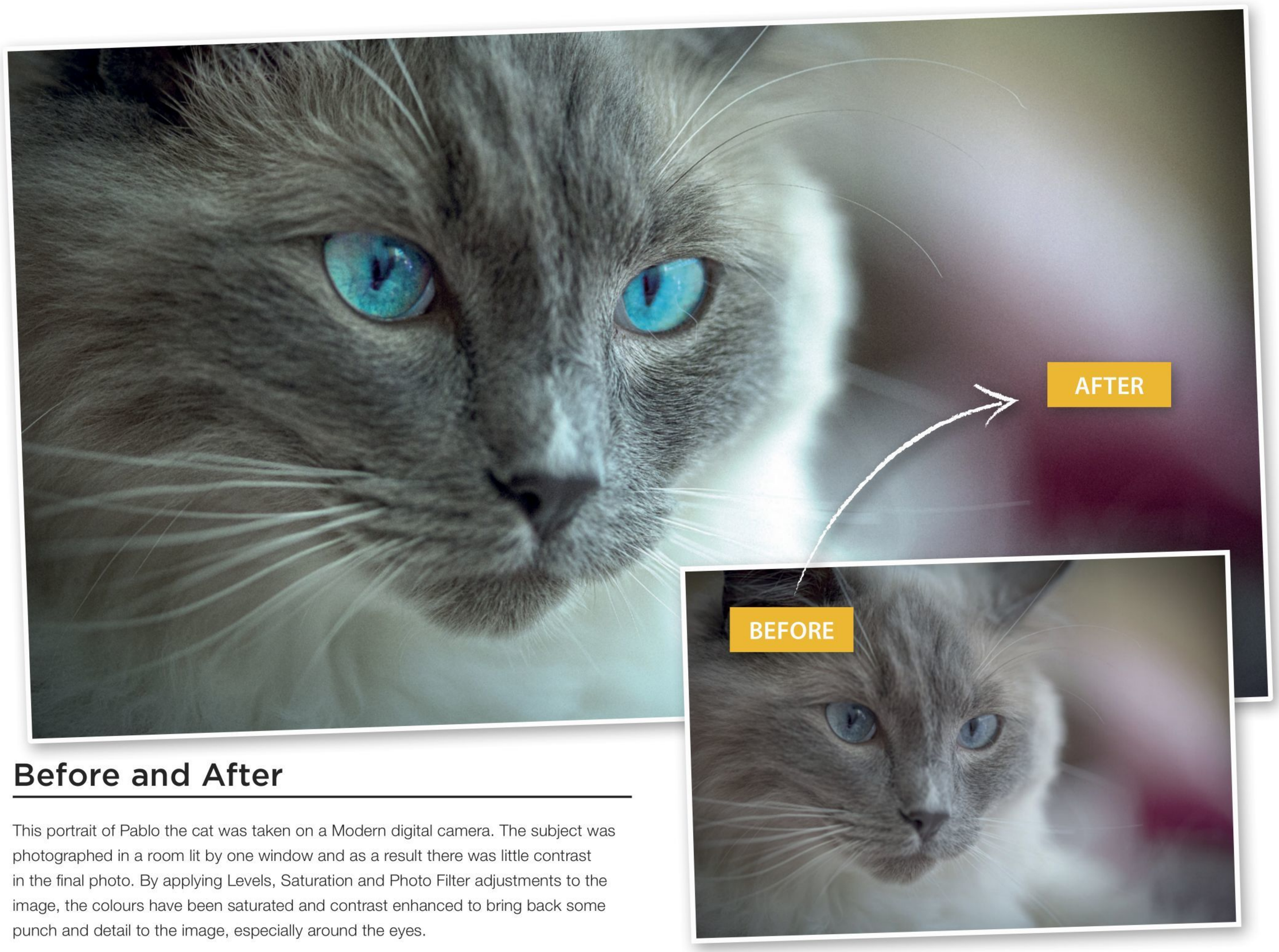
12 **Invert**
Inverts image colours like a negative.

13 **Posterize**
Adjust the number of tonal levels.

14 **Threshold**
Convert to black and white bitmap.

15 **Selective Colour**
Alter individual primary colours.

16 **Gradient Map**
Maps an image to a custom gradient fill.



Before and After

This portrait of Pablo the cat was taken on a Modern digital camera. The subject was photographed in a room lit by one window and as a result there was little contrast in the final photo. By applying Levels, Saturation and Photo Filter adjustments to the image, the colours have been saturated and contrast enhanced to bring back some punch and detail to the image, especially around the eyes.

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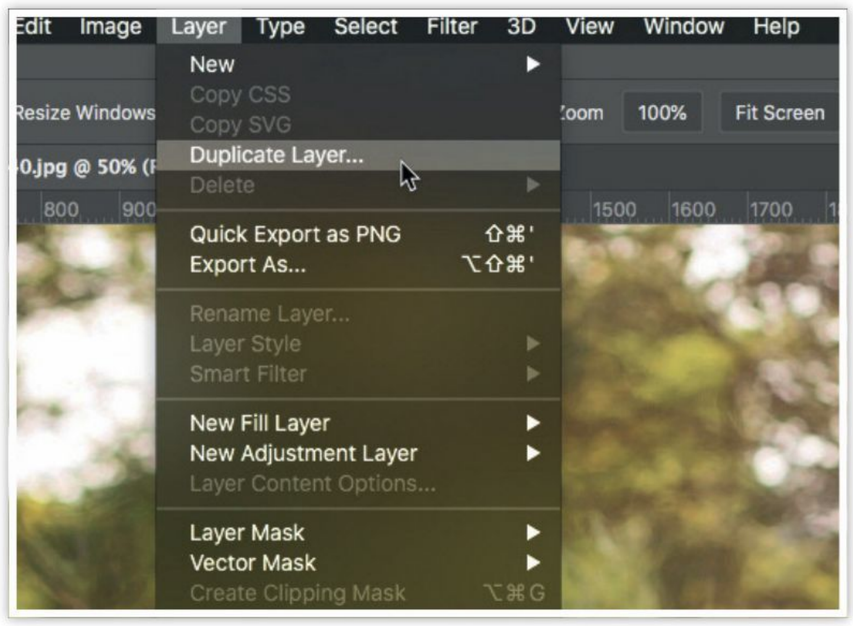
Using Layer Masks

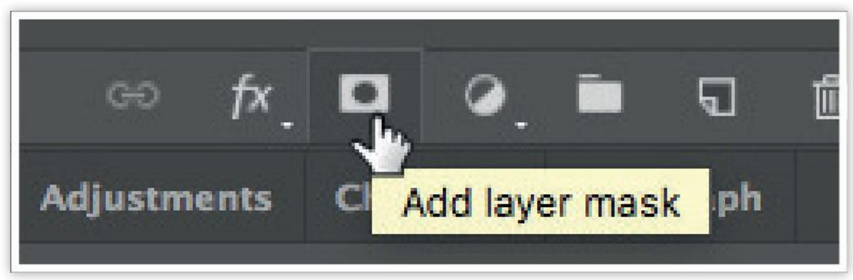
Add effects non-destructively with Layer Masks

While the Quick Mask function is an easy way to selectively edit your pictures, the more traditional method is to use Layer Masks. The advantage to this method is that it is non-destructive, so if you don't like the results you can just go back and start again. It is also repeatable, because you can use the same mask for multiple effects, saving you time and effort. For this quick tutorial we'll use a Layer Mask to apply a selective monochrome or colour extraction effect. We'll start with this bright image of a girl in a red dress. The red tones will remain in colour while the rest of the picture will be changed to black and white.

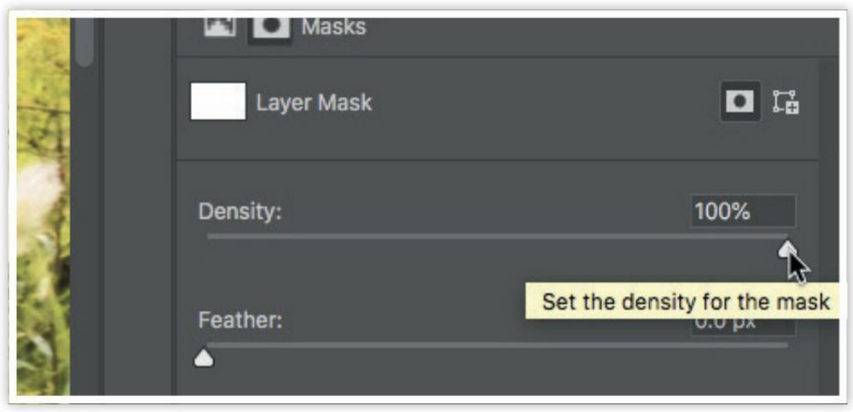
01 To start with, right-click on the thumbnail of the photo in the layer palette and select Duplicate Layer from the menu. Alternatively click and drag the layer thumbnail in the palette onto the New Layer button at the bottom of the palette, which will also duplicate the layer.



02 Next, activate the new layer by clicking on it in the palette and then click on the Add Layer Mask button at the bottom of the palette.



03 A white square will appear in the layer palette representing the new mask. Double-click on this and the Layer Mask palette will fly out. This palette lets you configure the mask in a variety of ways.



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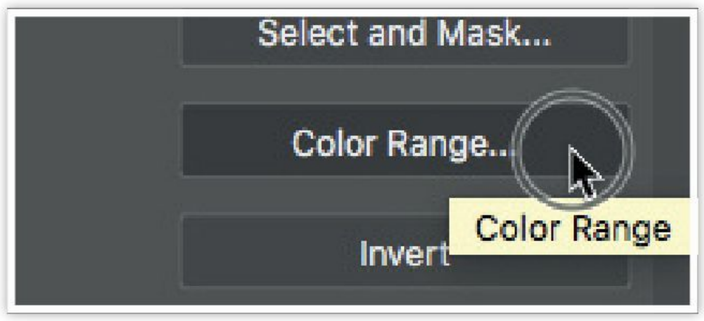
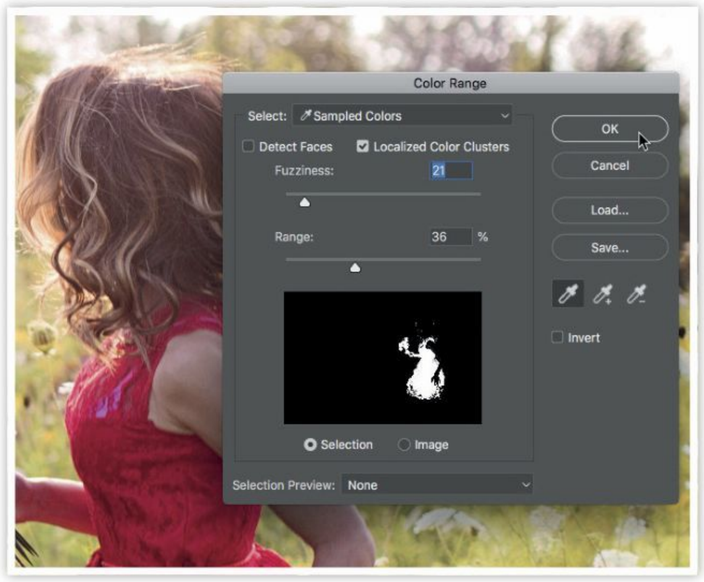
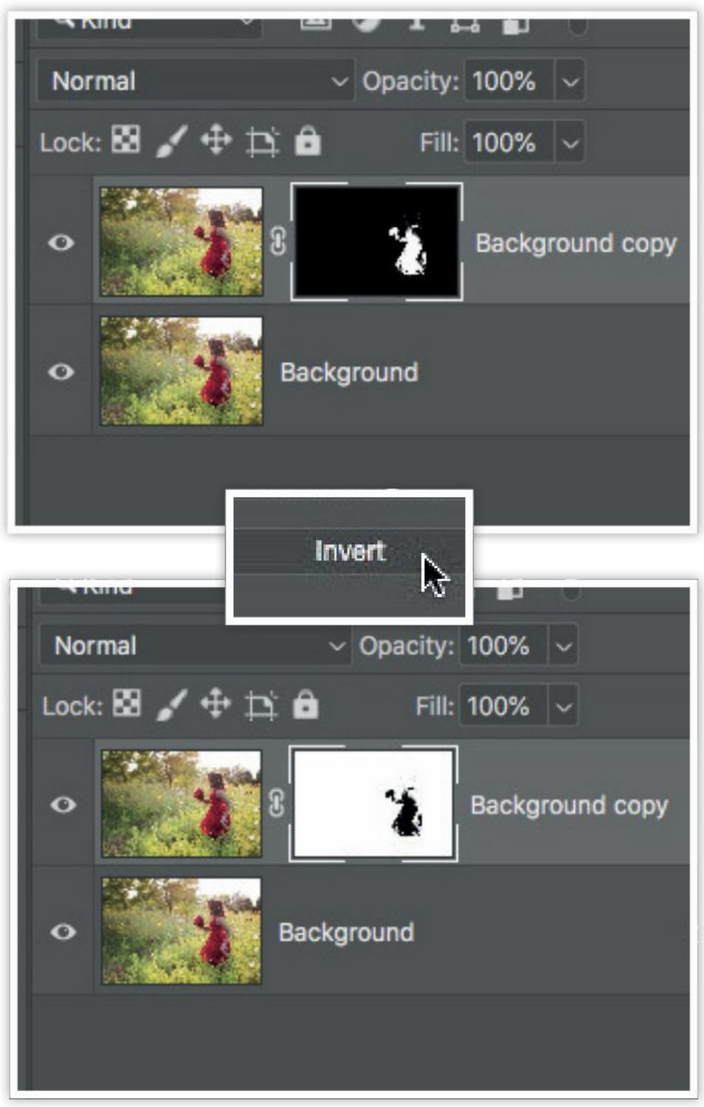
04 Click on the Color Range button and you'll see a new window appear with a colour range picker and the cursor will change to an eyedropper tool. Click on the red areas of the dress and adjust the sliders so that as much of the colour as possible is selected, but none of the background. Click OK when you're happy.





05 Now we've got a mask that covers the shape of the dress but what we need is a mask that leaves the chosen colour, while covering everything else, so click on the Invert button that swaps the mask and the background. This effectively creates a hole in the layer through which the background layer will be visible.



06 Next we can apply the effect to the top layer. For this one we'll use the Black and White menu option, since it's a quick and easy effect. You'll find it in the Image > Adjustments menu.

07 You can adjust the parameters of the Black and White effect with the sliders on the window that appears. The results are a matter of personal taste, so adjust the parameters until you're happy.

08 The Layer Mask can be used to produce any kind of selective effect like this and the great part of it is that the original image is still intact in the background layer, so if you're unhappy with the finished result you can just delete the effect layer and start again. However as you can see, the effect is working well.

USEFUL TIP

Always remember that layer masks do not erase any of a layer's detail, it just makes certain details invisible without deleting them. This is referred to as non-destructive image editing.

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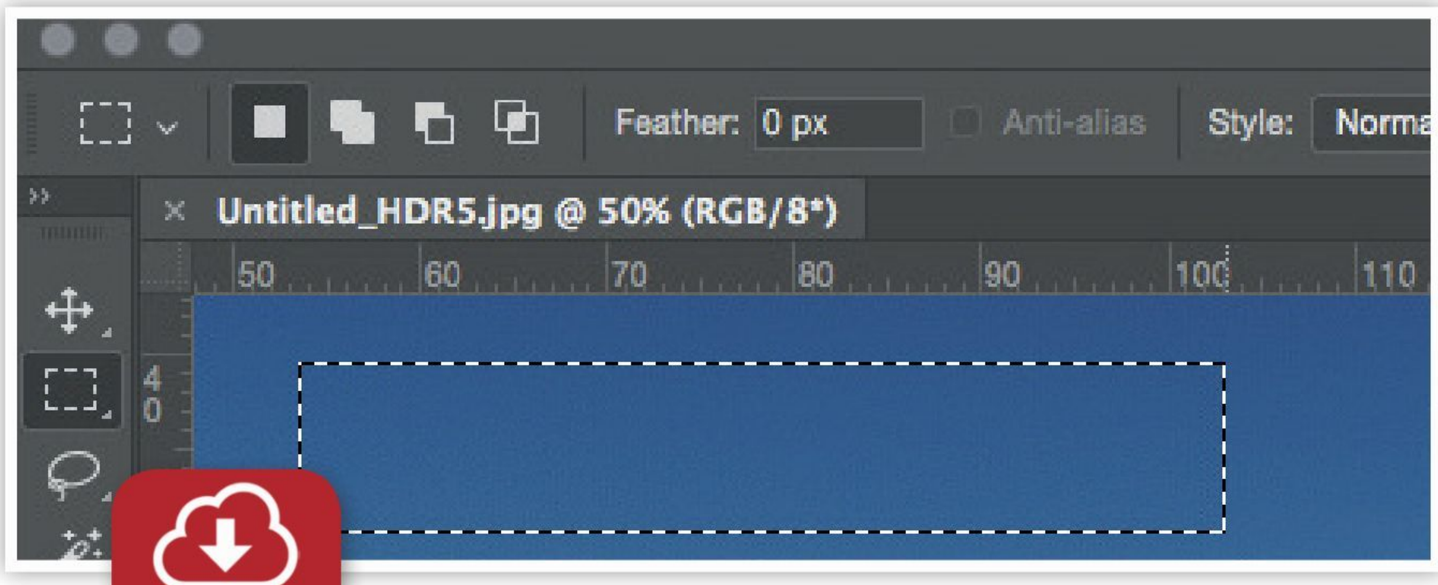
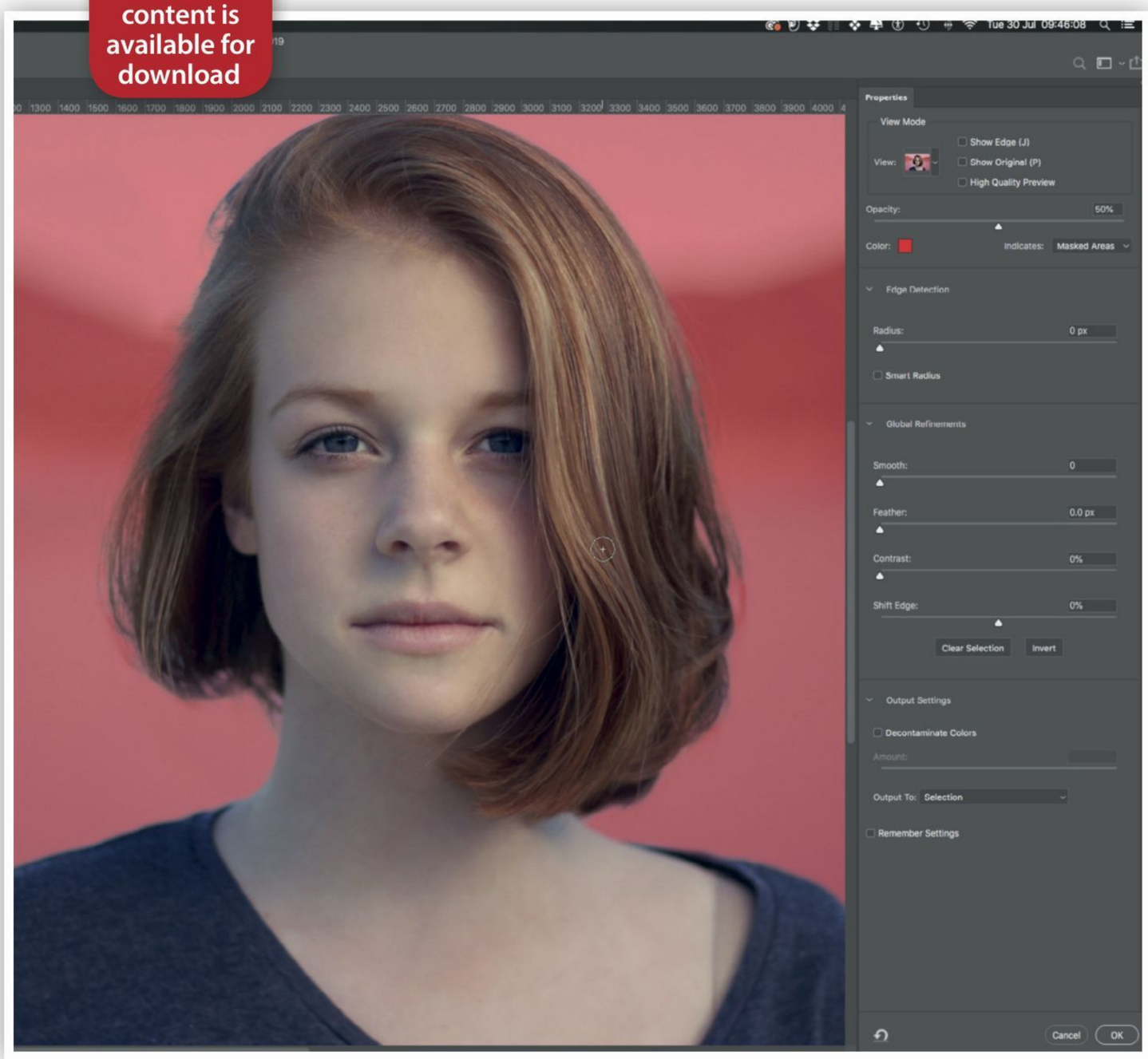
Selection Tools

Photoshop provides multiple methods for isolating areas of your image

The ability to select discrete areas of an image and change them in isolation is fundamental to Photoshop editing and to help with this there are many different ways of making that selection. The most frequently used are the Marquee tools, which allow you to select regular shapes such as rectangles, ellipses and lines. For irregular shapes there are several Lasso tools, which let you draw the area to be selected. For quicker selections there are the Magic Wand and Quick Selection tools.

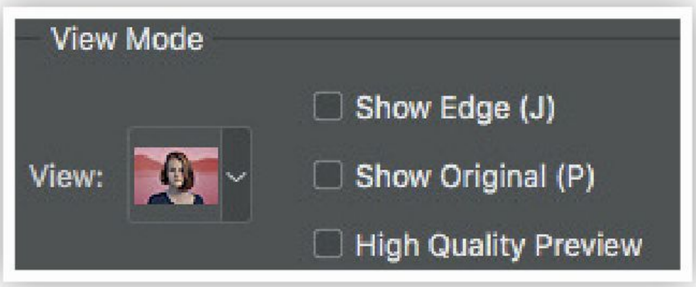


This tutorial content is available for download



Common Options

If you look across the top left of your menu bar, you will see there are common tool options for all of the selection tools. The first row of four buttons are: New Selection, which is the default setting; Add To Selection, which can also be activated temporarily by holding down the Shift key; Subtract From Selection, also activated by the Alt key; and Intersect With Selection, which selects only from areas you have already selected.



Edge Refinement

The next option is Feather, which softens the edge of the selection, useful for gradual effects. The edge of the selection can be further adjusted by using the Refine Edge menu in CS6 or Select and Mask in Photoshop CC, which uses sophisticated edge-detection techniques to automatically select around things like fine hair or soft and blurred edges.

USEFUL TIP

You can use the Quick Selection tool to quickly paint a selection using an adjustable round brush tip. As you drag, the selection expands outward and automatically finds and follows defined edges in the image. If the tool isn't visible in your toolbar, hold down the Magic Wand tool to see the fly-out menu with the additional options that are available to you.

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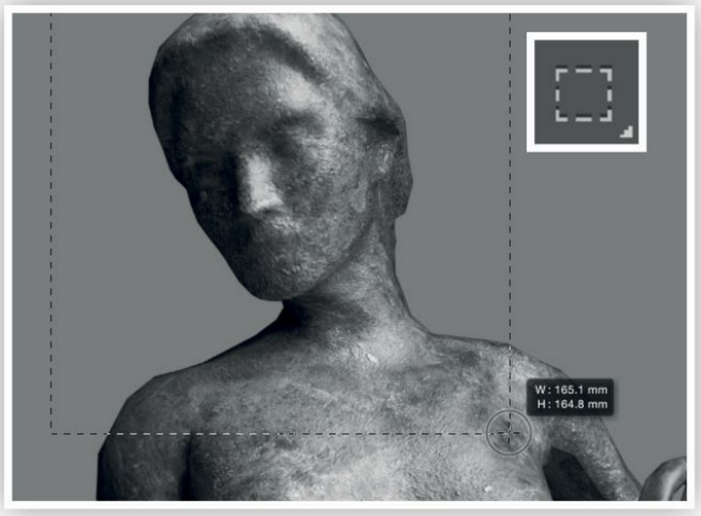
Rectangular Marquee

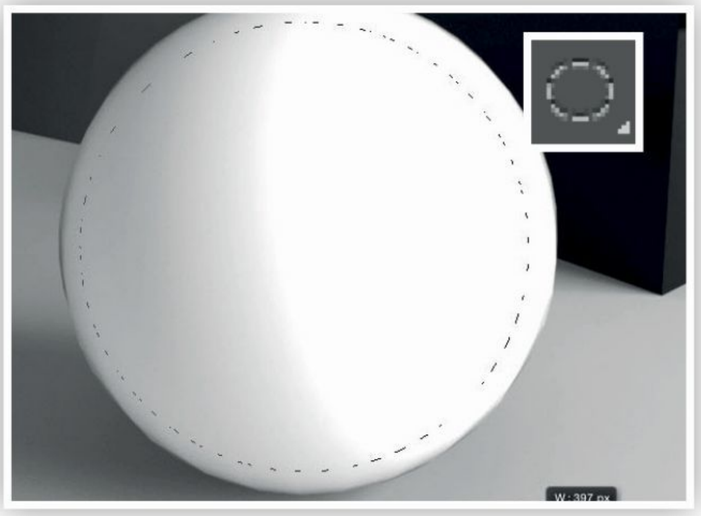


Make a selection of a rectangular area of any size or aspect ratio. Just click and drag to the right size. Hold down the Shift key to constrain the selection to a square shape and use the arrow keys to move the selection area.

Single Column Marquee

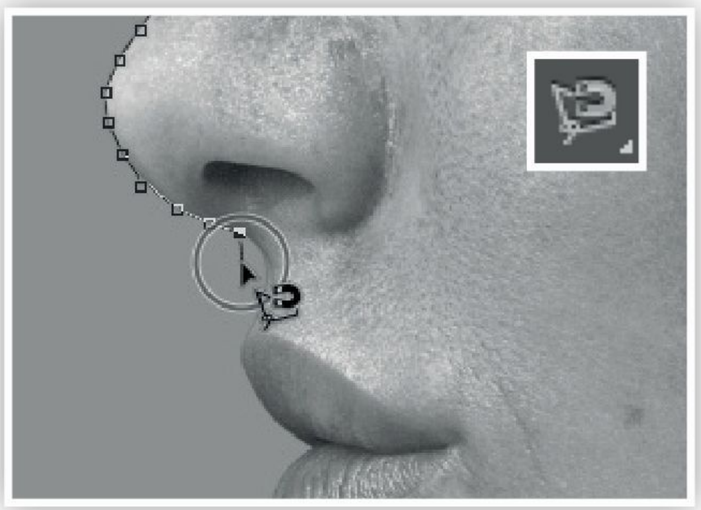
This option creates a selection of just a single vertical column of pixels. This is useful for tidying up other selections or crops that are just a little too big. Click near the area you want to select and then drag the marquee to the exact location.

Elliptical Marquee



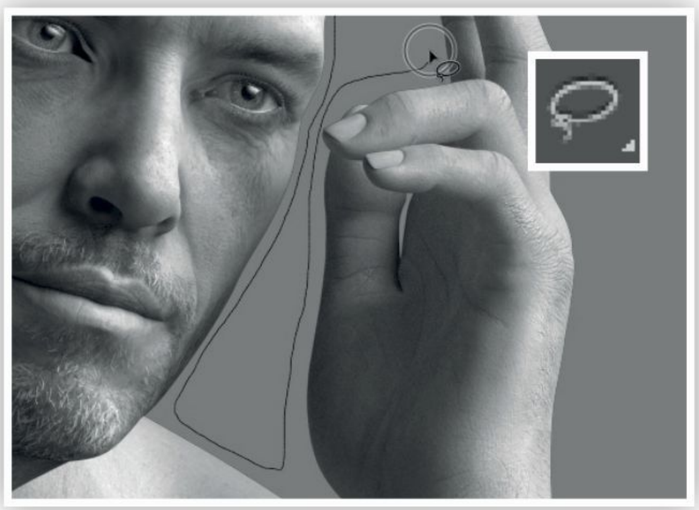
Create a selection of an elliptical shape of any size or proportion. Just click and drag to the size and shape you need and hold down the Shift key to draw a circle. If you hold down the Alt key the ellipse will be centred on the starting point.

Magnetic Lasso



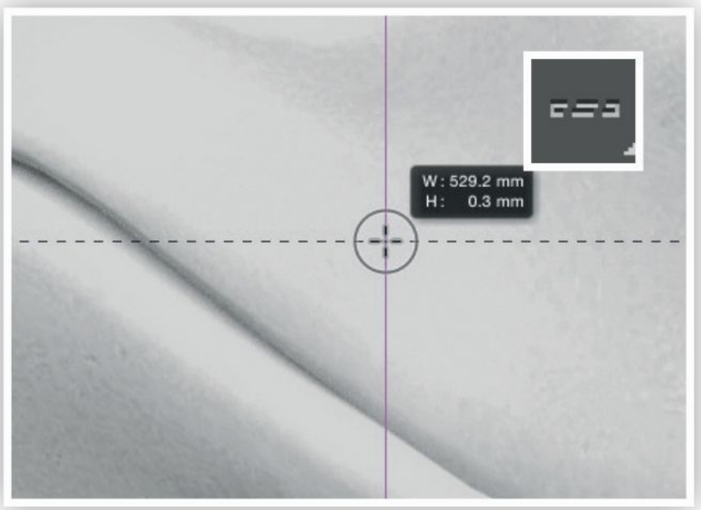
This tool uses edge-detection to try to match your selection to the edges of the subject in the image. You simply draw a line as closely as possible to what you want and it should automatically snap to the edge. Works best on high contrast areas.

Lasso



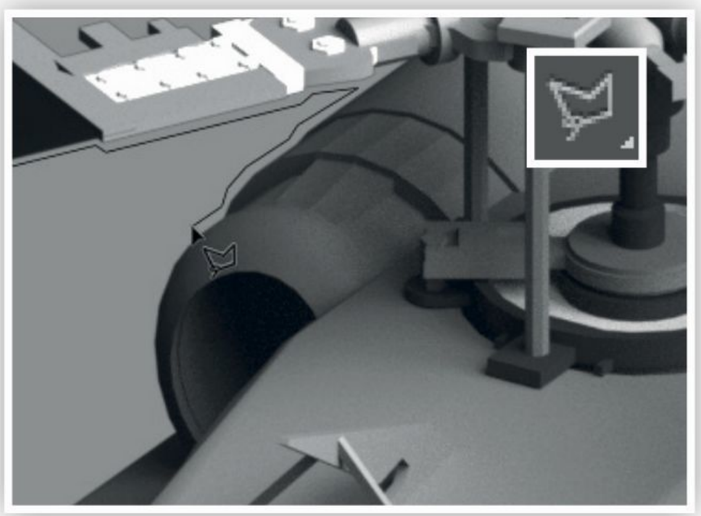
The Lasso is also used to make area selections from the active layer, but this time the shape can be irregular, marked out by clicking or drawing a line around the area to be selected. Join up your lasso at the point you started to close the selection.

Single Row Marquee



This is the same as Single Column Marquee, but this time it selects a single horizontal row of pixels. As with the Single Column Marquee option, click near the area you want to select and then drag the marquee to the exact location.

Polygonal Lasso

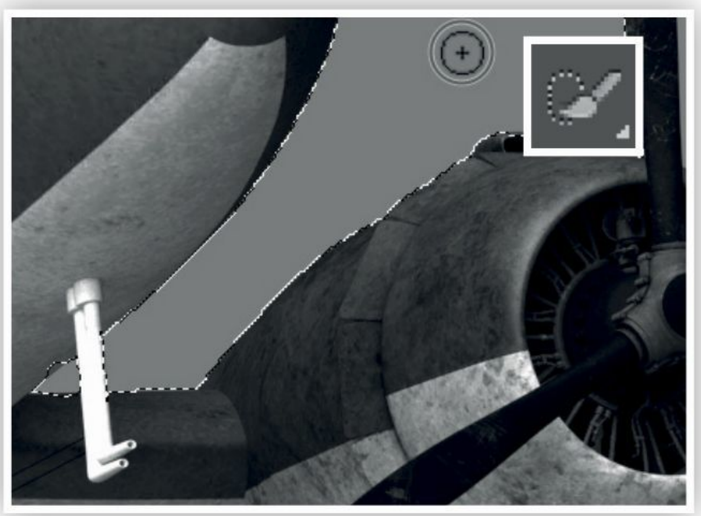


The Polygonal Lasso lets you draw a point-to-point line around your subject. It can only draw straight lines, but by using very short sections it's possible to approximate a curved line. To draw curved lines you need to use the Pen tool.

Magic Wand

This tool lets you make selections from areas of the same colour and brightness and by adjusting the tolerance and whether or not it will select contiguous areas, you can use it to do things like automatically select all the sky in your image.

Quick Selection



This tool lets you paint a selection and uses edge detection to try to match the selection to the nearest hard edge in the image. Again it's often only an approximation and will have problems with blurred or low contrast edges.

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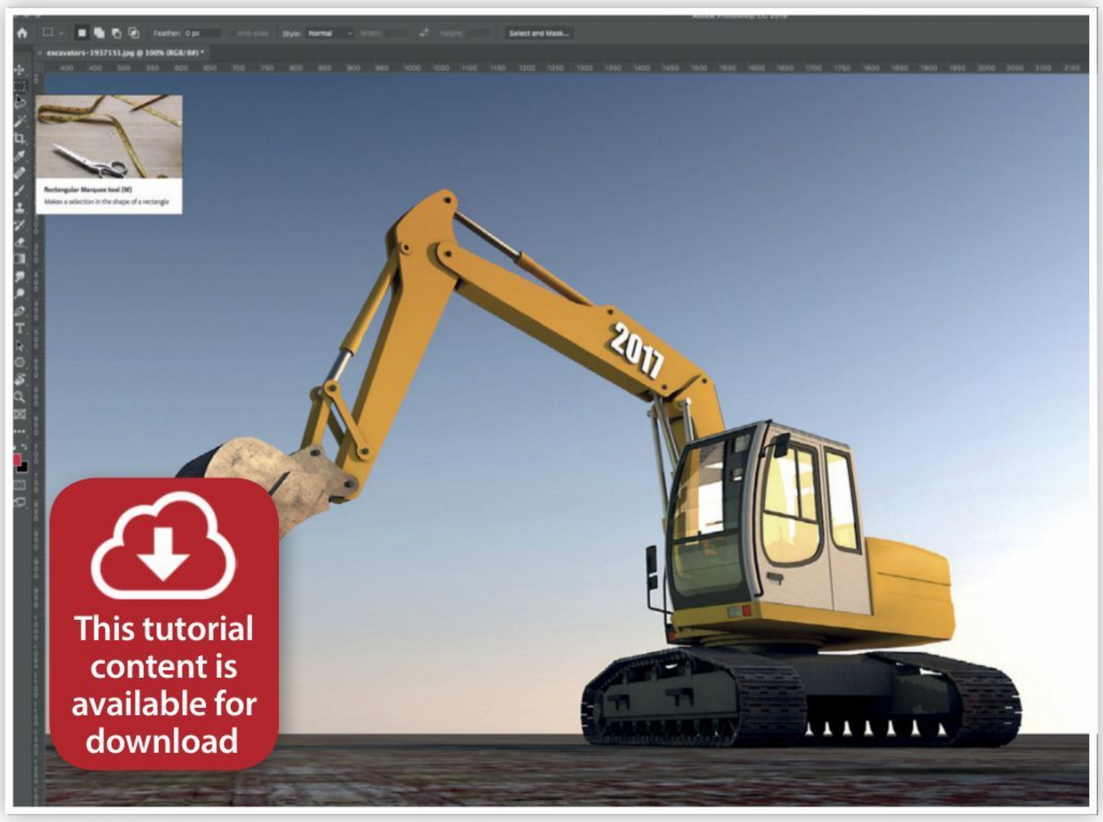
Making Selections

The ability to select and modify only part of an image is fundamental to how Photoshop works



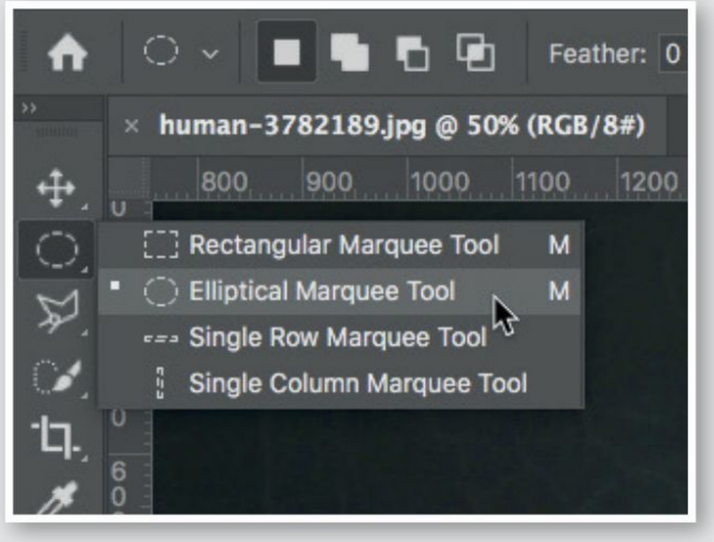
One of the most basic features of Photoshop is the ability to modify only part of an image, leaving the rest unchanged. The way that we do this is by using Selections and there are several tools and menu operations that we can use to help us achieve this.

After the Move tool, the next three icons on the Tool Palette are all selection tools, giving you a wide range of methods for isolating an area of your image. Some are fully manual, while others use varying degrees of automation.

The most basic Selection tools are the Rectangular and Elliptical Marquee tools. These both allow you to manually select a simple shape of any size, or of a fixed size or aspect ratio. You can select several areas, either separately or joined together and with a hard edge or a soft feathered edge. The various Lasso tools let you select an area of irregular shape, again with the option of a feathered edge. You can draw the area freehand, or use point-to-point lines for greater precision.

Let's take a look at the process of making a selection and examine the various options that are available.

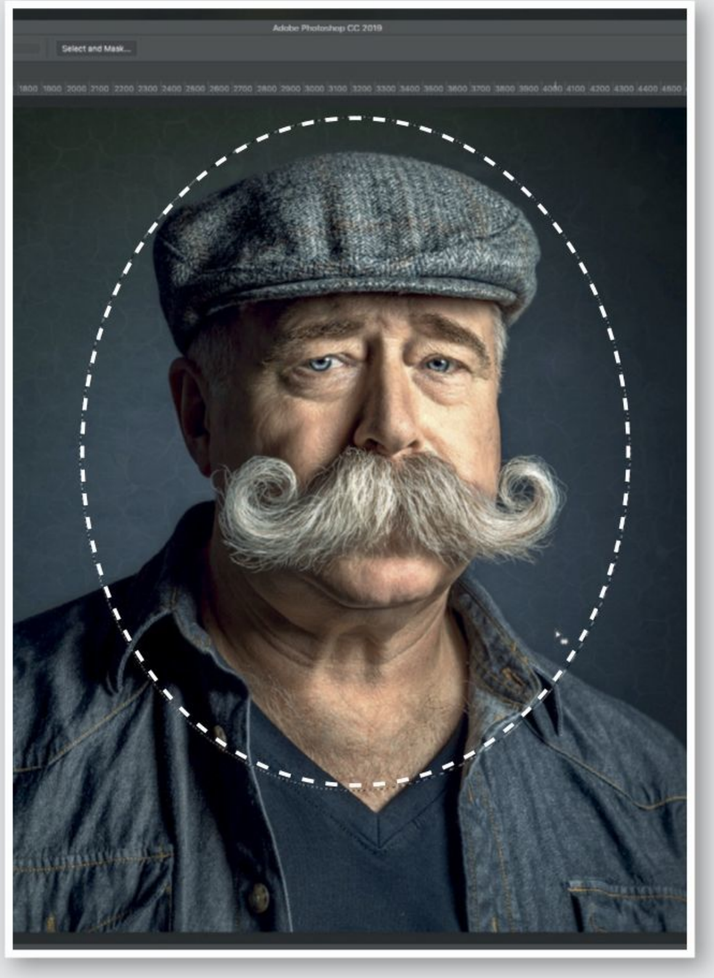
Elliptical Marquee Tool



01 The Elliptical Marquee tool works in much the same way as the Rectangular Marquee, but draws a curved shape.

02 As with the Rectangular Marquee, you can set the size or aspect ratio. A ratio of 1x1 draws a circle, other ratios draw ellipses of various sizes.

03 To draw an ellipse around your selection, imagine that it's actually a rectangle, start from one corner and drag to the diagonally opposite corner. This can be tricky to get right, so alternatively hold down the Alt key and start from the centre of where you want your ellipse to be.



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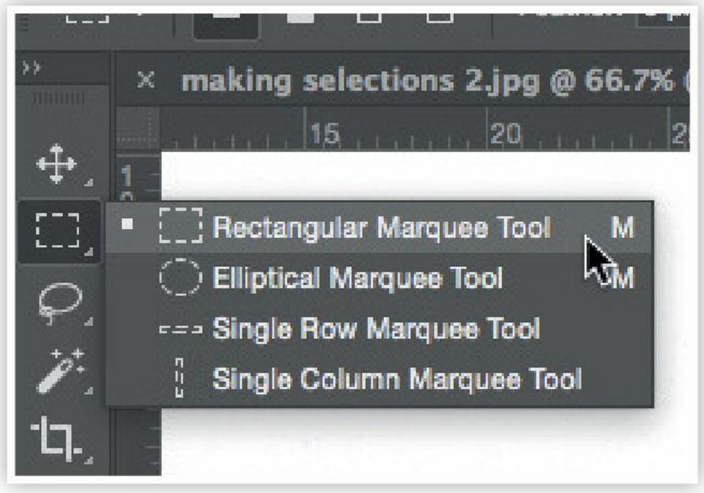
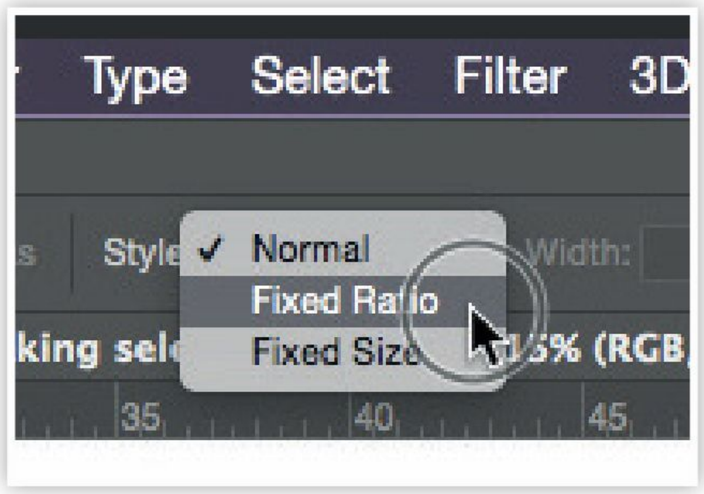
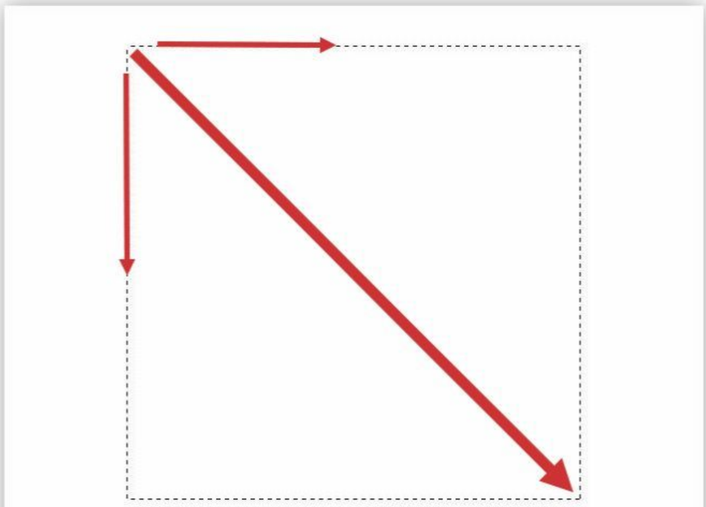
Simple Area Selection



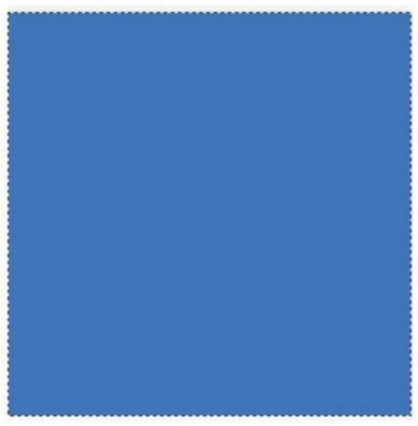
01 Let's start off with the simplest selection tool, the Rectangular Marquee. This is used, as the name implies, for selecting simple rectangular shapes.



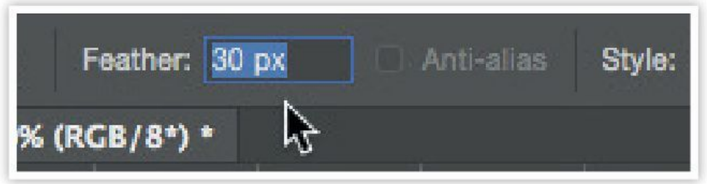
02 You can draw a freehand rectangle, or fix the size or aspect ratio by using the tool options. Let's draw a perfect square selection by setting a ratio of 1x1.



03 To draw a square, click on a point where you want one of the corners to be, then hold and drag to the diagonally opposite corner. You'll see the "marching ants" line of the selection box appear following the cursor.



04 If you use the Paint Bucket tool to fill the area you've selected you'll see that the edges are very sharp.



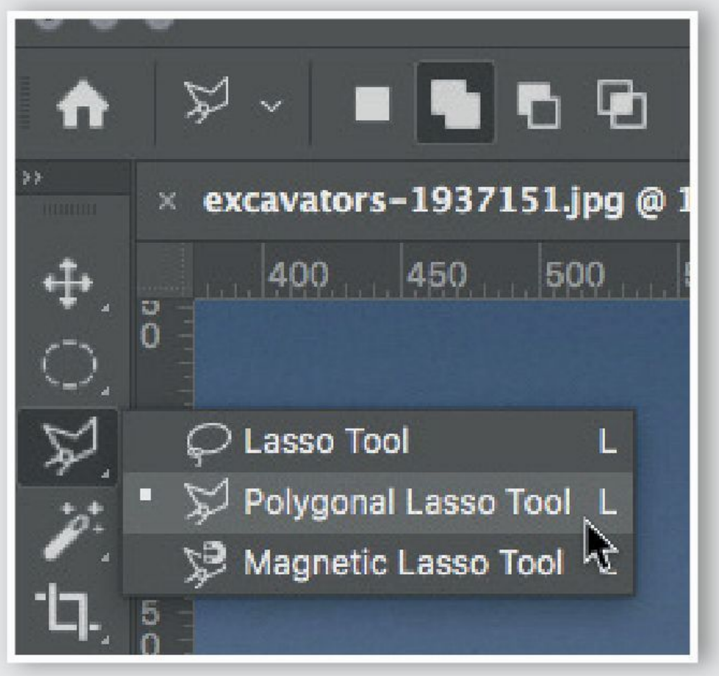
05 To make a soft-edged selection, type a number into the Feather box. The higher the number, the more blurred the edge will be.

06 This time if you draw a selection and fill it, you'll see that the edges are very blurred, with the marquee "marching ants" line in the middle of the blurred area.

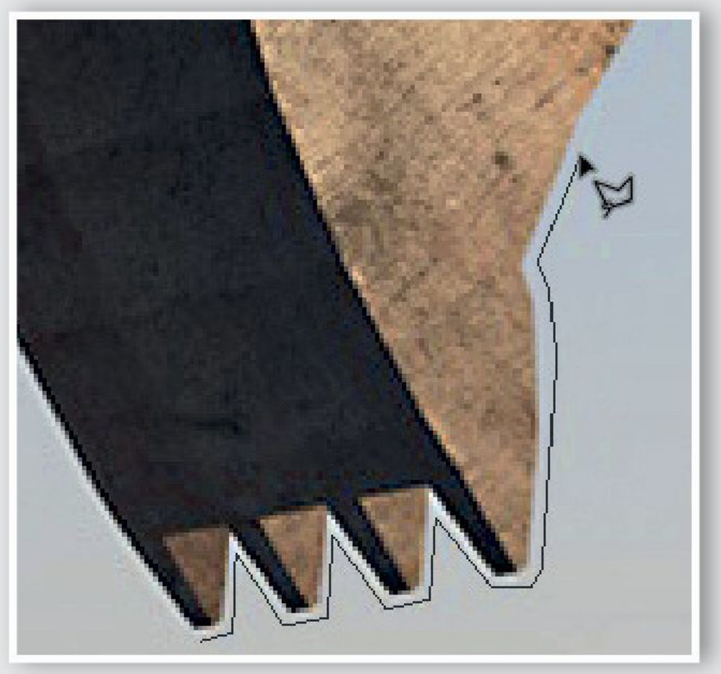
USEFUL TIP

If you want to select more than one area or add to the current selection, holding down the Shift key will temporarily put the tool into "Add to Selection" mode.

Polygonal Lasso Tool



01 For selecting more complex shapes, the best option is the Polygonal Lasso tool, or if you want to draw freehand, then the Lasso Tool is the one to go for. Drawing freehand may be quite odd using a mouse, but with a little practice you can use it with confidence.



02 With the Polygonal Lasso, you click around the edge of the area you want to select. When you complete the loop, or double-click, the selection is completed and you'll see the "marching ants" border.

03 A Polygonal Lasso selection is ideal if you want to cut or copy a complex shape out of a background, for example to make it part of another picture. It is particularly helpful when your subject has lots of straight, regular edges that are easy to follow.

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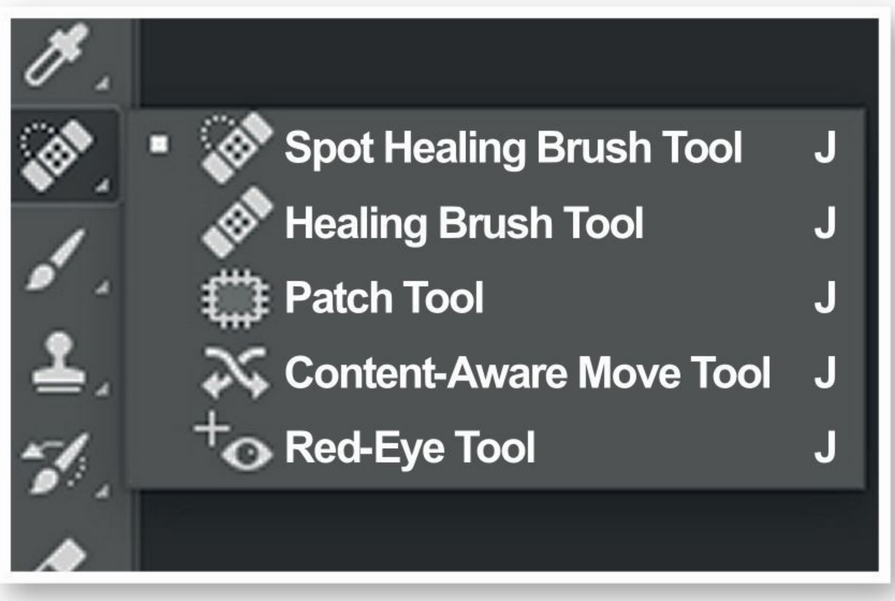
Healing Brush Tools

Clean up minor blemishes, dust spots and stray hairs with the Healing Brush tools

Even with a modern digital camera, your photos may have slight imperfections. Maybe it's just a stray hair or an unwelcome skin blemish in a portrait, or maybe some dust has managed to get onto your sensor, causing dark spots on your photo.

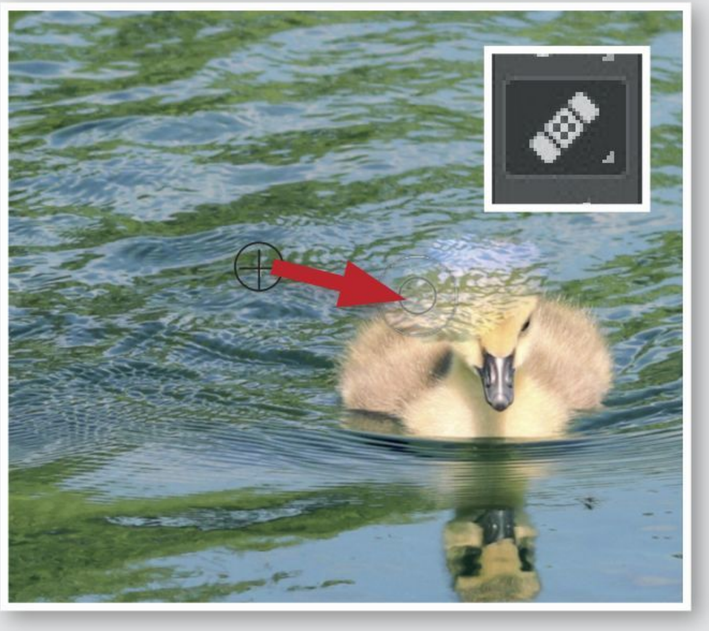
Whatever the reason, sometimes you need to remove some small features from your images and the best tools for this are the Healing tools. There are five healing tools in Photoshop, which you can see if you click and hold on the Spot Healing Brush tool icon in the tool palette.



USEFUL TIP

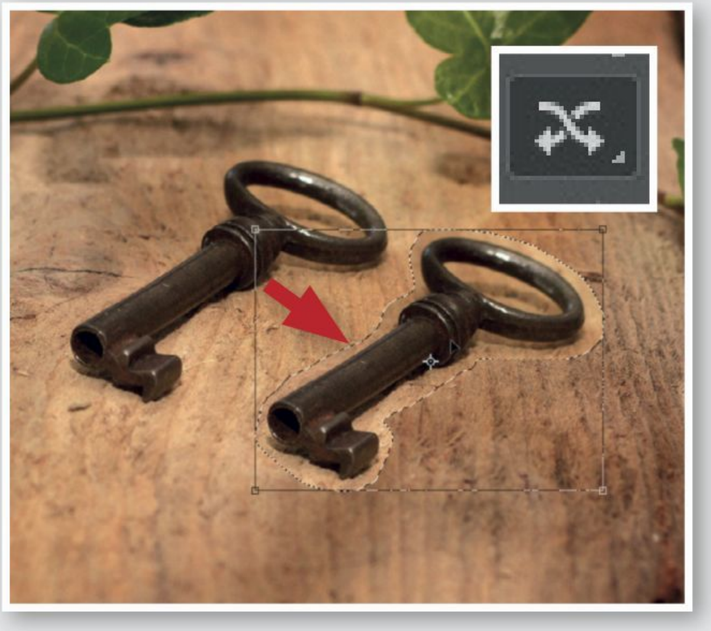
To get the best out of the healing tools, you need to work with care and not overdo the effect. The key to success is to be subtle. There is also no reason you can't use several of the healing brushes to make sure you get a perfectly healed image.

Healing Brush Tool



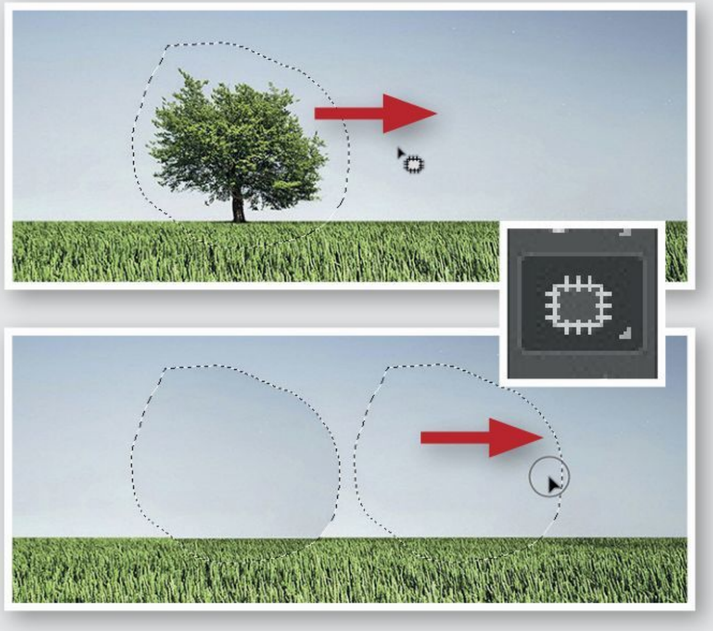
The Healing Brush is a legacy from older versions of Photoshop. It does much the same job as the Spot Healing Brush, but is rather less sophisticated. It works in much the same way as the Clone Stamp tool. To heal a blemish, you first need to set a sample point by clicking on an area of similar texture while holding down the Alt key, then painting the sample over the blemish. As ever, when it comes to healing and cloning techniques, subtlety is the key. You may find that it might take several attempts to get a good texture that doesn't stand out as being cloned in.

Content Aware Move



The Content Aware Move tool was introduced in Photoshop CS6. The idea is that you can simply draw a selection around an object and then drag it to another place. The program analyses the surrounding area and fills in the source with a matching texture. In practice the Content Aware Move tool is only useful in very specific circumstances, when the object you want to move is surrounded by a uniform texture. You will find that the more even the texture, the better the final result. Backgrounds such as grass and blue sky are much more successful candidates for this.

Patch Tool



The Patch tool is used for repairing larger areas. It can be used in one of two ways; either draw around the area you want to replace and then drag the sample to an area of matching clean texture, or sample an area of clean texture and then drag it over the part you want to replace. Here, a patch of wooden floor can be used to remove some bread crumbs from the shot. As you drag the patch, it will show you a real-time overlay over your target area so you can align it as best you can to ensure a good patch.

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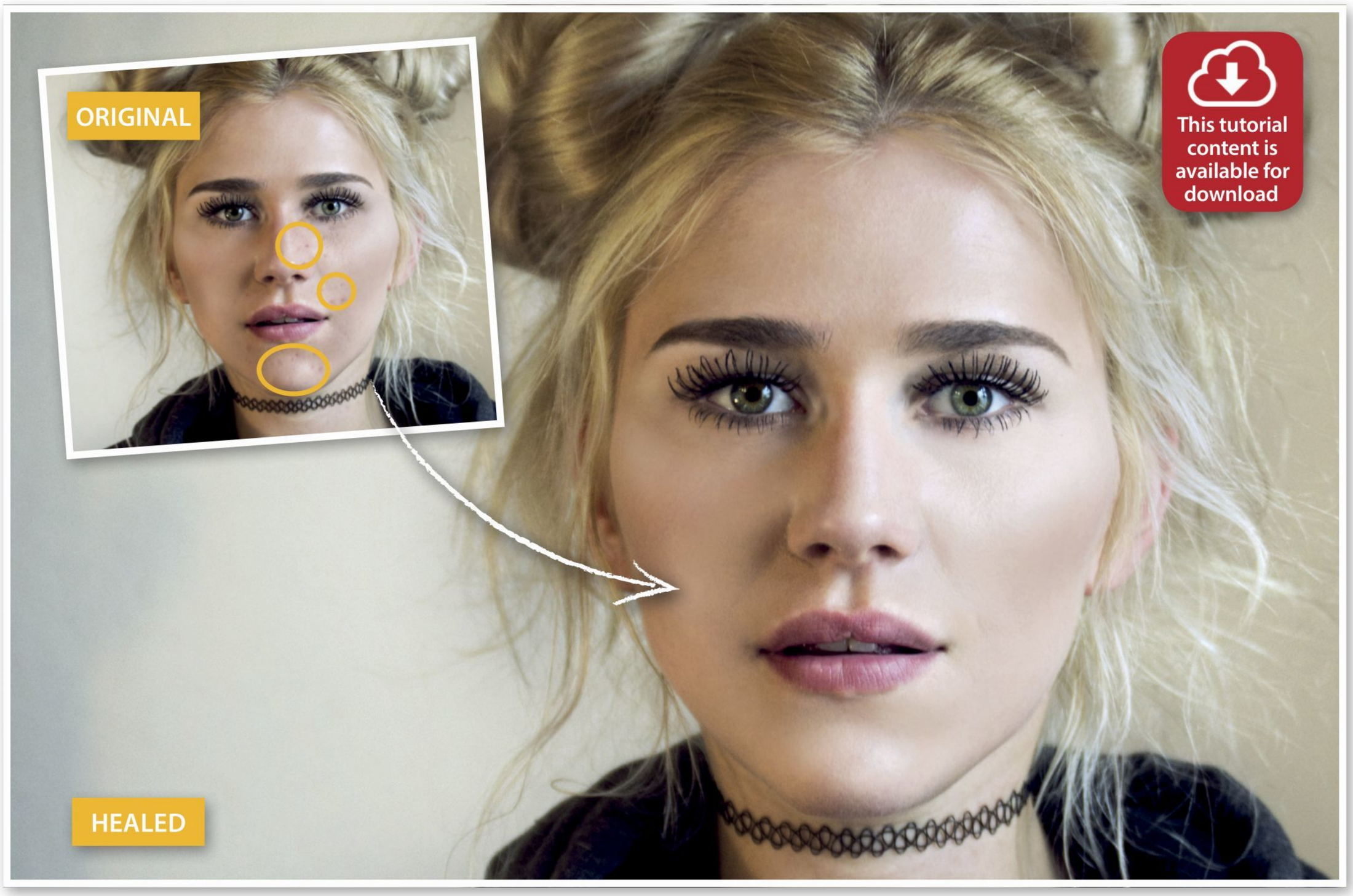
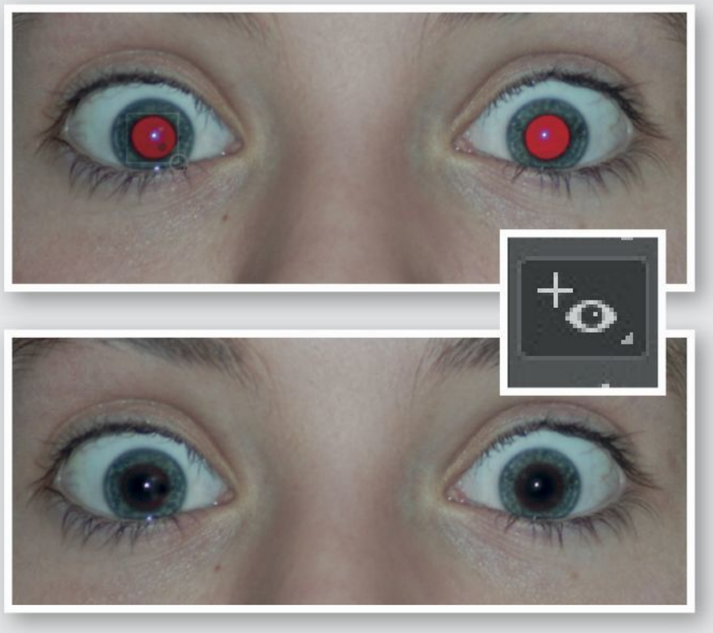
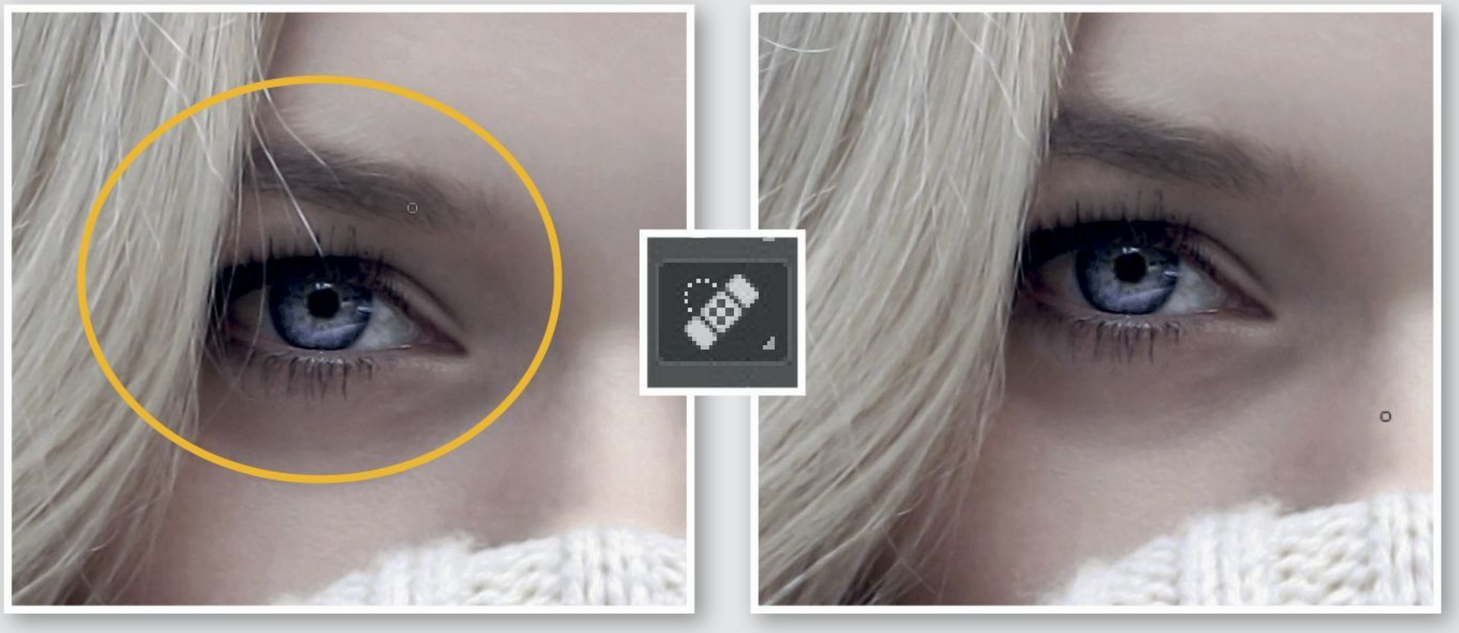


Red Eye Tool



Red Eye is caused by light from a camera flash reflecting off the blood vessels at the back of the eye when the pupil is wide open. It's possible to avoid it by proper camera technique, but if you find it in one of your portraits, Photoshop has a quick and easy tool to help remove it. Simply click on the offending redness and the tool will automatically analyse how much redness there is in the subject's eyes and remove it and replace it with a more natural-looking tone which is usually black or a very dark tone.

Spot Healing Brush Tool



For removing small objects such as dust spots and stray hairs, the Spot Healing Brush is the most useful and effective tool at your disposal. In some cases, you can even remove larger objects and people. When you use it to paint over an object, the brush samples the area around it and replaces the object with a simulation of the background. The way that it samples can be selected and the most effective option is Content Aware sampling. The brush parameters can be adjusted like any other brush.

USEFUL TIP

Camera sensors pick up dust spots over time. Use the Spot Healing Brush to remove unwanted sensor dust spots that appear on your digital images. As you can see from these examples, you can also remove larger objects as long as you have an even background behind it, otherwise the effect might look fake.

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Brushes, Pencil and Eraser

Photoshop has many tools to help you create images as well as edit them

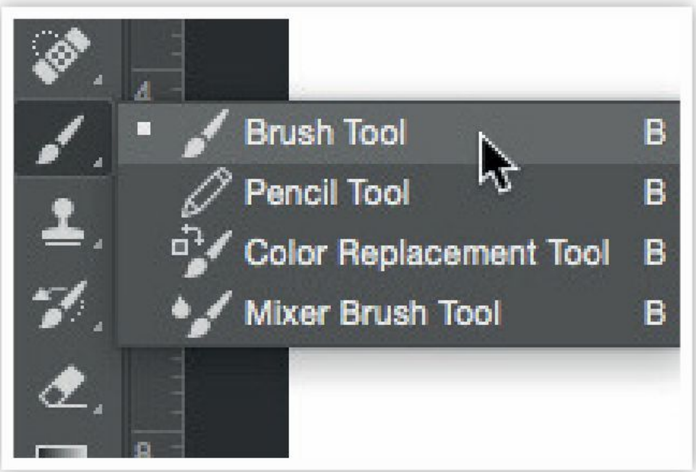
Although it is primarily designed and best known as an image editing program, Photoshop also offers a range of versatile tools, allowing you to create original artwork as well as adapting existing images. The brushes, pencils and eraser are designed to behave as much like their real life counterparts as possible, to make using them an intuitive process. If you have a graphics tablet and a pen, this helps even more.

The Brush Tool

The most useful drawing implement is the Brush (keyboard shortcut B), which is a multi-purpose tool that can emulate almost any type of drawing tool imaginable, be it a fine pencil, a felt-tip marker pen, a soft-bristle brush, an airbrush, or anything in between. The Brush tool has received a major upgrade for version CS6 and now has more options and more presets than ever before, giving you unparalleled versatility for creating your own artistic Photoshop masterpieces.

You select the Brush tool by clicking on its icon in the tool palette, but to get the most out of it you need to open the new Brush palette by clicking on the little folder-shaped icon in the options bar.

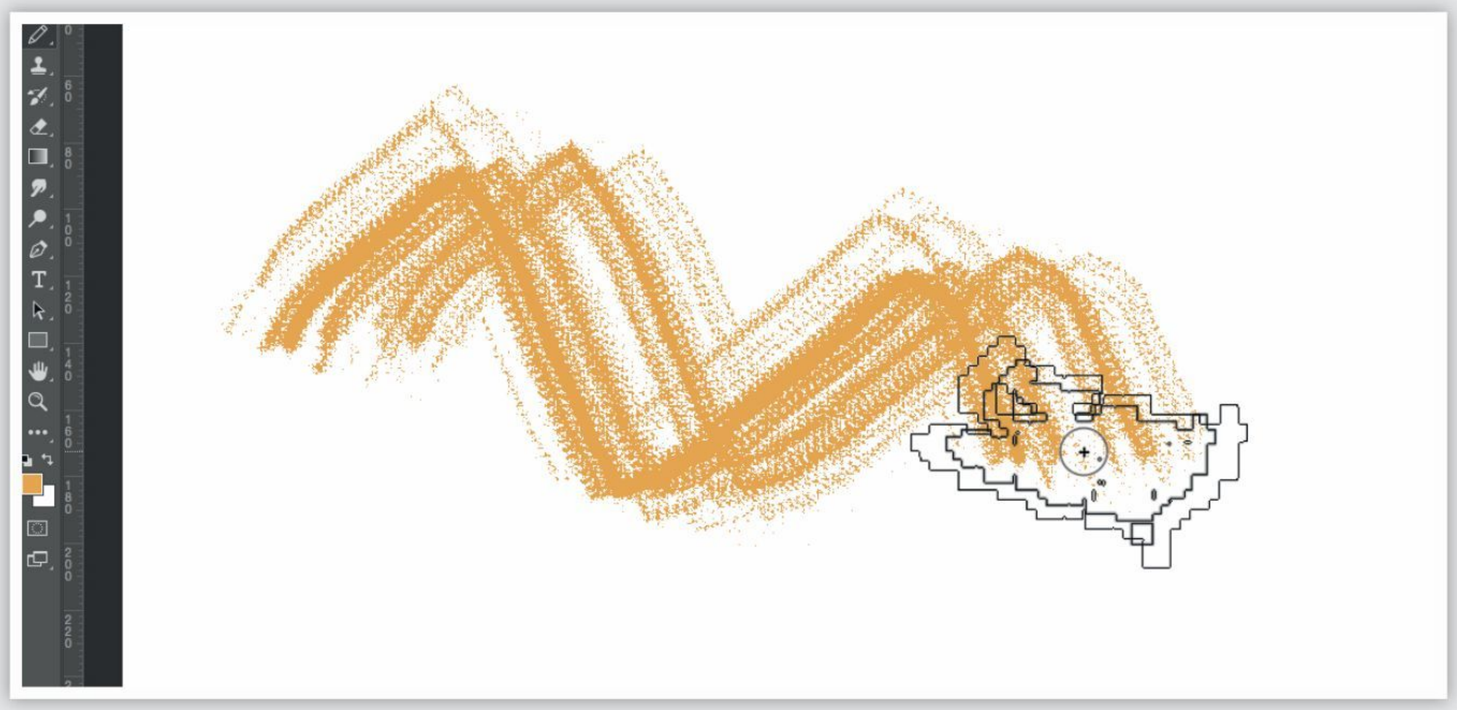
When you take a look at the new Brush palette you'll be blown away by just how customisable it is. You can adjust the shape of the brush tip, the density, length, thickness, stiffness and angle of the brush bristles and adjust or disable brush spacing. As well as



The Pencil Tool

The Pencil tool used to be a separate item from the Brush tool, but with radical expansion of the Brush in Photoshop to include simulations of numerous types of pencil, the Pencil tool itself is now just a variation of the Brush tool and uses the same options palette. It's not without its uses though.

The Pencil can be used as a secondary brush, which can save time swapping between pre-sets and can also be used to apply a stroke to work paths. You can press Shift + B to make it appear. By default it uses the 1 pixel brush size. The pencil tool is limited to hard-edged brush shapes of various sizes.



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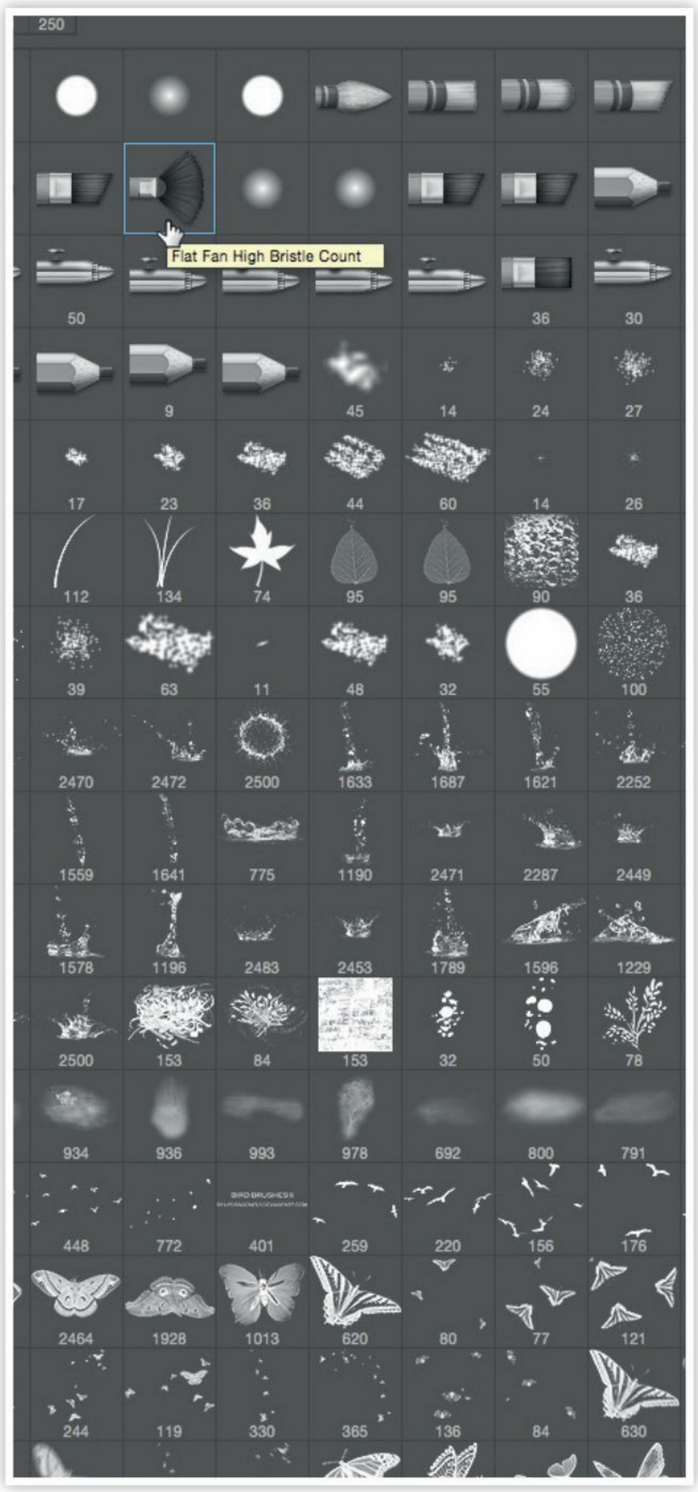
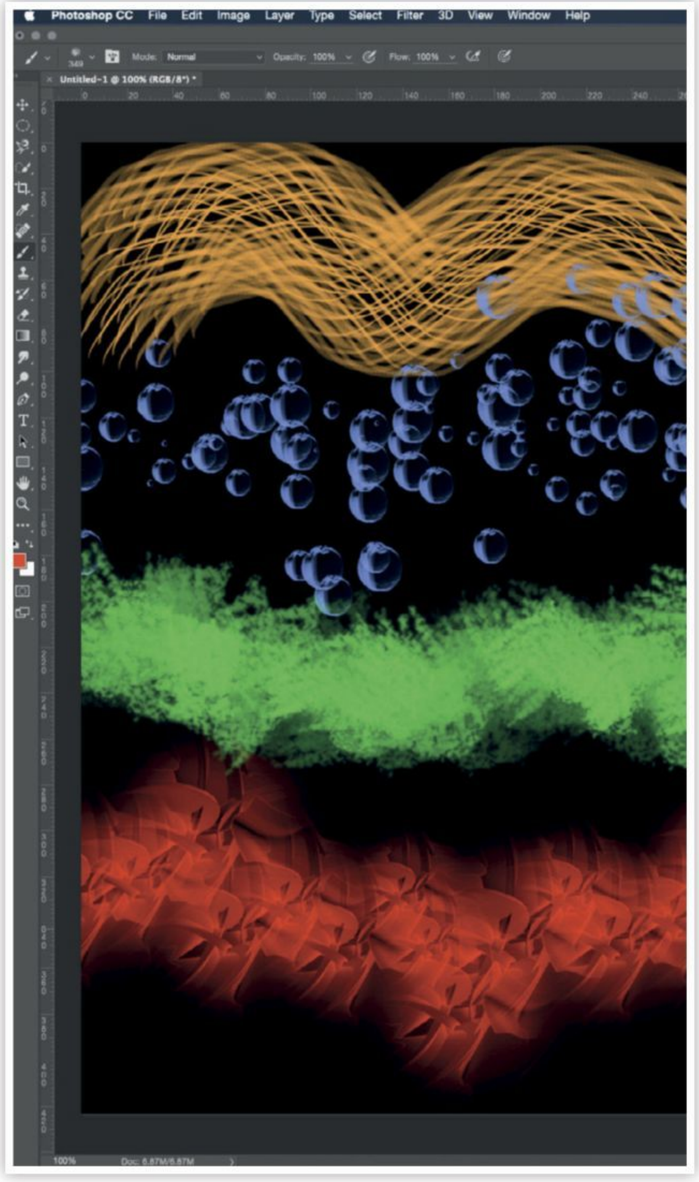
this there are many more options, allowing you to add random scattering, noise, texture, wet edge simulation, airbrush-like build-up and both shape and colour dynamics. If this degree of control is too time-consuming there are also dozens of preset brushes, a small sample of which you can see in the picture shown below.



There are preset brushes to simulate airbrushes, pastel crayons, big soft brushes, small stiff bristles, pencils, felt pens, sponges and even template brushes to quickly draw grass or leaves. The options and adjustments can be applied to preset brushes, so you can customise them for your own specific needs. You can even make your own brushes if you want.

As well as options for the appearance and texture of the brush, there are also options for how it interacts with the layer that you paint on. These are called Blend Modes and you can choose which one to use by clicking on the Modes button in the tool options bar.

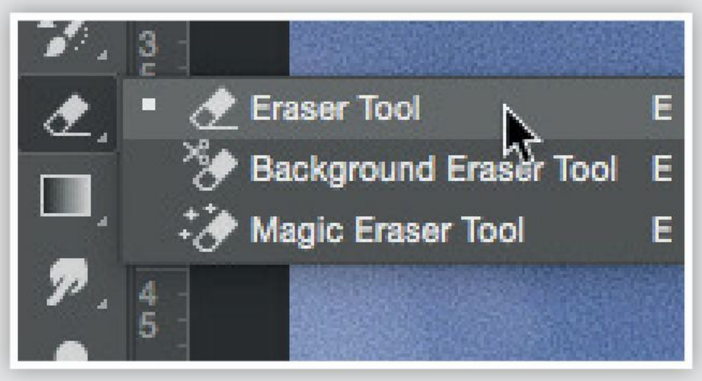


Many people will probably use Photoshop with a pen and tablet device, such as the Wacom Intuos4 shown here. The Brush tool includes options for pen tablet users, such as allowing pen pressure to control either brush size or opacity.

The Eraser Tool

The Eraser tool (keyboard shortcut E) is a specialised variation on the brush tool and uses the same palette options. It differs from the standard brush in that it can render pixels from a layer transparent, allowing the layer beneath to show through. If used on the background layer it paints in whatever the current background colour is set to.

As well as the Brush palette options, the Eraser also has tool options including Opacity, Flow and one unique one, Erase to History, which can be used in conjunction with the History palette to selectively undo changes in layers. The Mode options for the Eraser are Brush, Pencil or Block, which is a small square-shaped eraser of fixed size and full opacity.



There are two other Eraser options available if you click and hold on the Eraser tool. Background Eraser can, as the name suggests, erase parts of the background, but it does this by converting the background into a layer. Magic Eraser simply combines the Magic Wand tool with the Eraser tool and selectively erases contiguous areas of colour.

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Exploring Photoshop

Okay, you've got the hang of the basics and now you want to expand your skill base a little. This is where you can begin to explore more of what Photoshop can do for you with its extensive set of tools and manipulation techniques. Let's have a look at how you can make some simple edits to images such as cropping, cloning and masking.

Contents

40	The clone stamp tool	48	Cropping and resizing
42	Gradient fill and paint bucket	50	Quick mask mode
44	Modifying selections	52	Content-aware fill and scale
46	Curves and levels	54	Adjusting exposure

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The Clone Stamp Tool

USEFUL TIP

Vary brush size by using the open and close square brackets keys and vary brush hardness with the curly brackets.

Remove unwanted elements from your photos

The Clone Stamp tool (also known as the Clone Brush in some programs) is one of the most useful items in your image editing tool kit. Despite recent developments such as Photoshop's Spot Healing tool and Content-aware fill, it is still the most precise and reliable way to retouch photographs, allowing you to remove unwanted elements such as dust spots, skin blemishes, lens flare, telephone lines and other intrusive objects from your pictures. Because the process is entirely manual it can be somewhat time-consuming, but the results are often superior to the output of the more modern automatic tools.

This tutorial content is available for download

The Clone Stamp works by copying ("cloning") pixels from a selected target area and placing them over the unwanted objects. Using the Clone Stamp, it is relatively straightforward to remove even quite large unwanted objects from a photo. Our example, taken on a sunny day, is a photo on a beach, deserted except for a lone figure wandering away from camera.

We decided it would be a good demonstration of the power of the Clone Stamp tool to remove the lone figure from the image leaving a pure landscape photograph uncluttered by any sign of human life. This means not only removing the figure, but also her shadow and the footprints that lead out of the bottom of the shot.

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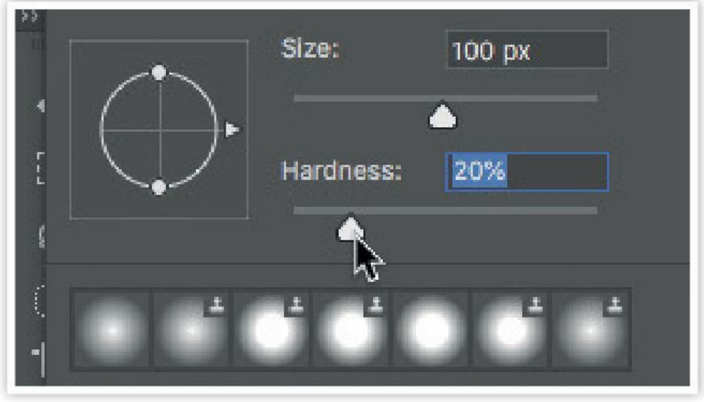
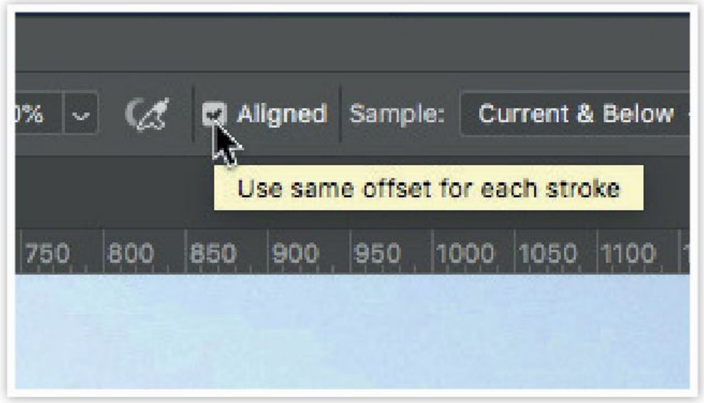
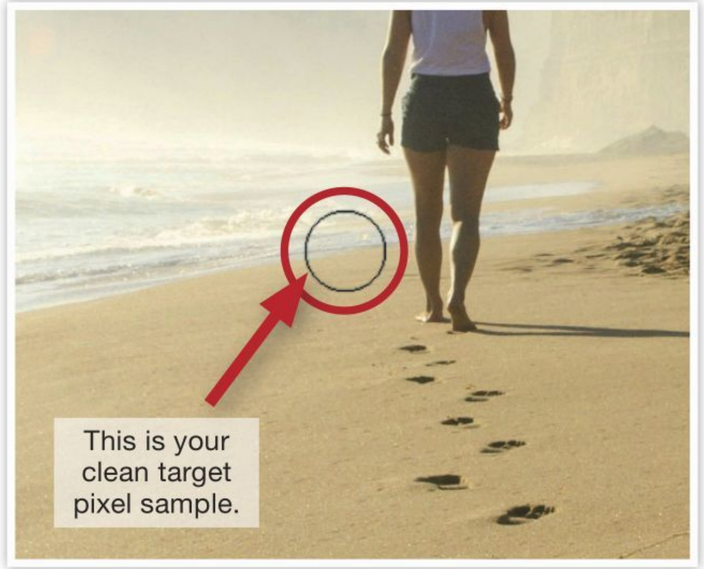
01 Go to your toolbar and select the Clone Stamp Tool (S). For the image we're working on, a brush Size of about 75 - 100 pixels will be fine. You can make the brush Hardness anywhere between 0% - 20%. We're going to start with the flag in the lower right corner.



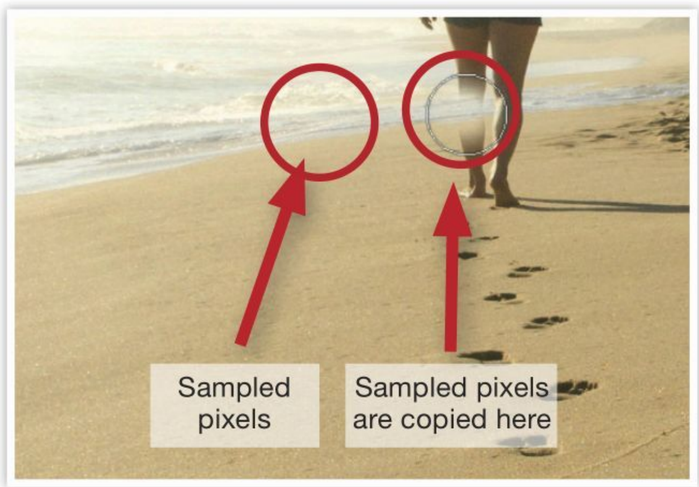
02 Make sure that you have the Aligned option ticked. This means that the sampling area of your brush moves as your brush does, otherwise you will clone the same sampled area repeatedly until you alter it.

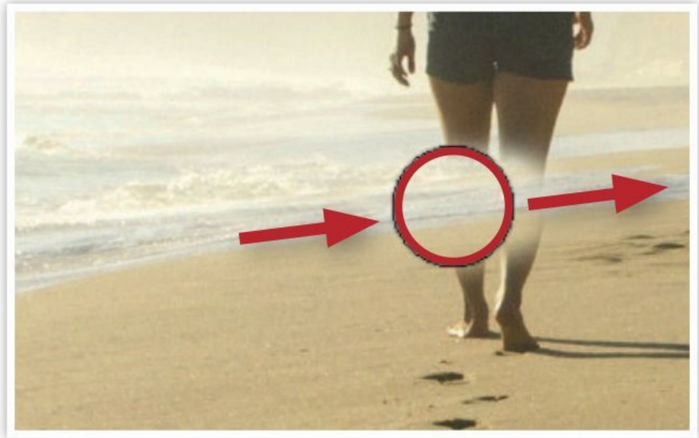


03 Find an area of sand or sea next to the figure and then press your Alt key. A small target icon will appear. Anything under this target will be your sample to be used as the starting point of the cloning. Left-click your mouse to confirm this as your sample area.

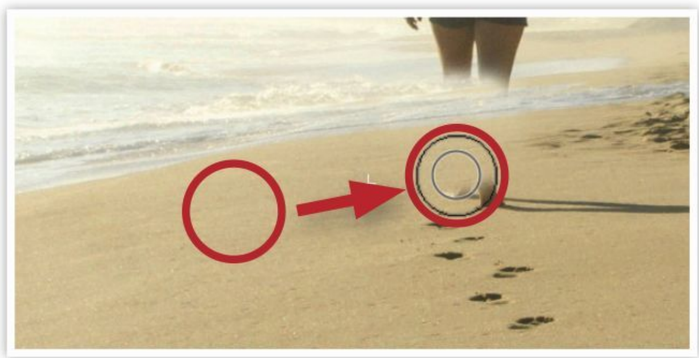


04 Now move your cursor over the top of the figure, level with your target area from the last step. It is shown as an overlay so you can see what you are about to clone on top of your figure. If you click and drag your mouse across her legs, the sand and sea adjacent to it will be cloned over the top, removing her legs.



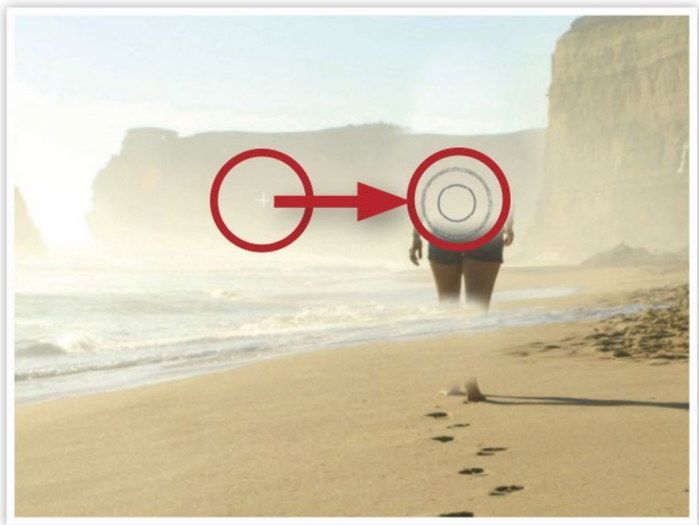


05 You can now choose another target sample to the left of her legs and clone sand from that side over the remaining area of her legs and feet. If you notice any repeated areas that stand out as being cloned, you can choose a new target area and clone in some new sand to keep the pattern random.

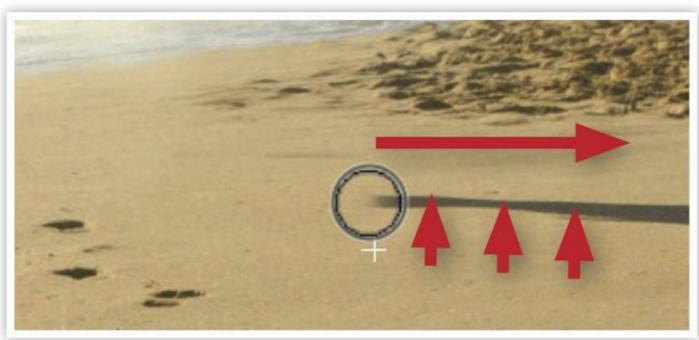


06 You can now move to her head and body and create a new sample from the cliff and sky to clone over her, as you did with her legs. Again, watch out for obvious repeat patterns as you clone clean areas on top of her body.

07 Now you can continue to remove her body by sampling an area of the cliff to the left of her and cloning that over the top of the figure's midriff. Finally, we can remove her shadow and the footprints in the sand using the same techniques we've just learned.



08 The random fractal nature of the sand texture is actually quite useful. Sample an area directly below the long shadow and then clone the sand texture sample on top of it. You can also click on the sand either side of each footprint and use that sampled pixel data to clone out the footprints leading up the beach.



09 Once complete, you can assess the result and if you see any obvious repeating patterns that give the game away, you can simply clone new areas over the offending repeated parts using random sea, sand and sky as needed.

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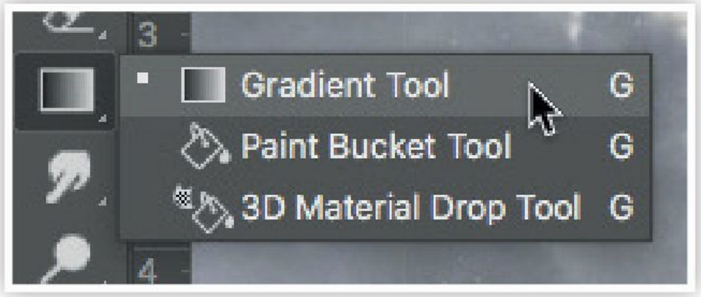
Gradient Fill & Paint Bucket

Fill layers and selections with colours, textures and gradients

One very useful facility that Photoshop provides is the Gradient tool. It can fill an area of a layer with a gradual blend between multiple colours. You can choose from a selection of pre-set gradient fills or create your own. It's a great way to add gradient filters for enhancing photographs, or to create effects such as vignettes and centre-spot soft-focus. Let's take a closer look at how it works.

You'll find the Gradient tool about halfway down the Tool Palette. It has its own unique set of options in the Tool Options bar, the main one being the Gradient Picker, which lets you choose from a list of pre-set gradients.



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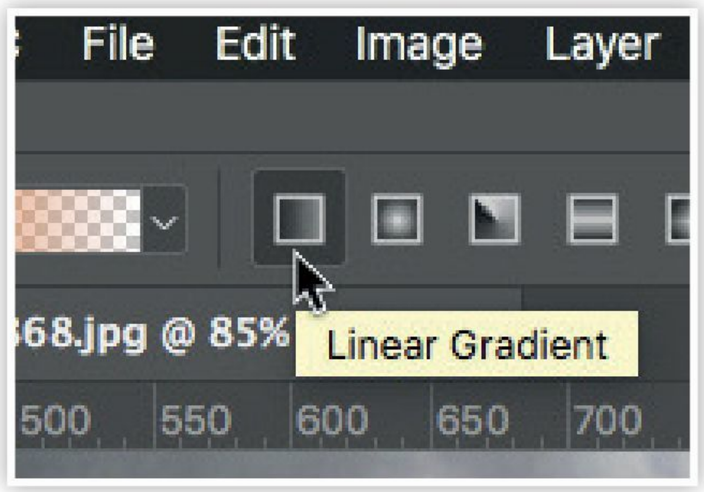
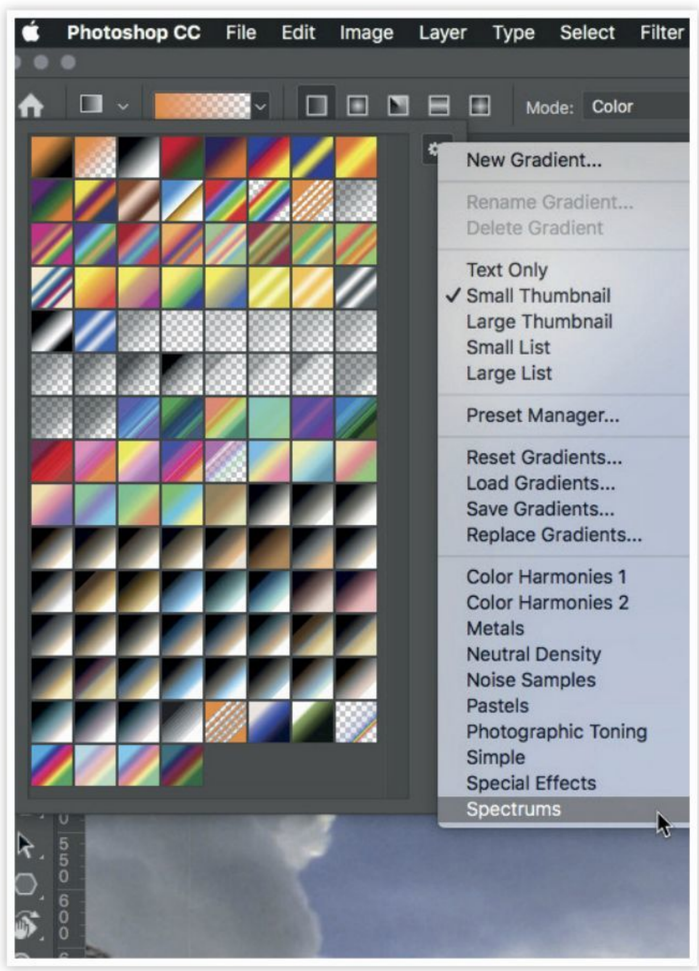


Next to this is a row of buttons that create different gradient shapes. The default setting is a straight Linear Gradient, but other options include Radial, Angle, Reflected and Diamond shapes.

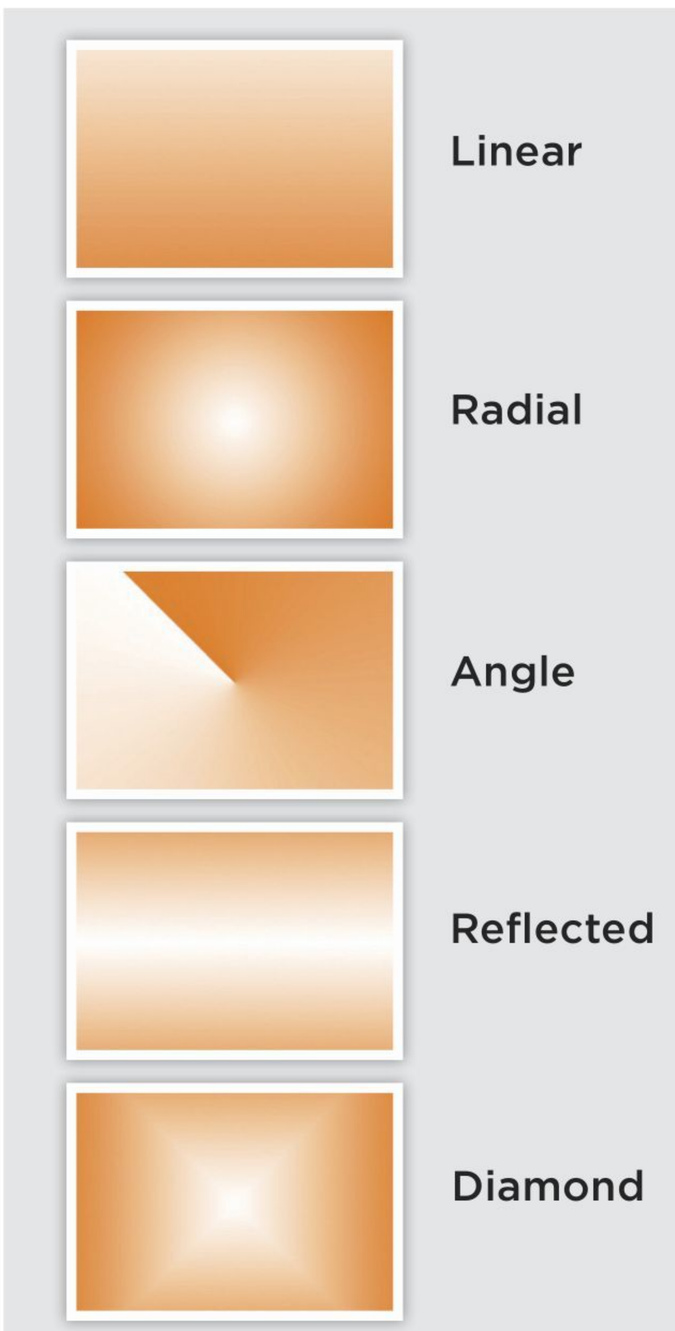
Like the Brush tools the Gradient has blend modes that let you mix the gradient colour fill with the layer below it in various ways. This is a great way to enhance landscape shots, by using an orange-to-transparent gradient fill in Color mode, as in the example seen here.

Photoshop comes with a selection of default pre-set gradients loaded, but there are other packs of gradients available. You can load in these other packs via the Gradient menu. If you open the Gradient Picker you'll see a small icon like a cog wheel. If you click on this you'll see the menu, with the list of standard gradient packs available to load at the bottom.

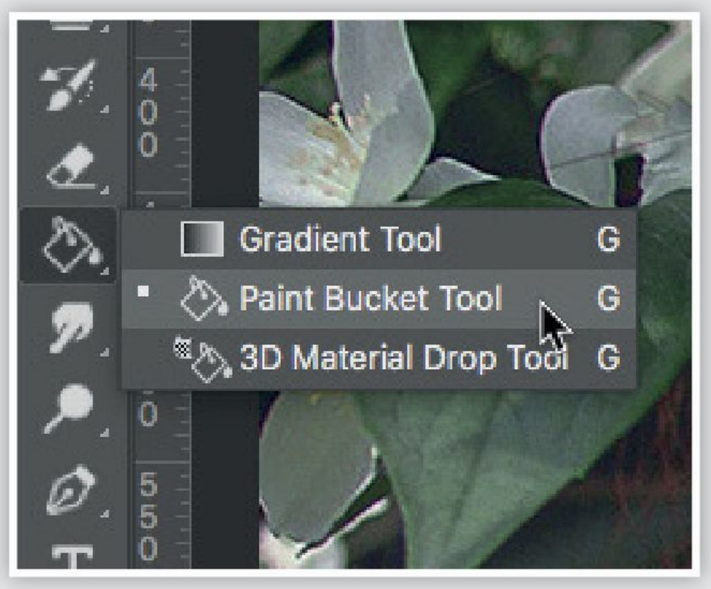
Other Gradient tool options include the overall layer opacity, reversing the direction of the gradient colour mix, changing the "dither" of the colour mixing and toggling the transparency.

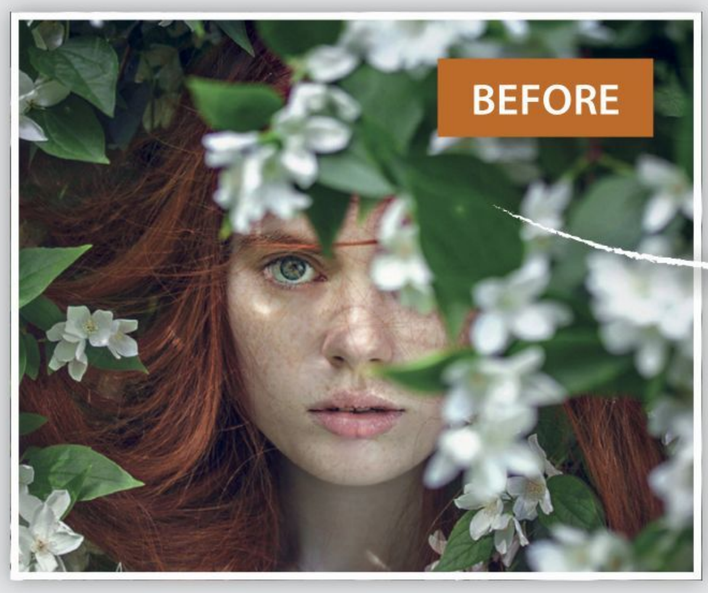


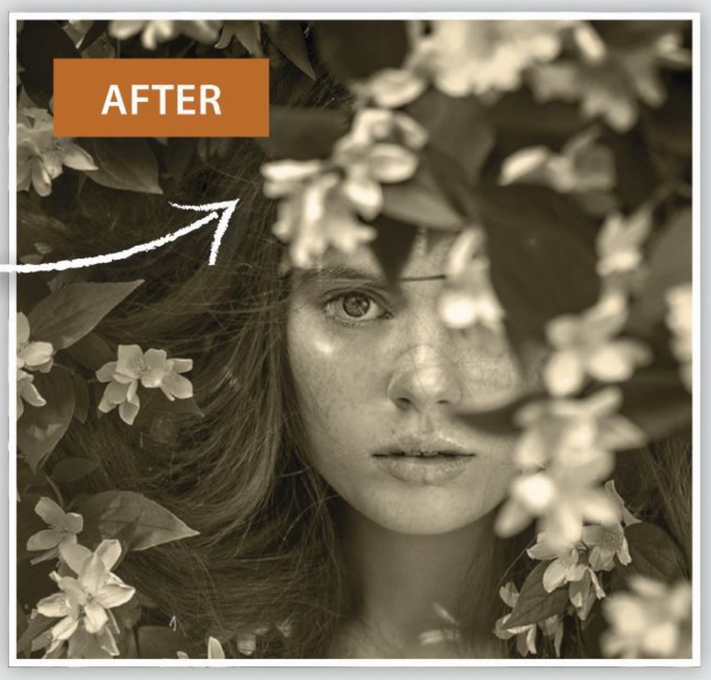
Below are the main gradient types that you can choose from the tool options bar at the top left of your screen.



Paint Bucket Tool







If you click and hold on the Gradient tool you'll find that one of its options is the Paint Bucket tool, which is used to fill an area, a layer, or a selection with a solid colour. In combination with layer transparency and blend modes it's a great way to add a colour tint or filter to a whole image.

If you use the Paint Bucket on the background layer of your image it will fill in an area of contiguous colour in much the same way as the Magic Wand tool. To add a tint to a whole image, create a new layer then fill it with the colour. It will fill the whole layer and you can then use layer transparency and blend modes to achieve the effect you're looking for.

To get this vintage photo effect, we used a sand brown colour, at 100% opacity and a Colour blend mode, which combines the fill colour with the tones and colours of the background image.

USEFUL TIP

Remember that the Paint Bucket uses the same edge detection as the Magic Wand tool. If you want to fill the whole screen, use a new layer.

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Modifying Selections

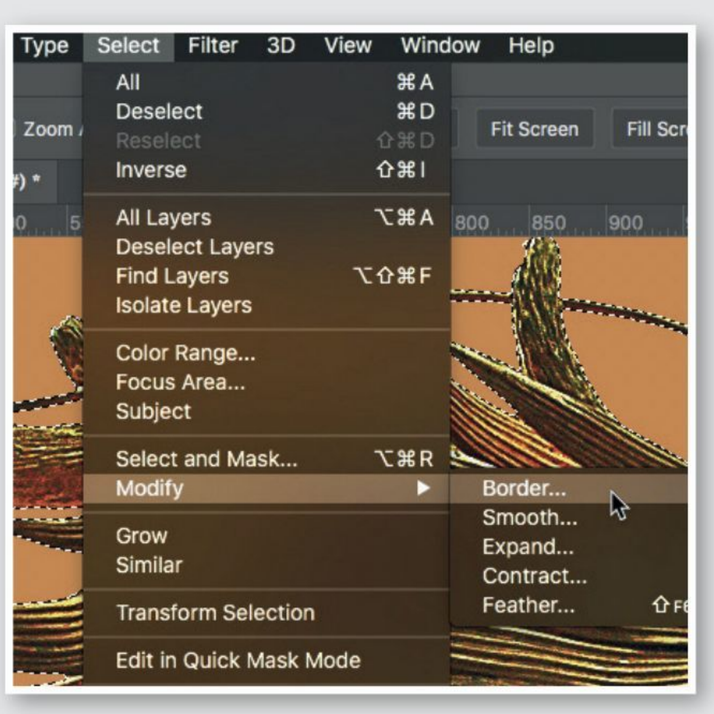
Photoshop has sophisticated tools to refine selections

Photoshop's standard selection tools: the Marquee, Lasso and Magic Wand, are fine for making basic selections of regular, well defined shapes, but they're not so good at picking out soft-edged or very fine shapes. One thing in particular, that has always been a problem, is the edge of fine or untidy hair. Take this photo for example:

This model has been photographed in a typical studio setting, with good lighting and against a plain background. Photos like this are used all the time for catalogues, advertising posters and the like.

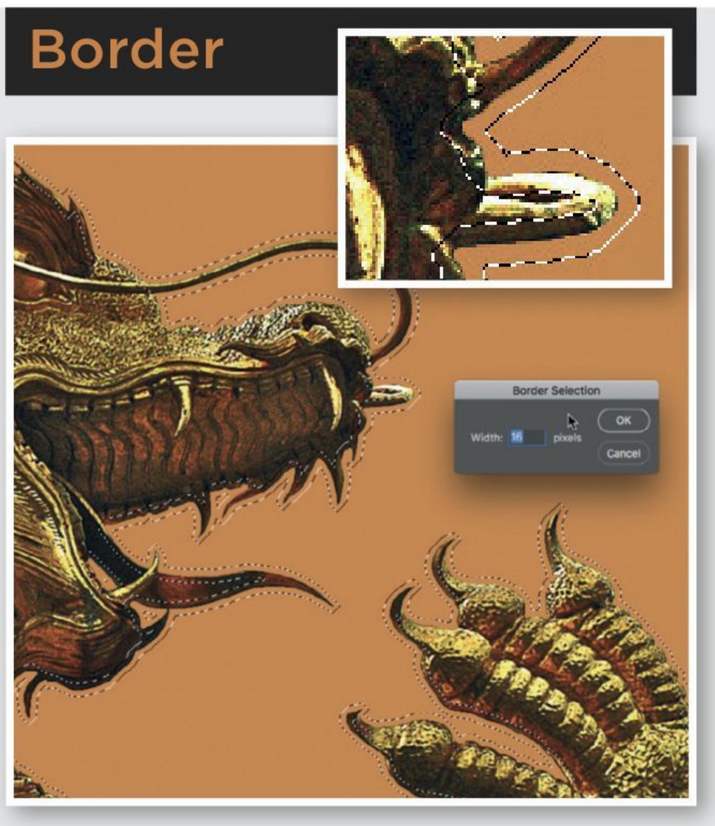
However, in order to fit these needs the model will have to be separated from the background. With a plain background like this, it would be tempting to use a normal selection tool such as the Magic Wand. However if we try it, what we end up with is something like this:

Modify Selection



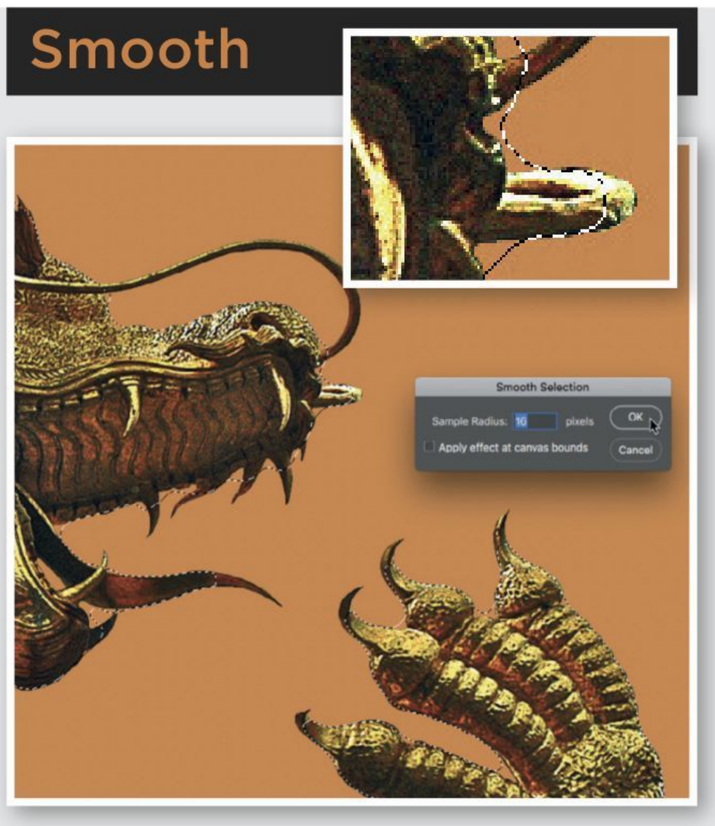
Photoshop has other tools to modify a selection which you'll find, appropriately enough, in the Select menu, under Modify. The options include: Border, Smooth, Expand, Contract and Feather. They're all relatively simple, but useful nonetheless. We have some examples to show you.

Border



Border converts the single-line selection into a border of the specified width. You can use this selection to create a border around your original selection by using the Paint Bucket tool. Be aware that the border extends an equal amount from either side of your original selection.

Smooth



Smooth removes the kinks and wrinkles from the line of your selection. It's useful when you're selecting smooth-edged objects, but it will round off the corners of any irregular shapes. The larger the value of Smooth Selection, the smoother and less detailed the selection becomes.

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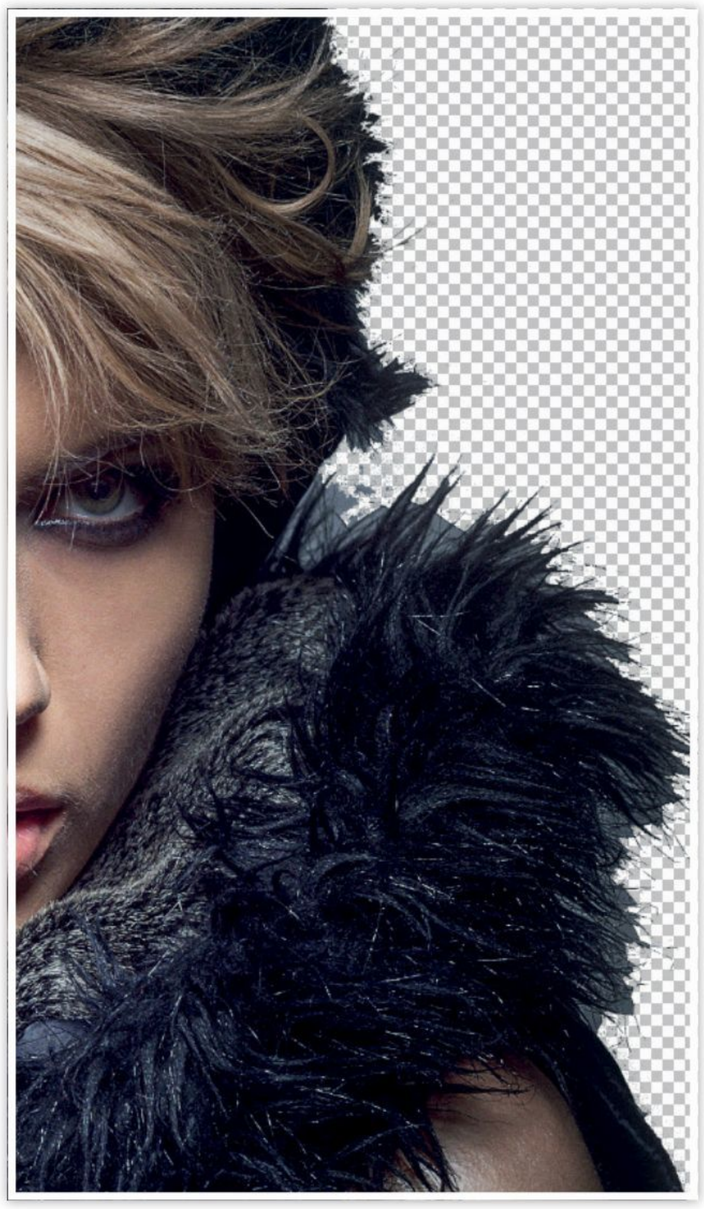
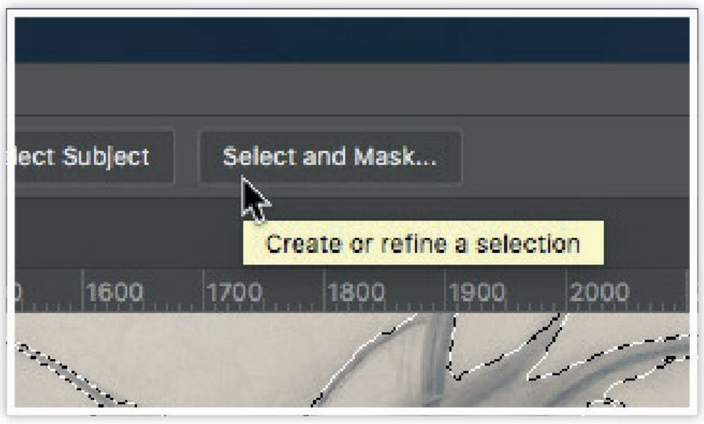
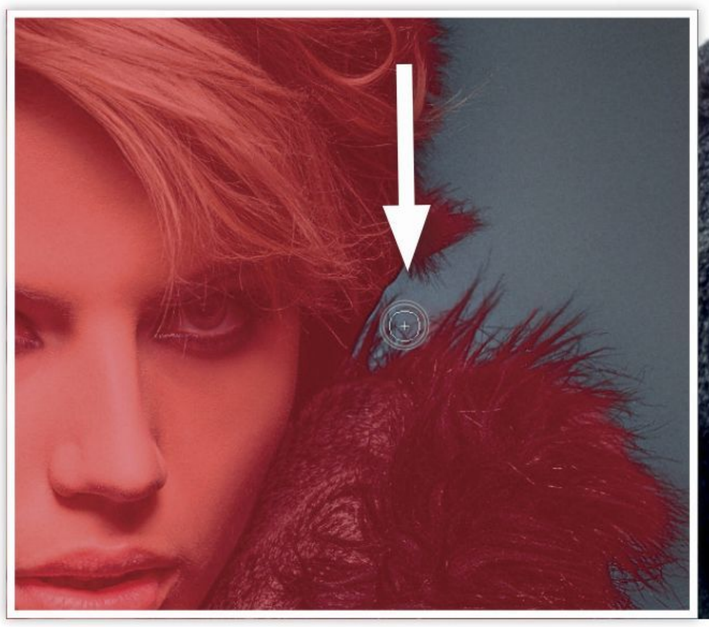


As you can see, the edge around the model's hair looks terrible. The automatic Magic Wand selection has produced a very jagged edge, because it can't distinguish between the fine edge of the hair and the background. Fortunately the latest version of Photoshop has a feature called Select and Mask, which is capable of making much finer distinctions.

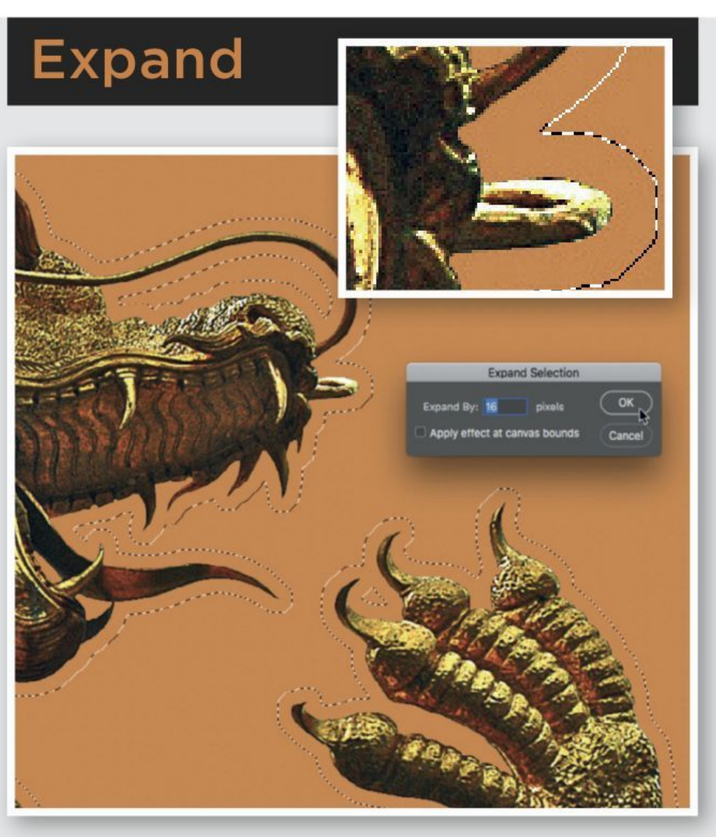


Select and Mask is very easy to use. Starting with a Magic Wand or Polygonal Lasso selection as close as possible to the edge of the hair, or any other soft edge, click on the Refine Edge button on the tool options bar. In the dialog window that opens, in Edge Definition, check the box marked Smart Radius and use the square brackets keys to set the brush size so that it's large enough to cover the hazy edge area around the hair. Then simply paint around the edge, overlapping both the model and the background.



When you've been around all the edge area that you want to refine, click OK and then wait a few seconds while the program recalculates the edge. As you can see here, the result is a good improvement over the first attempt.

Expand

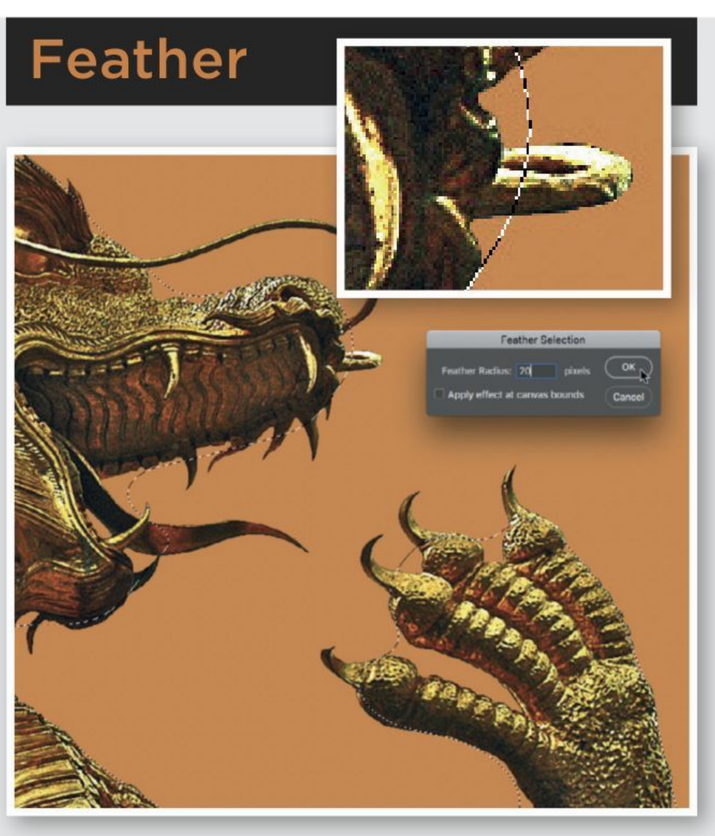


Expand, as the name suggests, expands the size of the selection by the specified number of pixels. The larger the value you expand the selection by, the more the detail and shape of your original selection will begin to decrease as it enlarges outwards.

Contract

Contract is the opposite of Expand. It shrinks the size of the selection by the specified number of pixels. As with the Expand option, the more you Contract the selection, the more the original selection shape's detail will become less well defined.

Feather



We've looked at Feather before. It softens the edge of the selection by the radius set in the dialog box. It's perhaps the most useful option here, particularly if you're trying to copy and paste the selection into a background. Unlike Smooth, this creates a soft vignette effect.

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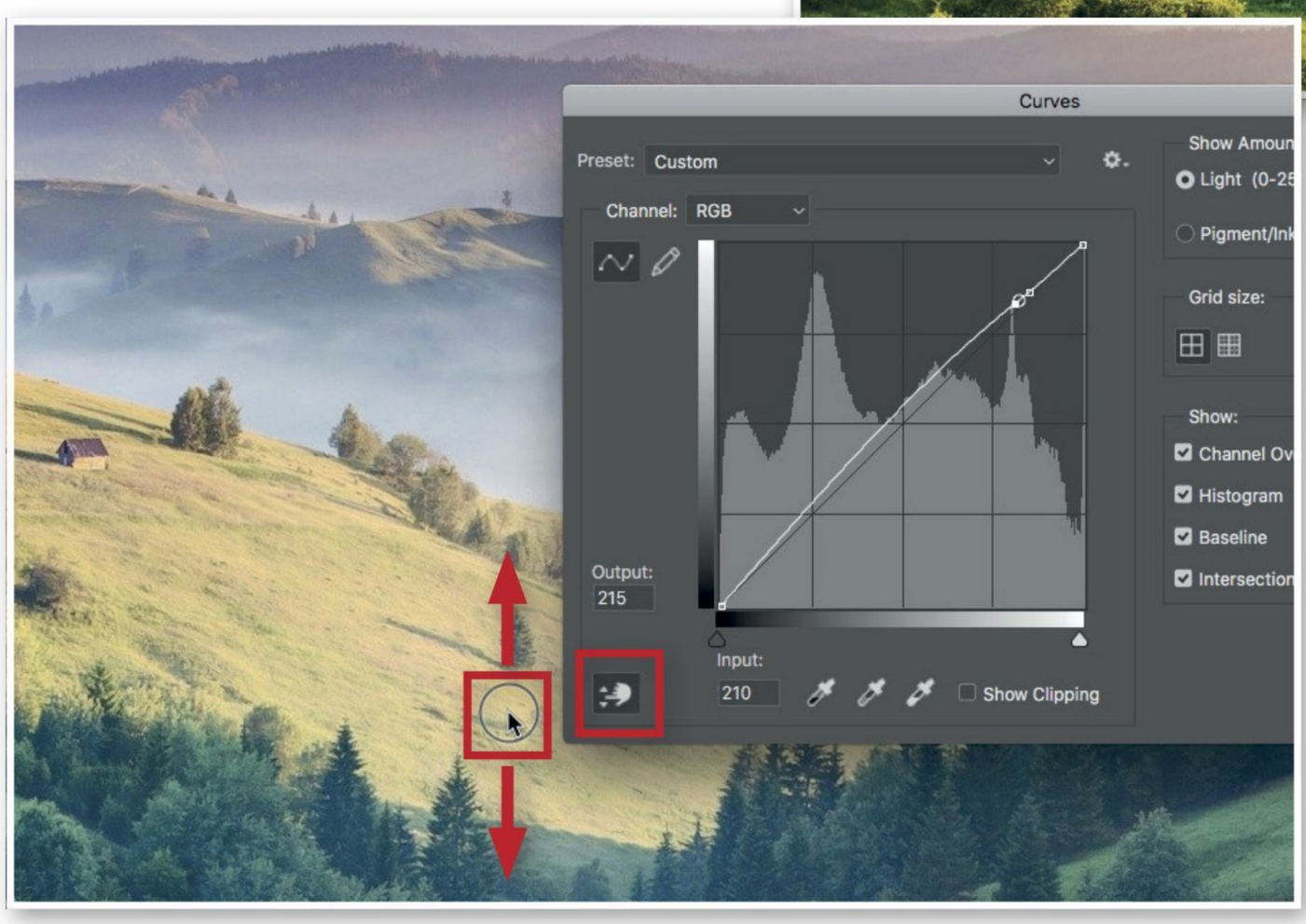
Curves and Levels

The most versatile way to adjust brightness and contrast in your digital images

You'll find the Curves function in the Image > Adjustments menu, or use the keyboard shortcut Cmd+M. The Curves dialog looks a bit daunting at first; a graph with a diagonal line running up the middle of it, like a difficult piece of maths homework. It's nothing to be scared of though and is in fact the most useful and versatile tool for making adjustments to the exposure and tonal balance of your images. We'll use this picture of a sunlit island as the image to begin with. What we want to do first is crop it down so we just have the darker foreground trees, the middle ground and the paler mountains beyond.

The Curves graph is a histogram showing the relative strengths of different tones within the image. It shows the input distribution along the bottom of the graph and the output up the vertical axis. The straight diagonal line from corner to corner indicates that there is a 1:1 ratio between input and output at all tones; the output is exactly the same as the input, as you'd expect. It is by adjusting the line and altering the ratio of input tones to output tones, that we can achieve a number of effects. The left-hand end of the horizontal axis represents the darker tones, while the right-hand end represents the highlights.



The Curves graph can be manipulated in several ways. You can move the line directly, by clicking on it to place new anchor points and then dragging these points into new positions. You can also use the arrow keys to nudge a selected point up, down, left or right. There's no limit to where the line can start or finish, or where it goes in between, which can lead to some extraordinary results.

In later versions of Photoshop there's an even more useful way to use Curves. Just to the lower left of the histogram you'll see a button with a hand and two arrows on it. If you click this button and then move the cursor over the image you'll notice a point on the line move up and down as the cursor passes over lighter and darker areas. Pick a spot that you want to lighten, click on it and drag upward and you'll see the tone curve move to match. Using this awesome feature you can selectively lighten or darken pretty much every tone in the image.

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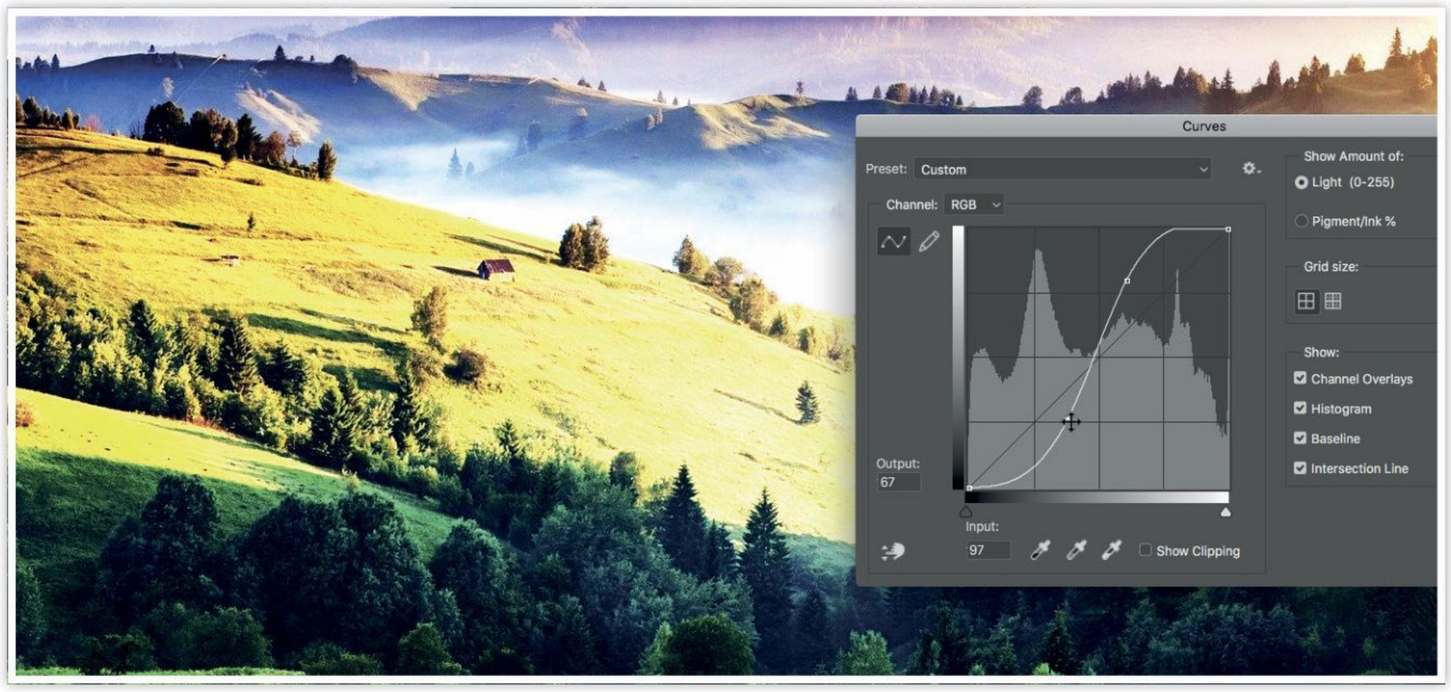
Boosting Contrast

Add two anchor points to the tone curve roughly one-third of the way from either end. Drag the shape of the line into a narrow S-shaped curve, slightly raising the upper half of the curve and lowering the lower half of it, leaving the mid-point and both ends in the same positions. This will brighten the lighter areas of the image, while darkening the darker areas, increasing the contrast while maintaining the same overall exposure. It's an excellent way to make very precise adjustments to contrast. Mid-tone lightness can be adjusted by moving the mid-point on the curve up or down.



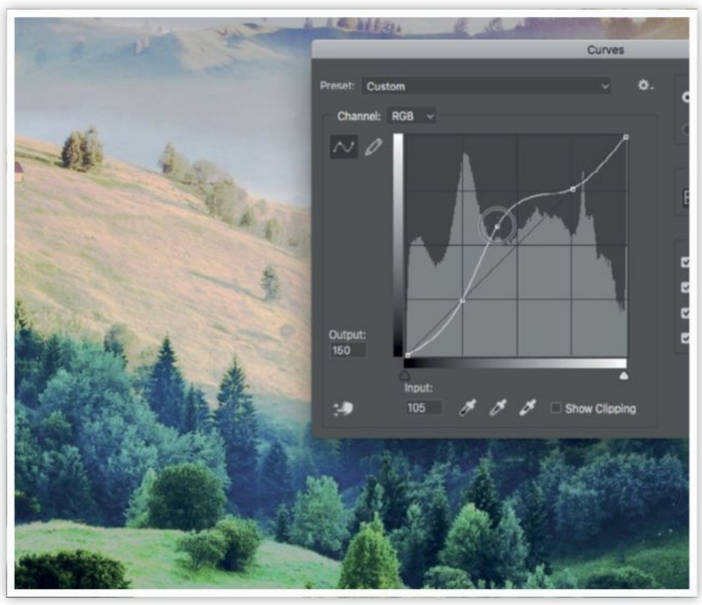
Emphasising Highlights

To boost the highlights of an image move the highest point leftwards along the top horizontal axis. This increases the brightness of the lighter pixels and may cause the brighter highlights to be burned out, but the result can be quite pleasing for the right kind of image. This technique works well in monochrome, producing an ethereal high-key image.

Emphasising Shadows

Moving the lowest point on the curve to the right will darken the shadows, but this will lose both shadow and mid-tone detail. This can be alleviated by moving the mid-point of the curve upwards slightly, flattening the upper part of the curve and brightening the mid-tones. This emphasising of shadows is very similar to boosting contrast, but can create a more extreme result.

Brightening Mid-tones

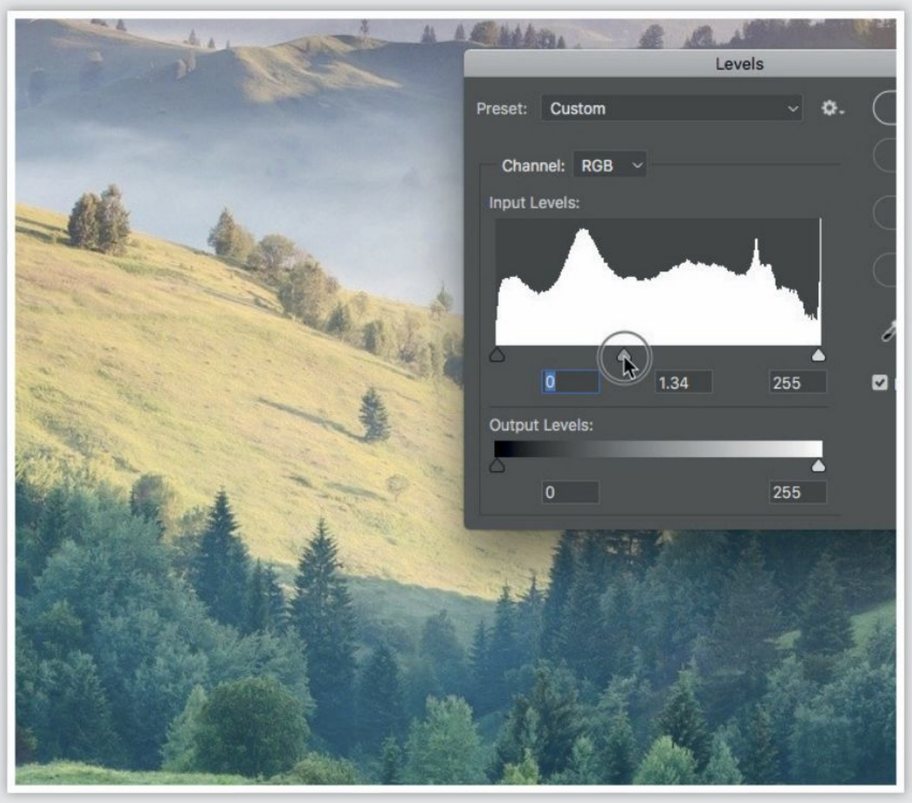


For images with very high contrast sometimes it is necessary to boost the mid-tones to balance the image. To do this, set three points on the tone curve at roughly equal positions along the curve and then move the middle one upwards to achieve the effect. The other two points act as anchors, keeping the shadows and highlights unchanged. Moving the mid-point downwards has the opposite effect.

Levels

A quick, easy and accurate way to adjust brightness and contrast

In the Image > Adjustments menu you'll also find the Levels function, keyboard shortcut Cmd + L. The Levels function is easier to use than Curves and lets you quickly adjust the black and white points and overall brightness of your image. It's particularly useful for images that contain a lot of light or dark areas, such as dark objects on a light background, because it provides a method for fixing the lightest and darkest areas of the image, while leaving the mid-tones free to be adjusted upward or downward.



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Cropping and Resizing

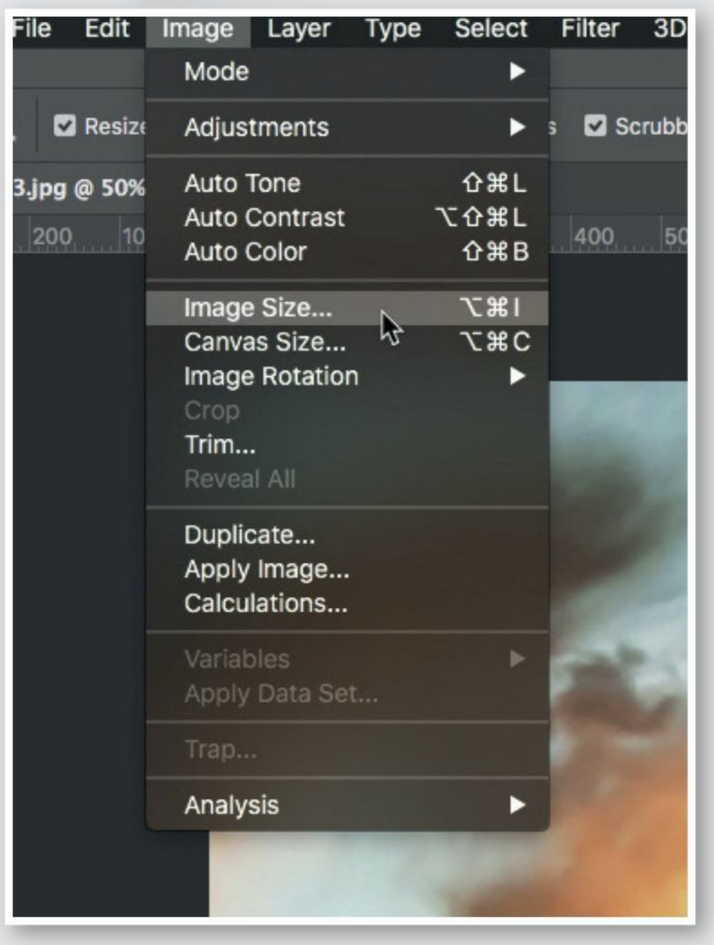
Changing the size of a digital photograph

Sometimes a digital photograph can be the wrong size. Maybe you've got too much of the surroundings in the picture, when you wanted to concentrate on just the main subject, or maybe the whole image is too big and you need to make it smaller to send via email or publish on a website. Doing both of these things is very quick and simple in Photoshop.

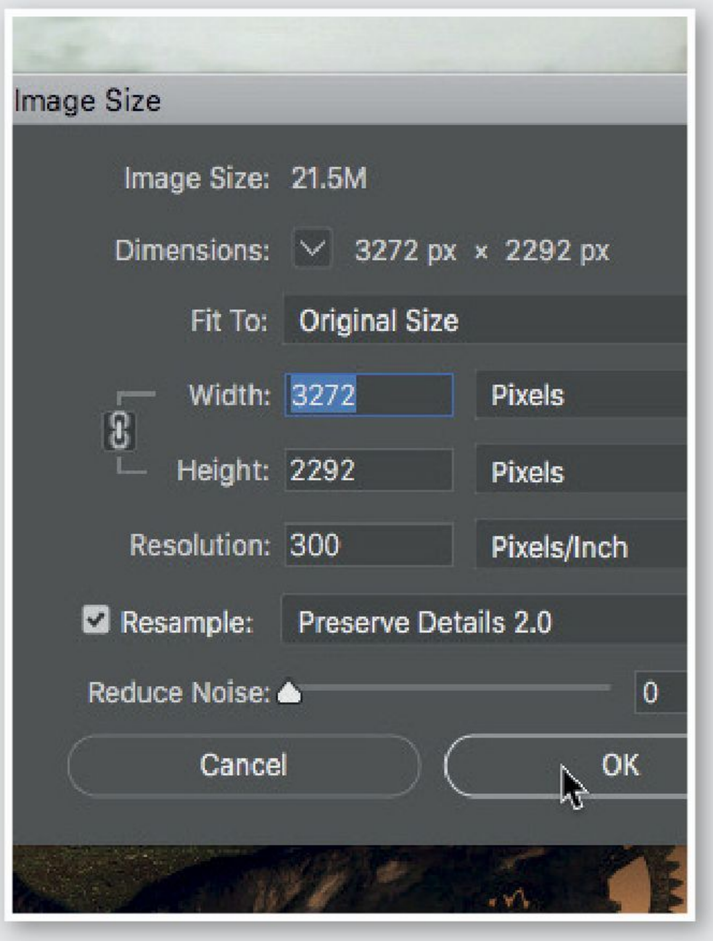
We'll use this artwork of a steampunk fantasy landscape as the image to start with. To enhance it, we need to crop it down so we just have a tighter view of the floating island.

01 The best tool for the job is, not surprisingly, the Crop tool. You'll find it in the tool palette, fourth down from the top. It looks a bit like two set-squares.

02 The crop tool is very easy to use. Simply click near one corner and then drag a box around the area you want to crop. Don't worry if you don't get the size exactly right first time, because you can adjust the size of the box by using the drag-handles on each side and corner. Press Enter to perform the crop.



03 Next we'll resize the image. To do this you'll need to get to the Image menu and select Image Size, or use the keyboard shortcut Cmd + Alt + I.



04 In the Image Size dialog box, check the box marked Resample Image and open the drop-down option panel below it. We're reducing the size of this picture and you can choose your preferred resampling mode.

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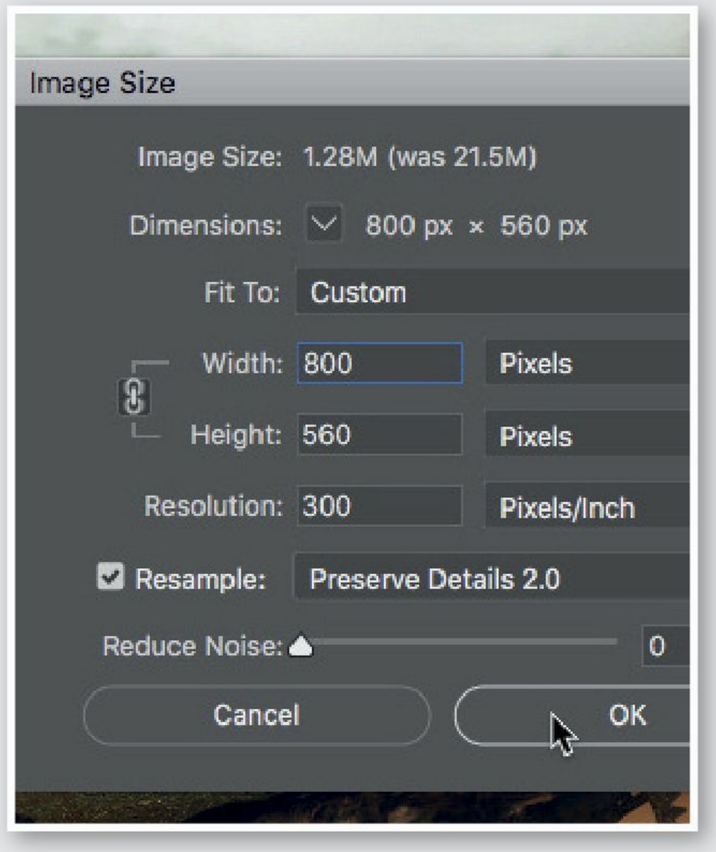
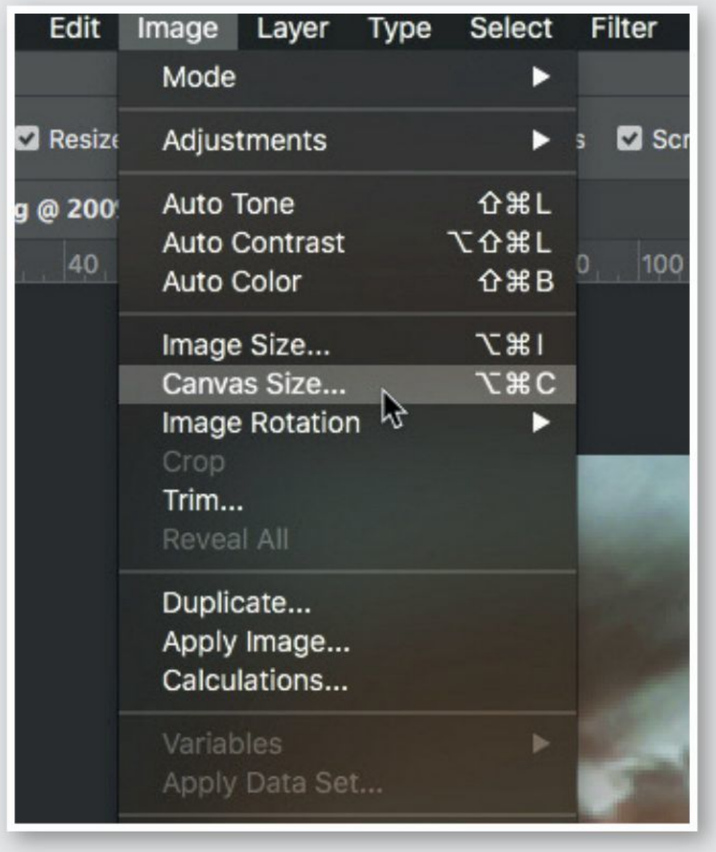
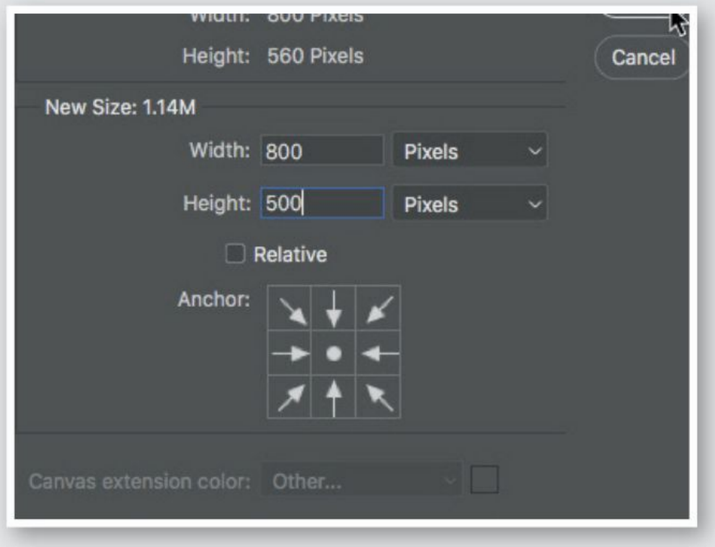


05 In the Pixel Dimensions panel, enter the width that you want your image to appear. If we were preparing this picture for a website, a width of 800 pixels would be ideal. The height will change automatically to keep the aspect ratio the same. Press OK to resize the picture.



06 Next, go back to the Image menu, but this time choose Canvas Size, or use the keyboard shortcut Cmd + Alt + C. Canvas Size will allow you to be able to extend the dimensions of your current document by adding extra pixels to the image. Bear in mind this is different than simply resizing the image.



07 You'll see the current size in pixels at the top of the panel, with the width as 800 pixels. In the lower window put in a height of 500 pixels. If your main subject is not in the centre of the frame, you can alter the anchor point by clicking on the arrows surrounding the box below. Click OK to perform the resize. You'll get a warning that you're about to chop off part of the image, but just ignore it.

Now we've resized the image to 800 x 500, a convenient size for display on many mobile devices and ideal for uploading to a website or sending via email.

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Quick Mask Mode

There's a quicker way of editing selections and masks

USEFUL TIP

By varying the transparency of the Quick Mask selection you can alter the effect of the edit you want to perform.

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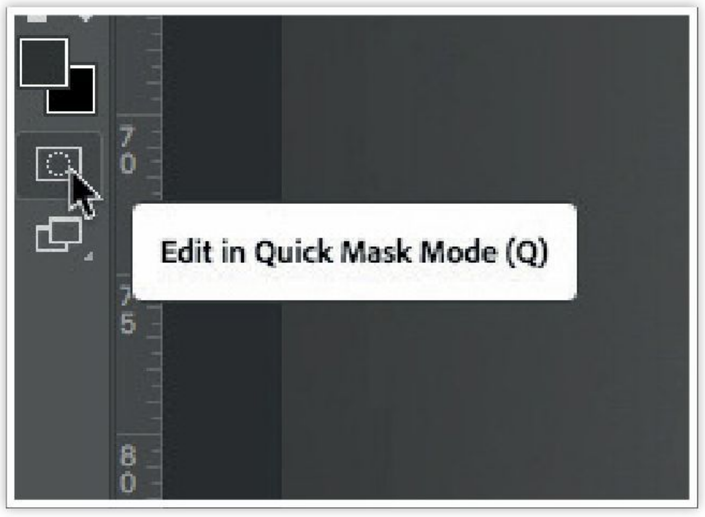

Often when editing in Photoshop it's useful to be able to block off certain areas that we don't want to be affected. For that we use masks and there are several ways of creating them, but by far the easiest is Quick Mask, a fantastically useful feature that was first introduced in Photoshop 7. Quick Mask lets you create and edit masks and selections quickly and easily using any of Photoshop's pixel painting tools to apply a brushed mask with freehand strokes of the mouse. It's extremely simple to use, but it can produce a wide and varied range of results. You'll find the Quick Mask mode button near the bottom of the Tool Palette. Clicking it will toggle Quick Mask mode on or off.

The most basic way to use Quick Mask is with the brush tool. When you switch on Quick Mask, you'll notice that the foreground and background colours change to black and white. Select a normal paint brush and start painting in black. You'll see that instead of black, the colour is a translucent red. Paint this colour over the area you want to mask.

If you make a mistake and overlap your area, simply switch to the white background colour. Painting white will erase the mask.

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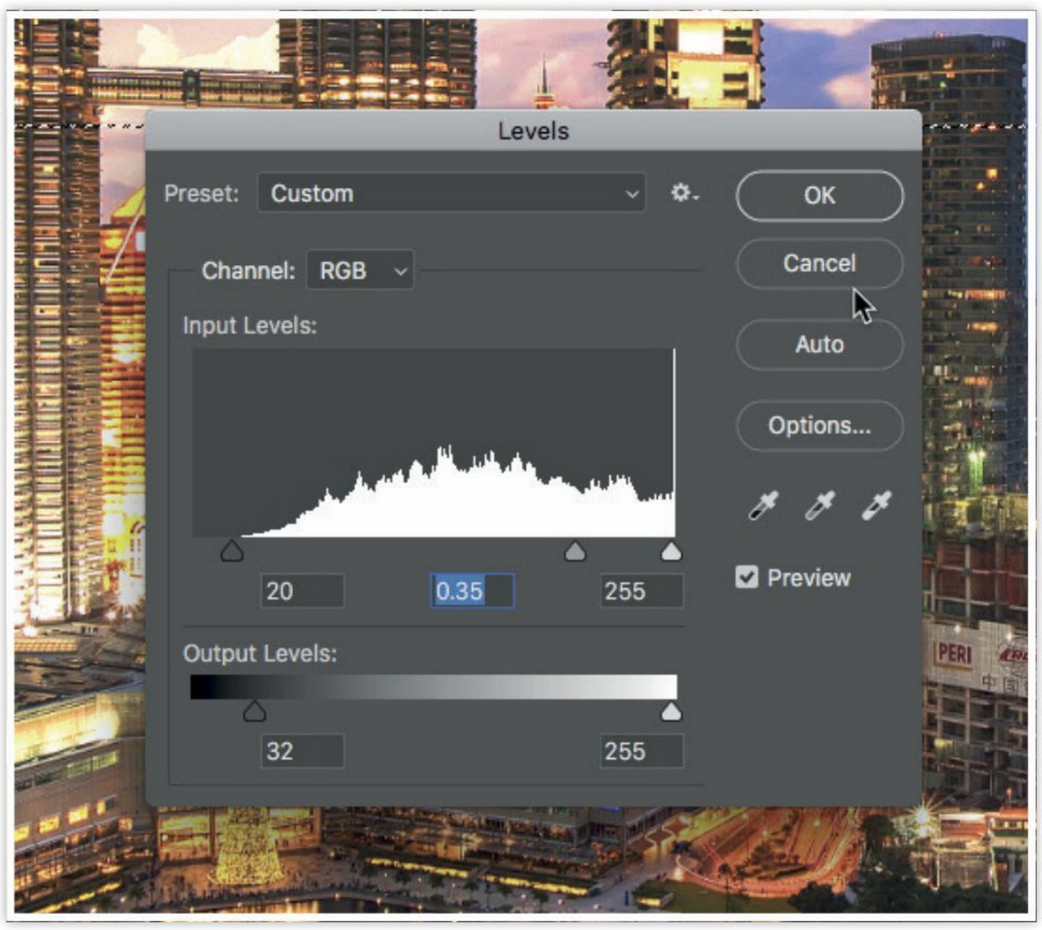
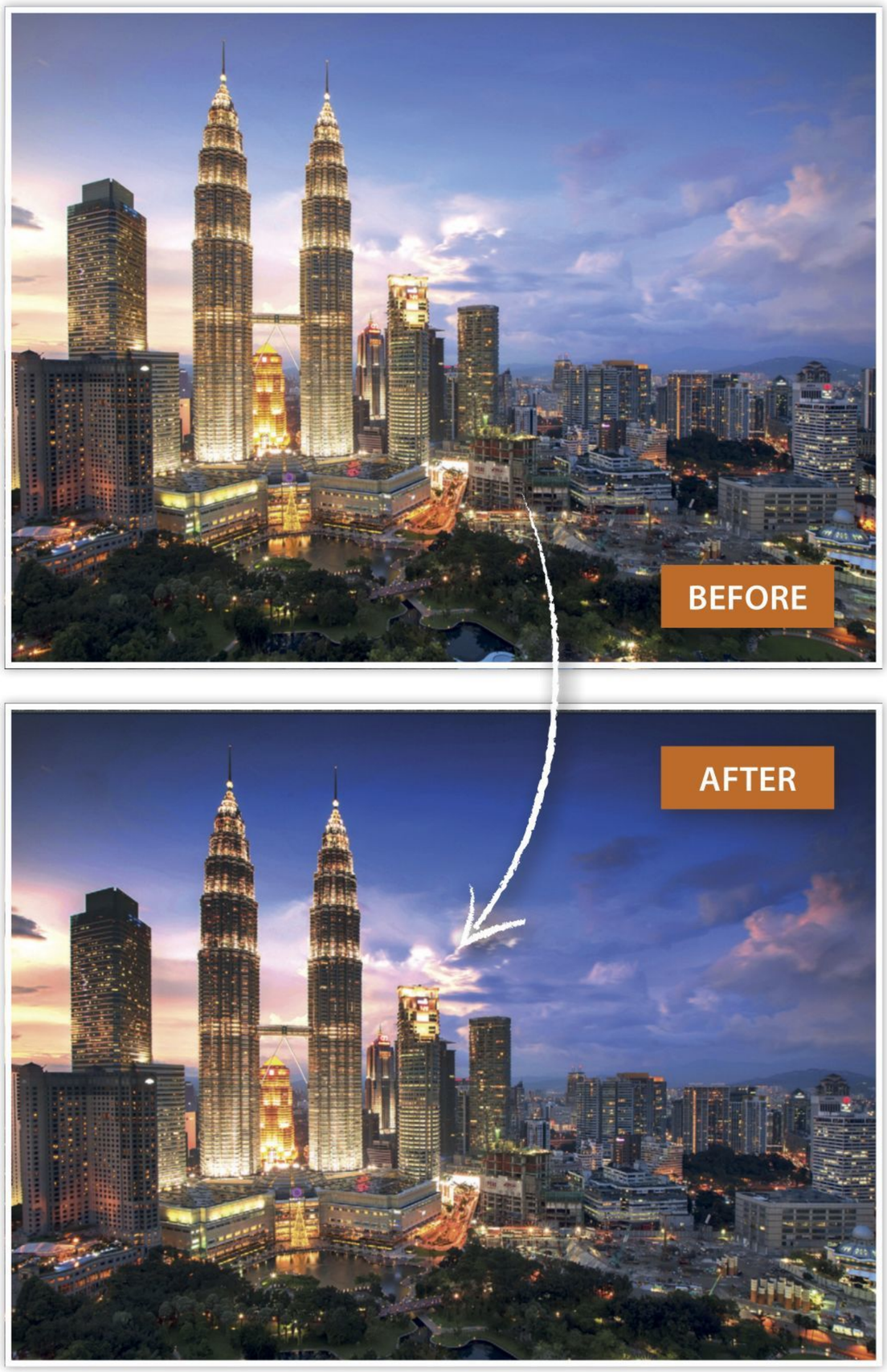
By using a combination of the two you can mask out even quite complex shapes. If you then toggle out of Quick Mask mode, you'll find that all but the area you've masked will be selected. You can now alter very specific areas of your image, such as just the beak and eye areas on this eagle portrait.

Gradient Mask

There are other ways to apply Quick Mask. For example it can be used with the Gradient Tool to produce gradual mask effects. Simply enter Quick Mask mode, then select the Gradient Tool. Drag a gradient fill over the area you wish to affect and when you release the Mouse button you'll see that the gradient effect is in translucent red, like the painted Quick Mask.





You can now use this gradient mask to produce graduated effects on an image. For instance, on this picture we can darken the sky and leave the foreground as it is by using a graduated Levels function. The gradient mask ensures a smooth transition from the full effect at the upper edge to zero effect at the lower edge of the picture.

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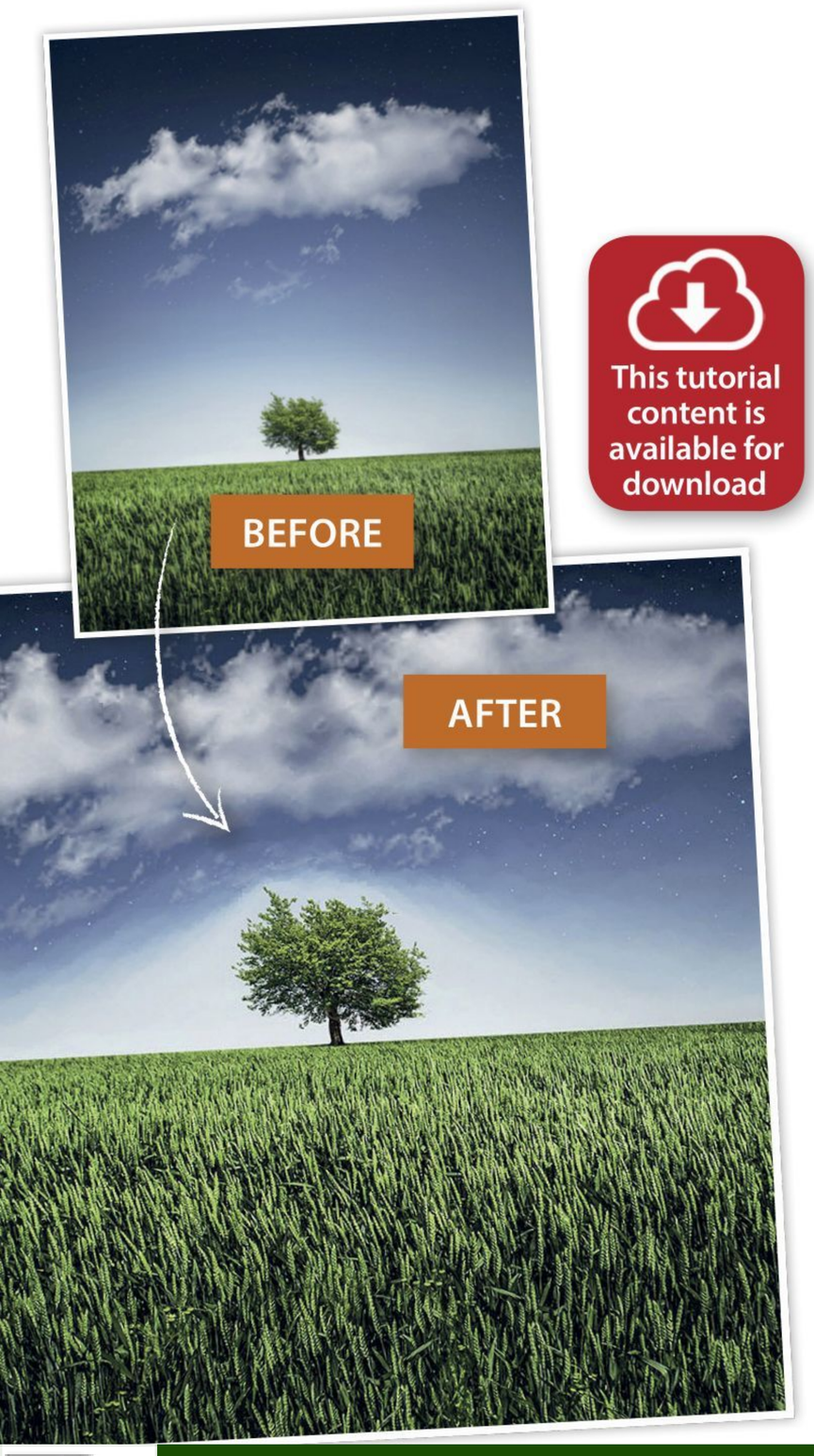
Content-aware Fill and Scale

Photoshop contains image processing technology so advanced it looks like magic

Photoshop CS4 introduced the world to an amazing new technology called Content-aware Scaling, which can resize an image while preserving the proportions of important image elements. It works by analysing the image and removing lines of pixels that contain relatively little information, so that a plain background will be affected before the main subject. The best way to illustrate the effect is with examples, such as this image of a tree and clouds.



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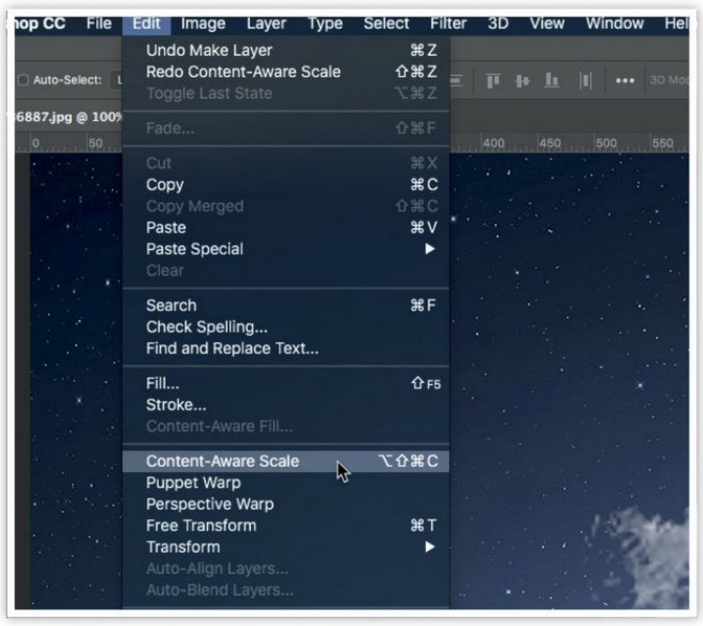
Content-aware Scaling

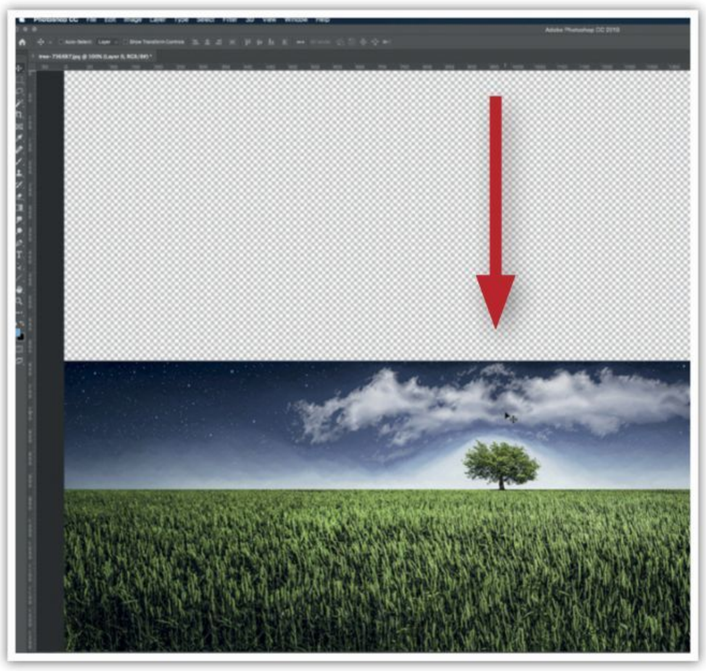
01 If we resize the image vertically by 60 percent using the standard Photoshop Image Size menu option, the tree and clouds will end up looking flattened and out of proportion, since their height has also been reduced by about 60 percent.

02 However if we use Content-aware Scaling, the clever algorithm detects that the areas that are just sky contain relatively little information and so this time when we re-scale the image it deletes those pixels first, preserving the more information-rich pixels that hold the details including the tree. As a result a 60 percent height reduction leaves the scene looking relatively unchanged, although the area of blue sky has been reduced.

03 You'll find Content-aware Scaling in the Edit menu, but it will be greyed out unless you've converted the image into a layer.



04 You use Content-aware Scaling in just the same way as the normal Image Size option. Either drag the handles on each edge in the direction you want, or directly enter the proportions into the text boxes on the tool options bar. Content-aware Scaling works for both height and width and can also be used to enlarge an image.



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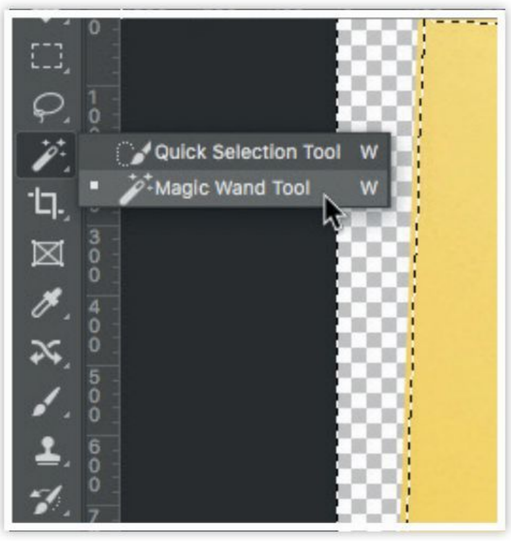
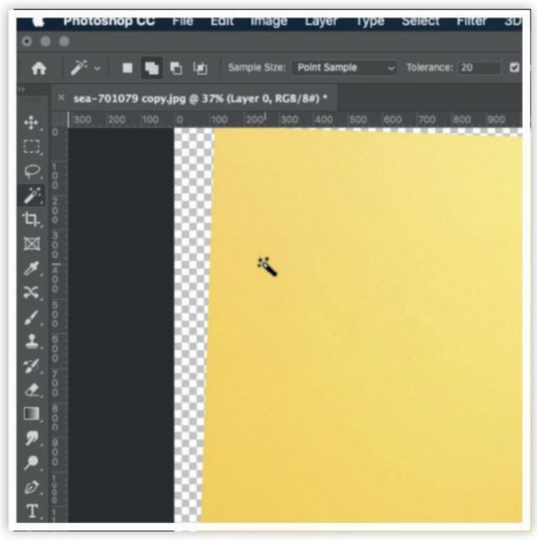
Content-aware Fill and Move

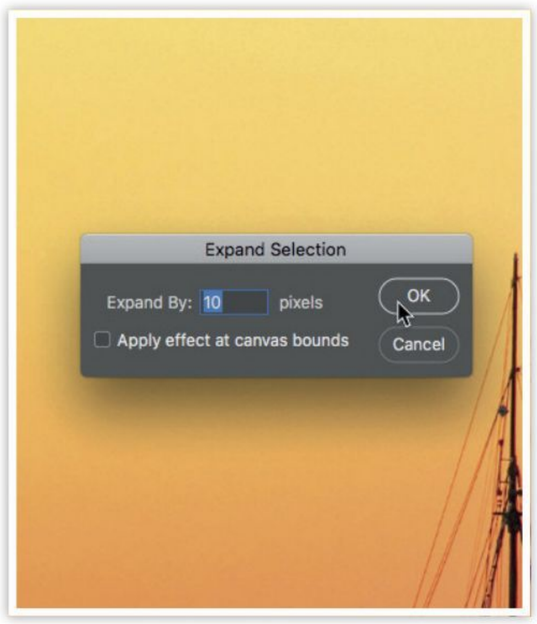
Photoshop CS5 took the content-aware technology further with the introduction of Content-aware Fill. This extremely useful function can fill in blank areas of an image with an approximation of the surrounding area, which makes it particularly handy for filling those triangular edges that are left after rotating an image, for example when levelling the horizon line. Again it's relatively easy to use.

01 Starting with an image that has just been rotated, leaving those empty triangles, take the Magic Wand tool and select the plain areas.

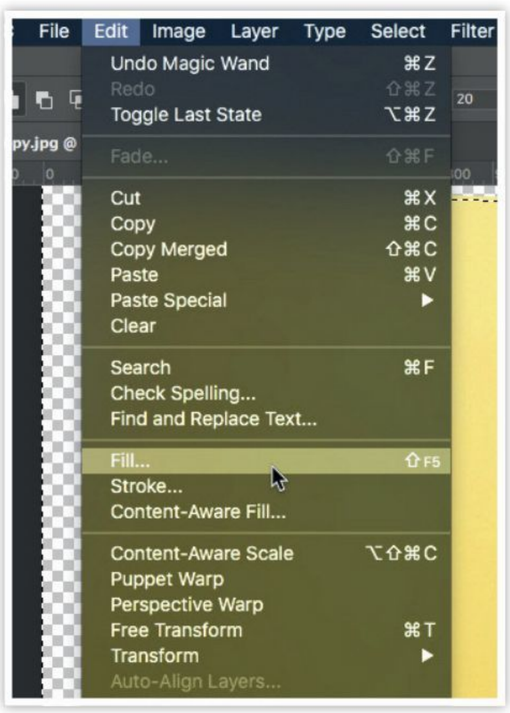


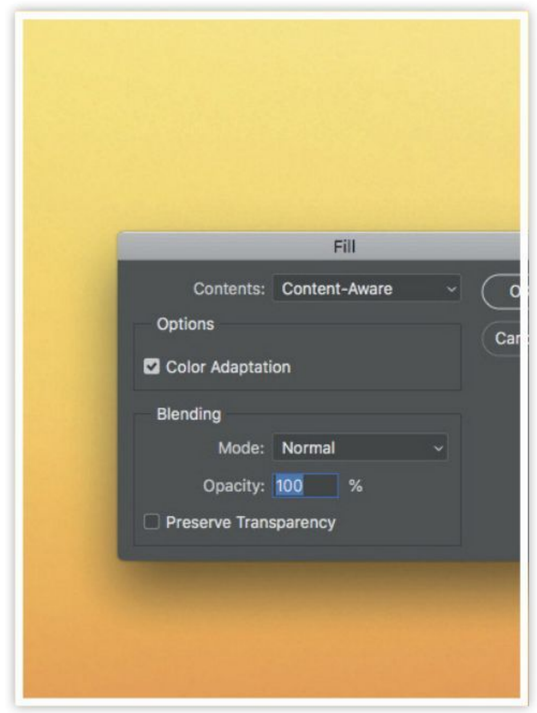


02 Next, go to the Select menu and click on Modify > Expand. Increase the selection area by a decent amount; for this picture 10 pixels should do nicely.

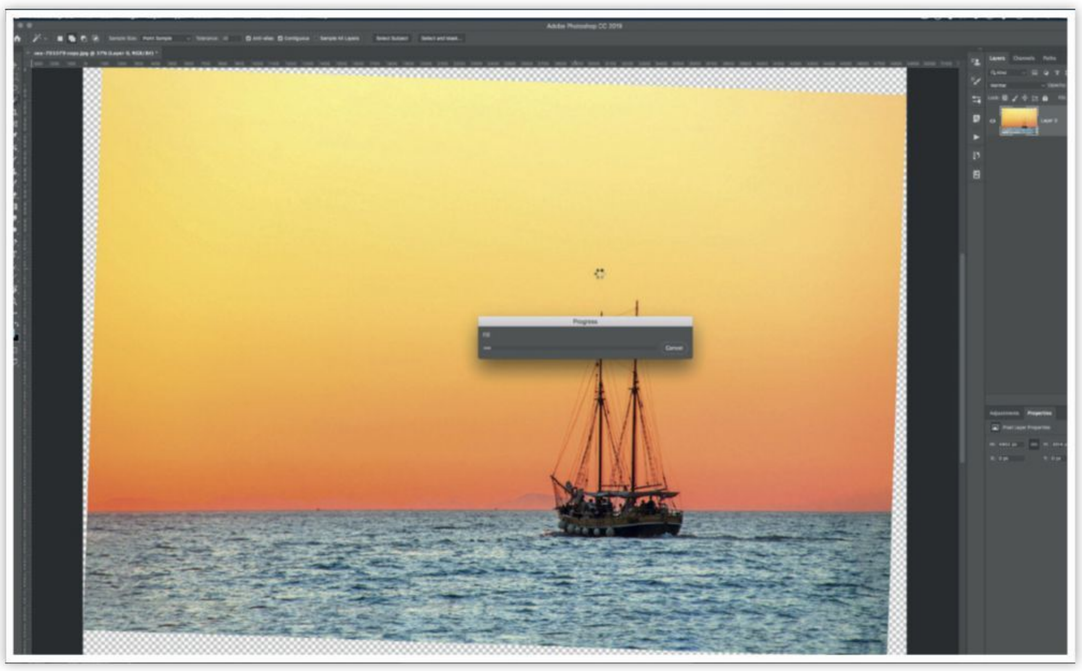


03 You'll find Fill in the Edit menu. Click on it and you'll see the Fill options window appear. Content-aware should be selected by default, but if not choose it from the drop-down menu.



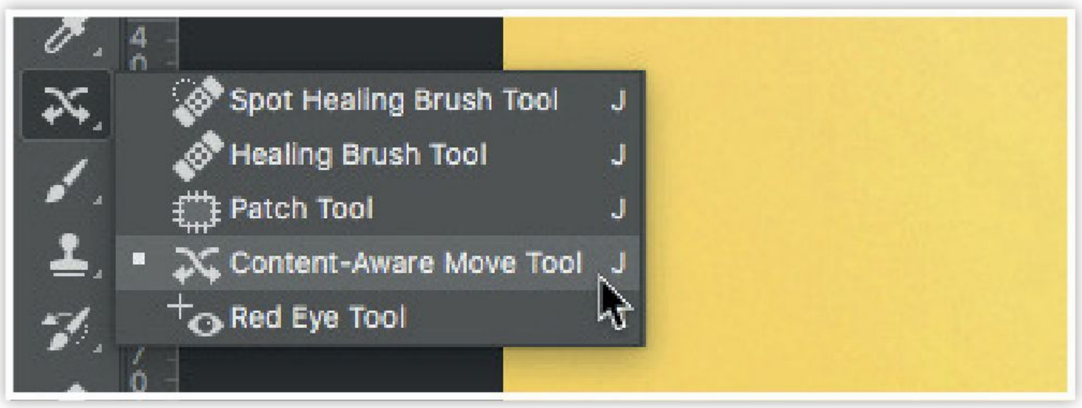


04 There will be a short pause while Photoshop analyses the image, but then it will fill in the blank areas with a texture derived from the content of the immediately surrounding area.



05 Content-aware Move is a new feature introduced with Photoshop CS6 and uses the same technology as Content-aware Fill. The idea is that you can select an object on a background and move it to a new area of the image. The Content-aware algorithm should automatically fill in the area that you moved from and also blend in the moved object.

In practice it's not actually much use unless the object to be moved is on a virtually plain background, in which case it's often simpler to use the Clone Stamp anyway, but some people may find it useful.



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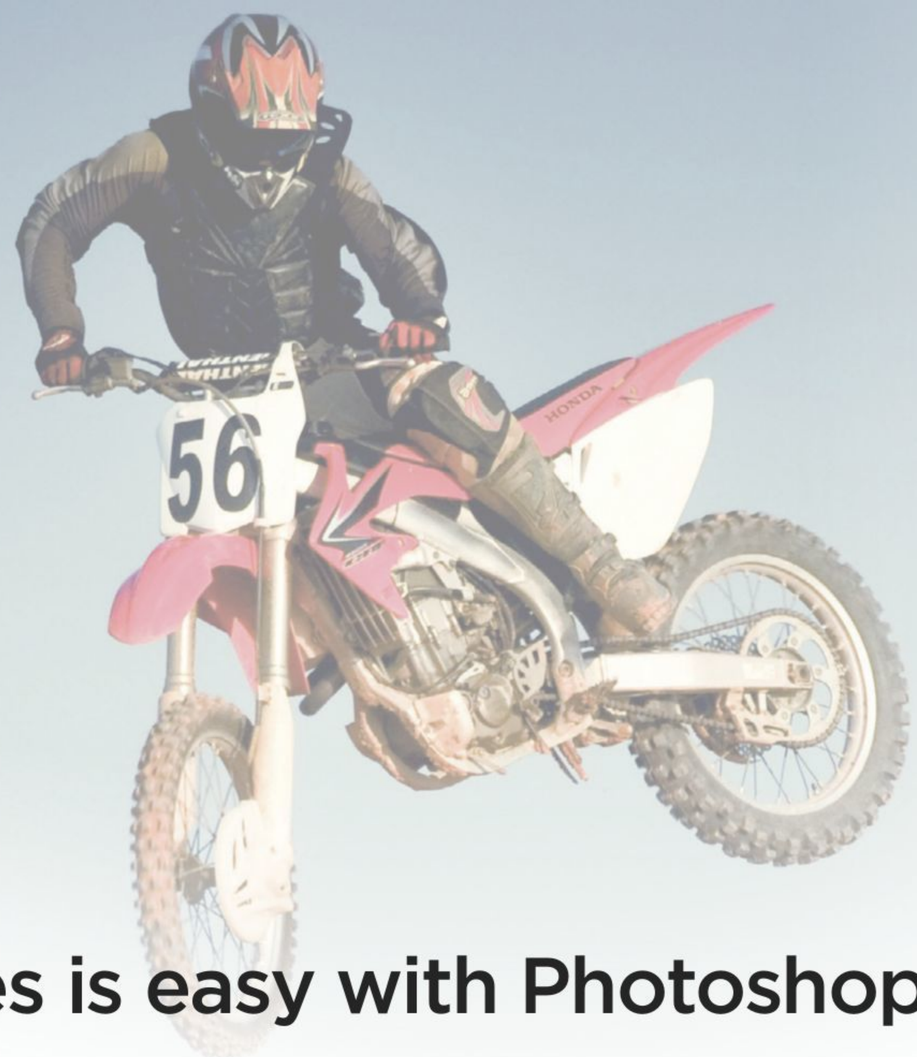


Adjusting Exposure

Correcting your exposure mistakes is easy with Photoshop

Even with the sophisticated technology found in the light metering systems of modern digital cameras, they are not infallible. Some lighting conditions can confuse them, resulting in pictures that are over or under-exposed.

All cameras have a limited dynamic range; levels of illumination at which they record featureless pure white or featureless pure black. The tonal variation available between those two extremes depends on the quality of the lens, sensor and image processor that captured it, along with the bit-depth of the file type used to record it. For maximum bit-depth it's always best to use Raw mode, since this will usually store images in 42-bit or even 48-bit form, capturing greater dynamic range. We'll look at improving the exposure of the more common JPEG images from a compact camera. JPEG images are usually only 24-bit, so have less latitude for any exposure recovery.

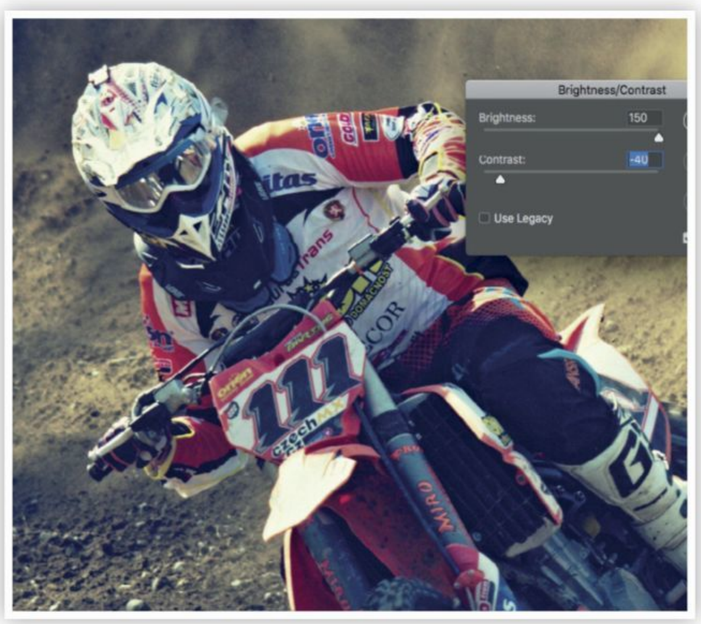
Over-exposure tends to be more of a problem than under-exposure, since burned-out highlights contain no detail, fortunately the JPEG format is surprisingly good at capturing detail in areas that might initially look like featureless black. As a result it's often possible to rescue shots that are quite badly under-exposed, although this will also amplify any noise in the image, so there is a trade-off for image quality.

This shot of a motocross rider was taken in haste with a fast shutter speed, to reduce camera shake, but unfortunately the other settings weren't set up to compensate, resulting in a dark, underexposed image. However, we can still rescue the photo.

Brightness/Contrast

The quickest and easiest way to brighten the photo is to simply turn up the brightness. You'll find Brightness/Contrast as an adjustment layer in the palette on the right, or in the Image > Adjustment menu. The Brightness/Contrast function in recent versions of Photoshop has been changed to improve contrast and tonal balance when adjusting the brightness of your images.

By moving the Brightness slider to the right, the overall brightness of the entire photo is increased, although the new algorithm retains a reasonable balance in shadow tones. You can tweak the effect with the Contrast slider and the result is reasonably acceptable.



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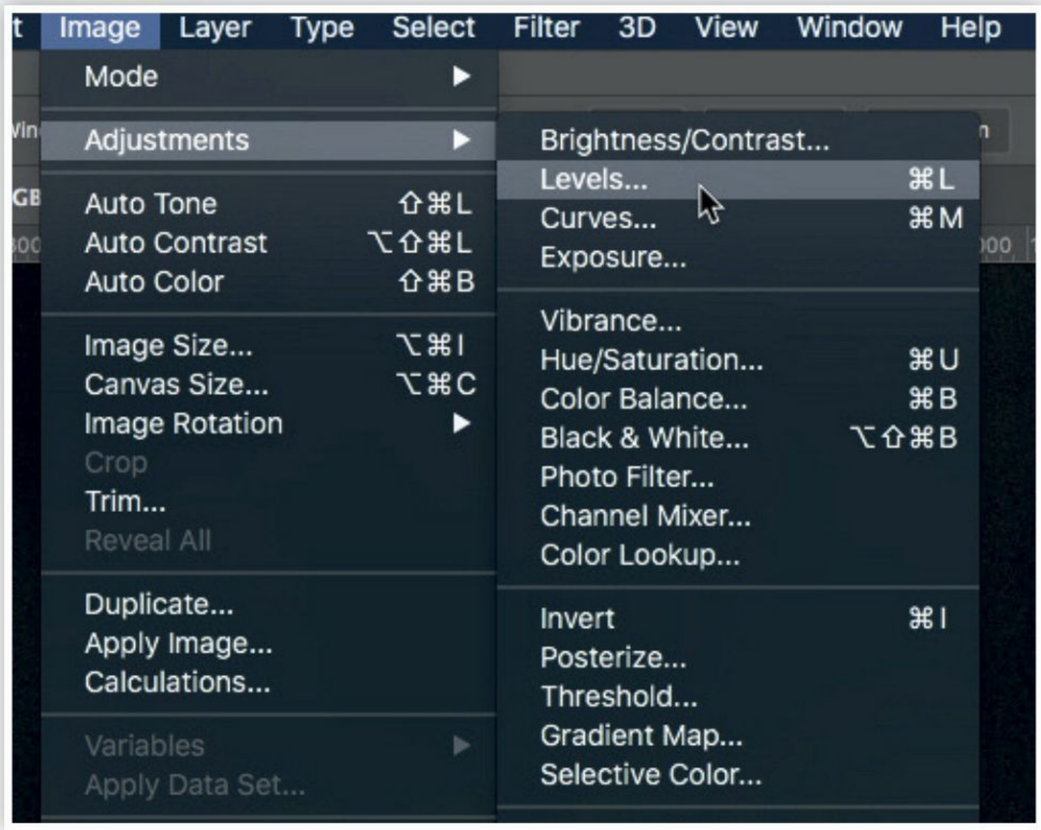
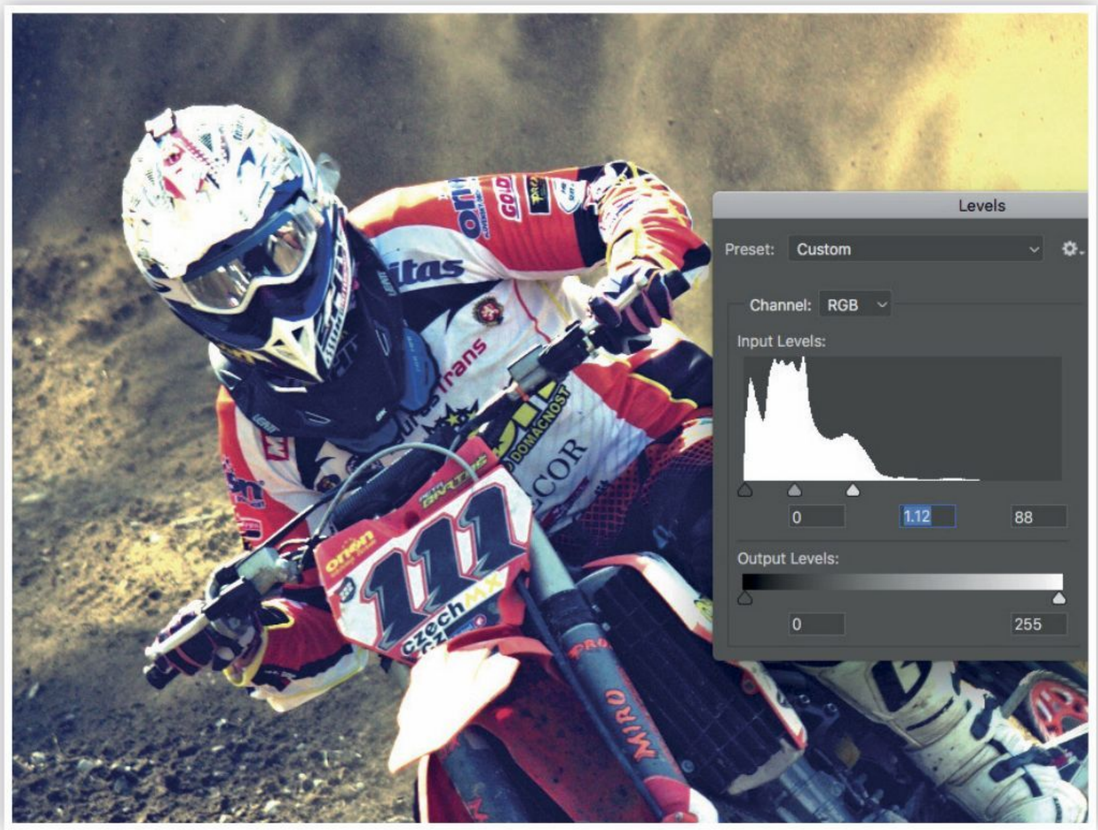




Levels

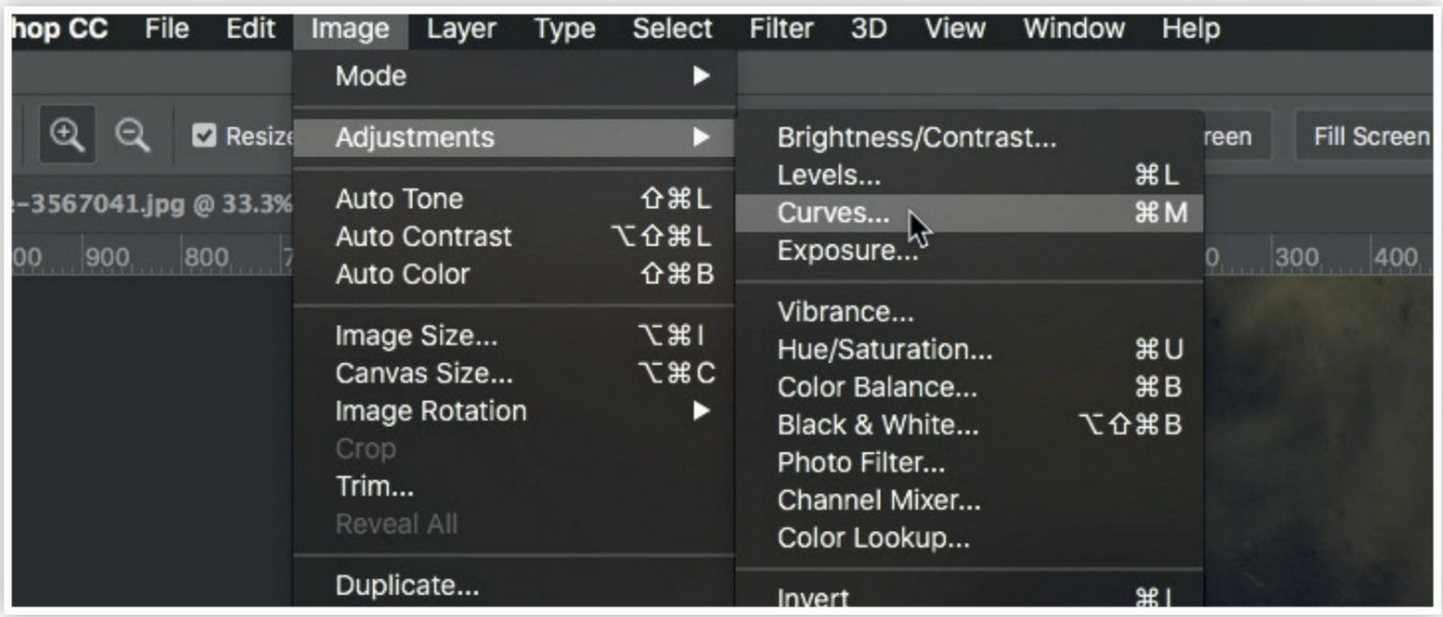
Photoshop offers another way of altering brightness and contrast, but this time with more subtlety and control, by adjusting the Levels histogram. You'll find Levels in the same Image > Adjustment sub-menu as Brightness/Contrast. The Levels histogram is basically a graph showing the proportion of pixels in the image at each colour intensity. The far left-hand end of the graph represents black and the right-hand end is white, with every tone in between represented by a spike on the graph. On the bottom axis of the graph are three points, the left representing the black cut-off point, the right the white cut-off point and the one in the middle representing the mid-tone point.

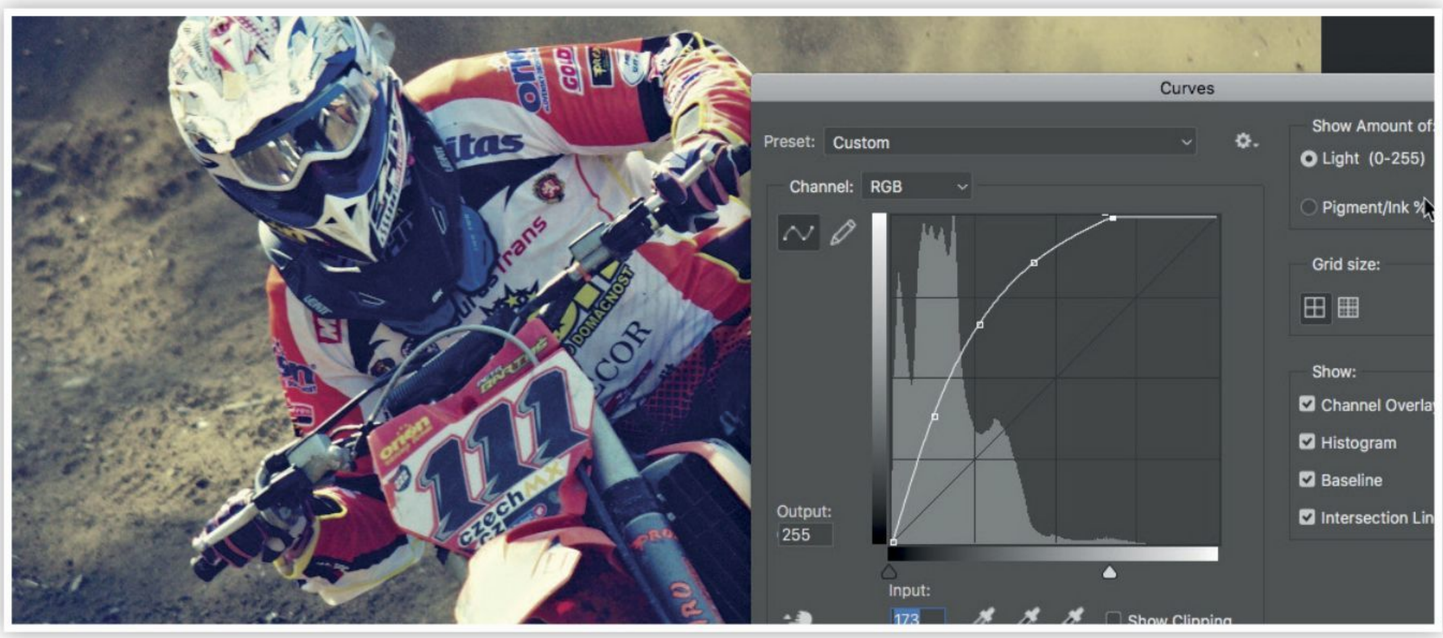
As you can see from the graph our image is mostly shadows, with few mid-tones and little highlights, so we need to brighten some of those shadows into mid-tones. The way we do this is by moving the mid-tone and highlights points left towards the shadows. This has the effect of bringing out a lot of the detail from the shadow areas without burning out any more highlights. It also leaves the deeper shadow areas intact. It is a far better way of adjusting the exposure of a photograph than simply altering the Brightness/Contrast, however it isn't quite the best way. Adjusting the Levels mid-point is still strictly linear in its adjustment.

Curves

The Curves adjustment option, again found in the Image > Adjustment menu and as an adjustment layer option, is a method of changing the relative brightness of specific tones and ranges of tones within an image, giving precise control over exposure. Learning to use it properly is a core skill in image editing and will enable you to make precise and subtle changes to the brightness and relative contrast of not just of the image as a whole, but also of individual colour channels.

Drag the Curves output line around by clicking at any point, then moving the handle that appears. To improve this picture we need to brighten the shadows and mid-tones, while simultaneously darkening the highlights, so we should drag the lower side of the curve upwards and the upper part of the curve downwards, creating an inverted S-shaped curve. As with many Photoshop techniques, the key here is subtlety. Push the curve too far and you'll ruin the picture, so keep an eye on it as you progress.





USEFUL TIP

As with most Photoshop editing techniques, subtlety is the key. If you push the curves too far you'll lose detail.

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Developing Your Skills

Hopefully by now you will be feeling more confident about using Photoshop and looking to step up your game a little. With that in mind, we have a few more essential editing techniques which may prove useful. Get to grips with colour, filter effects and even panorama stitching for super-wide landscape images.

Contents

58	Contrast and saturation	**64**	Panorama stitching
60	Adding a graduated filter	**66**	Colour replacement
62	Correcting lens distortion	**68**	Soft focus technique

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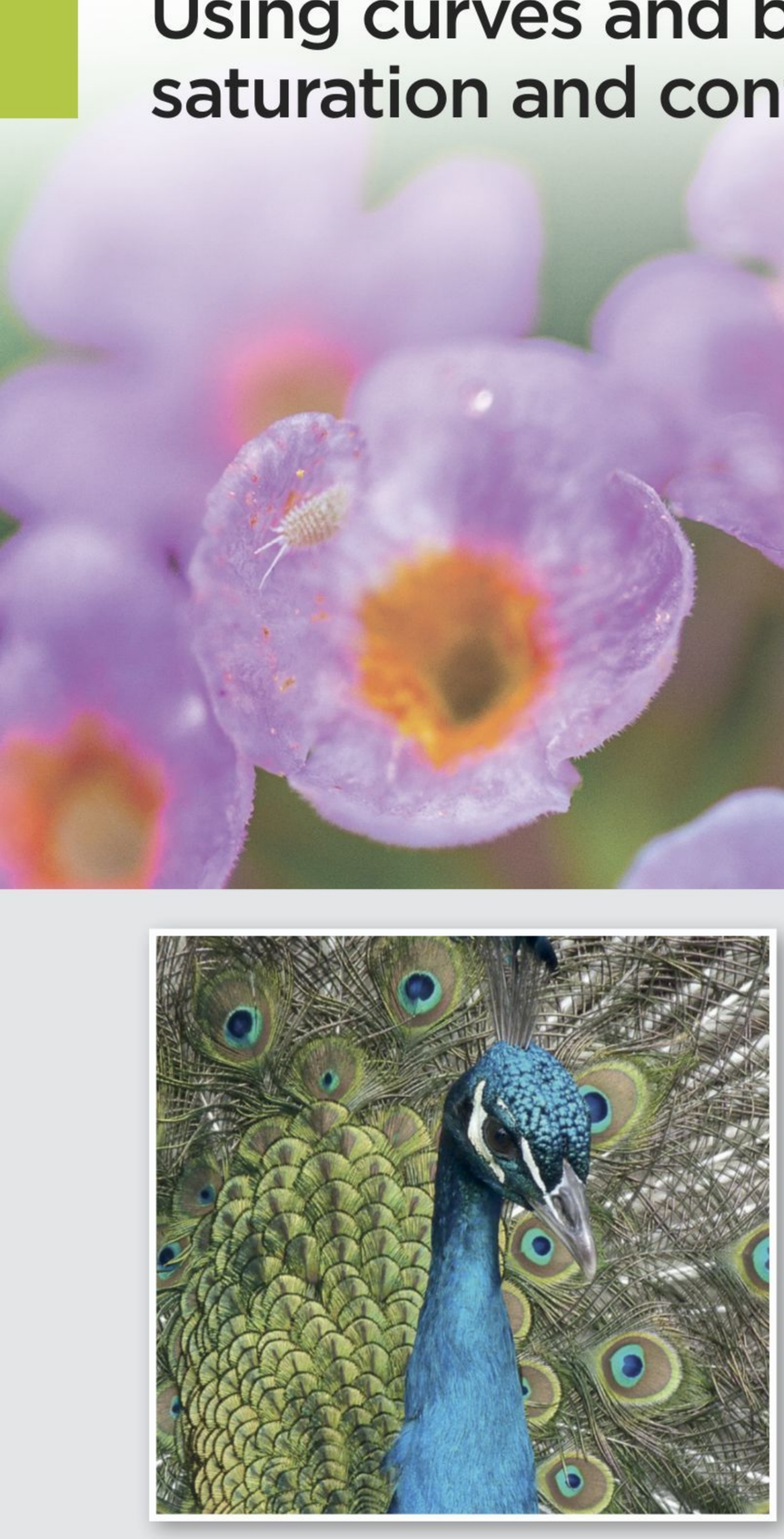
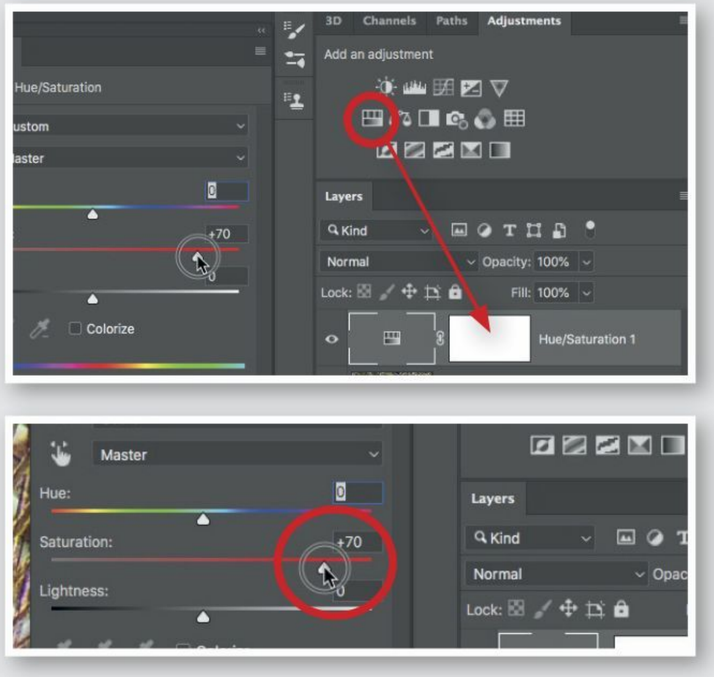
Contrast and Saturation

Using curves and blend modes to improve colour saturation and contrast in your digital photos

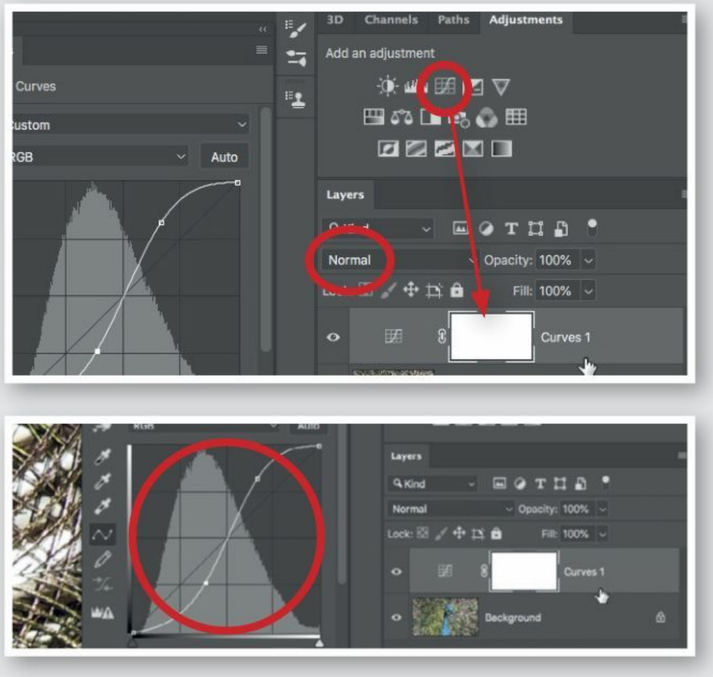


When you take a digital photo of a scene, you are relying on your camera to be able to capture all the colours and tones that you see. Unfortunately most digital cameras simply aren't capable of recording the full range of colours and shades visible to the the human eye, so your photo of what was a bright and colourful scene may prove to be a bit of a disappointment when you see it on your monitor. Fortunately there are many different ways to improve both contrast and colour saturation, which might help to restore some of the sparkle to your photos. Let's take a look at some of the alternatives.

01 As an example we'll use this snapshot of a peacock. In reality the colour of the scene is much more intense than it looks here, but the digital camera that was used to take the photo was set to a neutral and flat colour mode to capture as much dynamic range as possible. This mode generally leaves images looking a bit pale and lacking contrast and vibrant colour. This shouldn't be a problem as the shot is well exposed and contains plenty of detail that will suit the increase in saturation.



02 The simplest way to improve the saturation is by adding a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Like many other parts of the program, Hue/Saturation has been improved in Photoshop, producing a smoother result than previous versions. If you were to boost the saturation by about +70, you'd restore some of the missing colour, but it's a scattergun approach and doesn't offer much fine control. It can also increase noise in shadow areas in JPEG images. Let's look at more options.



03 A much more controllable way to adjust both saturation and contrast is to use a Curves adjustment layer. We've already looked at Curves in the section on adjusting exposure, but by using Blend Modes we can also use Curves to enhance saturation. In Normal blend mode the curve will change both contrast and saturation. We're using the same S-shaped curve, which boosts brightness at the upper end of the scale and darkens shadows at the lower end.

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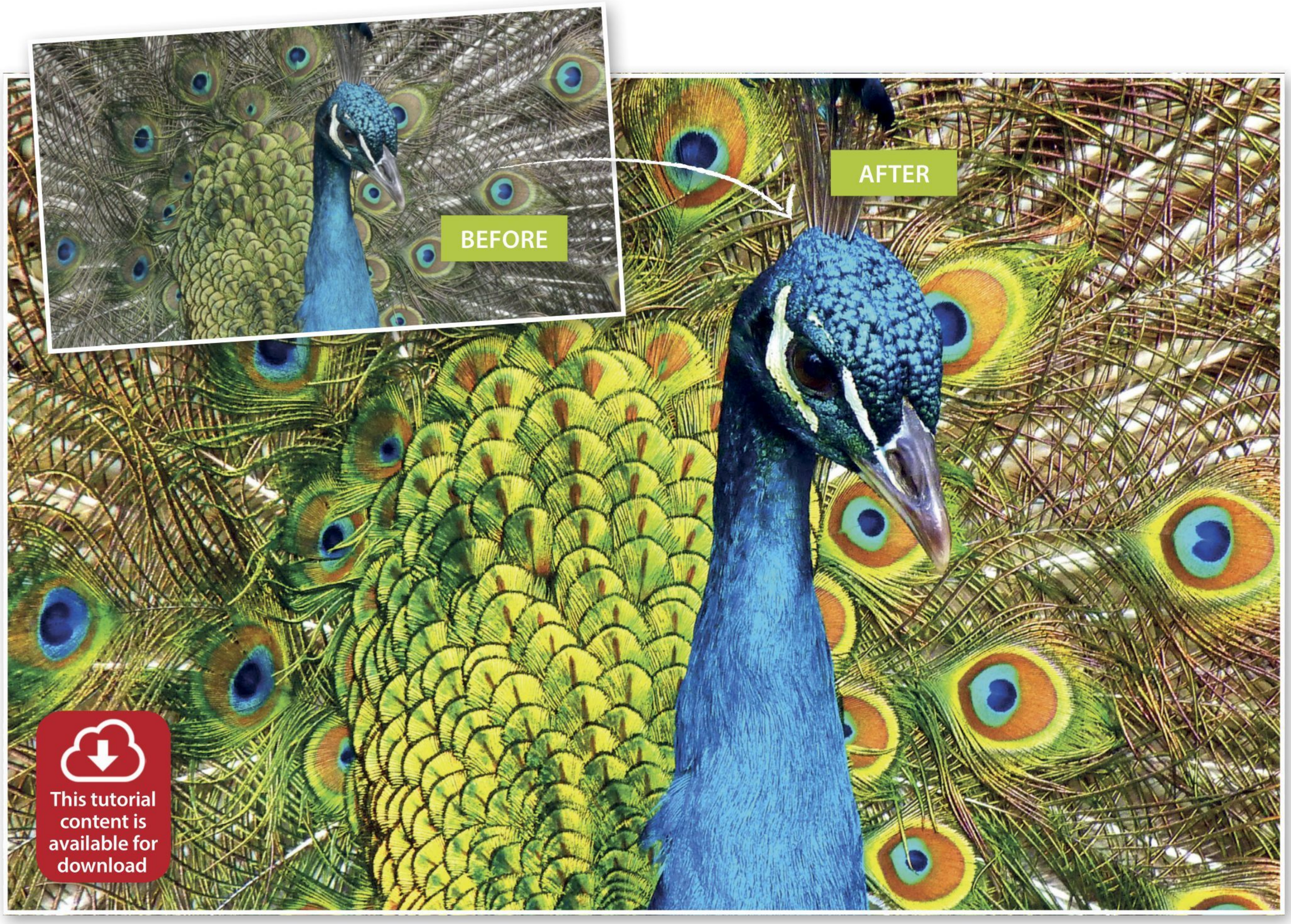

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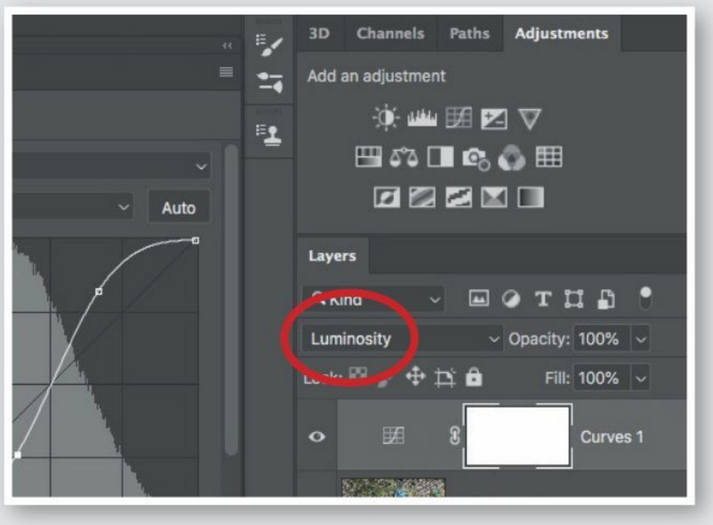

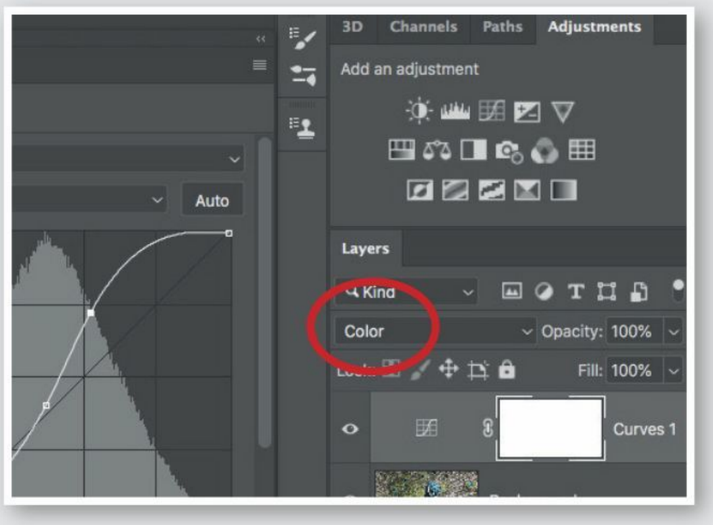

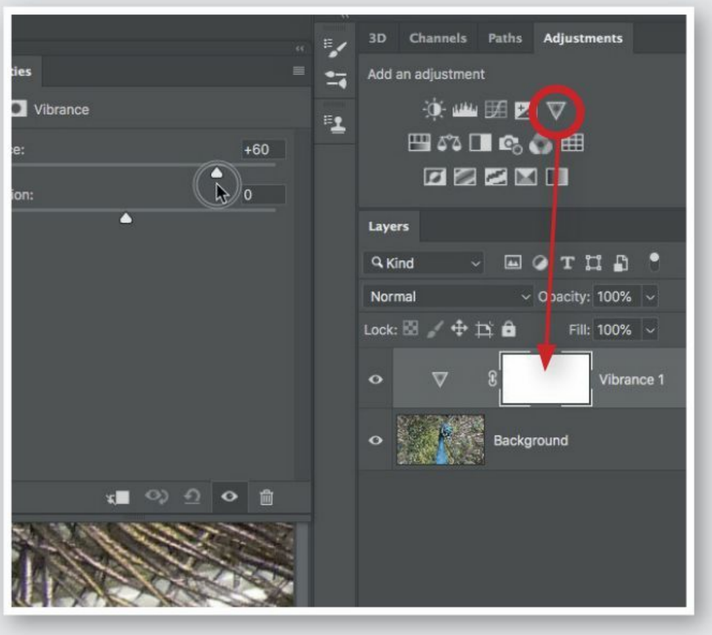

04 By changing the blend mode to Luminosity, the curve will only affect brightness, so an S-shaped enhancement curve will improve contrast, lightening highlights and darkening shadows without affecting colour saturation.

05 Conversely, by using a Color blend mode, an S-shaped curve will alter colour saturation without affecting brightness, so shadows and highlights are unaffected. This is great to keep noise under control.

06 Another way to improve saturation is a Photoshop function called Vibrance, which can also be applied as an adjustment layer. Vibrance is a difficult thing to quantify. It is a saturation function, but it works on a graph, affecting the least saturated areas most, and the most saturated areas least. On a picture like this it can help, but it has to be used with contrast enhancement for best effect, which may again cause an increase in noise. This option is less intense than using Saturation. Vibrance is best used when processing a Raw image file.

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Adding a Graduated Filter

Graduated filters can improve photos by adding depth and colour to the sky

Photographers use graduated filters placed in front of the camera lens to selectively change the exposure and sometimes the colour of part of a picture, usually to darken the sky to bring out details in the clouds and balance the exposure with the landscape in the foreground. They come in many different shapes, sizes and colours to fit all types of camera system.

As with most photographic techniques, it's possible to duplicate the effect of graduated filters using Adobe Photoshop and as usual there are several ways to accomplish this. For this example we'll use a landscape photo of a sunrise over a field.

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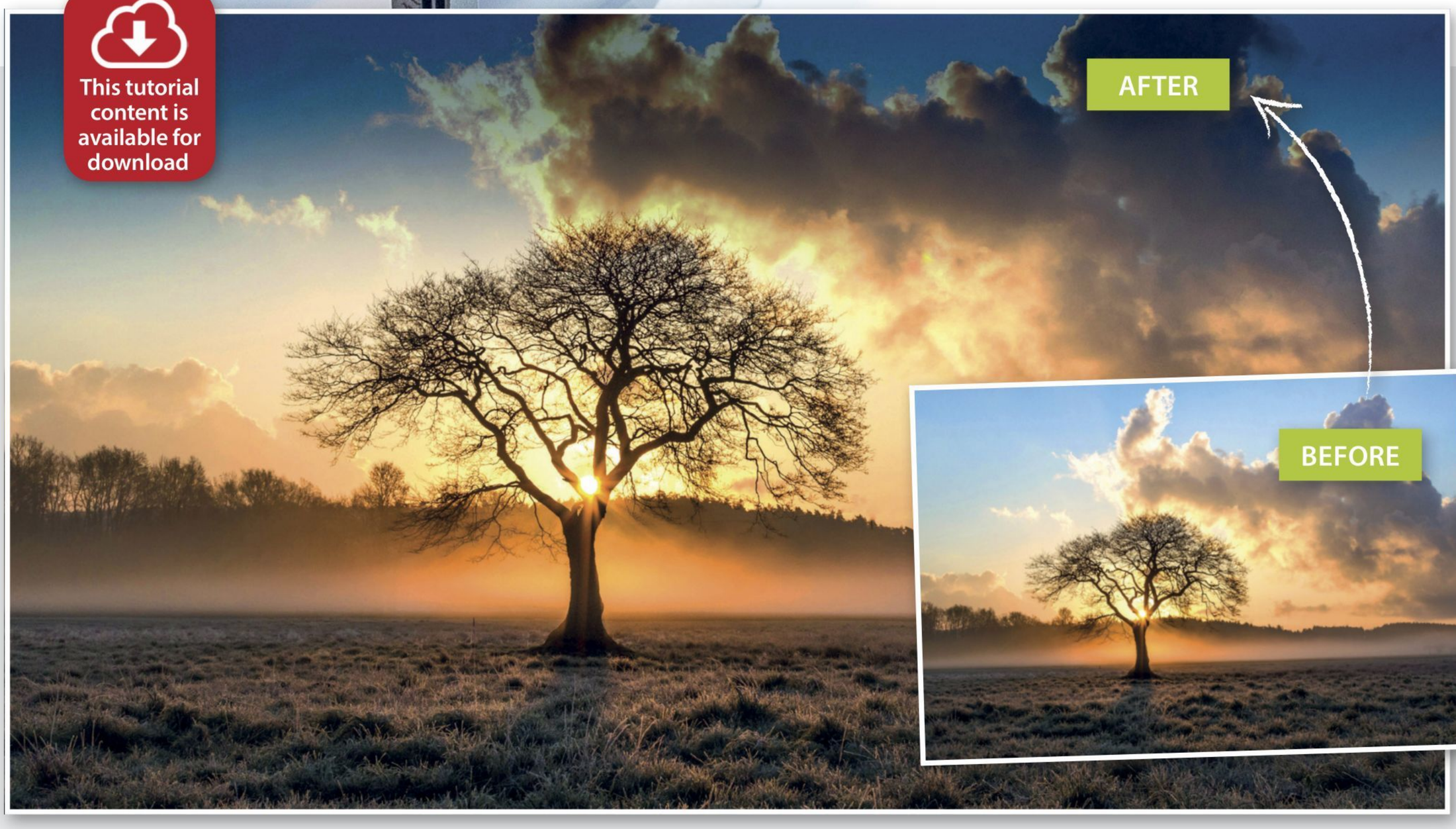

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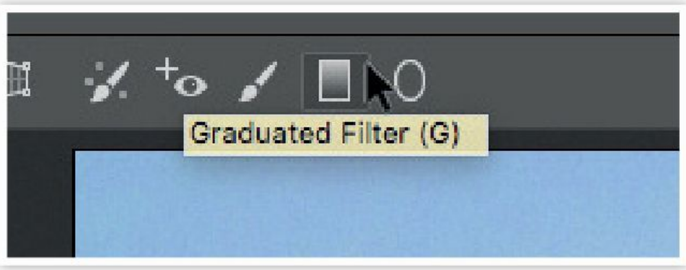
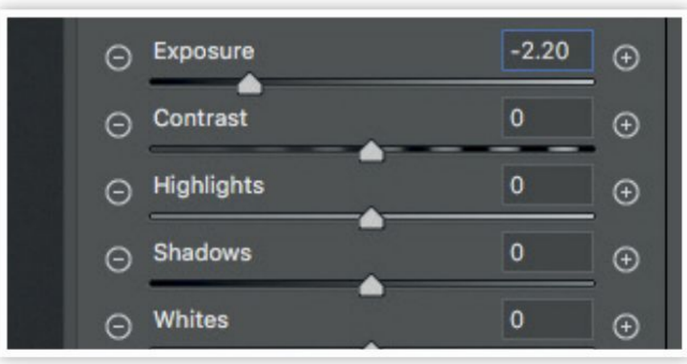
Graduated Filter in Camera Raw

Since this photo was taken using Raw mode, we can use the Graduated Filter tool in Adobe Camera Raw (ACR). ACR is the Raw processing application supplied with each version of Photoshop and allows you to add the effect during processing. This is by far the best way to do it, since it preserves the maximum amount of detail in the photograph.

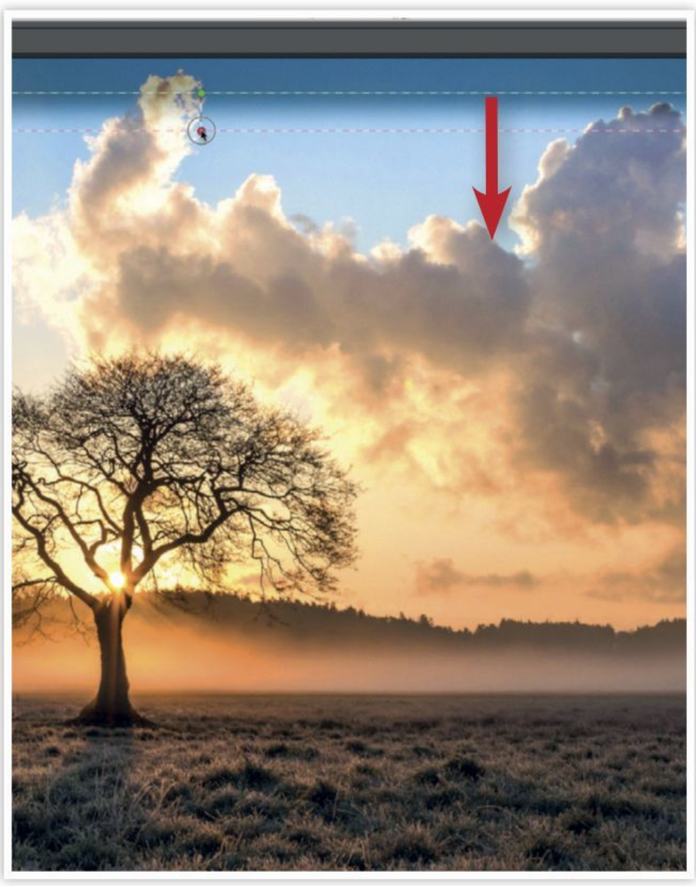
01 When you open the image in Adobe Camera Raw, you'll see a row of tool icons across the top of the main image window. The Graduated Filter icon is to the right.



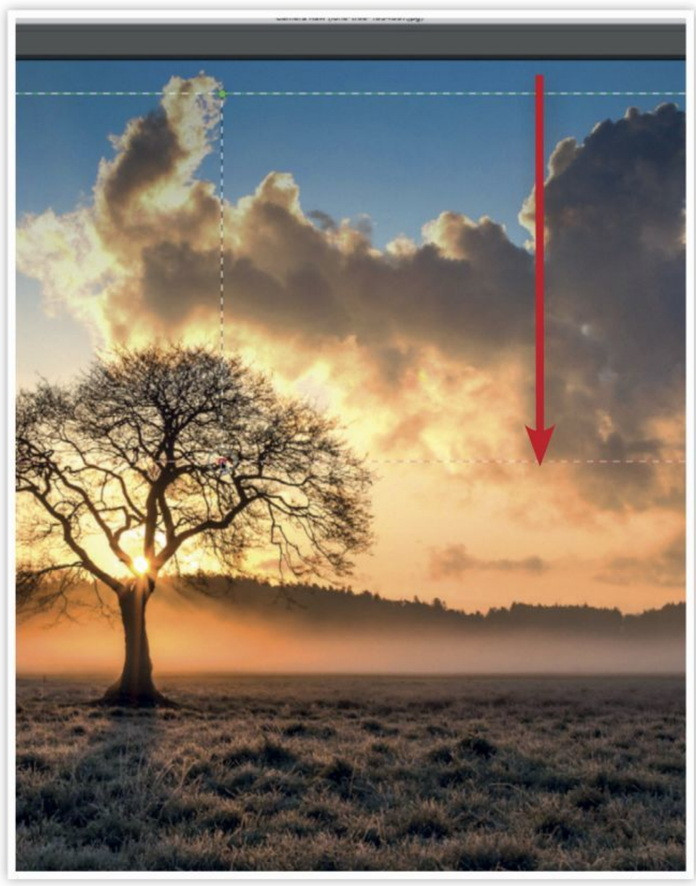
02 When you click on the Graduated Filter icon, you'll see the control panel on the right of the screen change. The filter can apply many different effects, but the one we want to use is a reduction in exposure. A setting between -2.00 and -2.70 should produce a suitable effect for this picture.



03 To apply the filter, drag a line down from the top of the screen to the horizon line. You'll see a horizontal and vertical dotted line like an inverted T. You'll also notice that you can change the angle of the line by moving the cursor left and right. To constrain the line to the vertical, hold down the Shift key while dragging.

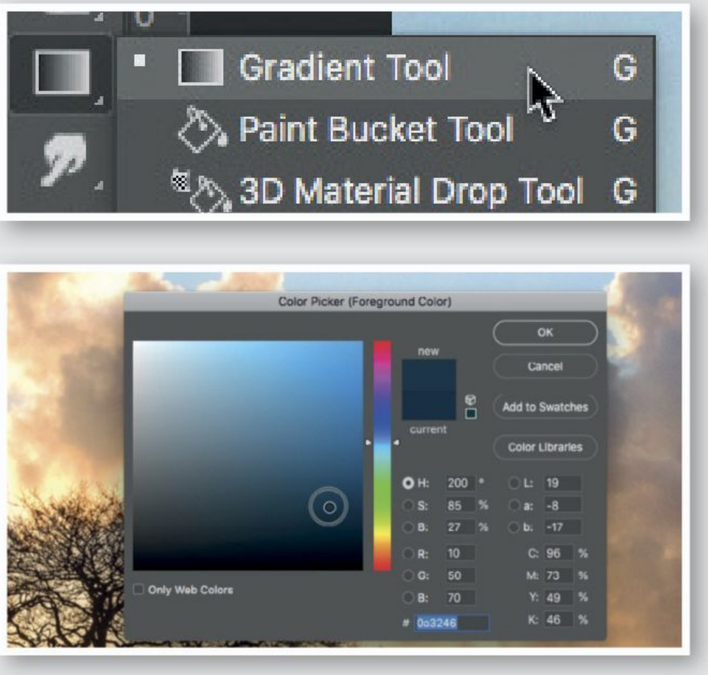


04 The red dotted line marks the lower, least saturated edge of the gradient effect, but there is also a green line at the top of the frame. This marks the top or most saturated edge of the effect, with a smooth gradient between the two lines. If you drag this green line down, more of the image will be at maximum effect and the gradient will be shorter.



Graduated Filter in Photoshop

01 If your photo wasn't taken in Raw mode, you can apply a graduated filter using the Gradient Tool. To set up the graduated filter, first select the Gradient Tool, then set the foreground colour to dark blue by clicking on the foreground square and then using the colour picker.



02 Next, in the tool options bar, click on the gradient editor and select Foreground to Transparent, click on the button for Linear Gradient, set the Blending mode to Overlay and the Opacity to 100 percent. Make sure the boxes for Dither and Transparency are checked.

03 To apply the gradient to the picture, start at the top of the frame and then click and drag down to the horizon line. If you hold down the shift key it will constrain the line to the vertical. The blue is blended into the sky making it darker. It's always a good idea to tailor the blend colour to match the sky. Apply again if you want it darker.

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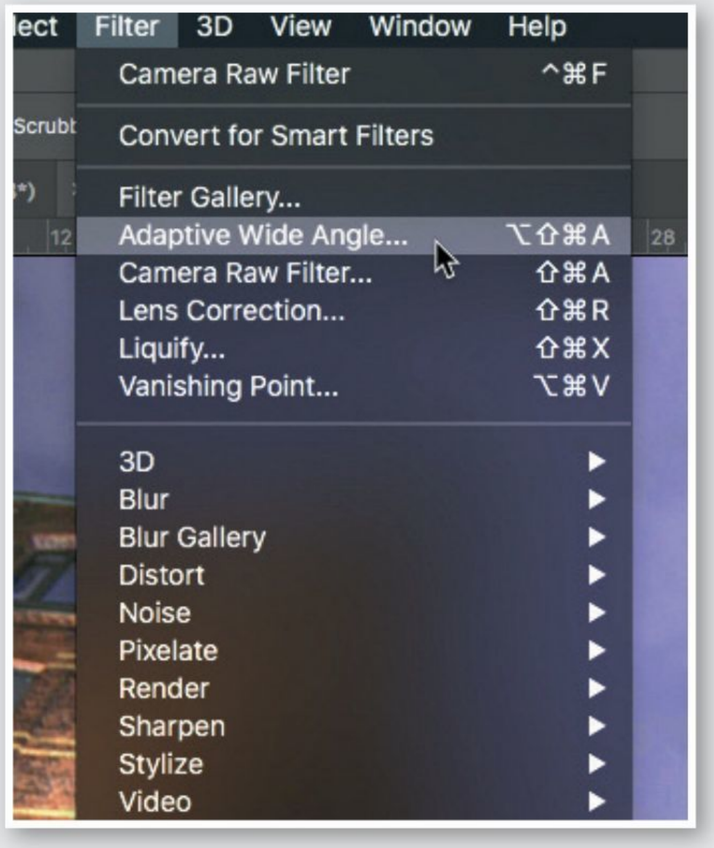
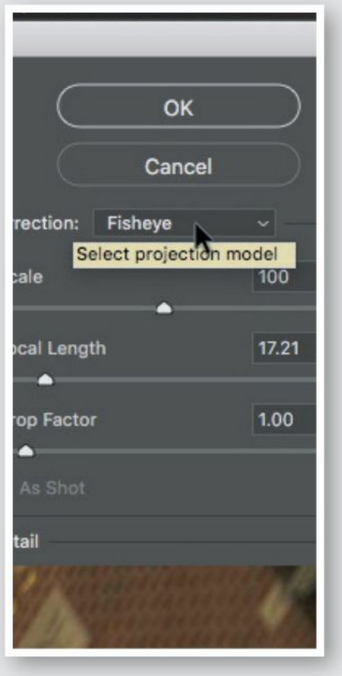
Correcting Lens Distortion

Correct the optical distortion of ultra-wide lenses with Photoshop's Adaptive Wide Angle

One of the new features introduced with Photoshop CS6 is called Adaptive Wide Angle; this can warp and bend an image to undo the optical distortion common to all very wide angle lenses. We've all seen photographs taken with "fish-eye" lenses. These lenses are called ultra-wide-angle, because the angle of view that they can capture can be as much as 180 degrees. Naturally the ability to squeeze half a room into the same shot comes at a price and that is extreme optical distortion. Straight and parallel lines appear to be bent, perspective is massively shortened and familiar objects take on almost unrecognisable proportions. In the photo opposite, the straight uprights of the window alcoves and bench seats seem to curve inwards, the walls seem to bulge outwards and the whole effect is quite disconcerting.



01 Adaptive Wide Angle attempts to correct at least some of these problems and can warp the picture to undo most of the optical distortion. Remarkably it can do all this while still preserving most of the detail in the picture. You'll find Adaptive Wide Angle in the Filters menu.



02 In the Adaptive Wide Angle interface, first select the Constraint tool from the panel on the upper left of the main screen and select Fisheye from the Correction drop-down menu. Pick one of the vertical lines, in this case the corner of the structure, click near the top of it and drag a line down the length of it. You should find that the line will automatically curve to follow the line, but you can drag the control handle in the mid-point of the line to match it up to the curvature.

03 The line will automatically warp the picture to make the curved line straight. You'll see that there is a circle overlaid on the line, with two more control handles where they intersect. You can drag these handles, rotating the line to bring it into a vertical position. If you hold down the shift key it will automatically snap to vertical right away.

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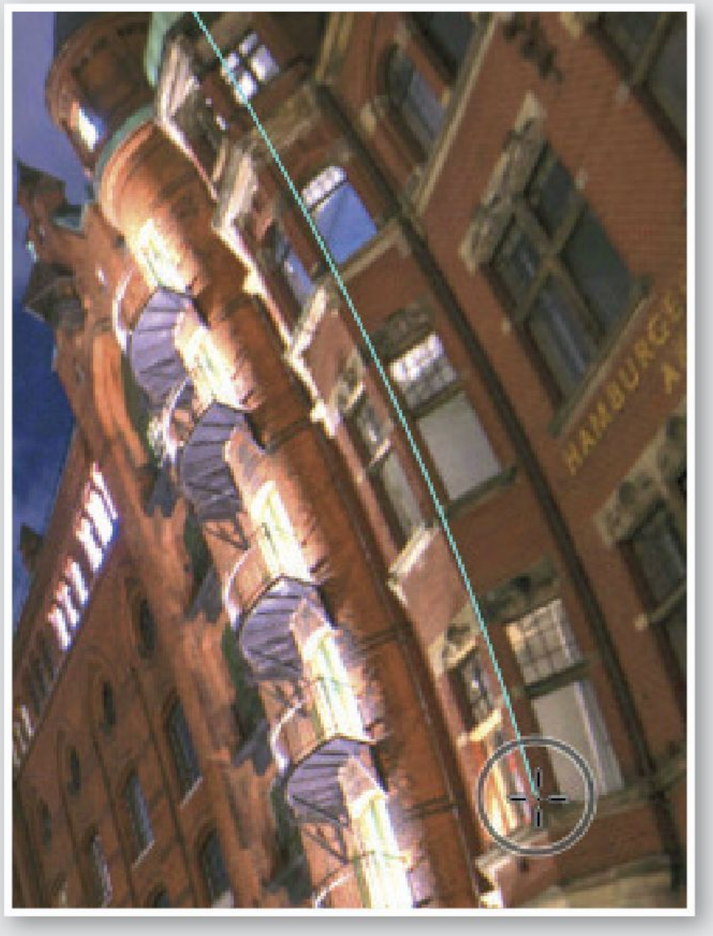
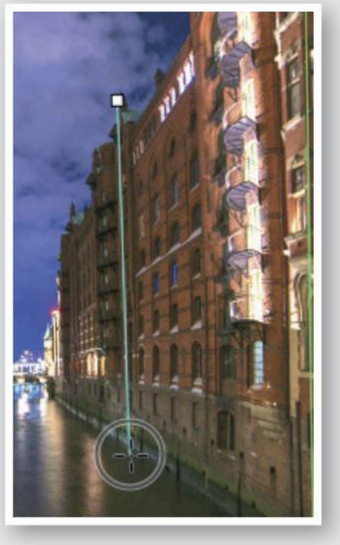
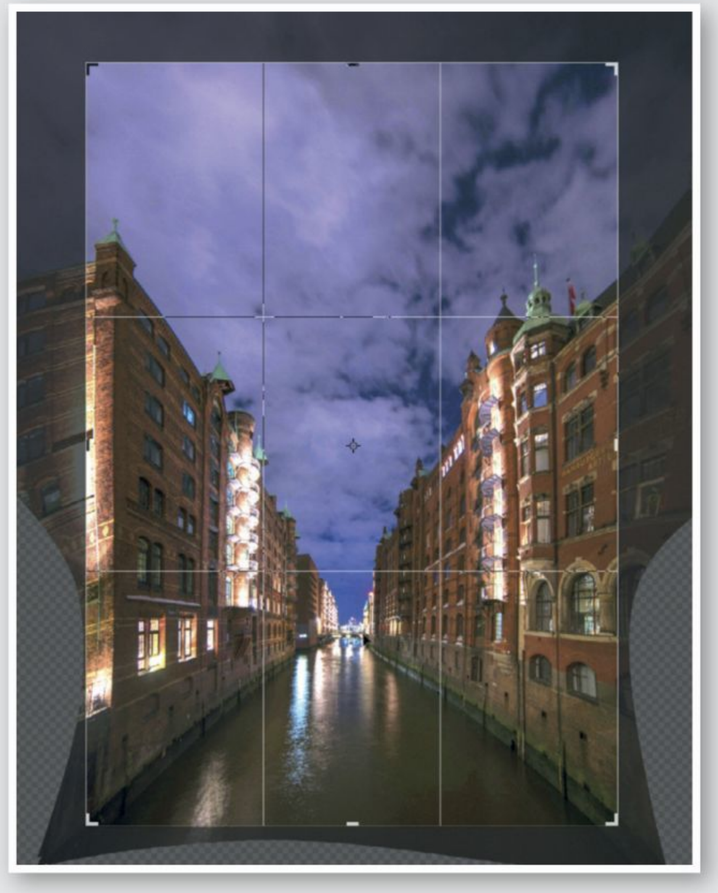


04 Pick a line on the opposite side of the picture and repeat the process by dragging a line down the uprights of the bay windows for instance. This too will automatically straighten up the line.



05 Again, drag the handle on the circular line to move the upright into a vertical position. If you've done it right the vertical curvature distortion of the image should now be looking better. You may notice that the correction isn't quite perfect; there may still be some slight curvature of the various uprights and horizontals, but it's certainly a great improvement and the vertical structures are much straighter. You can carry on and try to correct more of the curvature, but be aware of how much warping is being applied to the image to straighten everything out. Click OK when you're done to finalise the correction.



06 The process will have left some empty spaces at the edges of the image, so it will be necessary to crop the image to remove these. This does mean losing some of the original photograph, but the result is much less distorted than it was at the start.

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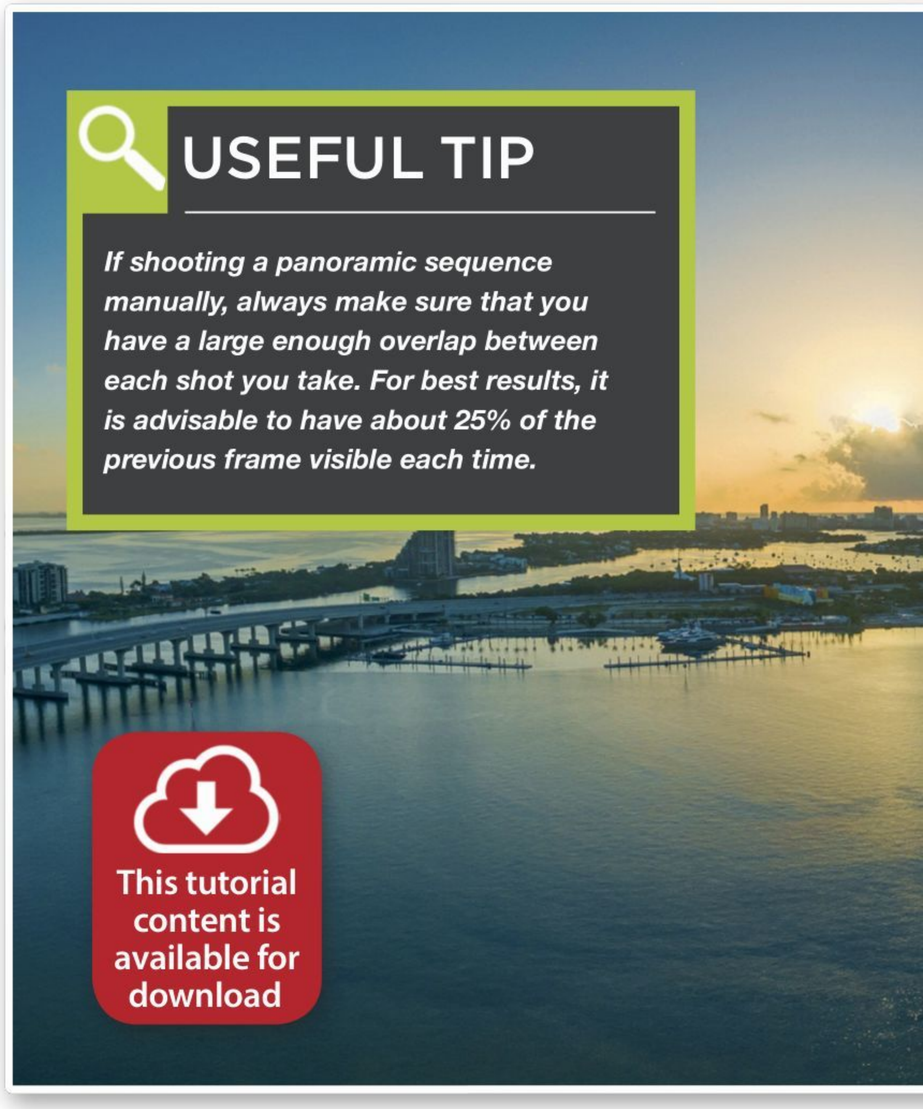
Panorama Stitching

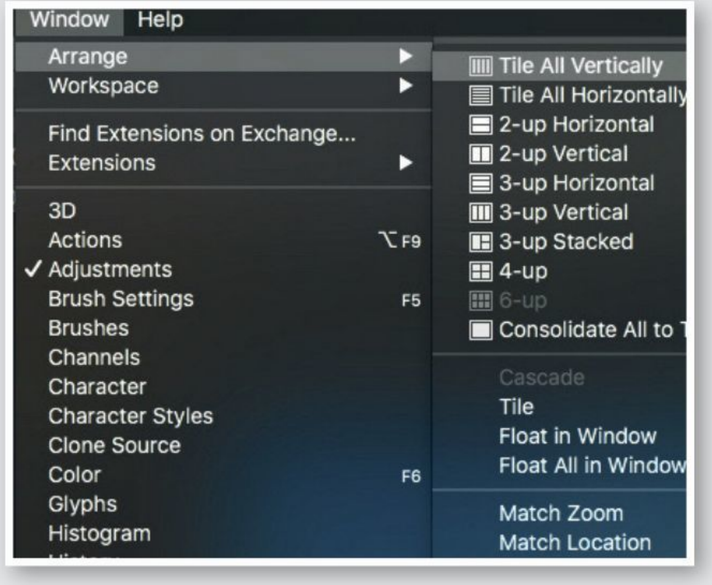
Get the whole of the landscape into one ultra-wide picture



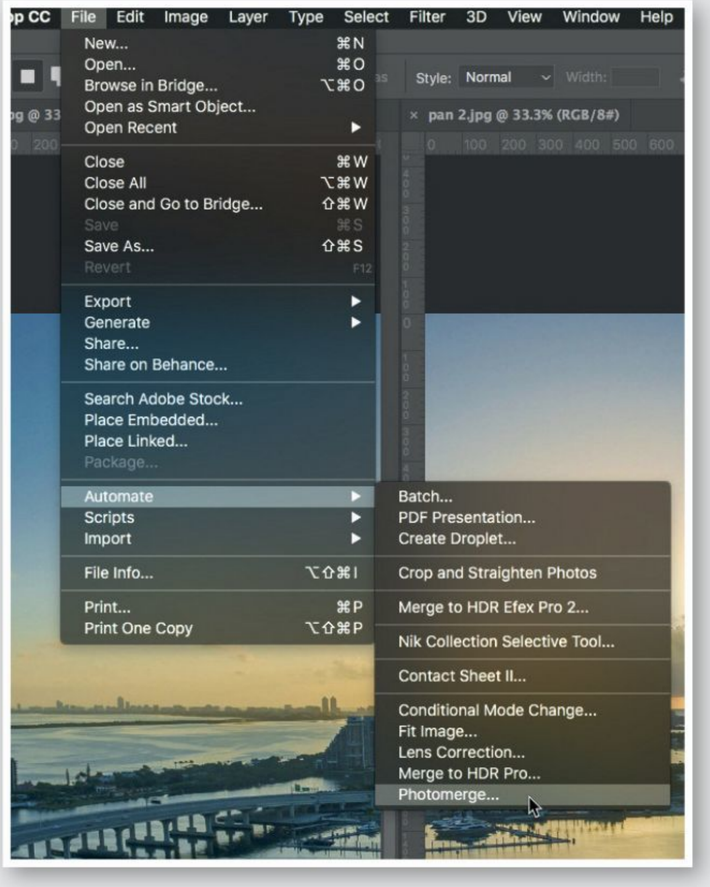
Many digital cameras have a feature known as "Panorama Stitching" or "Panorama Assist" mode. It's there to help with a particular type of photograph, or rather series of photographs, in which successive shots are taken as the camera is panned across a scene. After you take the first shot, the camera shows the edge of that shot superimposed on the monitor so you can match up the position of features in successive shots, producing a long continuous photo showing an entire panoramic scene. You can also shoot your pan sequence manually, especially if you have a tripod handy to keep the camera level. When it's done well the results can be breathtaking, but getting a satisfactory result isn't as easy as it looks.

BEFORE

We'll use this example of a five-shot sequence taken at a sweeping metropolitan location.



01 Having downloaded our panorama pictures from the camera into a folder on the PC, it's time to fire up Photoshop and stitch them together into a panorama. Locate the files on your hard drive and open all of them in Photoshop. If you go to the Window > Arrange menu you can view them all at once in various arrangements. Not essential, but it gives you a chance to make a last-minute exposure check.



02 In Photoshop you'll find Photomerge in the File menu under Automate, along with several other automatic processes.

03 The Photomerge window offers a number of options for how to arrange your panoramic shots. For a simple landscape panorama like this the Auto option should work fine. Click on the Add Open Files button to add the five shots to the Photomerge list and check the top two options and the bottom option to attempt to fill blank areas with the Content Aware tool.

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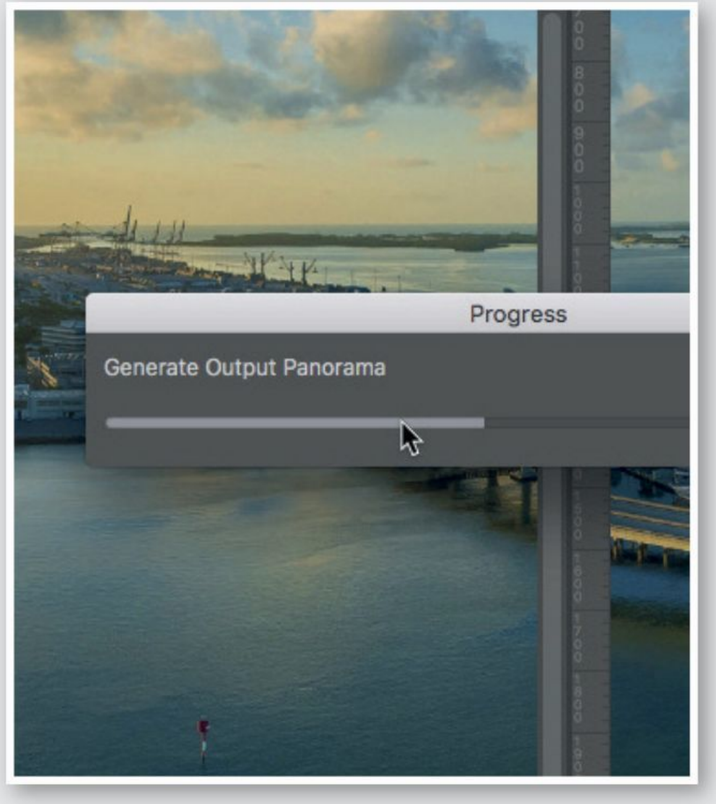
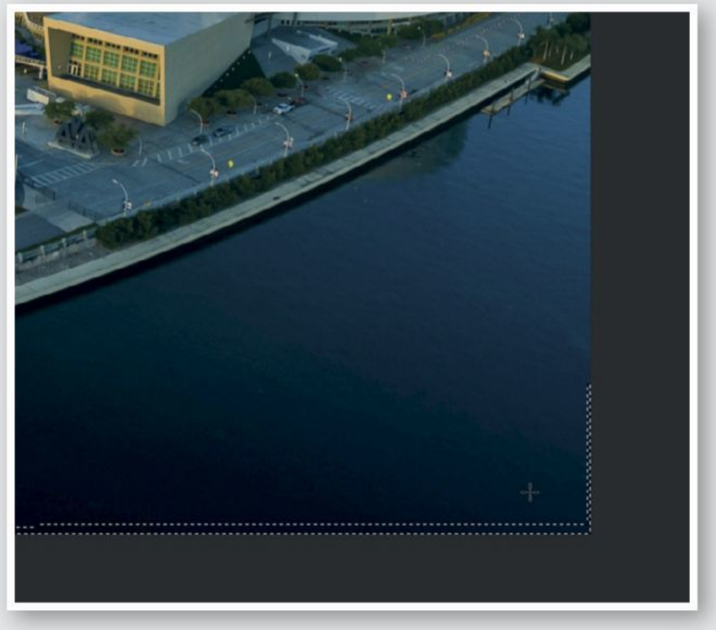
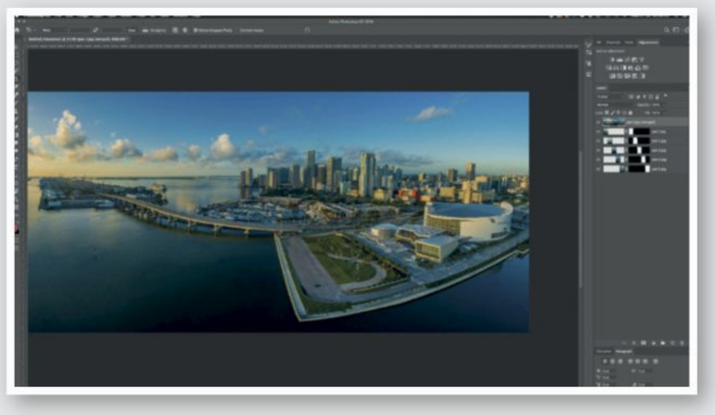


04 Once you click OK the merging process starts and it is completely automatic. It will take a while to complete, possibly quite a long while if you have a slow computer and/or very large image files.



05 Once the Panorama has been rendered, you'll see that there are areas where the program has had to warp the pictures to correct for perspective. This is where the Content Aware Fill tool will have attempted to add something that looks a bit like sky and sea. Depending on how well the fill works, you can always crop out these areas.



06 You can also use the Crop tool to straighten out any slight tilt in your horizon, but hopefully you won't need it. The finished result should look something like this.

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Colour Replacement

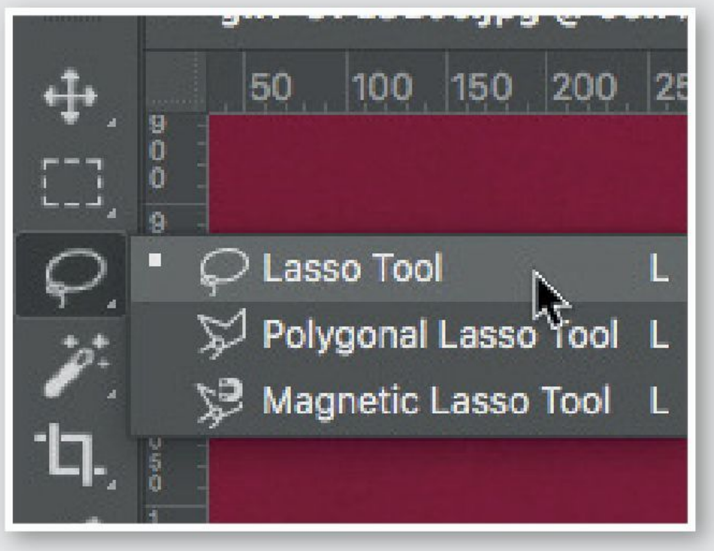
Swapping one colour for another

One relatively simple operation that you can do in Photoshop is to replace one colour with another. By using some of the selection tools we looked at earlier, along with the Hue/Saturation controls, we can change the colour of individual objects in our photos, such as replacing the colour of the red background in this shot.

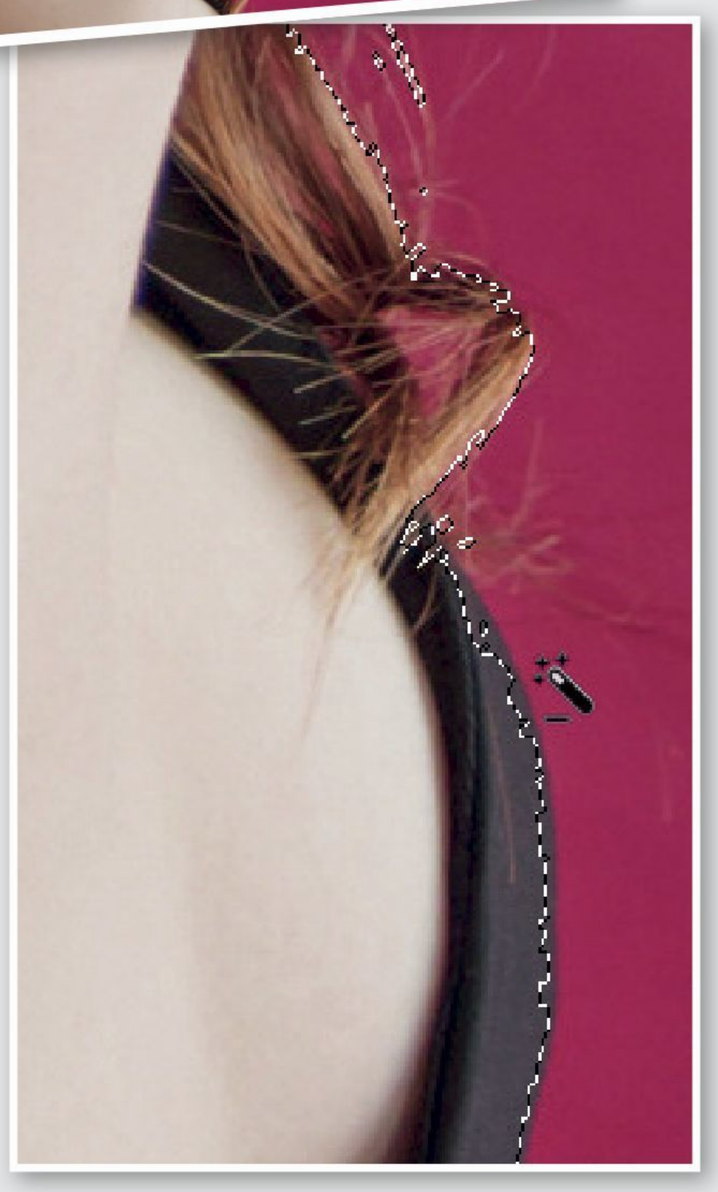
This tutorial content is available for download

01 Selecting large areas of the same colour is one of those few occasions where the Magic Wand tool is actually useful, so we'll use it as a starting point here. With a tolerance setting of 40-50 it should be able to pick out the items without too much trouble.

02 With the Magic Wand, it's best to add a bit at a time. Click on an area that's a mid-tone for the total area you want to select, and you'll find that the wand tool will select an area around it. The size of the selection will depend on the tolerance setting. By holding down the Shift key and carefully clicking on areas around your starting selection, you can add more areas. If the wand selects any wrong areas, you can use Cmd+Z to undo that step, and try again more carefully, possibly adjusting the tolerance downwards if it keeps happening.



03 When you've reached the limit of what you can usefully select using the Magic Wand tool, you can finish your selection using the Lasso tool. By setting the Feather to zero you can produce a sharp-edged selection. Alternatively, use the Selection Brush tool.



04 Again hold down the Shift key to add more areas to your selection. If you need to remove any areas from the selection, such as the blurred edges of the background, you can subtract by holding down the Alt key and going around them with the Lasso.

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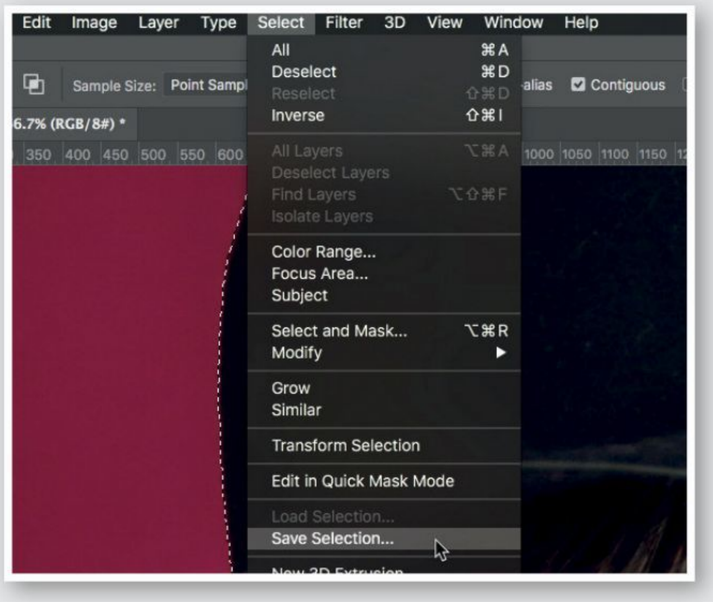
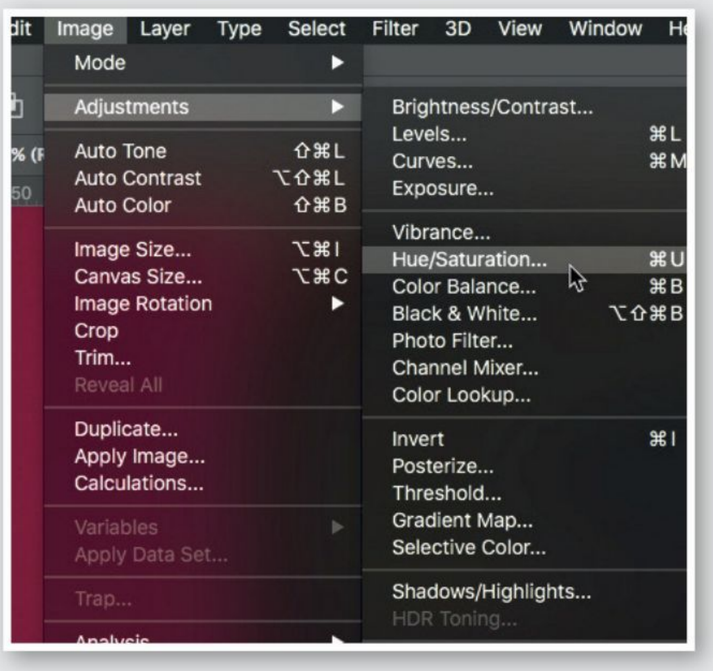
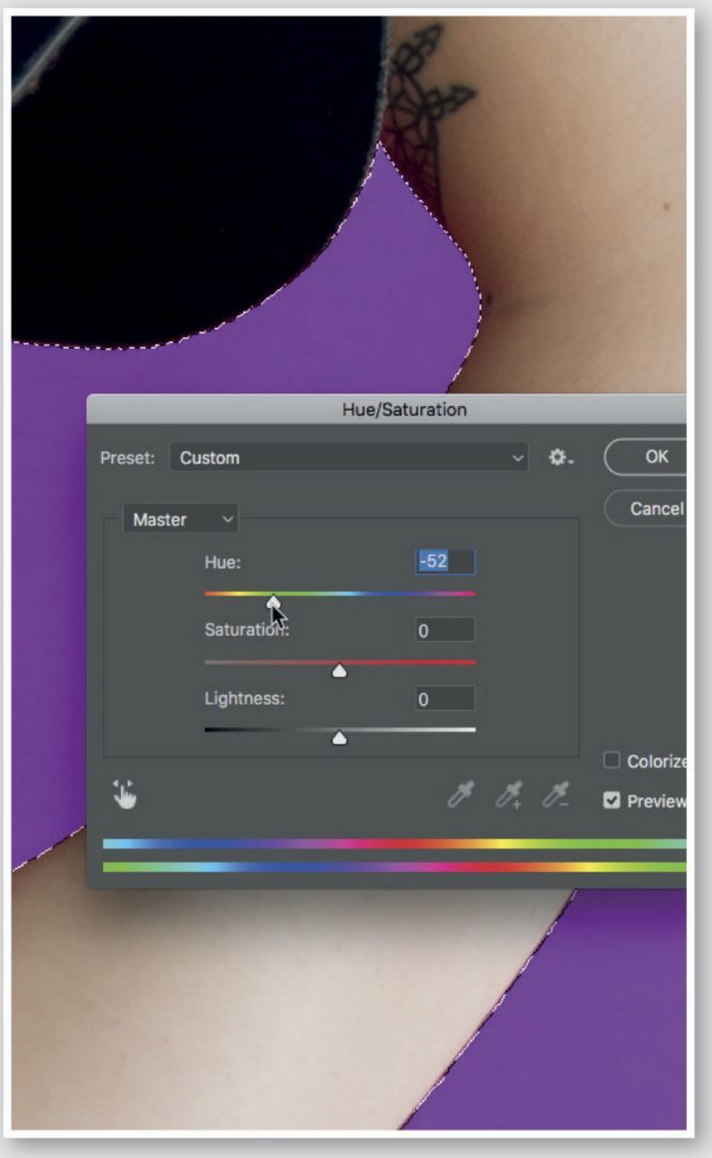
AFTER



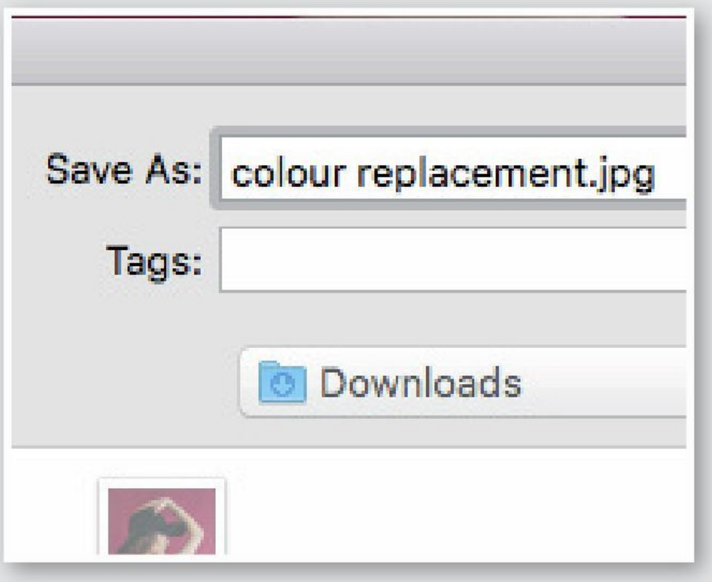
05 When you've selected all the bits you want to repaint, you can save the selection for later use, to save you doing all that work again if you change your mind.



06 Although there are several filters we could use at this point, the most versatile way to change the colour of the selected area is the Hue/Saturation/Lightness option. This is common to most editing programs. In Elements you'll find it in the Enhance menu.



07 You have three options under the Hue/Saturation setting. Leave the Lightness slider in the middle position to preserve the overall brightness of the object, but you can experiment by moving the Saturation and Hue sliders around. As you move the Hue slider, the colour will start to shift through the spectrum of colours, or you can produce subtle colour changes with lower saturation settings, or say to hell with subtlety and go for broke with full saturation.



08 When you're happy with the result, or when your eyes start bleeding, you can clear the selection by using the keyboard shortcut Cmd+D, and then save the result. When you save the final image as a .PSD file in Photoshop or Elements, the selections are saved as well, embedded in the file.

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Soft Focus Technique

Adding a soft focus effect gives your portraits a romantic feel

Soft focus is an effect used widely in television and in the movies, as well as in many commercial and advertising photographs, for producing a dreamy romantic look. It's also a big favourite with wedding photographers. In traditional photography the effect is achieved with a special filter fitted over the camera lens. Many digital cameras now include soft focus as a digital effect, but we can produce the same results in Photoshop with ease, using Gaussian blur and layer transparency.

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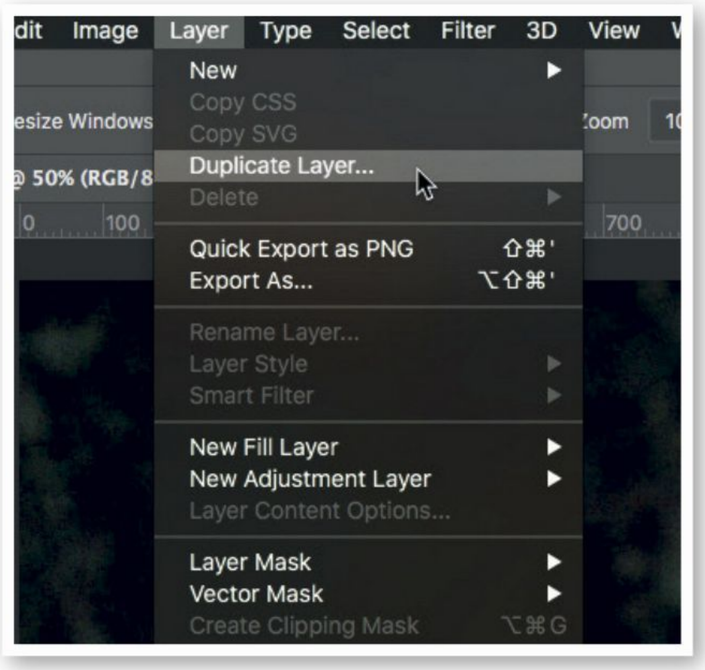
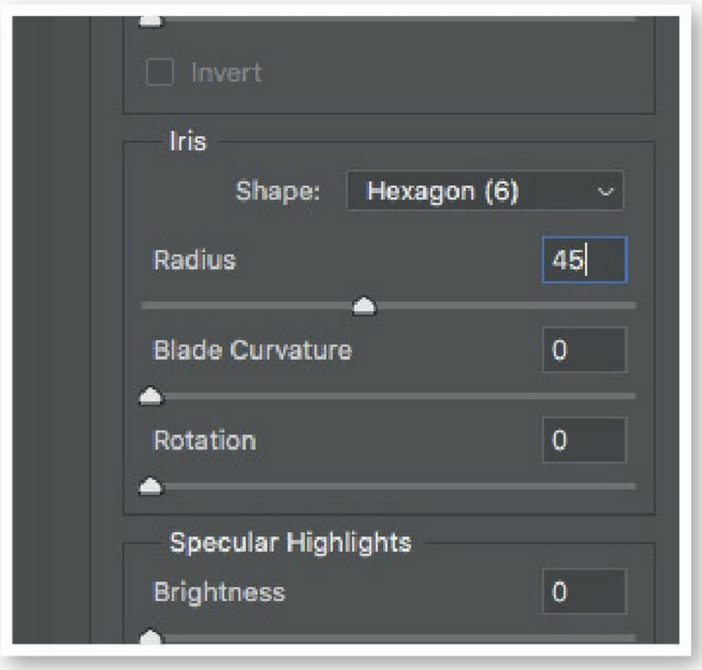
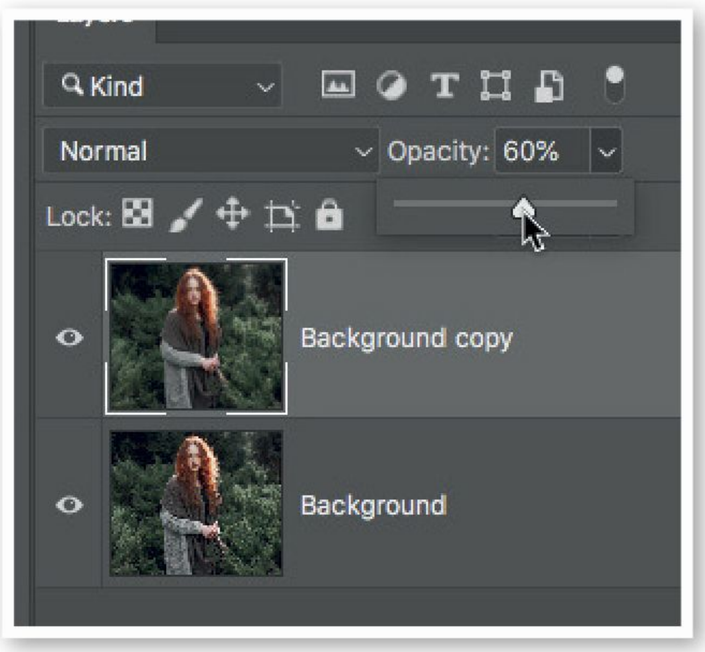


01 The first step is to turn the picture into two identical layers. To do this, go to the Layer menu, and select Duplicate Layer. Don't worry about naming this layer, it's the only one we're going to make.

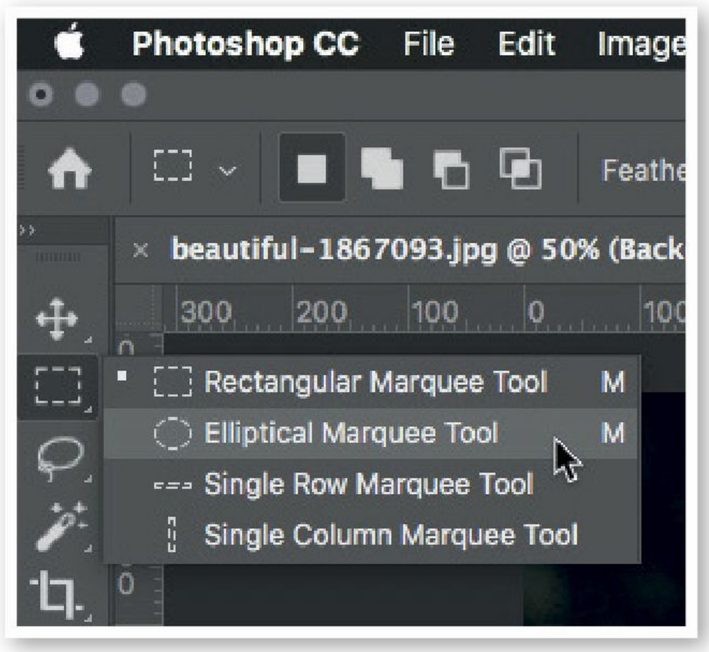
02 Next, go to the Filter menu, move down to Blur, and select Gaussian Blur. This is a special type of blurring that can be adjusted to produce certain effects.



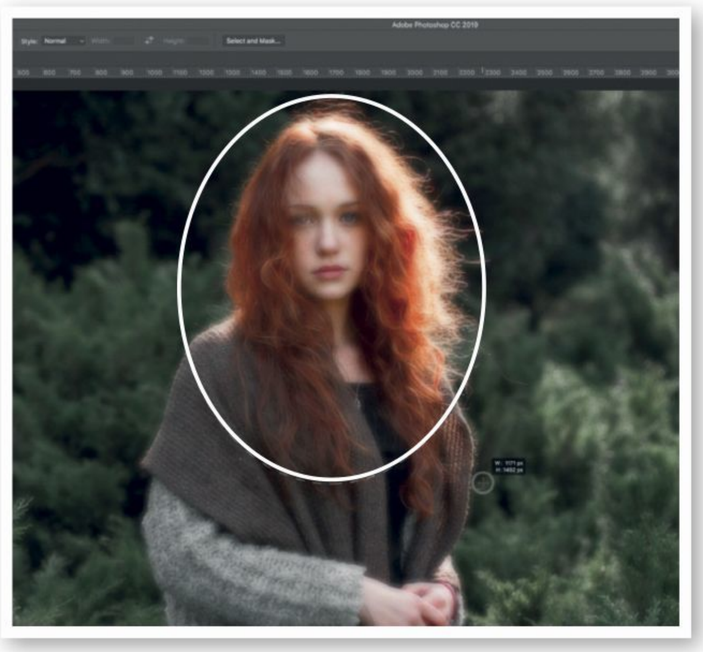
03 We don't need very much blurring to produce the soft-focus effect, so for this portrait shot, set a radius of 45 pixels. You may need a smaller radius for smaller images, but keep it subtle.



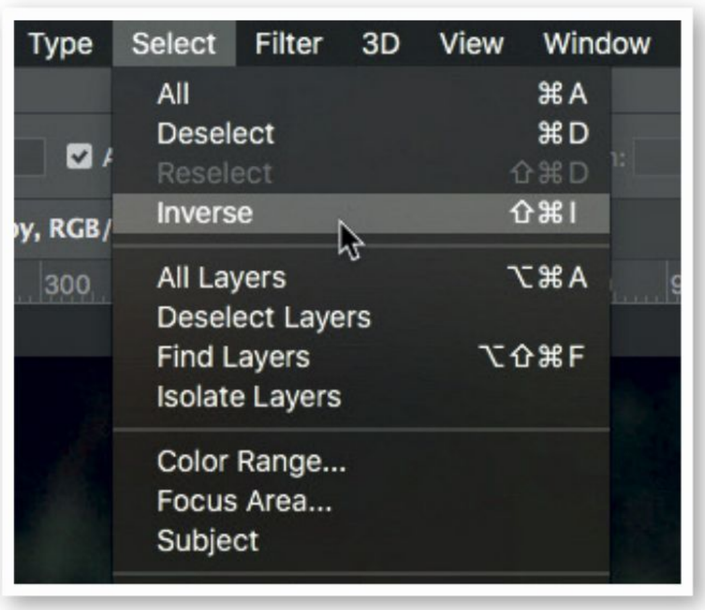
04 In the Layers palette, set the transparency of the blurred layer to around 60 percent. This lets the still-sharp lower layer to show through, mitigating the effects of the Gaussian blur. If you feel it is too blurred, you can drop the Opacity down to about 40% if you like.



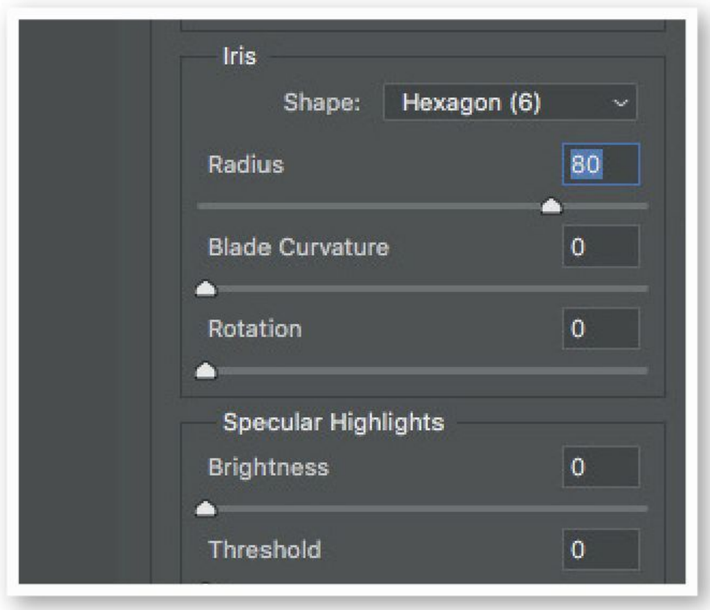
05 We can further enhance the look of the picture by adding an elliptical vignette of further blurring around the subject. This is a technique that portrait photographers have been using almost since the invention of photography. First, select the Elliptical Marquee tool.



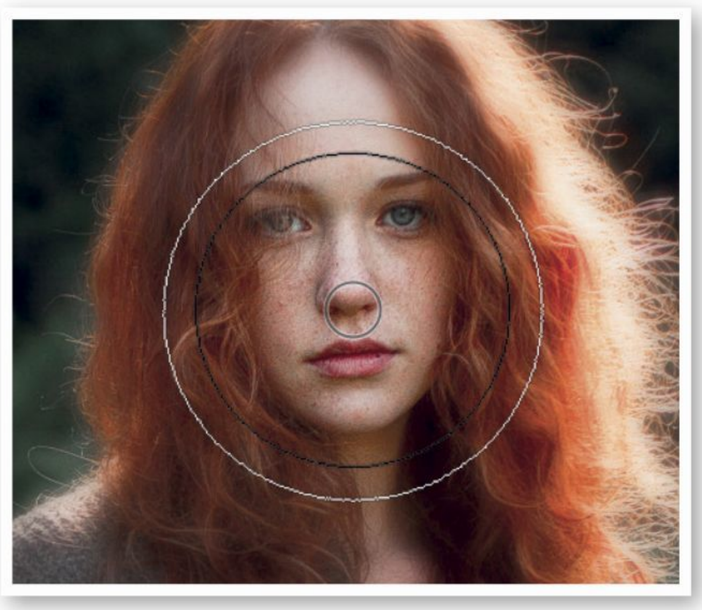
06 Drag an elliptical marquee selection around the portrait subject. This may take a few tries to get right, so use Cmd+D to de-select if you get it wrong. When you're happy with it, go to the Select menu and click on Feather. Set a radius of about 50-60 pixels.



07 Next, select Inverse from the Select menu to change the selection so that everything outside the ellipse is selected.



08 Now add a Lens blur filter to the selection, giving it a much bigger radius than before; around 80 pixels should do the job.



09 One final option is to use a soft eraser and erase areas of the blurred layer around your subject's face to keep it sharp if you prefer.

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Putting it all Together

Over the following pages are a number of slightly more involved tutorials that build upon everything you've learned up to this point. We've kept them fun and varied, yet with enough detail to show you more of what Photoshop can do. This may be your first step into the world of layer-based editing, but we hope it won't be the last.

Contents

72	The glitch effect	**102**	Star trail action
80	Light beam effects	**108**	Wet plate portraits
88	Pixel explosion	**114**	Compositing images
96	Making reflections	**122**	Custom Photoshop brushes

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The Glitch Effect

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We show you how to recreate a malfunctioning monitor effect

A glitch is a problem or malfunction, usually a temporary one, in a system or machine. The term glitch was said to be introduced in the '60s when science, technology, and space flight were being developed. You see the effect everywhere, in modern science fiction films, TV series and horror films where a character is walking into a situation and they have a camera with a live feed broadcasting back to some control room with people hunched over monitors watching the scene unfold. At some point, there is going to be a monitor glitch. The image on the screen breaks up and distorts just before something bad happens to the poor unfortunate in the scene. There are any number of ways to recreate a glitch effect in Photoshop with different visual appearances, but here is one that we quite like and we can divulge how to assemble it with a few masks and a couple of filters.

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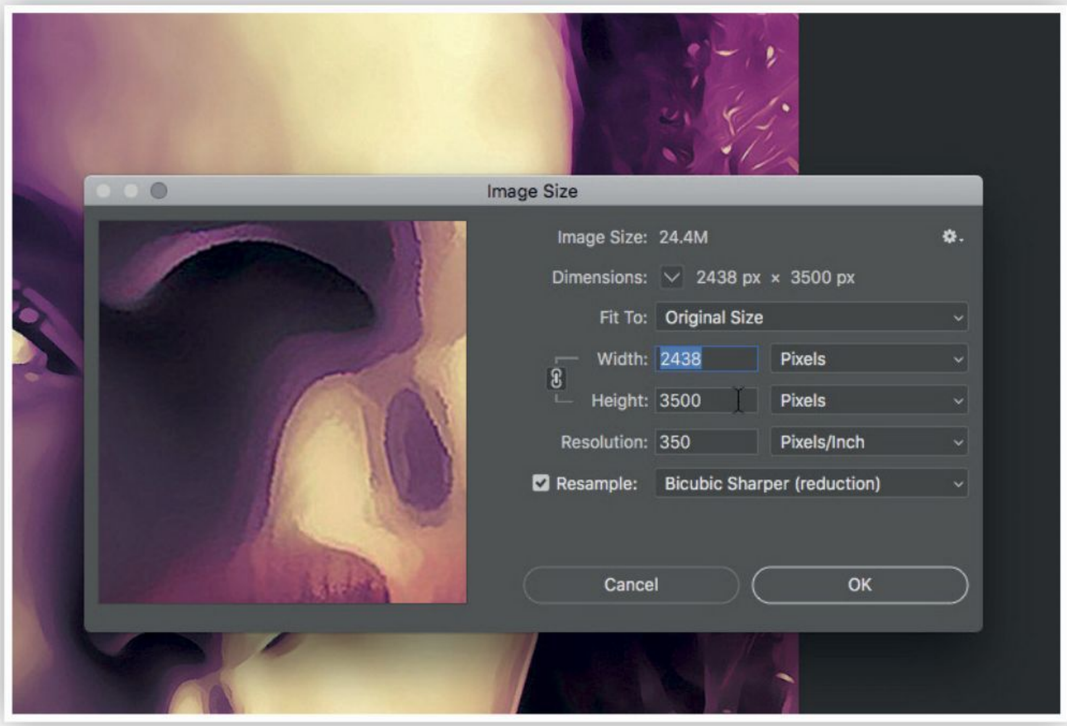
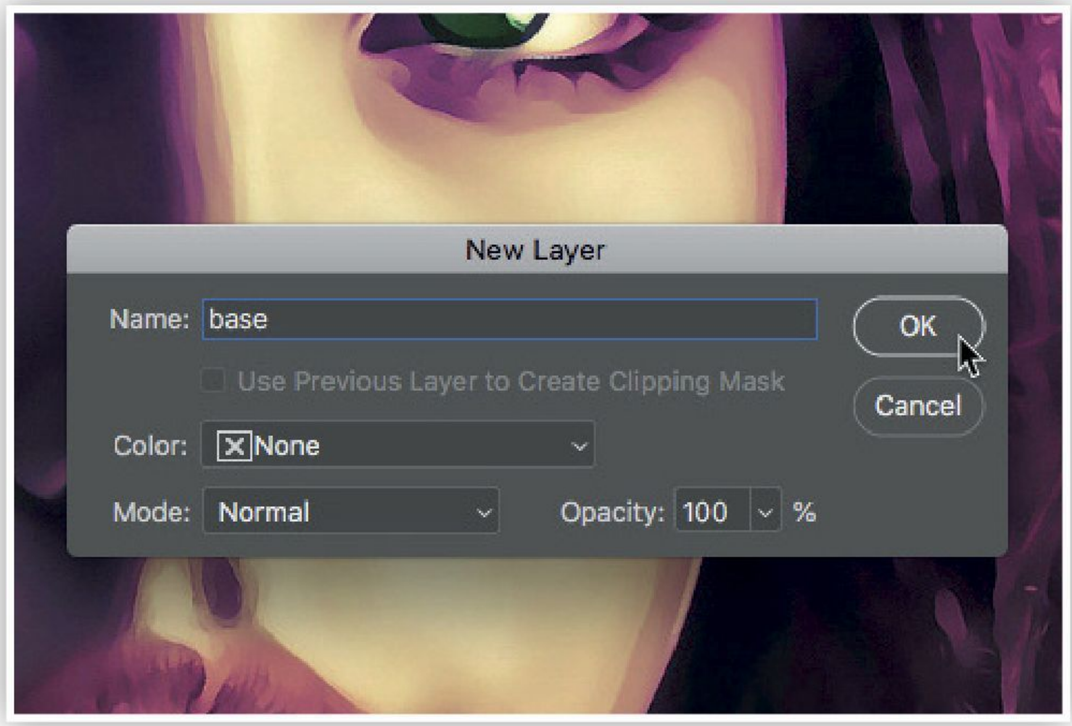
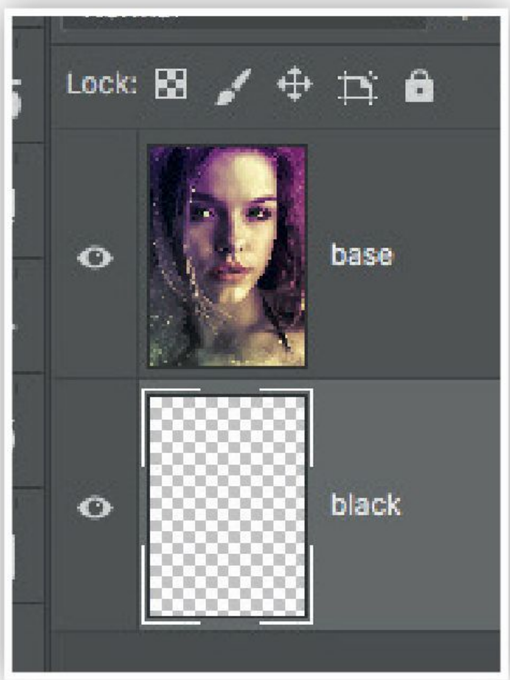
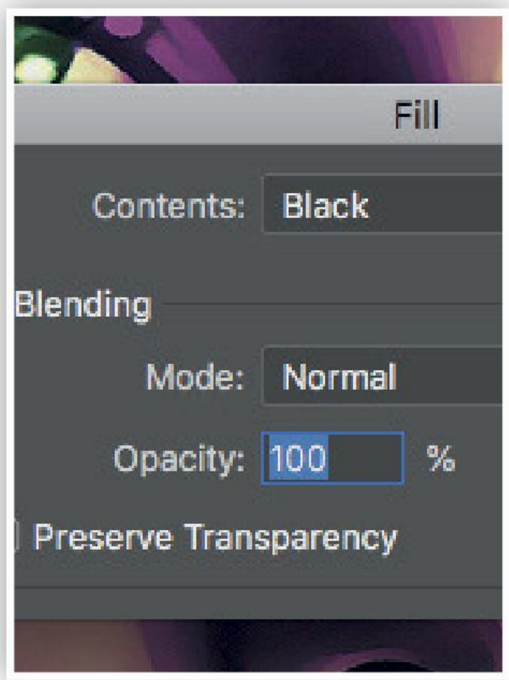


01 We begin the process by opening our example image called 'glitch.jpg'. The image measures 2438 pixels wide by 3500 pixels high. All the settings used are based on an image of this size. If you are using a different size, you may need to take that into account.

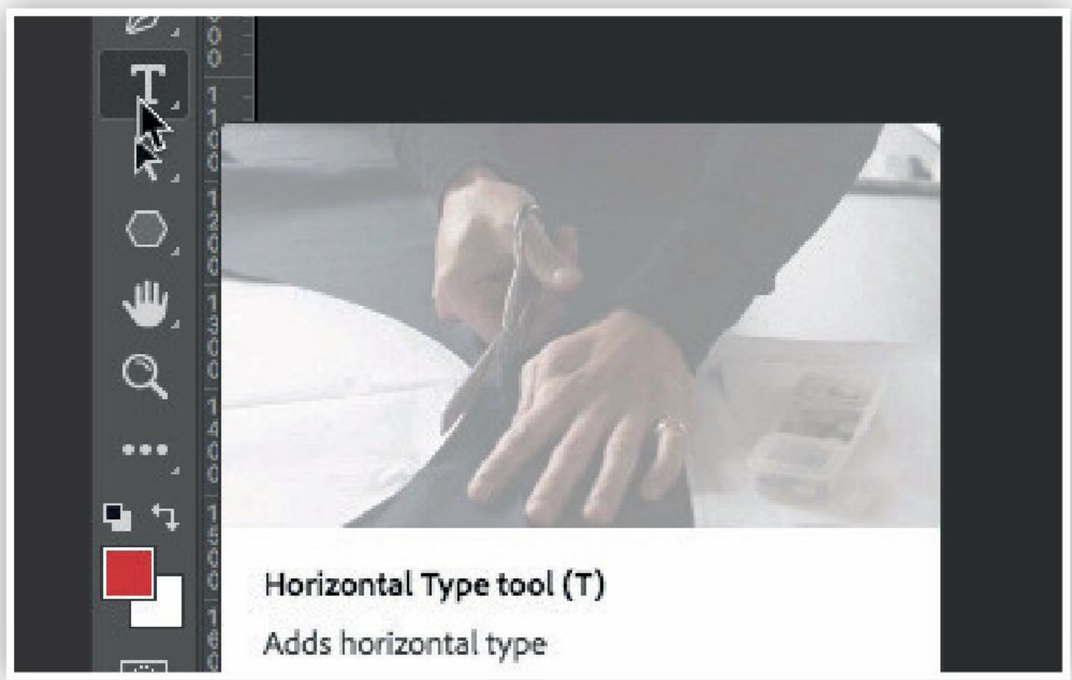


02 When open, double-click the 'Background' layer to unlock it. A small panel will open and ask you to name the layer. We used the name 'base' and clicked OK to proceed. This converts 'Background' into an unlocked layer called 'base' ready for the next step.

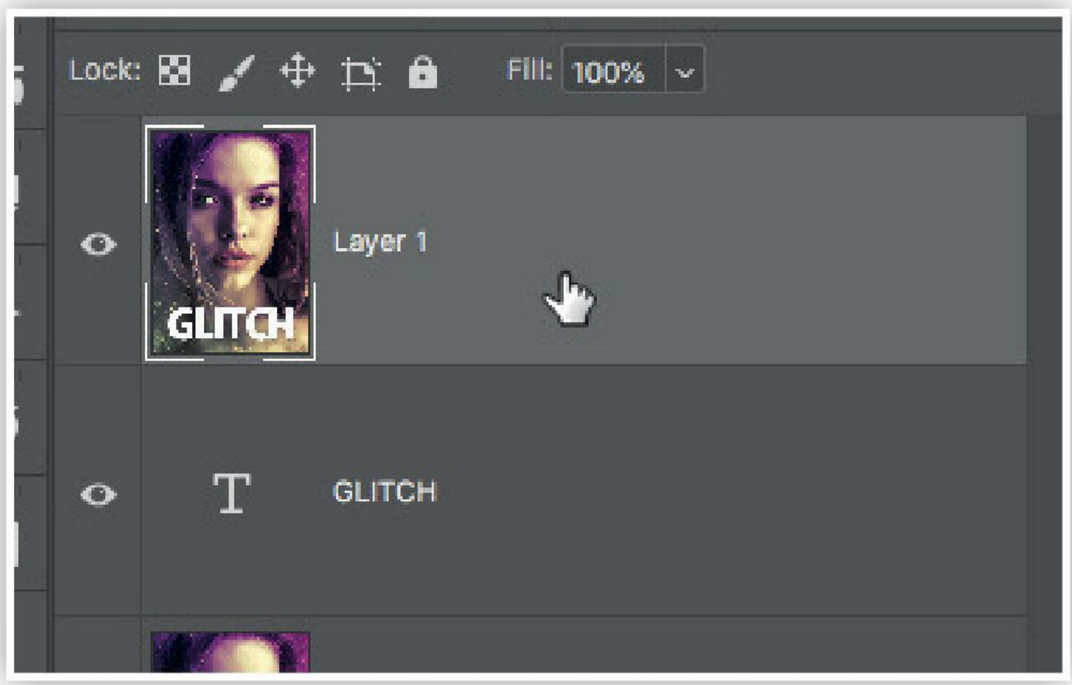




03 Click on the Create A New Layer button to add a new layer to the stack. Name this new layer 'black' and drag it so it sits underneath the 'base' layer in the stack. Then go to Edit > Fill (Shift + F5) and choose solid black as your fill colour, before clicking OK to fill the layer black.



04 Click the 'base' layer to make it active, then go to the toolbar and select the Horizontal Type Tool (T). Click on the document and you will create a new text layer above the 'base' layer and you will be able to enter text, which is kept in that text-editable layer.



05 Choose a strong font, we've used Kozuka Gothic Heavy. We've typed the word 'GLITCH' onto the text layer. You can easily scale and move the text once it has been entered. We've placed it at the bottom beneath the girl's face.

06 We need to begin editing the document to turn it into an old raster scan display, such as you would see on a very old television set. Keep the text layer active and then press Shift + Alt + Cmd + E to create a new layer that is a merged version of all visible elements.

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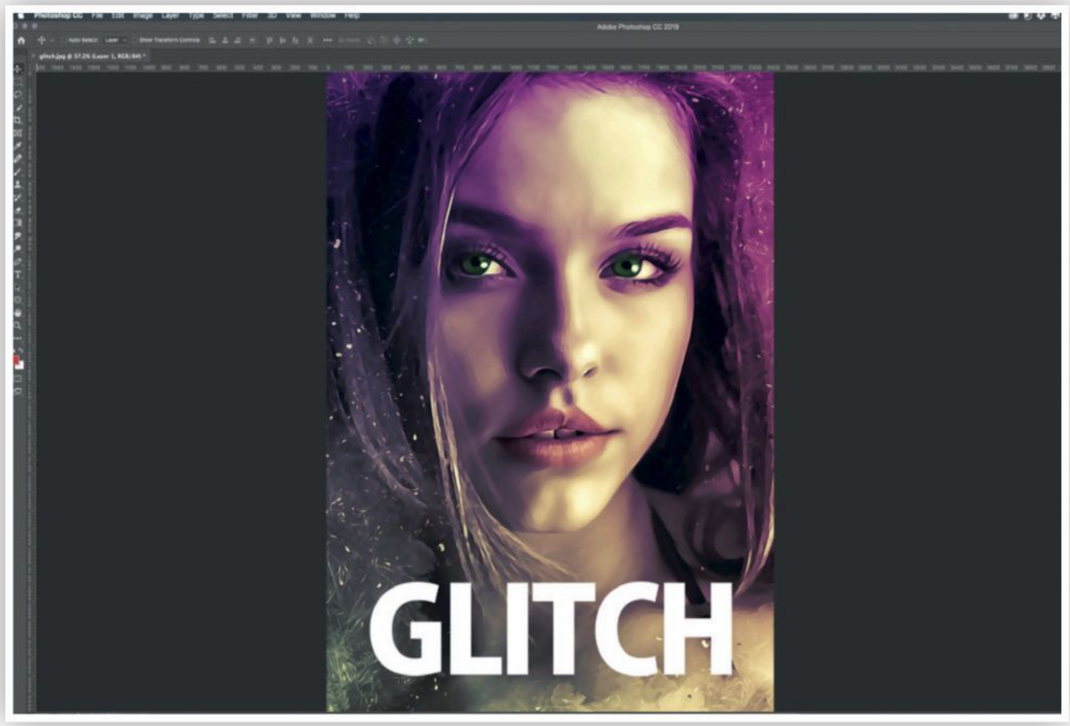
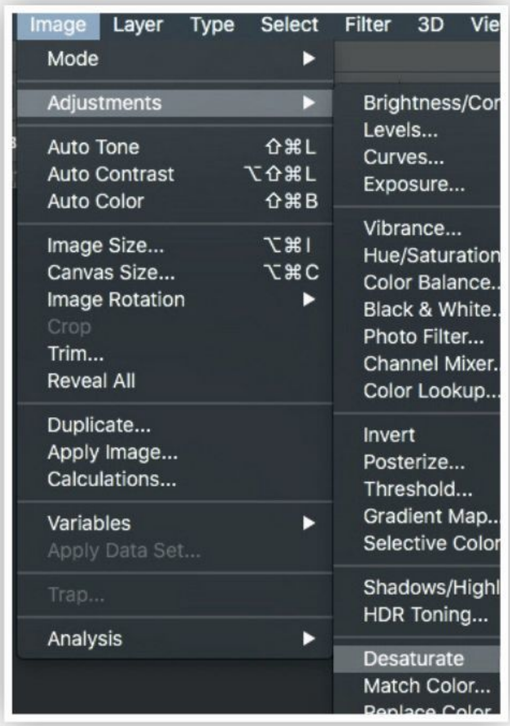
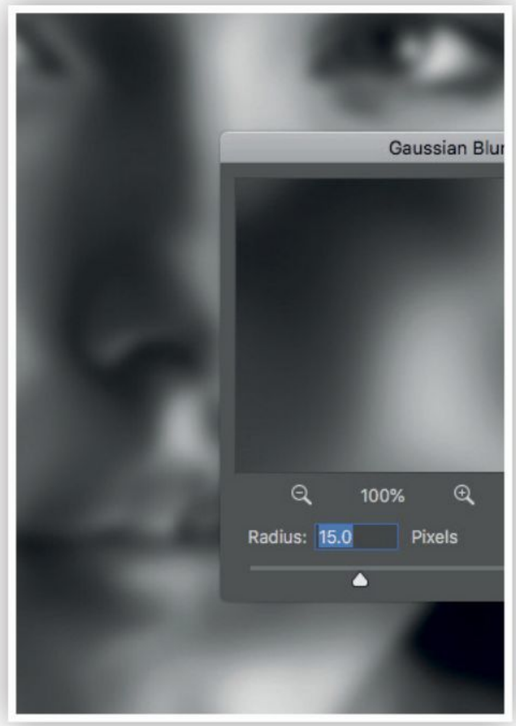
THE GLITCH EFFECT

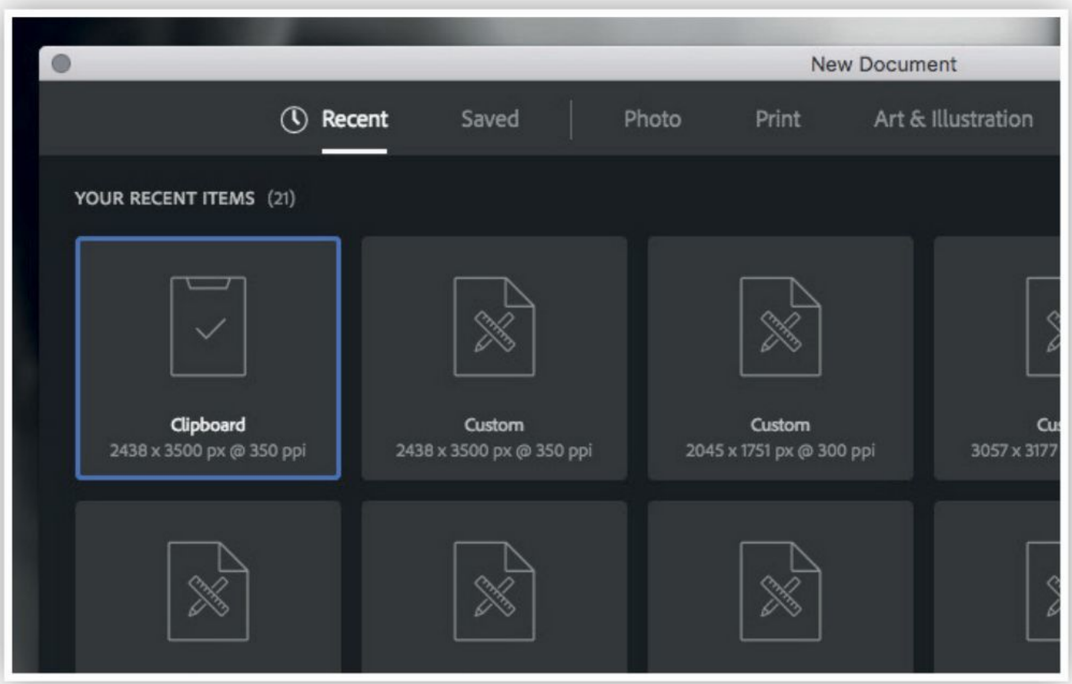


07 A new layer called ‘Layer 1’ is created, which is a merged version of the text and the ‘base’ image. At the moment, the black cannot be seen. It will come into effect as we progress through the glitch effect process. This merged version has a very specific function.



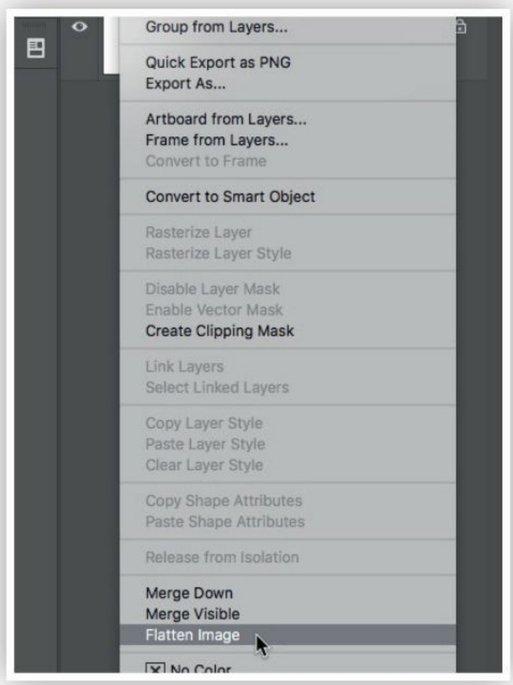


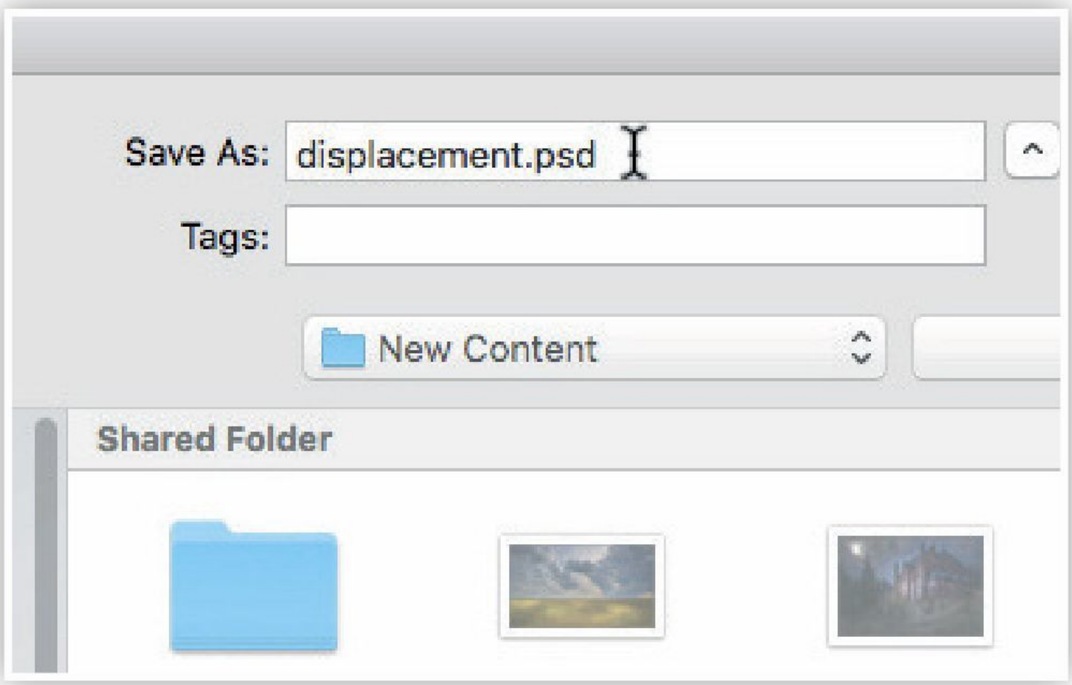
08 With ‘Layer 1’ active, go to Image > Adjustments > Desaturate (Shift + Cmd + U). This will remove all colour data and make it look black and white. Next, go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur and blur the grey image by about 15 pixels. Then choose Select > All (Cmd + A).



09 Select All selects the entire image as denoted by the ‘marching ants’ around the perimeter of the document. Then choose Edit > Copy (Cmd + C) to copy the entire grey image to the clipboard. This blurred grey image will become very useful later in the process.

10 Having copied the grey image, go to File > New (Cmd + N). An untitled clipboard document, with the same dimensions as the image you just copied, is waiting, by default, to be selected. Choose Clipboard, then hit the Create button and a new blank document will open.





11 Press Cmd + V (or go Edit > Paste) and you can paste the grey image into the new document on its own layer. Right-click that new layer and choose Flatten Image from the dropdown menu that appears. This will flatten the image and create a default locked ‘Background’ layer.

12 The purpose of this blurred grey document will become apparent later in the process. For now, go to File > Save As and save the document with the name ‘displacement.psd’. It can be used to add a distortion effect to the main image you are working on; more on this later.

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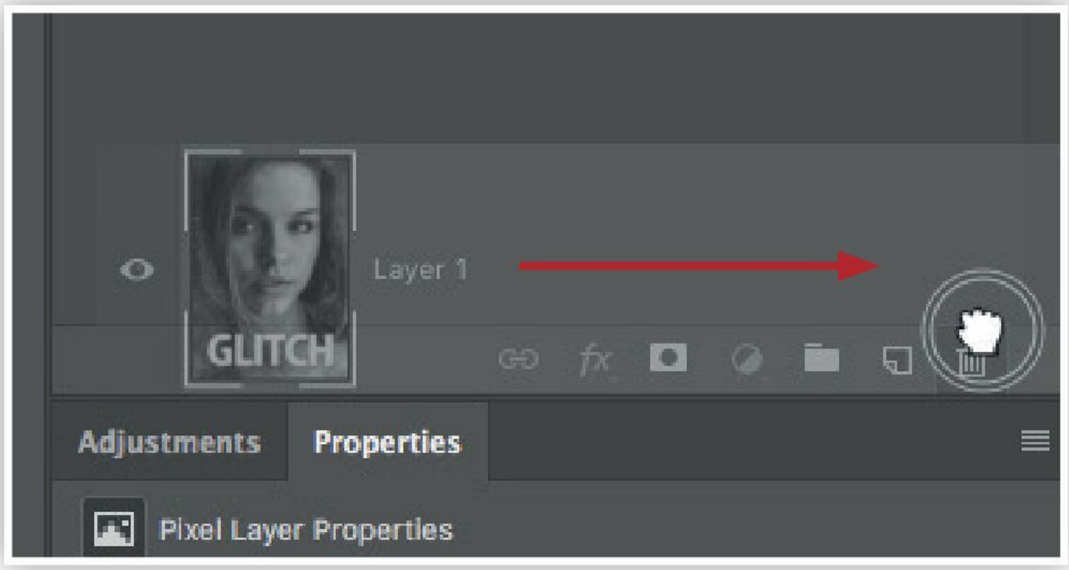
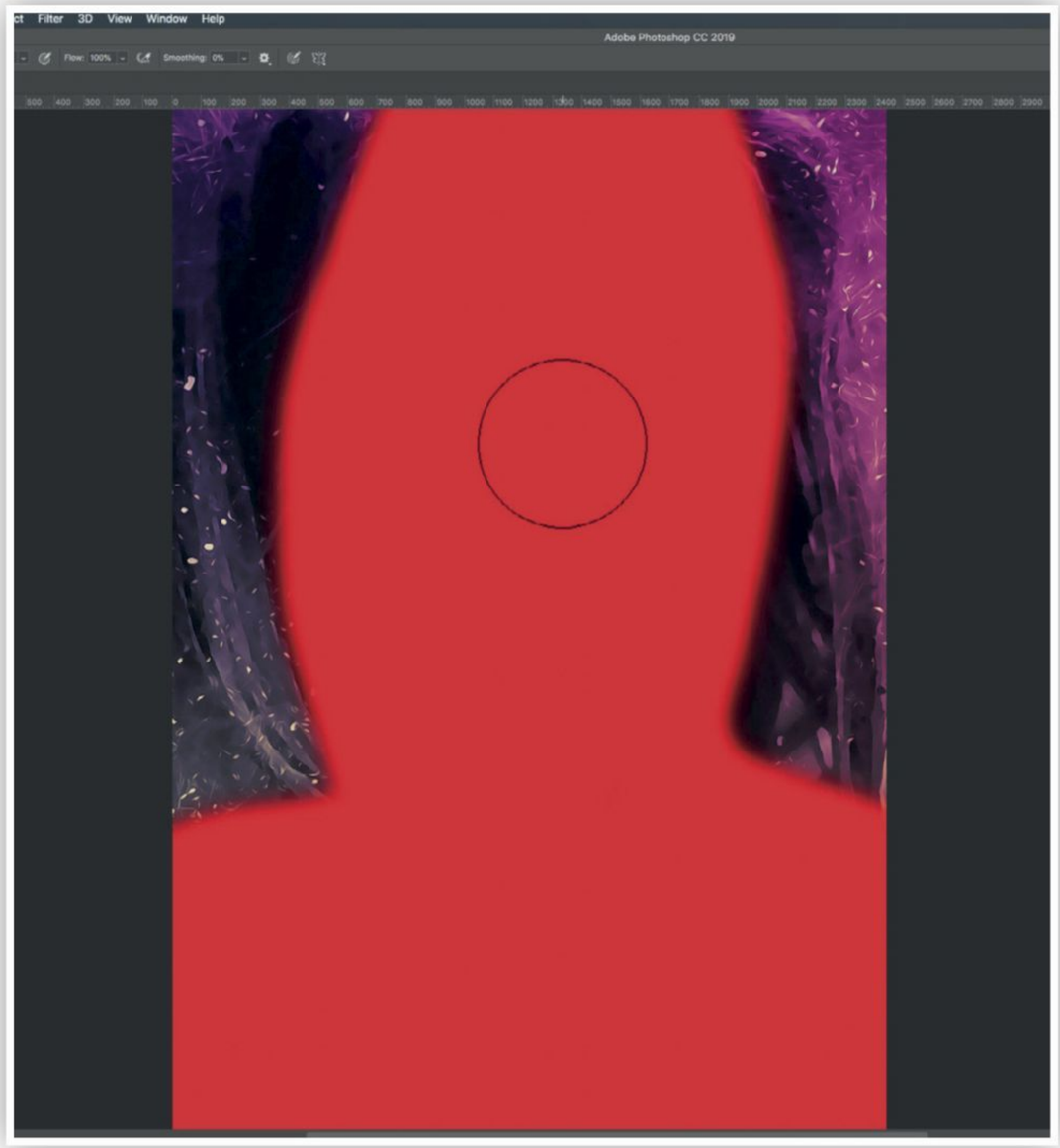
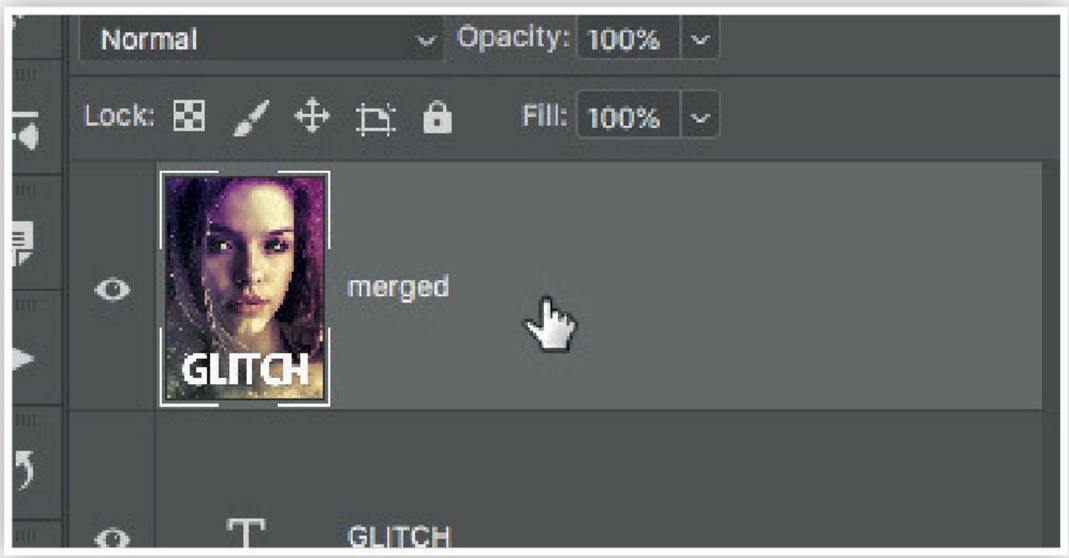
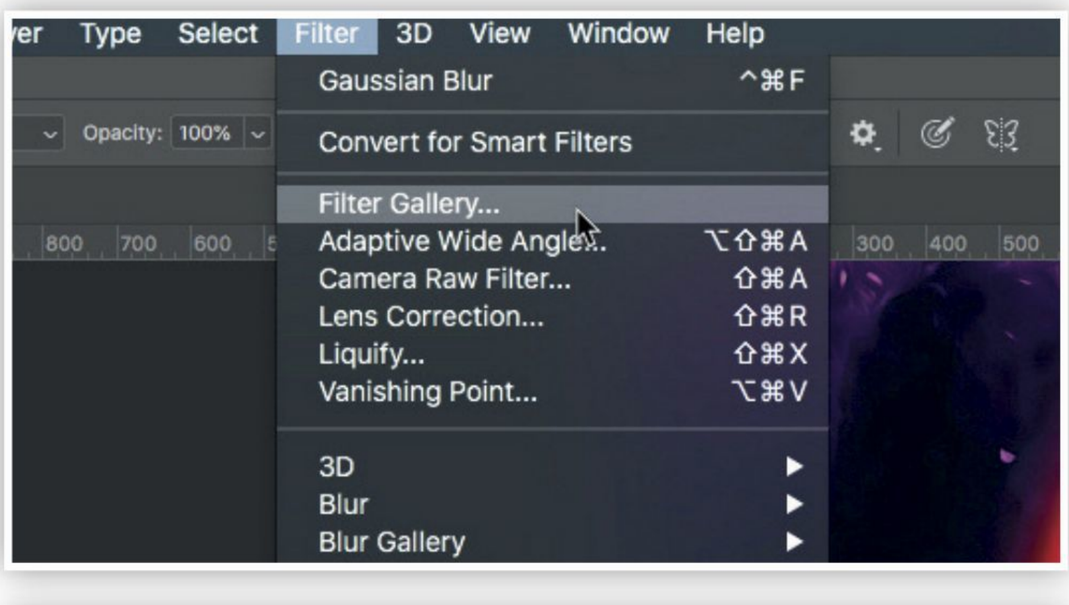


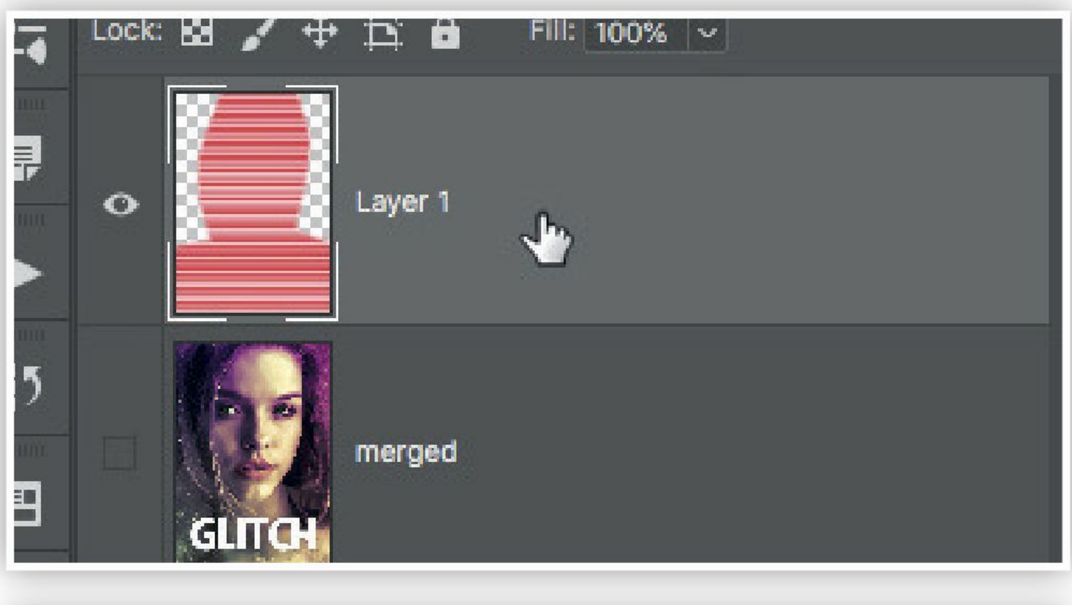


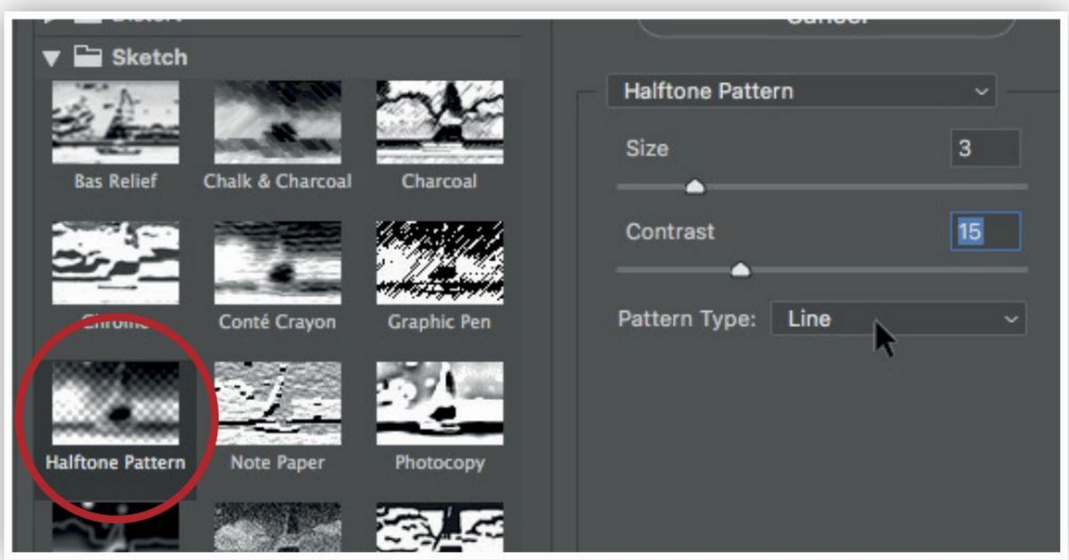


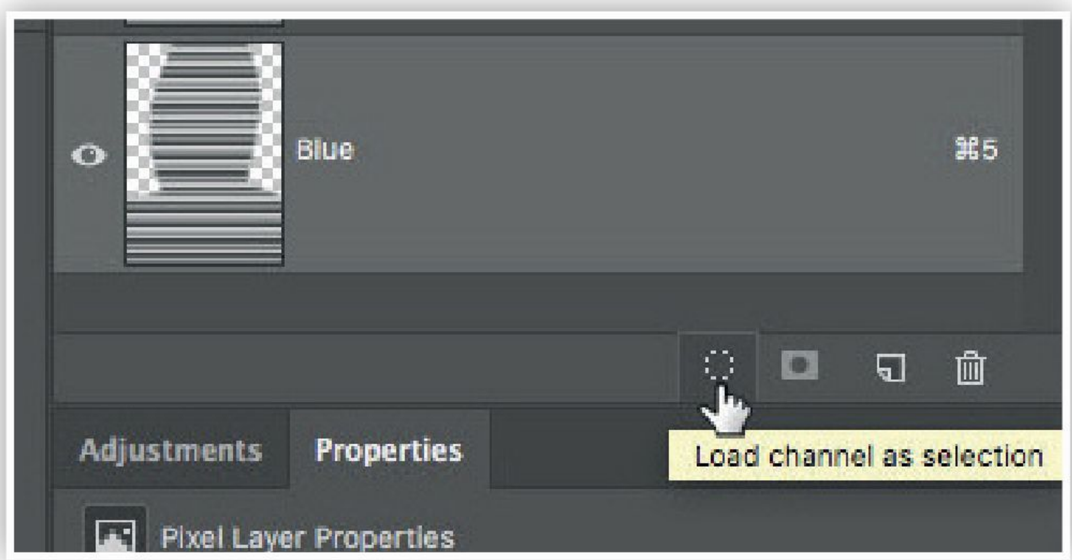
13 You can close the 'displacement.psd' document, now that it's saved, and return to your working document. The 'layer 1' image you created can be dragged to the Trashcan now that it has served its purpose. Press Shift + Alt + Cmd + E to create a new merged layer in colour again.

14 Create a new layer and make sure it is at the top of the layer stack. Use the brush tool and pick a 500 pixel brush with about 50% hardness. Set the foreground colour to a bright red and paint on 'layer 1', covering the subject's face and shoulders as shown.









15 This red layer can help us create the look of an old raster scan display. Go to Filter > Filter Gallery and under the Sketch options, choose Halftone Pattern. Set the Pattern Type to Line, Size to 3 and Contrast to about 15. The red area will be converted to lines.

16 Make all the other layers invisible for the moment, except 'layer 1'. Click on the Channels tab at the top of the layers palette and select just the Blue channel. Below, in the layer options panel, click on the Load Channel As Selection button, to turn the lines into a selection.

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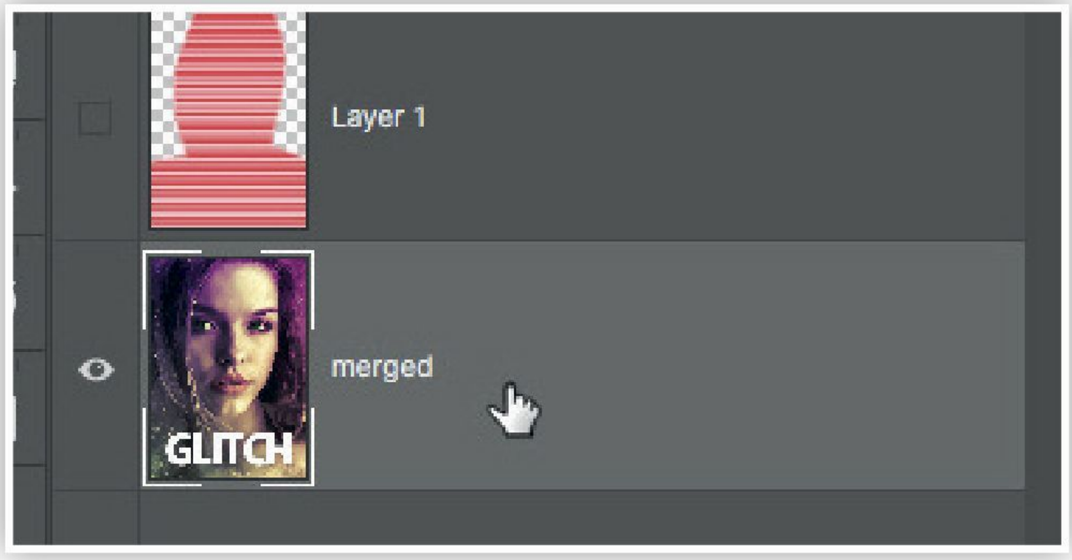
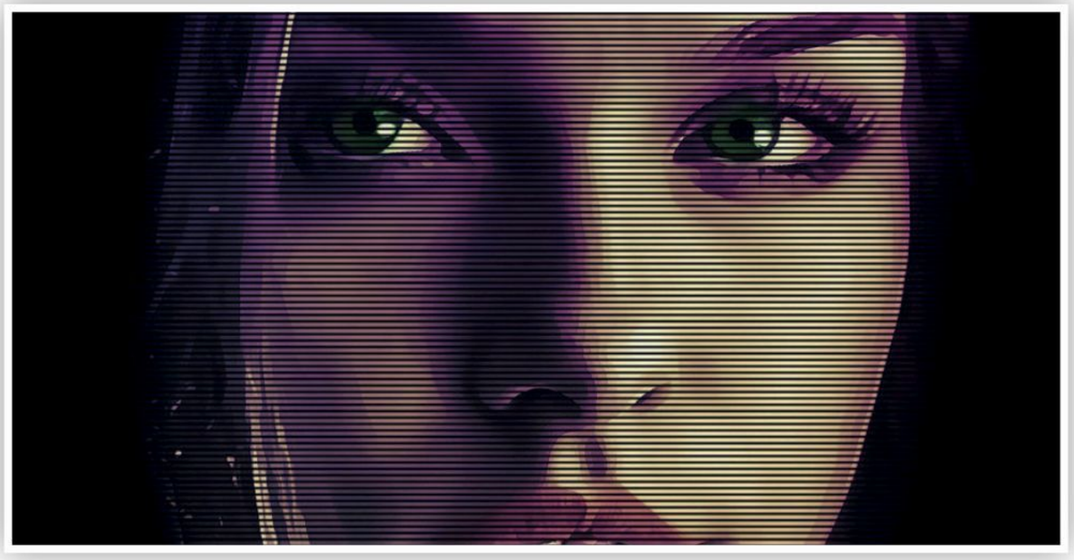
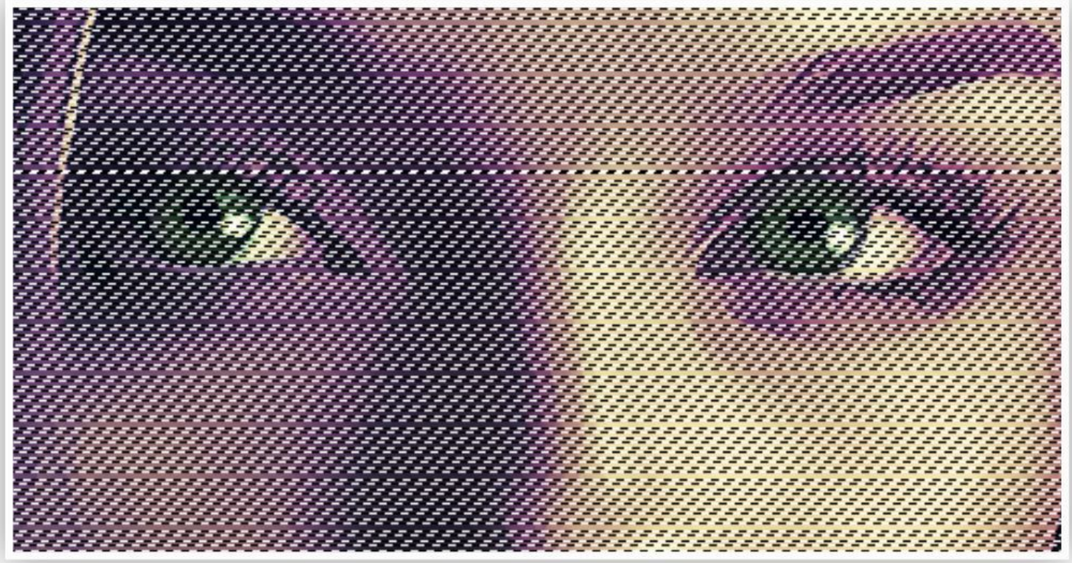
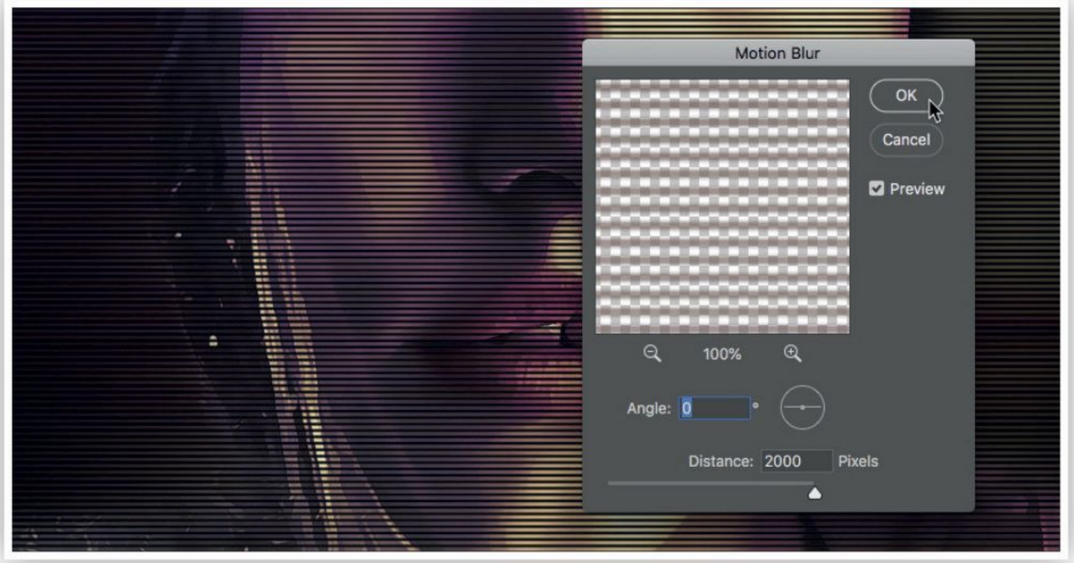


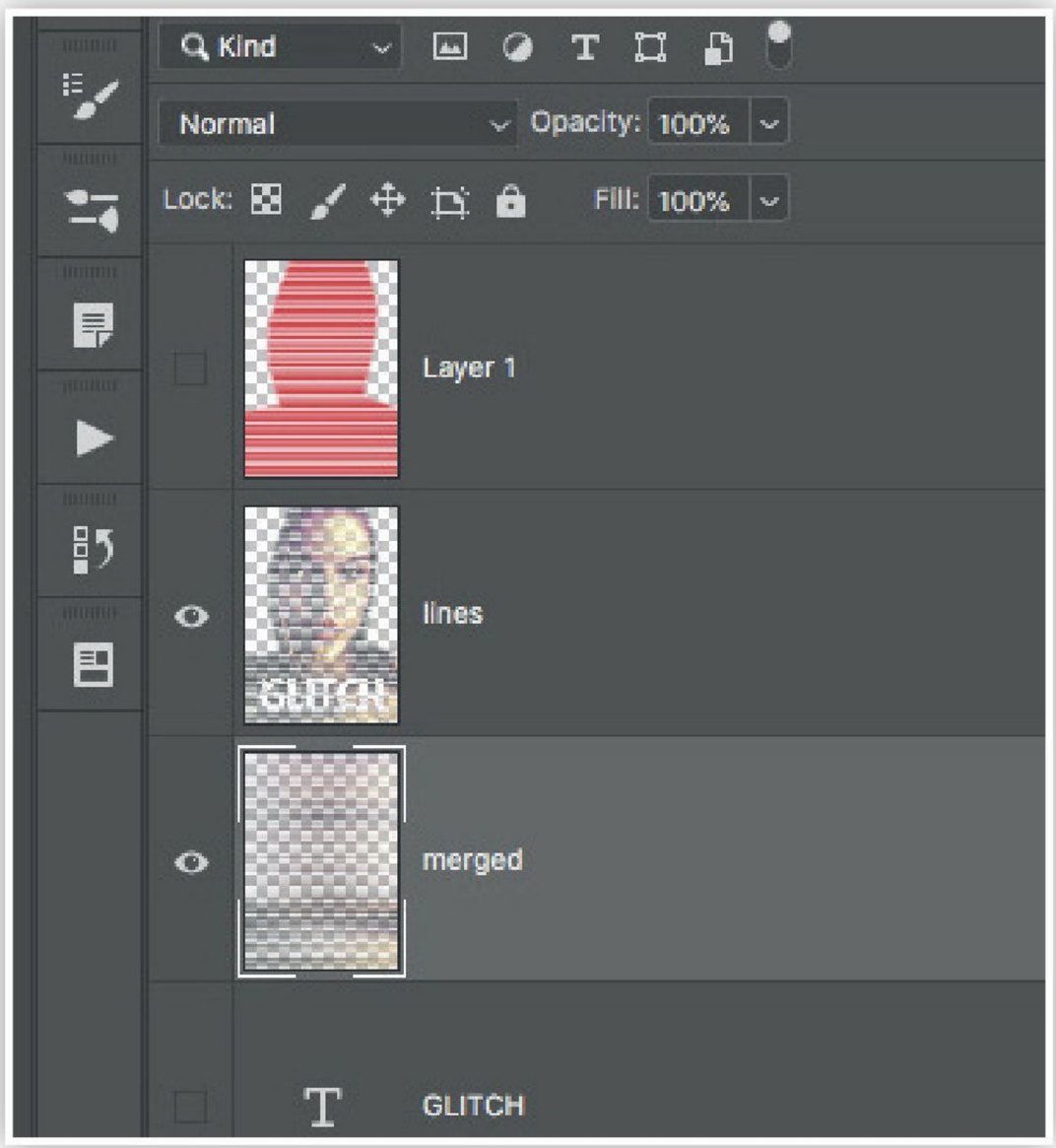


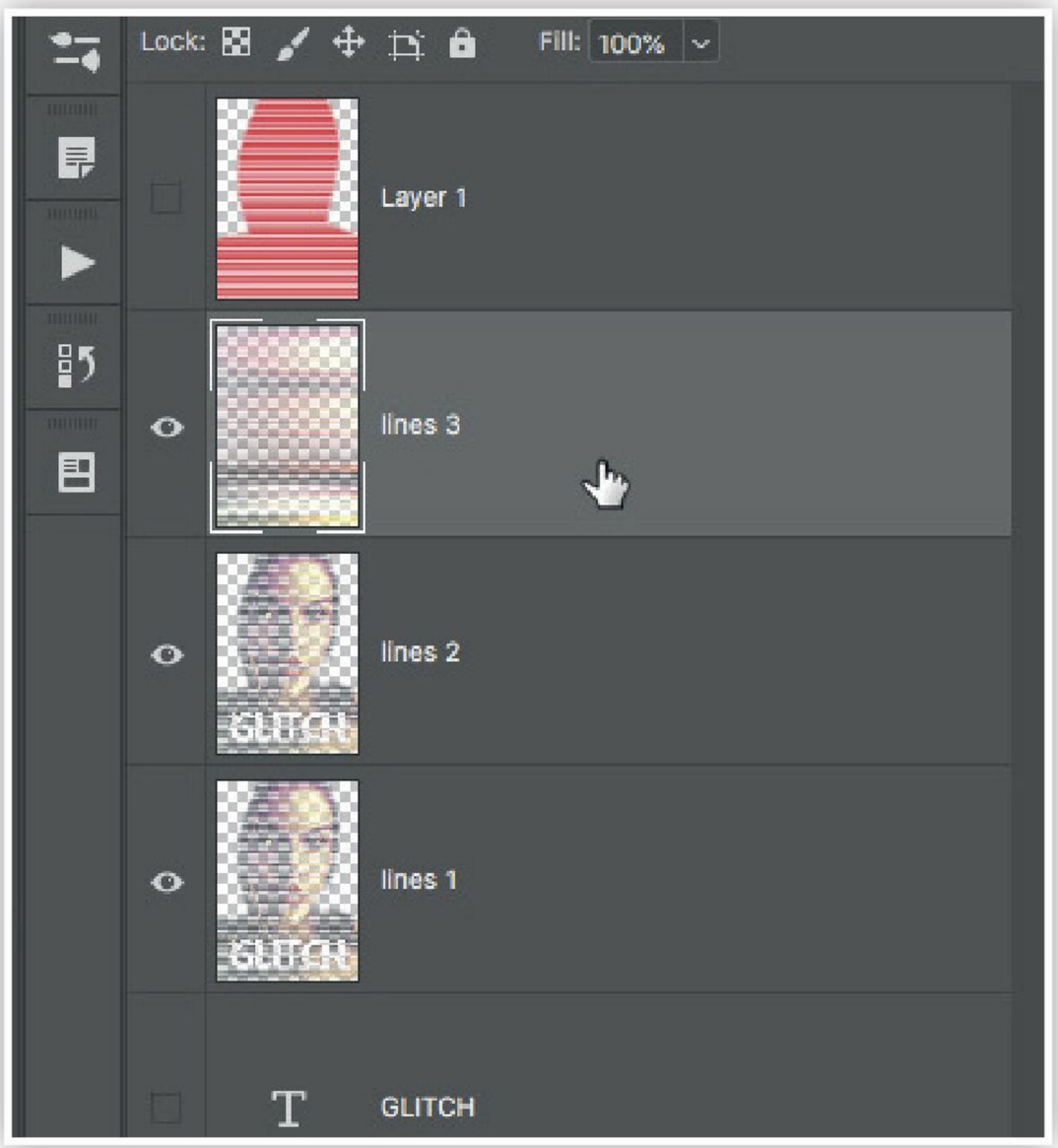




17 With the lines selection active, make all layers invisible except the 'merged' layer. You should see the lines overlaid on the 'merged' layer image. Press Delete and the selection will remove half of the image creating the raster scan effect. Press Cmd + D to cancel the selection.

18 Press Cmd + J to duplicate the raster scan 'merged' layer and call it 'lines'. You can also make the 'black' layer visible at this point. Click on the 'merged' layer to make sure it is active again and go to Blur > Motion Blur. Then set Angle to 0° and Distance to 2000 pixels.





19 The 'merged' layer will be blurred horizontally across the screen. You can apply the effect an extra couple of times if you want to really get the pixels stretched across the screen. Now we need to do some layer housekeeping to get ready for the next part of the effect.

20 Take the blurred 'merged' layer and drag it above the 'lines' layer. Rename it to 'lines 3' then rename 'lines' to 'lines 1'. Press Cmd + J to duplicate it and name the duplicate 'lines 2'. If that hasn't confused you, hopefully you will have three layers as shown.

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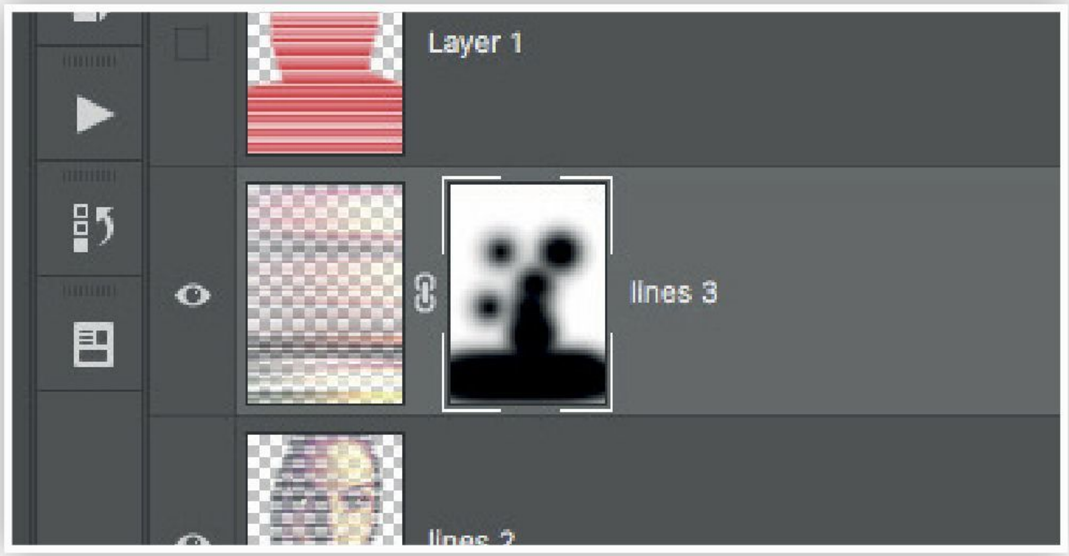
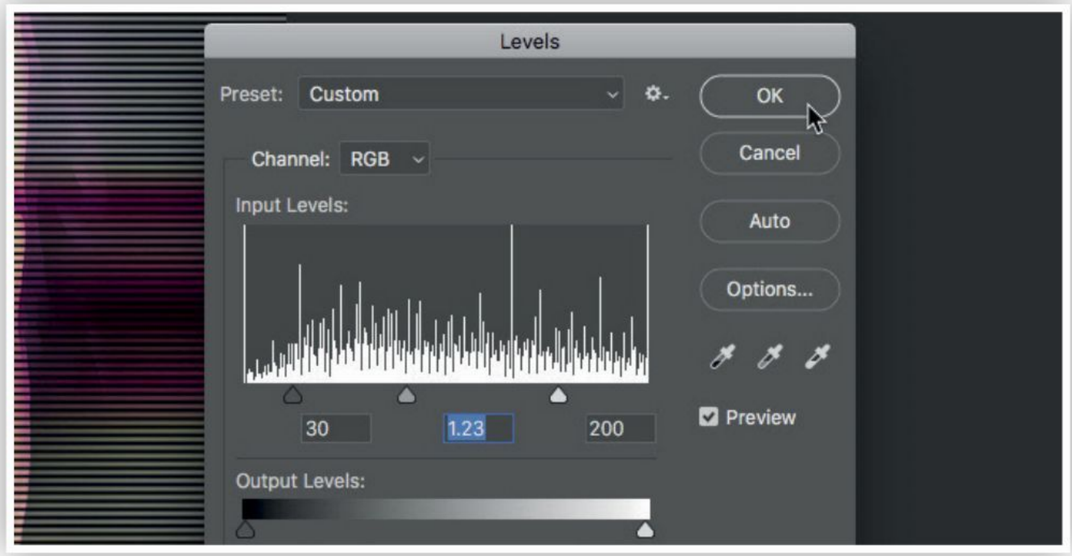
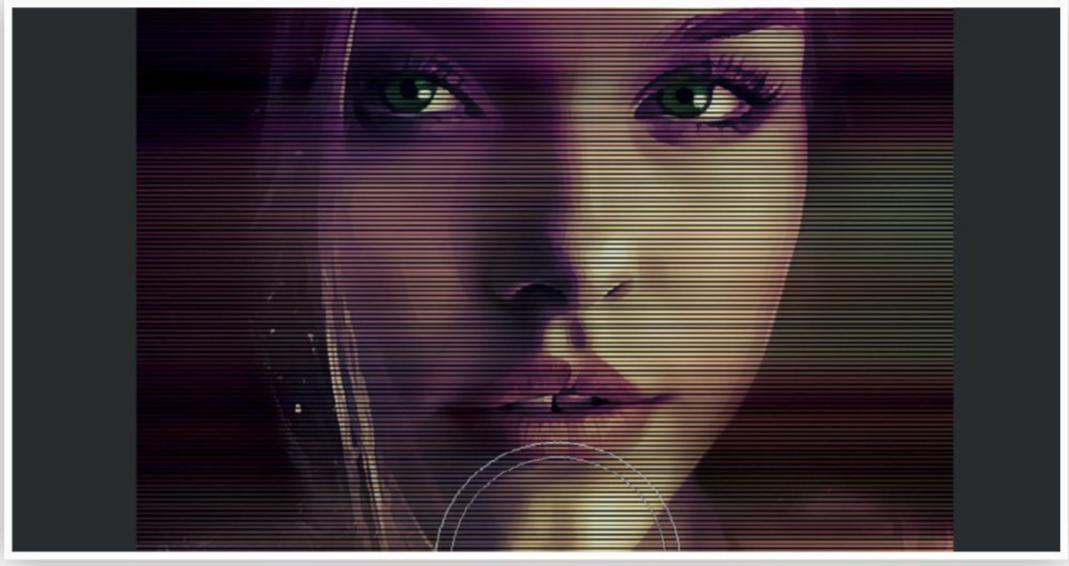
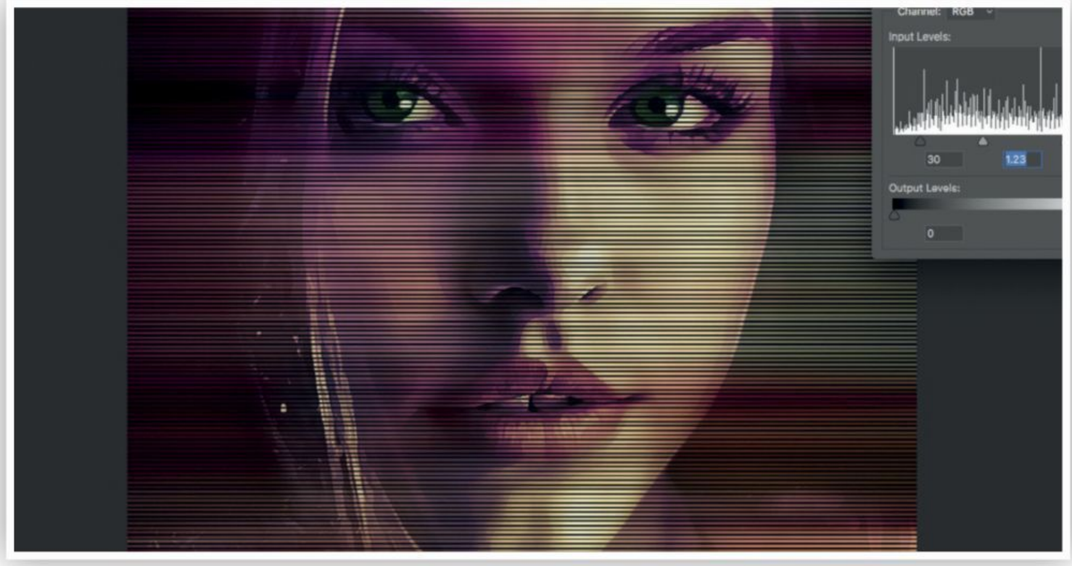


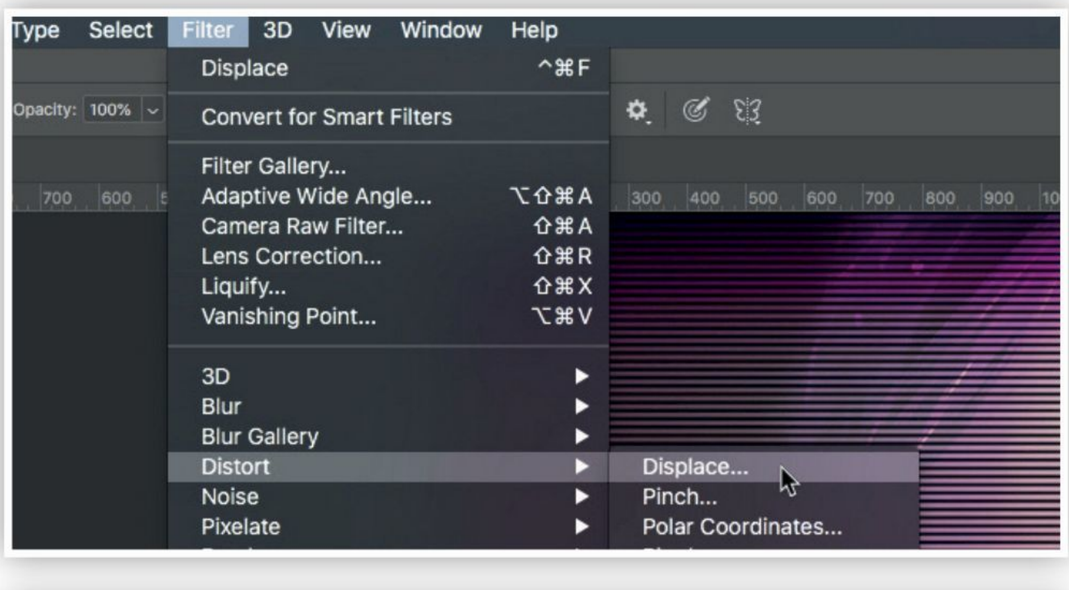


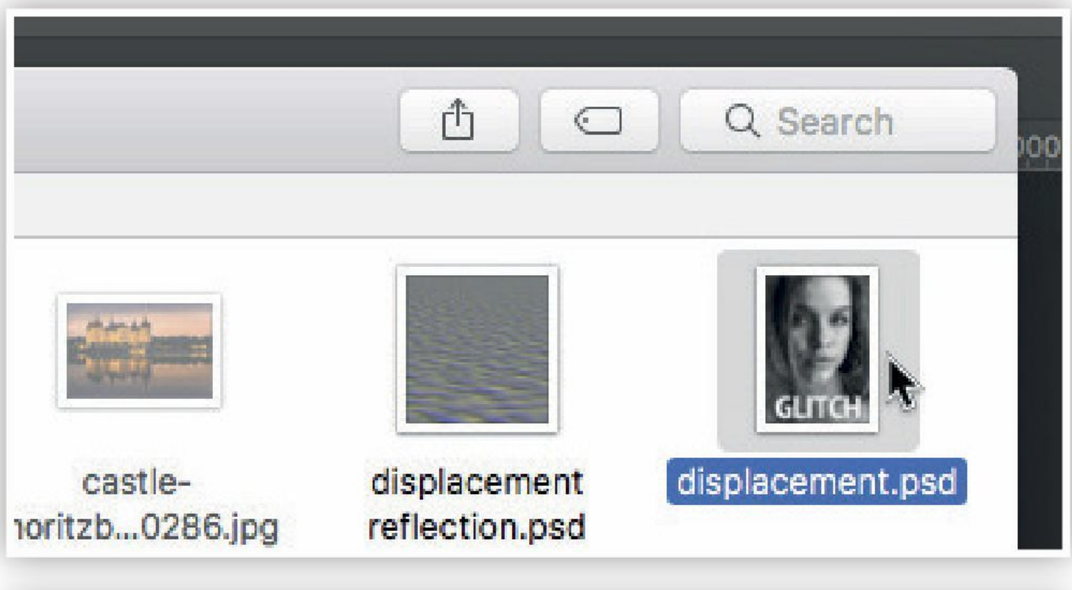


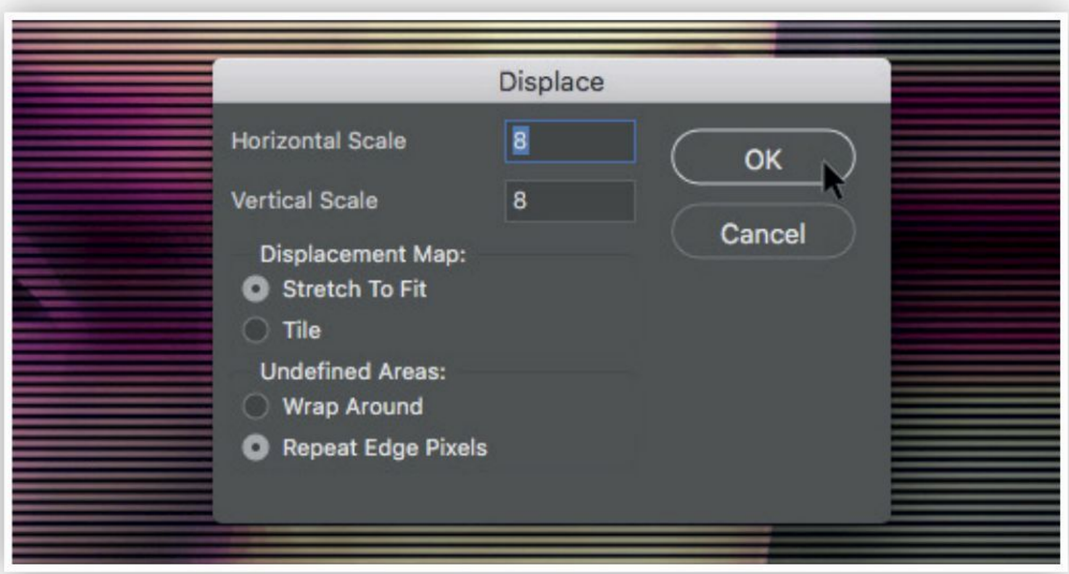


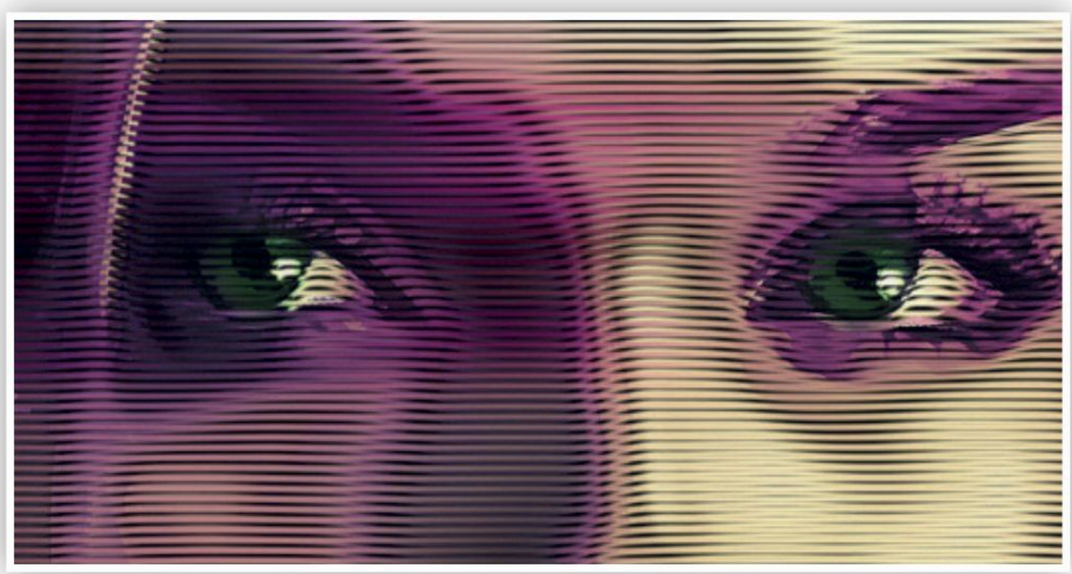
21 Click ‘lines 3’ to make it active and then add a layer mask to it. Use a large soft black brush on the layer mask, to remove the blurred lines just from around her eyes, nose, mouth and the area around her shoulders and text, so they look clearer.

22 Click the ‘lines 3’ layer thumbnail and press Cmd + L to bring up the Levels Adjustment panel. Slide the Highlight and Shadow sliders towards the centre of the histogram, to add more contrast to the blurred lines, until you have something you like.









23 Click on the ‘lines 1’ layer to make it active. Now we can use the blurred grey image we created before. Go to Filter > Distort > Displace and then set Horizontal and Vertical Scale to about 8. Check the Stretch To Fit button and Repeat Edge Pixels. Click OK.

24 You will need to select the ‘displacement.psd’ file. This file will be used to warp the image on ‘lines 1’. You can repeat the displacement a couple of times by pressing Ctrl + Cmd + F (Ctrl + Alt + F on PC), or just go to Filter and reuse the last filter applied.

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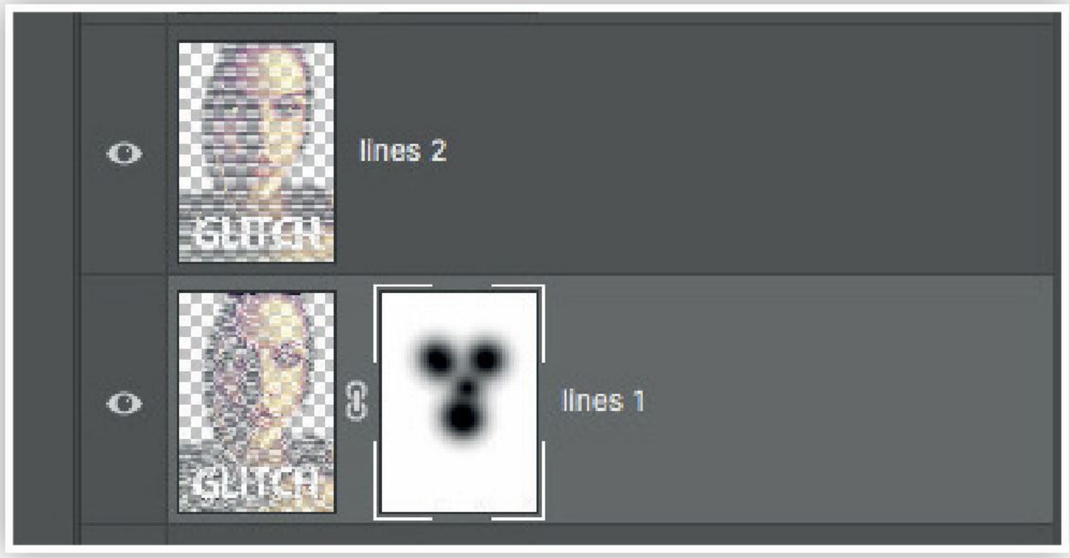
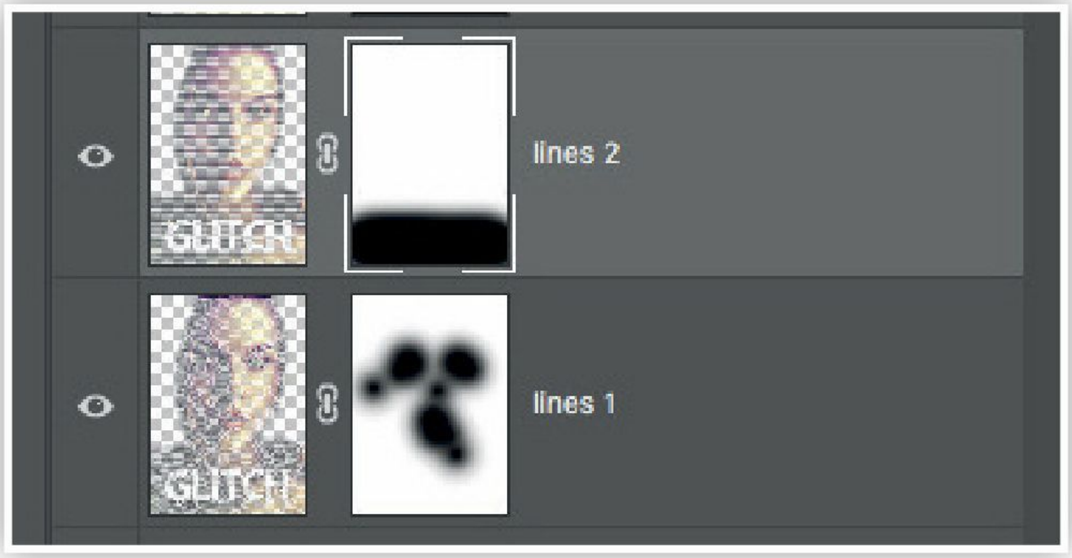
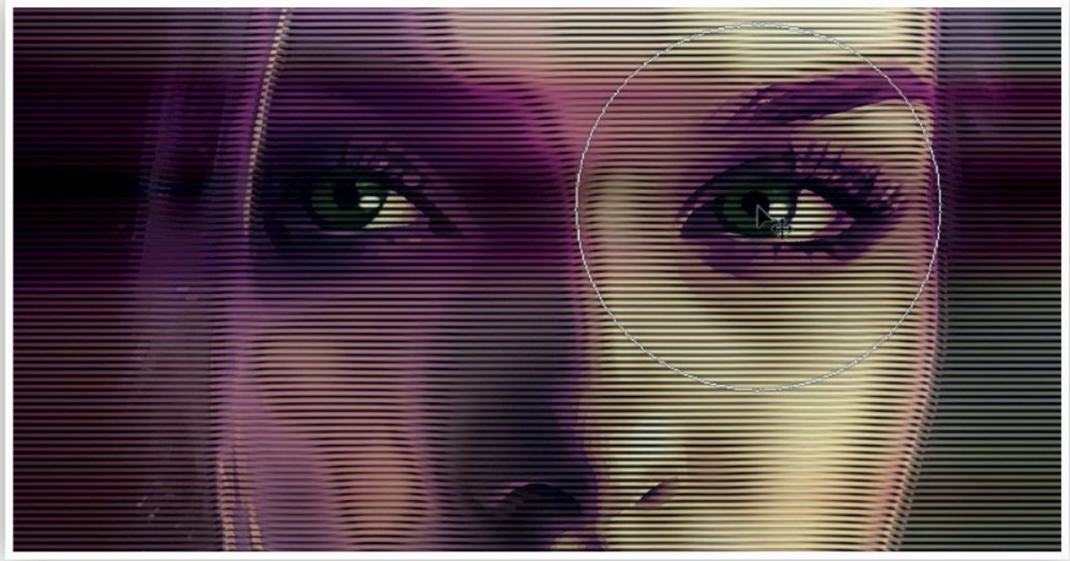
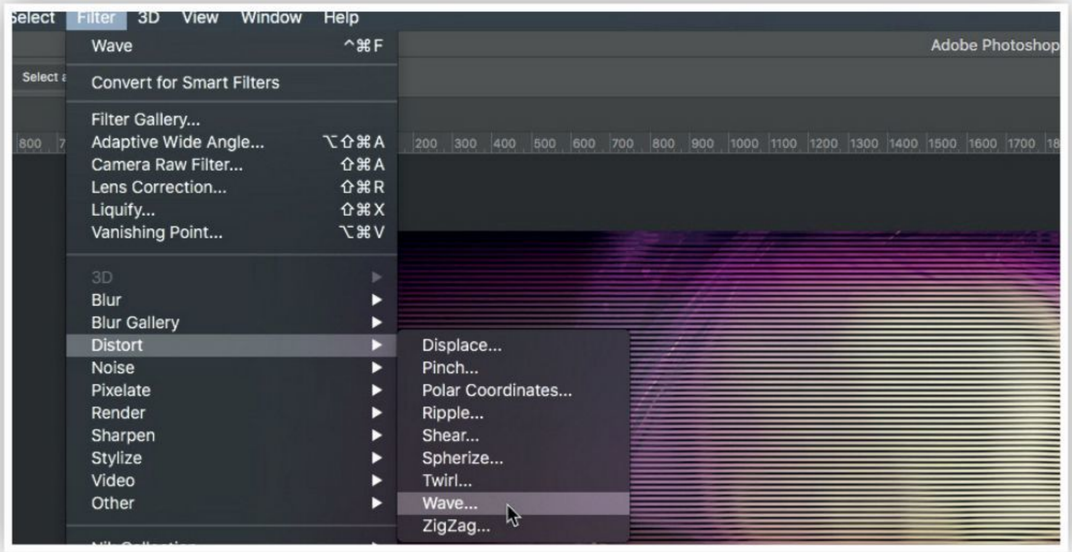


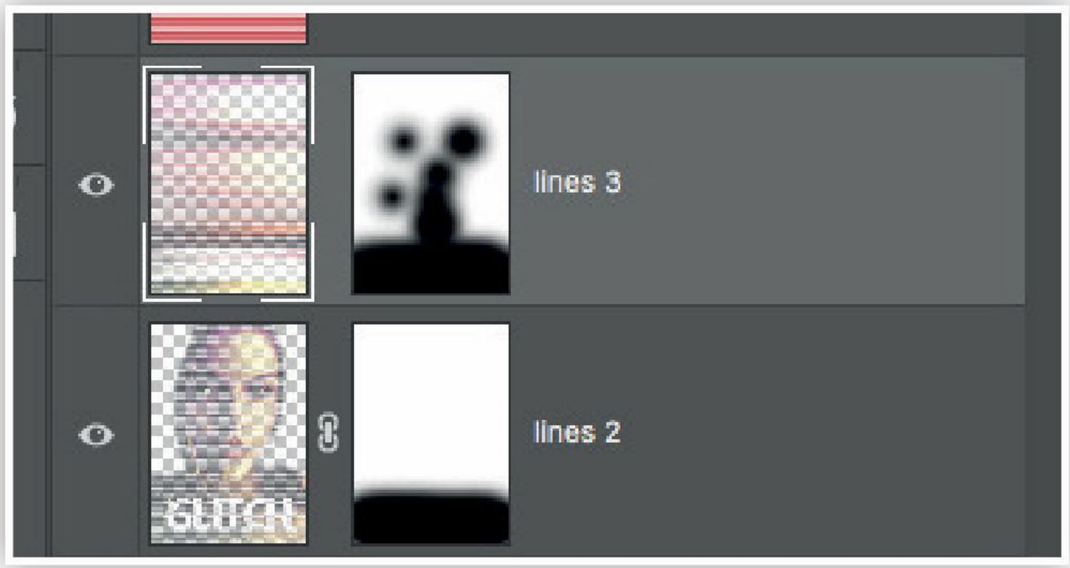


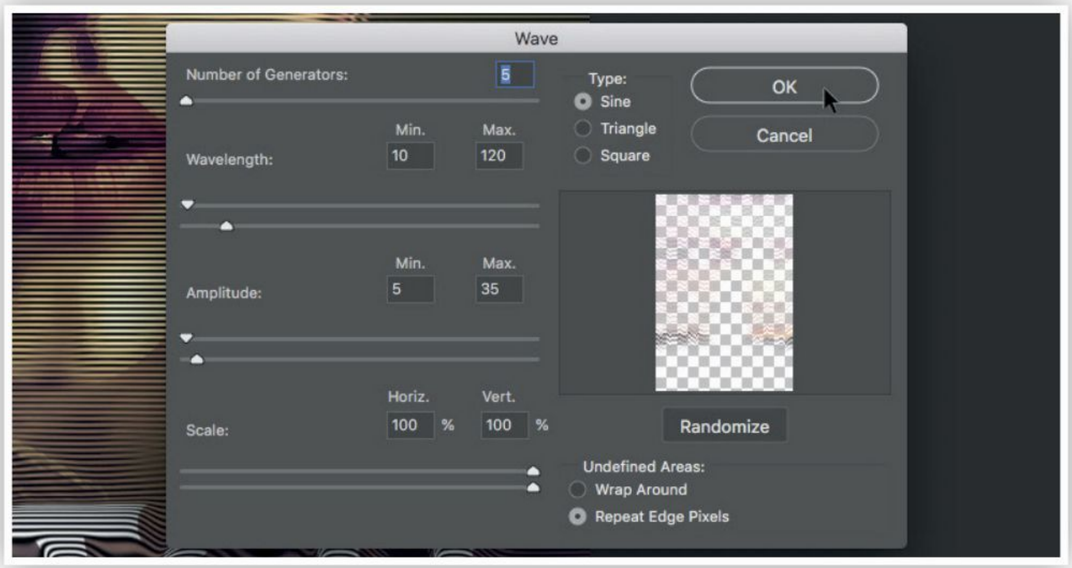


25 You will notice the face and text begin to displace and obscure the image slightly. You can add a layer mask to the 'lines 1' layer and use a large soft black brush to mask out the distortions around her eyes, nose and mouth so they are clear again.

26 Next, click on the 'lines 2' layer and add a layer mask to that too. Use the same black brush to mask out the text on the 'lines 2' layer. This will reveal the text beneath, on the 'lines 1' layer, which is very distorted but actually looks really good.







27 Now we can turn our attention to 'lines 3'. Click on the Chain icon, between the layer thumbnail and the layer mask, to unlink them. We want to distort the blurred lines image but not the mask. Click the image thumbnail so it is active, not the mask.

28 Go to Filter > Distort > Wave. Set: Number of Generators to 5, Wavelength Min. 10 and Max. 120, the set Amplitude Min. 5 and Max. 35, and Scale 100% for both Horiz. and Vert. values. Click OK to add a wave distortion to the blurred lines.

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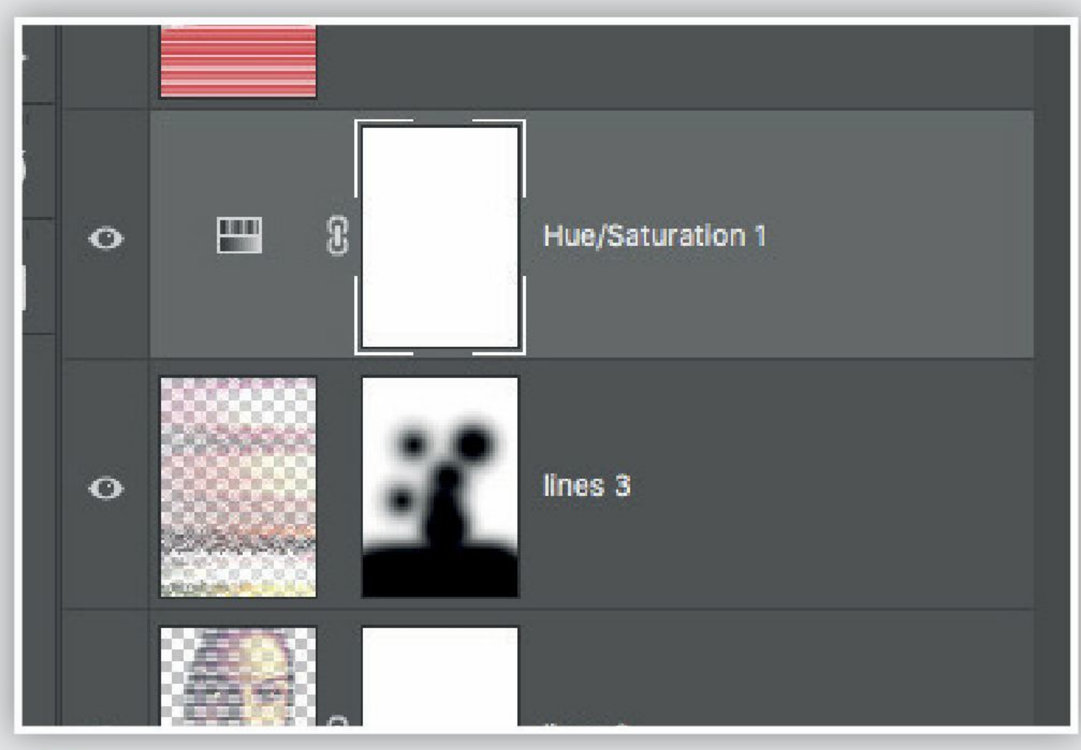
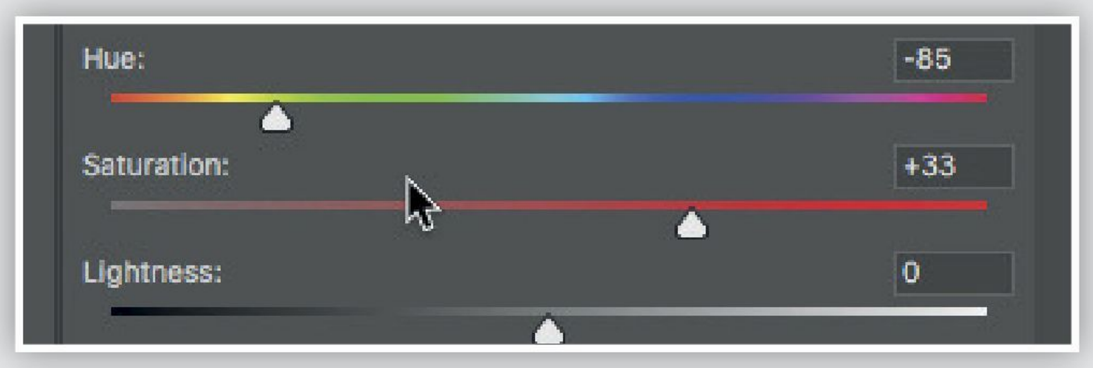
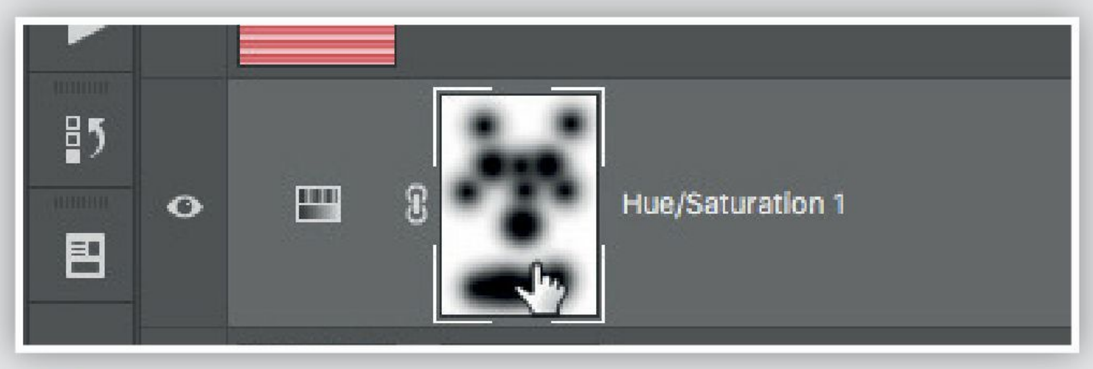
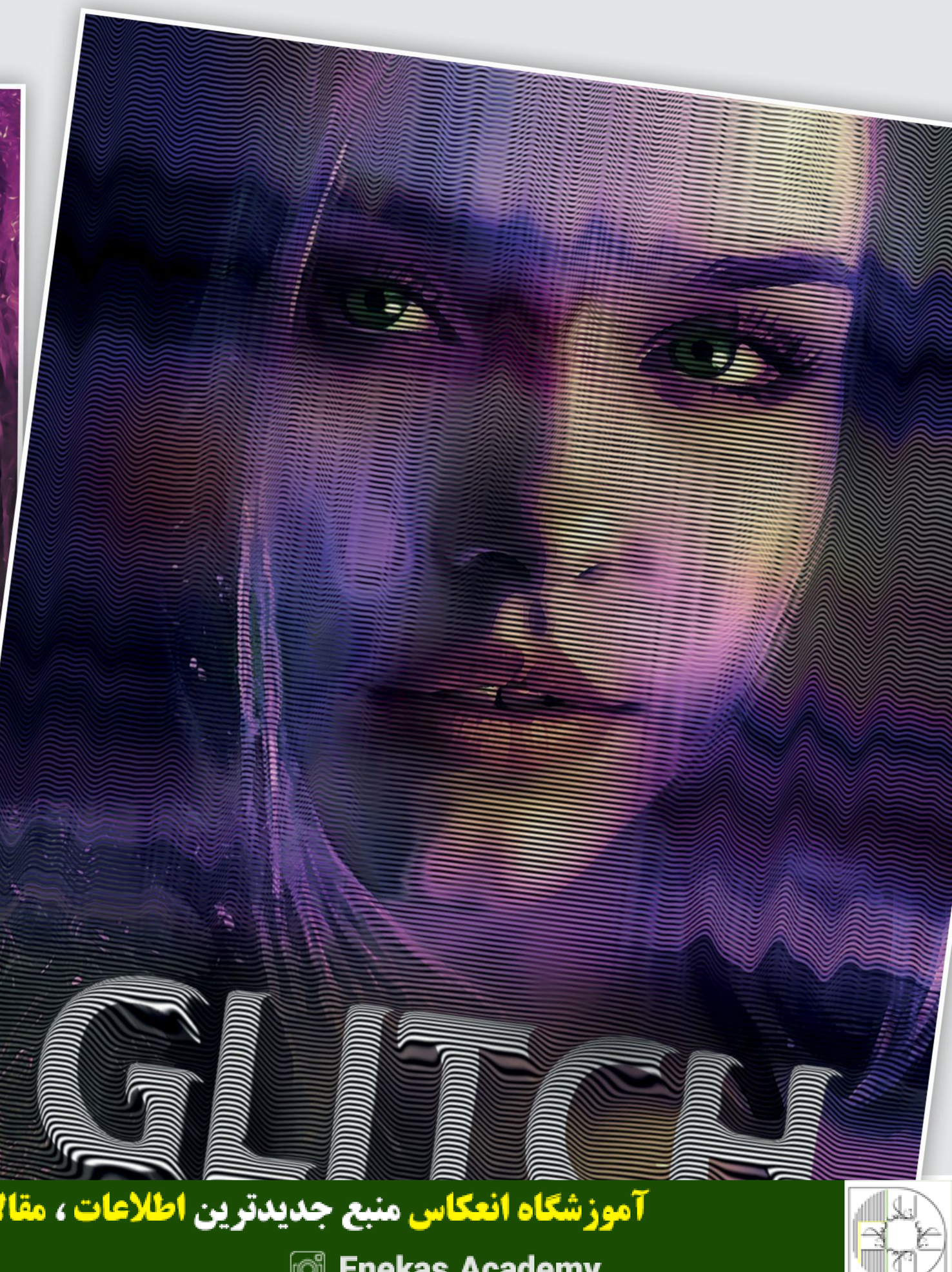






29 Go to the layer options, click Add New Fill Or Adjustment Layer and select Hue/Saturation. Make sure this goes to the top of the layer stack. We can use the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer to alter the colour to look more like glowing blue screen.

30 Make Hue -85, Saturation +33 and Lightness 0 to make the colours of the layers below look more blue/purple. On the 'Hue/Saturation 1' layer mask, use the black brush to mask away some of the blue from the subject's eye, cheeks and lips. With that, your glitch effect is complete.



Effects for high tech

Now you can glitch with the best of them.

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Light Beam Effects

This tutorial content is available for download

Enhance your photos and art with cool beams of light

Photographers will tell you that their medium is light. In fact, the word photograph is taken from the Greek words; photos for light and graphe for drawing. In Photoshop, even if the medium with which you are working is the coloured pixels in an image, it is how you use those pixels to represent light that makes a photo 'pop'. We want to show you how to create some great lighting effects, then show you how to combine several images and blend them into one final artwork that will benefit from the lighting you will construct. We have three images. The first is a field, into which the other two elements will be placed. We will combine them to create a classic alien abduction scene. You're always guaranteed of some good alien light beams in a scene like that and we can start off with the basic assembly of the elements, before moving on to make the light effects.

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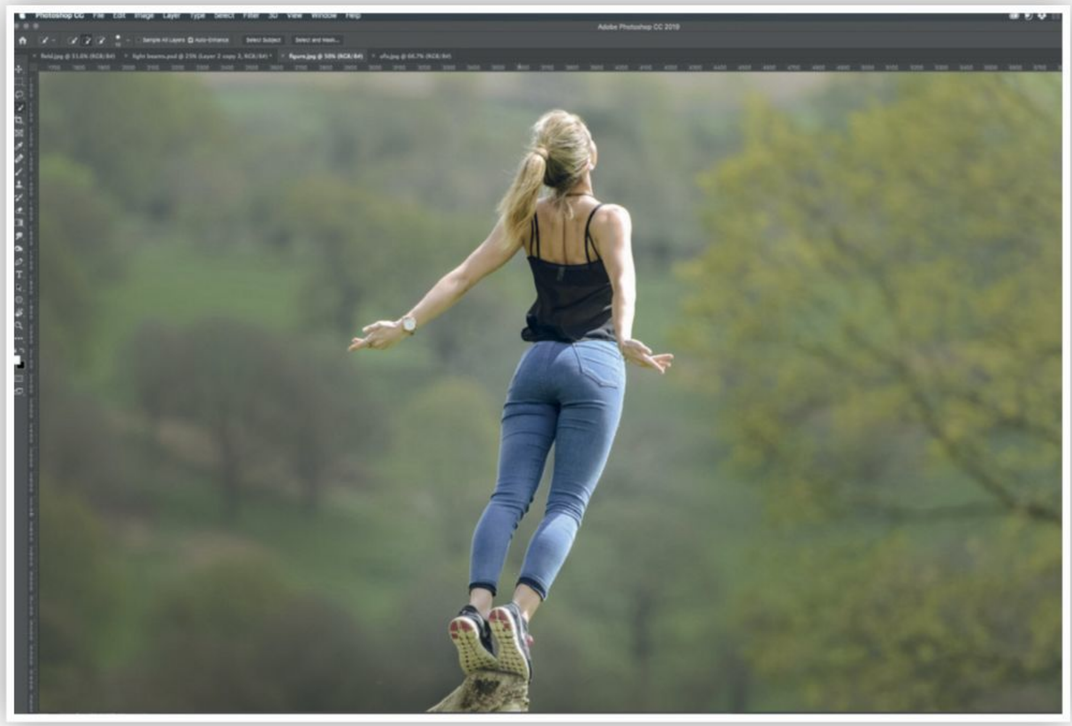
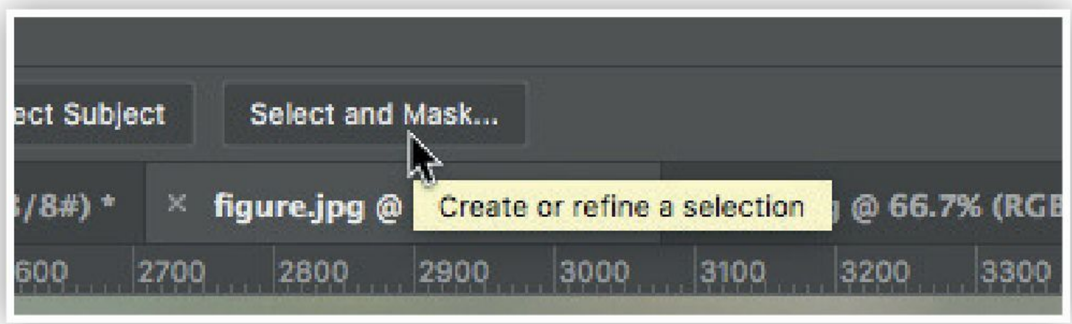
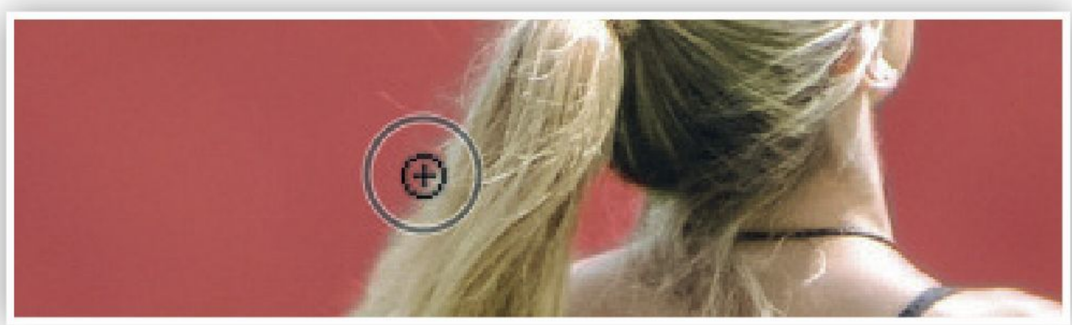


01 Firstly, we open the base image, which, in the case of our example, is called ‘field.jpg’. The base image is 2899 pixels wide by 4123 pixels high. Settings used in our example are based on an image that size. Your settings may vary if working on a different sized image.

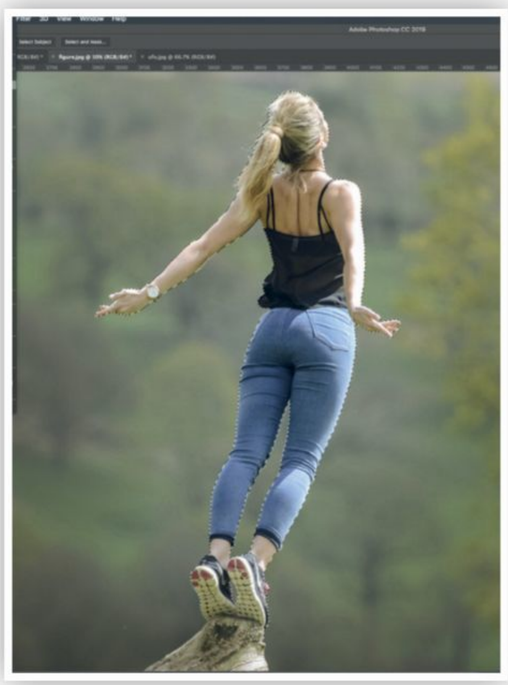
02 Next, open the image called ‘figure.jpg’. It is an image of a girl pretending to fall off a tree stump. We can use this image to create an abductee floating in a beam of light. The first thing we need to do, is remove her from the background.

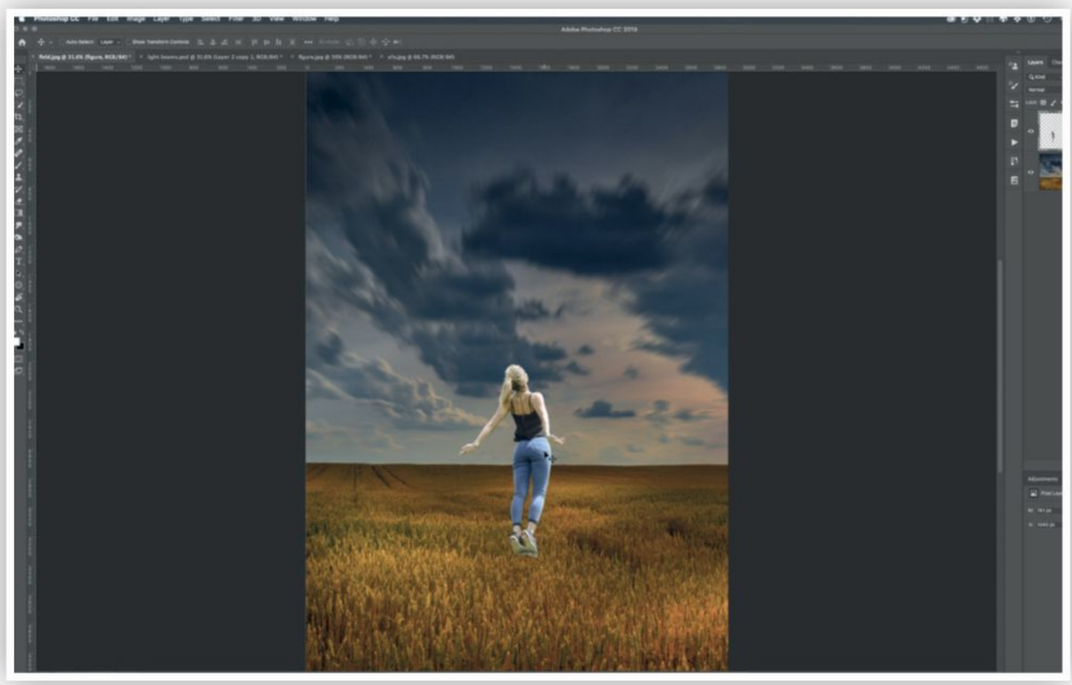




03 An easy way to do that is to use the Quick Selection Tool (W). Use a small brush size of about 10 pixels and begin to draw a selection within the outline of the girl. As she is against a plain background, you should be able to get a fairly decent selection.

04 To make sure of a good selection, you can click on the Select And Mask button and paint the refinement brush over the girl’s outline. Each brush stroke will attempt a more accurate selection. Keep brushing until you’re happy with the quality of the selection and then press OK.





05 With your selection refined, you can go to Edit > Copy (Cmd + C) and copy the girl. Then you can return to your field image and go to Edit > Paste (Cmd + V) to paste the girl into the scene on a new layer, which you can name ‘figure’.

06 She’s probably a bit too big for this scene, but if you press Cmd + T, to activate the Free Transform Tool, you can scale her down and move her into her final position near the bottom of the filed image. You can also rotate her a little, so she faces the sky more.

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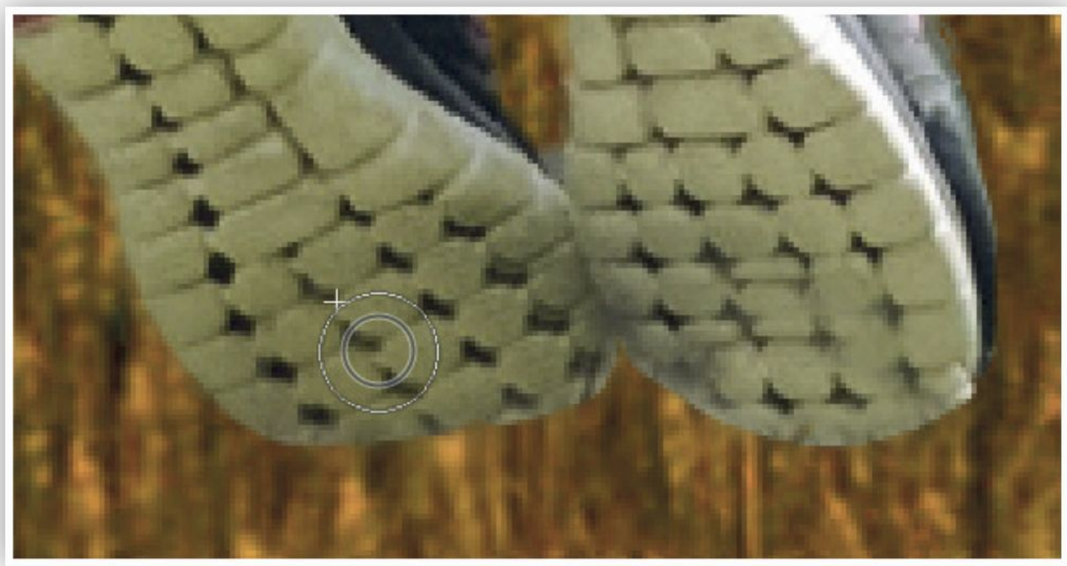
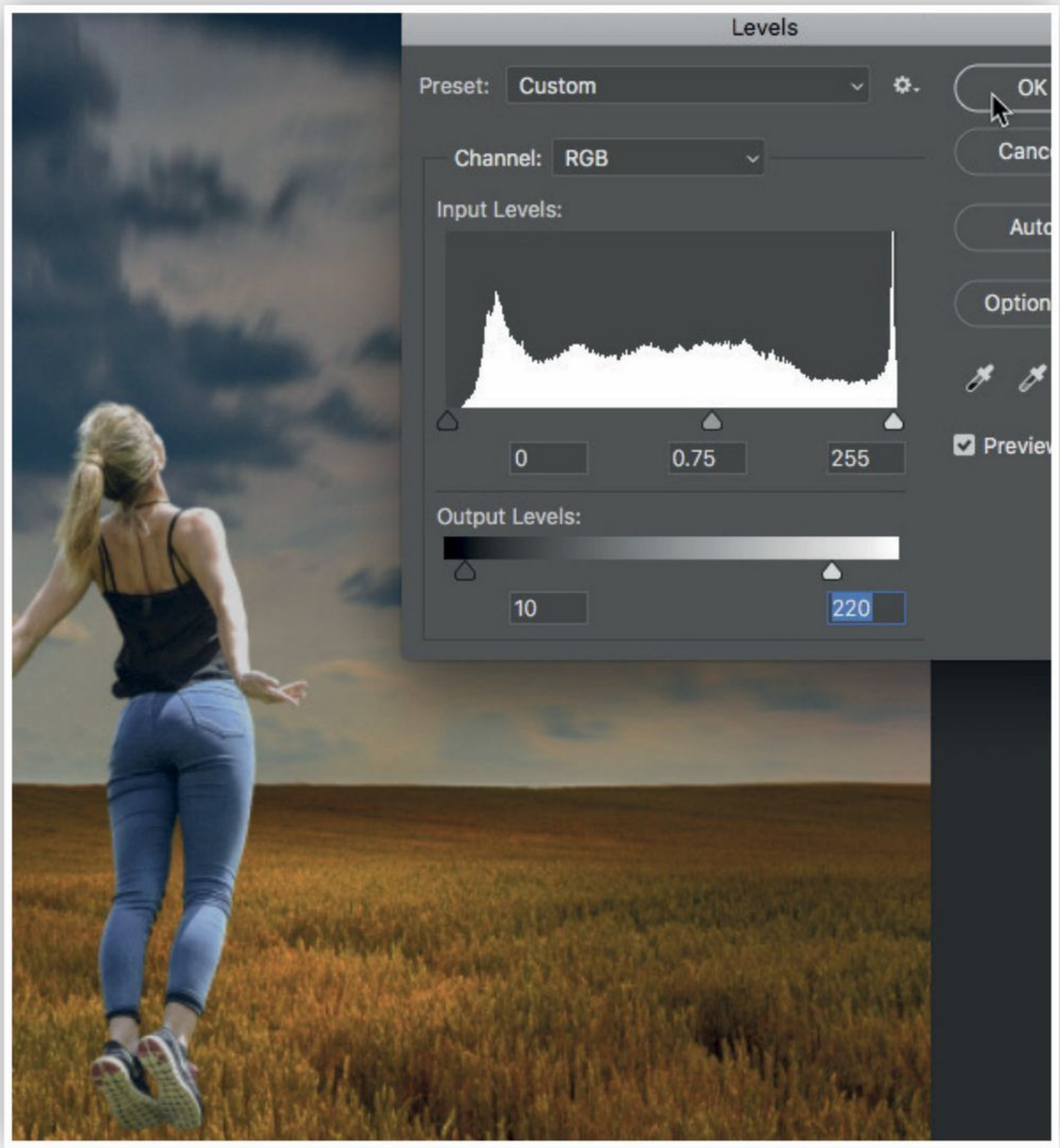
LIGHT BEAM EFFECTS



07 Since the girl was standing on a tree stump, parts of her feet were missing. You can use the Clone Stamp Tool (S) to clone new areas of her sneaker soles onto the missing bits. You can then use the Eraser Tool and refine the shape of her feet.



08 With the 'figure' layer still active, press Cmd + L to call up the Levels panel. The girl is a little too bright for our purposes, so if you drag the middle Midtone slider to the right a little, you can make her darker. You don't have to make her very dark.

09 Now we need our alien invasion craft. If you open the file 'ufo.jpg', we have a classic alien saucer to abduct our girl. Now, just as you did with the girl on the tree stump, you can use the Quick Selection Tool (W) to select the saucer, then copy it, and paste it into your main document.

10 The saucer goes on its own layer, which you can name 'ufo' and place at the top of the layer stack, with the girl on the 'figure' layer beneath that and the field image as the main 'Background' layer. At this point it may be worth hitting Shift + Cmd + S to save the document.

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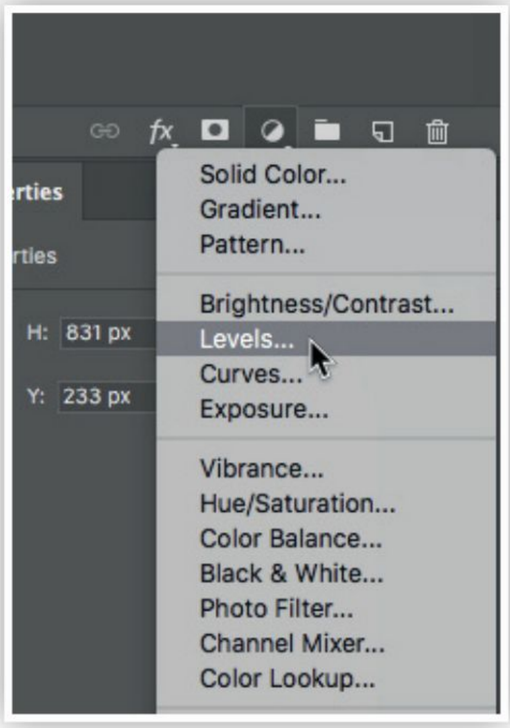
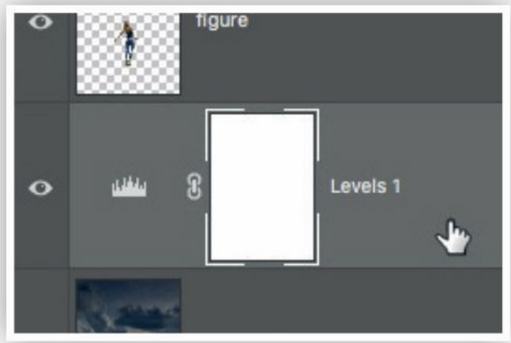
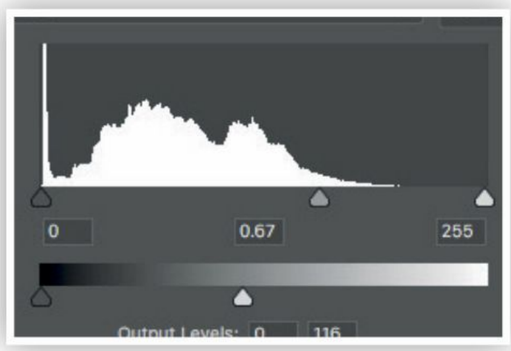
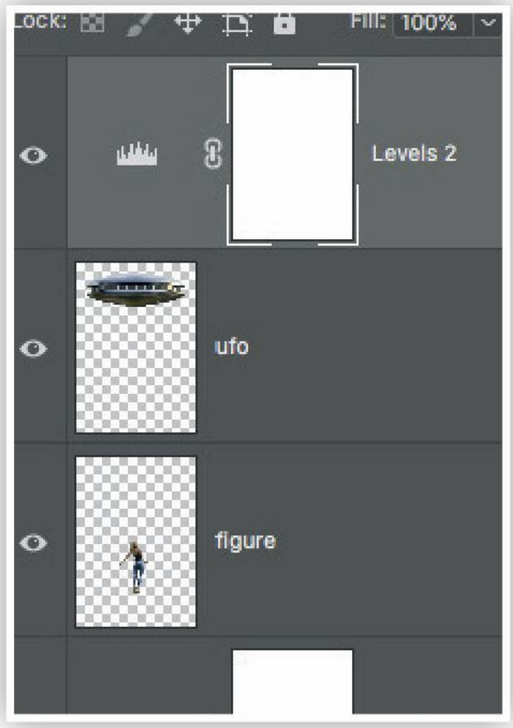
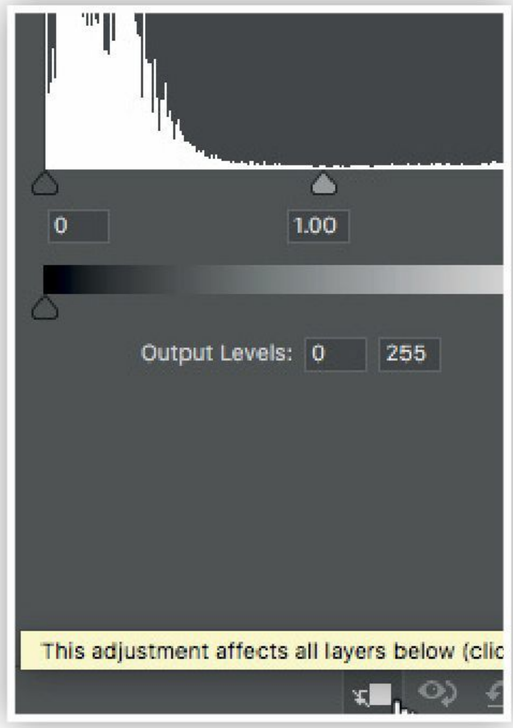




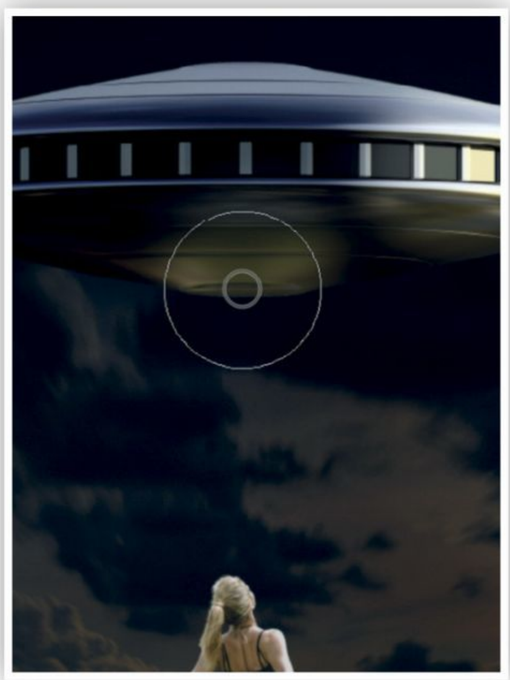


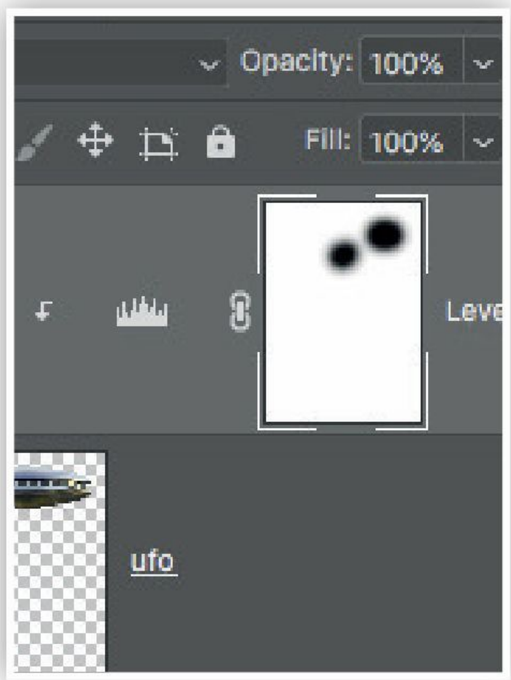


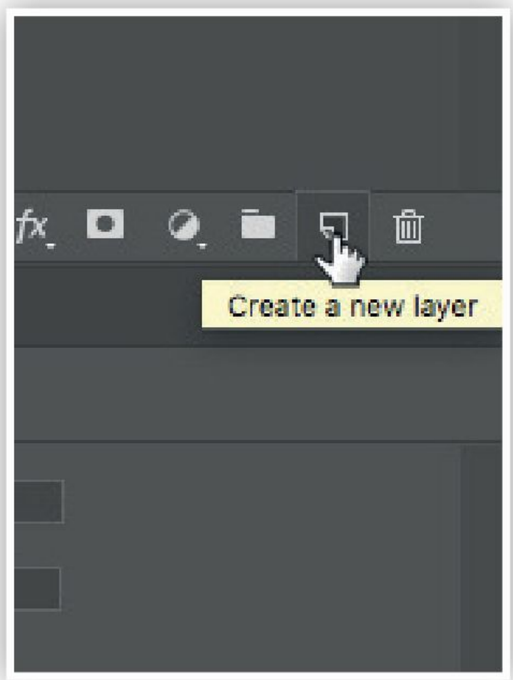


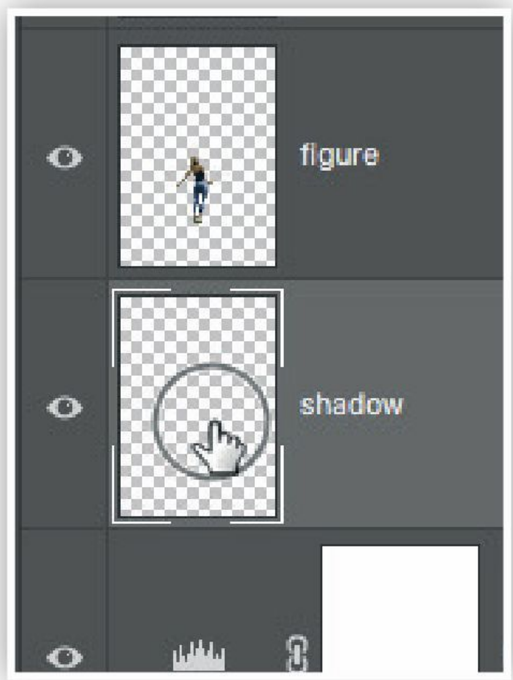
11 Click the ‘Background’ field image layer, go to the layer options panel and click Create New Fill Or Adjustment Layer. A ‘Levels 1’ adjustment will be added above the field image. Grade the Midtone slider to the right and the Highlights Output Levels to the left, as shown.

12 The field image is now darker, but without too much contrast. Add another Levels Adjustment above the UFO image, since we also want to make the saucer darker too. To ensure this adjustment only affects the saucer, click on the Clip To Layer button. ‘Levels 2’ is now clipped to the ‘ufo’ layer.



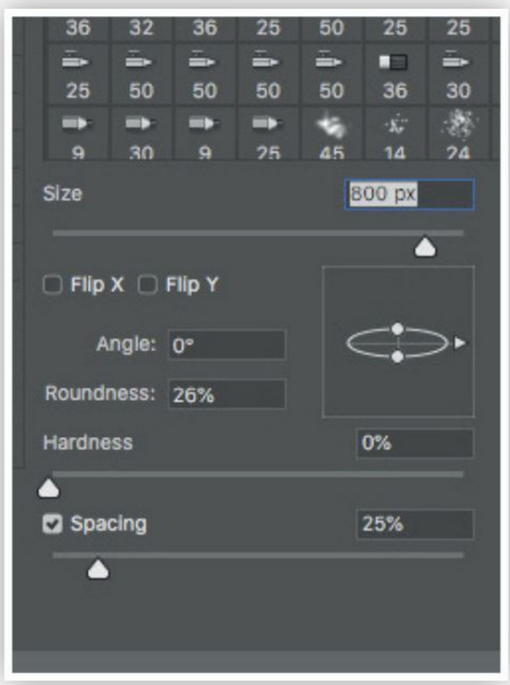


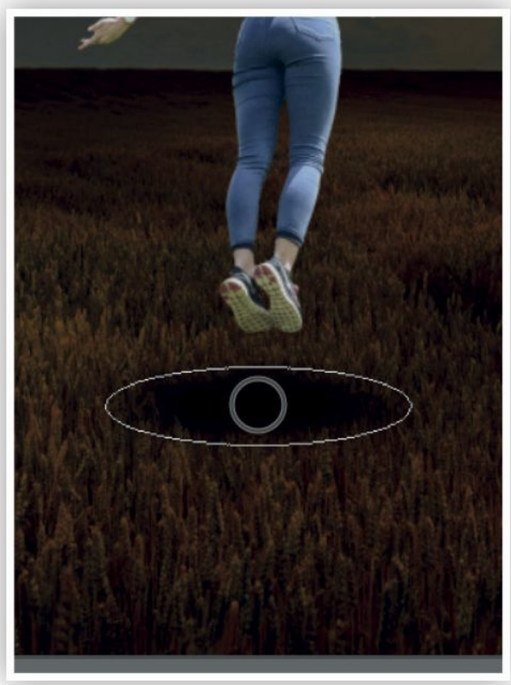


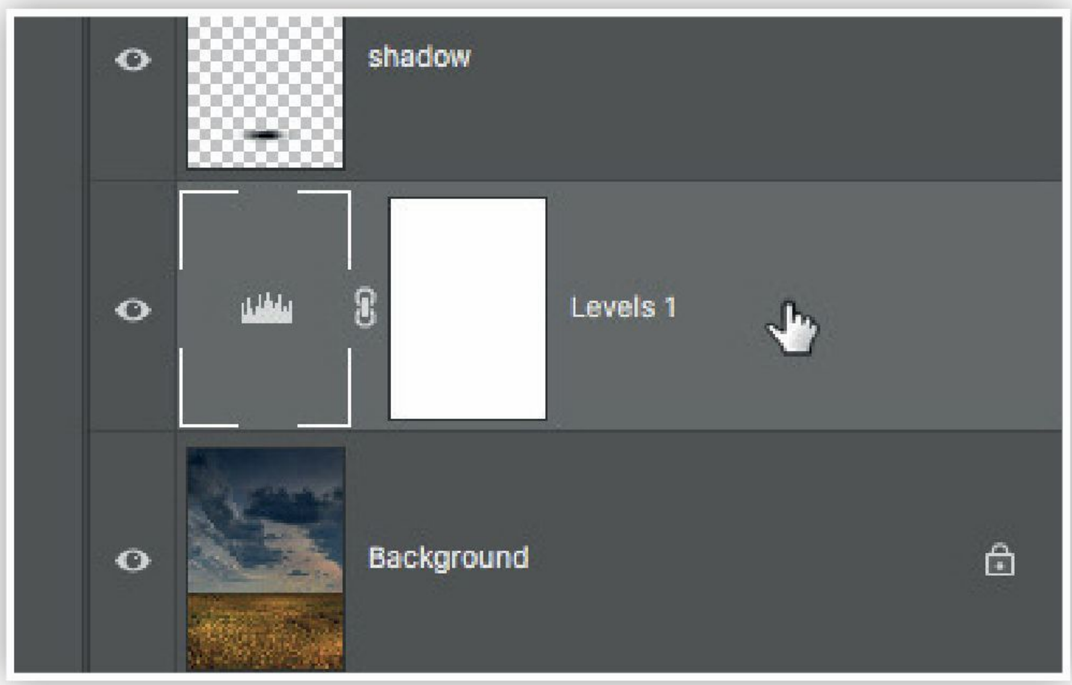


13 Drag the ‘Levels 2’ Midtone slider to the extreme right, to make the saucer really dark. Then, on its layer mask, use a large soft black brush to reveal areas of original brightness on the bottom of the craft. Later we’ll make this even brighter, but this is a good start.

14 Click on the Create A New Layer button to create a layer called ‘shadow’ and then drag it so it sits between the ‘figure’ layer and the ‘Levels 1’ adjustment layer above the field image. On this layer, we will place a shadow beneath the girl.







15 Select the Brush Tool (B) and set the foreground colour to black, if it isn’t already. Click the Brush Settings button to set up an 800 pixel brush size and make its Roundness about 26% to flatten it out into a shallow oval shape, which we can use on the ‘shadow’ layer.

16 Now we need to start thinking about getting light back into the image. Click the ‘Levels 1’ layer to make it active. We could use that adjustment, but we want to make a new Levels adjustment above it to keep things easy and clear in the layer stack.

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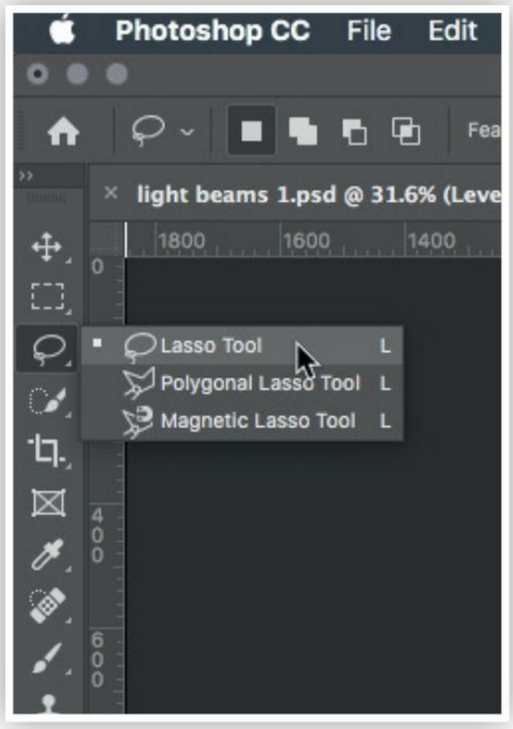
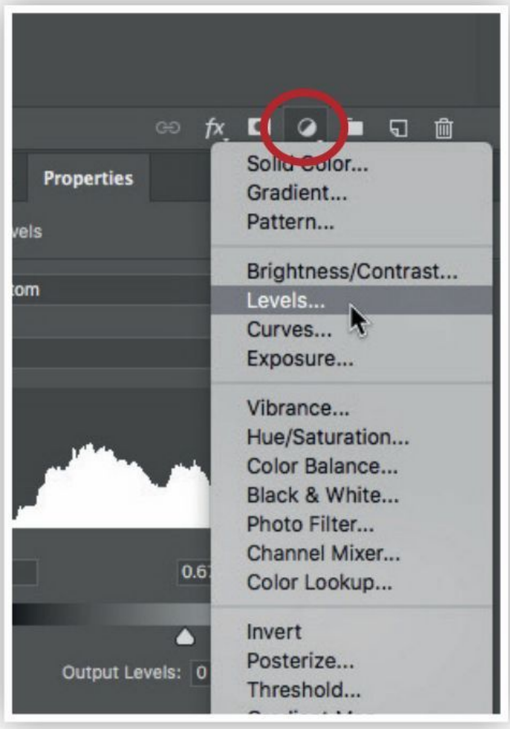
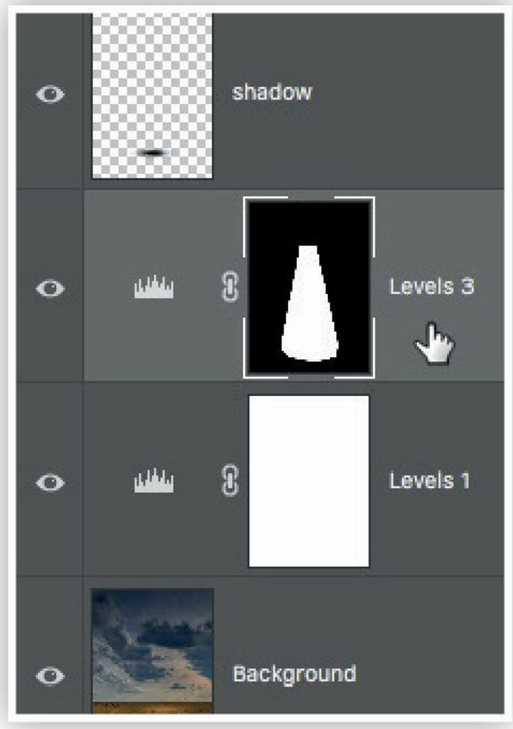
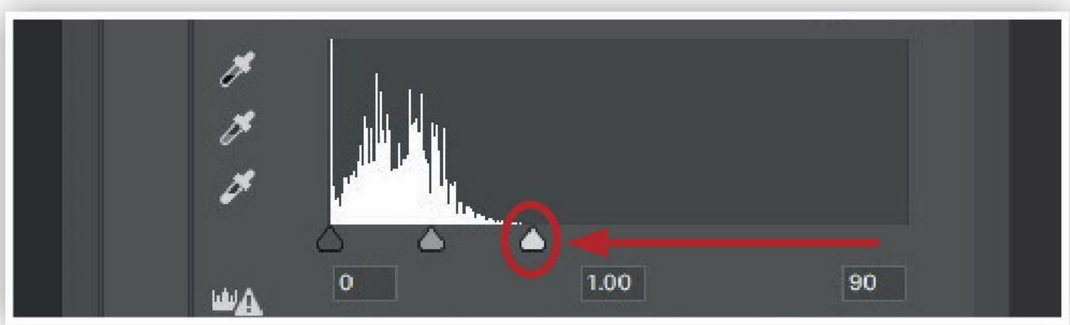


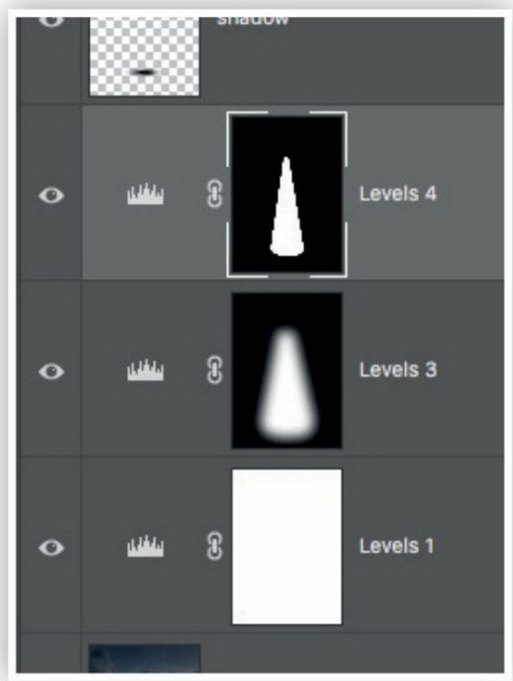




17 Go to the toolbar and choose the Polygonal Lasso Tool (L) then use this to draw a cone-shaped selection that emanates from the bottom of the saucer and expands downwards onto the ground beneath the floating girl. It doesn't have to be perfect, as you will soon see.

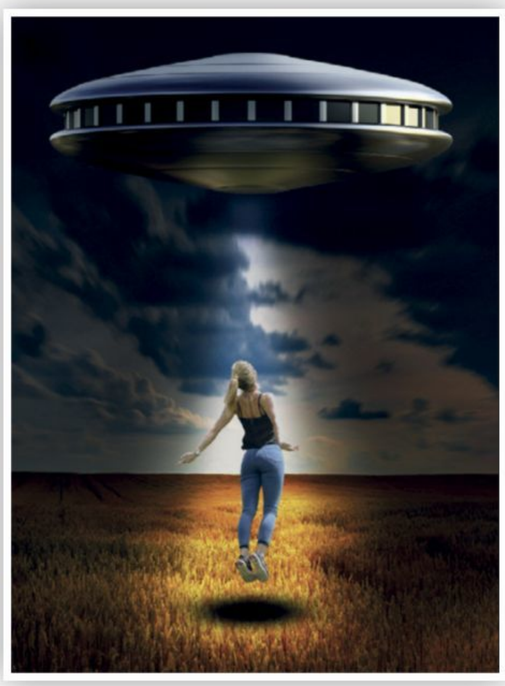
18 With the cone-shaped selection active, click the Create New Fill Or Adjustment Layer button and choose Levels from the menu. A new 'Levels 3' adjustment layer will be created and a mask, in the shape of the cone you drew, will be applied at the same time.

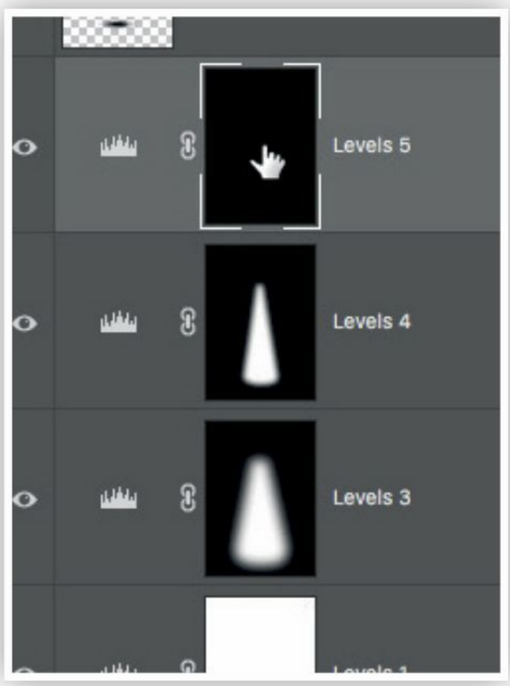




19 Click the layer mask thumbnail and, under its Properties, set a Feather value of about 130 pixels to soften the cone. Then click the 'Levels 3' thumbnail and drag the Highlight slider across to the far left to boost the brightness inside the cone. Don't overdo this bit.

20 Use the Polygonal Lasso Tool and draw a new cone that sits inside the first, but is much narrower, as if it were a more focused beam of light. Now you can add a 'Levels 4' adjustment and push the highlight slider across to the left again to boost the brightness even more.





21 Click the 'Levels 4' layer mask thumbnail and, under its Properties, make the Feather value about 65 pixels. This creates a nice searchlight-looking beam. Now we need to add another Levels Adjustment to create a feeling of atmosphere and energy.

22 Add a 'Levels 5' adjustment above the other two you've been working on. With the layer mask thumbnail active, press Cmd + I to invert the colour from white to black. Then use the Polygonal Lasso Tool to draw a new cone-shaped selection that is wider than the other two.

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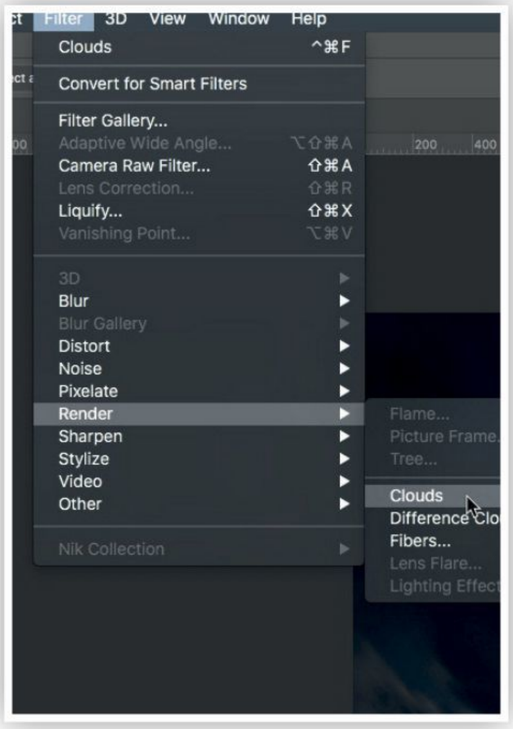
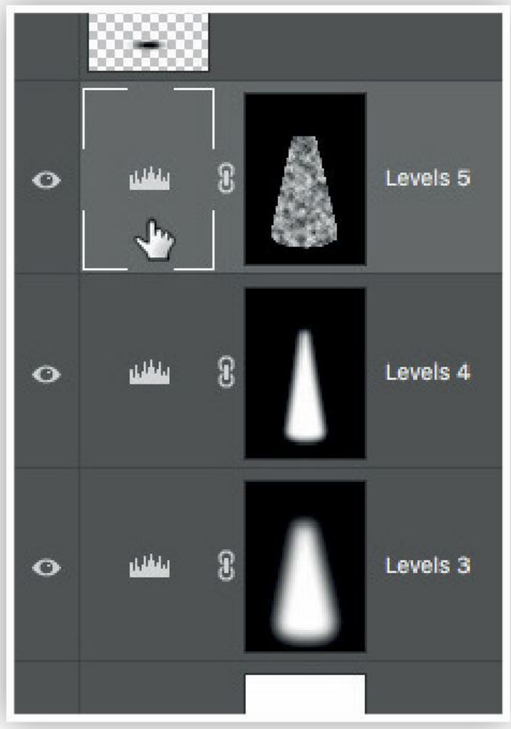
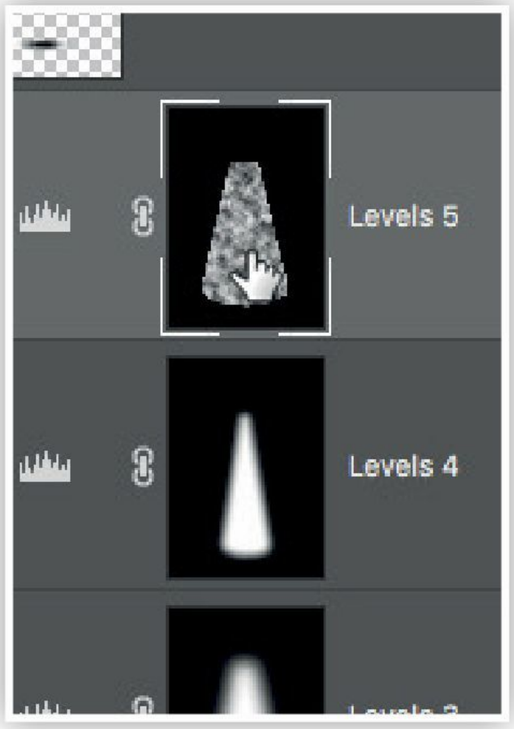
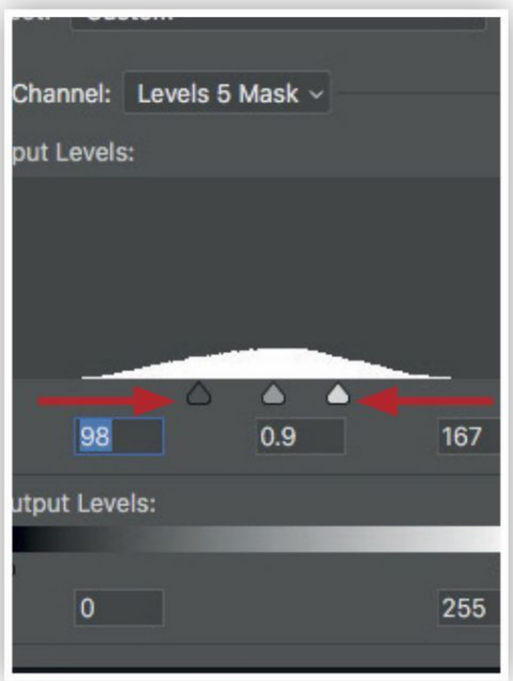


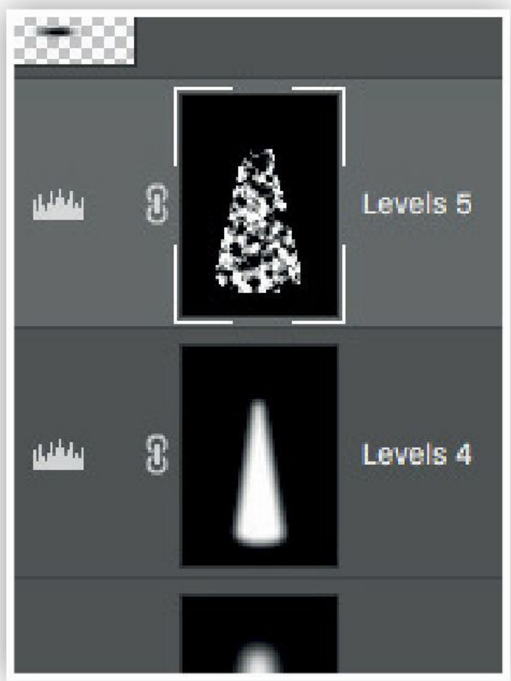




23 With the selection active, go to Filter > Render > Clouds. This fills the cone-shaped selection with a mottled black and white pattern that resembles clouds. Press Cmd + D to clear the selection and then click on the adjustment layer thumbnail to make that active instead.

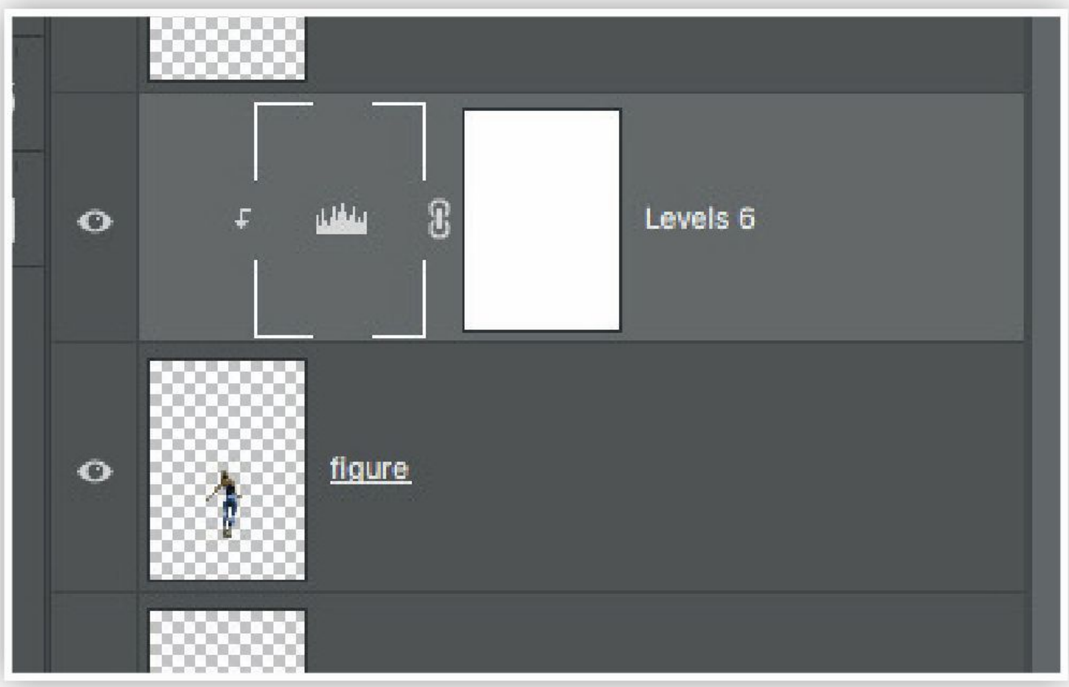
24 In the Levels Properties panel, move the Highlight slider across to the left just under half way. The outer cone should get much brighter, but the cloud patterns may not be strong enough yet. That is easily fixed; click on the 'Level 5' layer mask thumbnail to make it active.

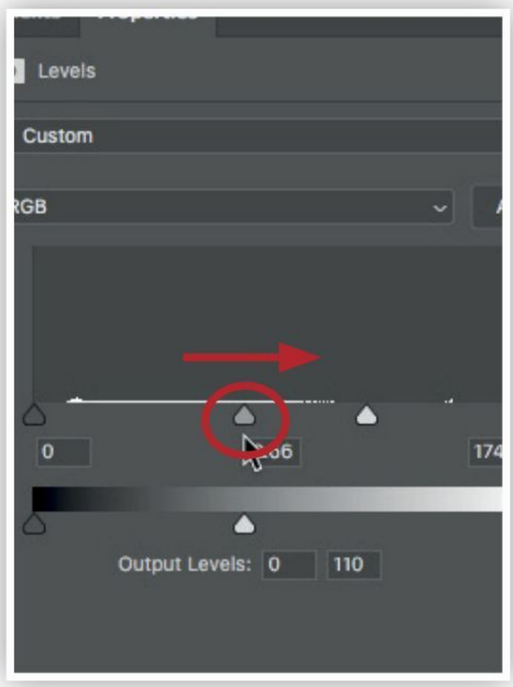


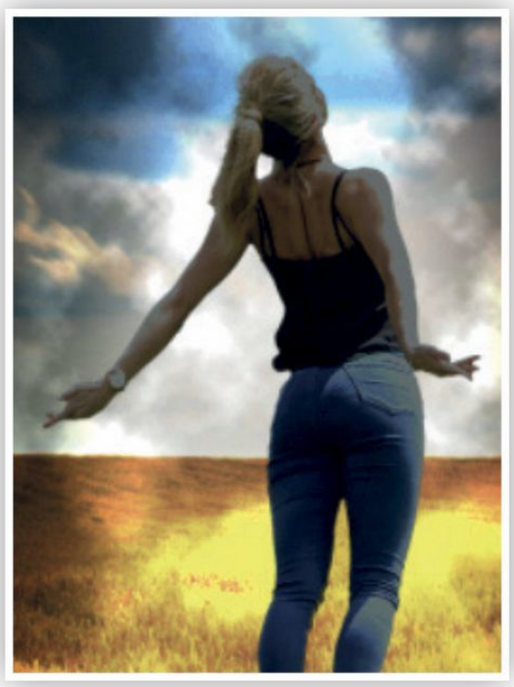


25 Press Cmd + L to bring up the Levels panel. If you drag the Shadow and Highlight sliders towards the middle of the histogram, you will increase the contrast of the clouds on the mask. You should start to see a mottling texture appear. Keep the layer mask active.

26 The outer edge of the cone is too sharp at the moment. Grab a large soft black brush and start to brush along the sharp edges of the mask. The sharp edge will start to disappear and you should be left with what looks like a cloud of crackling energy.







27 Now we need to tweak the image of the girl and make her brighter at the top and darker below, to suit the light that is shining on her from above. Create a new 'Levels 6' adjustment layer above the 'figure' layer and click the Clip To Layer icon in the layer's Properties panel.

28 This ensures that any adjustments will only affect the 'figure' layer below. With the Layer thumbnail active, move the Midtone slider to the right and substantially darken the figure. Next, pick a large soft black brush and make the layer mask active.

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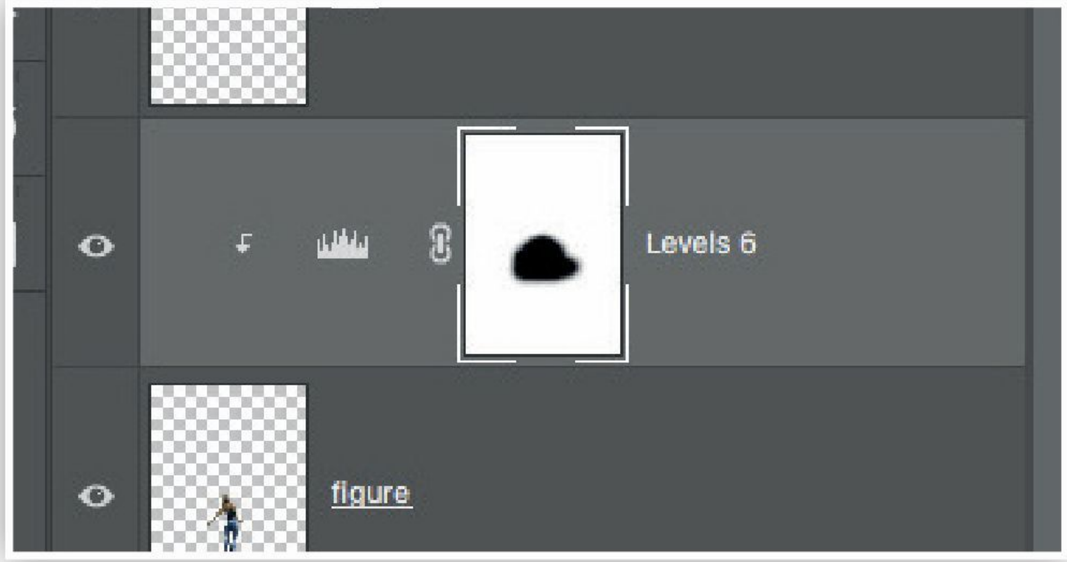
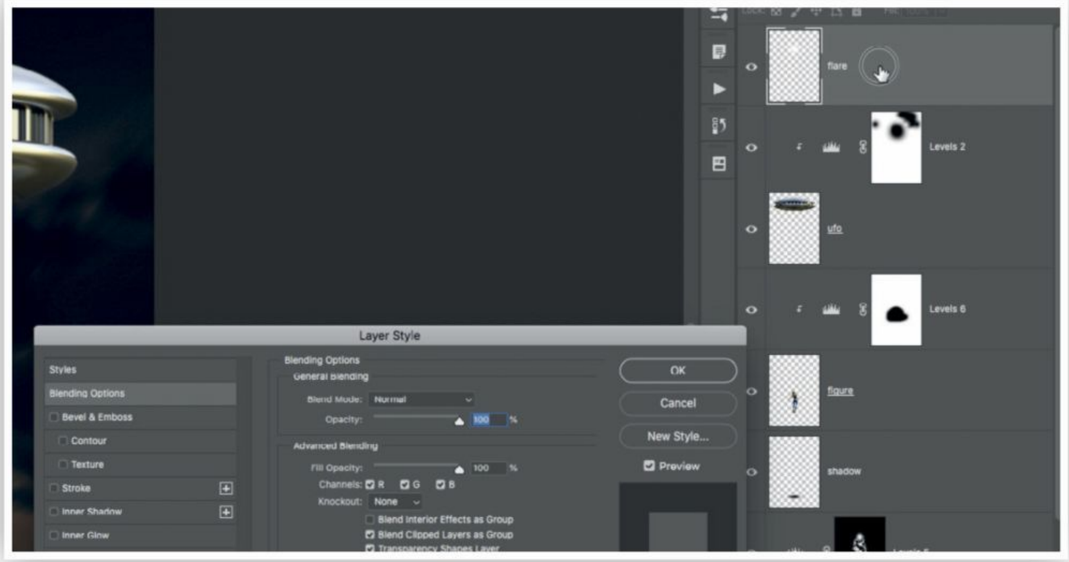
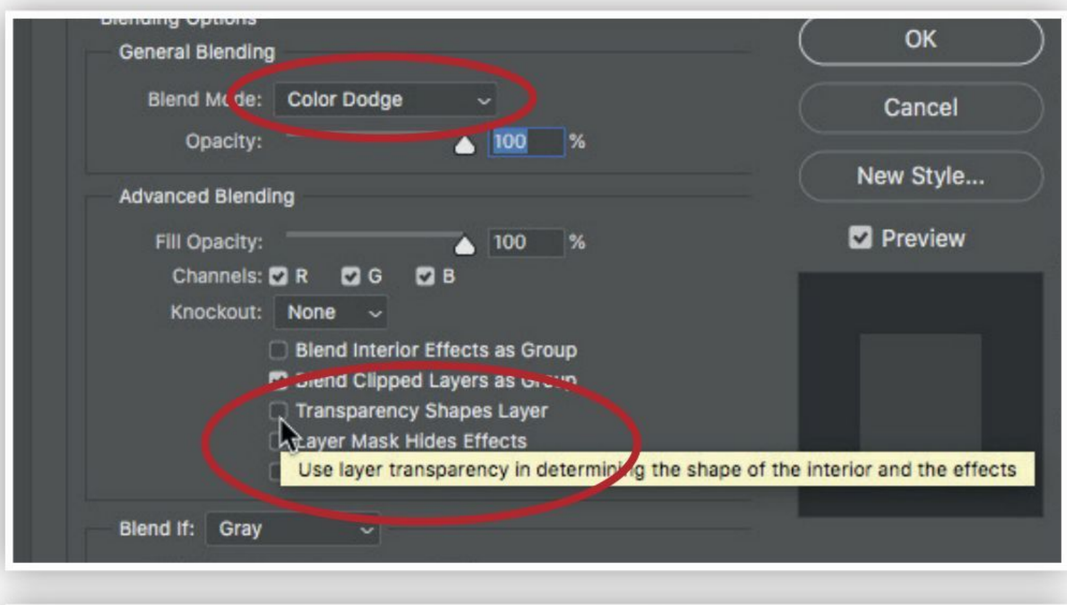
LIGHT BEAM EFFECTS

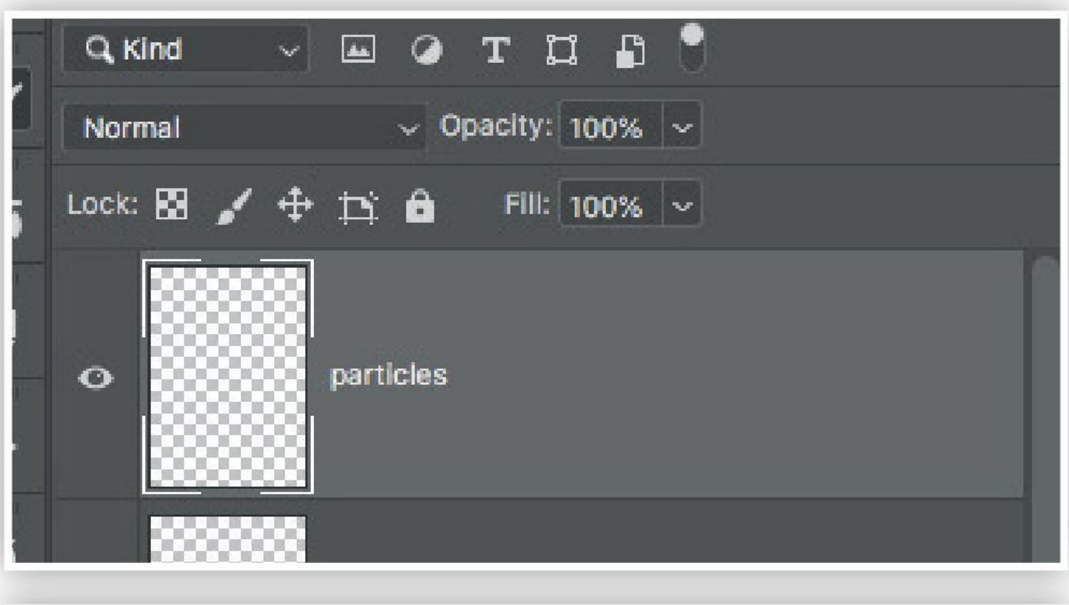


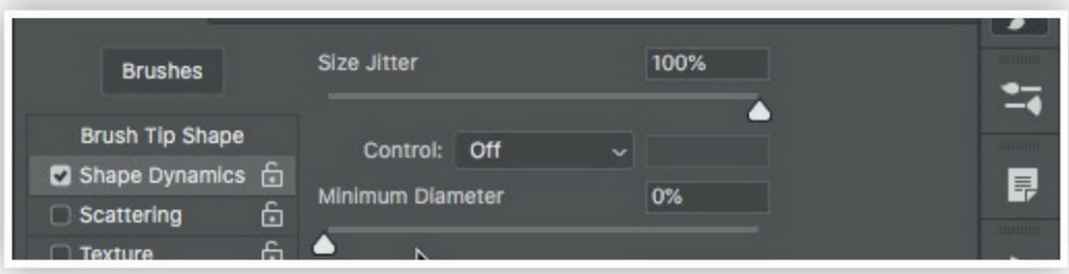


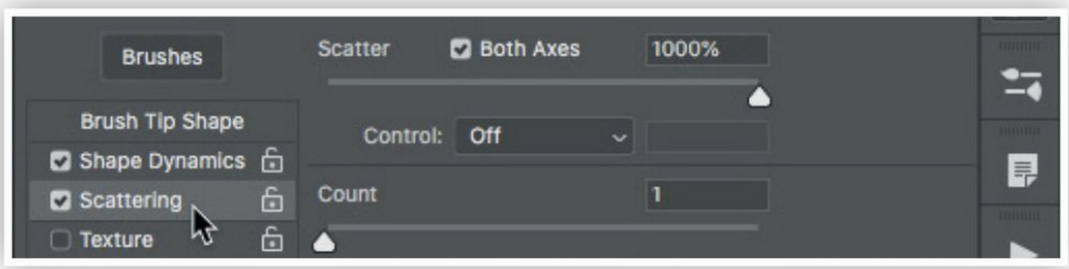
29 On the mask, use the black brush to paint the areas of the girl's head and shoulders that you want to return to original brightness, whilst, because of the light above her head, leaving her lower body looking as if it is in shadow.

30 Now create a new layer, make sure it is at the top of the layer stack, and name it 'flare'. Use a soft white brush to dab a large blob of white on the bottom of the saucer to act as a light source. Now double-click the layer to bring up the Layer Style panel.









31 Under Advanced Blending, uncheck the Transparency Shapes Layer button, then, in the General Blending panel above, change the Blend Mode to Color Dodge. The soft white brush blob you painted should now look a lot stronger against the saucer and background.

32 Create a new layer called 'particles' that sits at the very top of the layer stack. Choose a small, soft white brush. Go to your Brush Settings and click Shape Dynamics. Make Size Jitter 100%. Next, click on Scattering, make Scatter 1000%, and check the Both Axes button.

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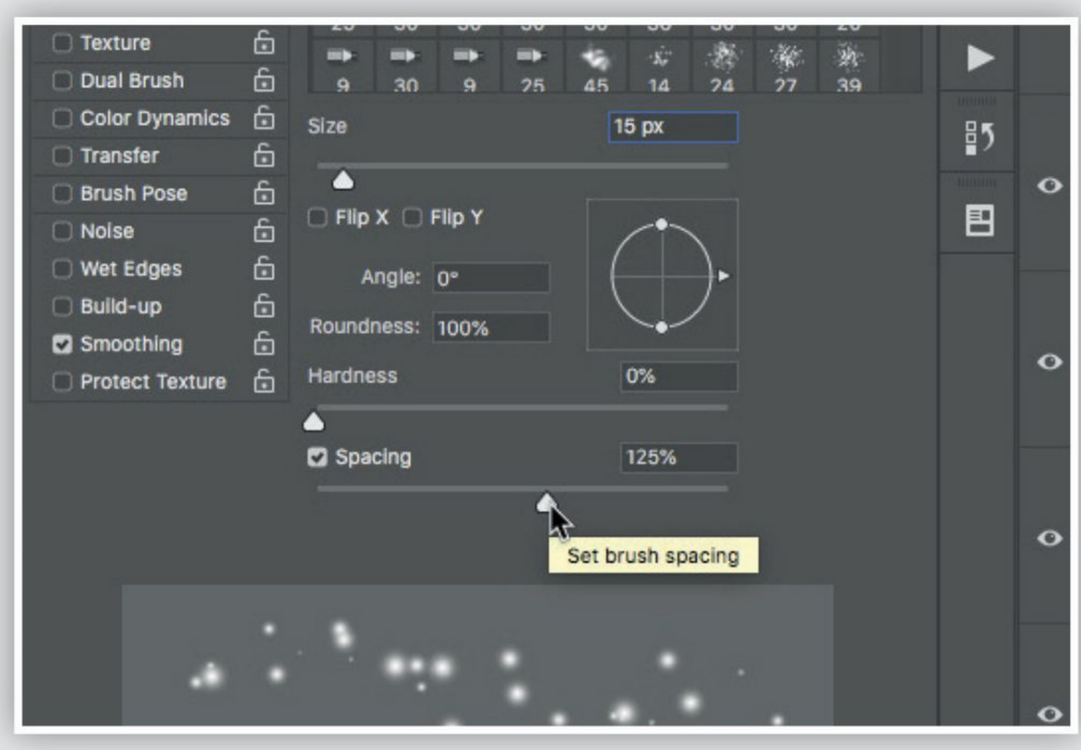

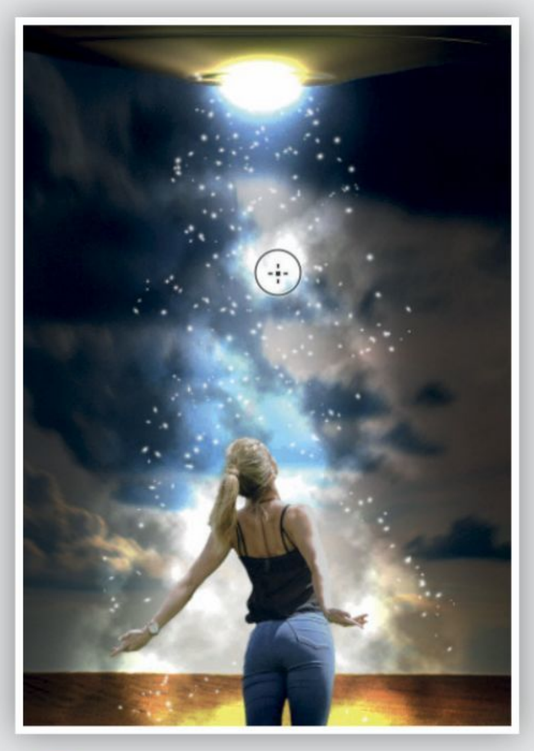

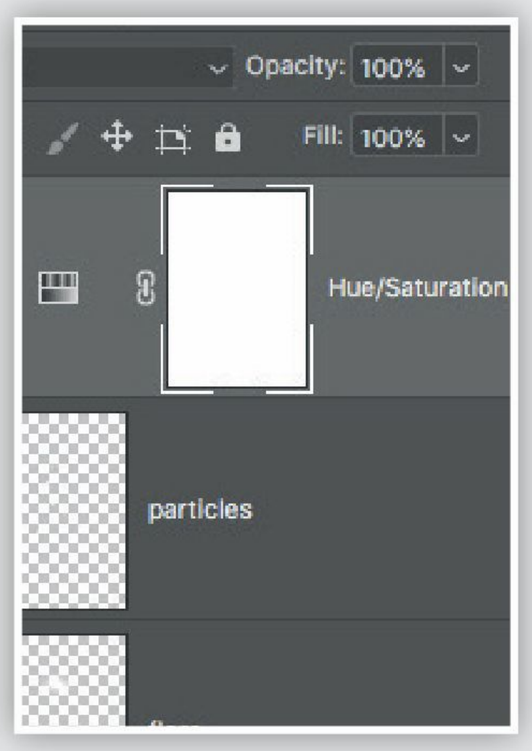

33 Click the Brush Tip Shape button and set the brush size to about 15-25 pixels, then check the Spacing button and set it to about 125%. Now you can begin to brush on the 'particles' layer, from the bottom of the saucer down the beam of light, to create a scattering of particles.

34 If you aren't happy with the way the particles scatter, you can always press Cmd + Z to back up and try it again. Finally, add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, at the top of the stack, and boost the saturation for the finishing touch to the alien abduction scene.

Light up your Photoshop art

Another bright idea for lighting effects revealed.

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Pixel Explosion

This tutorial content is available for download

Create an image that explodes off the screen in a thousand pieces

The pixel explosion effect, or pixel dispersion effect as it is sometimes known, is a great little technique that can turn an image into a shattered explosion of shards. The pieces look like they are tumbling into the air and your subject appears to be eroding away as the pieces fly off. For anyone with a good grasp of Photoshop basics this is, at its heart, a relatively straightforward effect to achieve. It helps to have a photograph of a subject that can be easily removed from their background. If they have a well-defined outline and a simple background, then Photoshop has the tools you need to cut them out, put them on their own layer and fill in the background. With a couple of layers, some masking and brushwork, you can take your base image and turn it into a classic pixel explosion image. Take a look and see how you can start creating your own right now.

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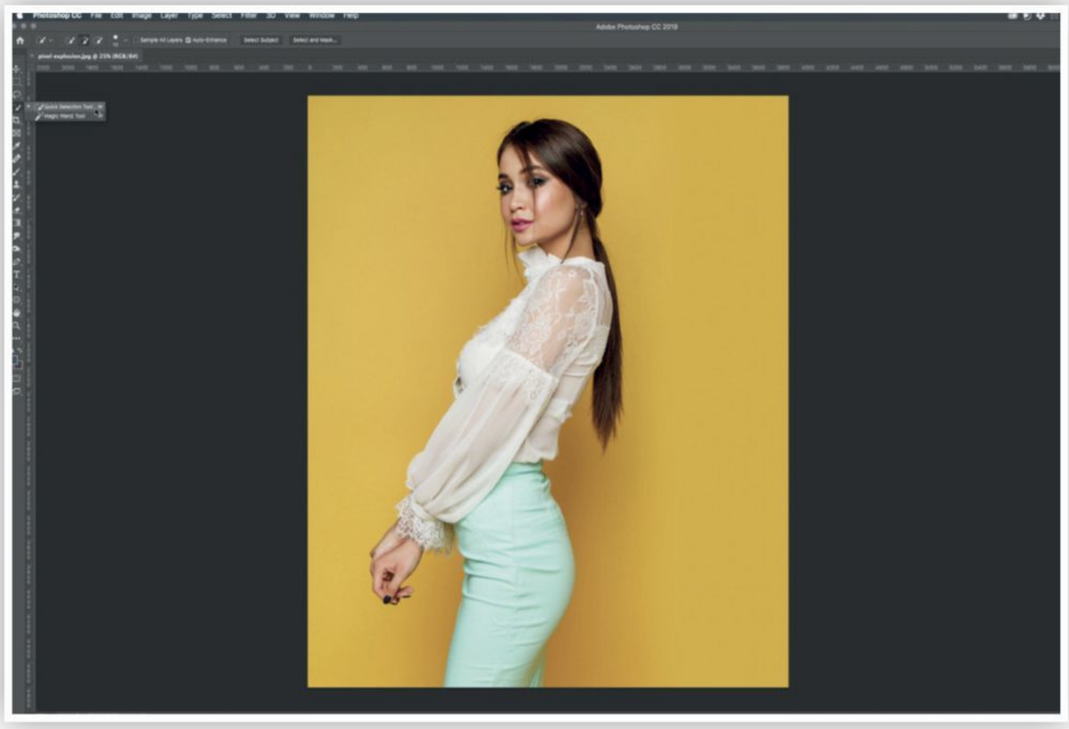
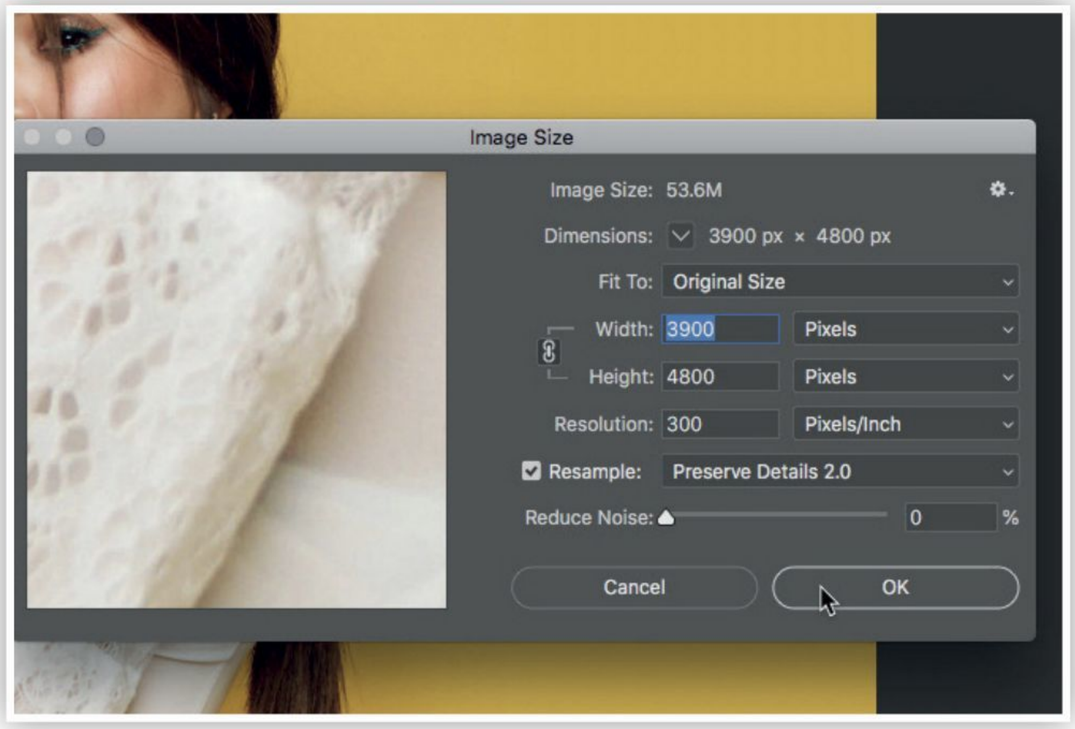
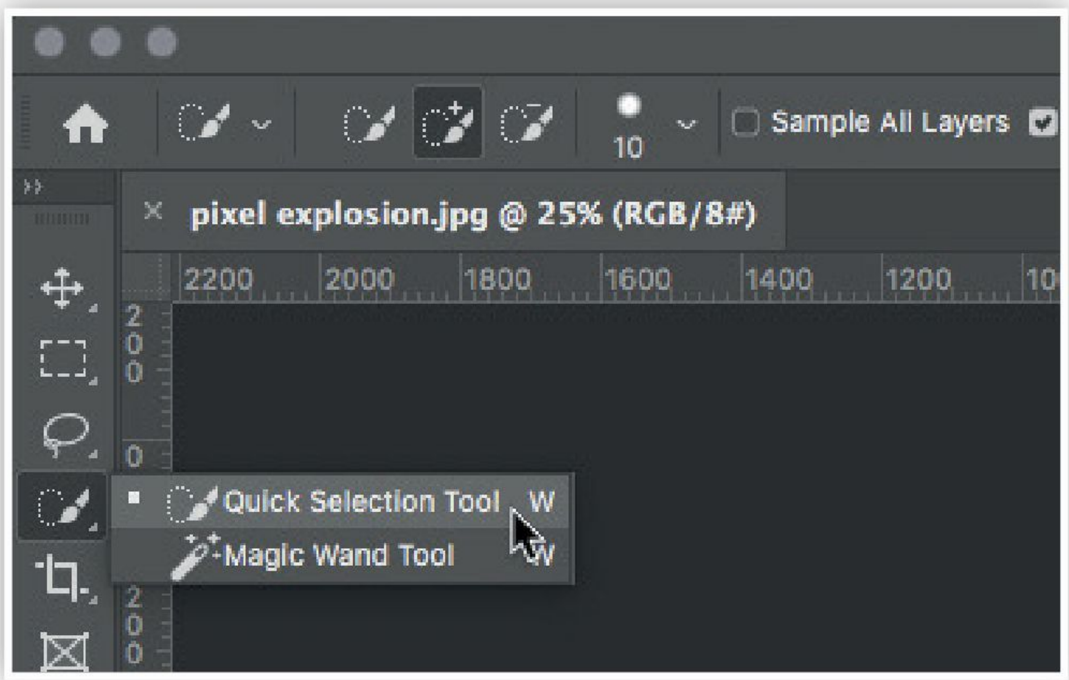


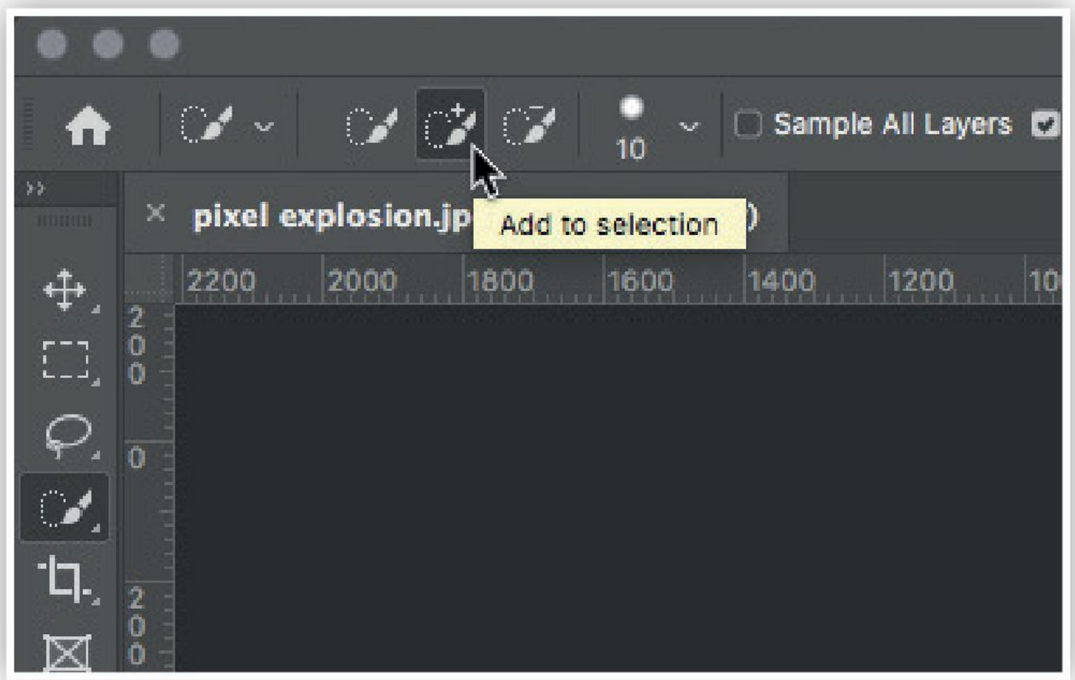
01 As we mentioned at the outset, any photo of a subject against a simple background that creates a clean outline, can be used for this effect. We have a bright image of a model against a yellow background. As you can see, her outline is well defined so this is an obvious advantage.



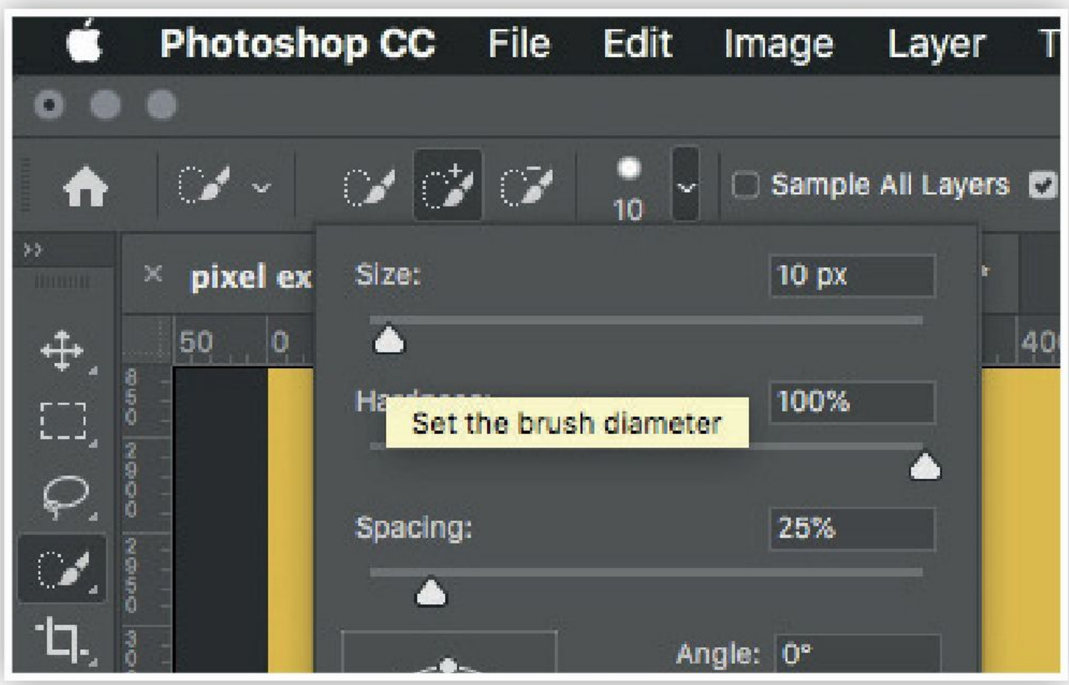
02 This particular example is 3900 pixels wide by 4800 pixels high. Certain settings, such as brush sizes, are used based on this image size. If you are using a photo that is of a different size, then be aware that you will need to modify your settings to take that into account.



03 The process begins by separating the subject from the background. Luckily, Photoshop has just the right tools for the job in the form of a method for making selections. Go to the toolbar on the far left of the workspace and choose the Quick Selection Tool (W).



04 Before you start making any selections, go to the top options menu and click on the Add To Selection button. This is just a personal preference and sets up the tool to enable you to make additional selections all the time unless you specify otherwise.



05 The Quick Selection Tool brush size can be altered by pressing the left and right bracket keys on your keyboard [or]. The size of the brush will depend on the area of image you are trying to select. We began selecting the subject with a 10 pixel brush.

06 Simply click on an area of your subject and slowly begin to drag the brush around within their outline. If you do it a little at a time, you will see each selection will be enhanced to better match the outline. Keep adding to the selection until the entire subject is selected.

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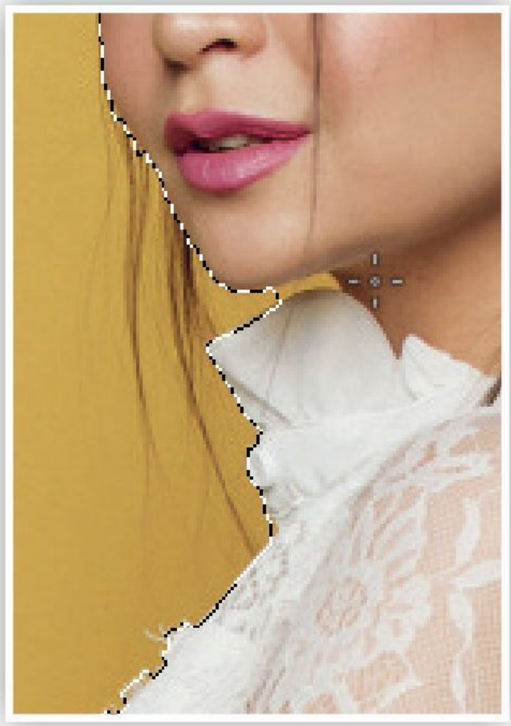
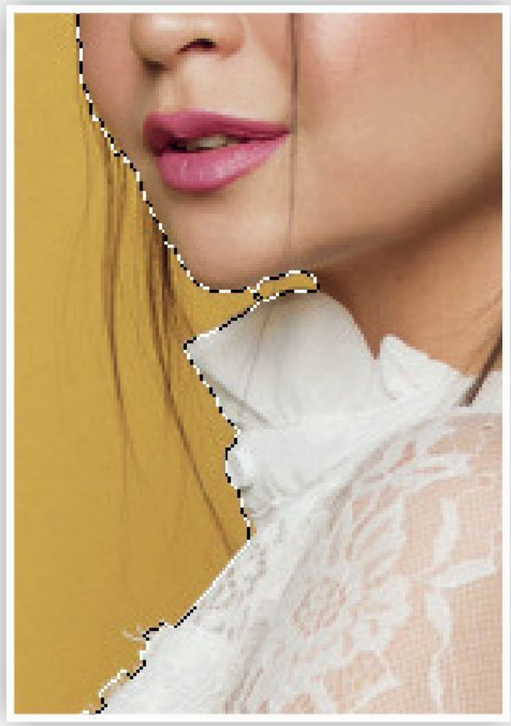
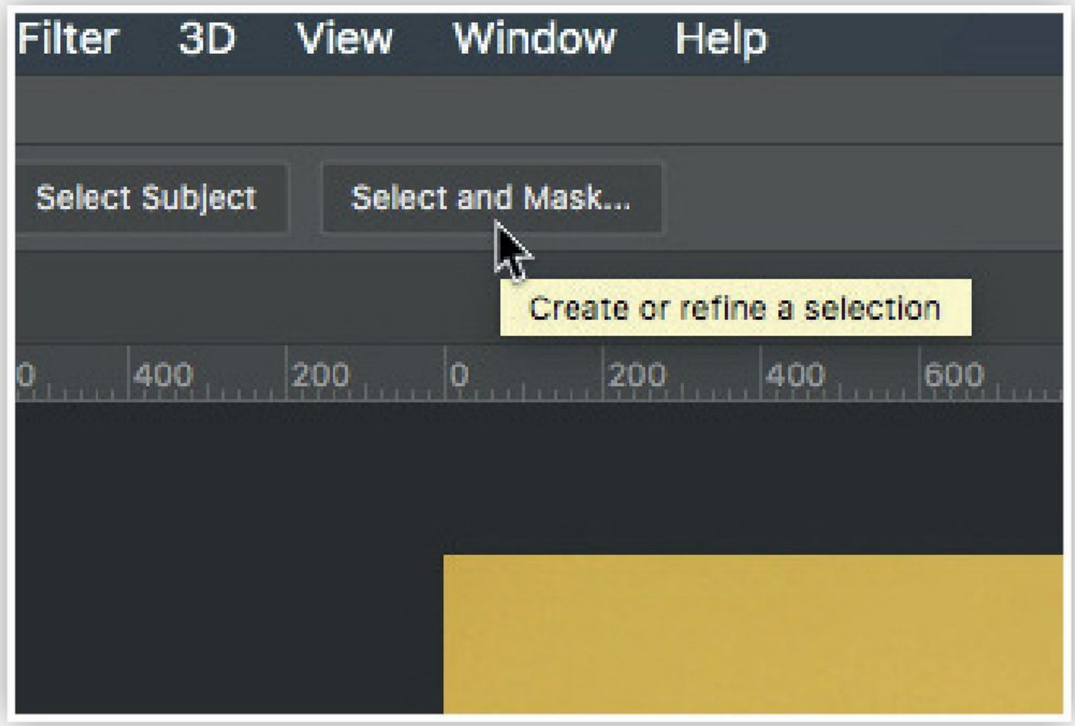
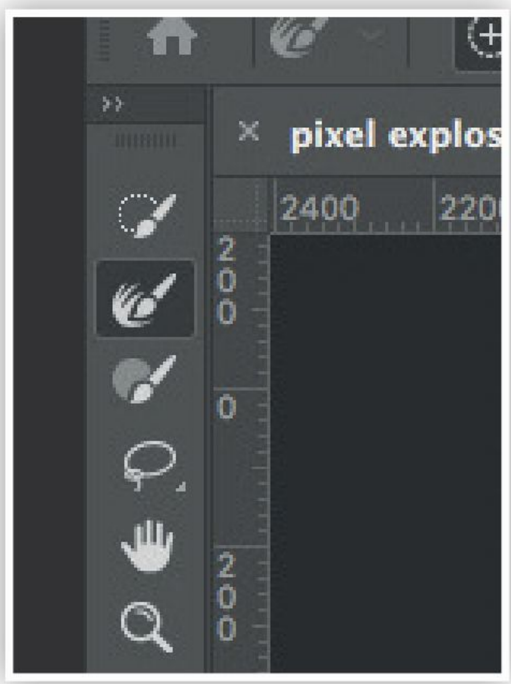


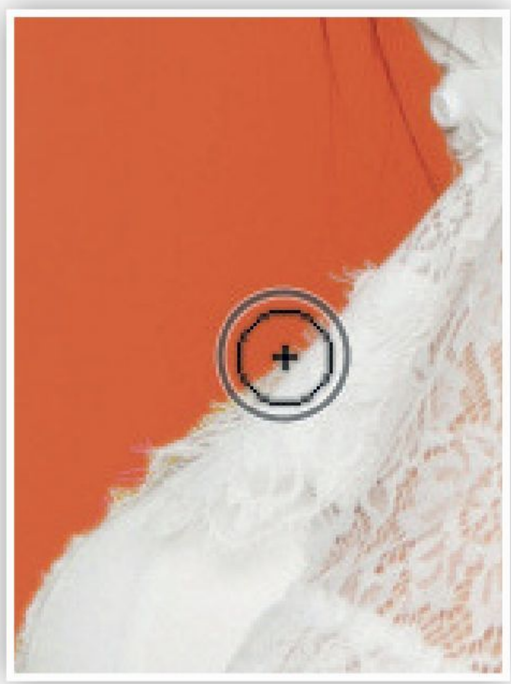


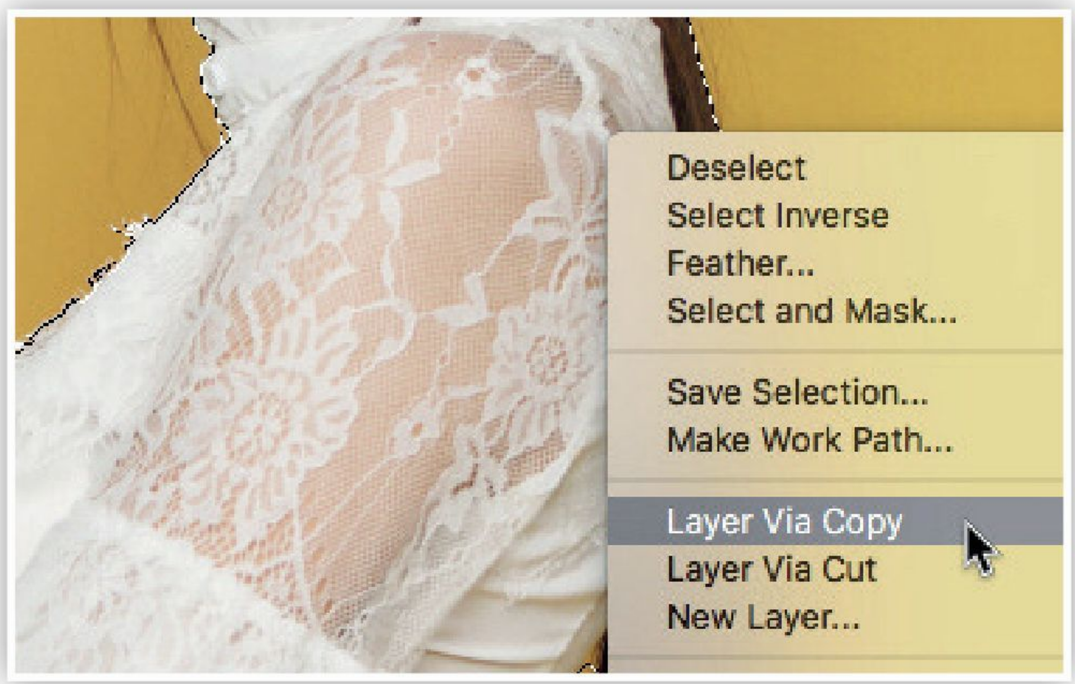


07 The selection needs to be reasonably accurate. In this example, a small area under the chin was not selected. Using a very small sized brush, we could press the Alt key, change the selection method to Subtract From Selection, and get a better selection in that area.

08 With the figure completely selected, you also have the option to refine that selection even further. Keep the selection active and go to Select And Mask in the top menu options panel. Older versions of Photoshop used to call this Refine Edge but it has the same function.

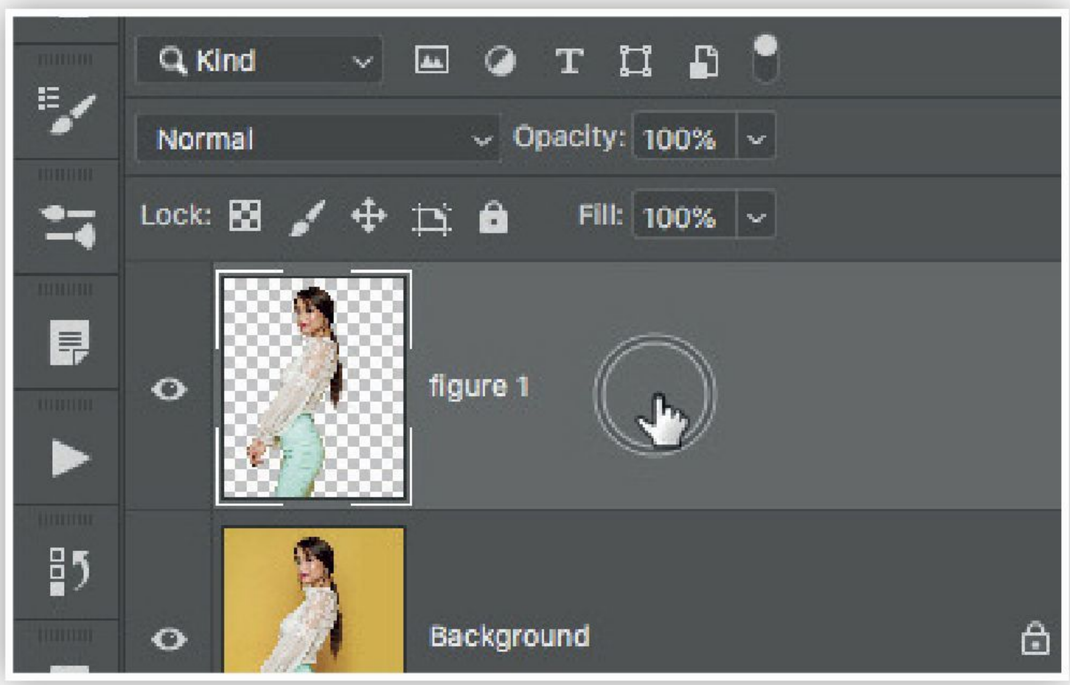


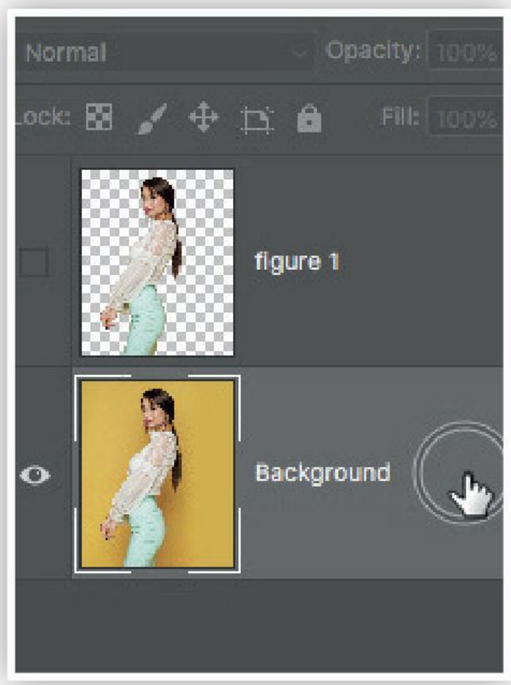


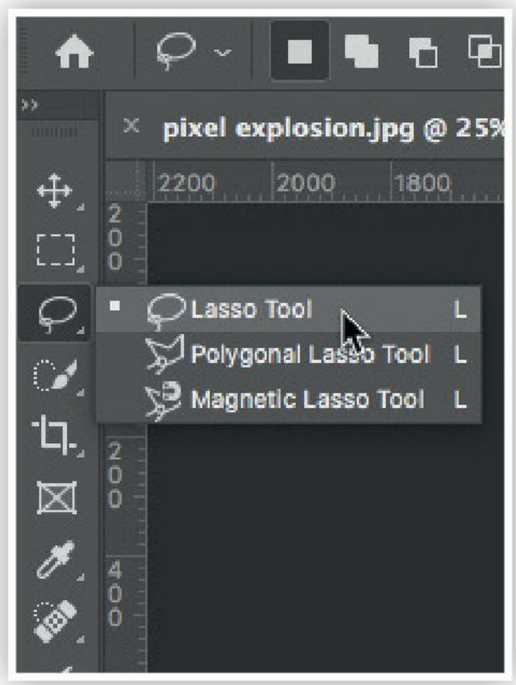


09 When the Select And Mask window opens, make sure the Refine Edge Brush Tool (R) is active. With a brush of about 100 pixels, you can begin to drag the refinement brush over the outline of the subject. Each brush stroke will try to improve the quality and accuracy of the selection.

10 Once you are happy with the quality of the selection, press the OK button and return to your main document again. Now, the selection will be much more accurate. If you right-click within the selection, you can now choose Layer Via Copy.







11 This will copy everything within the selection, create a new layer, and place it there to give you the subject on a transparent layer. You can name this new layer ‘figure 1’. Now we will need to make the background solid yellow with no subject on it.

12 Make the ‘figure 1’ layer invisible for the moment and click on the ‘Background’ layer thumbnail to make it active. Go to the toolbar and choose the Lasso Tool (L). We are going to use this to make a rough selection around the outside of the subject.

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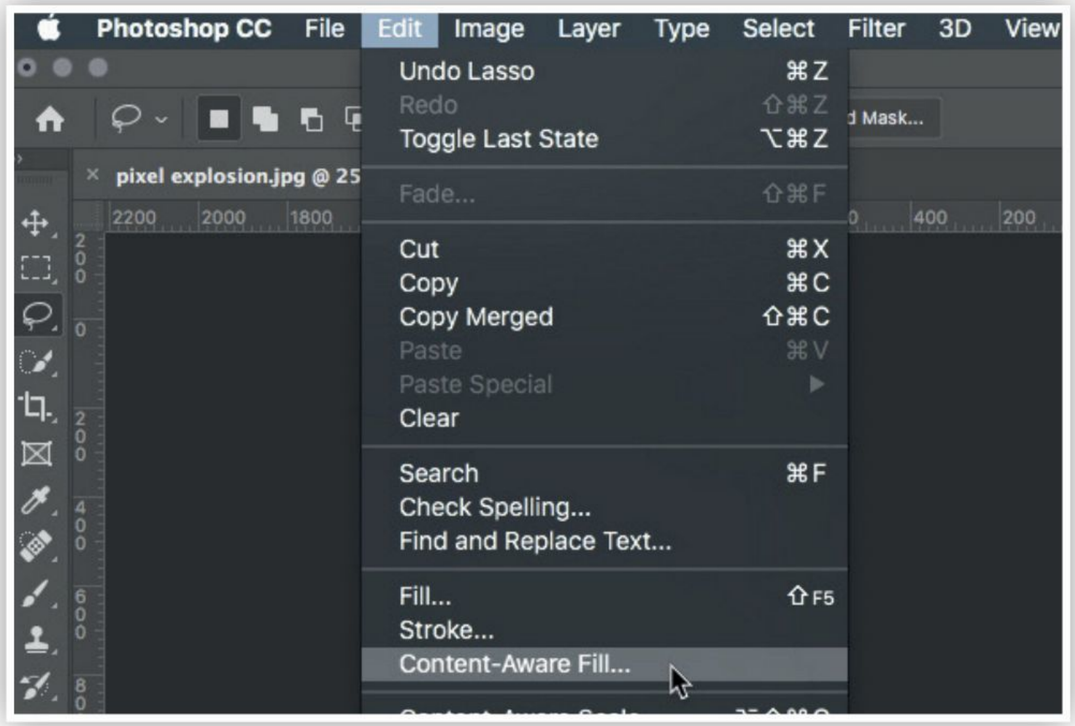
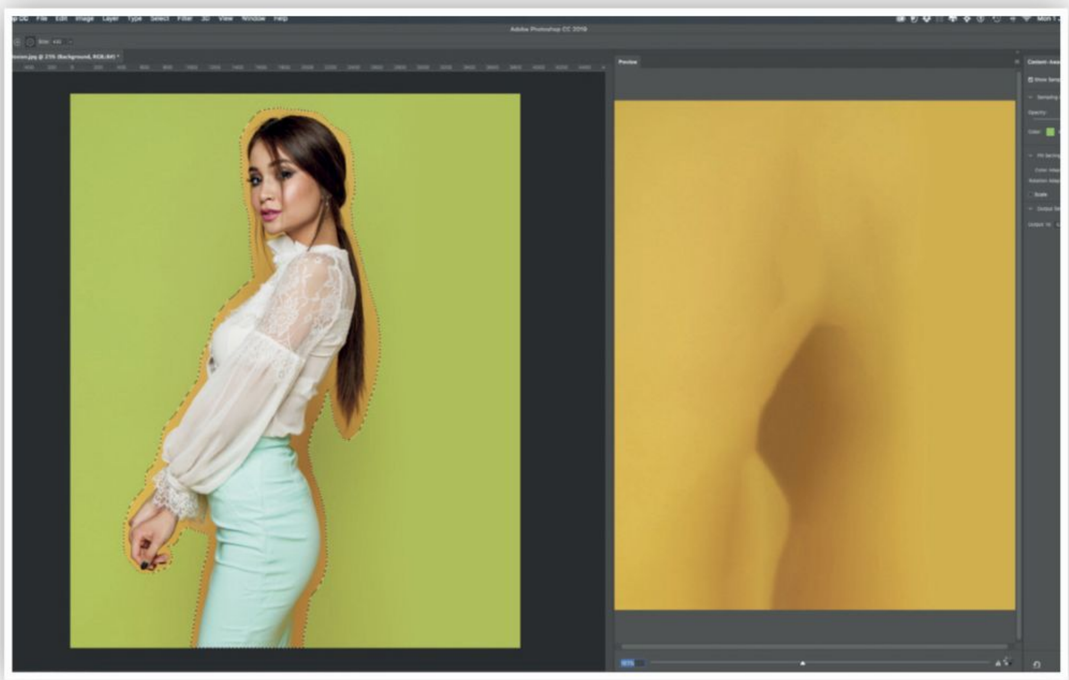
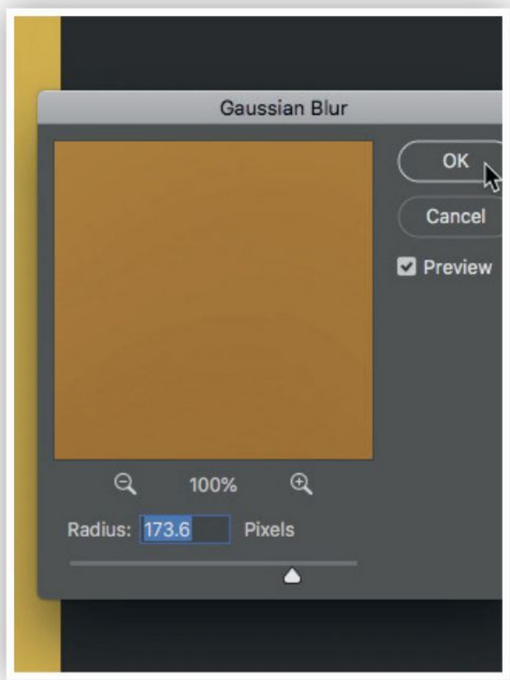
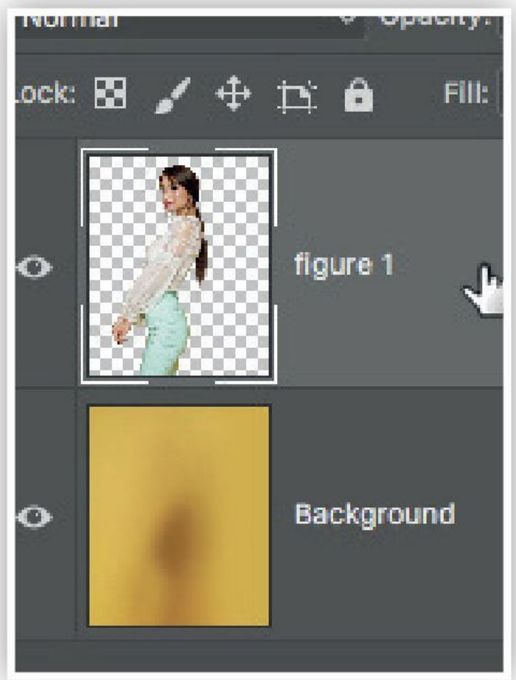
13 Use the Lasso Tool to draw a selection that encloses the subject. Keep a small distance away from their outline so you're only dragging your cursor over yellow background. Go all the way around them and join back up at your starting point to close the selection.



14 You will now have an active selection. Go to Edit > Content-Aware Fill; this is a newer implementation of the Content-Aware fill option in more recent versions of Photoshop CC. You can still access the original Content-Aware Fill option by using Edit > Fill (Shift + F5).

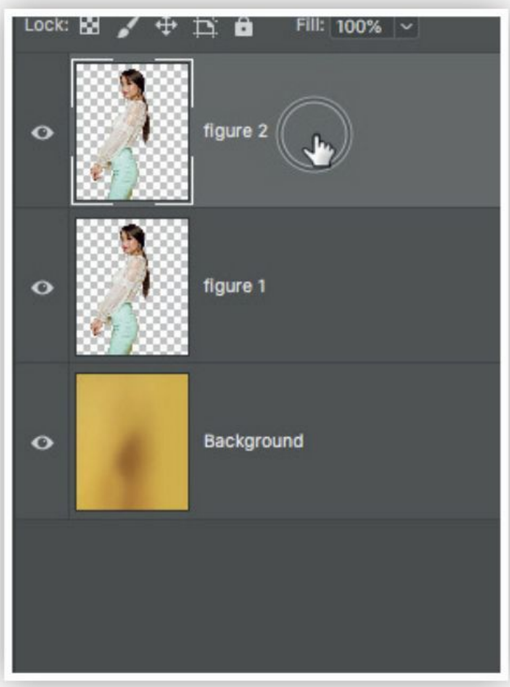


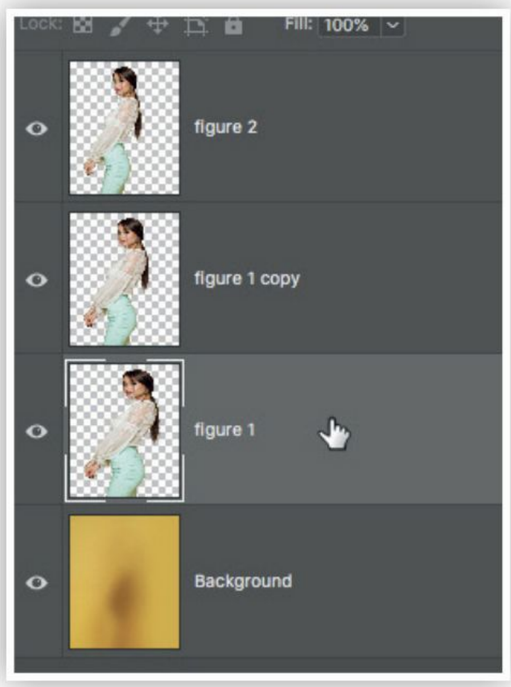


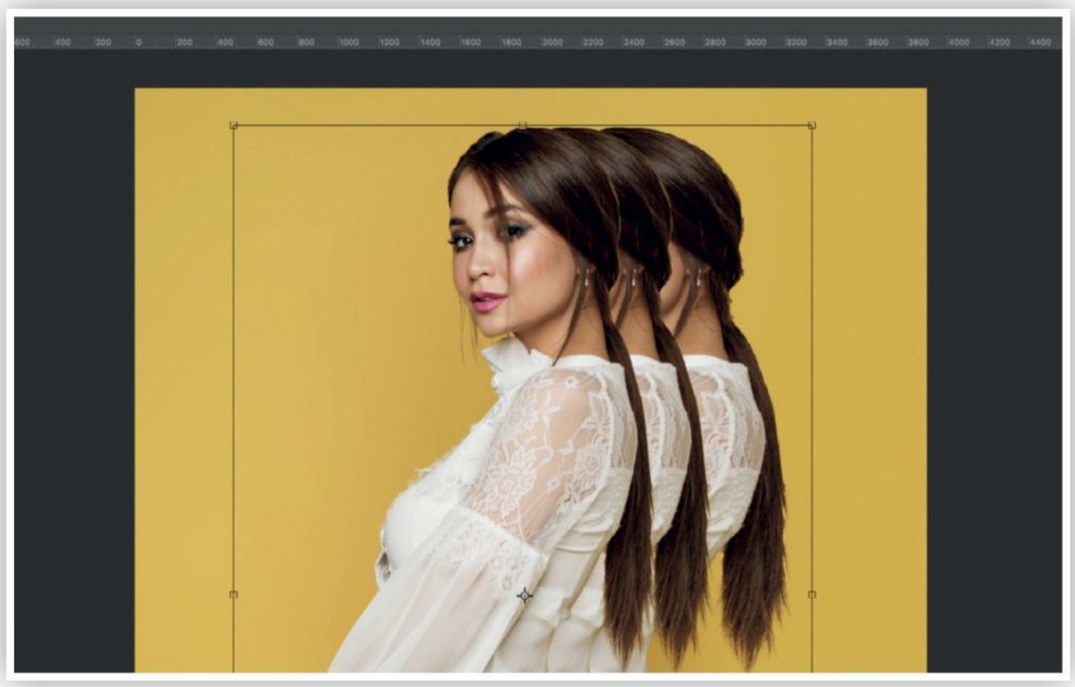


15 The new Content-Aware Fill offers more control, but the basic function is the same. It will analyse anything inside the selection and try to fill it with sampled material from outside the selection. It doesn't have to be exact, as you see in the example. Click OK to continue.

16 Go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur and add a significant amount of blur to even out the background. In this case, somewhere around 170 was enough. Now, if you make the 'figure 1' layer visible again, you should have something looking similar to the original, but split across two layers.







17 Make sure 'figure 1' is the active layer and then press Cmd + J to create a duplicate layer, named 'figure 2', above it. Then click back on 'figure 1' to make it active again. Press Cmd + J again to create a new layer, called 'figure 1 copy', which sits between 'figure 1' and figure 2'.

18 Click on 'figure 1' and press Cmd + T to activate the Free Transform Tool. Hold Shift and then drag the middle right control point to the right. The pixels on that layer will stretch out. Do the same on 'figure 1 copy' to about half that distance, until it looks like the example.

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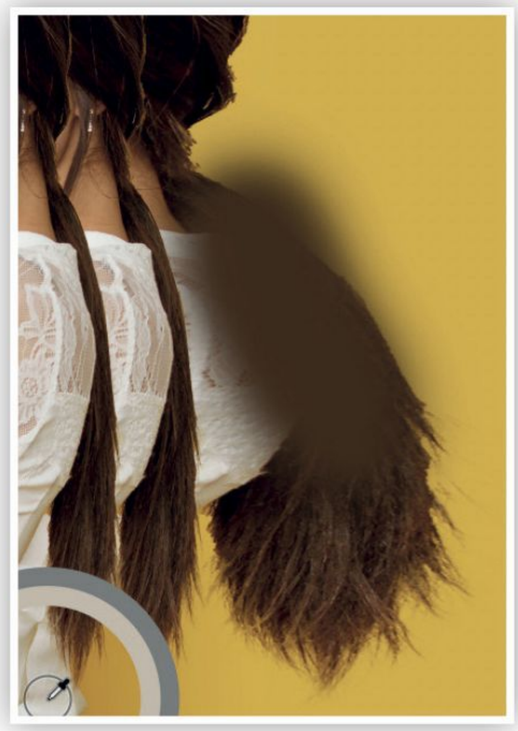
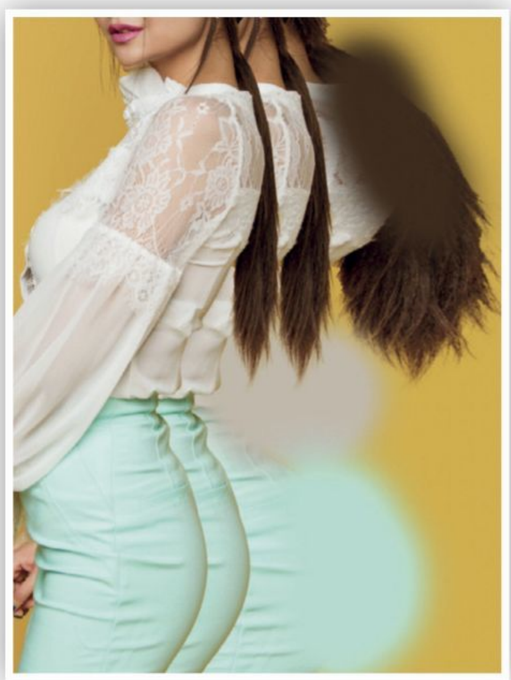
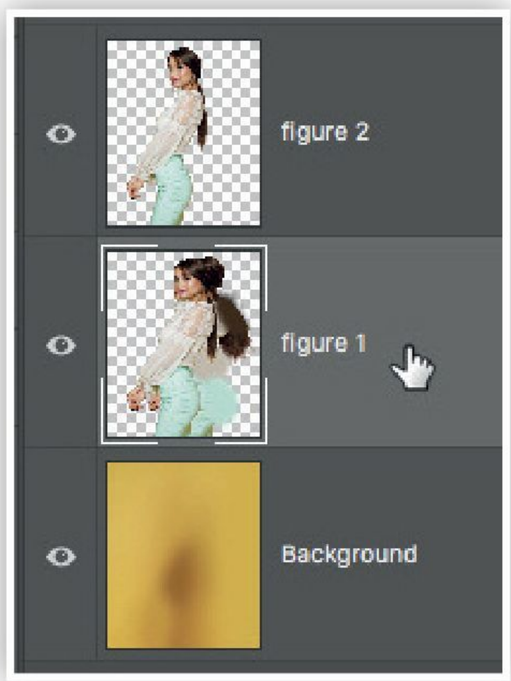
19 If you want, you can make ‘figure 1’ active again, right-click the image and choose Warp. Then stretch things out even further, in various directions, by dragging the control points until you have something you like. Don’t drag the pixels too far away from the untouched ‘figure 2’.

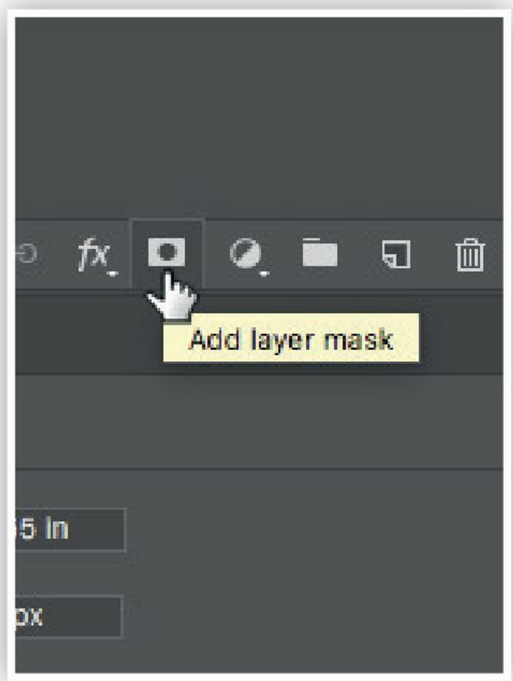
20 Part of the effect is having the right coloured pixels in the right places. If you go to the toolbar and choose the Eyedropper Tool (I) you can, for instance, sample her hair colour and brush it over areas on ‘figure 1’ where you would like to see more of that colour in the final effect.



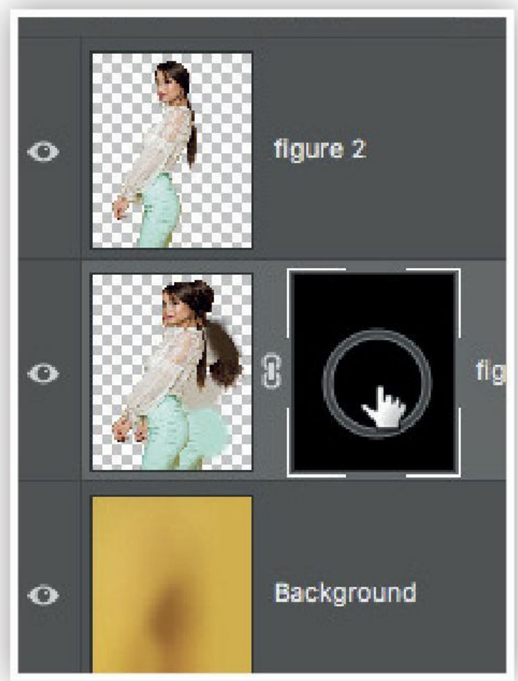


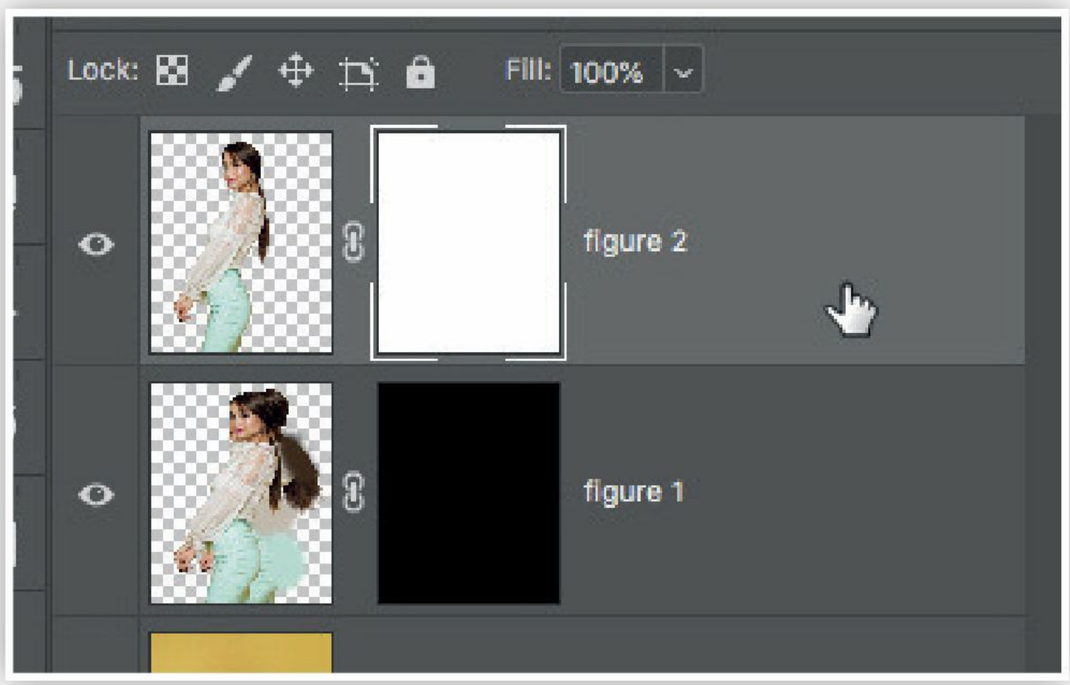


21 We’ve also done the same with areas of her shirt and trousers on the ‘figure 1’ layer and extended those colours away from her body. For the moment, you can press shift, highlight the ‘figure 1’ and figure 1 copy’ layers, and merge them by right-clicking and choosing Merge Layers.

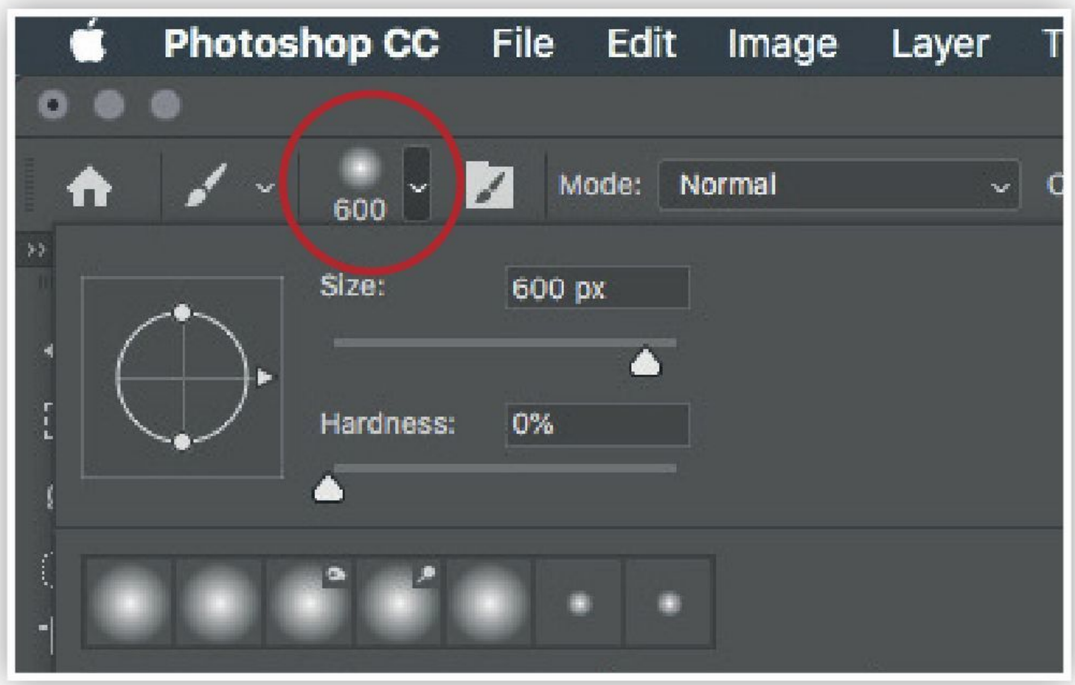


22 Keep the newly merged ‘figure 1’ layer active and select Add Layer Mask from the options at the bottom of the layers palette. Hold the Alt key as you do so. This creates a black mask on the ‘figure 1’ layer that will, for the moment, obscure it (more on that in a minute).





23 Click on ‘figure 2’ and add a mask to that layer as well. You don’t need to hold Alt in this case. A white mask will be added, so the layer is still visible. Next, we want to erode parts of the image on this layer and for this we’ll need the Brush Tool selected.



24 We want to use square brushes for our effect, but they may not be installed by default in new versions of Photoshop CC. With the Brush Tool active, go to the Tool options menu at the top and click on the Brush Preset icon to open the properties panel.

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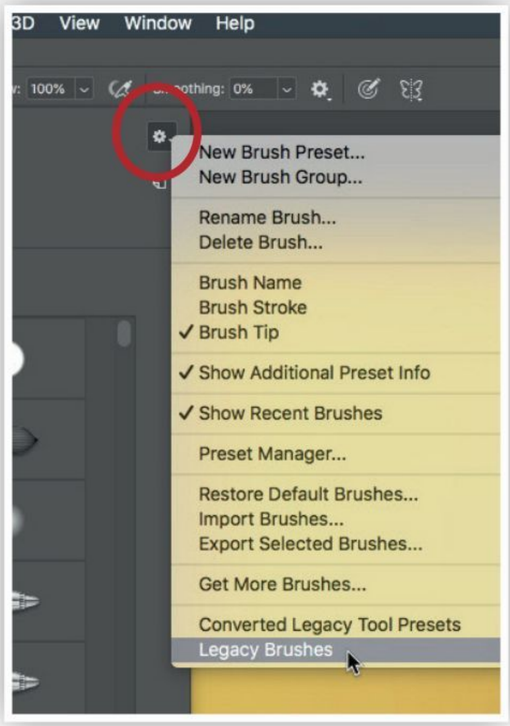
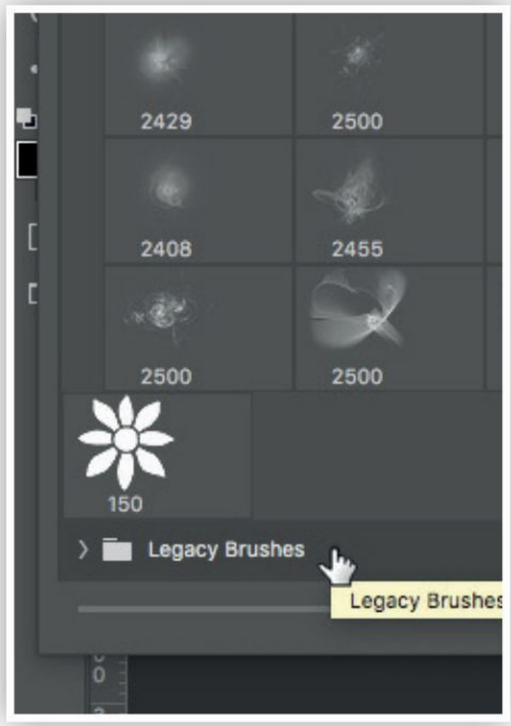
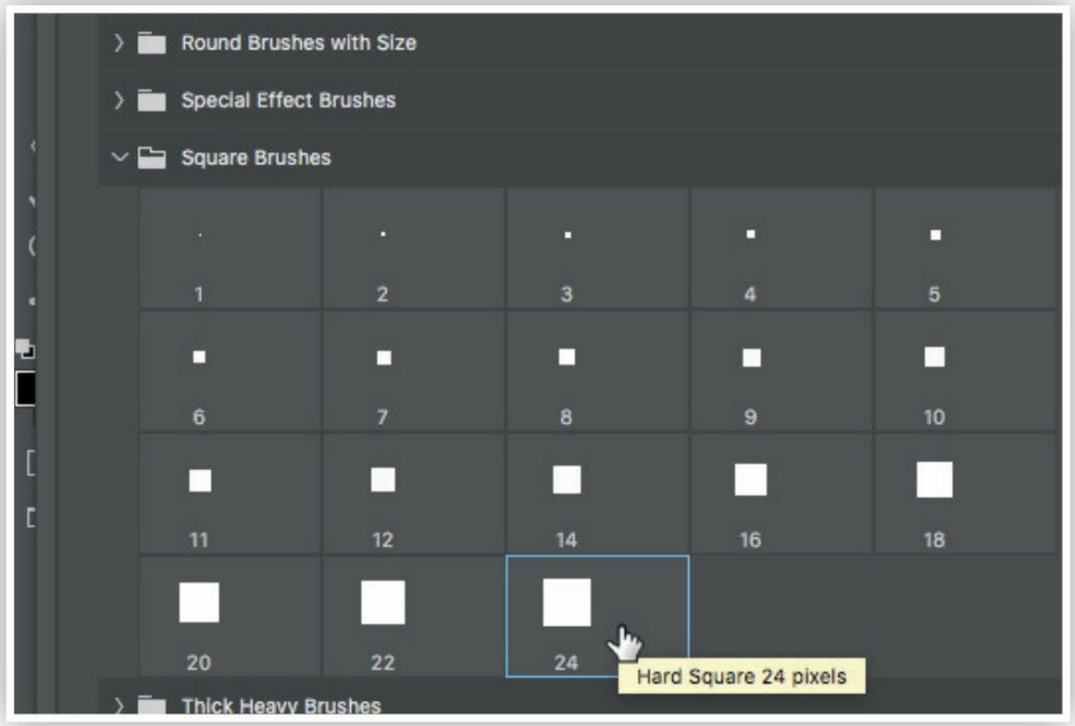
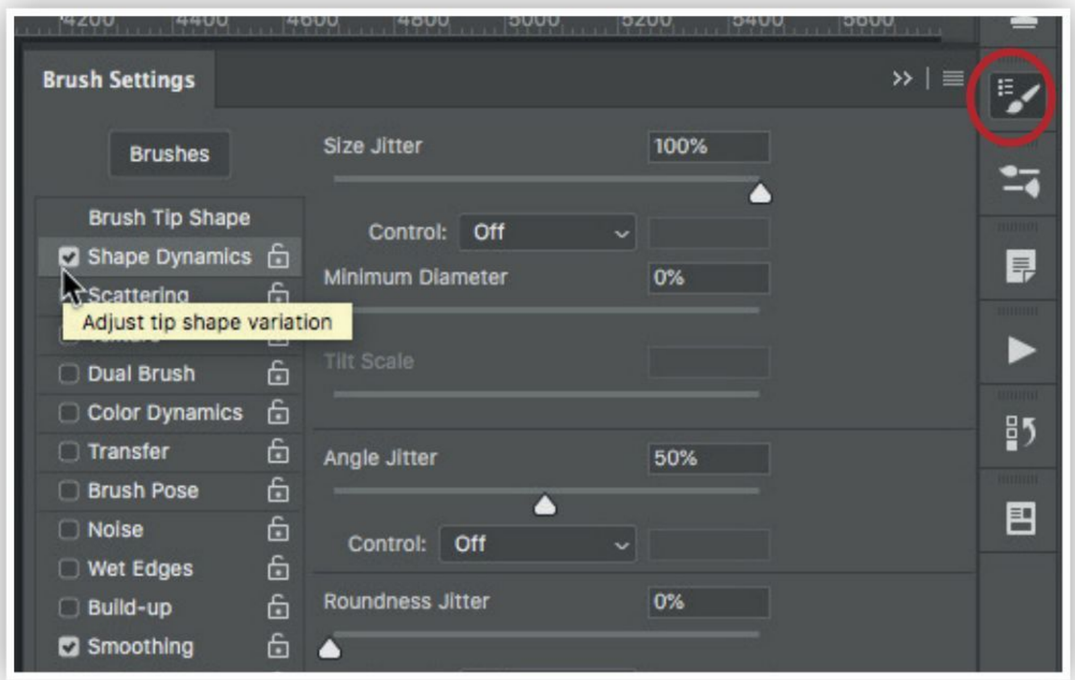






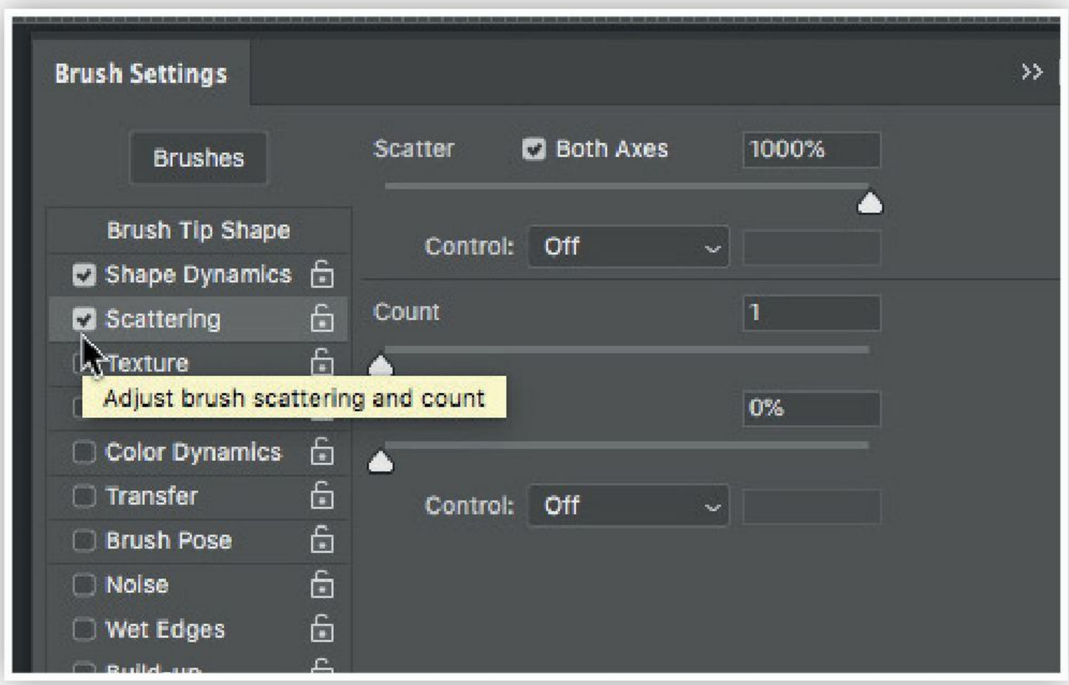
25 In the top right corner, click on the small gear symbol to open more options, then click on the Legacy Brushes option at the bottom. Confirm you want the Legacy Brushes installed and, in your brushes panel, you will see a new folder appear called Legacy Brushes.

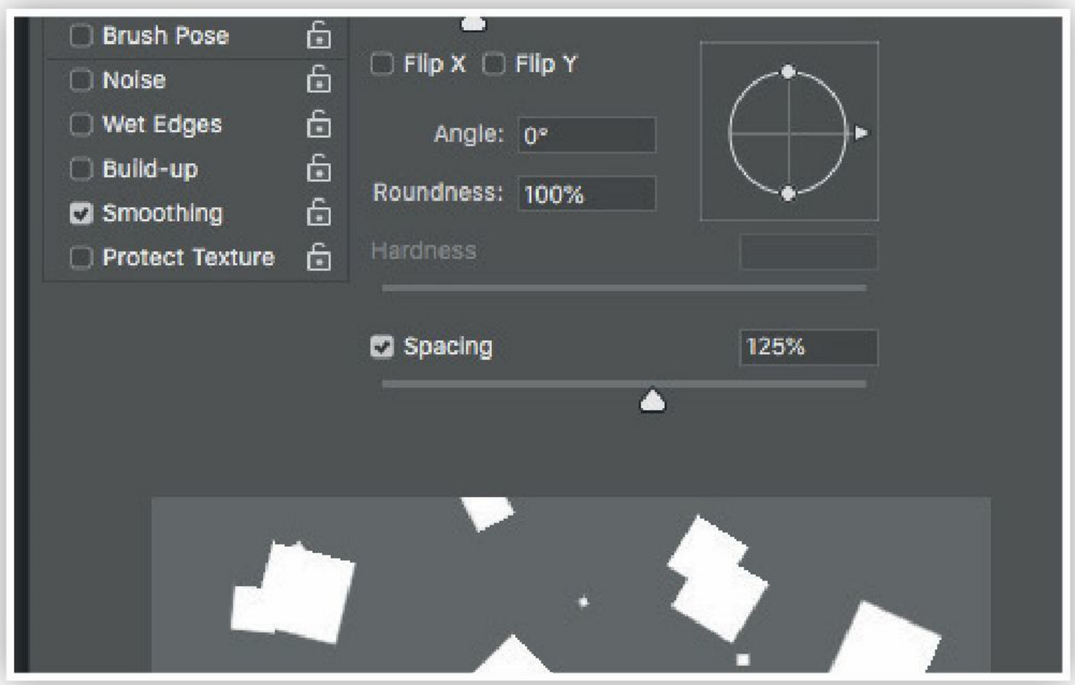
26 Click on that folder, scroll down until you see the subfolder called Square Brushes, and then open it. We can start with a Hard Square brush of 24 pixels. At this point, make sure your foreground colour is set to black and the 'figure 2' layer mask is active (not the image thumbnail).



27 If you were to paint on the 'figure 2' layer mask right now, all you would get would be a series of squiggles, as if drawn by a square pencil. Therefore, we need to introduce some brush settings that can scatter the square brush in a more random pattern.

28 If you click on your Brush Settings icon to open the settings panel, you can work on the settings that will make the brush strokes more random and dynamic. Check the Shape Dynamics button and make Size Jitter 1000% and Angle Jitter about 50%. This makes the brush randomly scale and rotate.





29 Next, check the Scattering button, set Scatter to 1000%, and check the Both Axes button. The rest of the settings can stay at their defaults. If you look at the bottom of the Brush Settings panel, there is a preview of the current brush tip. We need a little more spacing.

30 Click on the Brush Tip Shape button, make sure the Spacing button is checked and set it to about 125%. You'll notice that the preview window indicates how the brush tip shapes have spread out even more. This is the kind of brush pattern we require to start creating the pixel explosion.

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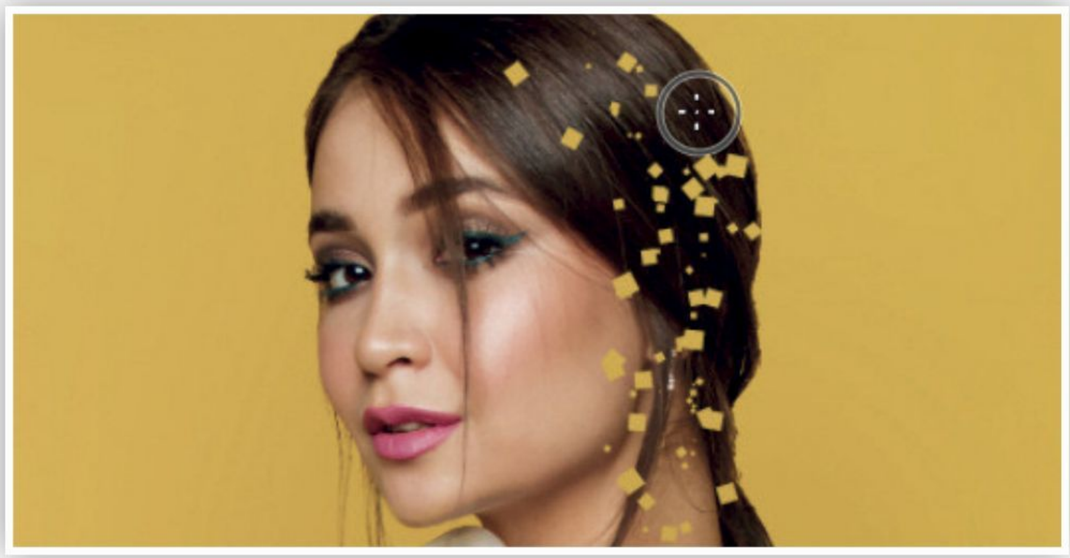
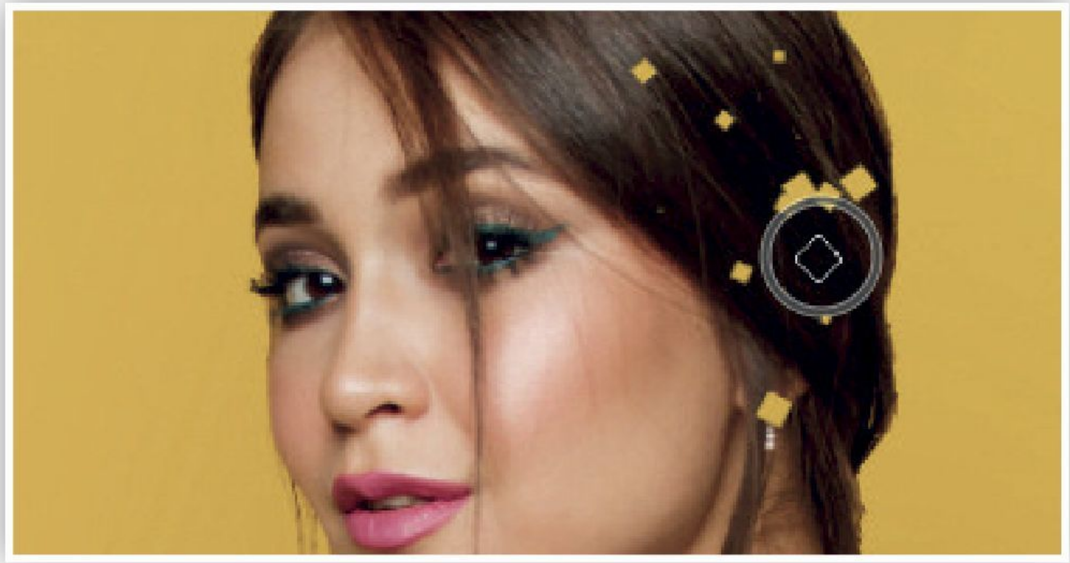
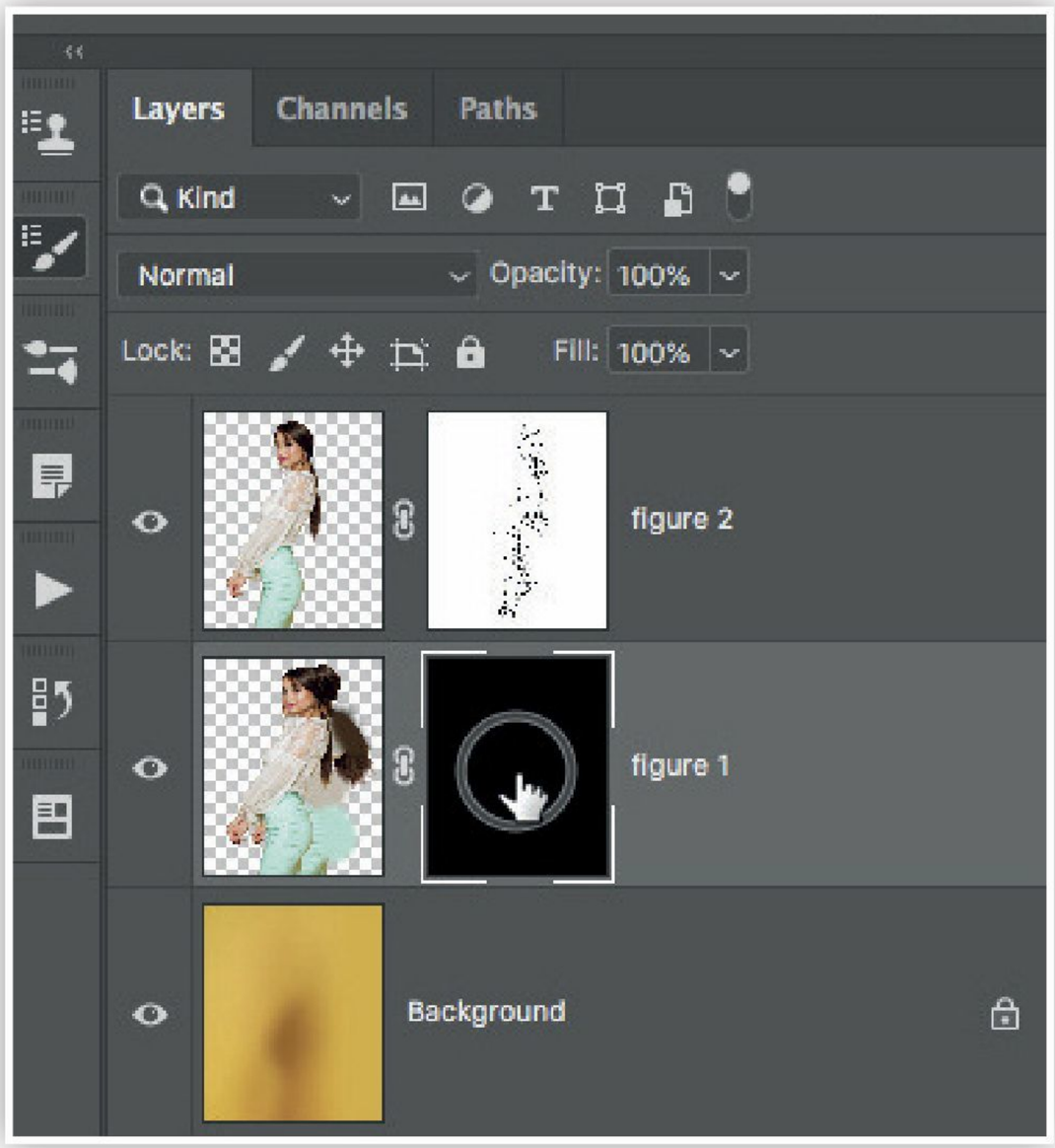
PIXEL EXPLOSION





31 Now begin to use the square pixel brush on the ‘figure 2’ layer mask. You can hold the mouse button and spray a random pattern, or, for more control, you can just click on the areas to which you want to add black pixels. Each pixel you paint should be different from the last one.

32 Any black pixel that your brush creates will remove part of the subject, creating a mask in the shape of that particular pixel. With this method, you can build up a series of pixel brush strokes that erode the right side of the subject leaving random holes.



33 Now we can turn our attention to the ‘figure 1’ layer and click on its layer mask to make it active. Remember, you’ll know it’s active because it will have highlighted corners. Since this mask is totally black and obscuring the layer, we need to reveal it with white brush strokes.

34 This layer simulates the parts of the subject that are flying off to the right. Any white brush strokes you apply should be in the space between her right side and the far right of the yellow background. Now you will see how the distorted ‘figure 1’ layer creates these flying pixels.

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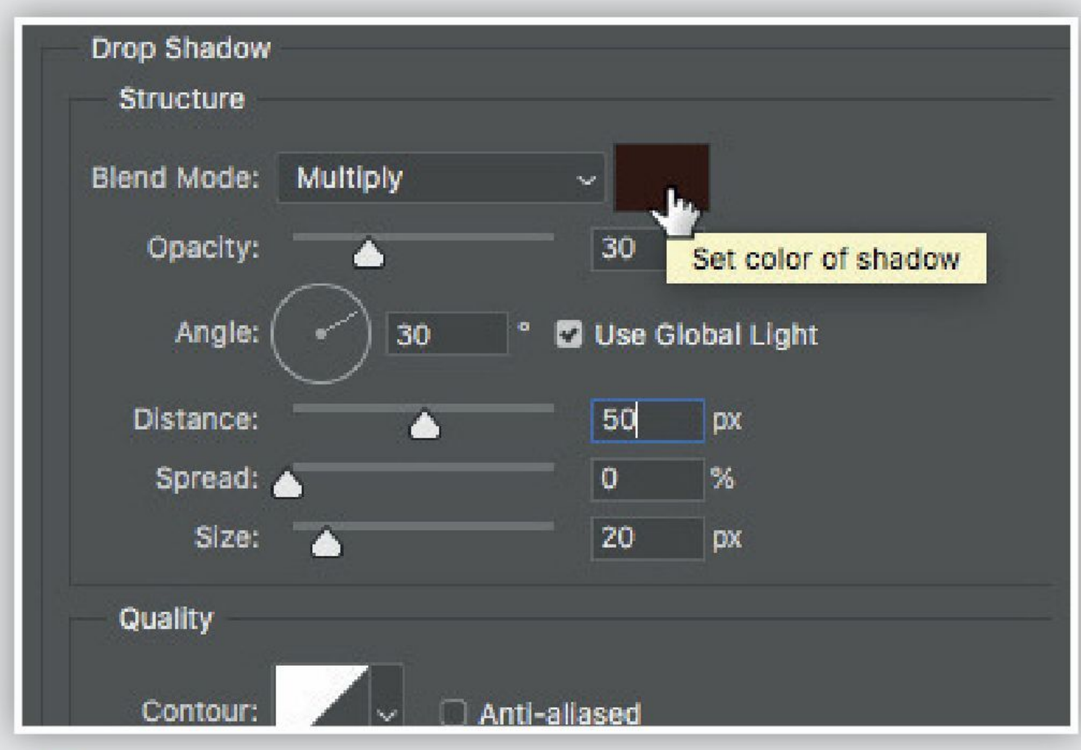

35 Now you can double-click the 'figure 1' layer and bring up the Layer Style panel. It would be nice to give the flying pixels some depth. Click on the Drop Shadow button and set a Drop Shadow value of Distance 50px, Spread 0%, and Size 20px.

36 To match the shadow already in the image, you could also click on the Blend Mode, set it to Multiply and choose a colour that matches her hair to tie it all together. You can now save this file as a PSD and this brings the pixel explosion tutorial to a conclusion.

Explosive results

You too can create this cool effect.

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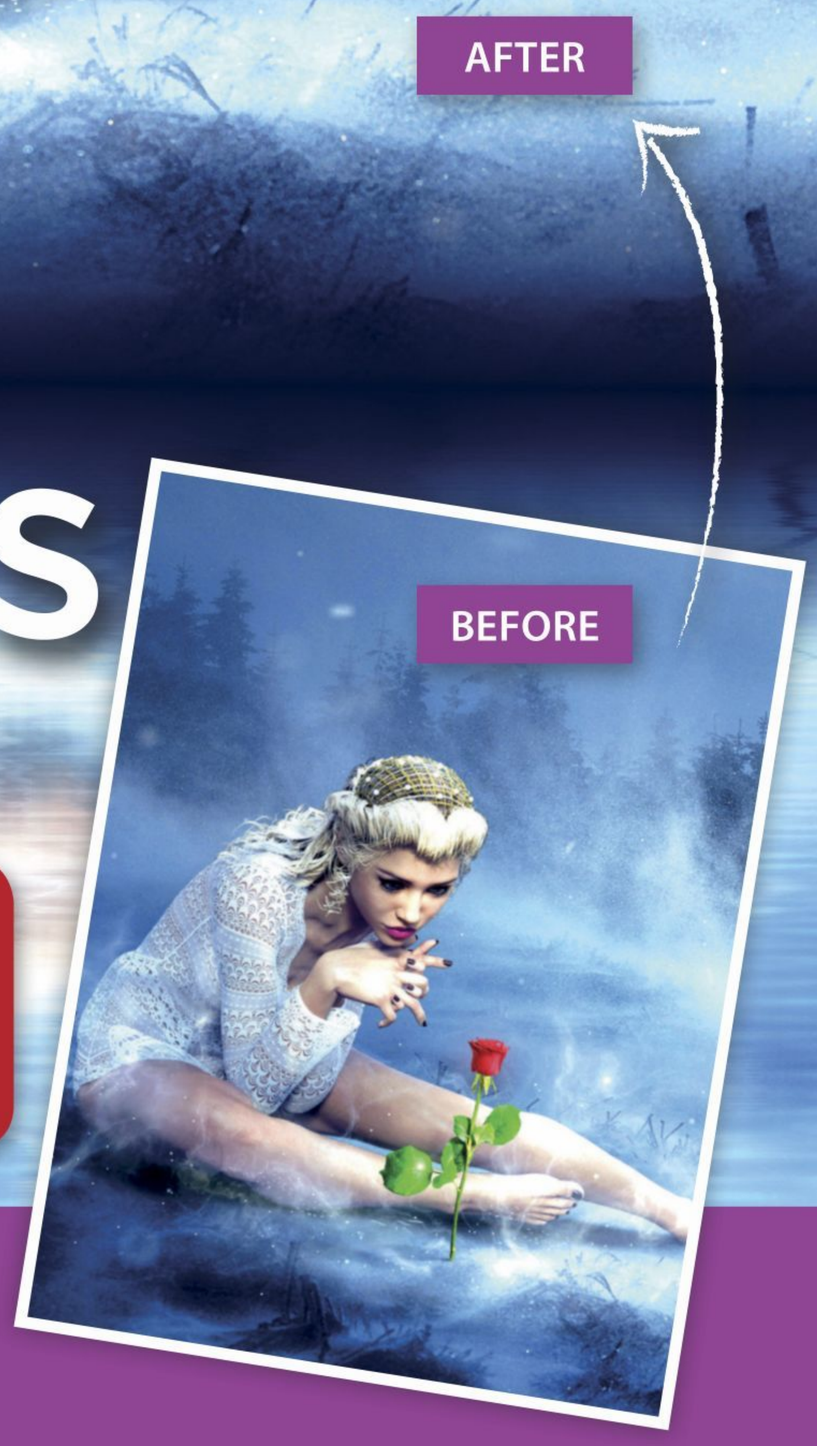
Making Reflections



This tutorial content is available for download

We show you how to make your own reflections where none exist

In this tutorial, we are going to take a look at a technique that allows you to create your own reflections in an image where none currently exist. It's a great method to add a sense of depth to a photo or any piece of art you may have created. Anyone who loves creating fantasy-based images will no doubt have seen quite a few examples of this technique. The prerequisite for the image to work well is that the main subject in the composition needs to be in the close foreground and look as if the photographer were shooting them from the same height or a lower angle. A photo taken from too high an angle may look quite odd when the reflection is applied. This effect uses a few different techniques to make the reflection look like a fair facsimile of the water's surface with an appropriate amount of distortion and ripples. We also use Smart Objects in this tutorial to aid us in creating as many non-destructive edits as possible. They also allow you to go back in and tweak all your settings, if you so wish. Dive in and we'll show you how it's done.

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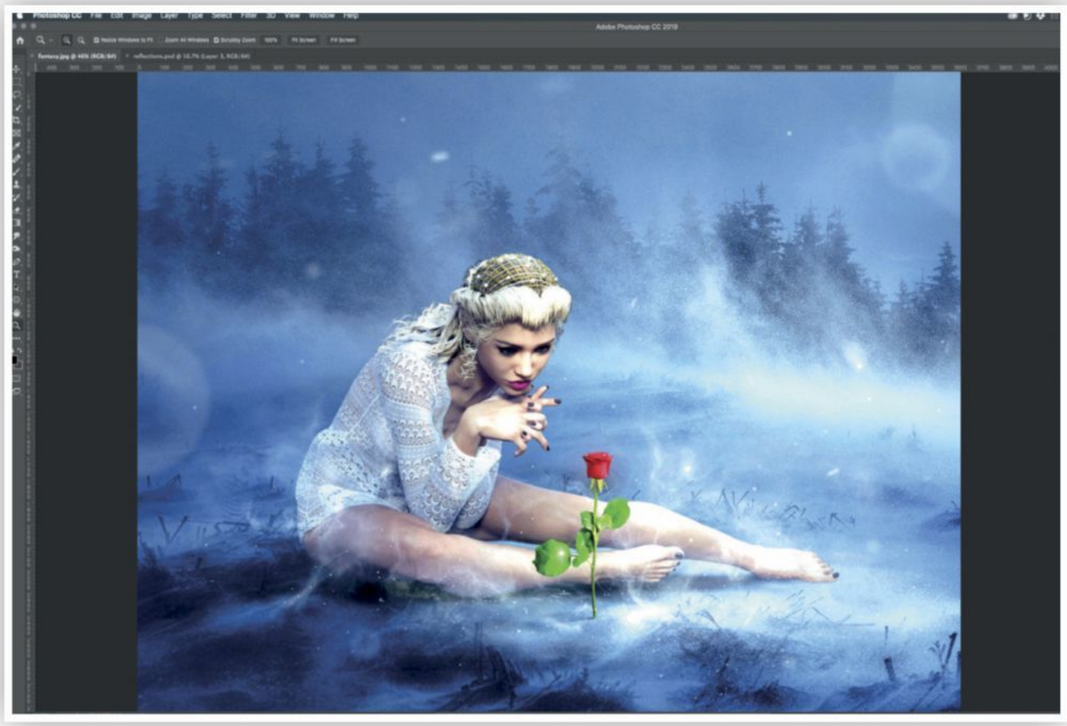
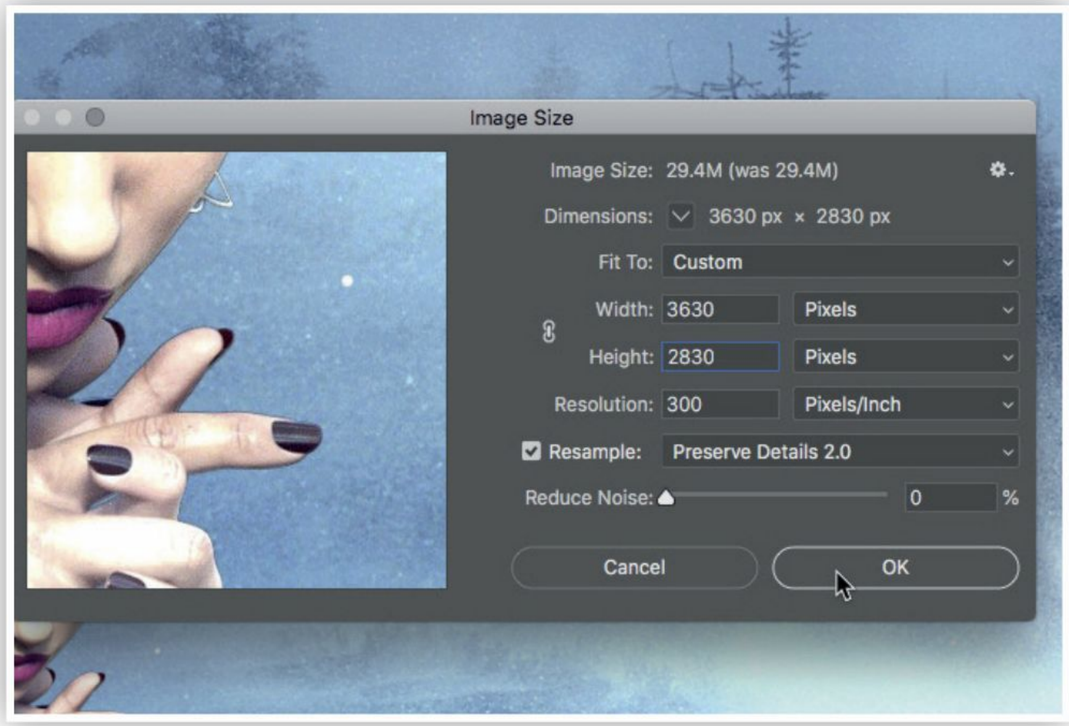
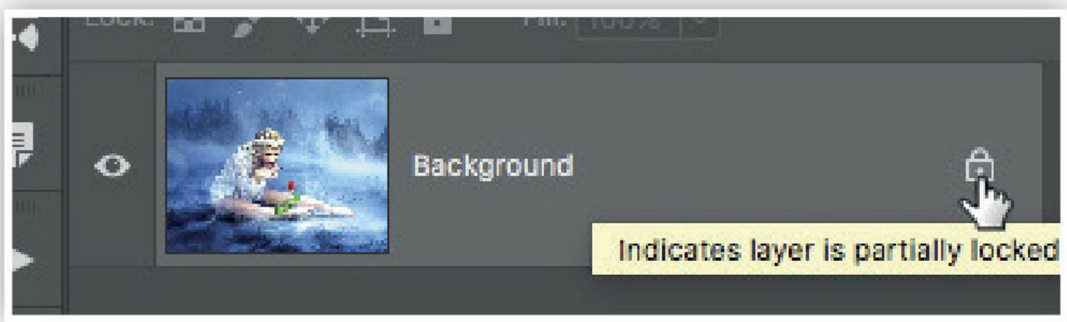
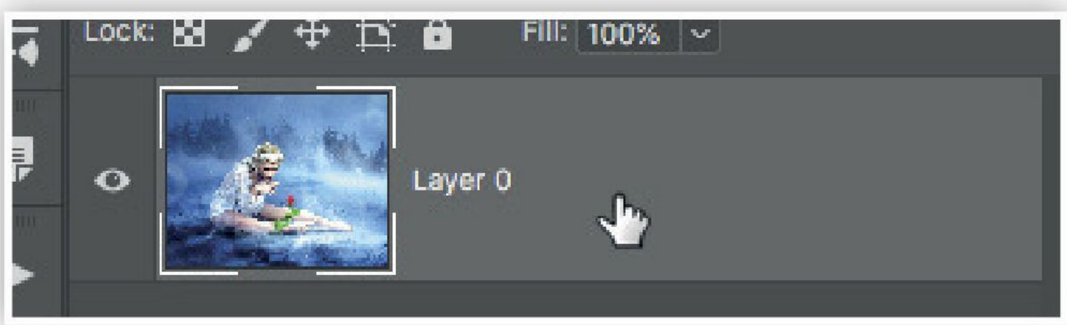


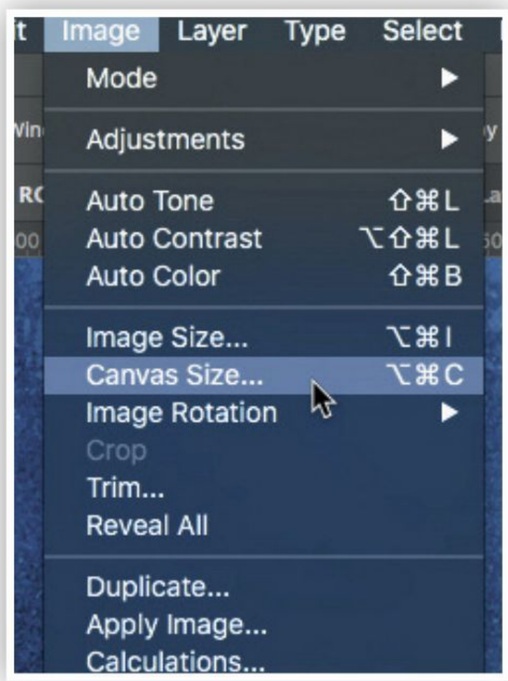


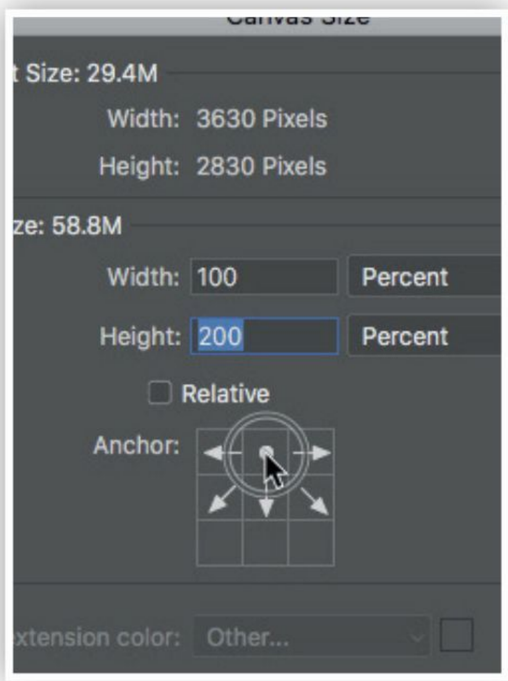
01 We have a fantasy style image of a girl in a forest. It is all quite dreamy and surreal and could benefit from the extra foreground interest that a watery refection could provide. As previously mentioned, both she and the ground are level with the viewer so the effect should work well.

02 The base image in this tutorial example is 3630 pixels wide by 2830 pixels high. All our settings and techniques are based on an image of this size. If you use a different size image, be aware that your settings may have to alter accordingly.



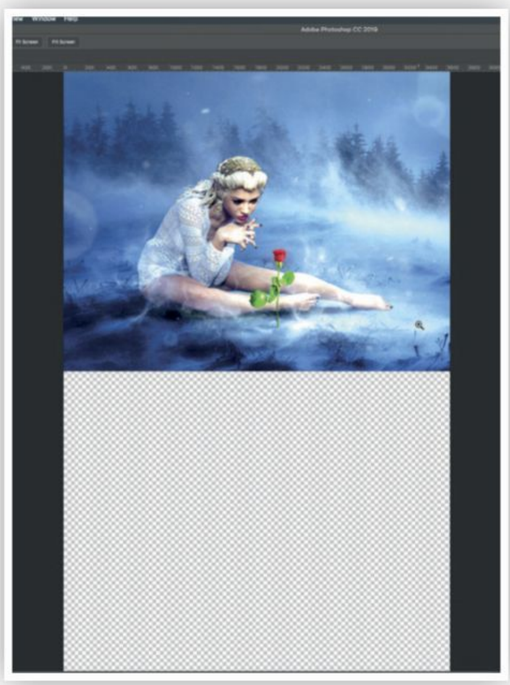


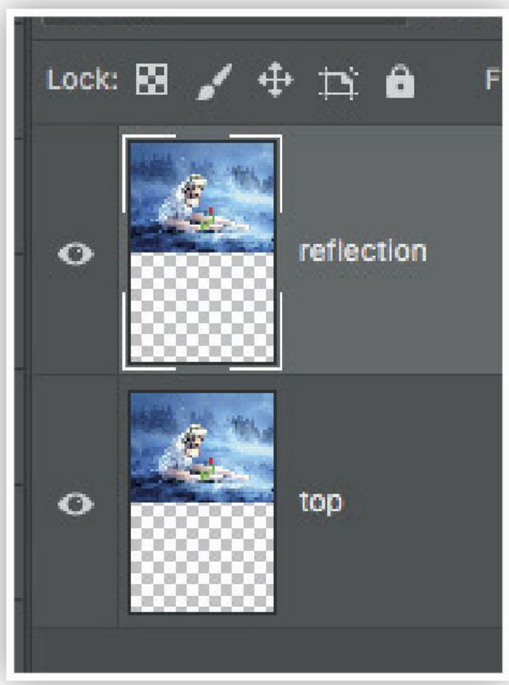


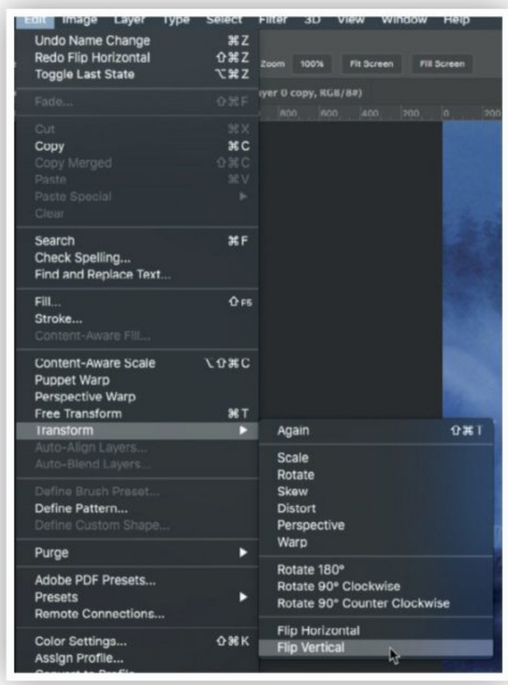


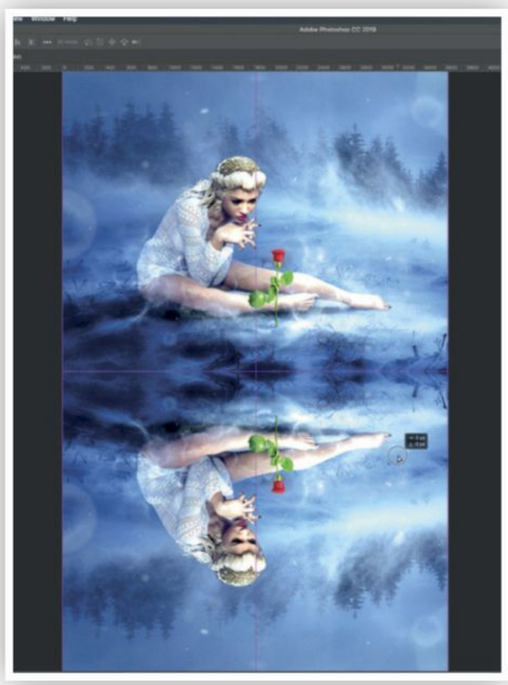
03 Firstly, the image needs to be unlocked so it can be worked on. The layer thumbnail will have a small Padlock icon on the right. If you click this, you can unlock the default background and turn it into an active layer, which is named ‘layer 0’ by default.

04 Next, we need to add enough space below our main image to accommodate the reflection, once it is created. To do this, go to Image > Canvas Size (Alt + Cmd + C) and call up the Canvas Size settings panel. Set the Anchor to top middle and Height to 200%. Click OK to proceed.









05 The document will be resized with the extra canvas area added to the bottom of the image. Press Cmd + J to create a duplicate of the main layer. You can name the new layer ‘reflection’ and the base layer can be called ‘top’ (more on this in a moment).

06 Make the ‘reflection’ layer active. Choose Edit > Transform > Flip Vertical. The layer will be turned upside down and you can use the Move Tool (V) to drag it down to the bottom half of the document. You can also drag the ‘reflection’ layer so it sits beneath the ‘top’ layer.

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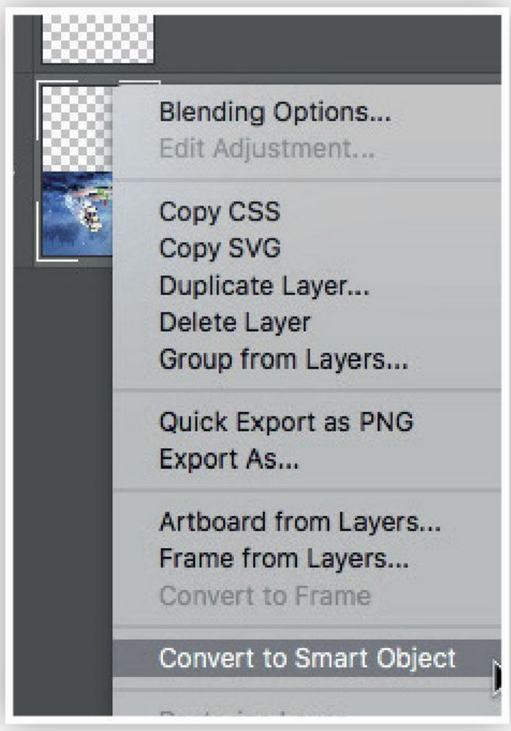
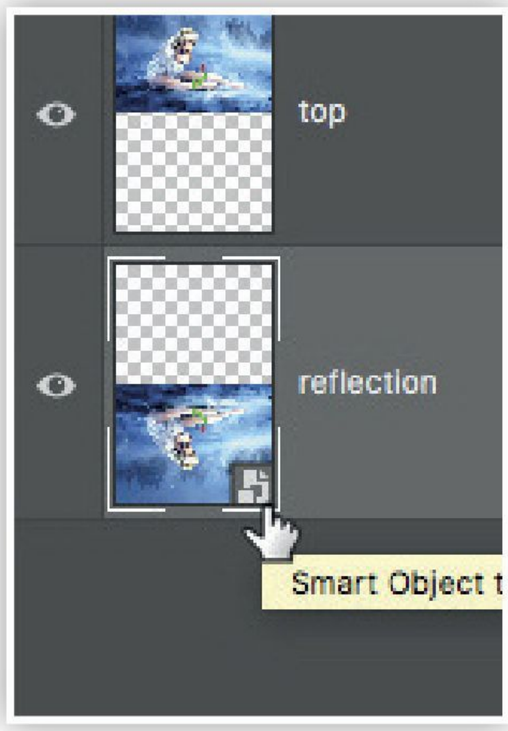
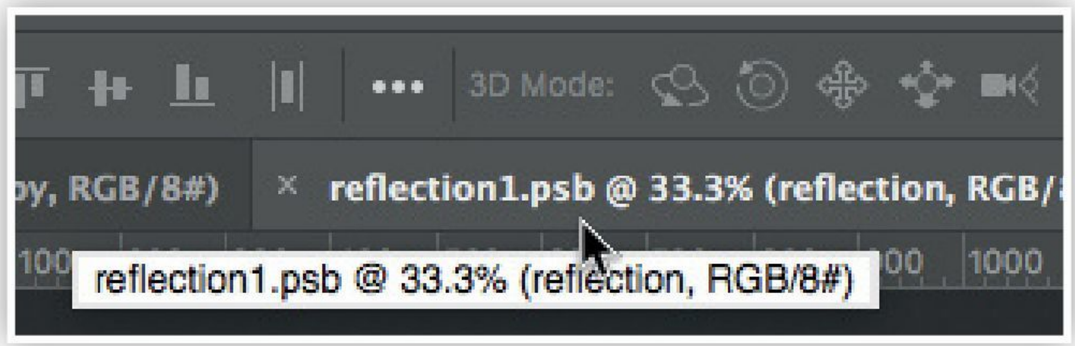
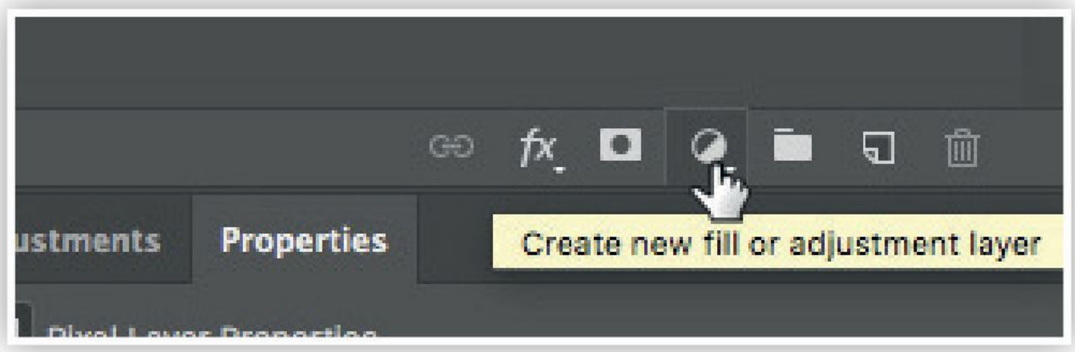
MAKING REFLECTIONS



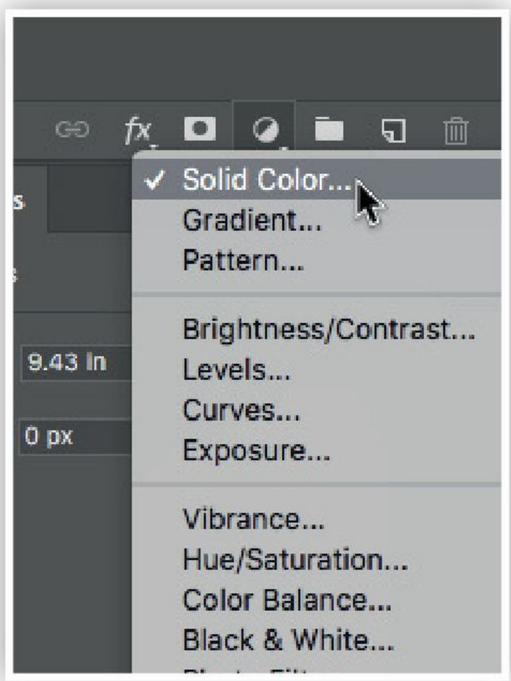


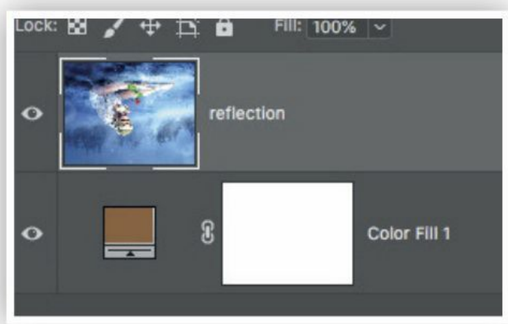
07 Now we need to do some work on the flipped image. Firstly, right-click the layer and choose Convert To Smart Object from the menu that appears. This will convert it to a Smart Object. If you look in the lower right corner of the layer's thumbnail, you will see the Smart Object icon.



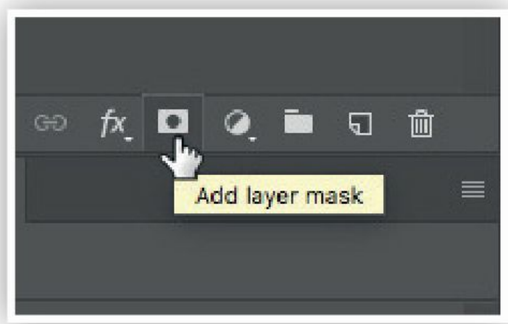


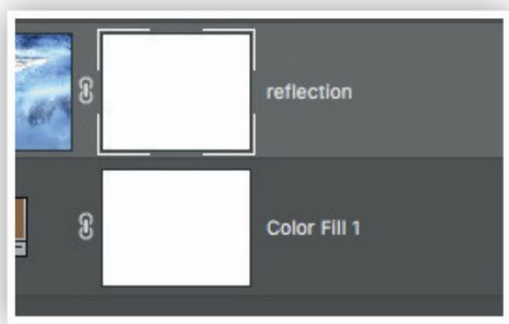
08 If you double-click the Smart Object, it will open it as a PSB file. Think of it as an editable Photoshop document within your main document. We can edit this in a non-destructive manner. Click on the Create New Fill Or Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the layers palette.

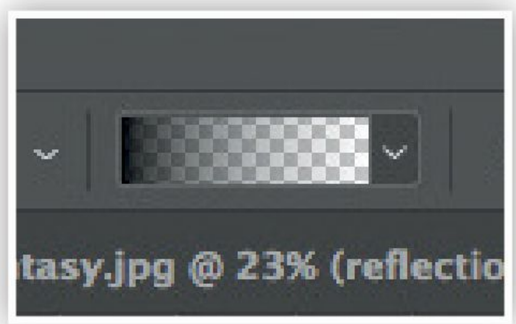




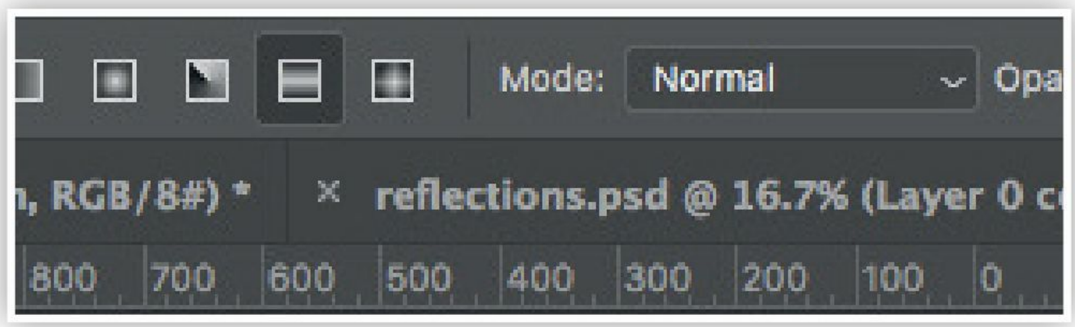
09 Choose Solid Color and, from the Color Picker that appears, select a sandy brown colour that could be the bottom of a riverbed. When you click OK, a solid colour will cover your flipped image. Drag the 'Color Fill 1' layer below your main 'reflection' layer.







10 Make the 'reflection' layer mask active and then click Add Layer Mask to add an active mask to your reflection image. Choose the Gradient Tool from the toolbar and make sure your gradient is set to be black to transparent. If it isn't, click the Gradient Editor in the top left.



11 Use your mouse to drag a vertical gradient that extends from the bottom of the image to about halfway up. When you let go, a black to transparent grad will be created on the mask. Any area that is black will allow the solid colour beneath to show through, giving a brown tint to the water.

12 Click the small cross in the left of the document tab for the Smart Object to close it. At this point, you will be prompted to save changes to 'reflection1.psb' before closing. Make sure you click Save or you will loose what you've done to the image so far.

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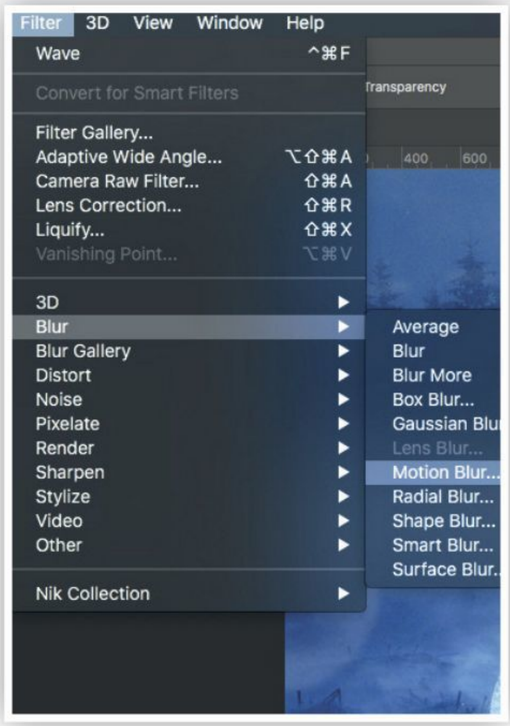
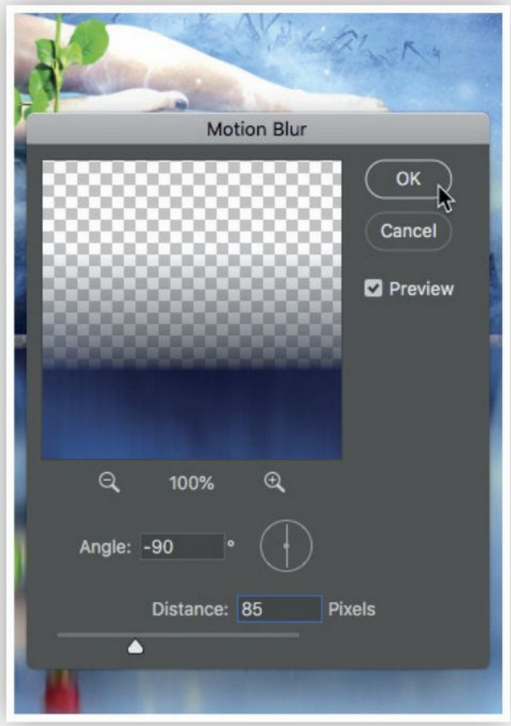
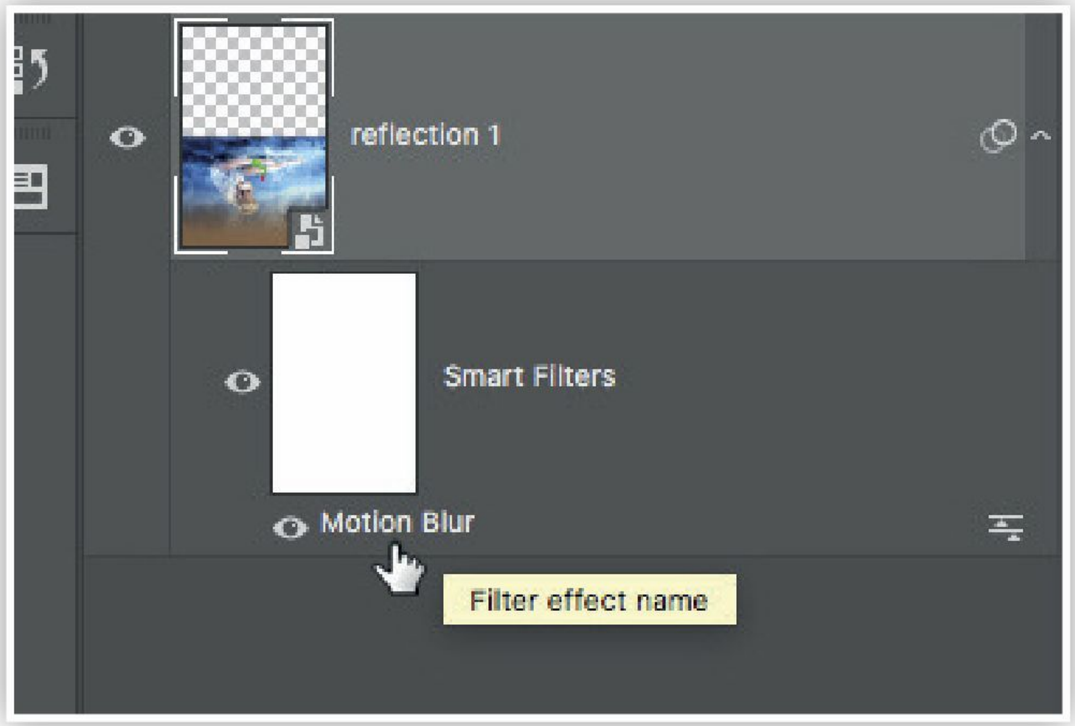
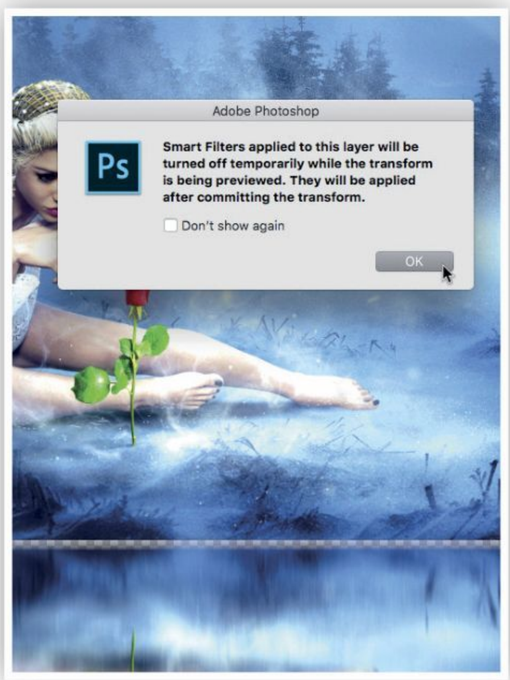


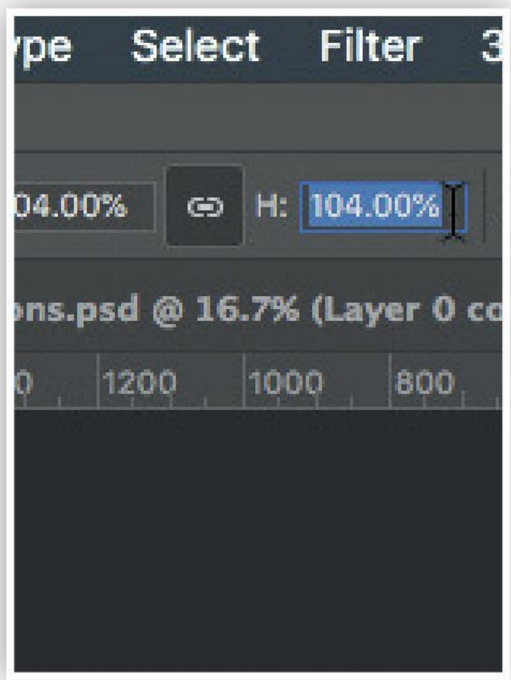


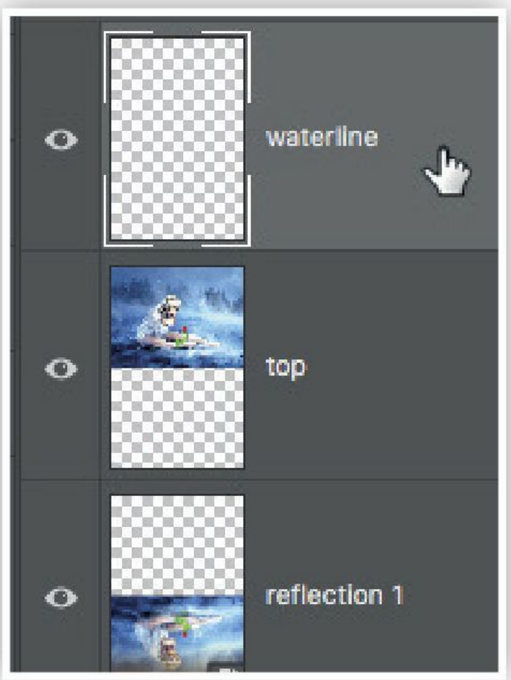


13 When the PSB file closes, you will taken back to your current working document where you will see the sand coloured tint on the image. Next, go to Filter > Blur > Motion Blur and choose a -90° Angle and a Distance of 85 pixels. Click OK to add the blur to the image.

14 If you examine the 'reflection 1' layer, you will note that the effect you just added shows up under the Smart Filters thumbnail. This means you can go back in at any time and alter that setting. Next, we need to sort out the blurred edge of the image that is leaving a gap.

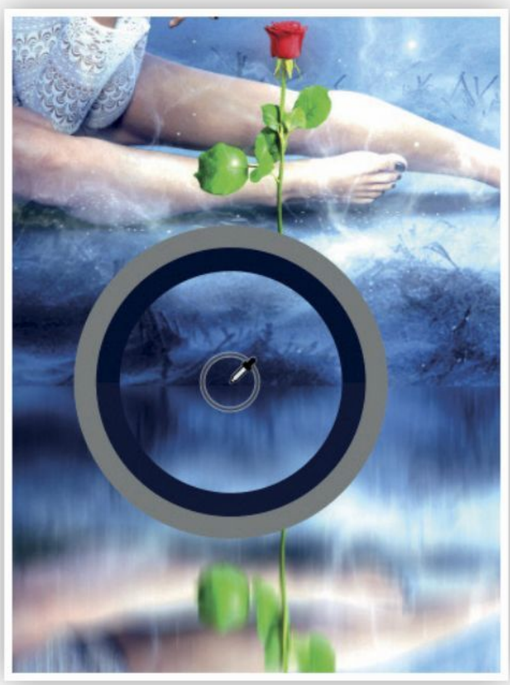


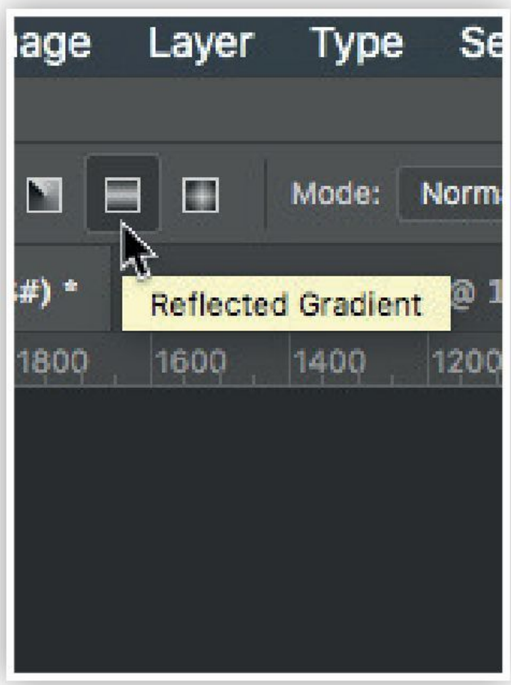


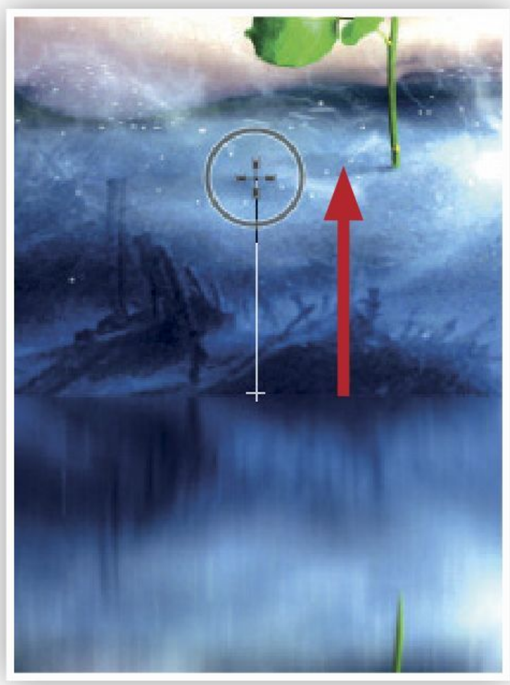


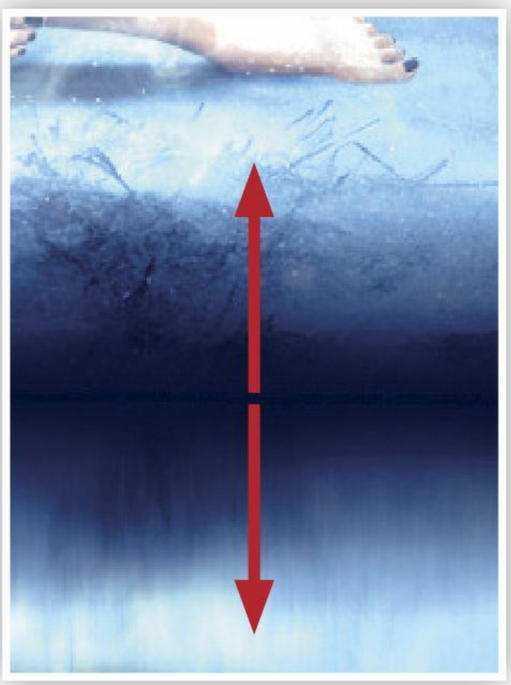
15 If you press Cmd + T to enter the Free Transform tool, you will see a warning that tells you certain effects will be turned off while performing a transform. Click OK then scale the image to about 104% to close the gap between the blurred image and the main image.

16 Once done, the Smart Filters preview will activate again showing the correct blur of the flipped image. Now we can blur the join between the sharp main image and the reflection. Create a new layer, called 'waterline', and make sure it is at the top of the layer stack.









17 Use the Eyedropper Tool (I) to sample a dark blue colour, and then go to the Gradient Tool (G) and select the Reflected Gradient option with the blue foreground colour set to fade to transparent. You can use the Gradient Editor to select it.

18 Next, it is a case of dragging a gradient that starts where the two images touch and goes up to just the below the girl's leg on the top image. When you let go of the mouse, blue grad will be drawn above, and below, the start point of the grad creating a nice blur between the two images.

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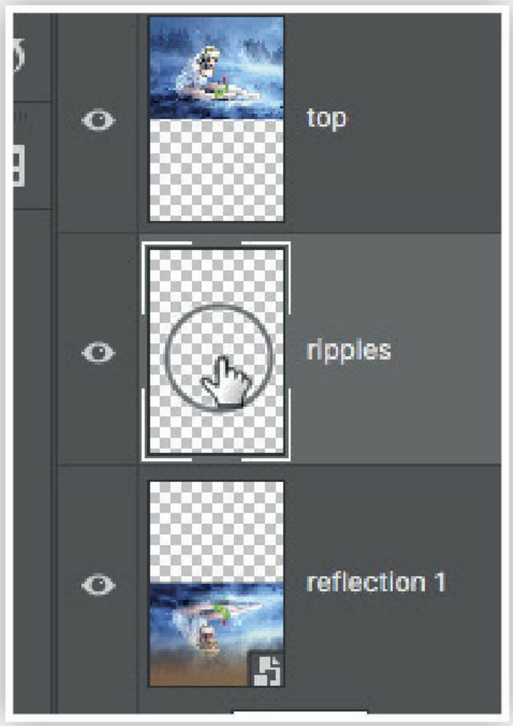
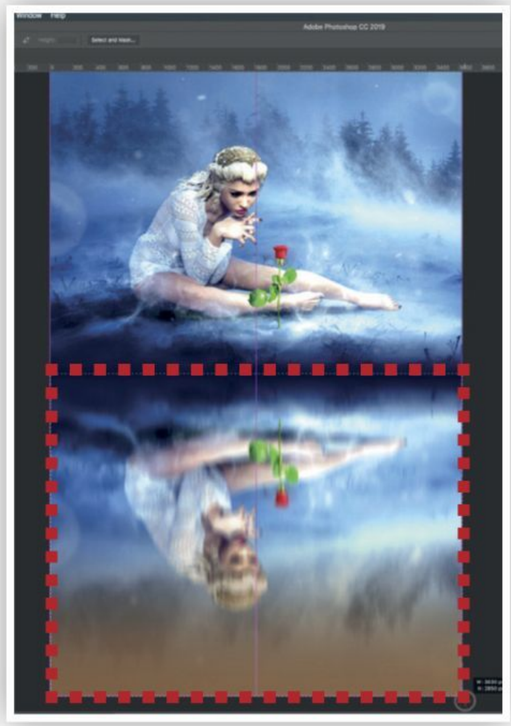
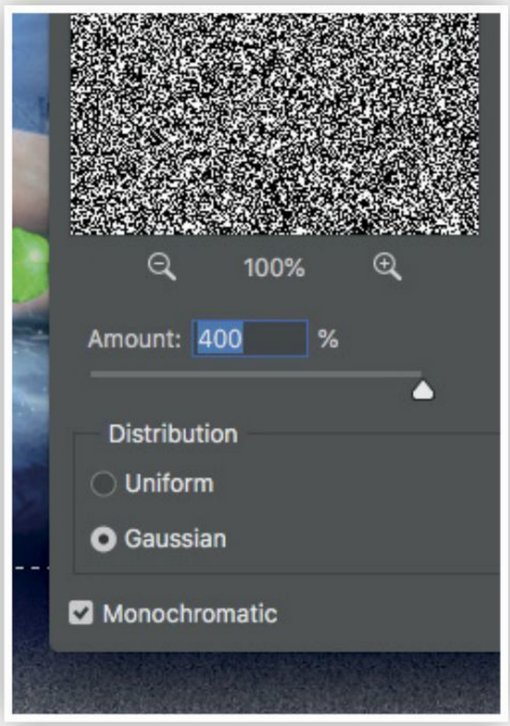
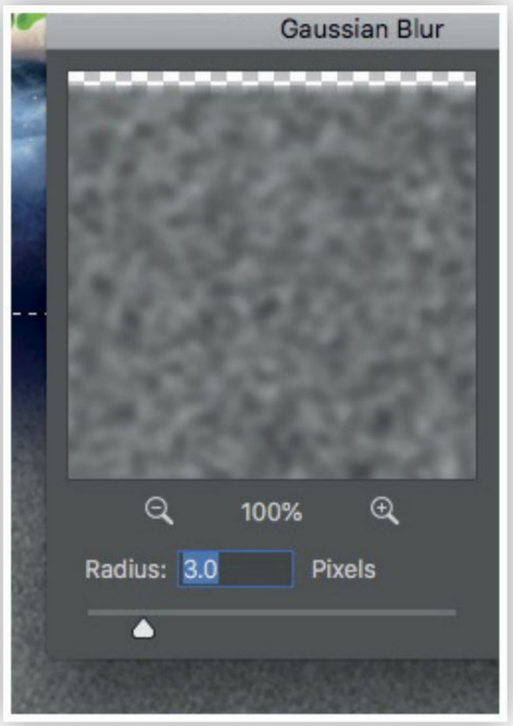
MAKING REFLECTIONS



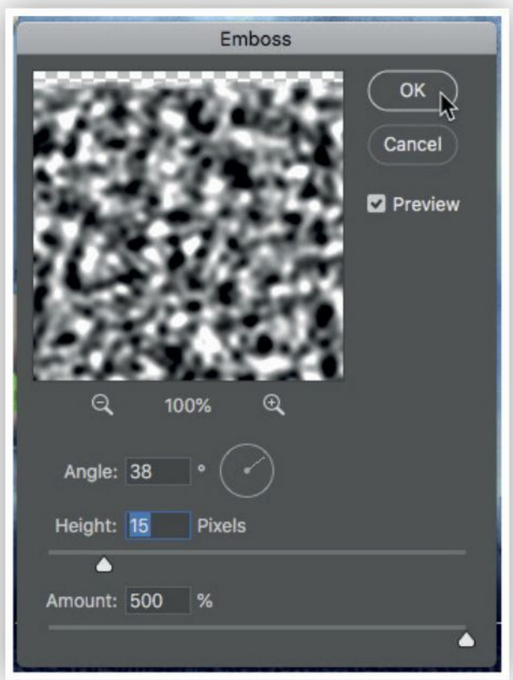


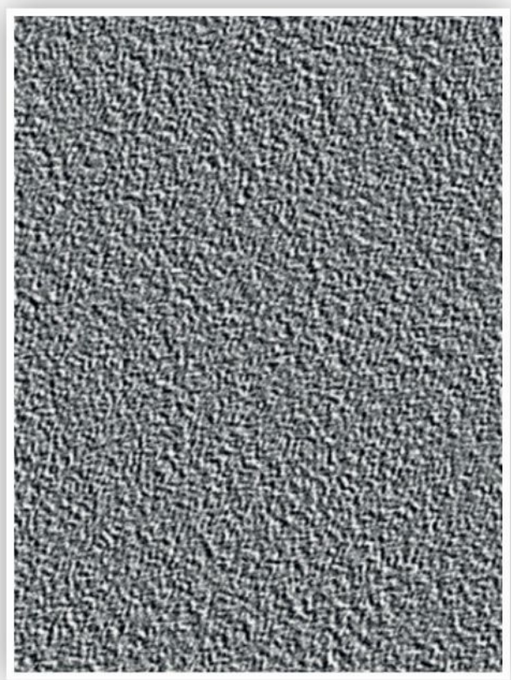


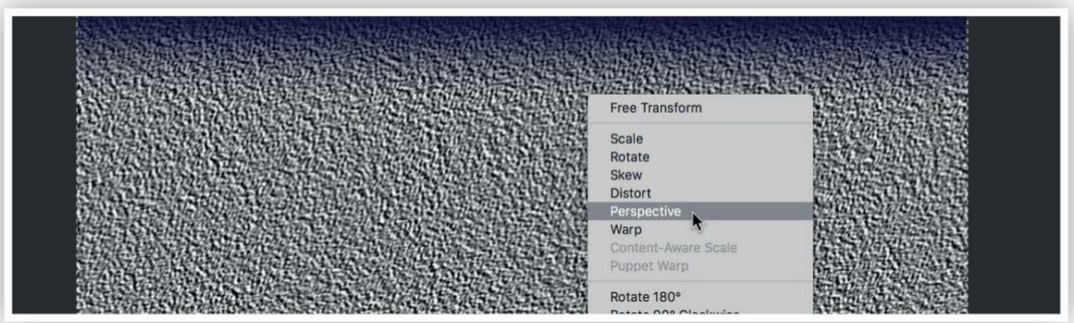


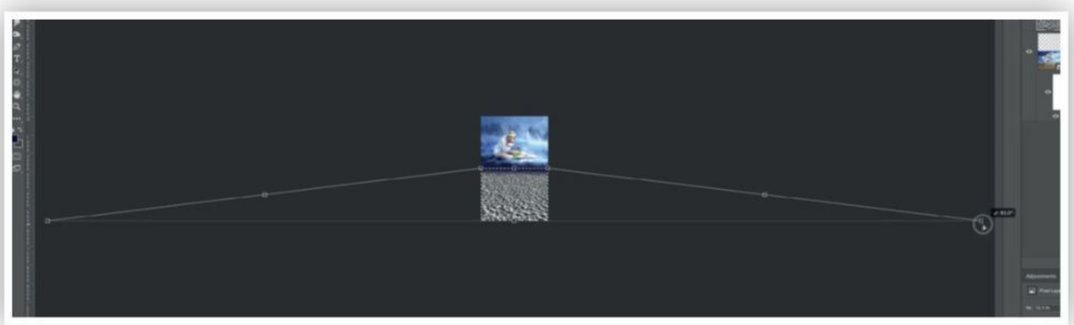
19 Add a new layer called ‘ripples’, make sure it sits between ‘reflection 1’ and ‘top’ and is the active layer. Use the Rectangular Marquee Tool (M) to draw out a selection that covers the bottom half of the image entirely. We will use this area to create some ripples.

20 Go to Edit > Fill (F5) and fill the selection with solid black. Then go to Filter > Noise > Add Noise and make the noise Amount 400% and click OK. Then go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur and make the Radius value about 3.0 pixels for a small amount of blur to the noise.



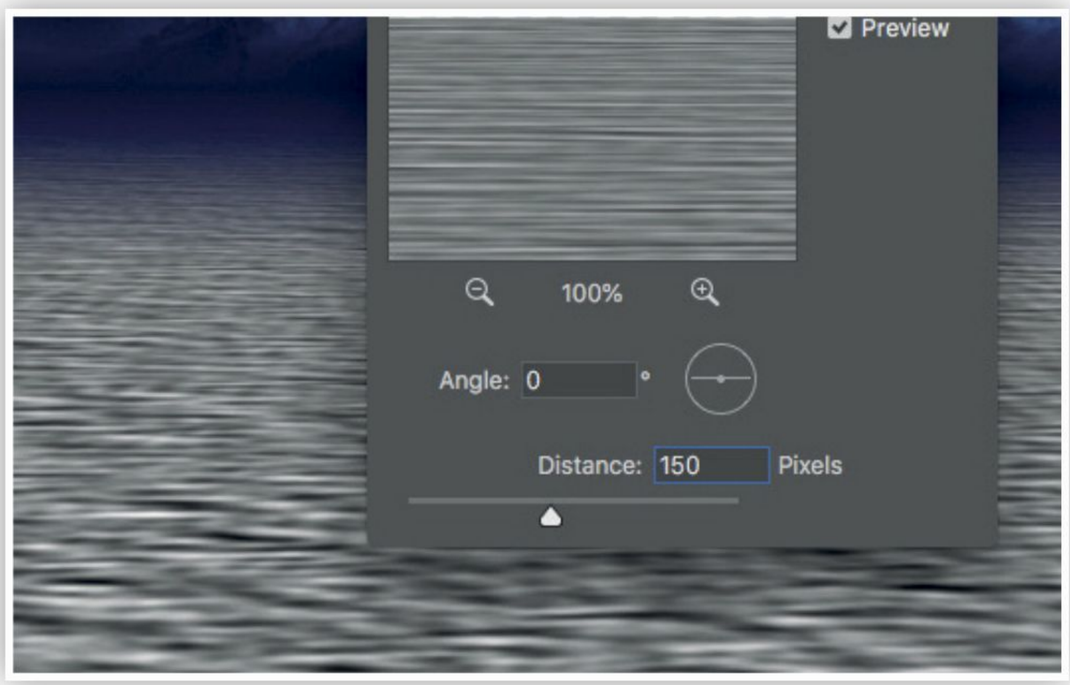


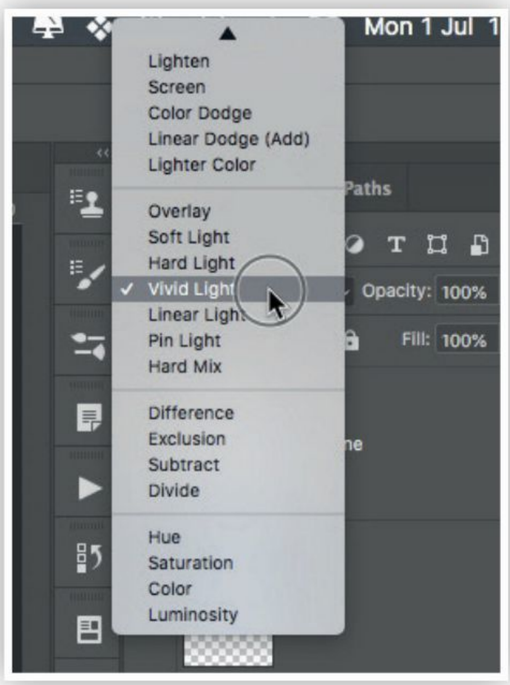


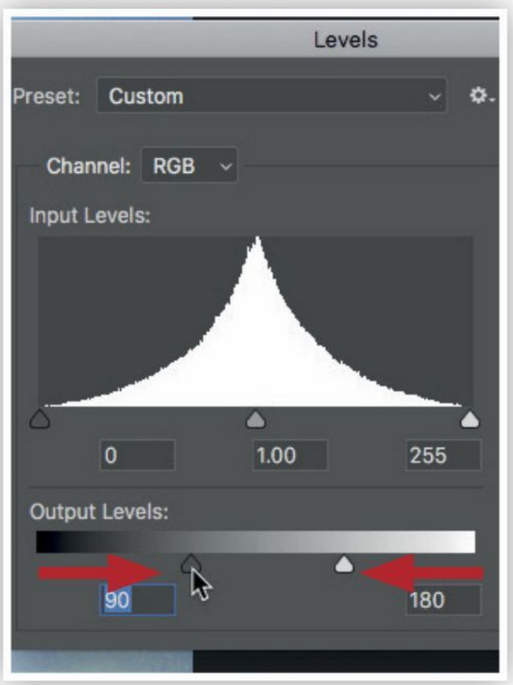


21 Now go to Filter > Stylize > Emboss, then make the Angle about 38° and the Height about 15 pixels. The Amount value can be set to its maximum of 500%. This adds a heavy random textured effect to the original blurred noise pattern. Make sure the selection is still active.

22 Right-click the selection and choose Perspective from the menu that appears. For the next part, you will need to press Cmd + minus to zoom out quite a distance. We used a magnification of 4%. Drag one of the bottom corner control-points as wide as possible to add perspective.







23 If you press Cmd + 0 you can go back to a standard view of the document. You will see how the mottled texture seems to get larger as it gets nearer the bottom of the image. Go to Filter > Blur > Motion Blur again and use an Angle of 0° and a Distance of 150 pixels to blur the texture.

24 Now change the blend mode of the ‘ripples’ layer to Vivid Light. If you feel the texture is too harsh, you can go to Image > Adjustments > Levels (Cmd + L) and then drag both Output Levels sliders inwards, to reduce the contrast of the texture, for a more subtle effect.

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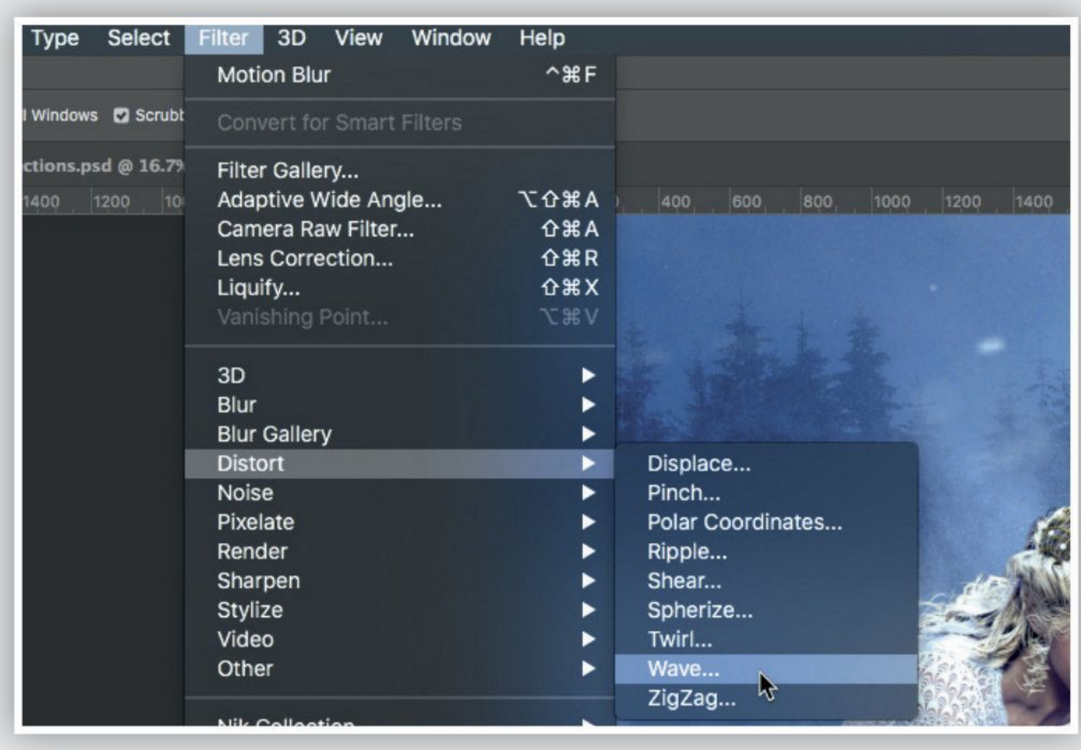

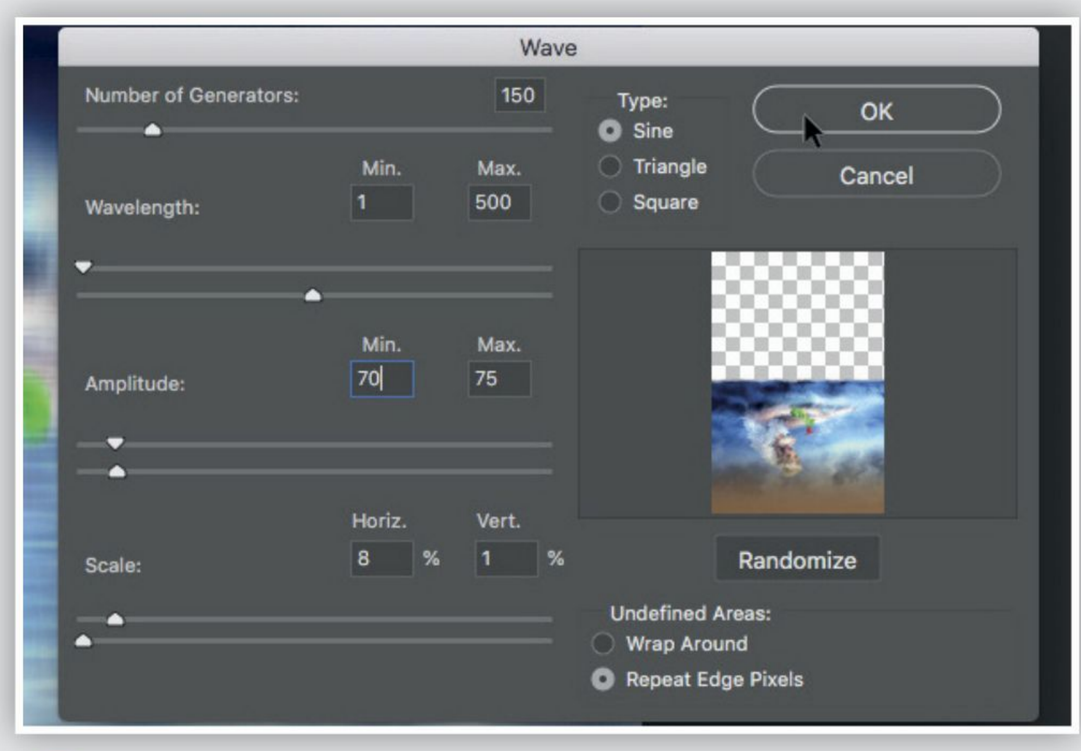

25 For even more movement in the water's surface, click on the 'reflection 1' thumbnail to make it the active layer, and then go to Filter > Distort > Wave. This opens up the Wave generator panel. This part can be a bit hit and miss, but the idea is to get a nice tight wave effect.

27 Now the watery reflection is looking more interesting. You have some effective texturing that can emulate the riverbed, and the addition of the Wave generator has created more visually pleasing distortions on the water's surface. Save your document as a PSD and the tutorial is done.

26 After a bit of trial and error, we arrived at settings that work for this size example. Number Of Generators was 150, Wavelength was Min. 1 and Max. 500. Amplitude was Min. 70 and Max. 75. Finally, Scale was Horiz. 8% and Vert. 1%. Click OK to add a subtle wave pattern.

Smart Objects for great effects

Just another example of the power of Photoshop.

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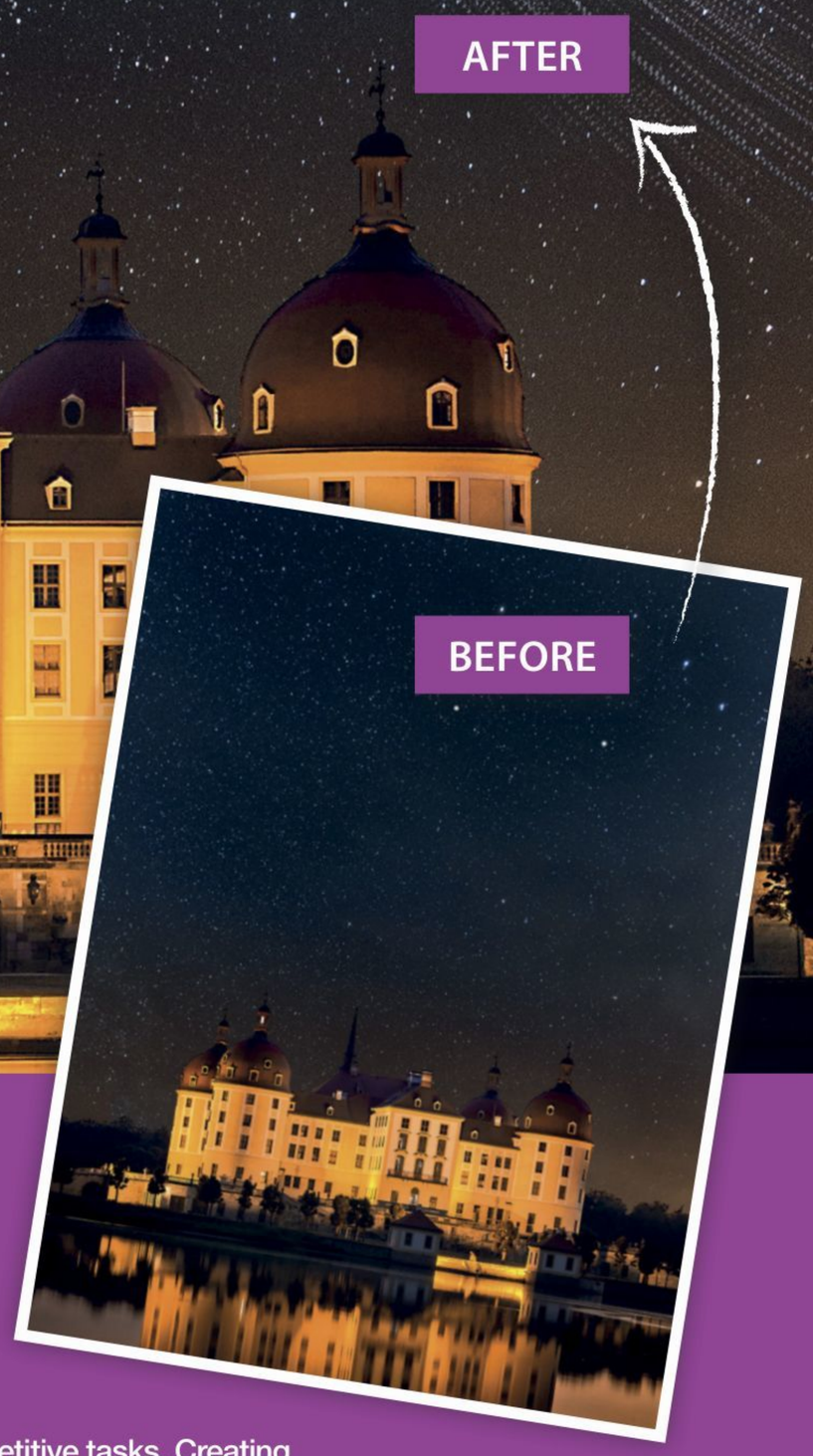
Star Trail Action



This tutorial content is available for download

Learn how to automate your effects with Actions

Photoshop is a powerful image-editing program that offers users the tools to be able to realise their creative visions by adjusting and editing photos to their heart's content. One significant aspect of Photoshop's suite of tools and techniques is its ability to let you create shortcuts that greatly speed up particular parts of your workflow, removing the necessity to hunt through the menus looking for the right effect or adjustment. Another aspect of this streamlined workflow methodology is the use of Actions. Actions can be particularly useful when it comes to long, drawn-out, repetitive tasks. Creating an Action is much like recording a series of moves that can then be played back. Each time it is played, the series of Actions you recorded will be applied to your image. Let's see Actions at work with an example that can create a cool swirling star pattern.

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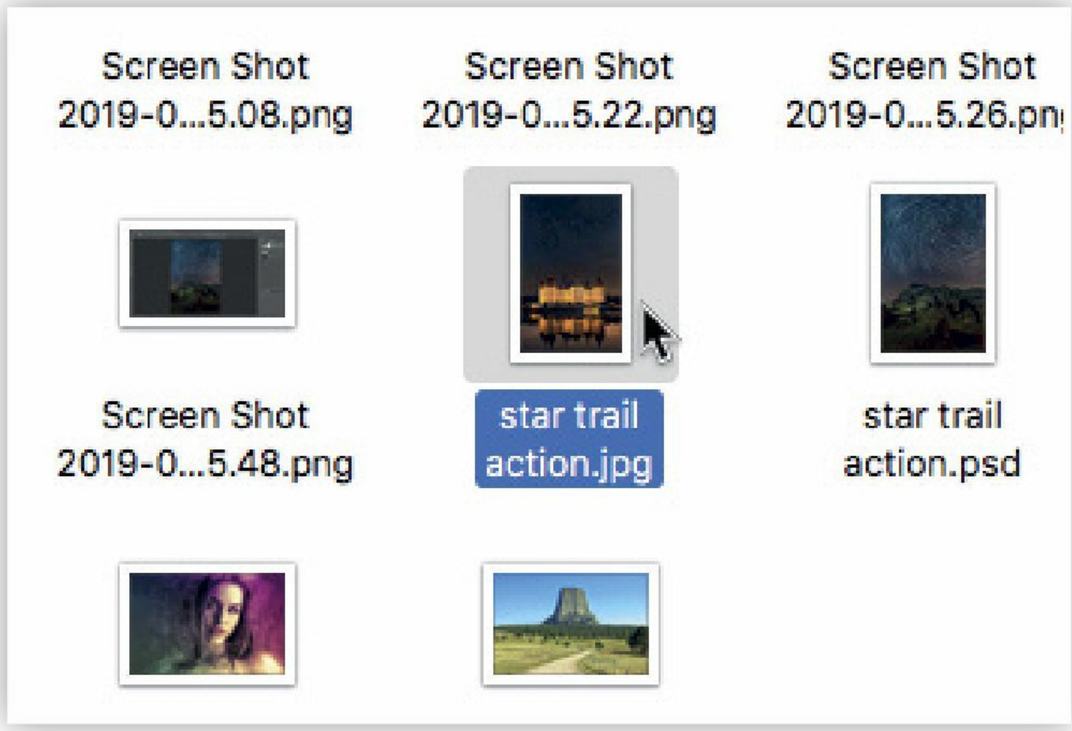
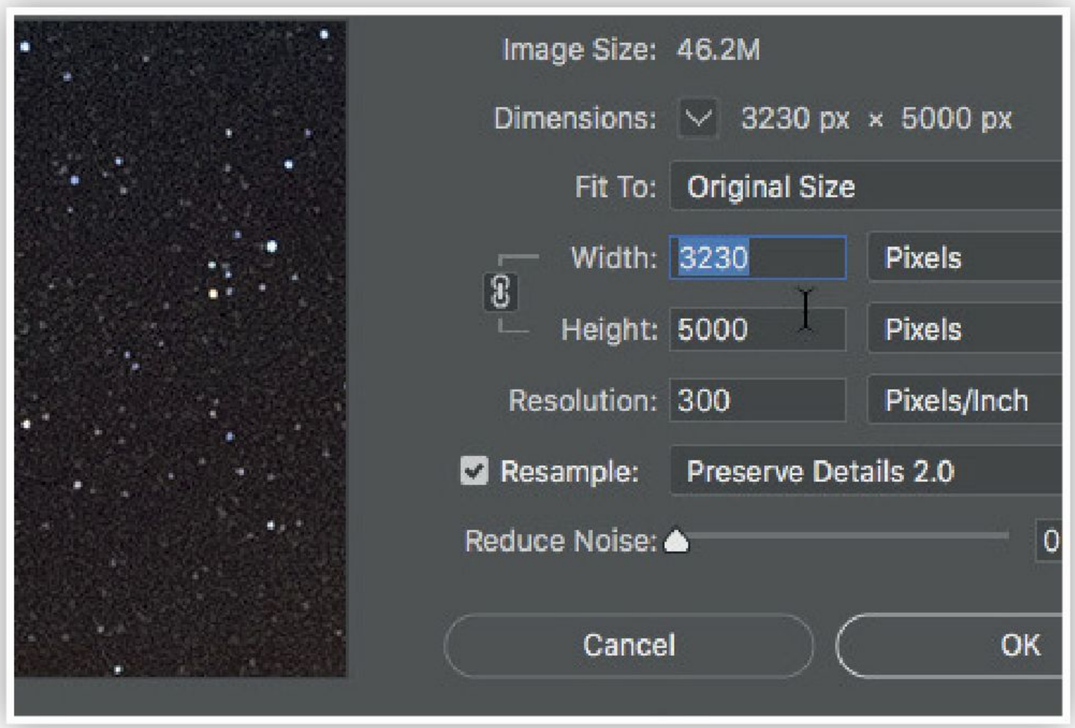
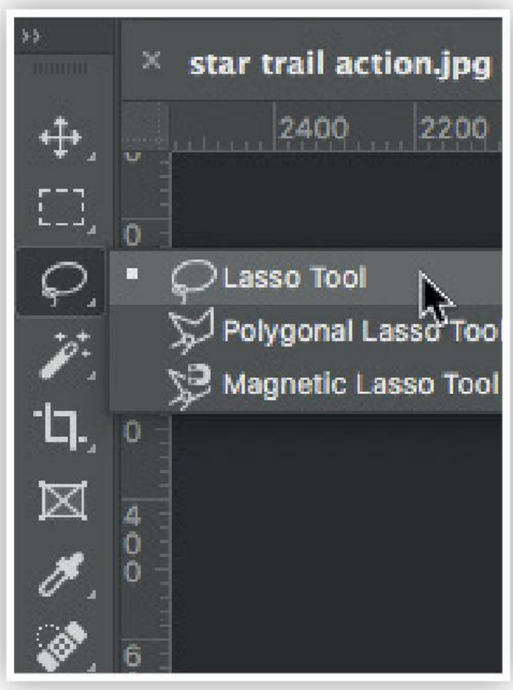




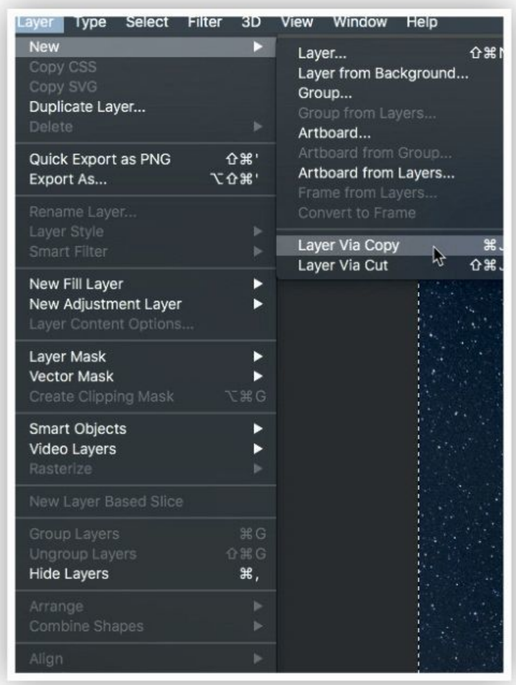
01 The process begins, as ever, with opening the image on which you wish to work. We have chosen an interesting shot of a castle against the night sky, which creates some nice foreground interest. The file in this case is called ‘star trail Action.jpg’.

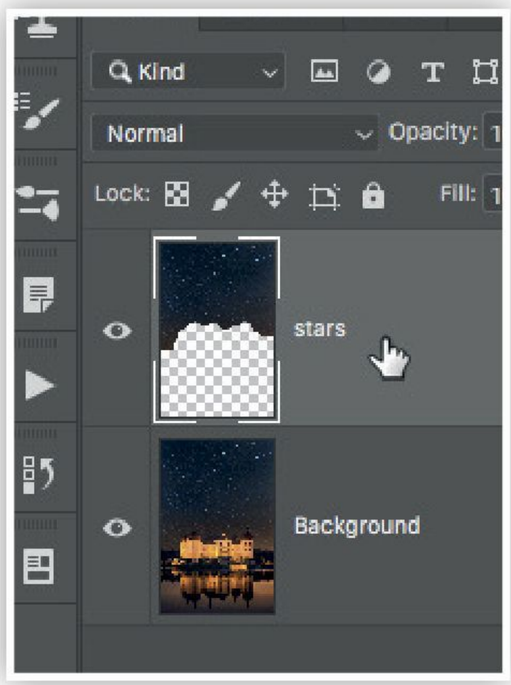
02 The tutorial we have created, and the settings used, are based on an image that measures 3230 pixels wide by 5000 pixels high. Bear in mind that if you are working with different sized images, then you may need to alter some of the values to match the size of image used.

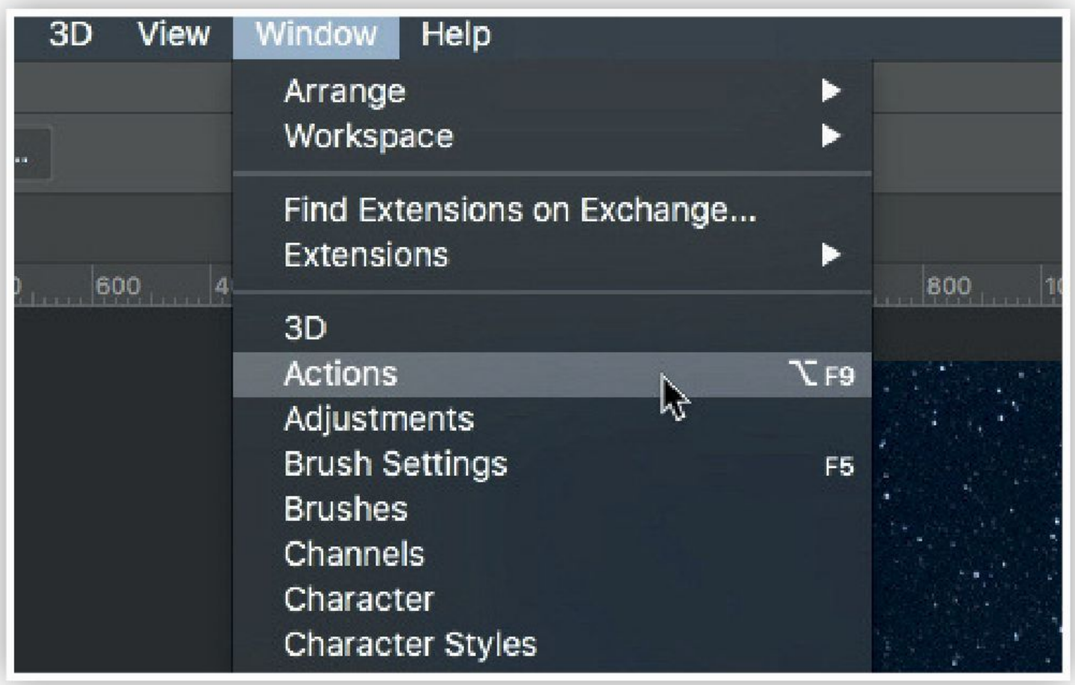


03 With our image open, we can begin the process of preparing the various elements needed. These can then be used to create the effect we are after and turned into a repeatable action. To begin, we need to select the area of the sky that will create the swirl pattern.

04 Go to the toolbar and select the Lasso Tool (L). Use the Lasso Tool to draw a selection around the main portion of the night sky above the castle. The area you select doesn’t need to be highly accurate. Just make sure only sky is selected.







05 With the sky now chosen and contained within an active selection, go to the top file menu and choose Layer > New > Layer Via Copy (Cmd + J). When you do this, the area of sky within the selection will be copied to a new layer. Once created, name this new layer ‘stars’.

06 This new layer will form the basis of the swirly star trail. Now we need to set up an Action for creating a duplicate layer that will also scale, rotate, and set its Blend Mode to Lighten. To begin, make sure the ‘stars’ layer is active and go to Window > Actions (Alt + F9).

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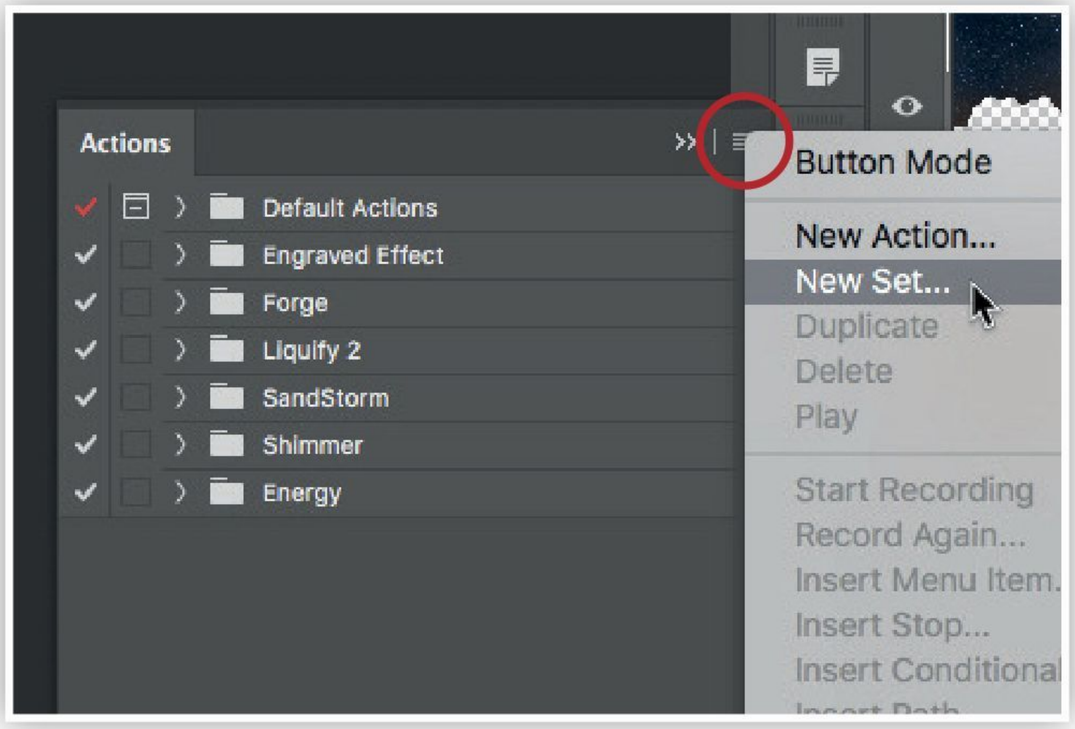
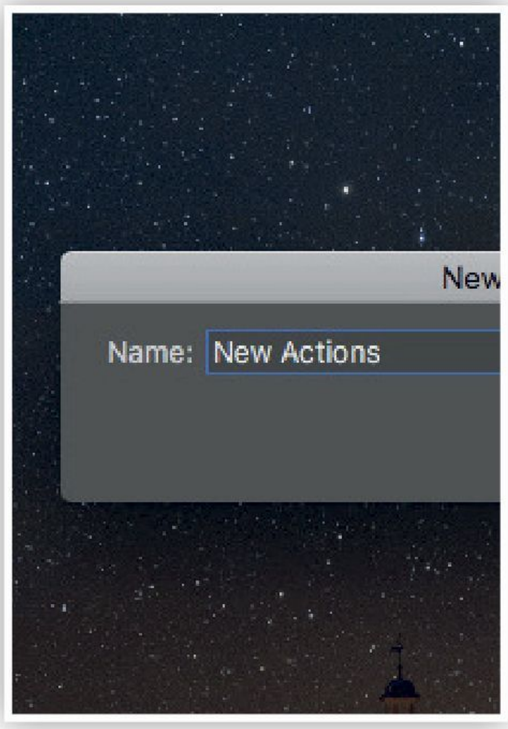
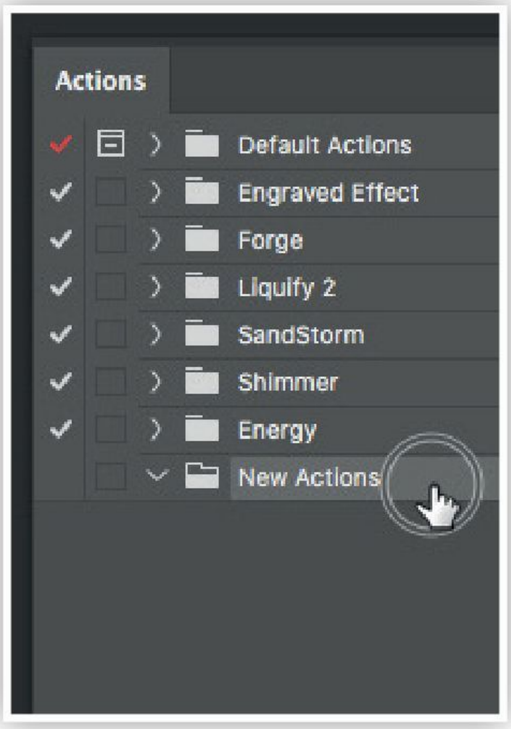
STAR TRAIL ACTION

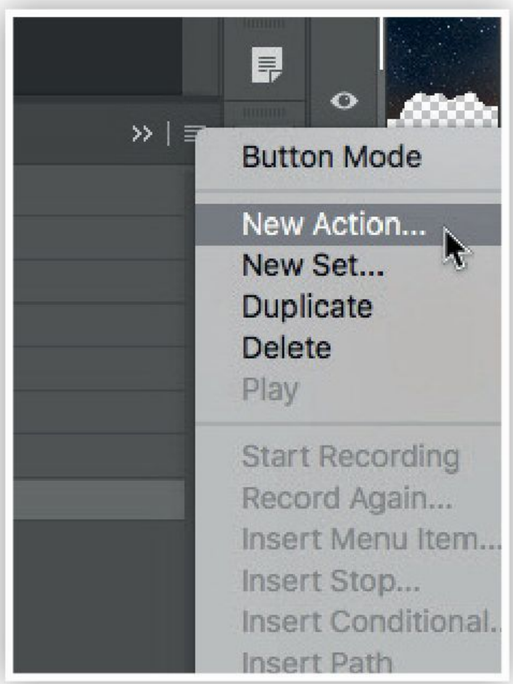


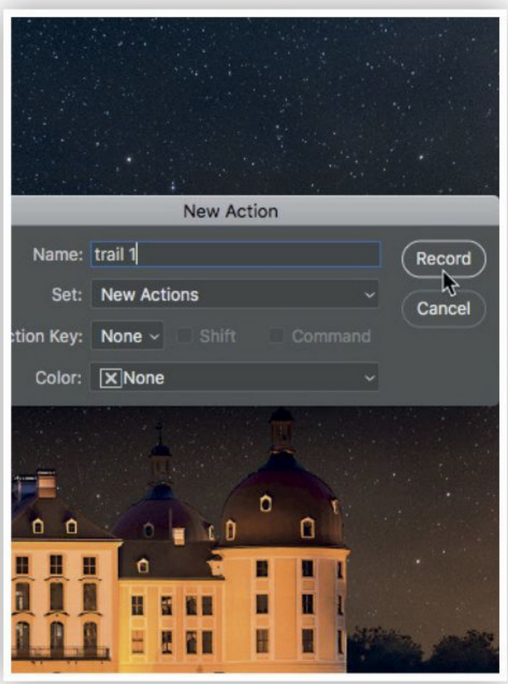


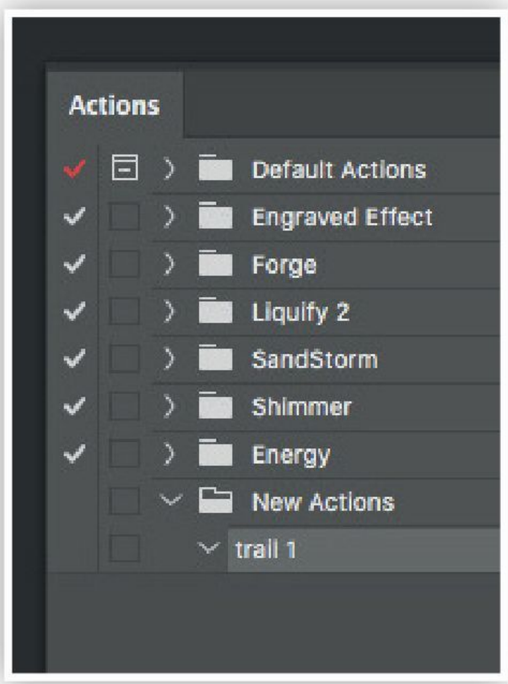


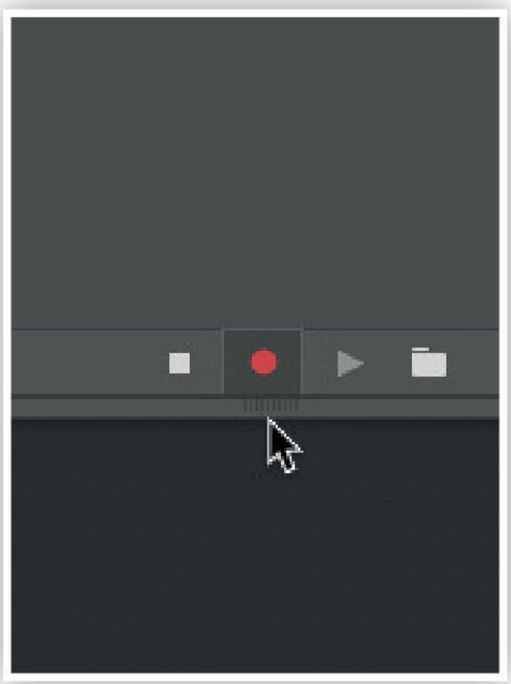
07 This will open the Actions properties panel. As a matter of good housekeeping, we are going to create a new destination folder for any new Actions created by us. Click on the small Menu button, in the top right of the Actions panel, and click on New Set.

08 The New Set dialog box will open and you will be prompted to input a name for the set you are creating. We named our new set 'New Actions'. and then clicked OK. This creates a new folder with that name, which you can now click to make it active, and into which you can put any new Actions.



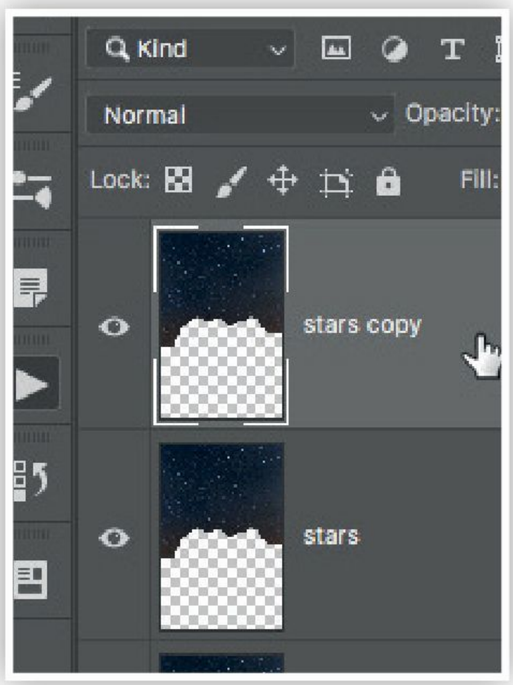


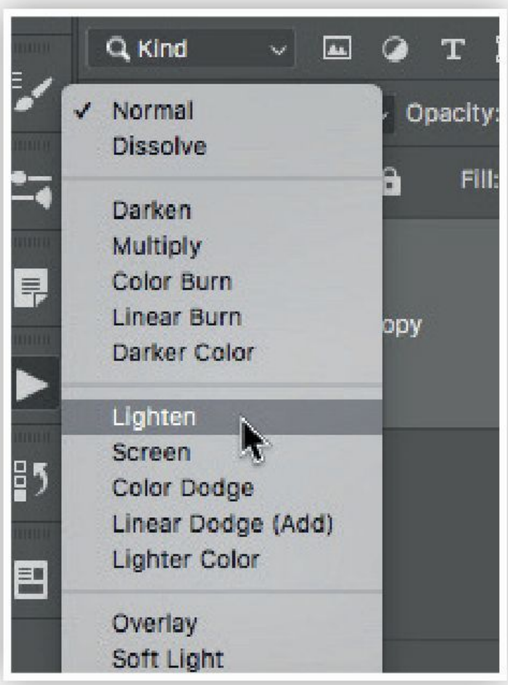


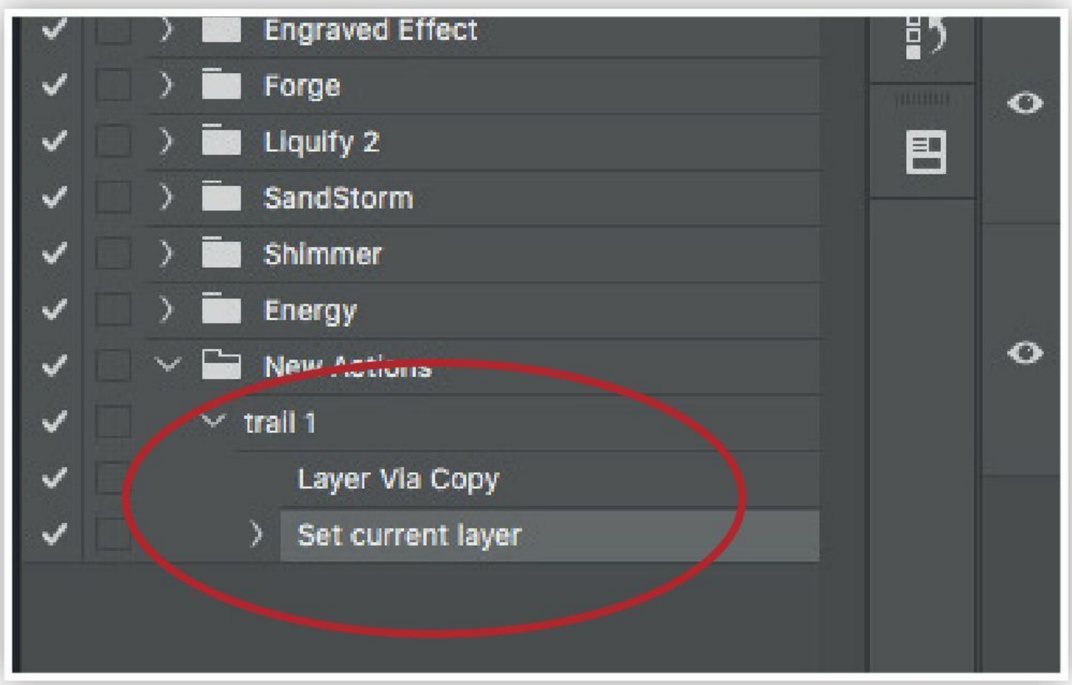


09 Now we have a folder in which to put them, we can begin creating an Action. Click on the Menu icon, in the top right of the properties panel, again and choose New Action. Enter a name into the New Action dialog box. We have used 'trail 1'. Click on the Record button to begin.

10 Within the 'New Actions' folder, you should see the name 'trail 1' appear. A red recording light is also on, in the bottom options panel. Be aware that any steps you take at this point will be recorded, so you need to have them ready to undertake without any mistakes.







11 Your 'stars' layer should still be active. Press Cmd + J to create a duplicate called 'stars copy'. Right-click this new layer and set its Blend Mode to Lighten. This means that only the brightest points of light of 50% grey equivalent are used and blended.

12 You should see in the Actions property panel (in the 'New Actions' folder), that references to what you are doing are being added to the 'trails 1' action. At this point, the layer duplication and the Blend Mode have been recorded and stored within the Action you are creating.

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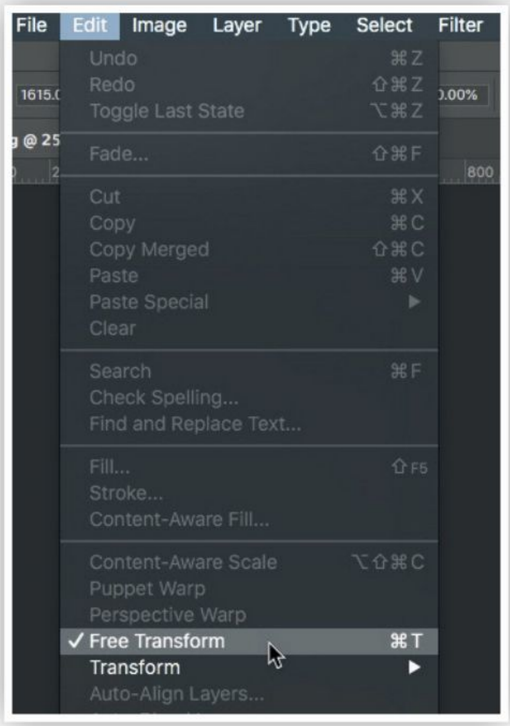
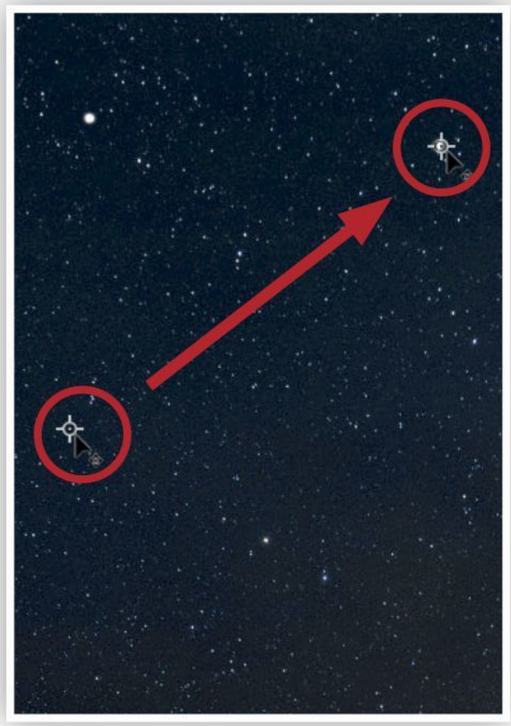
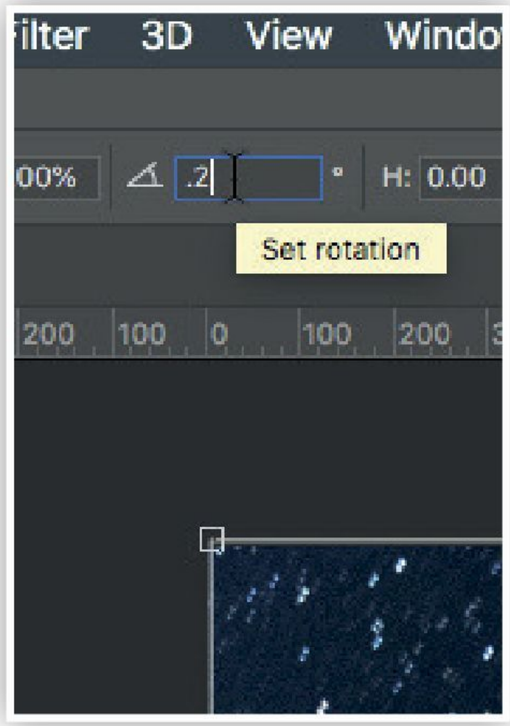
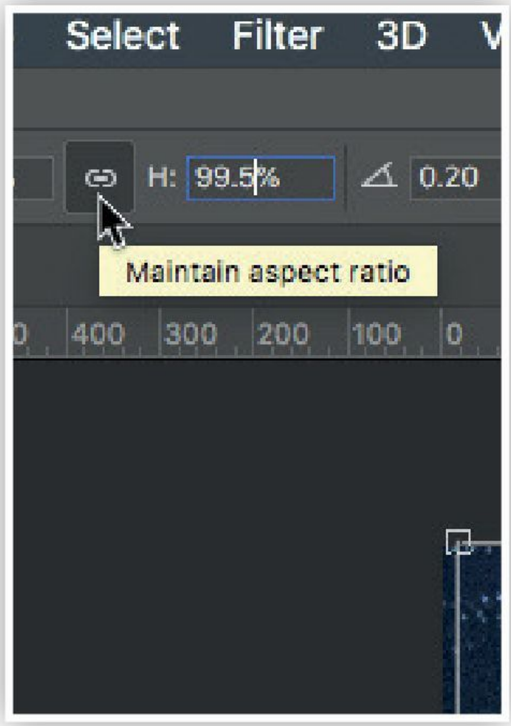


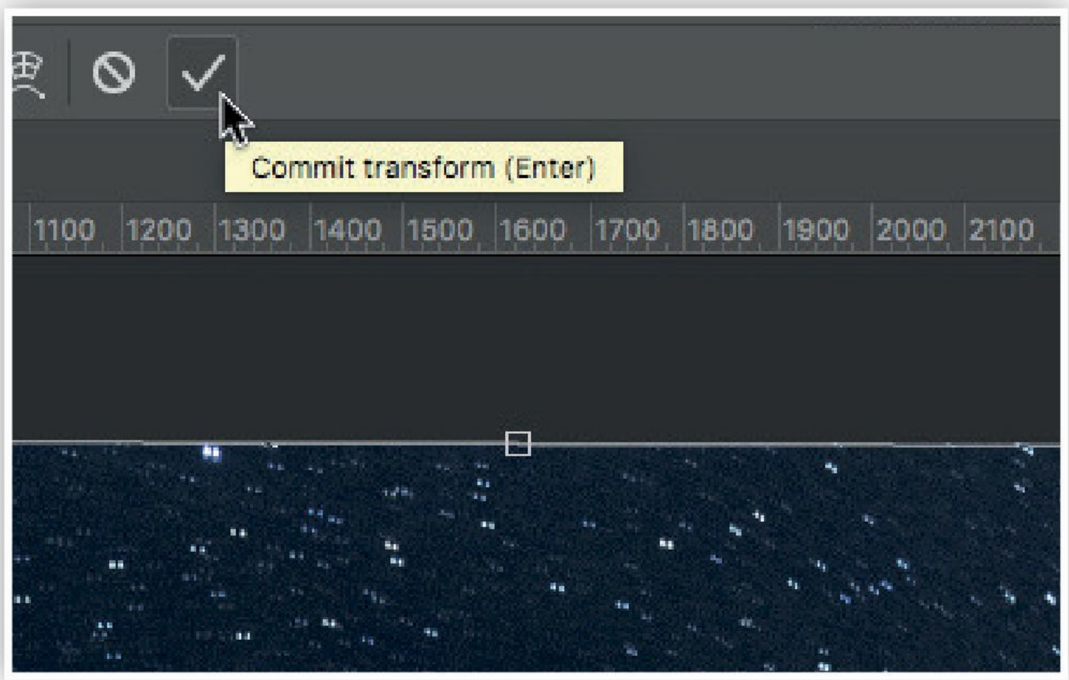


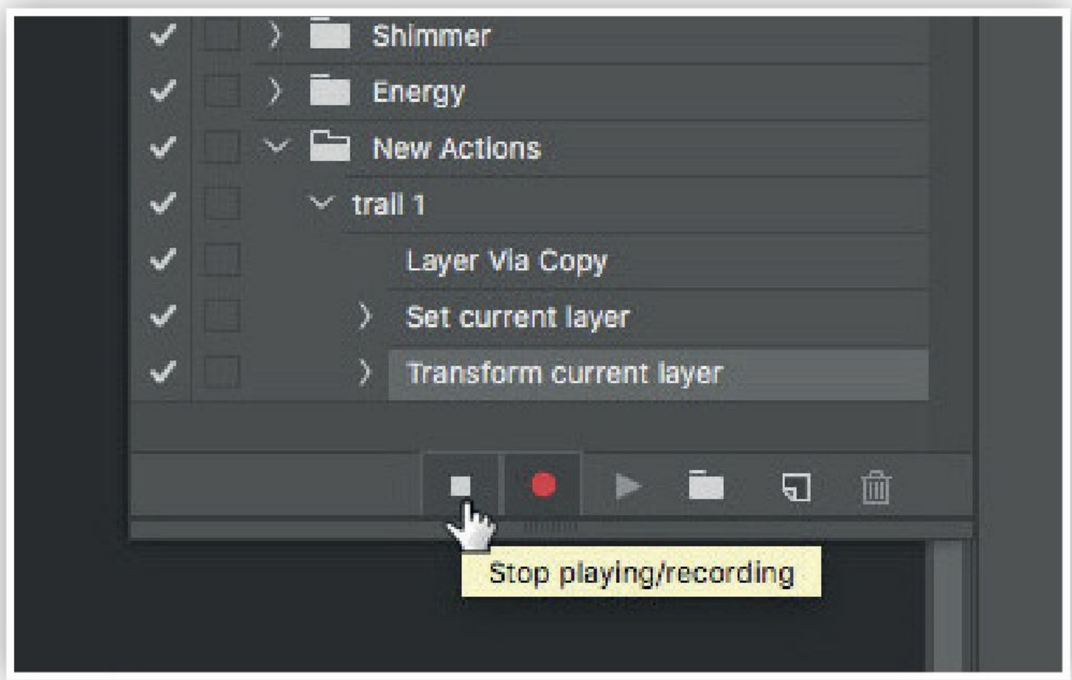




13 We now need to introduce some scaling and rotation to create the reducing swirl pattern we seek. Make sure 'stars copy' is the active layer, then go to Edit > Free Transform (Cmd + T), click on the centre of rotation marker and drag it off to the top right of the screen over a bright star.

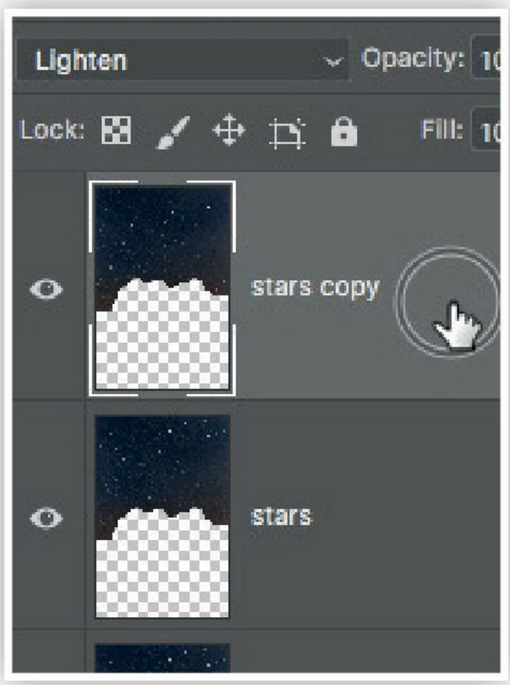
14 In the top Tool options menu, change the Set Rotation value to 0.20° to initiate a very small amount of clockwise rotation. Then click on the Maintain Aspect ratio so the linked icon appears and change Width and Height to 99.50%. This also reduces the layer by a tiny amount.

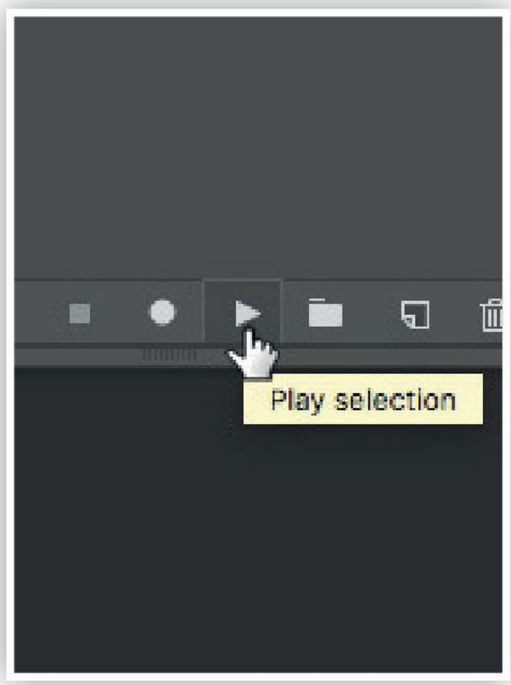


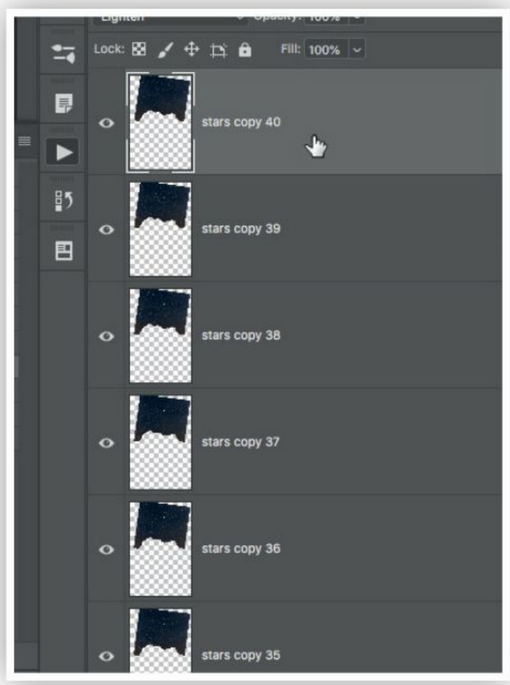


15 You then need to hit the Commit Transform button (shaped like a tick) in the tool options menu, to apply the scaling and rotation you just entered in the appropriate fields. If you look at the image, you should see the first signs of the effect beginning to happen.

16 The 'trail 1' Actions recording now contains the instructions to duplicate the layer, change its Blend Mode, move the centre of rotation, set a small amount of clockwise rotation, and reduce its size. At this point, you can click the Stop Recording button on the Actions panel.







17 Now the 'trail 1' Action is complete, you can click the 'stars copy' layer, to make it active, and then, under the Actions panel, press the Play Selection button to apply all the recorded instructions. For the effect to work, you will probably need around 30-50 copies.

18 Keep pressing the Play Selection button. As you do, you will see the swirling star trail forming and swirling inward to the centre of rotation point you set as part of the Actions recording. Keep going, adding more layers, until you have an effect that you like.

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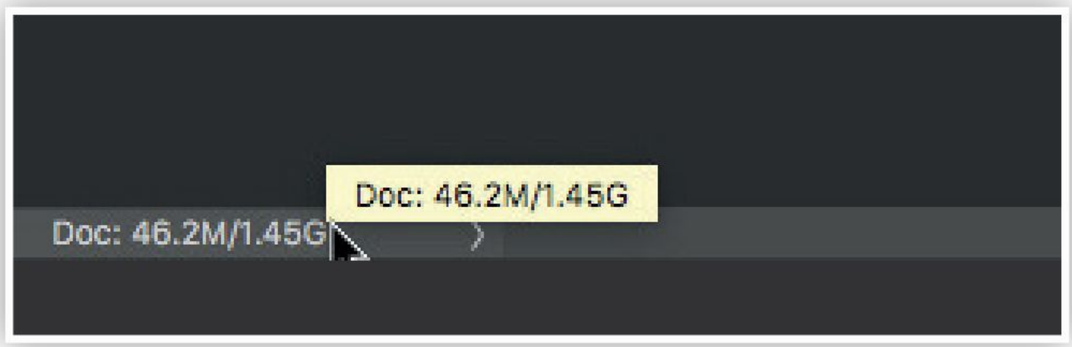
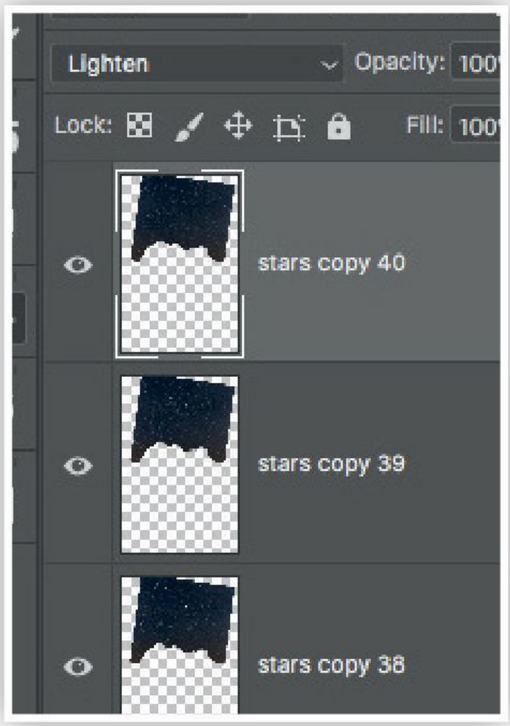
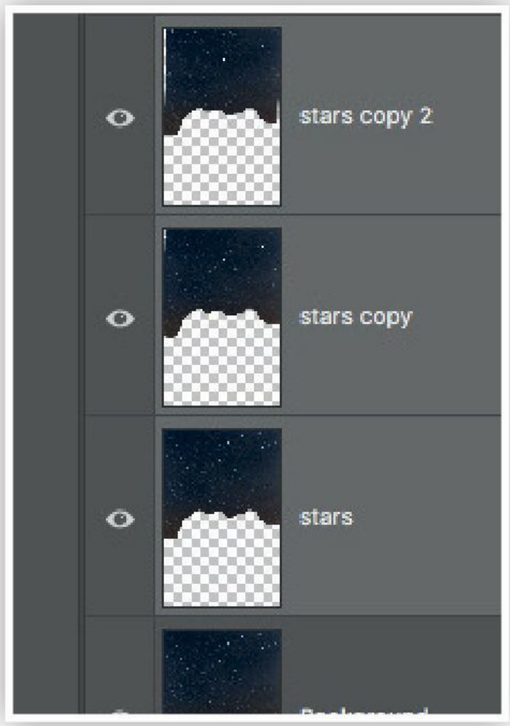
STAR TRAIL ACTION

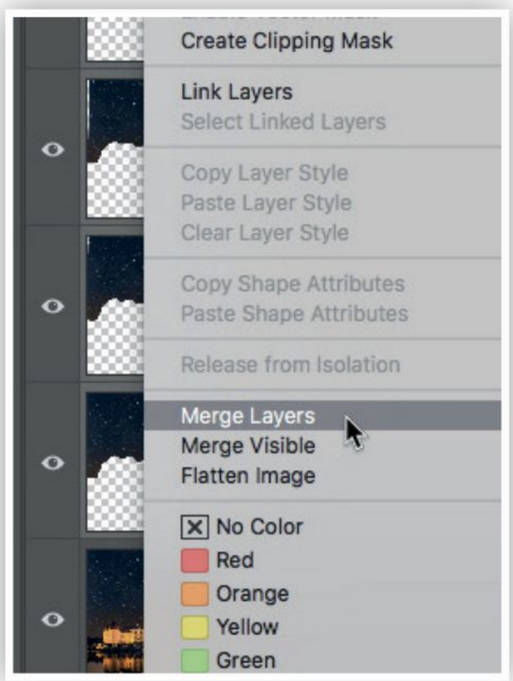


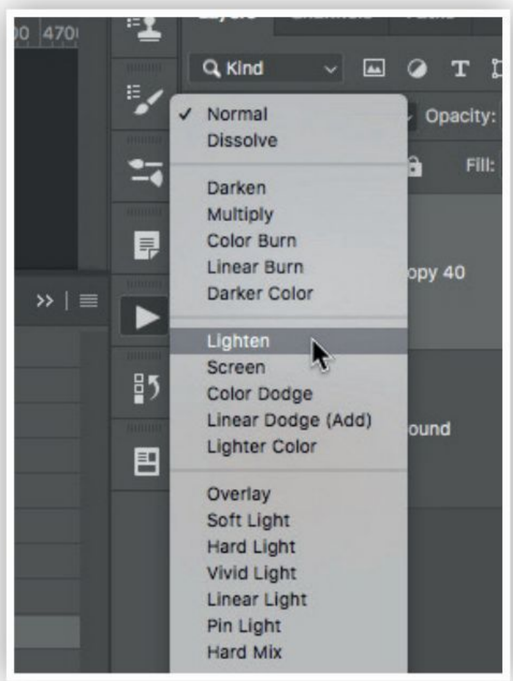


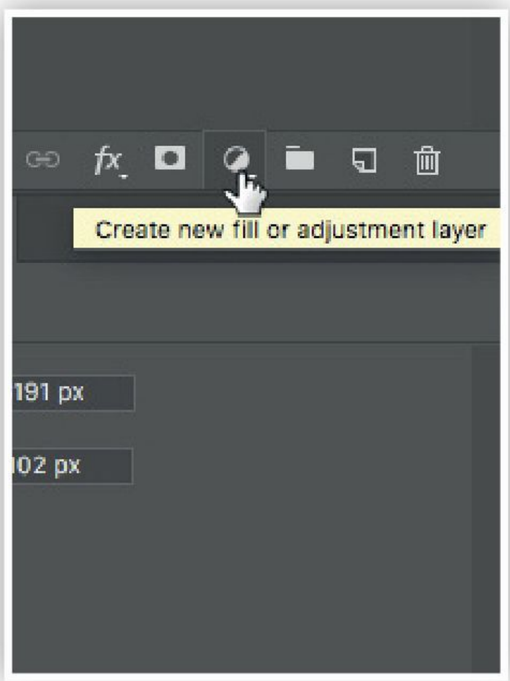


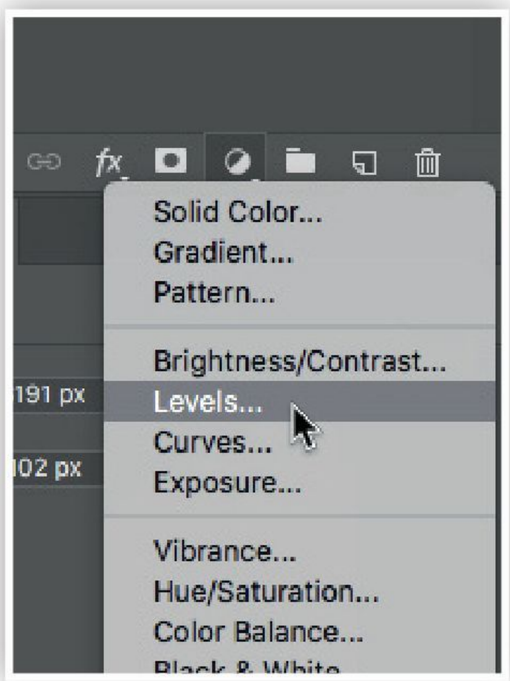
19 We stopped at 40 copies of the first layer. You will see that the pattern is now very strong. You may also notice that your document size has ballooned to a very large size. Our document topped out at a whopping 1.45Gb based on the pixel dimensions of our original image.

20 Luckily, we don't need to keep the document in this multi-layered state for long. Click on the top layer to make it active, hold the Shift key and scroll down to the 'stars' layer and click that too. All the layers will be selected as one.



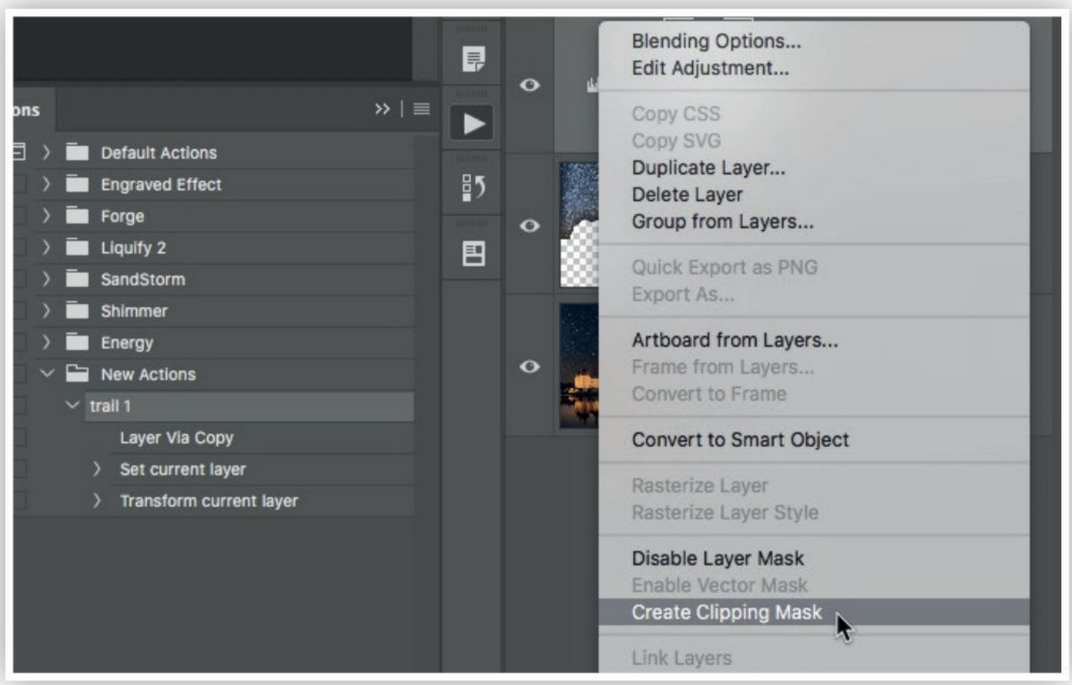


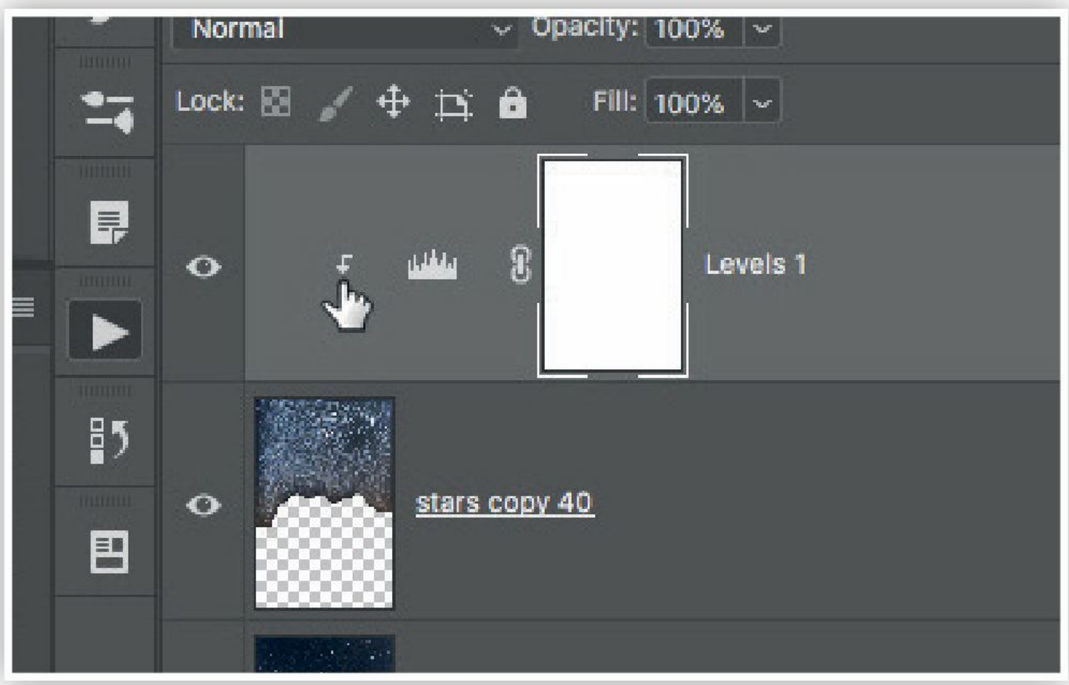




21 Right-click one of the selected layers and choose Merge Layers from the content menu that appears. All the trail layers will merge and reset back to their default Blend Mode. You can easily click on Blend Mode again and change the newly merged layers back to Lighten.

22 At the moment, the star trail looks a little overpowering, but we can adjust that quite easily and in a non-destructive manner. Click on the Create New Fill Or Adjustment Layer button at the bottom of the Layers panel and choose Levels as the adjustment to add.





23 Because you still have your original base layer with the castle on it, you need to make sure that the new 'Levels 1' adjustment layer you just added only affects the merged star trails layer above it. Make sure 'Levels 1' is selected, right-click it and choose Create Clipping Mask.

24 This Create Clipping Mask option instructs the 'Levels 1' adjustment layer to only affect the layer directly below it and no others. If you look at the thumbnail, you will see a small arrow pointing down at the layer below to let you know it is clipped to the merged star trails.

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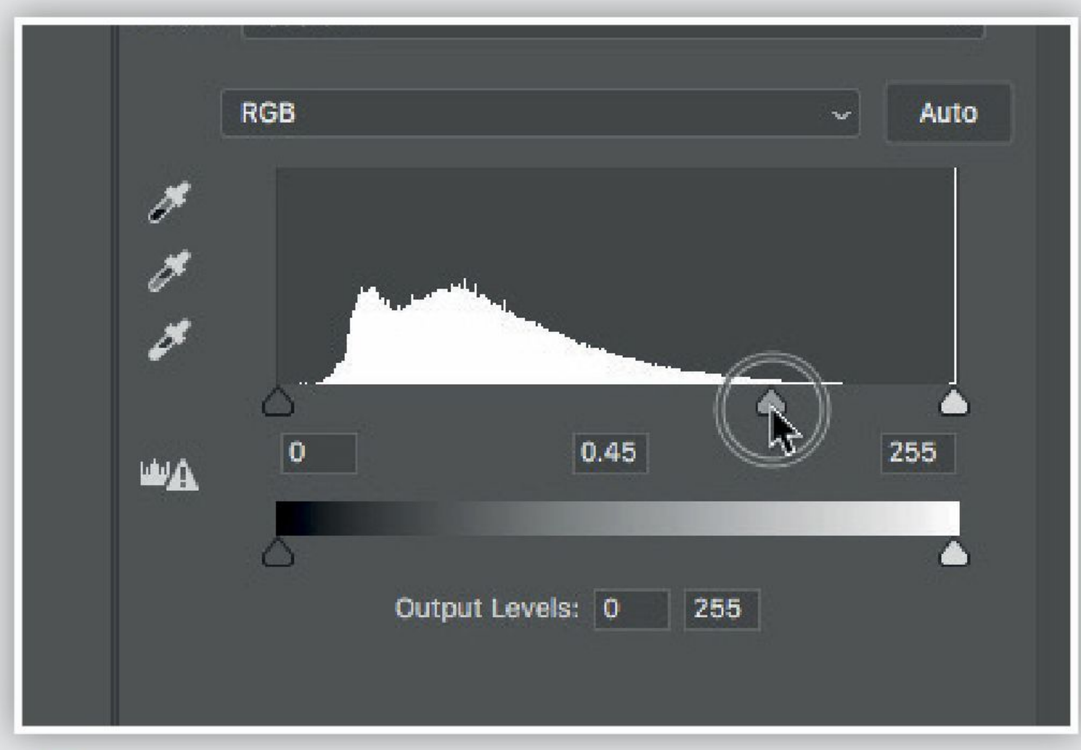
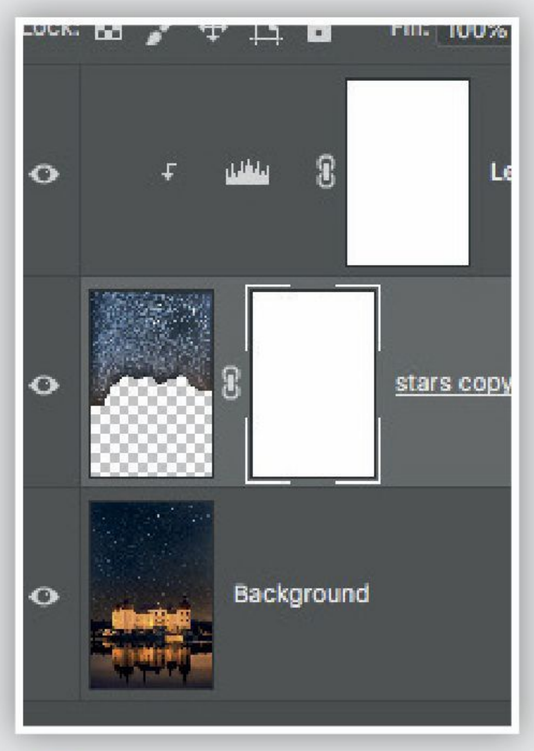
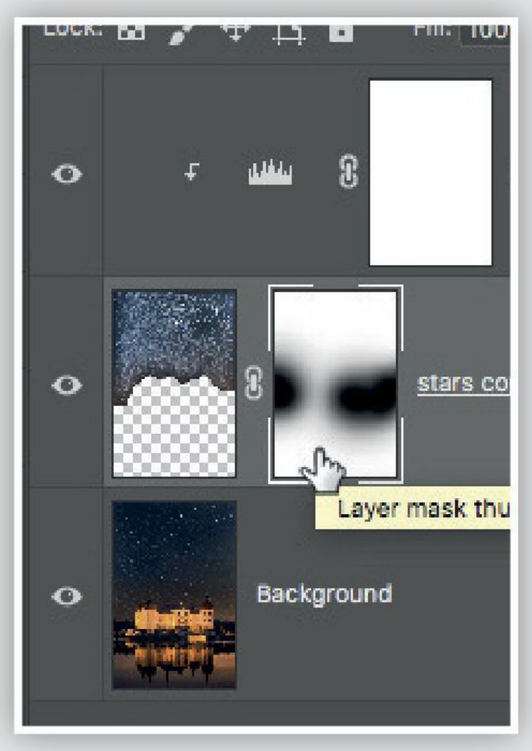
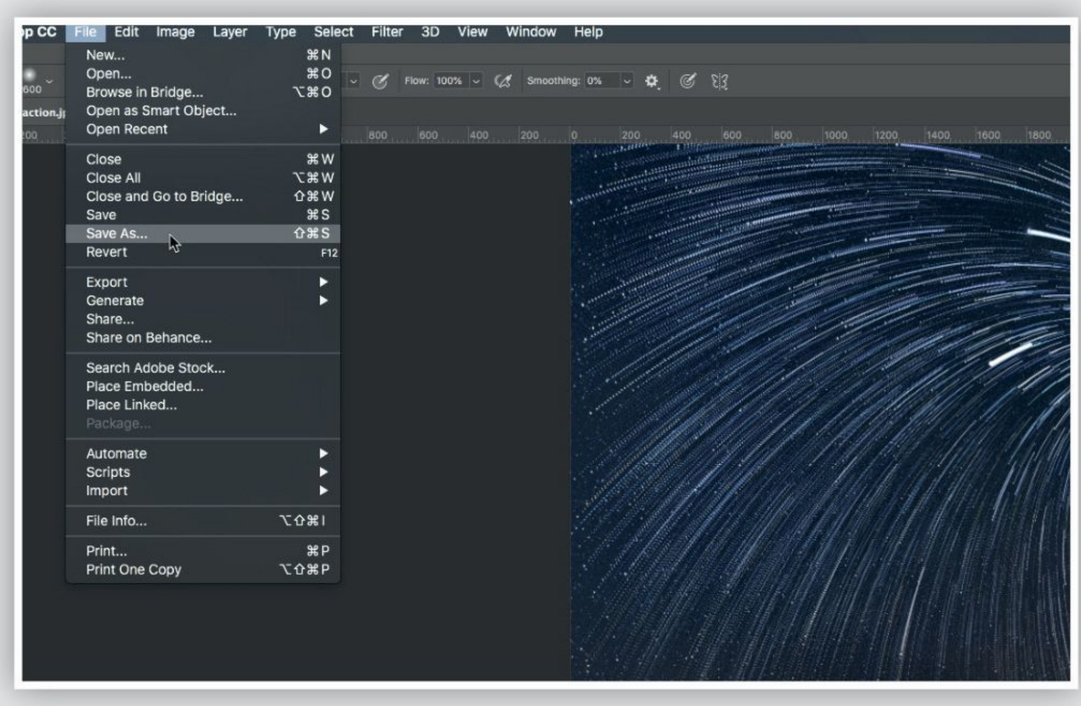






25 Now you can drag the midtone slider to the right and make all the middle tones of the star trails darker, to better blend with the image as a whole. Next, you might want to blend the trails into the base layer a little better. This is easy to do.



26 Make the merged star trails ('stars copy 40' in our example) the active layer and click the Add Layer Mask button. You can then use a large, soft, black brush on the 'stars copy 40' layer mask to blend out the stars at the bottom of the image.

27 With that adjustment completed, your Actions tutorial is completed. All that remains is to go to File > Save As (Shift + Cmd + S) and save your document with an appropriate file name. The Action you created will remain stored in Photoshop until you decide to delete it.

Photoshop actions

Take the drudgery out of repetitive tasks.

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Wet Plate Portraits

This tutorial content is available for download

A unique and eye-catching portrait processing technique

When photography was in its infancy, the method by which images were captured was complex, time-consuming and involved a lot of brittle materials and harsh chemicals. That said, some early wet plate images are amazing to behold even now. So great is the lasting impact of these early photographs that today's photographers actively seek out ways to replicate the look. Some actually use the old equipment and process using the old wet plate techniques. Some use a digital approach using Photoshop. Safe to say this is only an approximation of the result you would get if you did it for real, but since not everyone has access to old bellows cameras, darkrooms, plates and chemicals, here is our version of the classic effect given a Photoshop twist.

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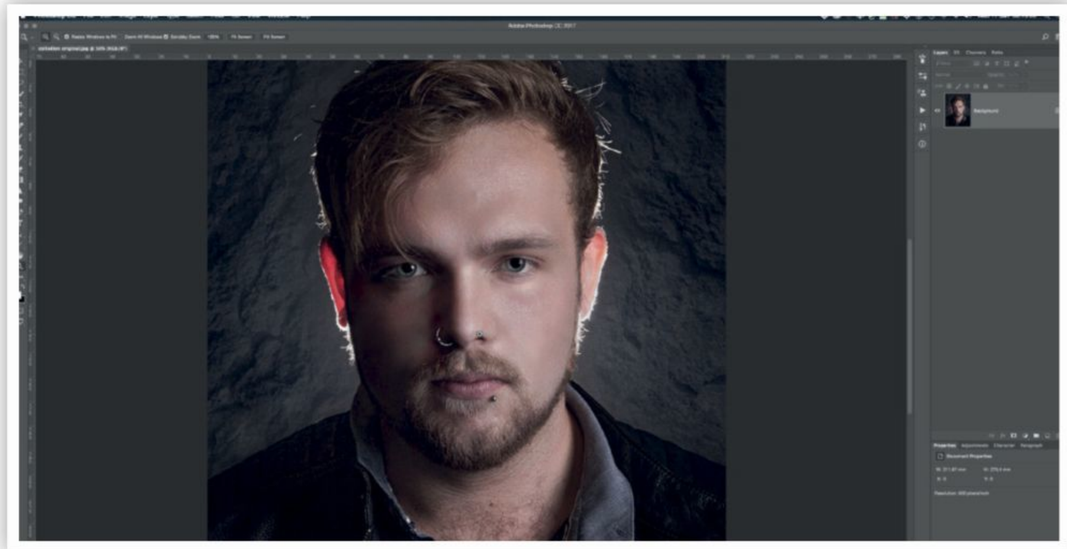
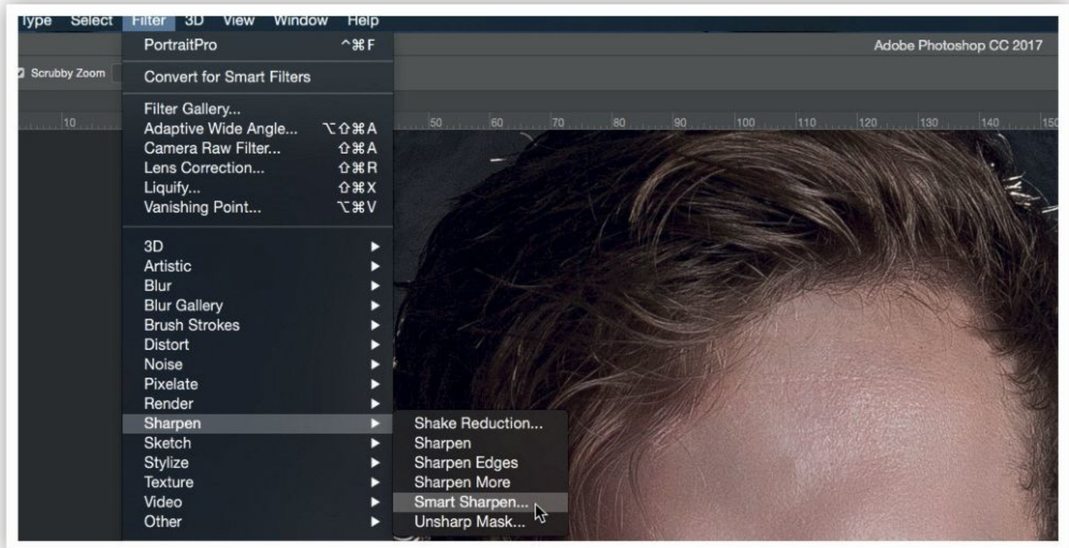
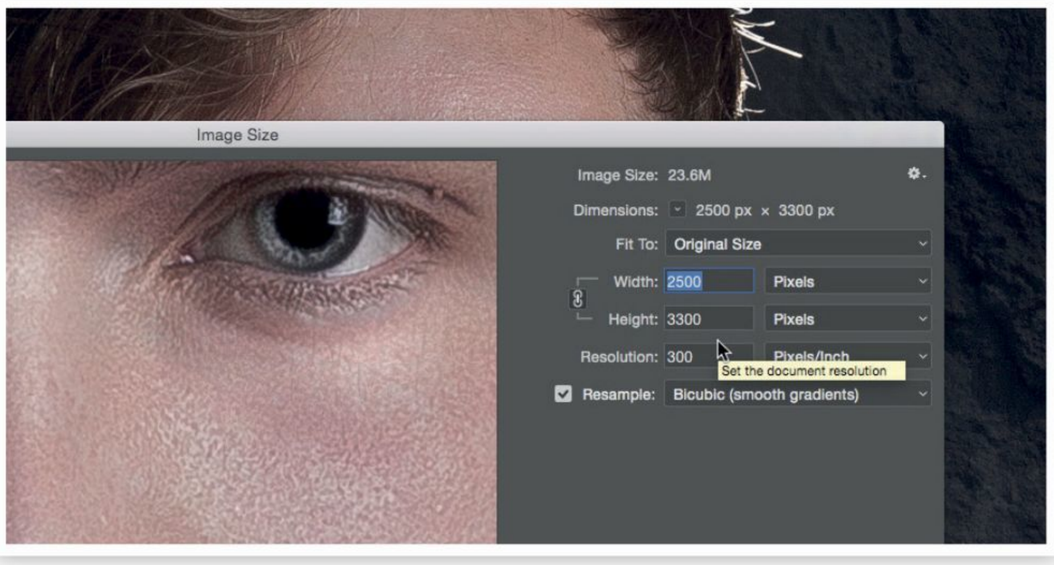
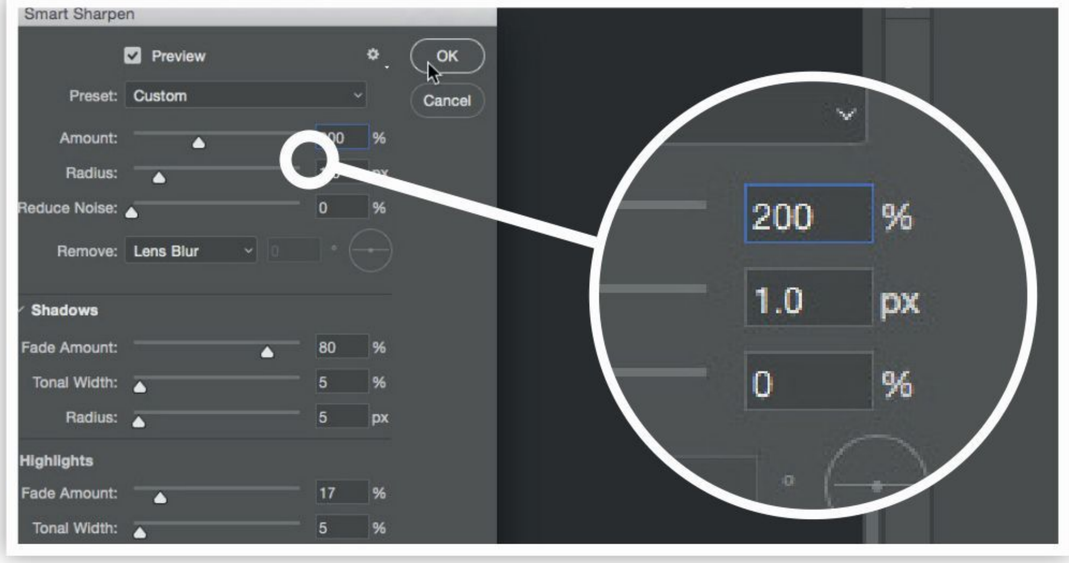


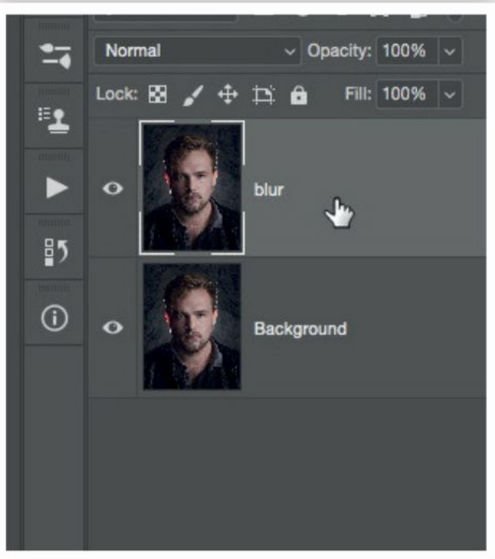


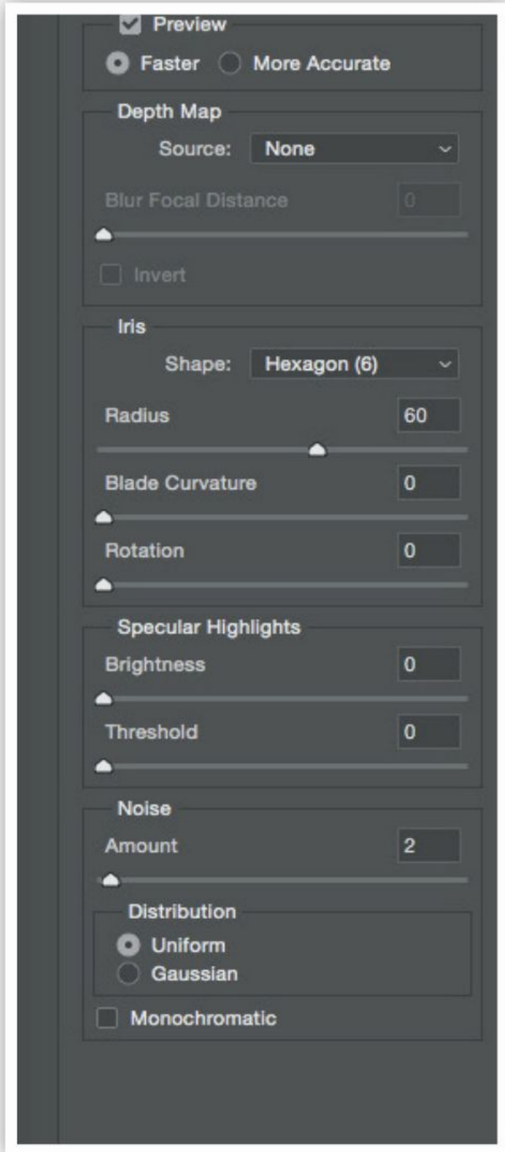


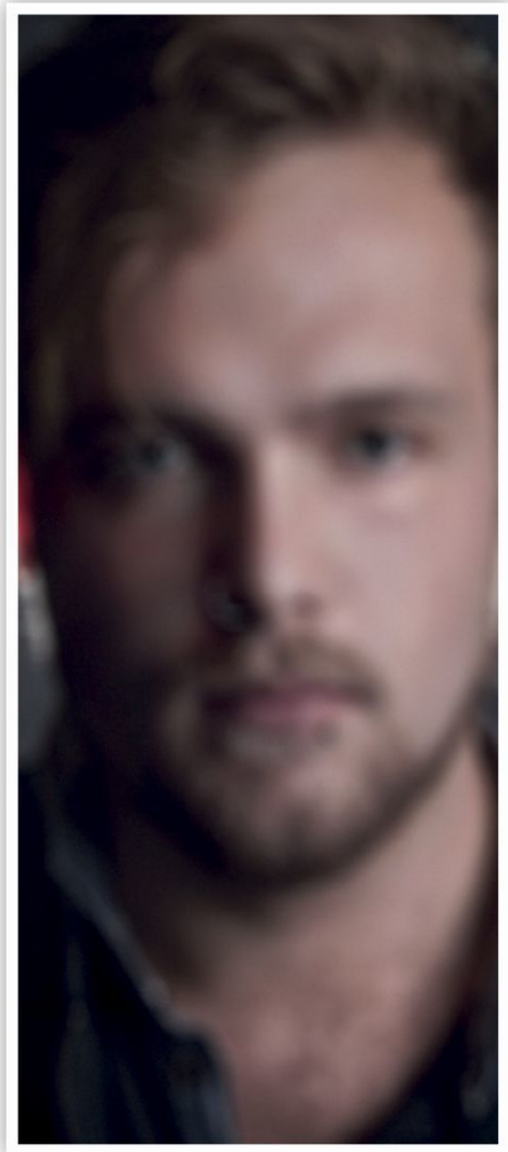


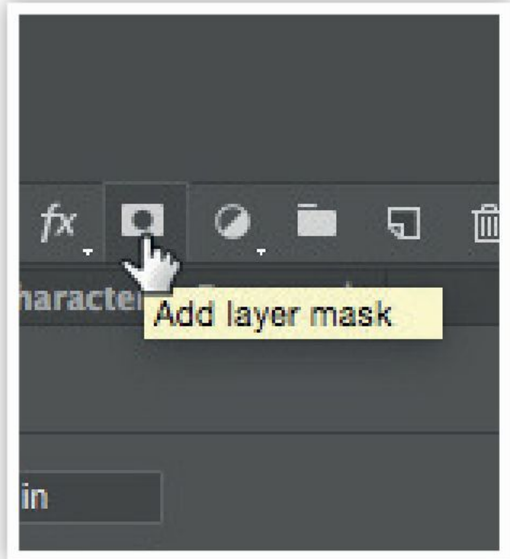
01 We start off with a suitable head and shoulders portrait as typified by so many classic portraits done in this style. Our example is a portrait of Oli. It is 2500 pixels wide by 3300 pixels deep. Our settings are based on an image this size.

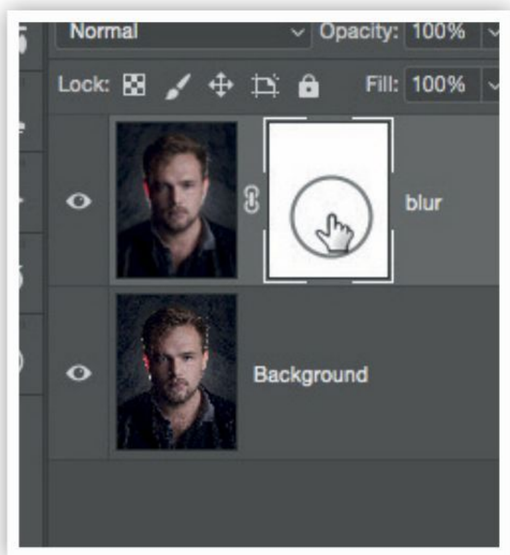
02 The first step is to sharpen the image. Go to Filter > Sharpen > Smart Sharpen and set your Amount to about 200%, Radius to 1px and click OK when you are ready to proceed.











03 Press Cmd + J to create a duplicate layer of this image and name it ‘blur’. With the new layer active, go to Filter > Blur > Lens Blur and make your Radius 60 and Noise 2. Click OK and the blur will be applied.

04 With the ‘blur’ layer active, Click on the Add Layer Mask button at the bottom of the layers palette. A layer mask will be added to the blurred portrait. We now want to combine both the blurred and sharp layers.

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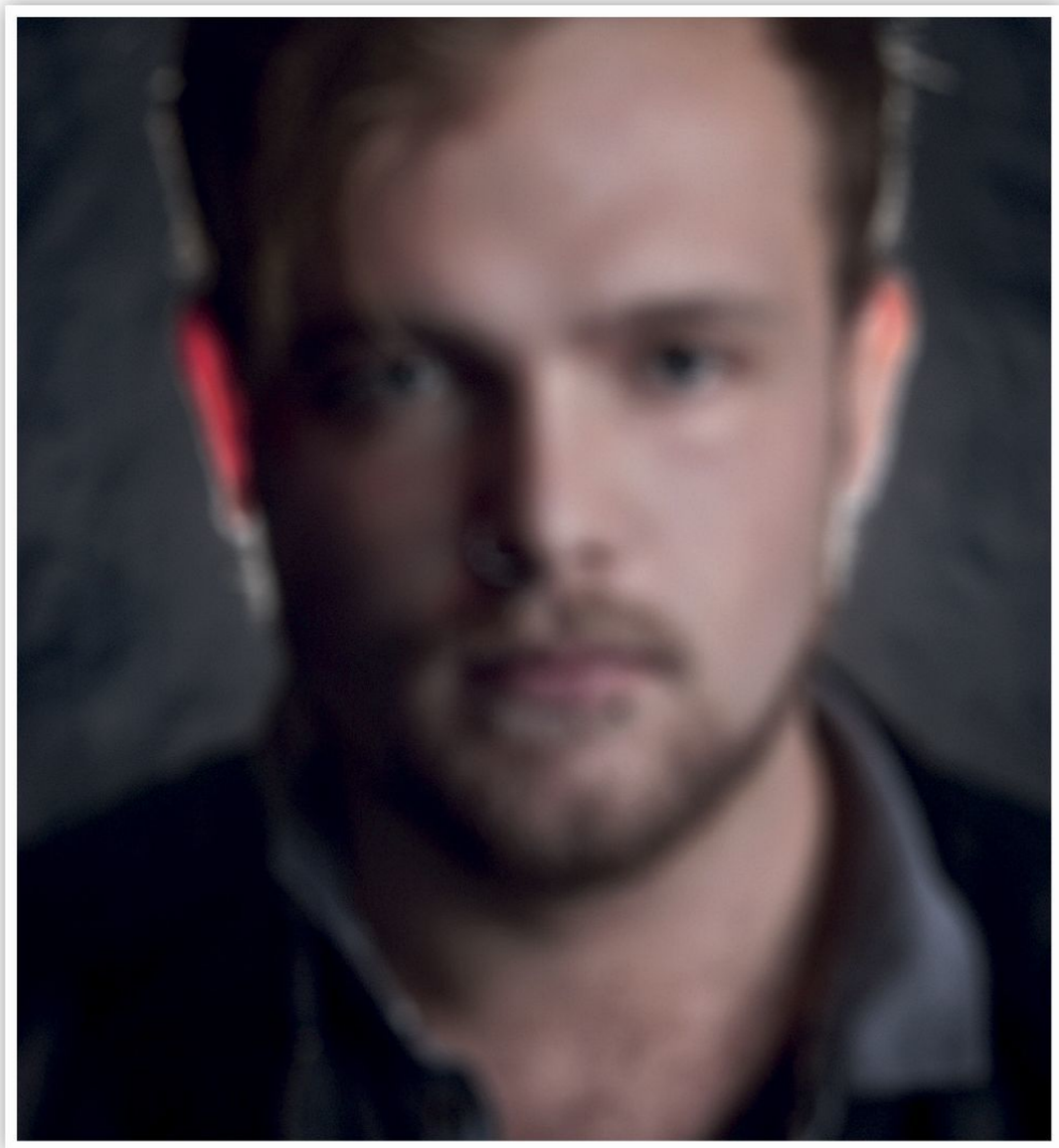
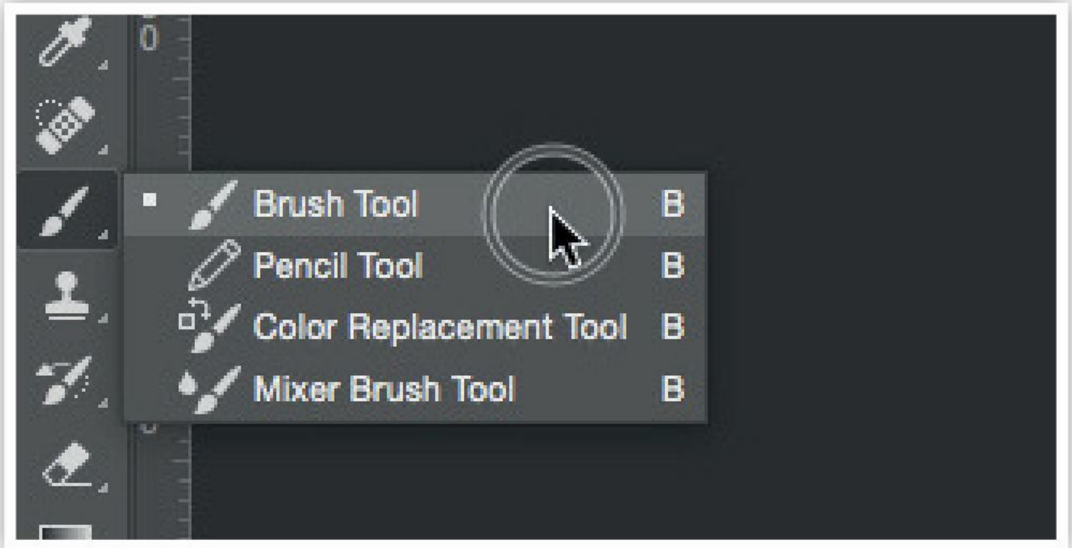
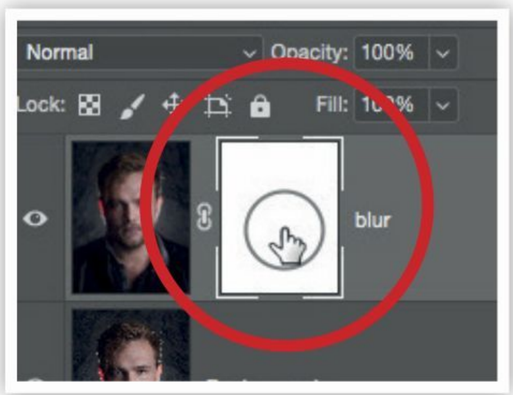
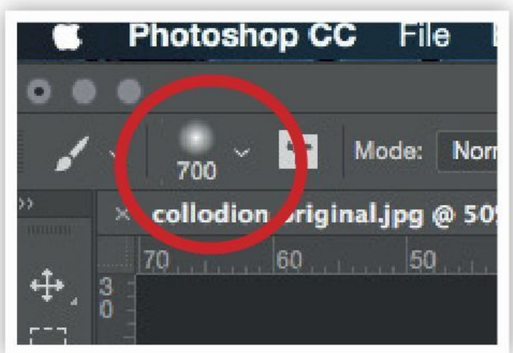


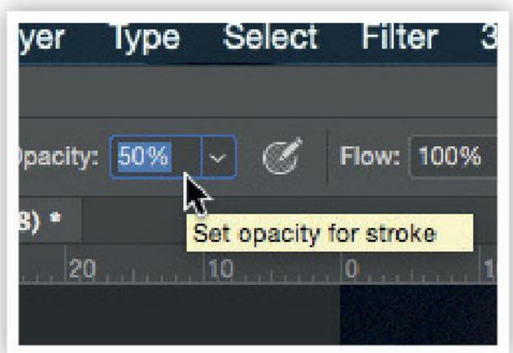
05 Wet plate photographs are characterised by their very shallow depth of field. Normally, just the eyes and some of the facial features are the only things in sharp focus. This is what we are trying to emulate.

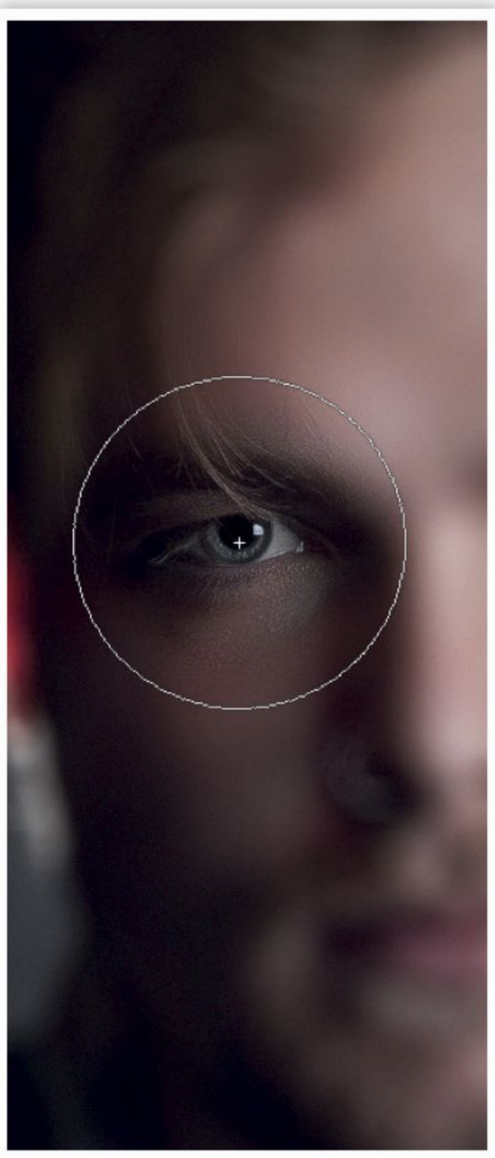


06 Go to your toolbar and select your Brush Tool. Make sure your foreground colour is set as black. You can press D to default the colours to black and white and press X to toggle which is the foreground colour.

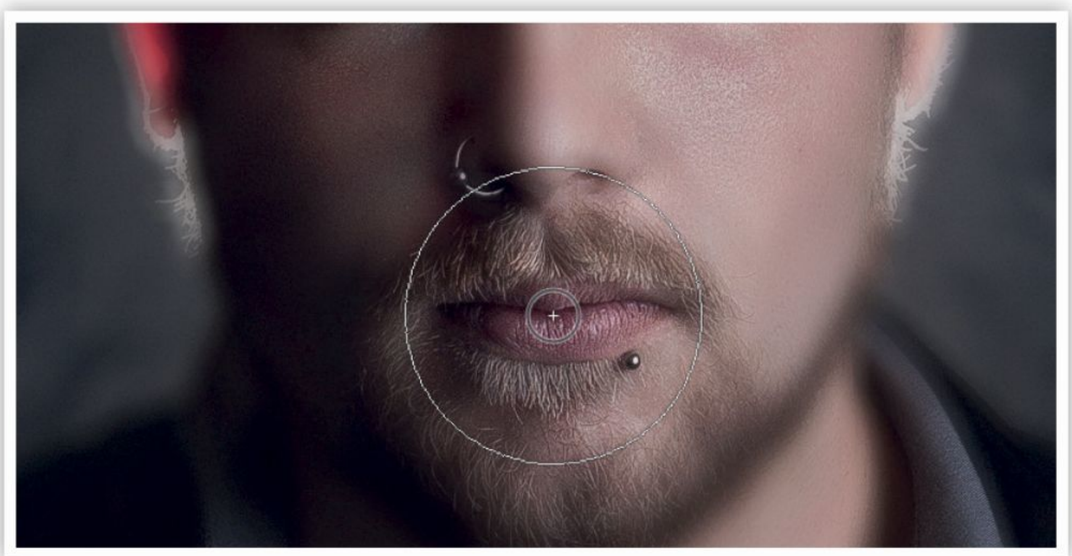


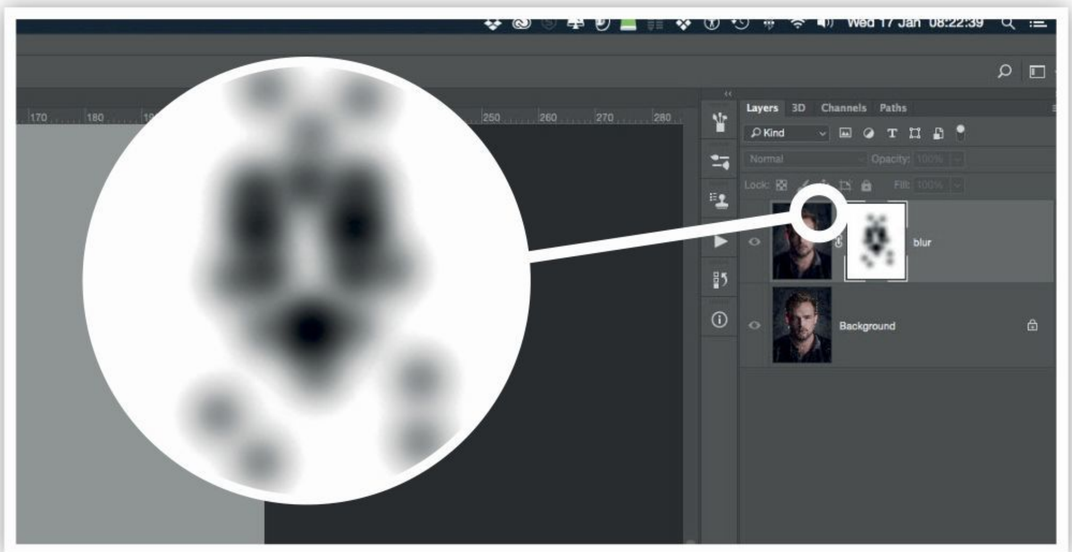






07 Click the ‘blur’ layer mask thumbnail to make it active and use a large, soft, black brush with its Opacity set at 50%, and begin painting in the eyes, nose and mouth of the man’s face.





08 With each click of the brush, you will see more and more of the sharp layer below starting to show through. When you are done, you should have a shallow depth of field effect with just the eyes and the face in focus.

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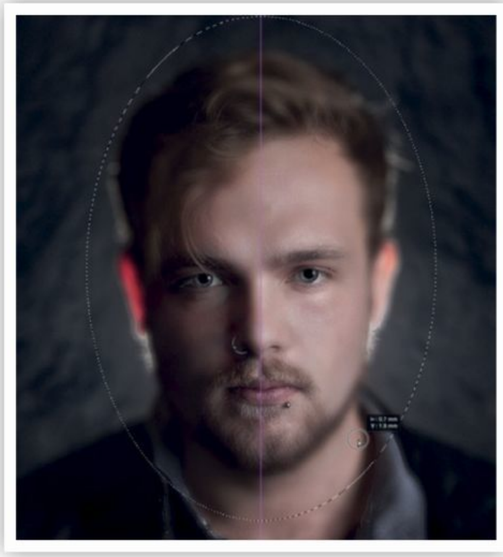
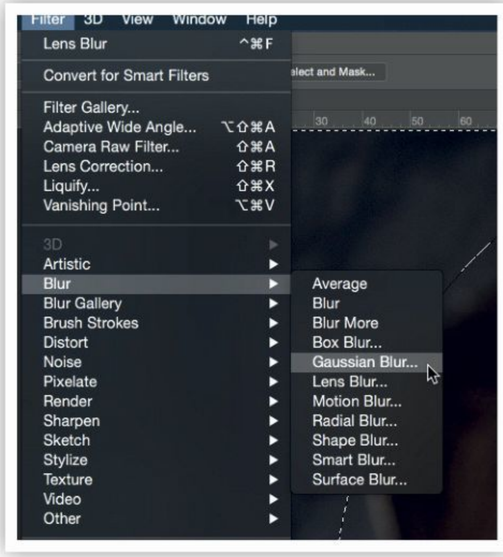
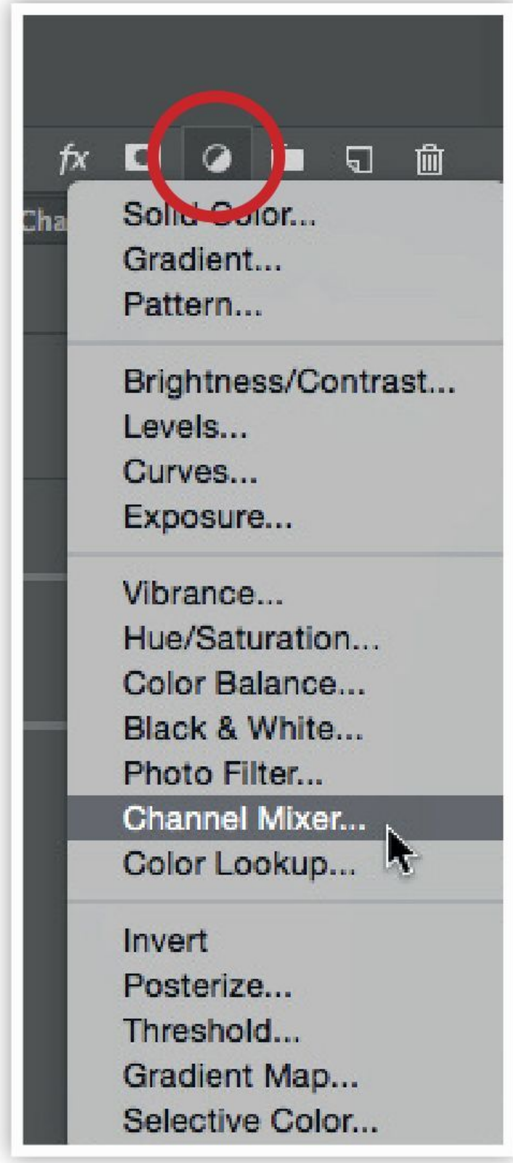
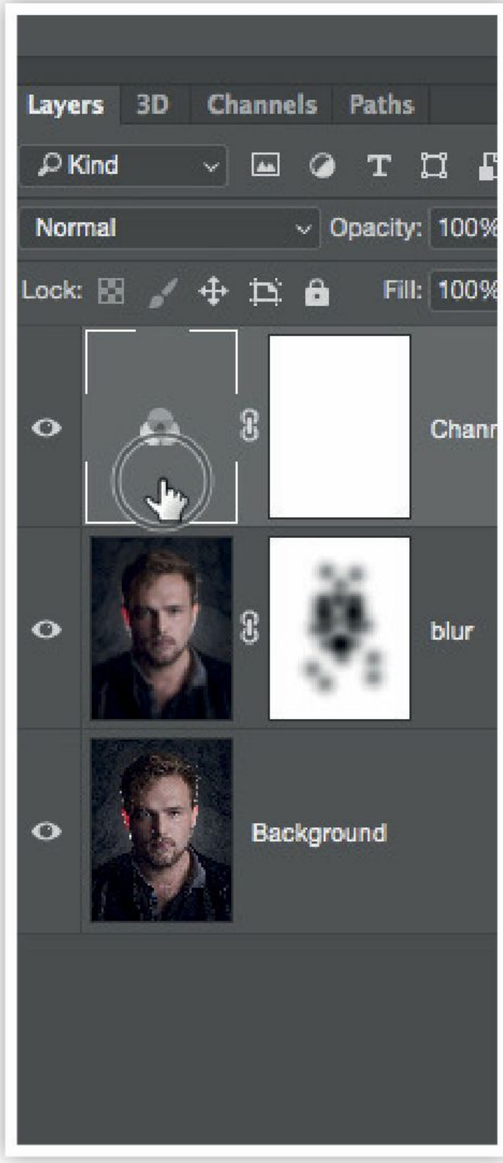
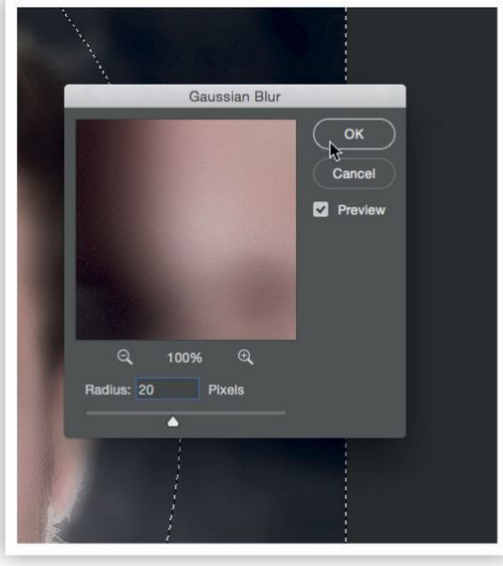




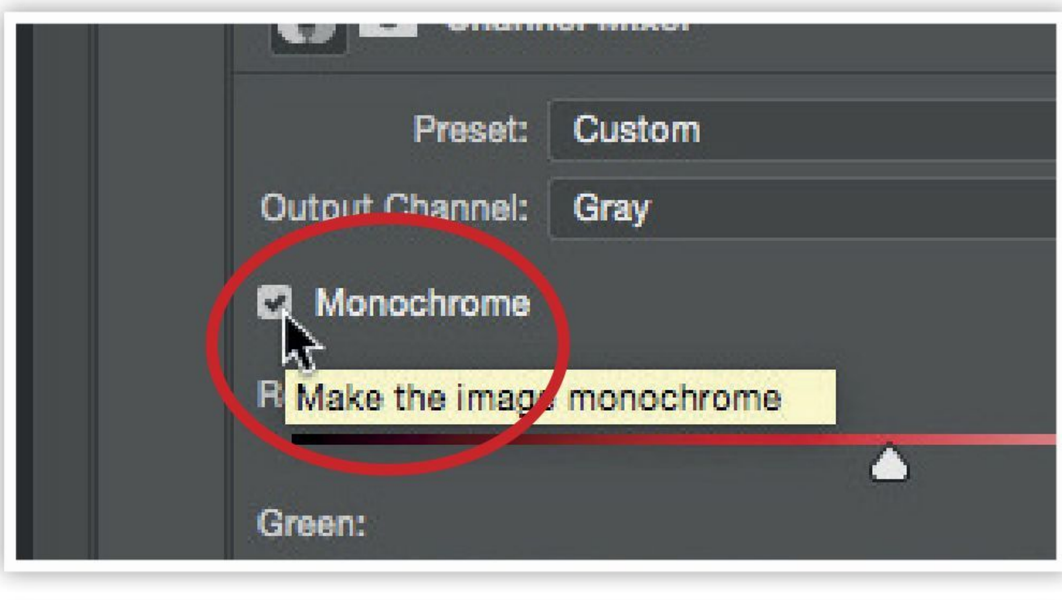


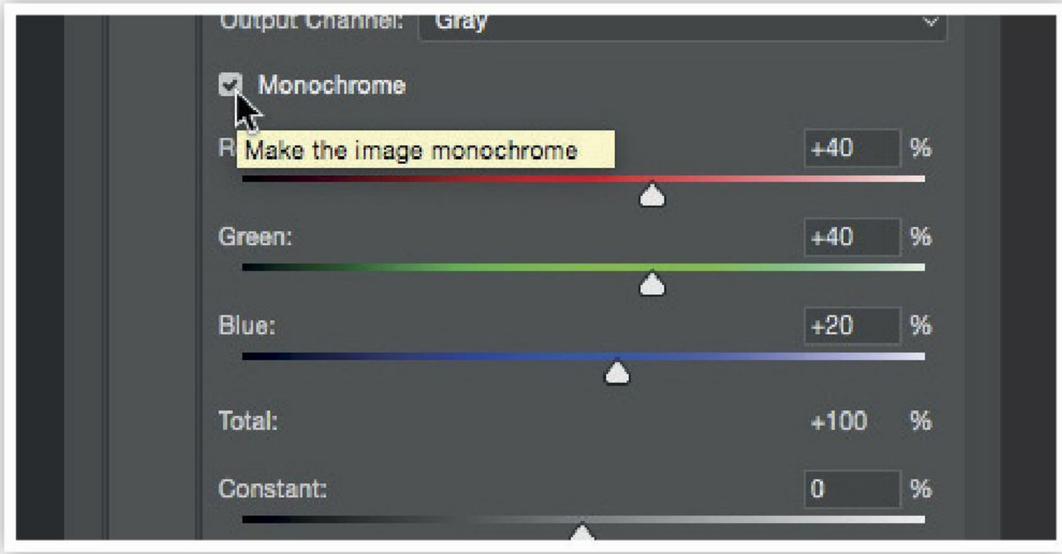




09 You can make the top 'blur' image softer by putting an elliptical marquee (M) around the face, inverting the selection (Shift + Cmd + I), feathering the selection by about 200 pixels and then using Gaussian Blur with a Radius of about 20 pixels.

10 Next, click on the Adjustment Layer button and select Channel Mixer from the dropdown menu. Make sure the new Adjustment Layer is at the top of your layer stack. Click on it to make it active if it isn't already.





11 From the Channel Mixer Properties panel, make sure the Monochrome button is checked. Now you need to adjust the Red, Green and Blue sliders to adjust the image to give it a more authentic wet plate look.

12 This kind of portrait requires that the RGB sliders are adjusted in such a way to bring out texture in the skin. This image requires the sliders be set at Red -35%, Green -34%, Blue +184% and Constant +3%.

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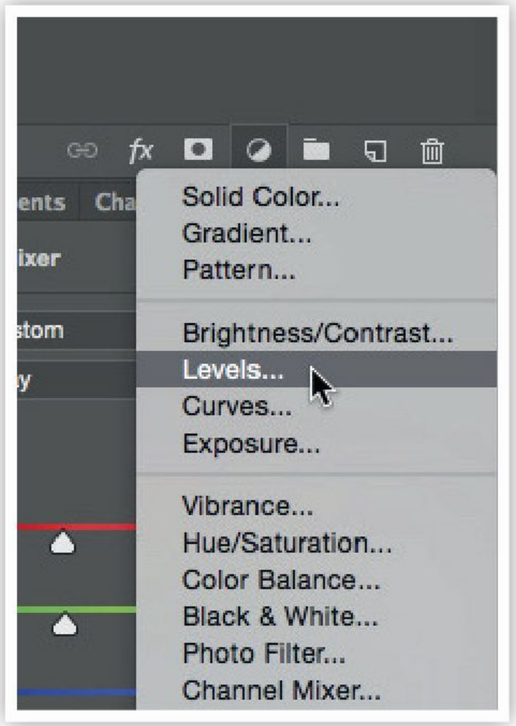
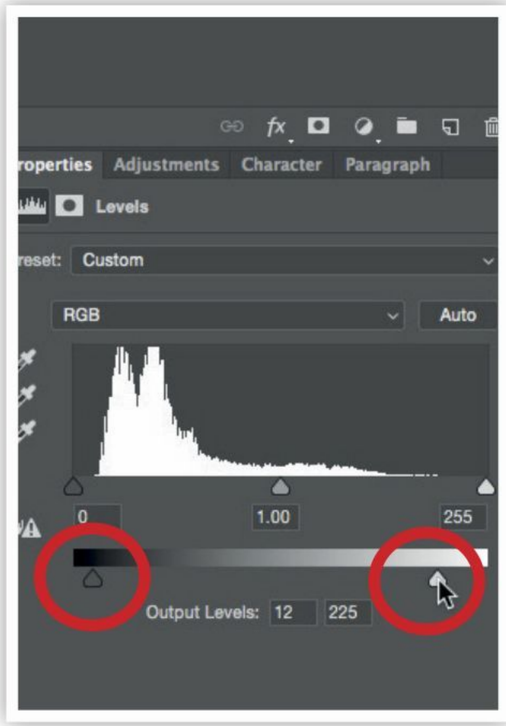
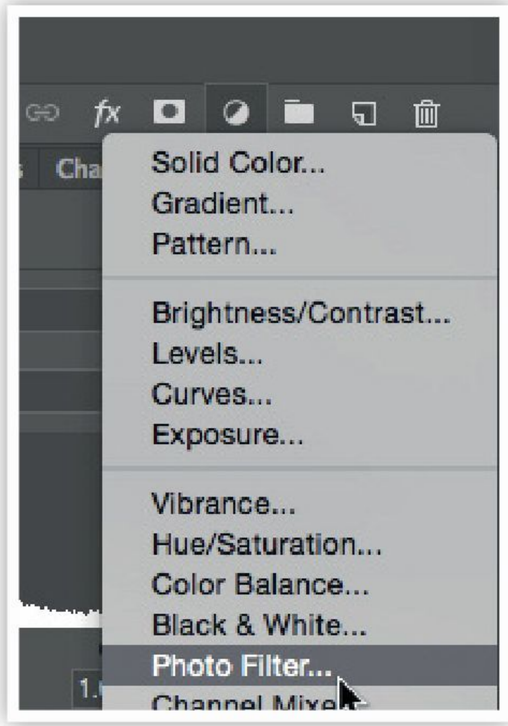
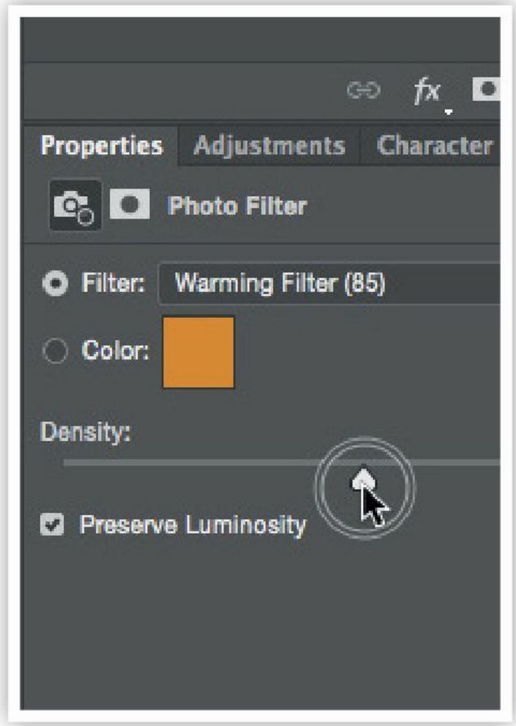


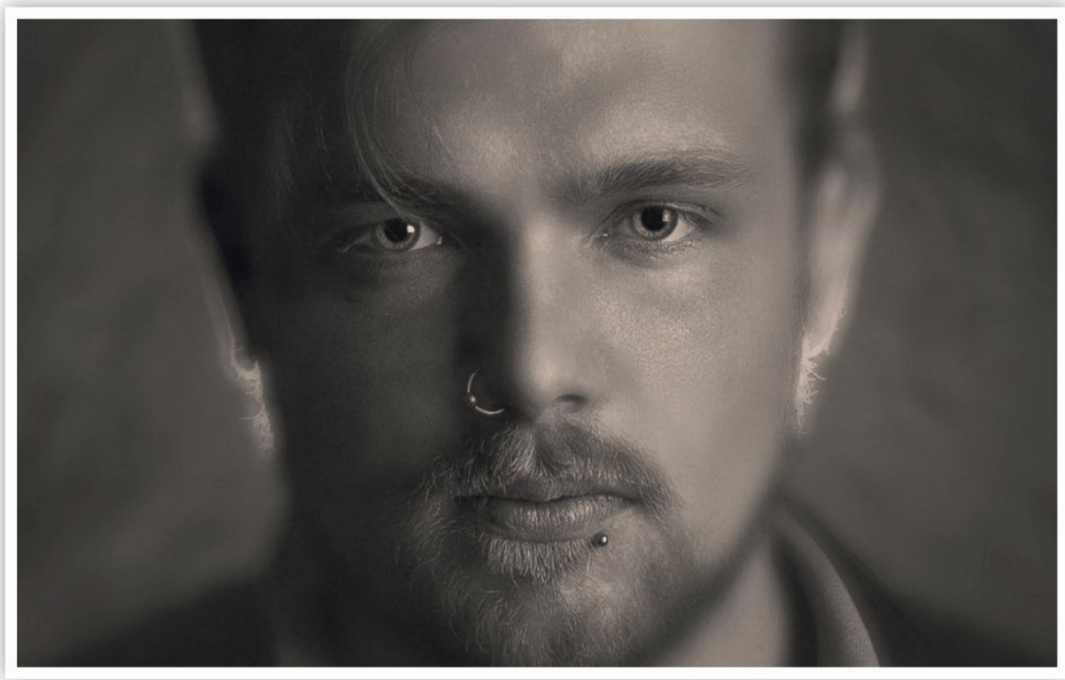


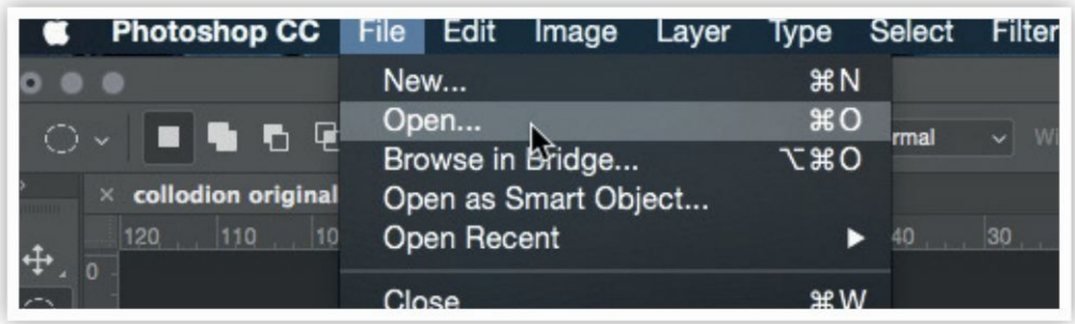




13 Next we need to add a Levels Adjustment layer and adjust the Output Levels to Black 12 and White 225 to reduce overall contrast slightly and brighten the darkest parts of the image by a small amount.

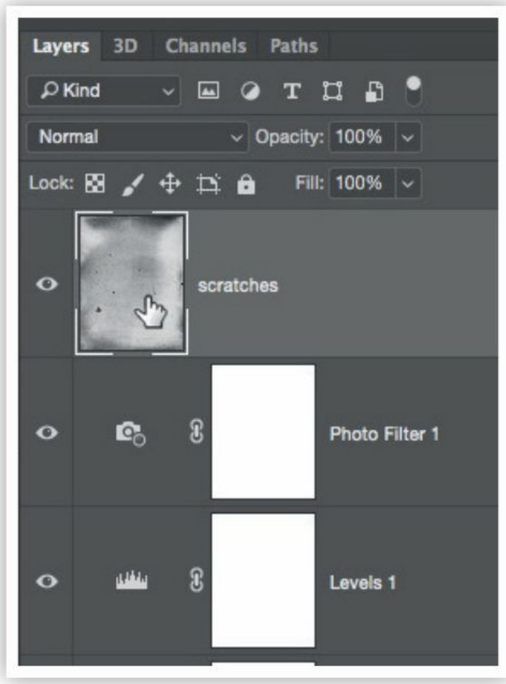
14 Now we can add a Photo Filter Adjustment Layer. Make the filter colour Sepia. Make the Density about 50% and make sure the Preserve Luminosity button is checked. This gives the image quite an antique feel.

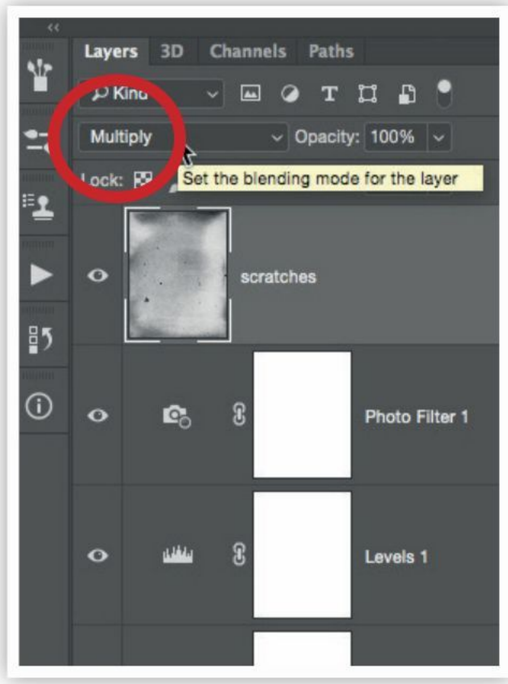




15 At the moment the image looks too new. We need to add some effects to give it a distressed feel. The old wet plate process also had an inherent amount of dust and scratches involved which we can add next.

16 For our example, we will go to File > Open (Cmd + O) and browse to the location of a couple of images that can add the authentic distressed look. We have two examples here called ‘scratches’ and ‘streaks’. Select them both and click Open.





17 Start with the ‘scratches’ image. Press Cmd + A to select the image and then press Cmd + C to copy it to your clipboard. Click back on your document and press Cmd + V to paste it on a new layer which you can call ‘scratches’.

18 With the new ‘scratches’ layer active, go to the Blend Mode button and set this layer’s blend to Multiply. The ’scratches’ layer will now blend into the layers below giving a great antique feel to the image.

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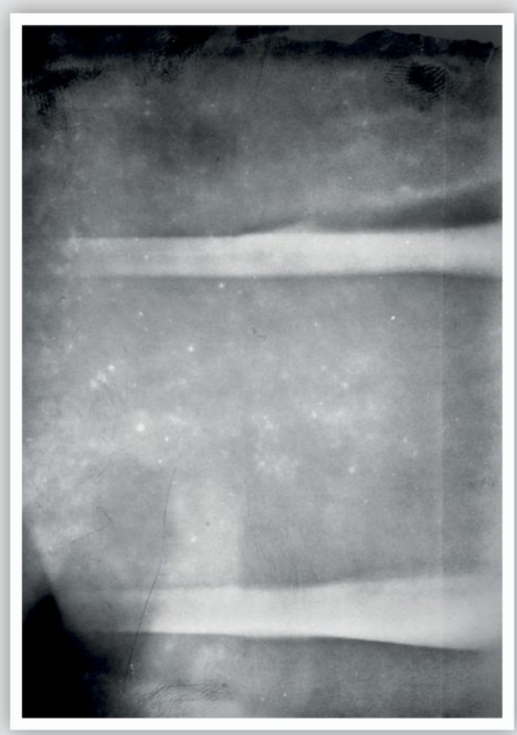
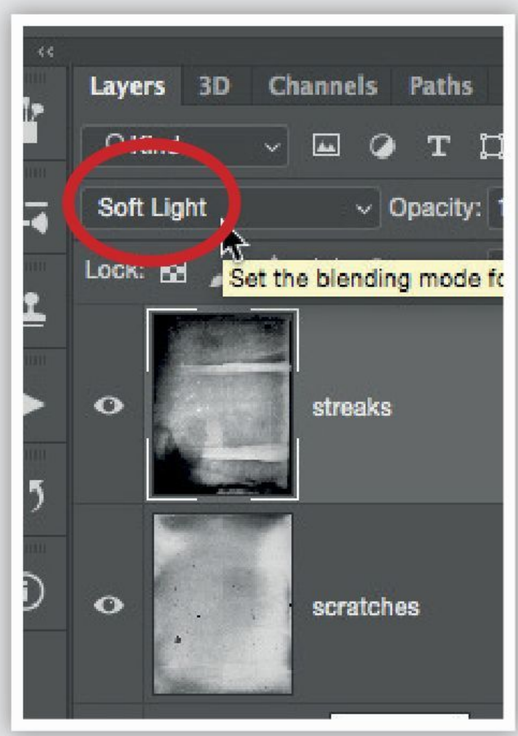
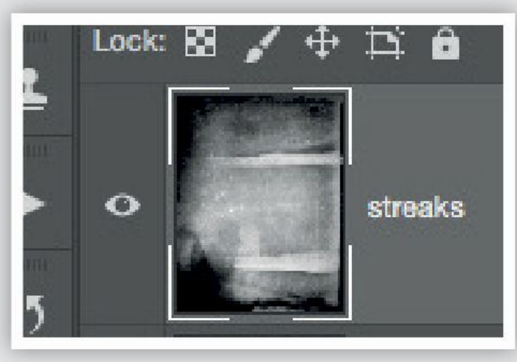
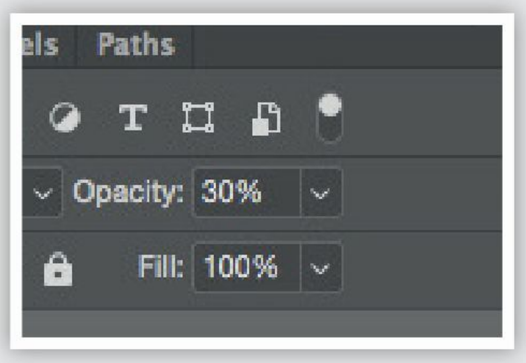
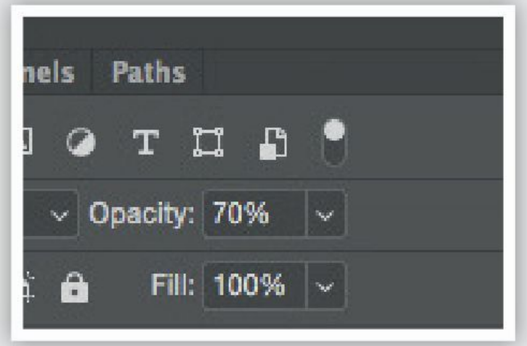




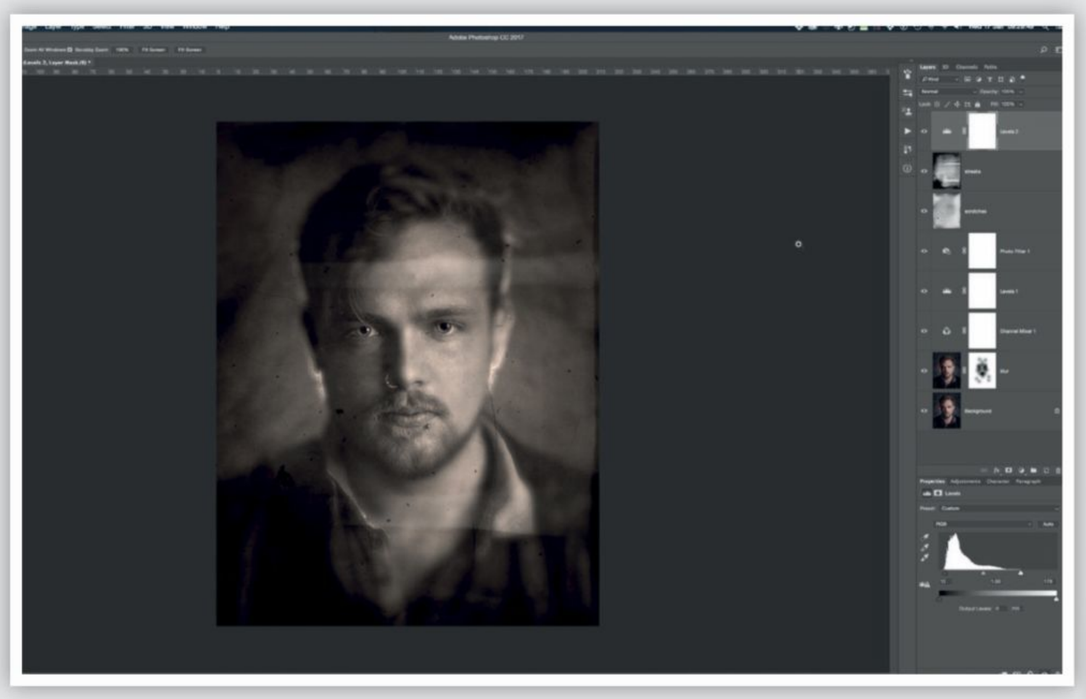






19 Go to the 'streaks' image and copy and paste this one into your wet plate portrait document. This time, set the 'streaks' layer Blend Mode to Darken.

20 Finally, make the Opacity of both the 'scratches' and 'streaks' layers about 45%. This will ensure they don't dominate the image too much but add to the overall effect of an old style wet plate image.



21 After adding a Levels Adjustment to brighten the image a little, there is your final image. A classic photographic process has been given a modern digital update.

Emulate a classic photography style

You can create wet plate portraits with no need for chemicals!

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AFTER

Compositing Images

This tutorial content is available for download

The graphic professionals method that anyone can use

Compositing is the combining of visual elements from separate sources into single images, often to create the illusion that all those elements are part of the same scene. There are a number of ways to produce composite images. In this tutorial we will be looking at a fairly typical approach for the two main elements of the image which is the grey/neutral background compositing technique. The beauty of shooting your main subject against a grey screen is that it gives them a well defined edge that makes the process of blending them into another environment all the easier. Whether your subject is normal human-sized or in this case, just a 150mm tall action figure, grey screen compositing is the choice of many graphics professionals and is easier to do than you think. To flesh the scene out, we have a background and some additional graphics to create what could easily be a movie poster for the next big zombie apocalypse blockbuster.

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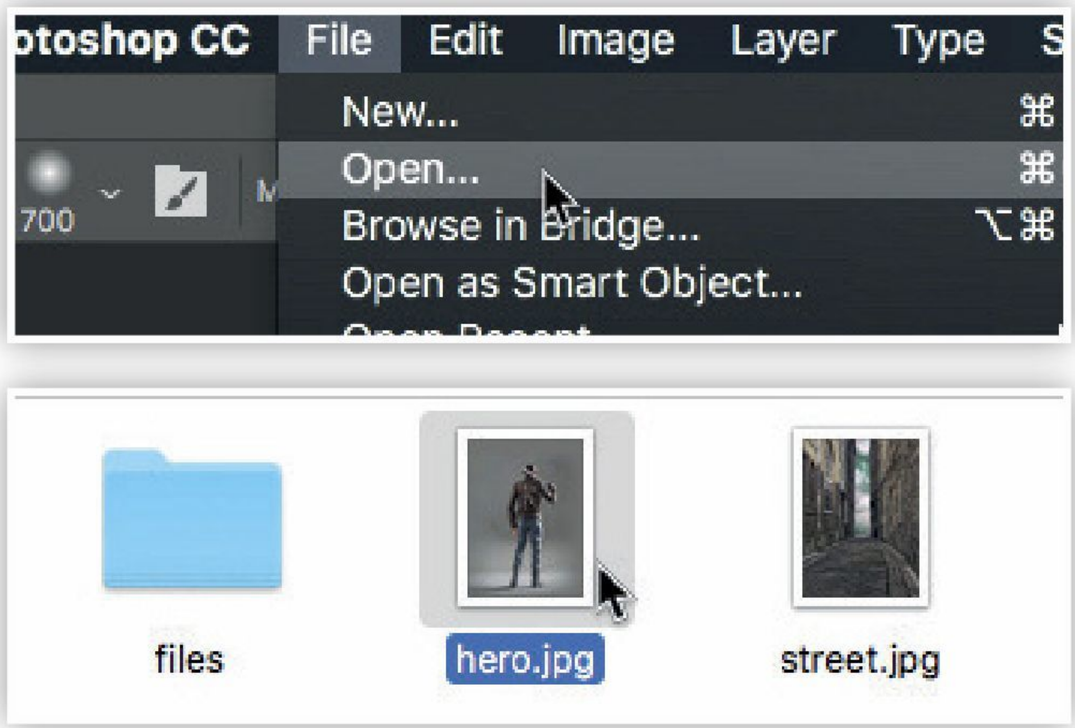
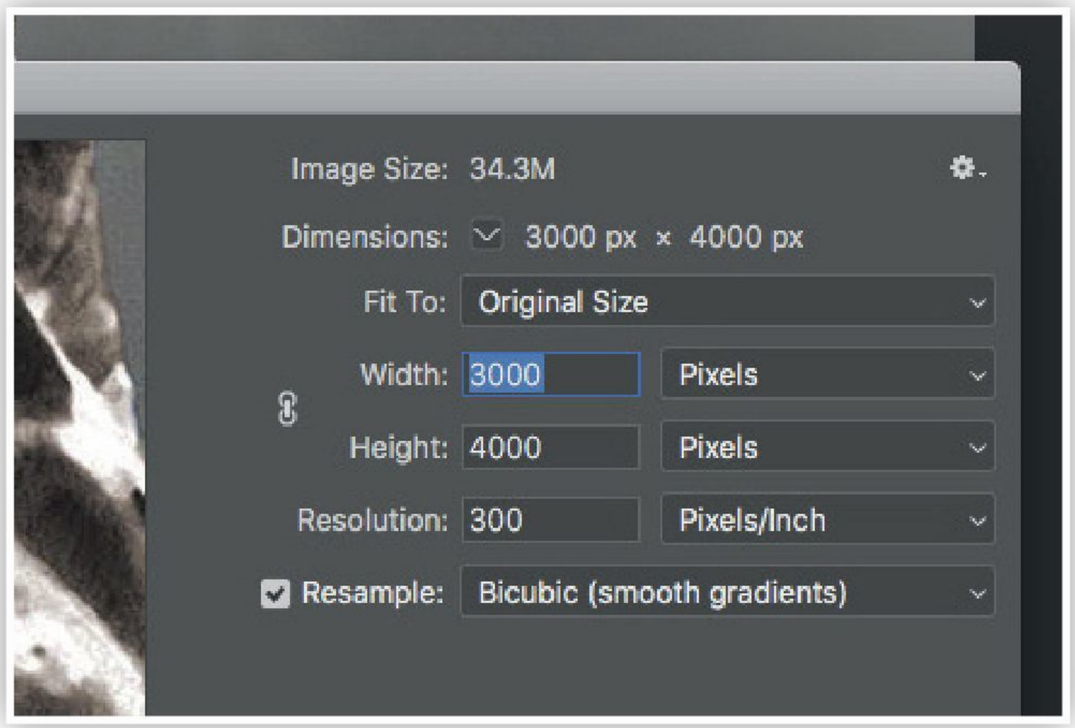
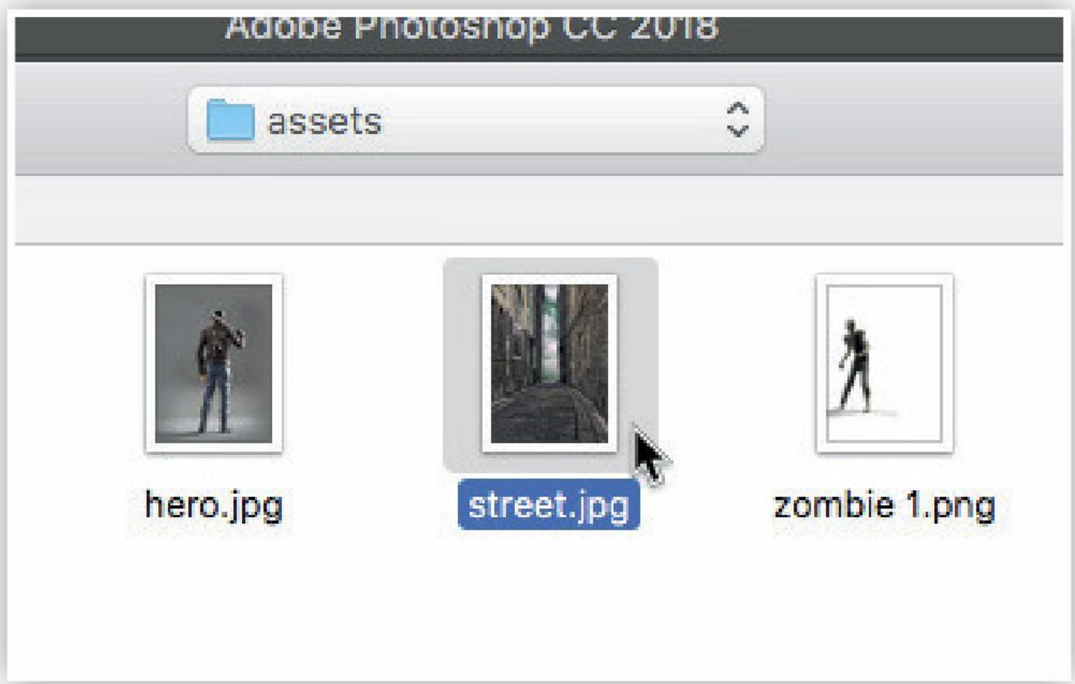


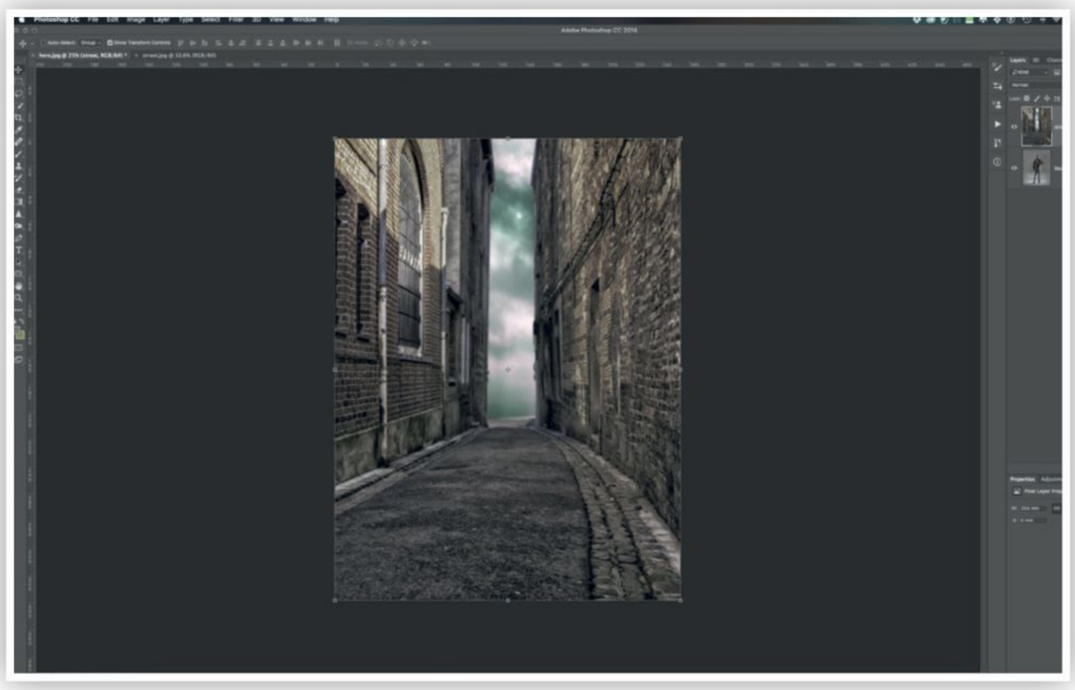
01 There are a number of elements to work with, but you need to start with the two main parts first. Go to File > Open and navigate to the file called 'hero.jpg'. Click Open and the image of a baseball bat wielding hero will be opened in Photoshop.



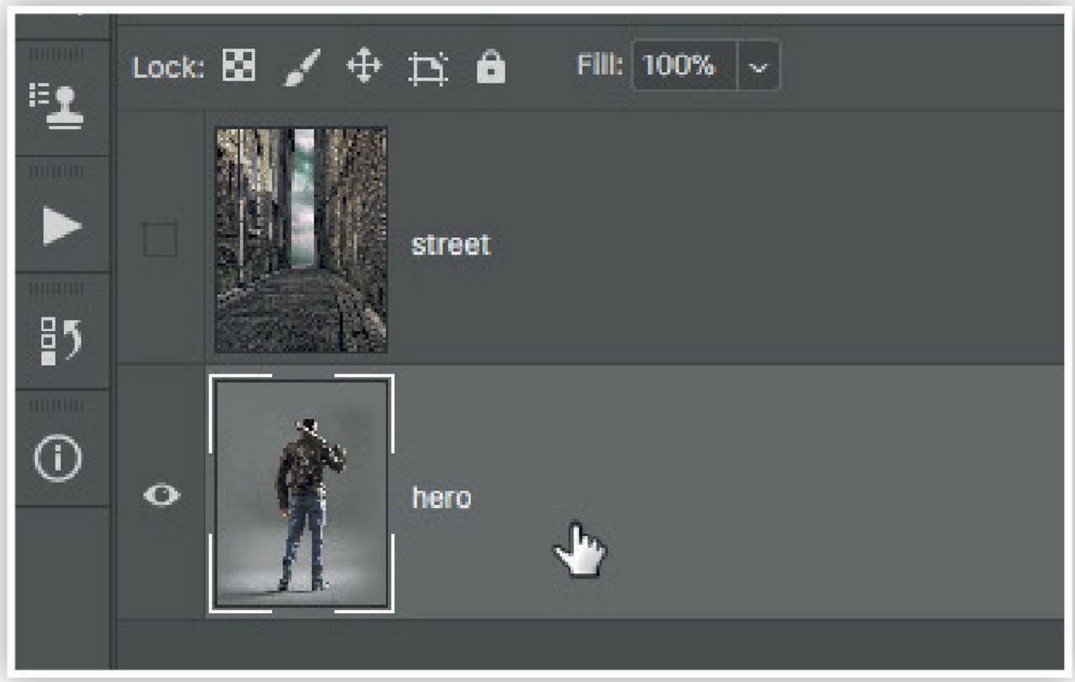
02 The image is 3000 pixels wide x 4000 pixels high. Certain settings and brushes used are based on an image that size but if working with images of a different size, you may need to alter your settings accordingly.



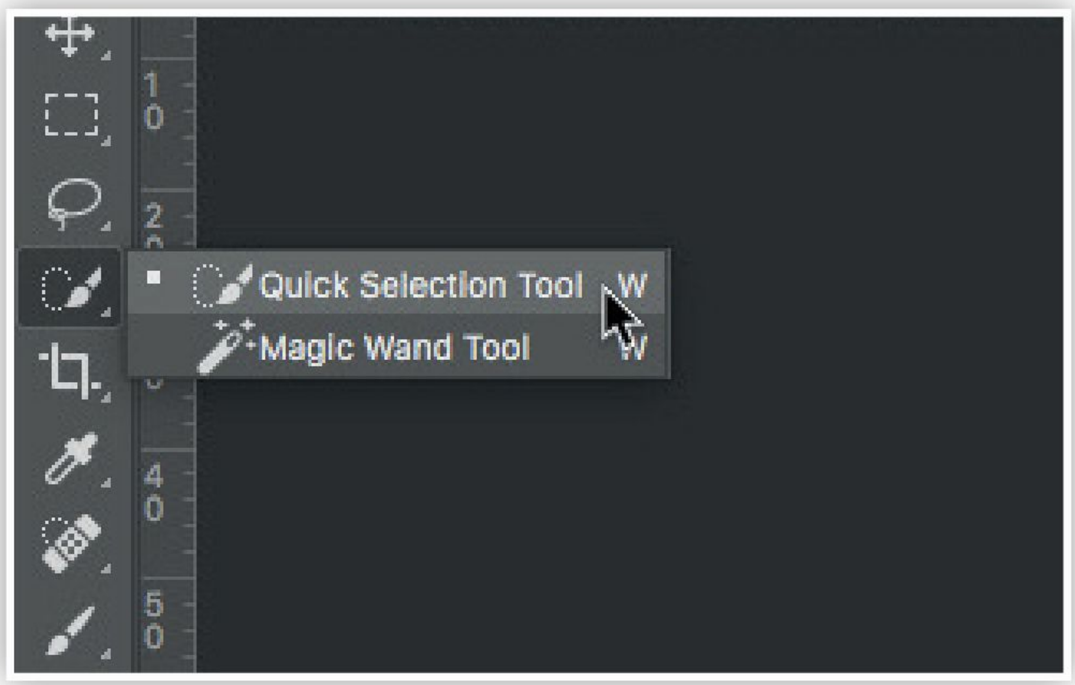
03 Next, go to File > Open again and navigate to the file called 'street.jpg' and click Open. This image will open in its own document. Now we need to combine the two images. Press Cmd + A to select all and then Cmd + C to copy the street image to the clipboard.



04 Go back to the 'hero' document and then press Cmd + V. This will paste the street image you just copied into the document containing the image of the hero. You can convert the Background to a layer by clicking the padlock icon on the right of the layer.



05 You now have two layers. You can name the recently pasted layer 'street' and the unlocked background of the man can be named 'hero'. For the moment, turn off the visibility of the 'street' layer by clicking the small eye icon next to its thumbnail.



06 Click on the 'hero' layer to make sure it is active and then go to the toolbar and choose the Quick Selection Tool (W). This is where the grey background that the figure was photographed on will help you make an accurate selection of him.

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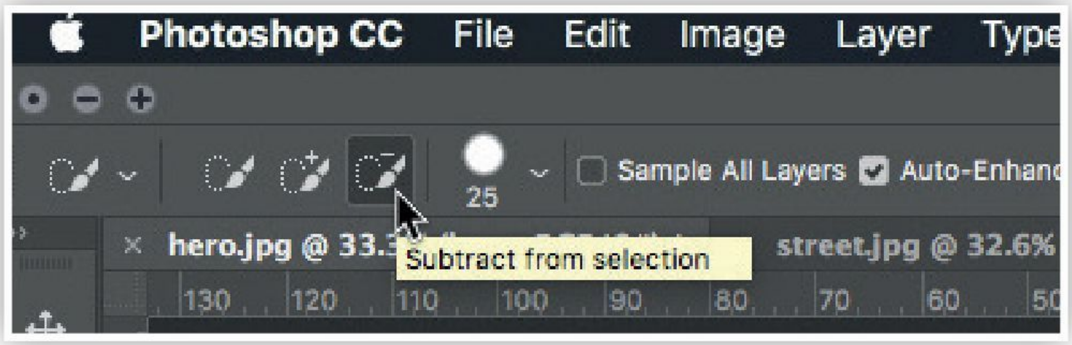
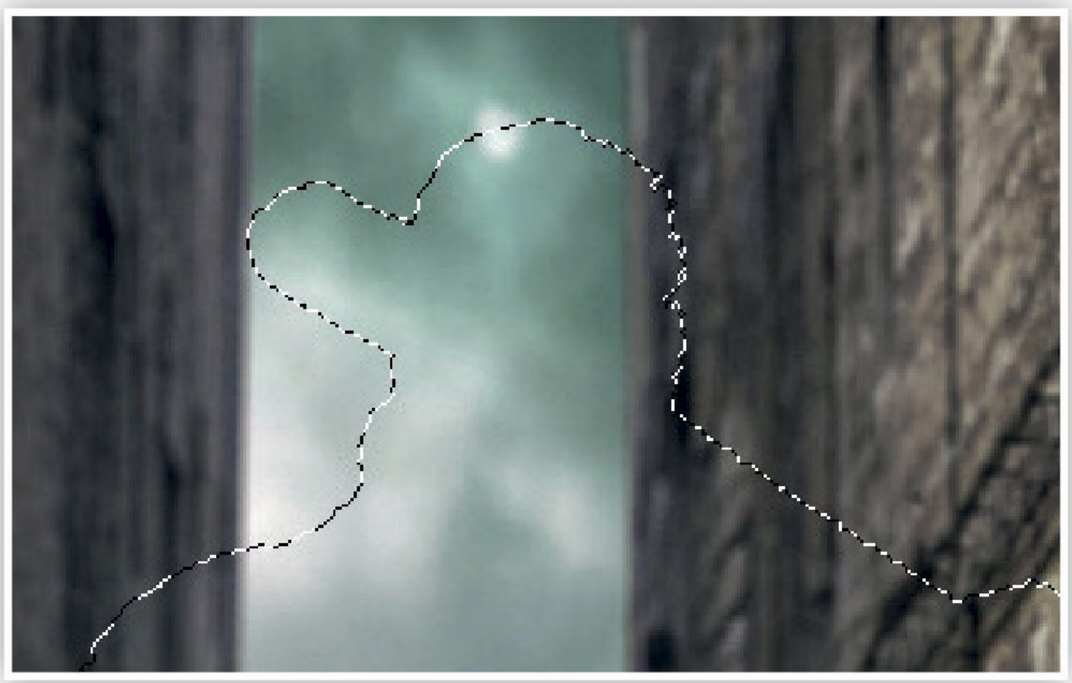
07 Take your Quick Selection Tool and select a brush size of about 25 from the tool options menu. Then click anywhere on the grey background and drag the cursor around the outside edge of the man. Make sure you also select the gap in his left arm.

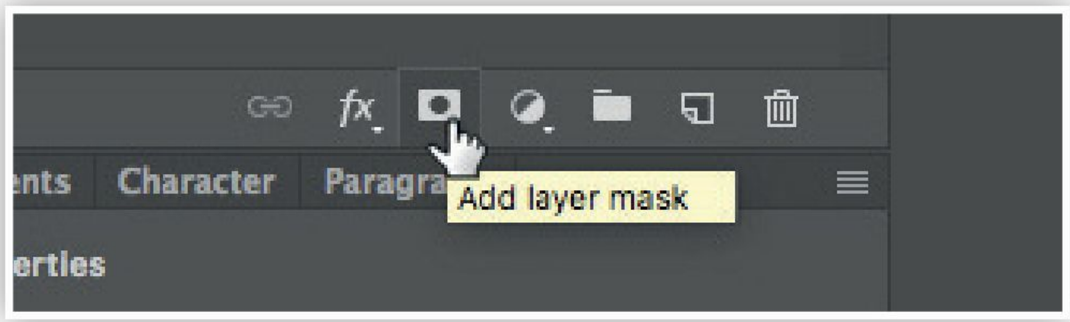


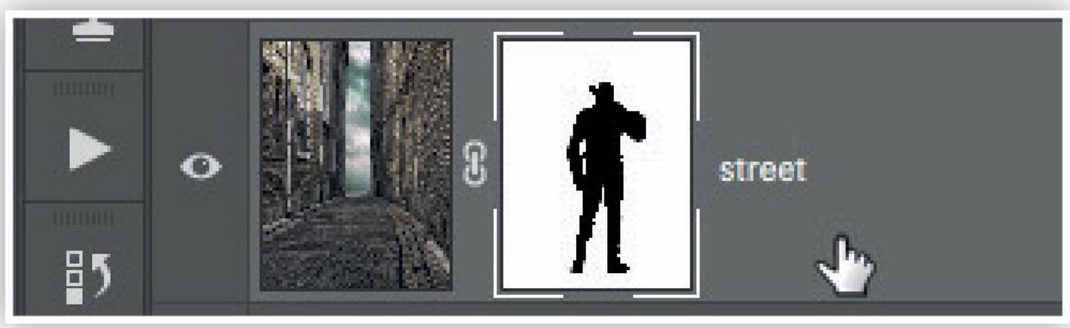
08 If the Quick Selection Tool selects too much, such as his left boot, you can go to the tool option menu at the top and click the Subtract From Selection button. Carefully draw over his boot and that part of the selection will be removed.

09 You can use the add or subtract selection options to make sure just the background is now selected. Most areas should be fine but as noted, the boots, and in this case, the tip of the baseball bat, need a little attention to get the selection correct.

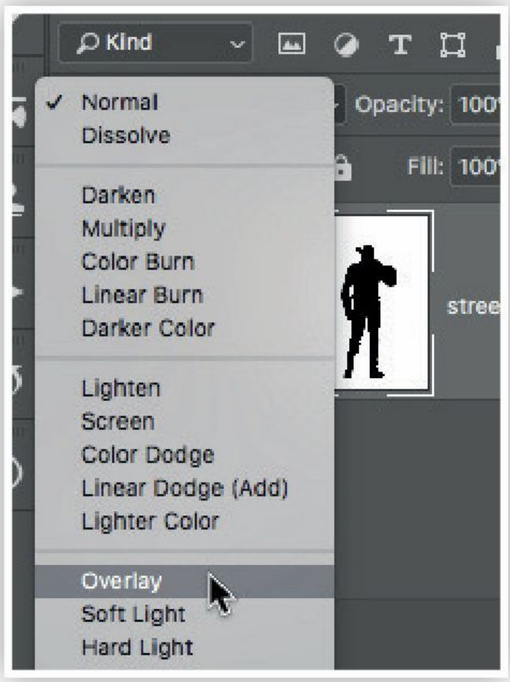


10 Keep the selection active and click on the ‘street’ layer visibility icon to turn it back on. You will see your selection, denoted by the marching ants, overlaid on the street image. Now you need a mask.





11 Go to the layer options panel and click on the Add Layer Mask button. When you do, a mask in the shape of the selection will be added to the ‘street’ layer. Any white area of the mask reveals the street image, black areas conceal it.



12 At the moment, the figure of the hero looks very obviously like a cut out. Click the ‘street’ layer and then choose Overlay from the Blend Mode panel. Now both images blend much more smoothly, with light and shadow of the grey mixing with the street image.

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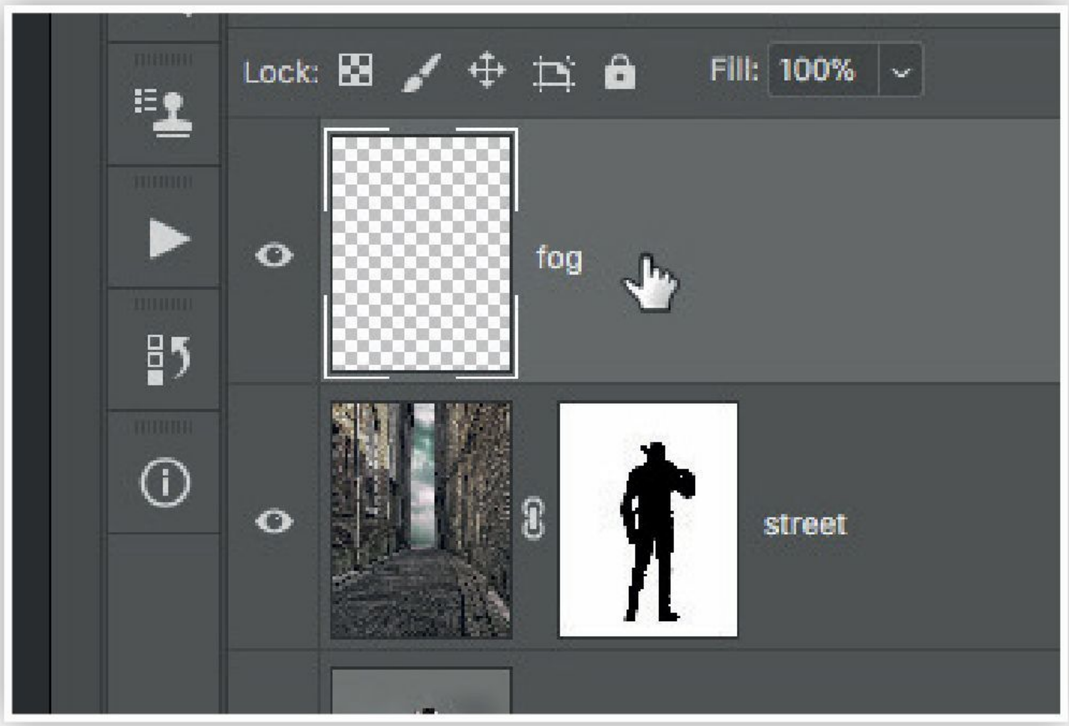
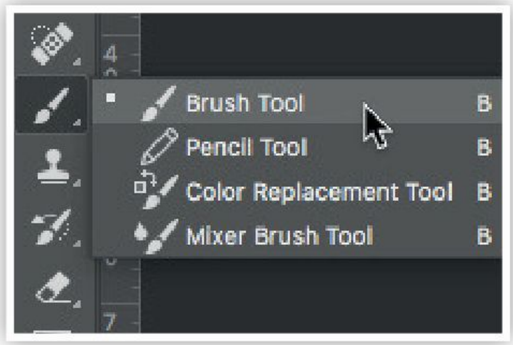
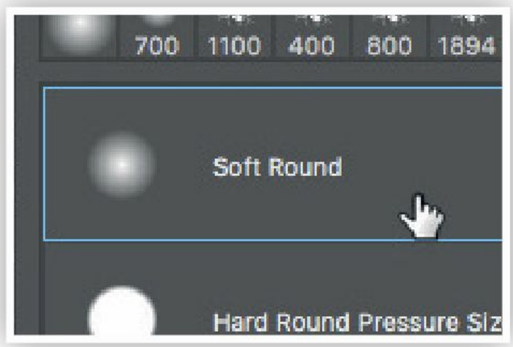
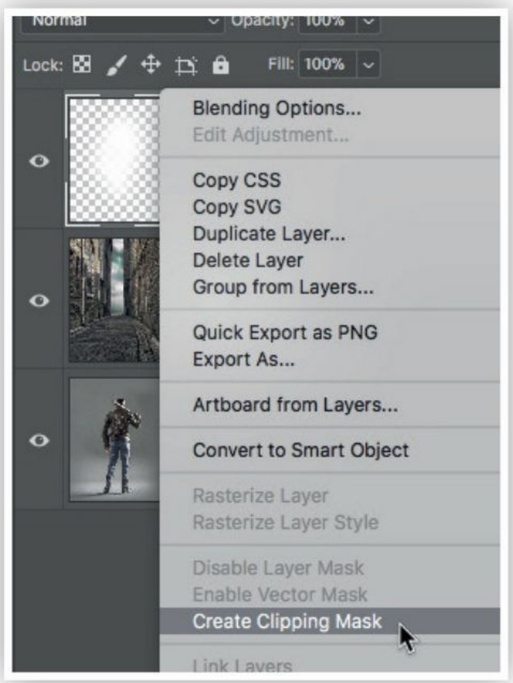






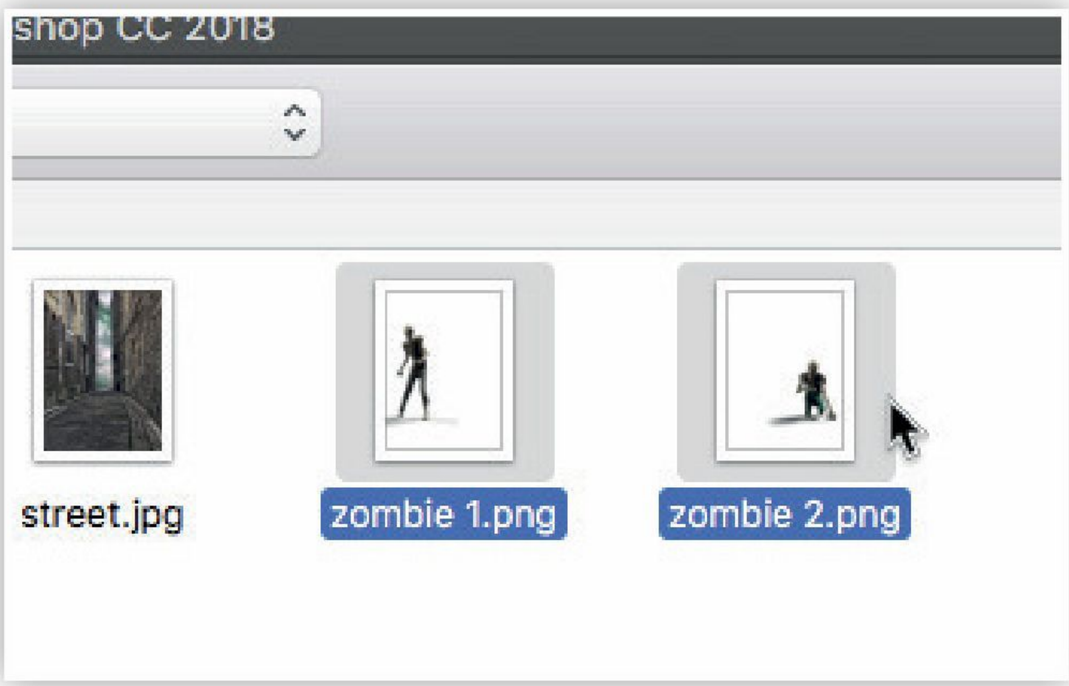
13 Go to the layer options panel again and choose Create A New Layer. Name this new layer ‘fog’ and make sure it is at the top of the layer stack. This is a little visual technique to create some more separation between figure and background.

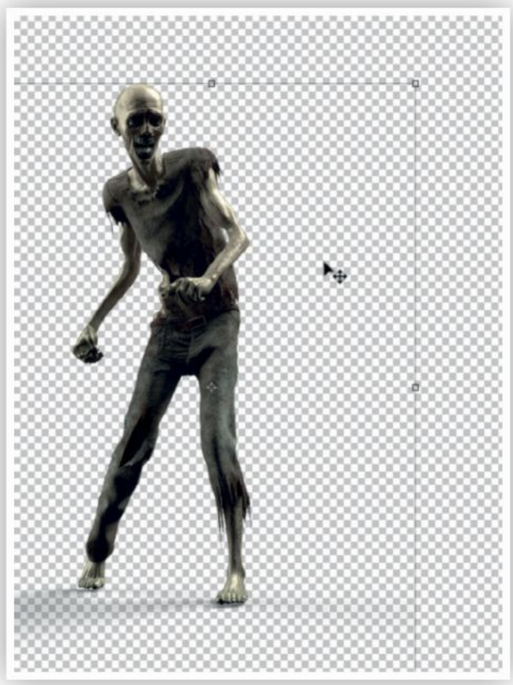
14 With the ‘fog’ layer active, go to the toolbar and choose the Brush Tool (B). Set foreground colour to white and use a soft round brush of about 1200 pixels and paint white around the figure of the man. Blur the brush marks by about 125 pixels.



15 Obviously the white brush marks have obscured the man but if you right-click the ‘fog’ layer, you can select Create Clipping Mask from the menu. The ‘fog’ layer is clipped to the layer below and inherits the mask properties you created, revealing the man.

16 You can adjust the Opacity of the ‘fog’ layer as you wish; we set it to about 50%, just enough to help separate the foreground figure’s outline from the busy details of the street image. Now you can add the extra character elements.





17 Go to File > Open and navigate to where ‘zombie 1.png’ and ‘zombie 2.png’ are kept. Highlight them both and click Open. Both of the files will be opened in Photoshop in their documents. Go to ‘zombie 1.png’ first.

18 If you press Cmd + A to select all content and then press Cmd + C to copy all selected, you can then go back to your original document and press Cmd + V to paste the first zombie into the document. It will appear on a new layer which you can call ‘zombie 1’.

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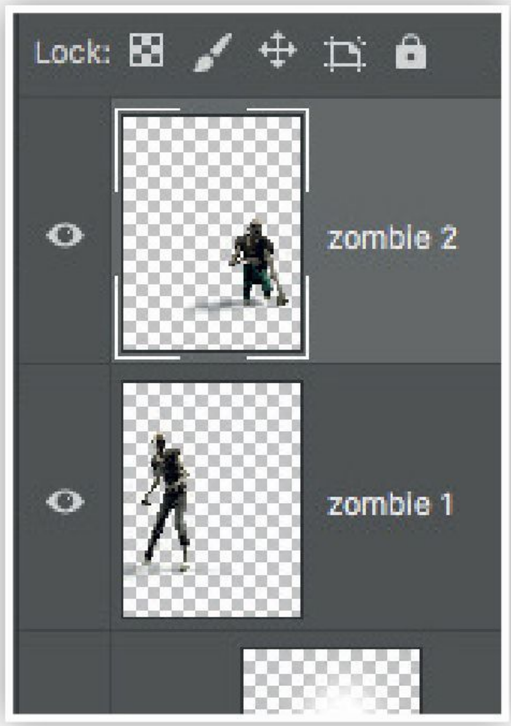
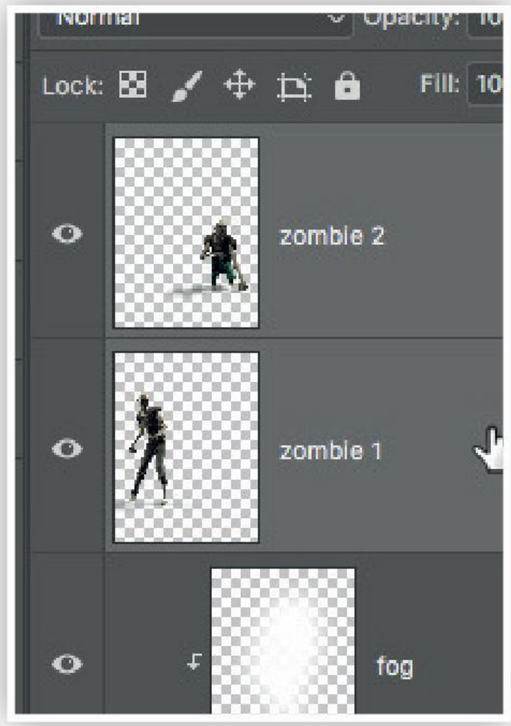
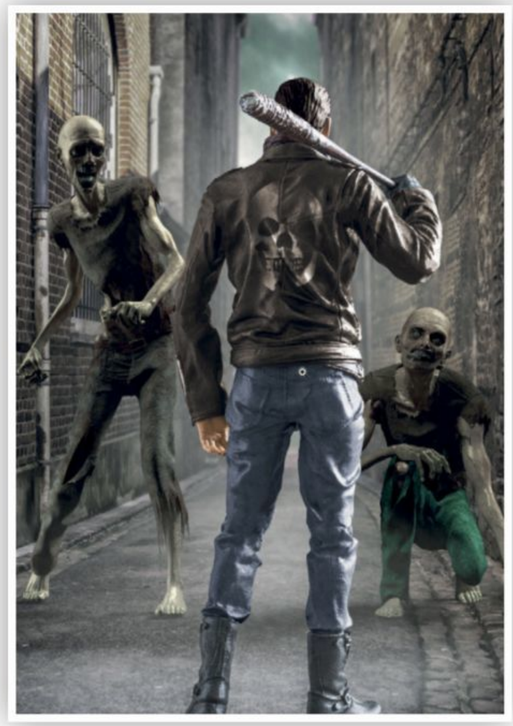
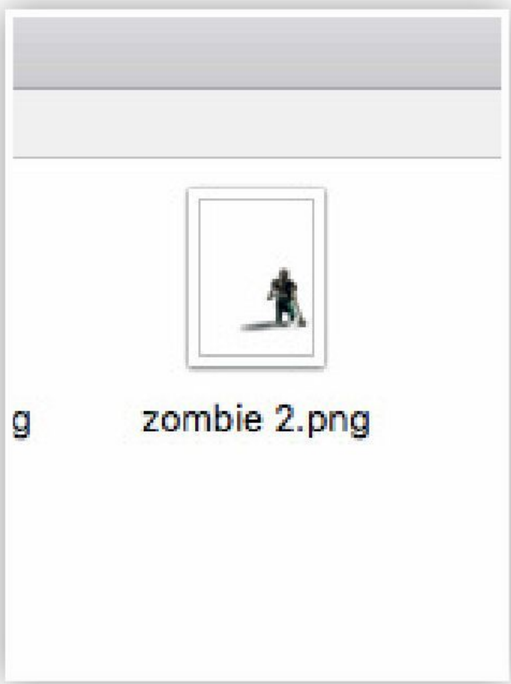


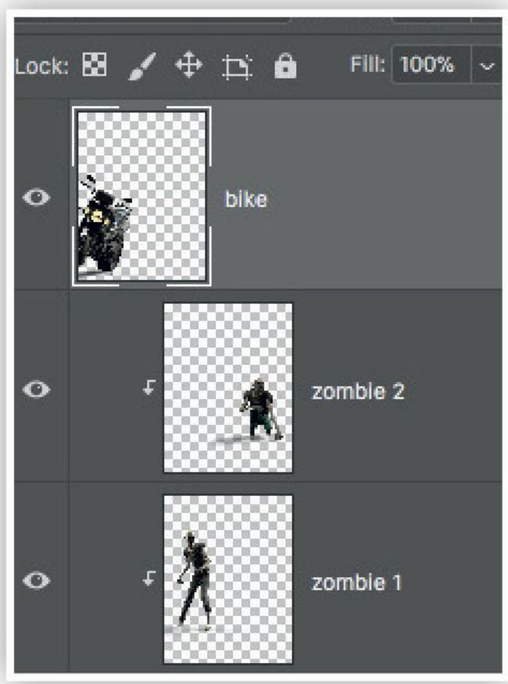




19 Repeat the process with the second zombie image and name its layer ‘zombie 2’. Both zombies are at the top of the layer stack and you can see that they appear to float in front of our main foreground character. Let’s fix that next.

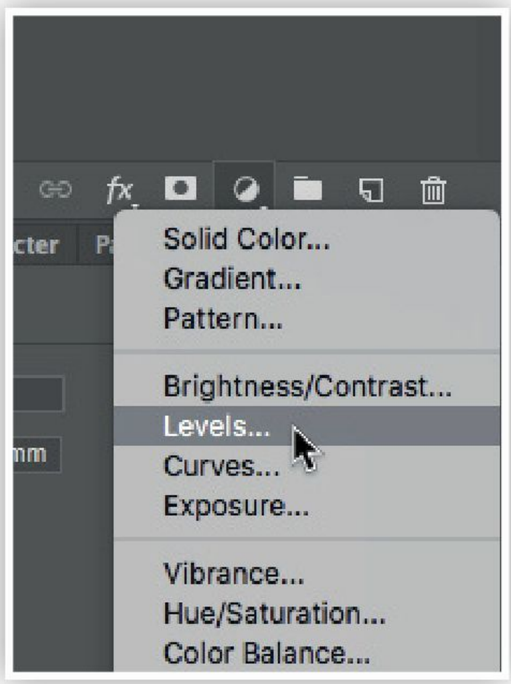
20 Hold Shift and left-click on each zombie’s layer to highlight them both. Now right-click on them and a context menu will appear. Choose Create Clipping Mask. You will see that both layers are now clipped in the same way the ‘fog’ layer was previously.

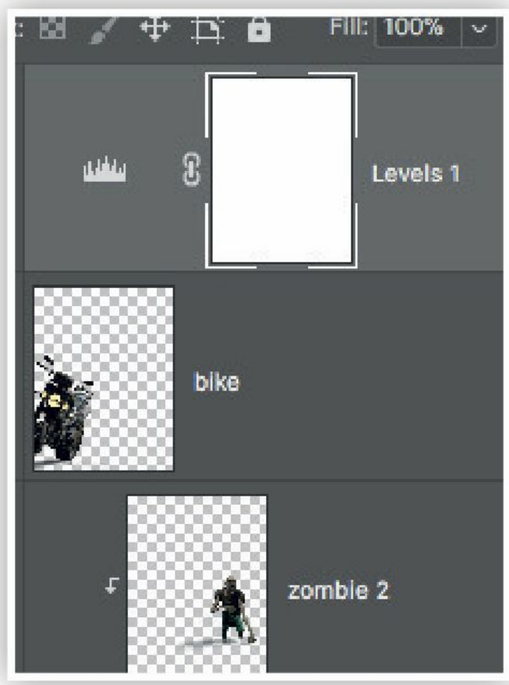


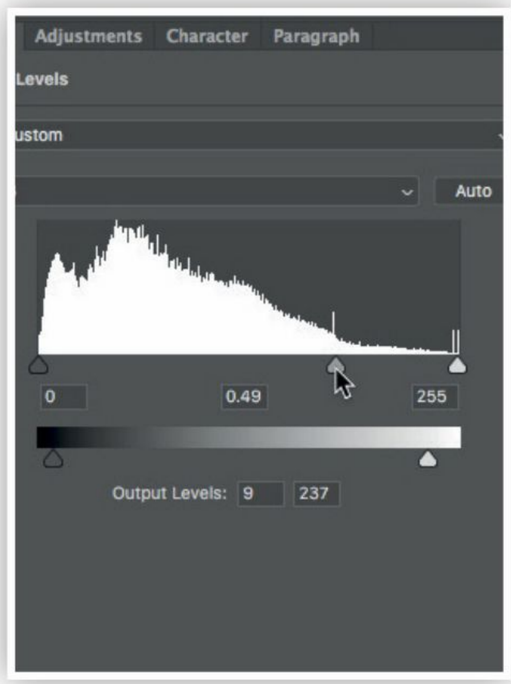


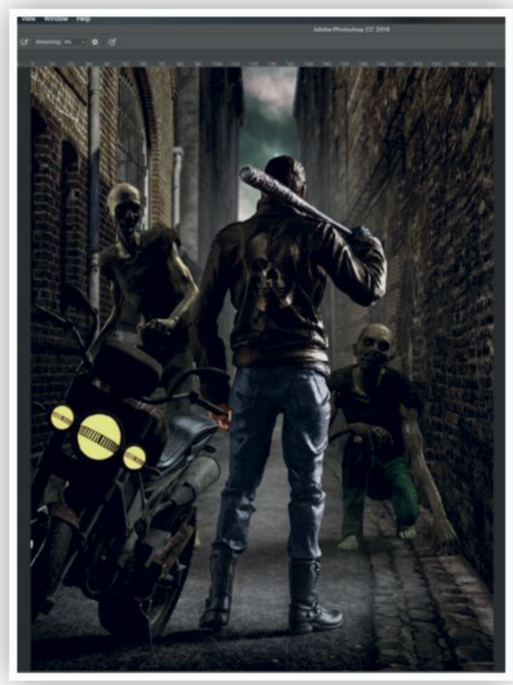
21 There is one more asset we can include to finish our scene off. Go to File > Open again and open the ‘bike.png’ file. Just as you did with the zombies, you can copy and paste this image into your main document at the top of the stack. Name the layer ‘bike’.

22 Since the ‘bike’ layer appears in front of our character, there is no requirement to clip it like the zombies and the fog. Now that we have all our elements in place, they can each be moved within the scene as you see fit. We can also boost the drama a little.









23 Go to the layer options panel and click on the Create New Fill Or Adjustment button. Choose Levels from the dropdown list. This will add an adjustment layer to the top of the stack; use it to boost light and shadow in the image.

24 With the ‘Levels 1’ adjustment layer active, go to its Properties and push the middle Midtone slider to the right. All the middle tones will be darkened but since this is affecting the whole image, you need to be a little more selective.

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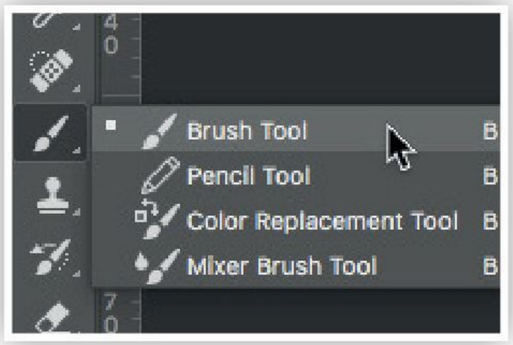
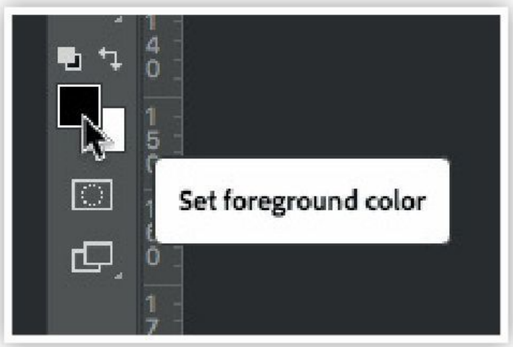
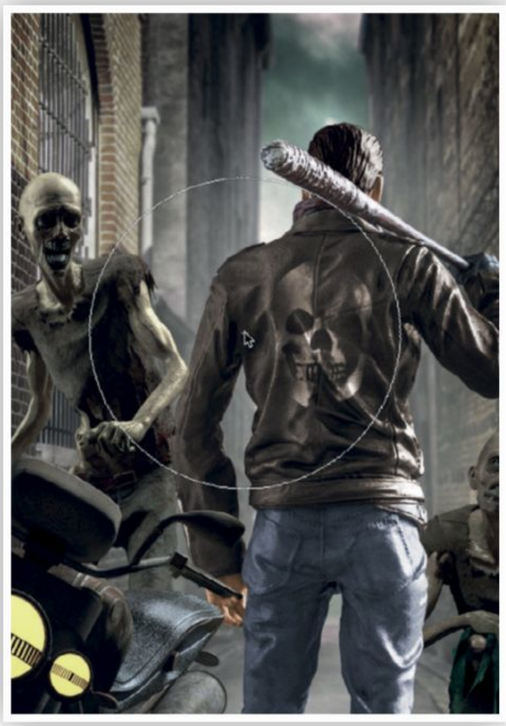
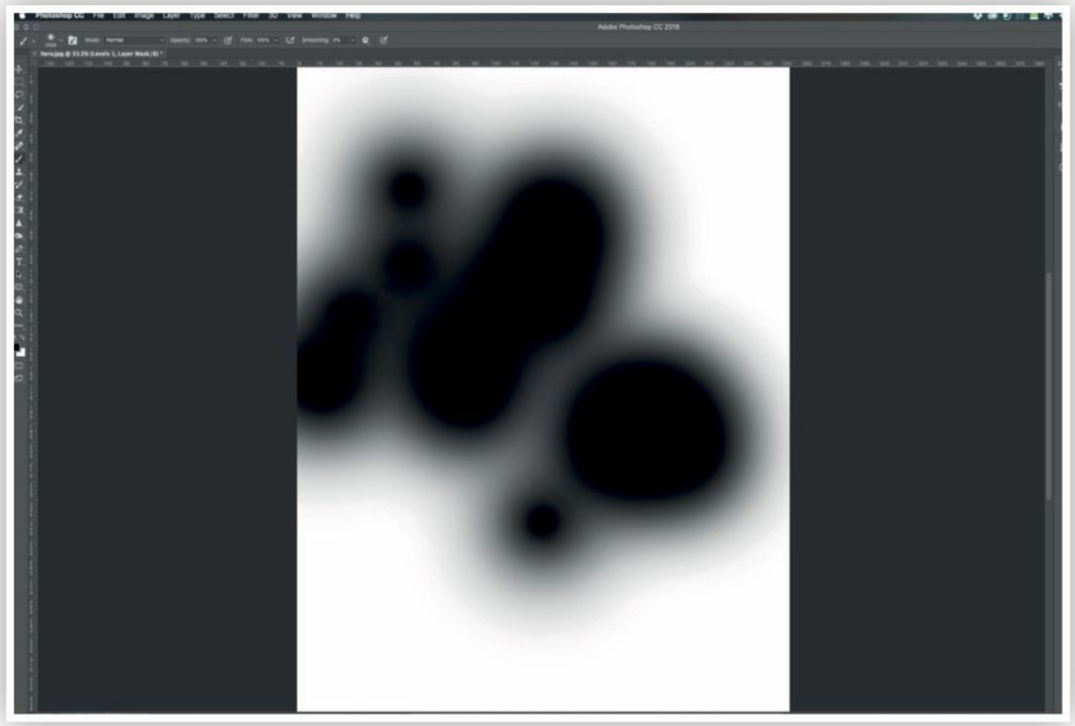


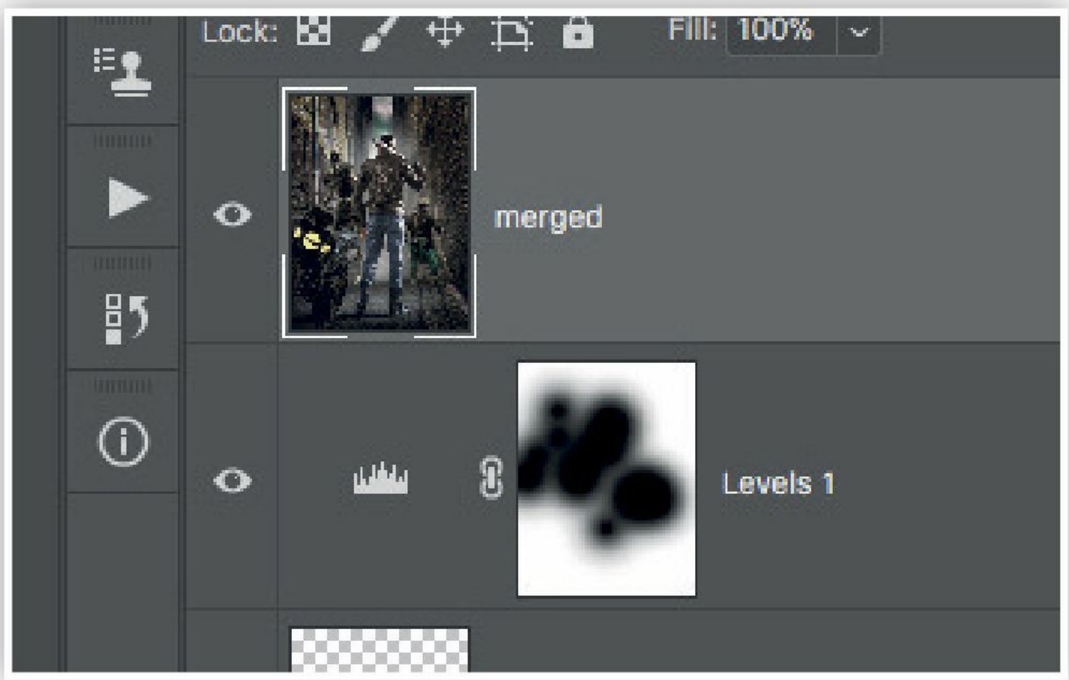


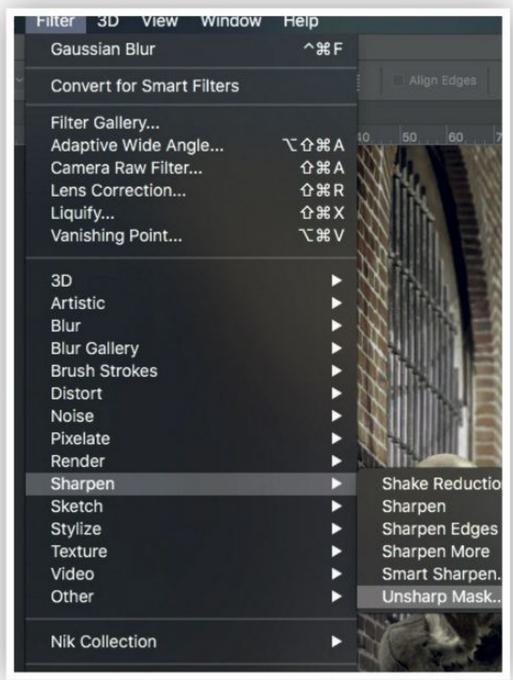


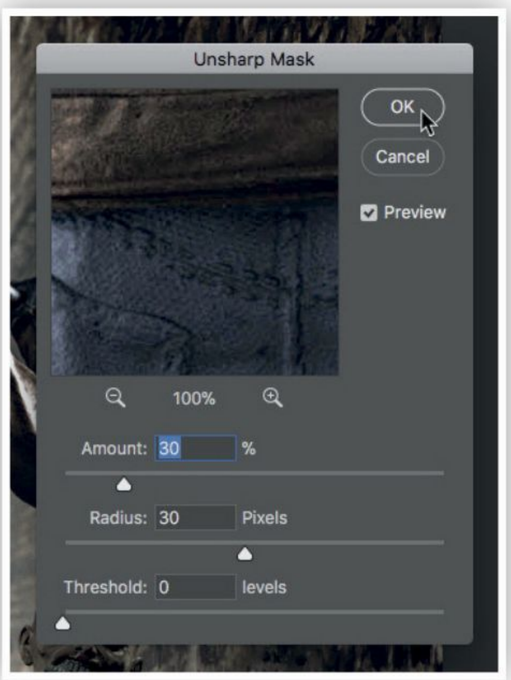


25 Keep the adjustment layer active and go to the toolbar and choose the Brush Tool (B). Set the Foreground Colour to black and use a large soft round brush to paint black on the 'Levels 1' layer mask where you do not want the darkening effects to be seen.

26 We painted around the three characters to keep them at their original brightness but made sure that their surroundings are darker. If you Alt + left-click the mask, you can see the brush marks that conceal the effects of the adjustments you've made.

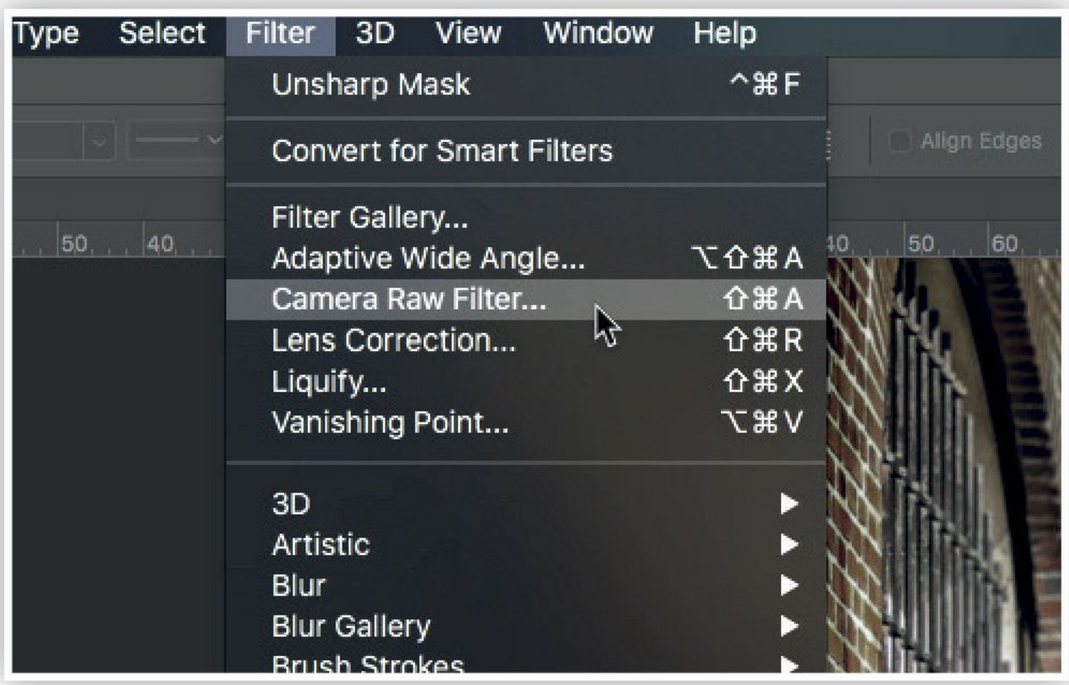


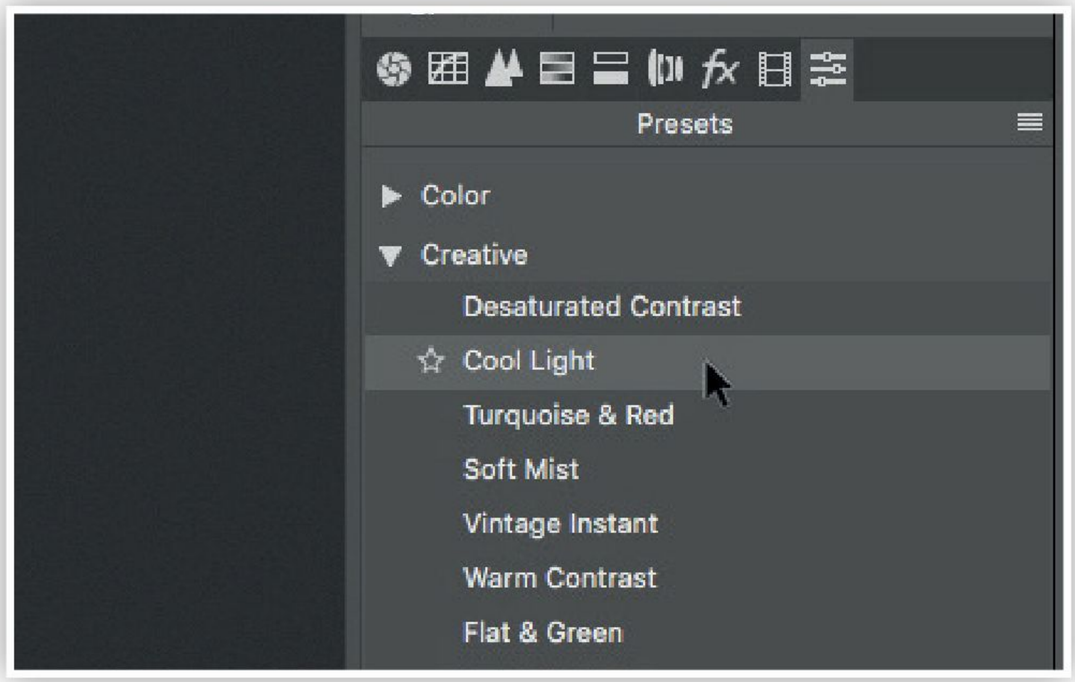




27 If you press Shift + Alt + Cmd + E, you can create a new layer that is a merged version of all the layers you've created so far. Think of it as a snapshot of the work done so far. Be aware that any layers that are turned off, will not be merged into the snapshot.

28 Call this new layer 'merged'. You can add some extra sharpness and boost contrast quickly by going to Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp Mask. Set the Amount to 30% and Radius to 30 Pixels. Threshold is 0 Levels.





29 This boosts overall contrast and adds a level of sharpness, bringing out detail in the image. Now you can think about the colour in your image. If you go to Filter > Camera Raw Filter (Shift + Cmd + A), you can play with some its new filter options.

30 The 'merged' layer will open in Adobe Camera Raw (ACR). The latest version of ACR now has some interesting new creative filters which can be found under the Presets tab. You can preview each filter's effect on your image until you see something you like.

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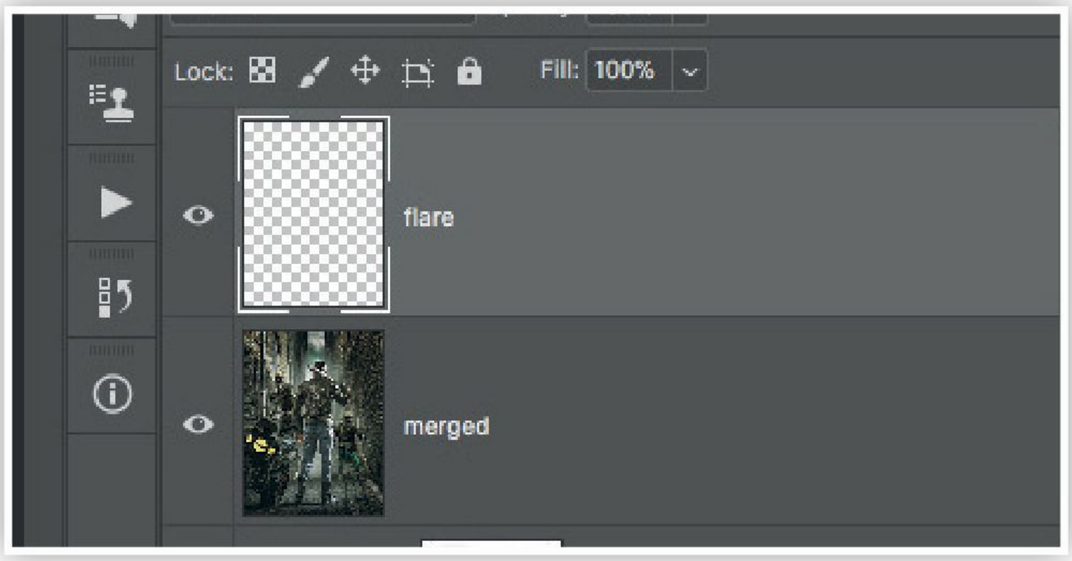
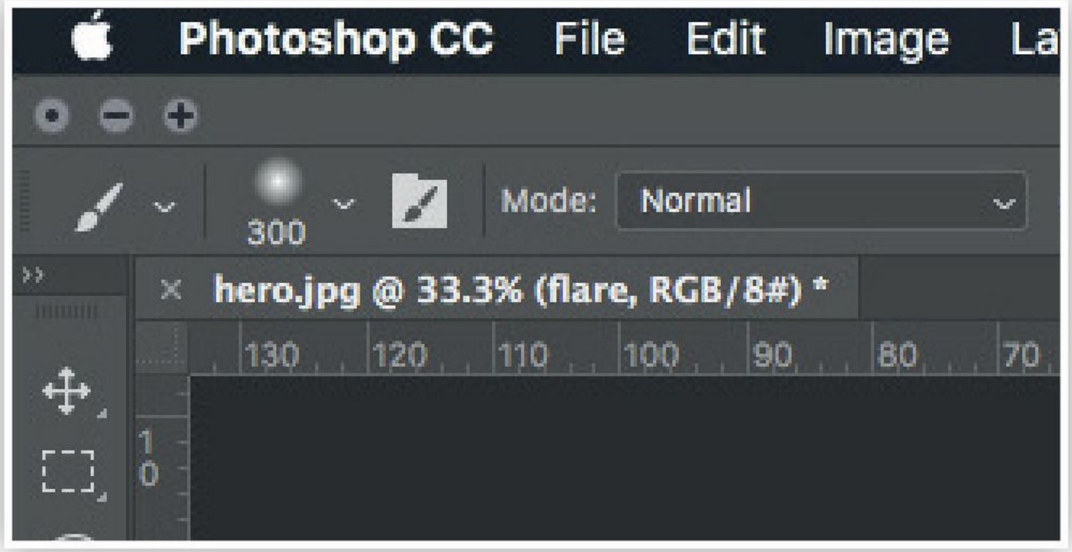
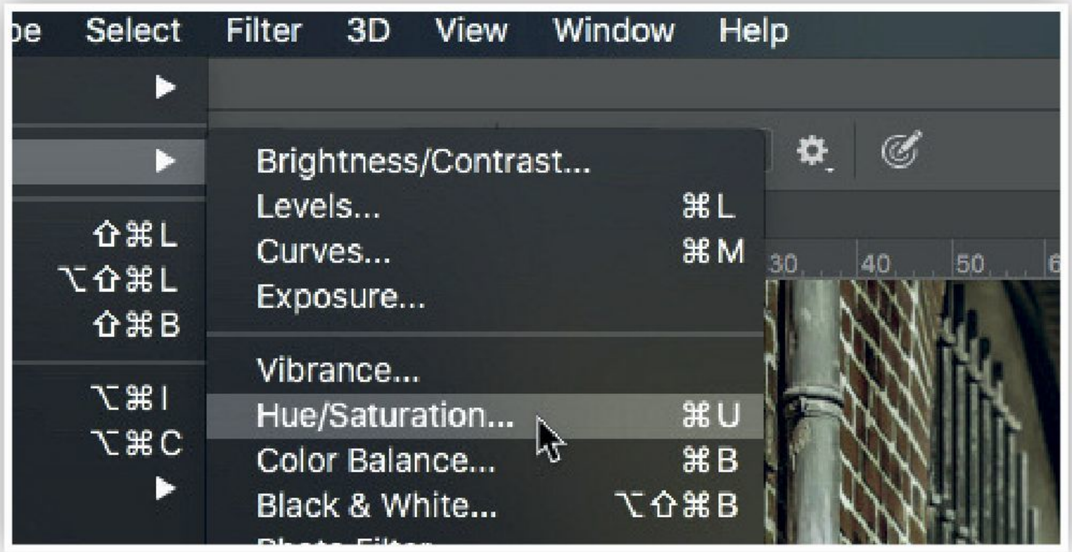
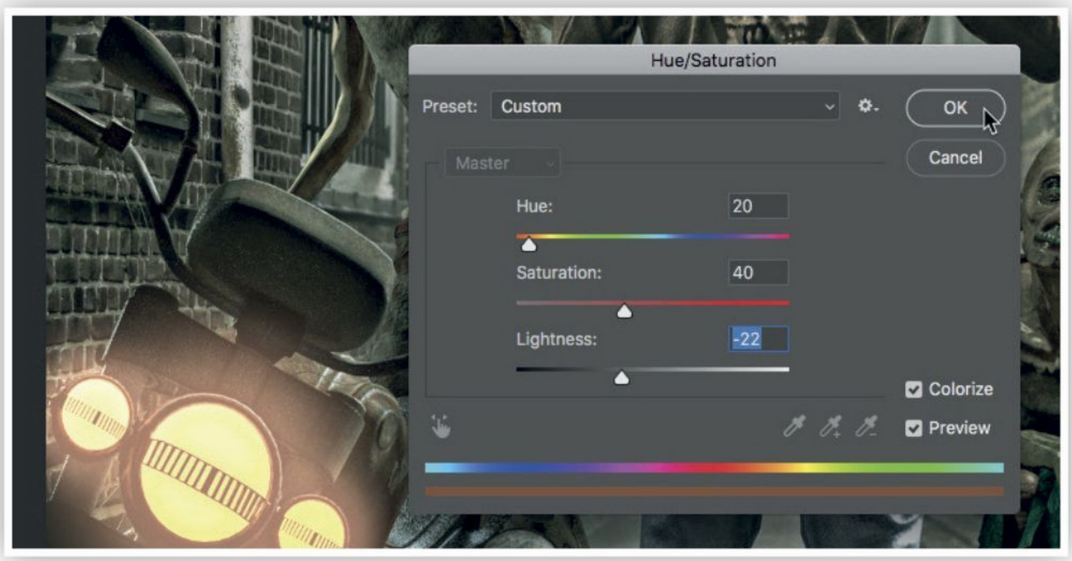


31 We chose the Flat & Green preset under the Creative options as this suited the content of the image quite well. We also employed ACR's own Basic adjustment options too, to add more contrast and colour saturation. Click OK when you're happy with the changes.



32 ACR will hand the 'merged' layer back to Photoshop where you can see it updated with the adjustments you've just made. You can add a new layer next and call it 'flare'. Go to the Brush Tool and choose a soft white brush of about 300 pixels.





33 Paint over the headlights of the bike with the white brush. Then set the Blend Mode of the 'flare' layer to Linear Light. This is a favourite method of ours for adding a glowing effect to bright areas in an image.

34 Go to Image > Adjustments > Hue/Saturation (Cmd + U) and in the panel that appears, check the Colorize button, set Hue to 20, Saturation to 40 and Lightness to -22. Click OK to apply a yellow glow to the headlights.

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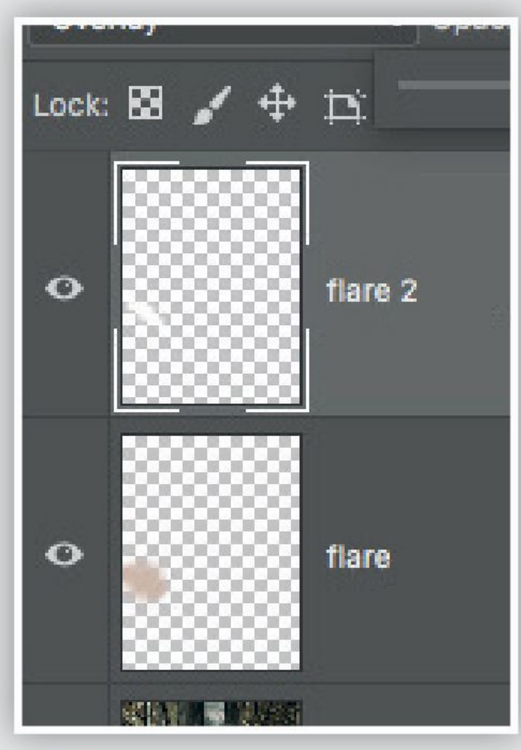

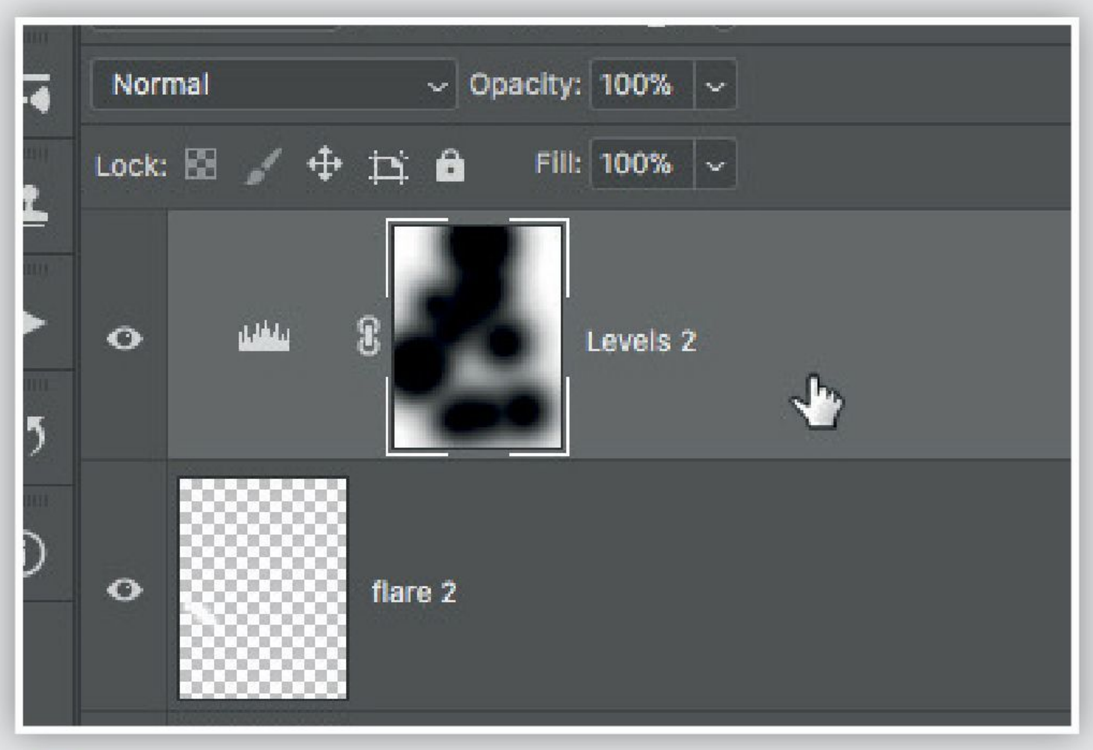

35 Create another layer called ‘flare 2’ and make its Blend Mode Overlay. Now paint with your white brush on top of the glow you just made to enhance the light effect of the bike’s headlights.

36 We also added another Levels adjustment to darken the edges a little more using the same selective masking methods used in step 25. Your image is finished. Our hero is about to face off with the zombie hordes and we have front row seats.

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Custom Photoshop Brushes

This tutorial content is available for download

We show you how to make your own effects brushes quickly and simply

One of the great assets of layer based editing programs like Photoshop is its large array of brushes and brush effects. If you want anything from a simple pencil stroke to a watercolour brush effect or even explosions, dust and particles, Photoshop can give you access to all that and more. What happens if you want a particular effect and you don't have a brush that matches your needs? We have an example here of dramatic cracking effects applied to text and a stone texture, but the question is: how do you make your own brushes? This is the beauty of Photoshop; we have an image of an electrical discharge from a generator and it's no coincidence that the random streak of light, with all its crackling energy, also looks like the kind of cracks you'd see in stone or paintwork. We're going to show you how to repurpose one image and turn it into a brush that can fulfil a need for another. If you'll pardon the pun, let's get cracking!

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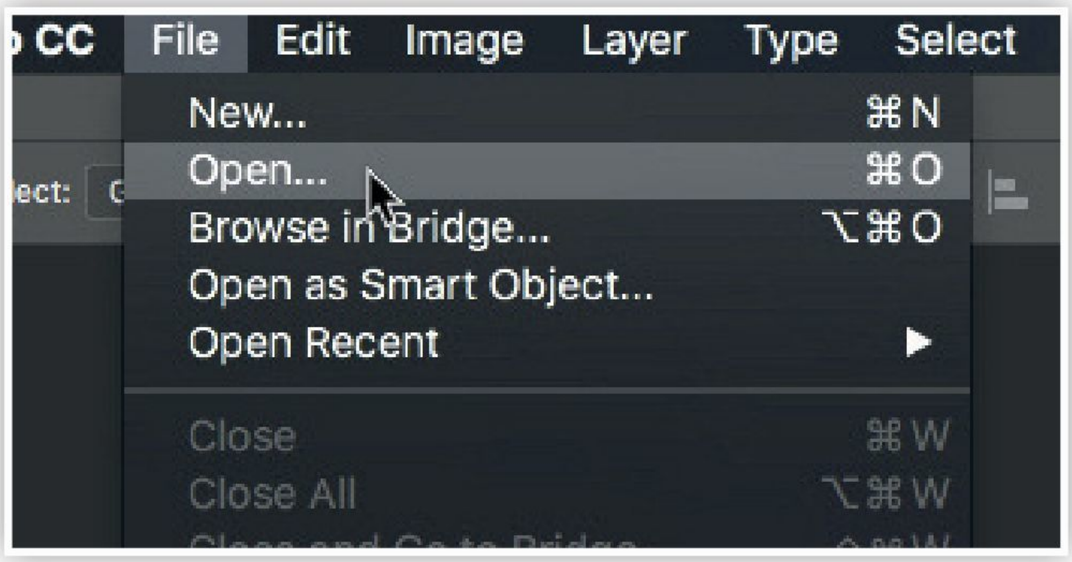
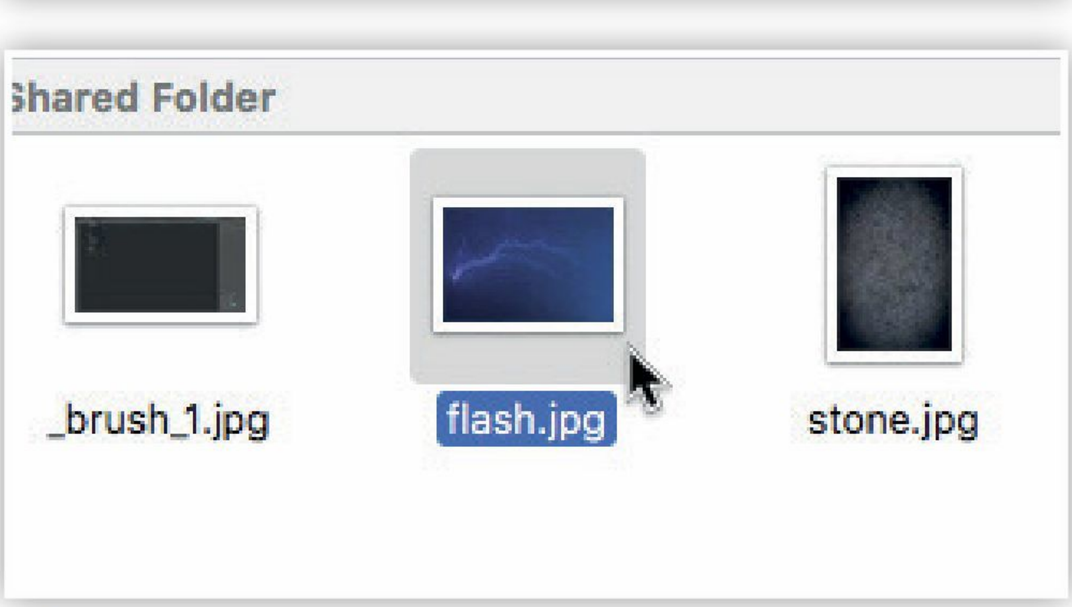
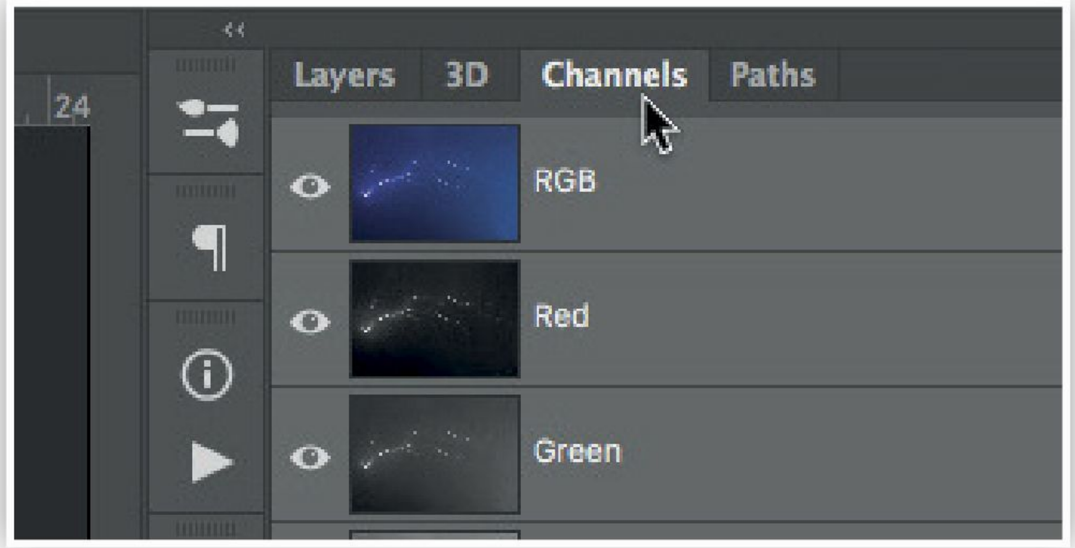
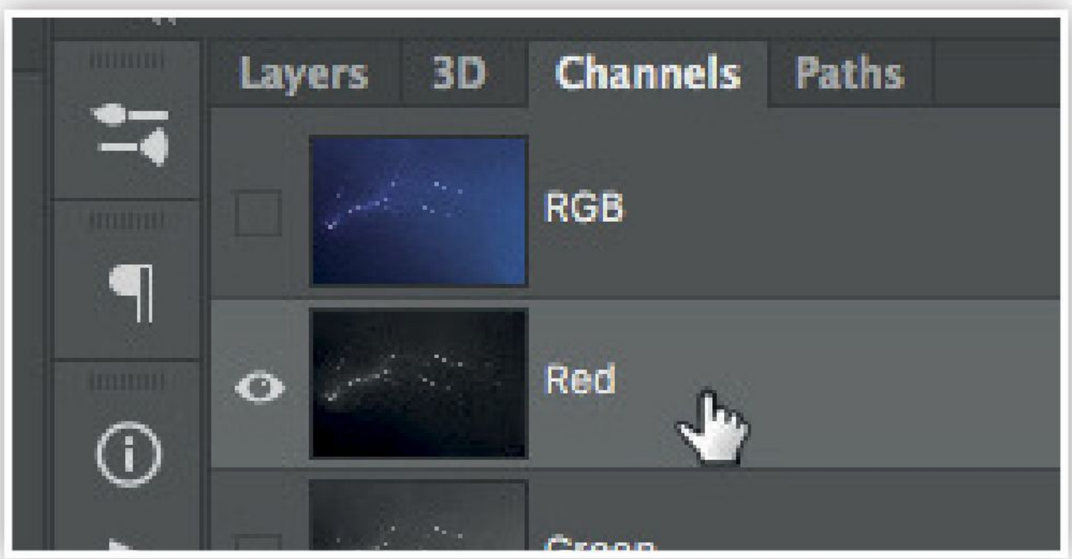


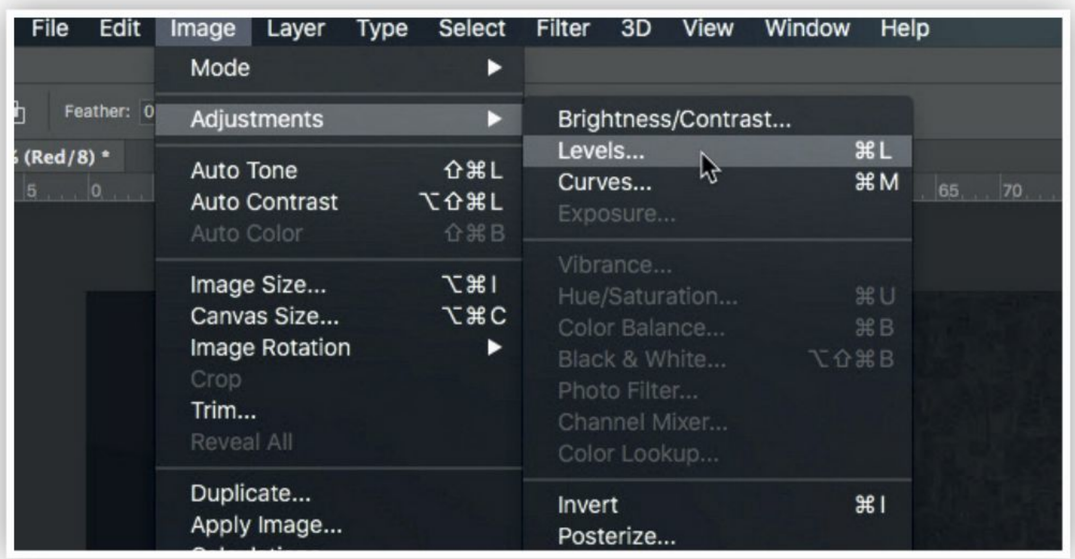


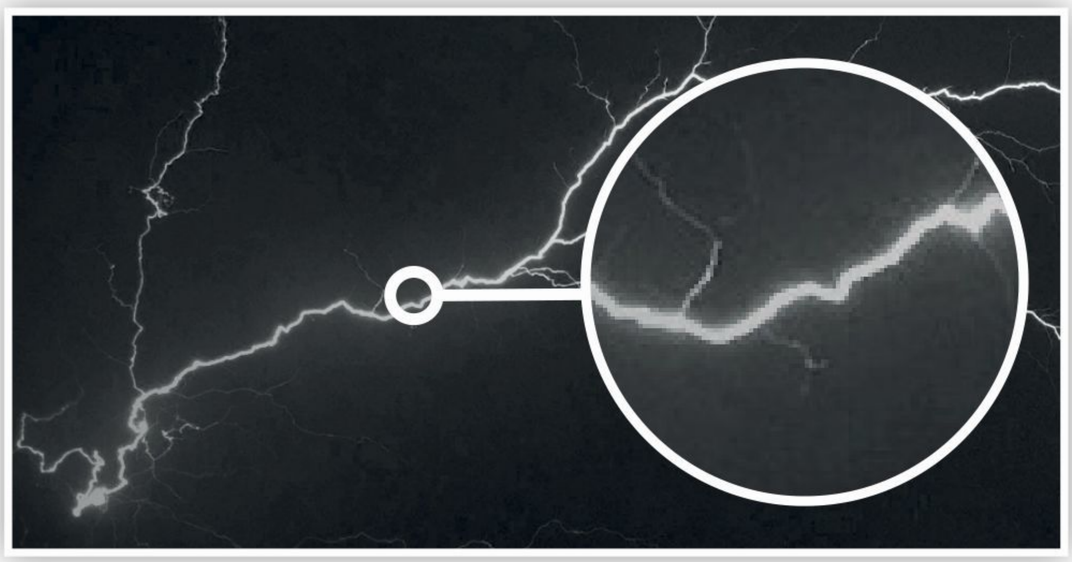


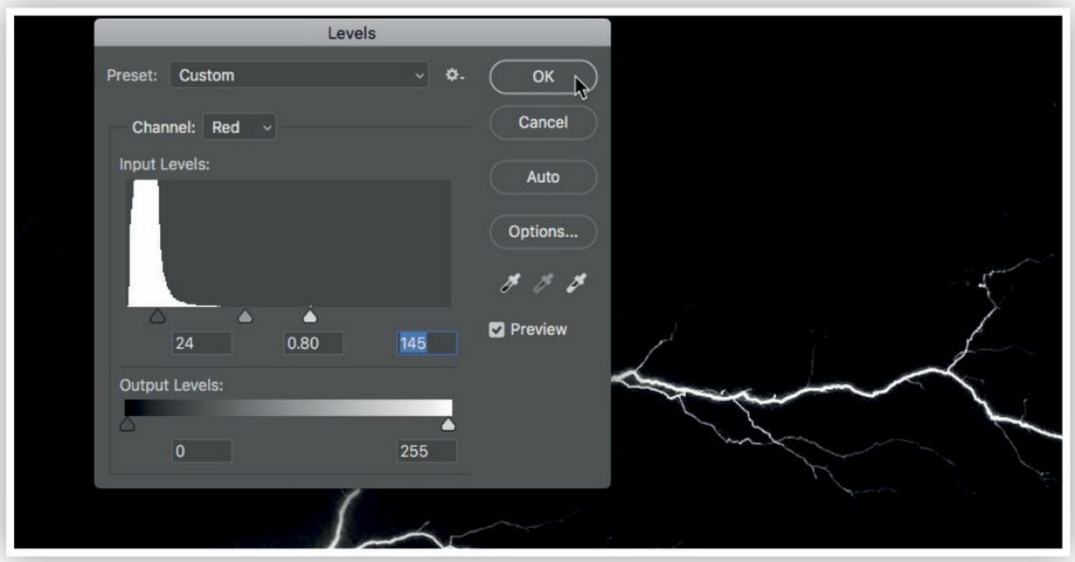
01 You need to start by opening our source image from which you can derive the brush shape that is needed. Go to File > Open and navigate to the file called 'flash.jpg'. Click Open and Photoshop will open the file for you in a new document.

02 You have your image. Next you need to isolate the bright flash itself. To do that, go to the top of the layers palette and click on the Channels tab to view the RGB colour breakdown of the image. We picked the channel that defines the shape of the flash the best.









03 In this case, if you click on the Red channel, you can view that channel on its own in black and white. You need to make some adjustments to remove unwanted detail in the image and give yourself a cleaner image to work with.

04 Go to Image > Levels (Cmd + L) to call up the Levels Adjustment panel. Bring the Highlights slider to the left and push the Shadows slider to the right. You will increase the contrast and reduce any grey midtones in the image. Click OK when done.

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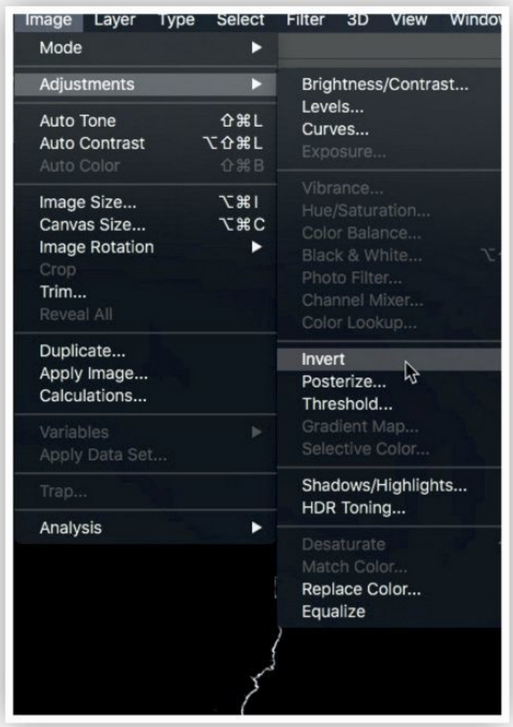
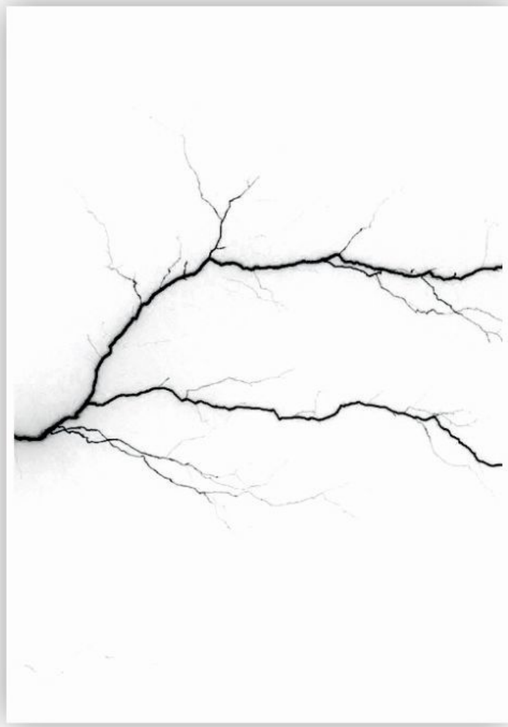
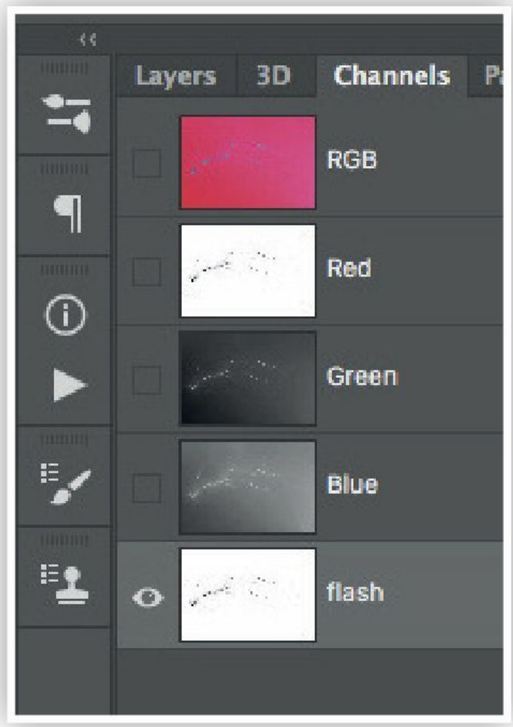
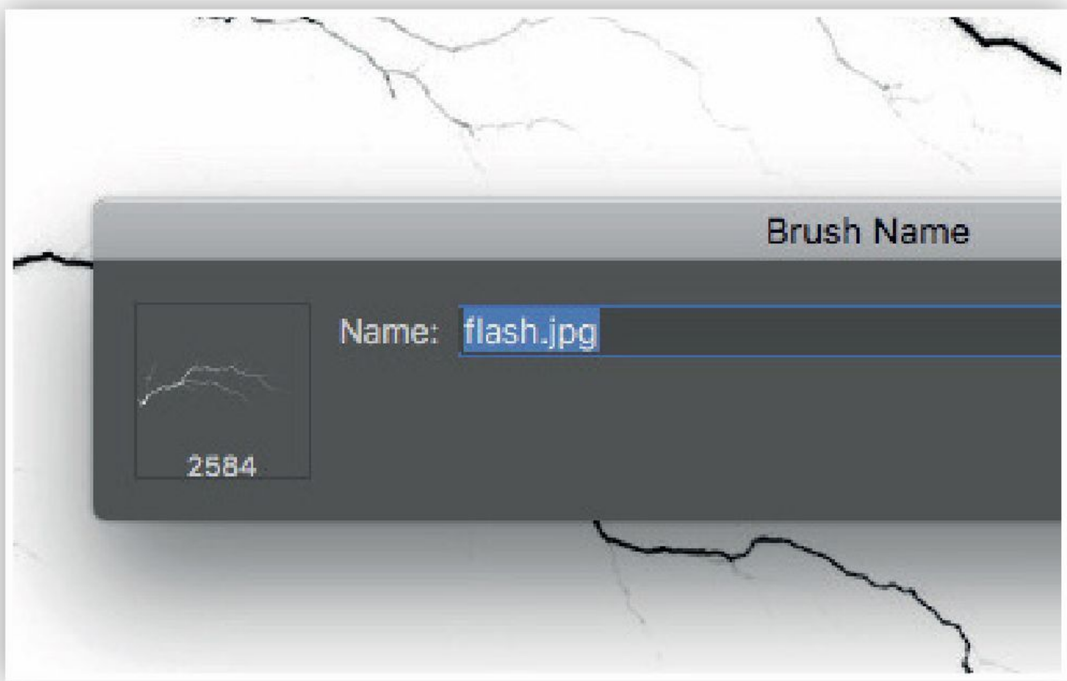


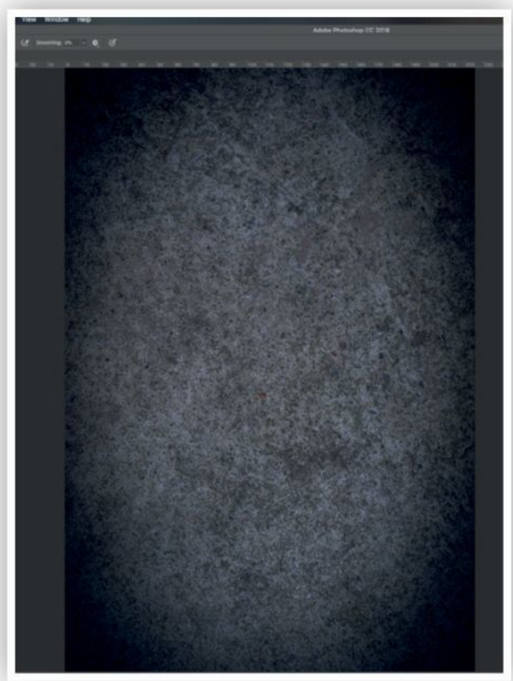


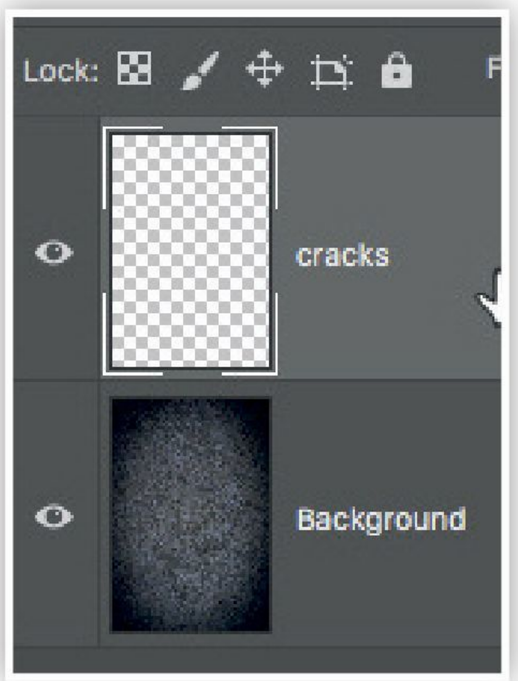


05 Brush creation in Photoshop relies on a black shape on a white background, so we need to do that to this image. Go to Image > Adjustments > Invert (Cmd + I) and the flash will now be black against a white background as required.

06 Right-click the Red channel layer and select Duplicate Channel. You can name it 'flash' and click OK. Make sure that only the new channel is active and then go to Edit > Define Brush Preset. This is where we can turn the image into a brush.

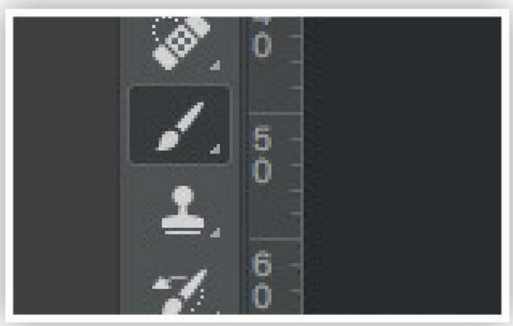


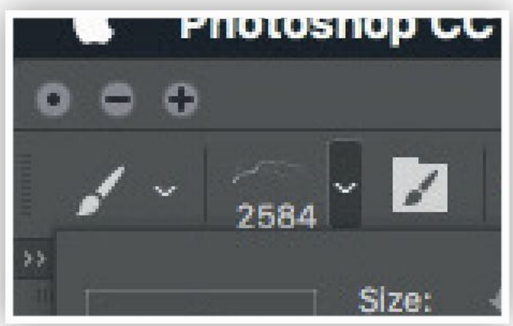


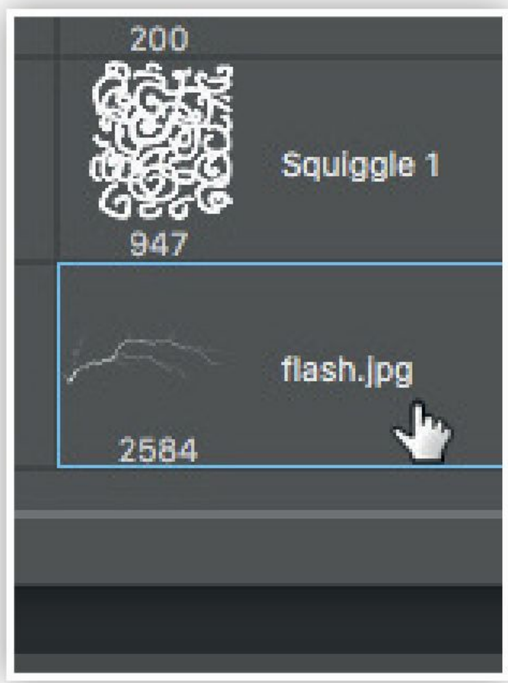


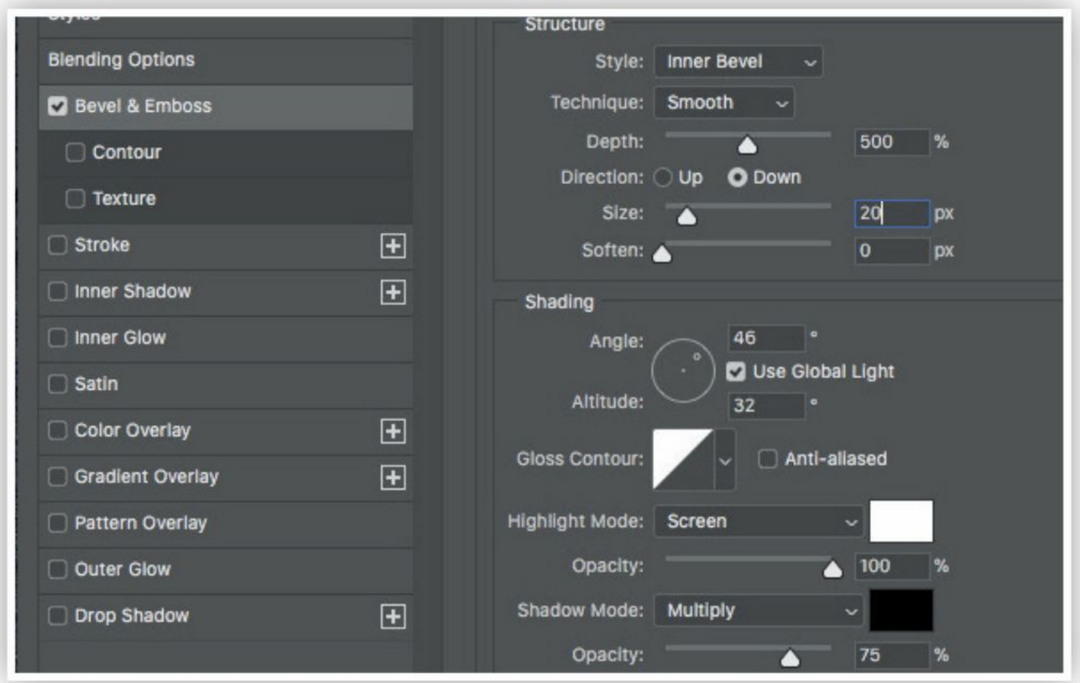
07 A panel will appear where you can save the brush shape and name it. You can call it 'flash' and then click OK to proceed. The lightning flash shape has now been stored as a brush shape preset. You can close the image now and not worry about saving it.

08 Now you can begin the process of creating your final image. Go to File > Open and navigate to the image called 'stone'; then click Open to proceed. With the image open, go to the layer options panel and choose Create A New Layer. Call this new layer 'cracks'.









09 Go to the toolbar and choose the Brush Tool (B) and from the Brush Tool options panel at the top of the document, choose your newly created brush. It will probably be right at the end of the dropdown list. Click it to select it.

10 Make sure the brush's foreground colour is set to black and then double-click the 'cracks' layer to call up the Layer Style panel. We need to add some Bevel And Emboss to the brush strokes. Use the settings shown and click OK to proceed.

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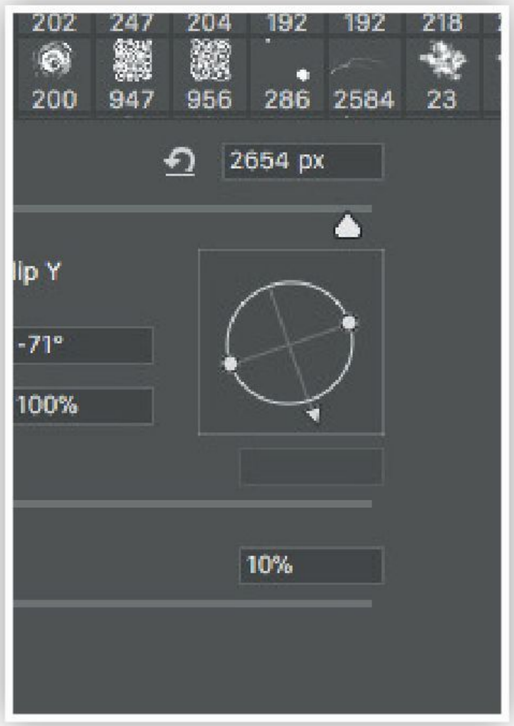
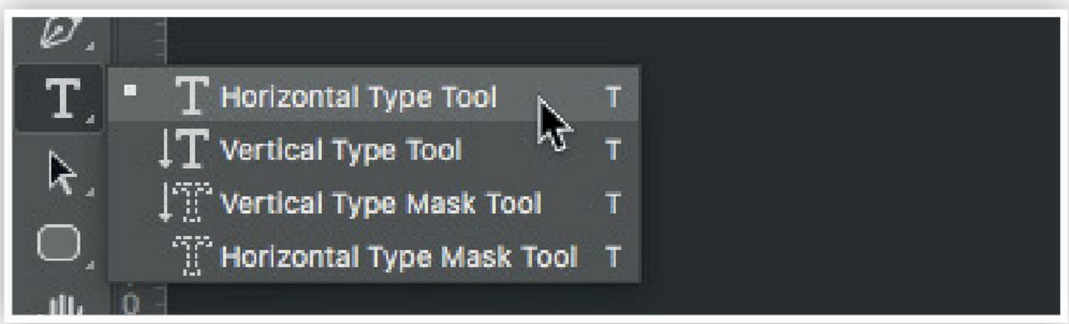
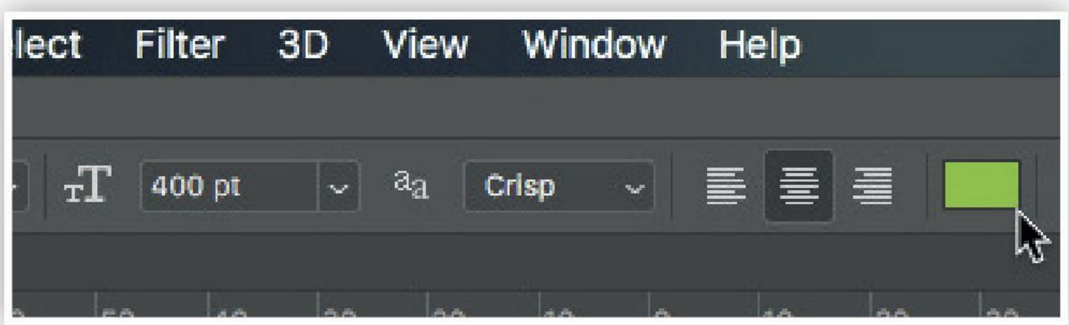


11 Next, go to your Brush Settings and check that the Size is at its maximum of 2654 pixels. Keep the panel open and now begin to add single-click brush strokes randomly around the image.

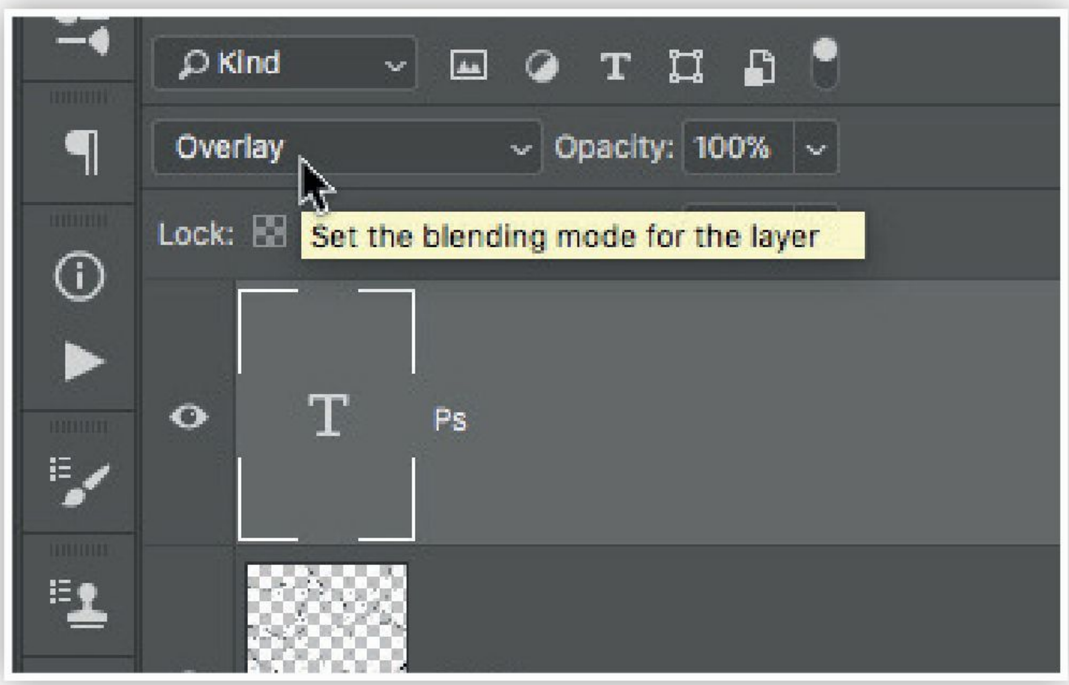
12 To make sure the crack positions look random, you can keep altering the Angle value by rotating the widget every few clicks of the brush. When you do this, you will see a pattern of cracks appearing in the texture of the stone background.

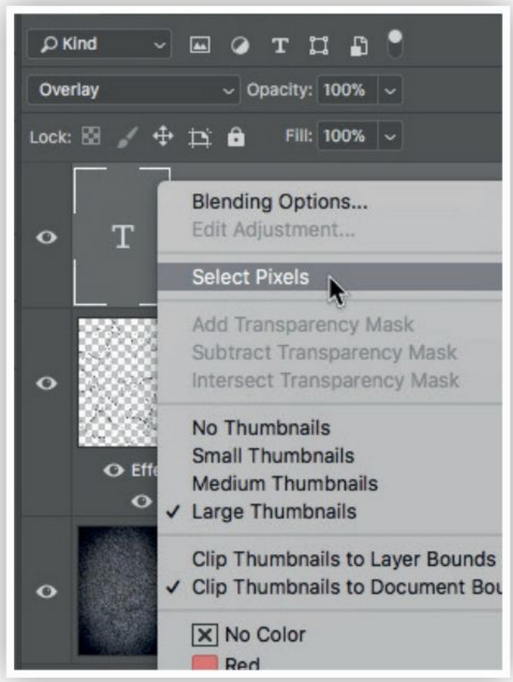


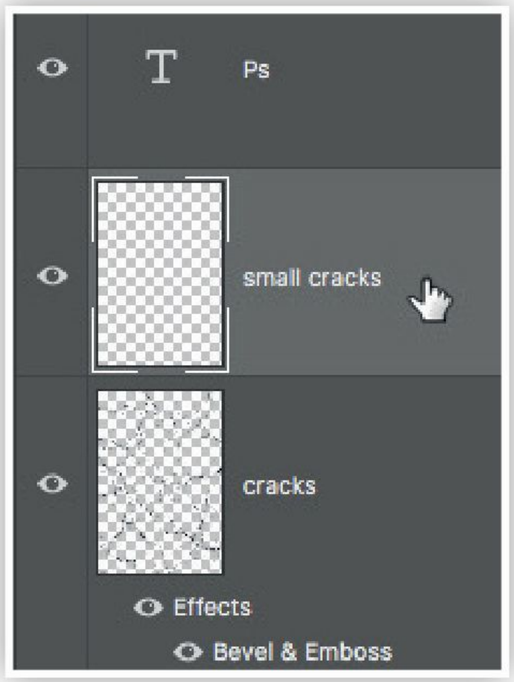


13 Next, click on the Horizontal Type Tool in the toolbar (T). Choose a nice heavy font from the fonts you have available on your computer and set the text size to about 400 point and choose a strong bright colour from the colour picker.

14 Click on the image and a new text layer will be created for you. We simply used the Photoshop logo style for our example but you can happily type any word that you like. We also rotated it by dragging one of its control points. Press Enter to commit any changes.







15 With the 'Ps' layer active, go to the Blend Mode menu and choose Overlay as your blending mode. This will blend the coloured text into the cracks and the stone texture beneath it in the layer stack allowing details to show through.

16 Right-click the 'Ps' layer thumbnail and choose Select Pixels from the dropdown menu that appears. This will make a selection of the layer's contents automatically for you. Keep the selection active and add a new layer called 'small cracks' beneath the 'Ps' layer.

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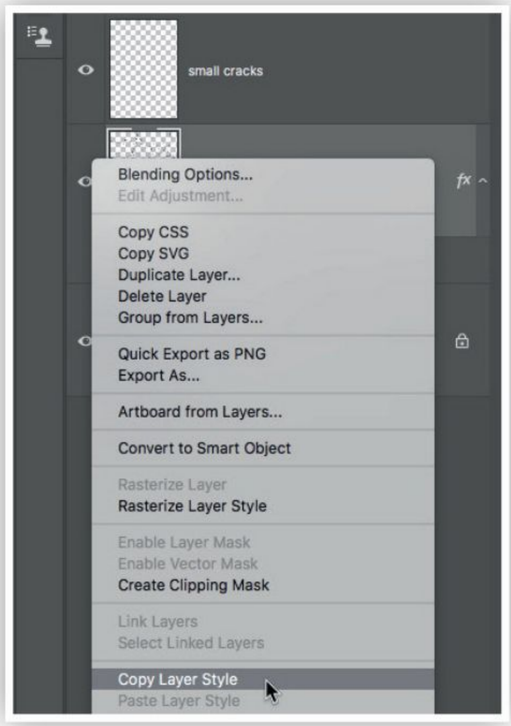
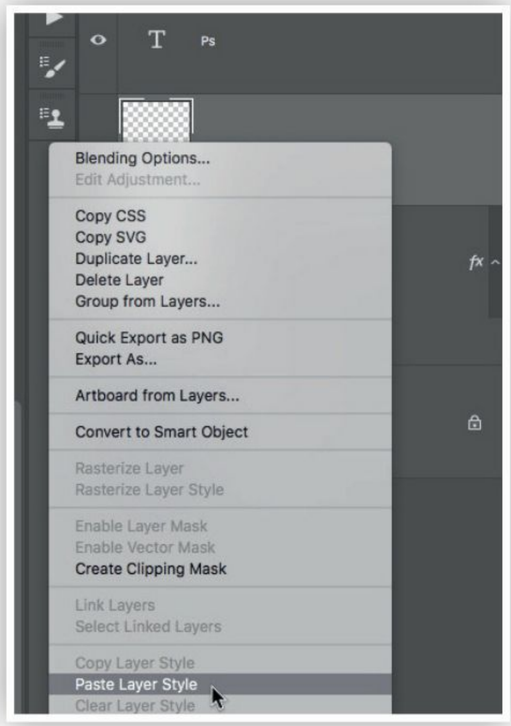
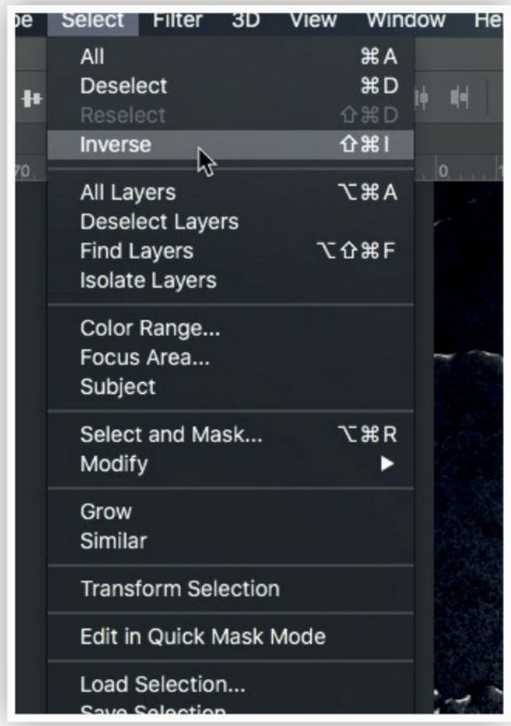
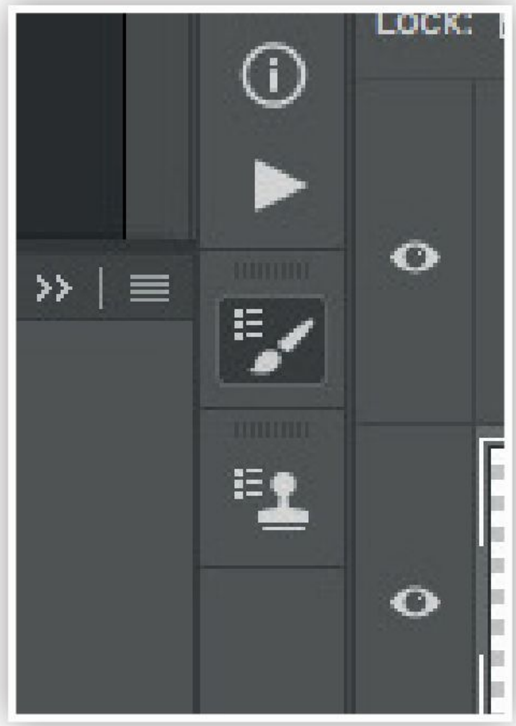


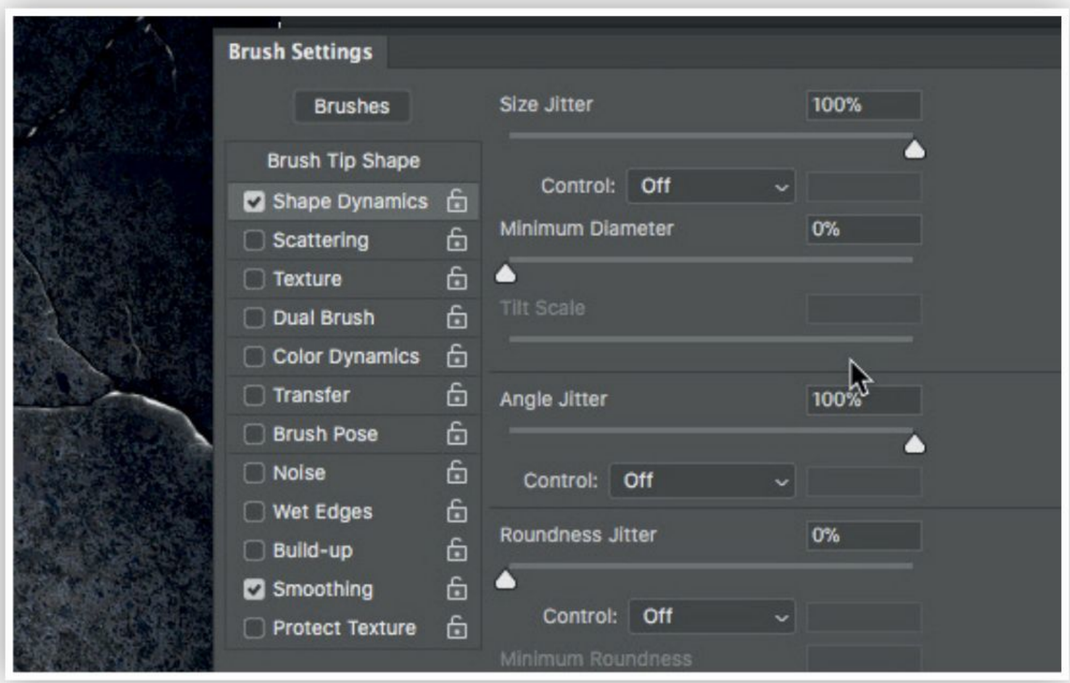






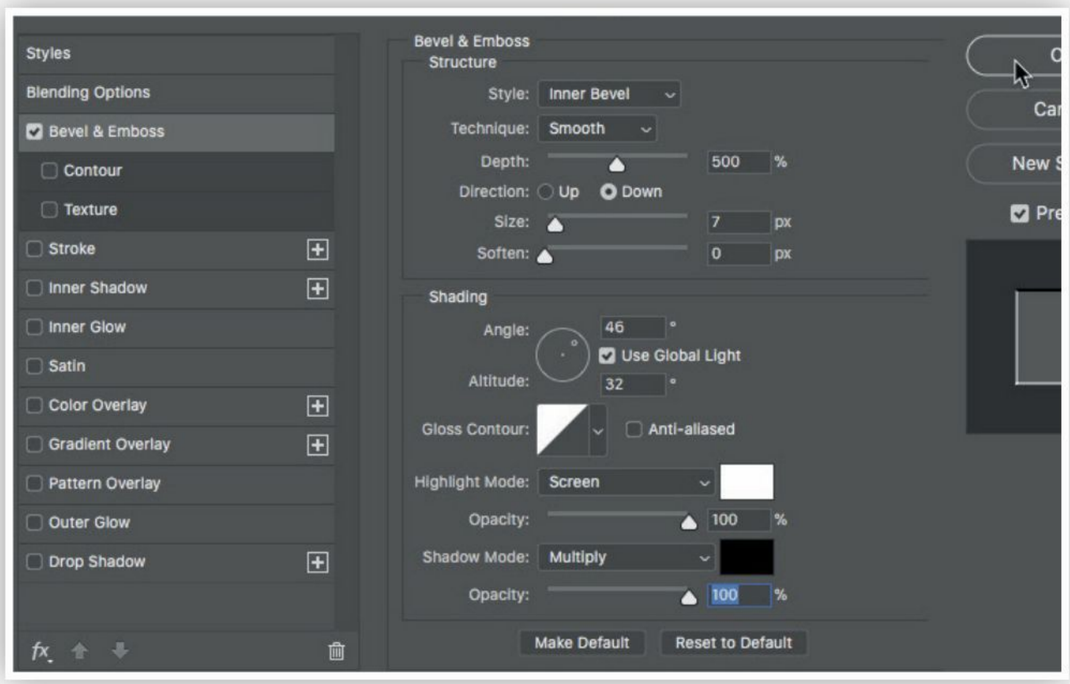
17 Right-click the ‘cracks’ layer and choose Copy Layer Style from the list. Then right-click the ‘small cracks’ layer and choose Paste Layer Style from the list. This will apply the same layer style settings used on the ‘cracks’ layer to the ‘small cracks’ layer too.

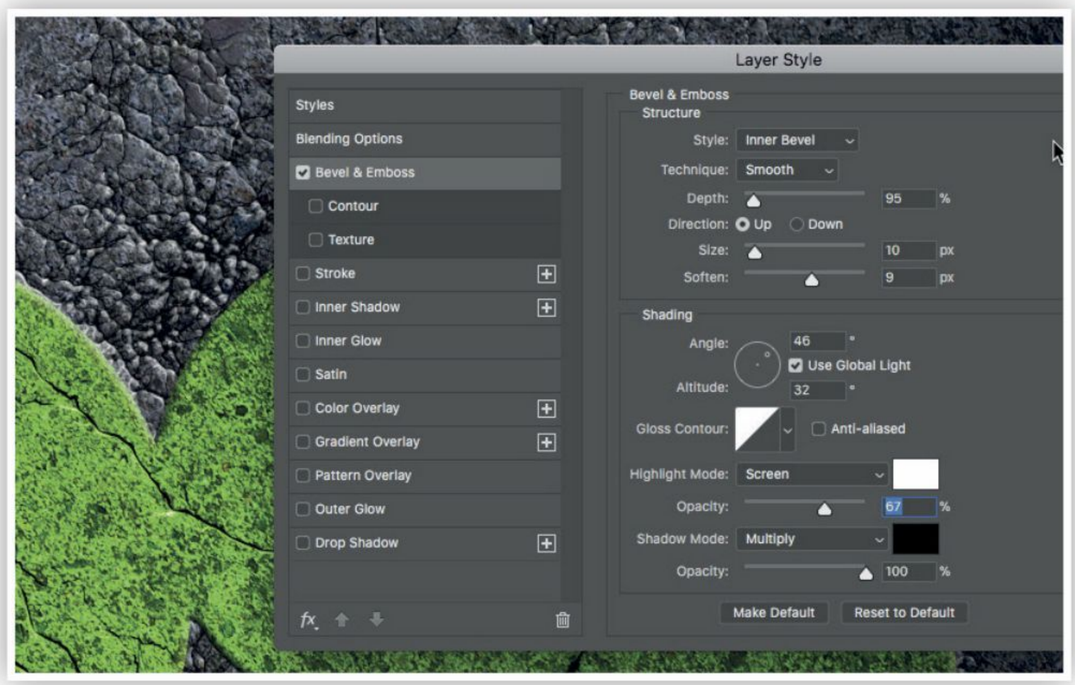
18 With the selection still active, go to Select > Inverse (Shift + Cmd + I) so everything except the text is now selected. Go to the toolbar and choose the Brush Tool again and then click on your Brush Settings again to alter the brush parameters.



19 This time, rather than single-clicking your brush, you can click on Shape Dynamics and set Size Jitter and Angle Jitter to 100% to randomise the application of the brush. Reduce the size of the brush to about 700 pixels and paint around the edge of the Ps text.

20 The selection you made will prevent the brush strokes being applied to the text shape but it will start to build up a small network of cracks on the ‘small cracks’ layer, giving the illusion that the text has crushed parts of the stone beneath it.





21 If you want, you can double-click the ‘small cracks’ layer and alter the Bevel and Emboss settings. We reduced the the Size value down to 7 pixels and increased the Highlight Opacity and Shadow Opacity to 100% for smaller looking cracks.

22 Next, we double-clicked the ‘Ps’ layer to add some Bevel And Emboss to the text shapes. Using the settings shown gives you a slight raised edge to the text, making it look a bit like green paint on the road that is cracking along with the stone surface.

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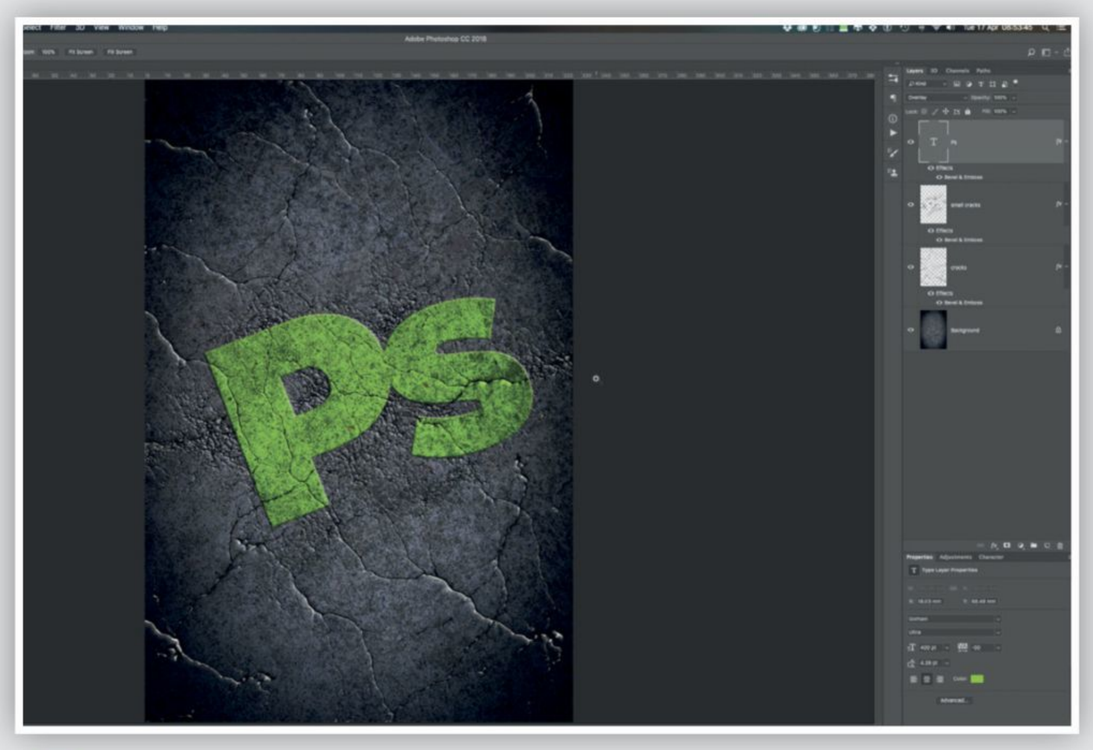

23 You've taken an image of lightning discharge, turned it into a custom brush and repurposed it to create convincing cracks in both a stone surface and text. Any image that you can create as a black image on a white background can be turned into a brush.

24 Your introduction into creating custom brushes is complete. Now it's up to you to get creative and find great shapes and textures of your own to turn into brushes and use in your next Photoshop project.

Another amazing tool for you

Discover the power of custom brushes.

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What is Raw Mode?

A Raw file is an image format for digital cameras that offers a higher quality than standard jpeg files. It is an uncompressed and unprocessed readout of the camera's sensor and is essential in creating the best possible photos. Photoshop offers you a digital darkroom where these files can be processed.

Contents

130 Processing Raw files

132 Adobe Camera Raw interface

134 Adobe Camera Raw menus

136 Adobe Camera Raw workflow

138 Introduction to Lightroom CC

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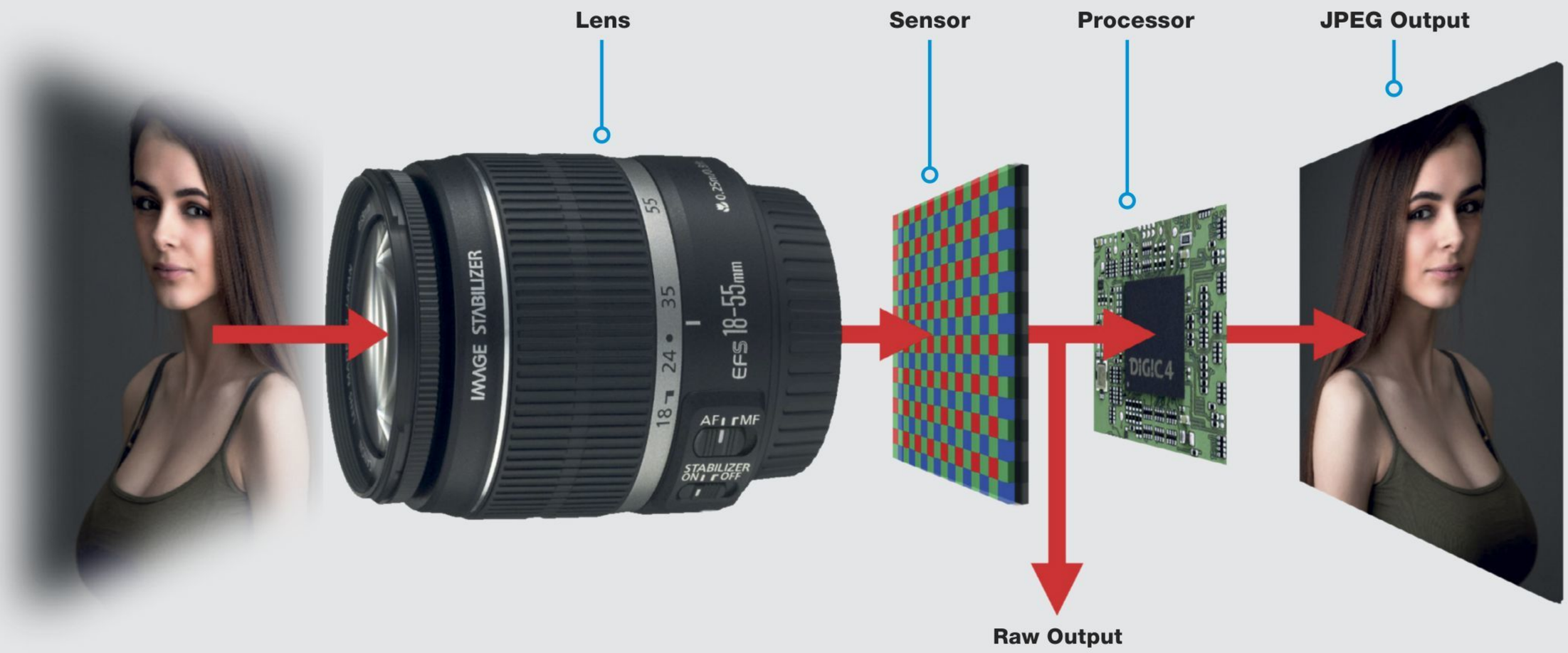
Processing Raw Files

For the best possible quality, shoot in Raw mode

All digital SLRs and Compact System Cameras, and most of the better compact cameras, have a shooting option called Raw mode. You'll usually find it in the menu as an option under image quality. Raw mode offers greatly improved image quality over the usual JPEG image file format, and is recommended for all serious photographers. Let's take a closer look at Raw mode, find out how it works and see how it can help you produce better photographs.

What is Raw Mode?



Raw mode is a special image recording option that is available on digital SLRs, Compact System Cameras, and other high-quality digital cameras. If your camera has this option, you have access to much higher image quality than the standard JPEG file format.

Essentially, Raw mode is just what it sounds like. It's the raw data pretty much straight from the camera's sensor. In a digital camera the photographic image is, as I'm sure you're aware, captured by an electronic image sensor. This sensor has millions of tiny photocells that produce a charge when they are exposed to light; the brighter the light, the higher the charge. Digital camera sensors don't record the colour of the light hitting them, just the brightness, so a special mosaic of coloured filters is placed in front of the sensor, called a Bayer filter.

Naturally, the image generated by the sensor and filter wouldn't make much sense to the unaided eye, so the signal from the sensor feeds into the camera's image processor, a combination of computer electronics and software which turns the brightness data from the sensor, adjusted for the colours in the Bayer filter, into a full colour digital image that you can view and print.

Part of that process includes reducing the bit-depth of the basic image data (the amount of 1s and 0s used by a computer to describe each pixel), usually from 36-bit (12 bits per channel)

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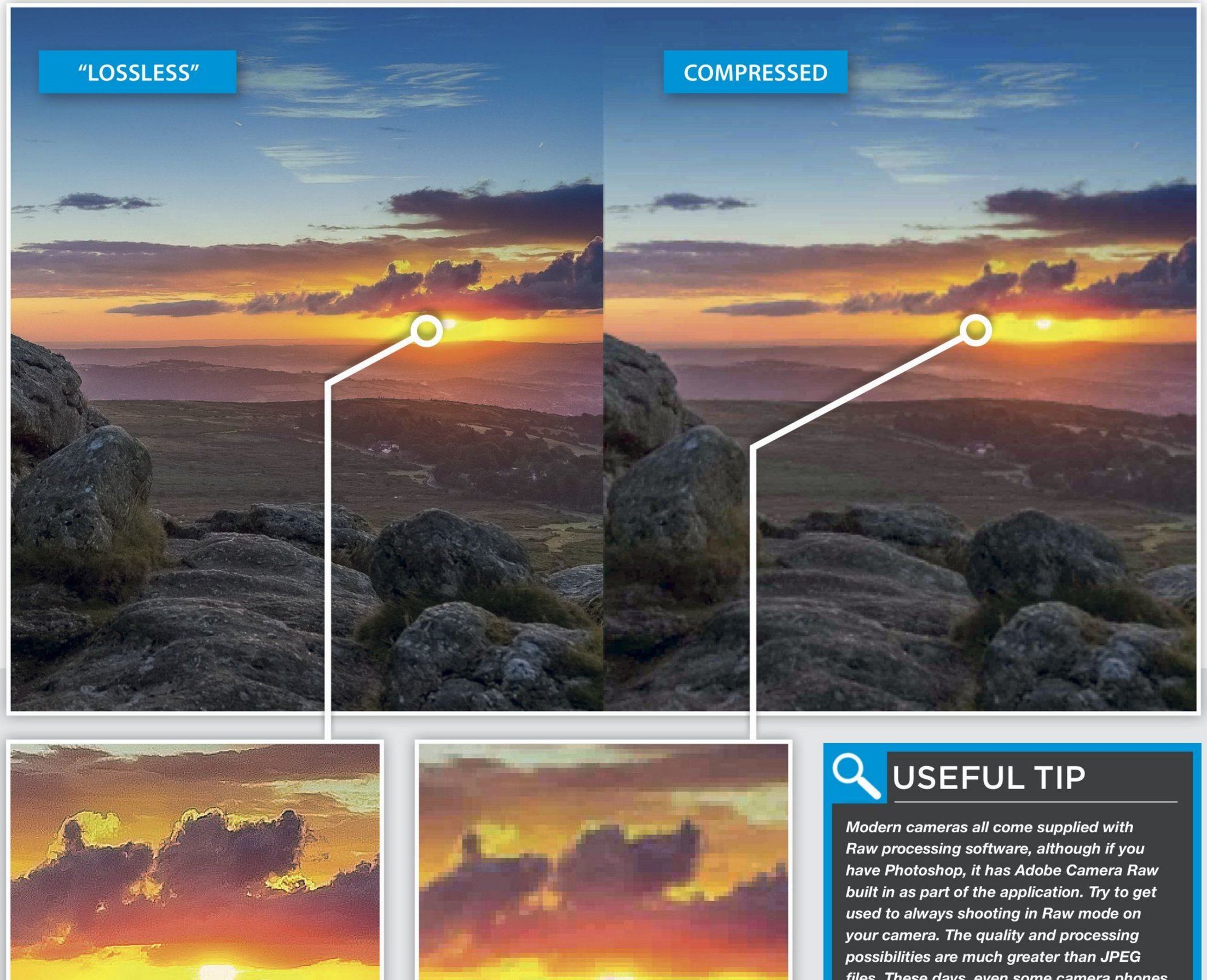

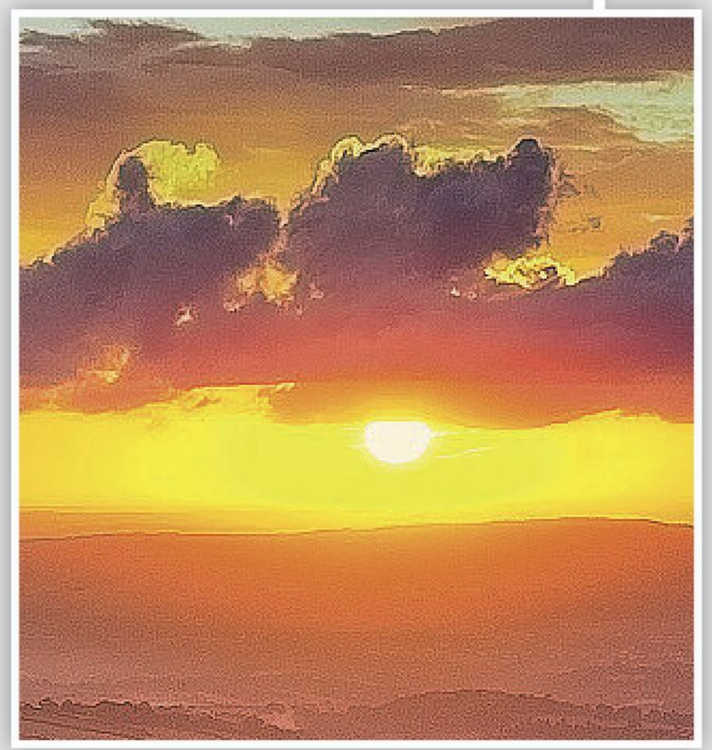

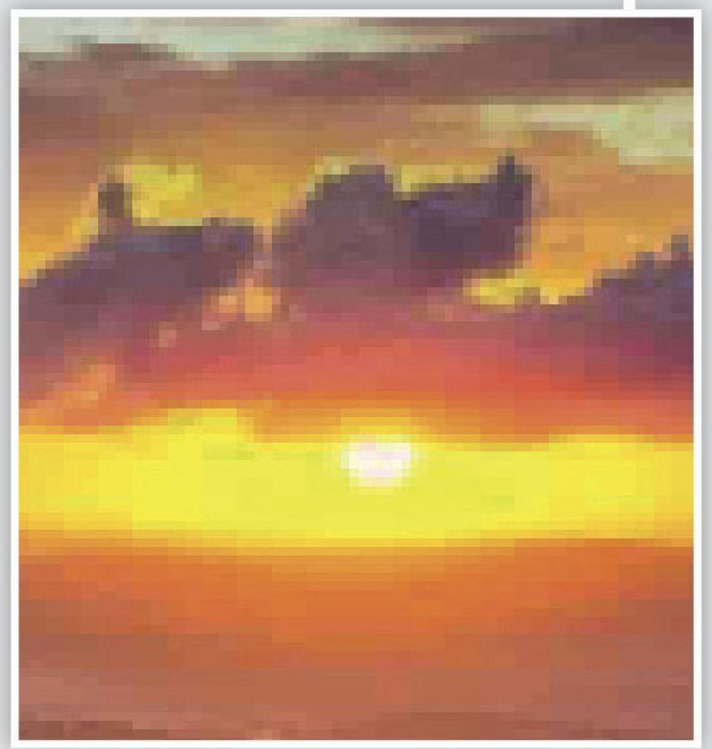

USEFUL TIP

Modern cameras all come supplied with Raw processing software, although if you have Photoshop, it has Adobe Camera Raw built in as part of the application. Try to get used to always shooting in Raw mode on your camera. The quality and processing possibilities are much greater than JPEG files. These days, even some camera phones have the ability to shoot in Raw format. They are larger file sizes than JPEGs but the benefits become clear once you start to understand how much more processing ability you have. Your photos will see a marked improvement when you use Raw.

or even 48-bit (16 bits per channel) to 24-bit (8 bits per channel), which makes a smaller and more easily processed file, but loses some colour depth because of the smaller palette that can be represented by that many bits. Other adjustments to the colour balance, such as unusual white balance settings, can also reduce image quality, as will heavy noise reduction.

In order to save space on the memory card, produce faster transfers and make it easier to display and print the photograph on a computer, the image is usually converted to a compressed JPEG file. Unfortunately JPEG compression also reduces the image quality, and can introduce artefacts into some areas of the image.

The main advantage of Raw shooting, apart from the improvement in overall image quality, is that it bypasses the in-camera image processing, such as white balance, saturation, sharpness etc. This sounds illogical, but it's not really. The processing that takes place in the camera is pre-set before the shot is taken, and irreversible once the image has been converted to a JPEG file. By shooting in Raw mode, you can make the processing adjustments after the shot has been taken, and if you need to change them you can do so as long as you have the original Raw file.

The downside to Raw file recording is of course that the saved files are much larger, so they take a lot longer to save to the memory card, and you can fit fewer of them on there. For a typical 16MP DSLR, a high quality JPEG file will be around 8MB, while a Raw file will be around 25MB, over three times the size.

Many of the more recent DSLRs have the ability to record Raw and JPEG image files simultaneously. This has the advantage of the convenience of JPEG with the versatility and quality of Raw, but takes up even more space on your memory card. Fortunately the price of very large memory cards is falling almost daily, so this needn't be much of a problem.

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ACR Interface

Adobe Camera Raw isn't as difficult as it looks

Photoshop comes with Adobe Camera Raw, usually shortened to ACR. It offers a range of processing options that enable you to get the best out of your photos, including exposure adjustment, sharpening, noise reduction, colour correction and automatic correction for lens distortion. It is regularly updated to maintain compatibility with all the latest cameras and lenses. Like the rest of Photoshop, it's easy to get started. Let's take a look at the interface and see what it has to offer.

Toolbar

This holds all the main selectable tools, most of which are similar to tools in the main Photoshop interface, including Zoom, Hand, Crop, Straighten, Spot Removal, Red Eye Removal, and a newly-added feature that can add a graduated filter to your picture.

Control Palette

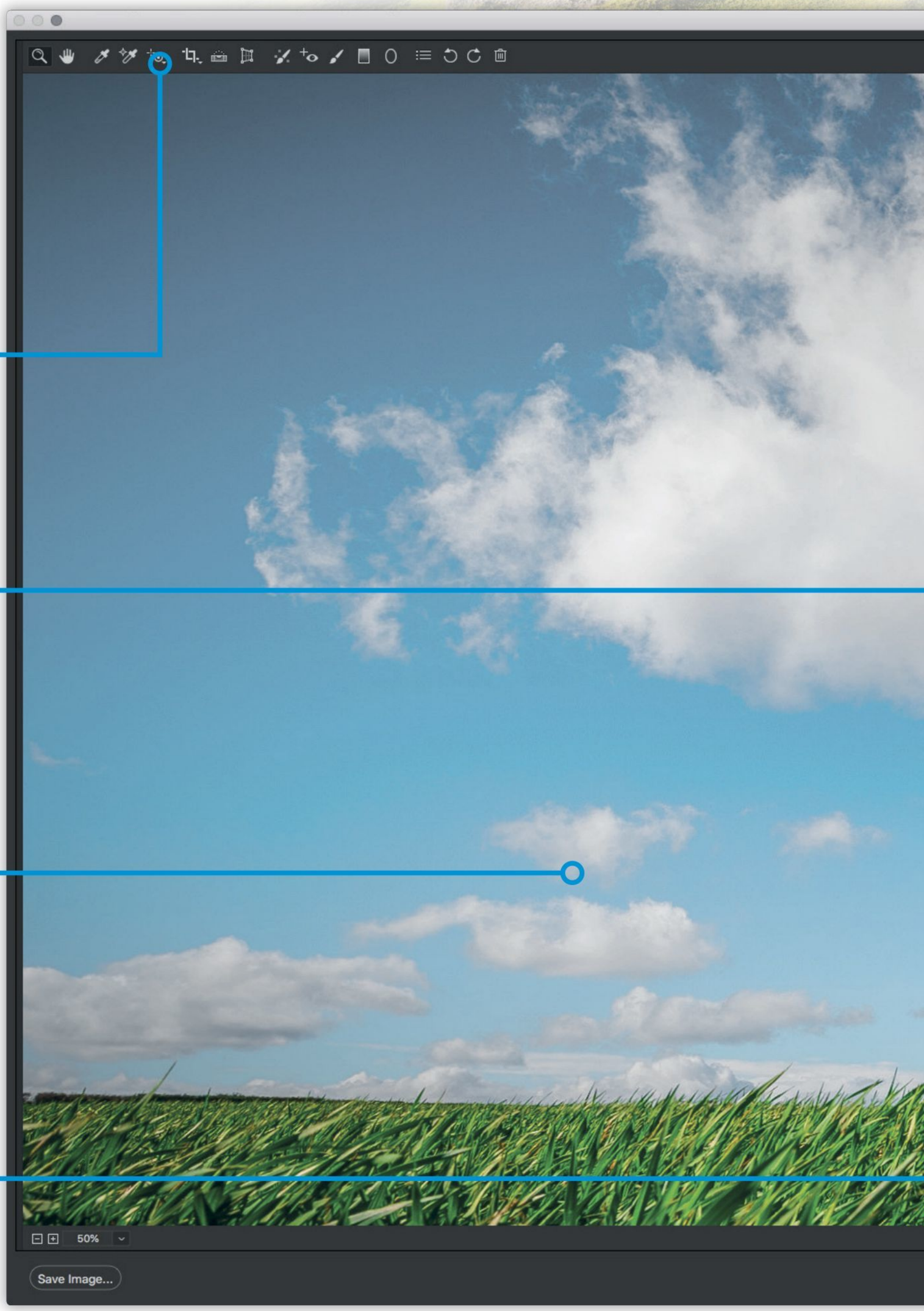
This is the main dialogue palette, which contains the controls for each tabbed section. Most of the controls are sliders, and you can see the results of each adjustment both in real-time on the histogram and in the main image window.

Image Window

This is the main window displaying the image you're currently working on. All changes that you make during Raw editing will be visible here. You can zoom into the image using the magnification controls at the bottom left, or use the usual CTRL + and CTRL - shortcuts. You can see what effect your editing has had by checking and unchecking the preview option at the top right.

Output Options

At the bottom of the screen you'll find the controls for when you've finished your editing. If you click on the blue link you'll see a range of output options, since Adobe Camera Raw can process your pictures in a range of sizes. You can also save your edits back into the Raw file to keep them for later.



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Control Tabs

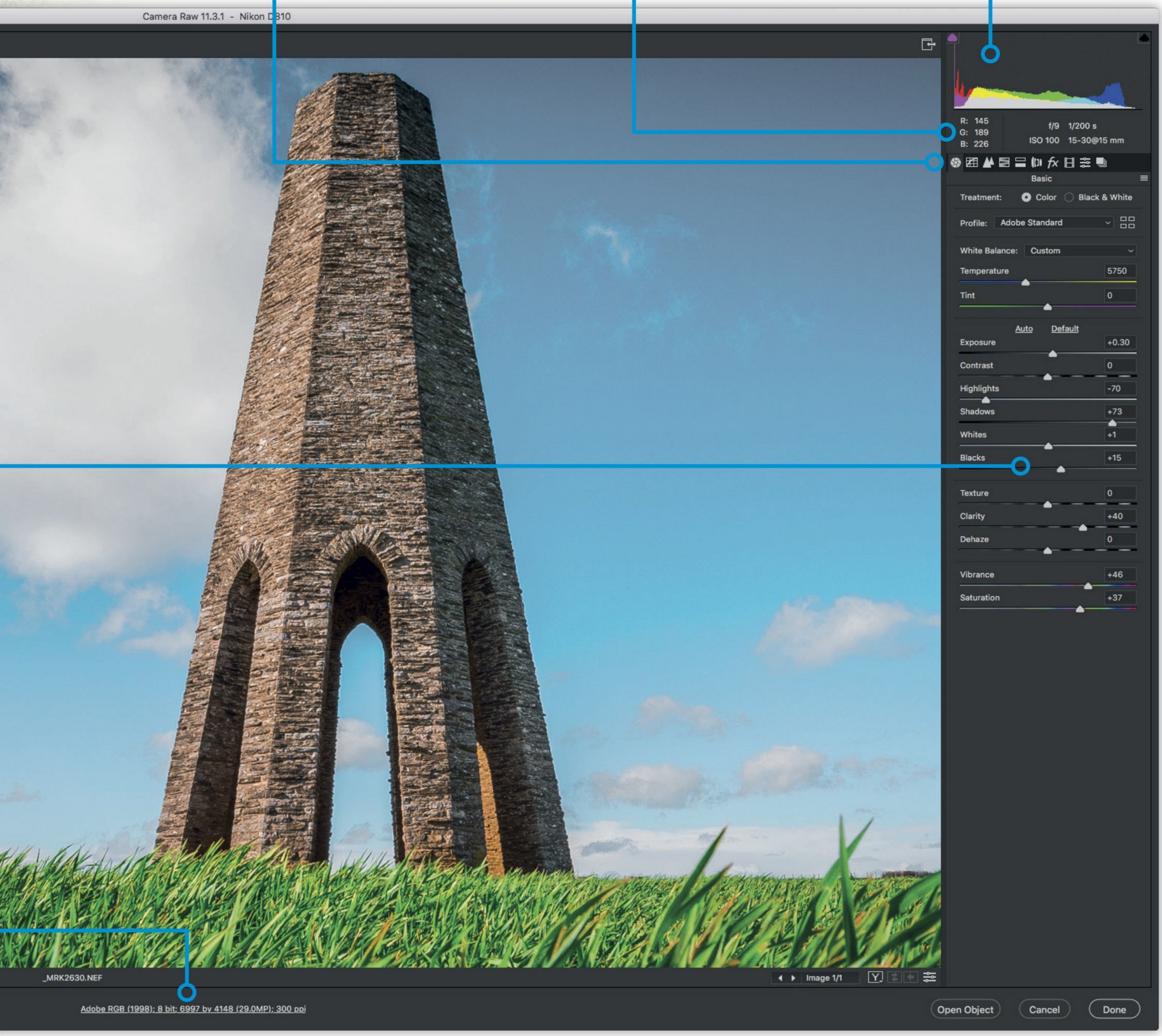
The Camera Raw interface breaks the workflow down into discrete sections, each with its own tabbed palette of controls and adjustment sliders. You can switch between them by clicking here. The tabs are, from left to right: Basic, Tone Curve, Detail, HSL/Greyscale, Split Toning, Lens Correction, Effects, Camera Calibration, Presets and Snapshots.

Information Palette

The left side of this panel shows the RGB colour values at the cursor position. RGB represents the three primary colours of red, green and blue, which combine to create a final colour image. The larger right side of the area displays the exposure information for the image, including the aperture, shutter speed, ISO setting and the focal length of the lens used.

Histogram

The Histogram shows you the number of pixels of each tone in your image and changes as you make exposure and colour balance adjustments. The graph represents the colour in digital form, with levels from 0 to 255, with the darkest on the left and the brightest on the right. The white area represents the combined colours, but you can also look at each colour channel individually.



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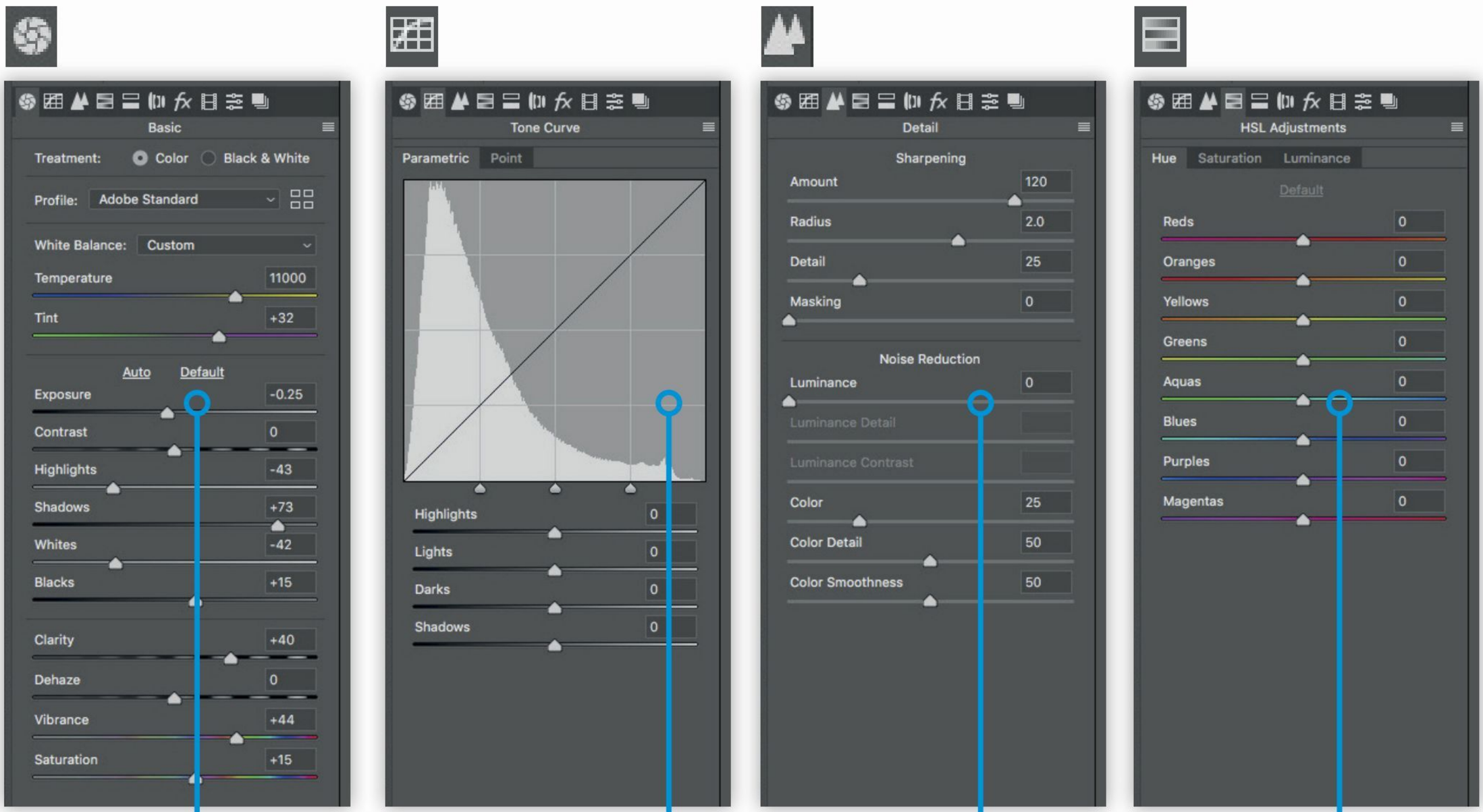
ACR Menus

Adobe Camera Raw has a powerful set of features all nested within a series of easily accessible control tabs

The main interface of Adobe Camera Raw is comprised of ten menus, each with a series of control sliders and some additional menu tabs to access further features. Although you will no doubt spend most of your time working in the Basic panel, when used in conjunction with adjustments from the other control panels, you will be able to enhance your images beyond what you thought possible in no time at all.



Basic

The Basic panel in ACR is probably the one you will spend the most time in and also making the most important global image adjustments. Apart from choosing the colour treatment, you can adjust Exposure, Contrast, Highlights and Shadows as well as Clarity, Vibrance, and Saturation. More recent additions include being able to apply a colour profile from a collection of presets and the Dehaze option to reduce haze in your photos.

Tone Curve

The Tone Curve options in ACR behave very much like the Levels and Curves Adjustments you can make in Photoshop itself. The basic Parametric adjustments allow you to use sliders to individually adjust Highlights, Lights, Darks and Shadows. The Point Curve adjustment allows you to place control points and create your own custom curves by moving the points around to your own personal preference.

Detail

The Detail section lets you handle both Sharpening and Noise Reduction in your Raw files. Sharpening is basically an increase in the contrast of the brightest and darkest edges in your image. Too high a value and you may suffer image degradation. The Detail and Masking sliders can effectively suppress the halo effects of over sharpening. The Noise Reduction settings help you reduce the amount of image noise and colour artefacts seen in high ISO photos.

HSL

The HSL panel, which is an acronym for Hue, Saturation and Luminance, is where you can get to grips with the colours in your images and how you can affect them. The first panel is Hue, which lets you alter a specific range of colour values such as reds for example; then alter their hue to make them more magenta or make orange more yellow or blue more purple. The other panels allow the adjustment of their colour intensity and brightness.

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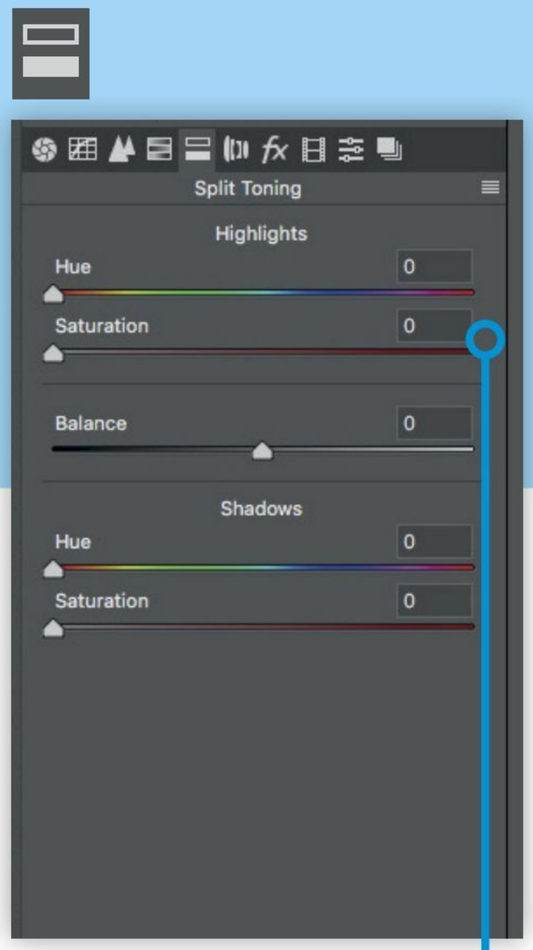
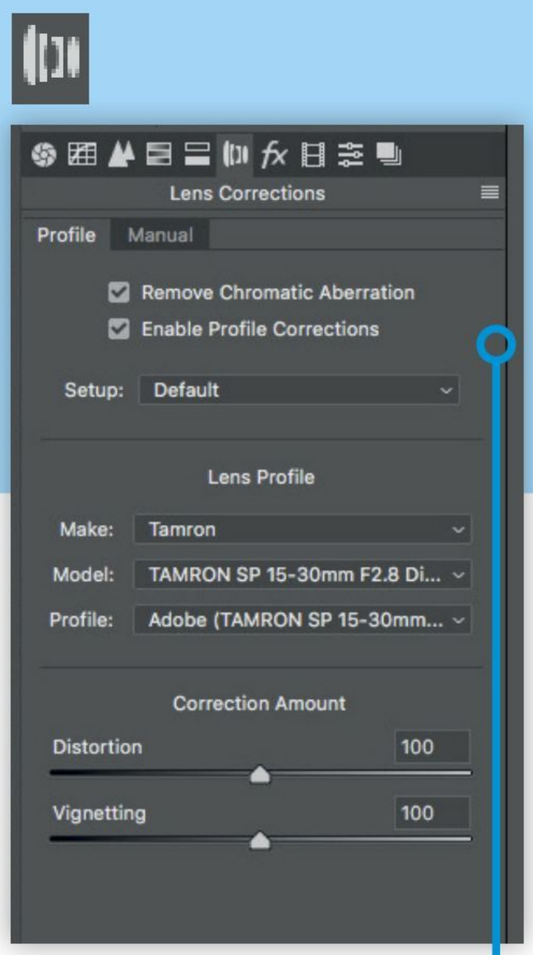


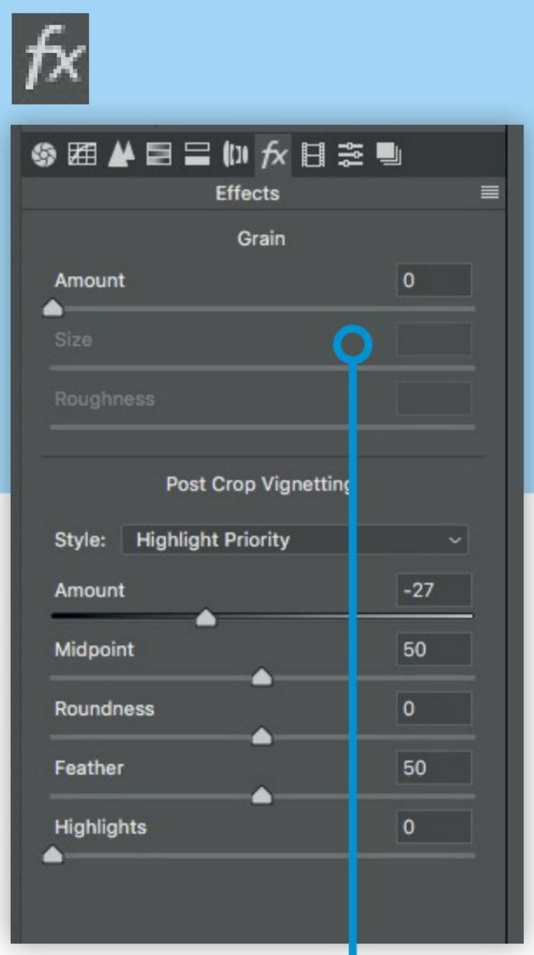
Split Toning

Split Toning is a particular effect you can apply to your images in order to control how much of a certain colour appears in the highlights or shadows of your images. There are Hue and Saturation sliders for both Highlights and Shadows. Set a Hue value and then increase its Saturation amount. When you do so, that chosen colour will start to dominate the brightest and darkest areas of the shot. The Balance slider governs which is most dominant.



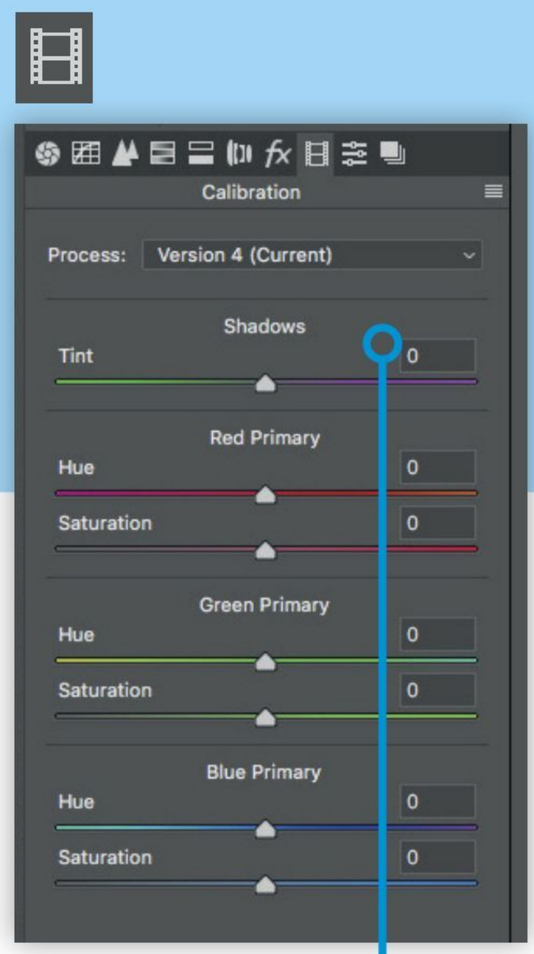
Lens Corrections

Throughout its life Adobe Camera Raw has been updated at regular intervals. Each new update brings the latest Lens Correction profiles that can automatically assess your photo and determine what lens was used on the camera that took the shot. Once it knows what lens was used, it can apply a set of corrections that can eliminate lens aberrations and distortions specific to that lens. It does also allow for manual adjusts as well.



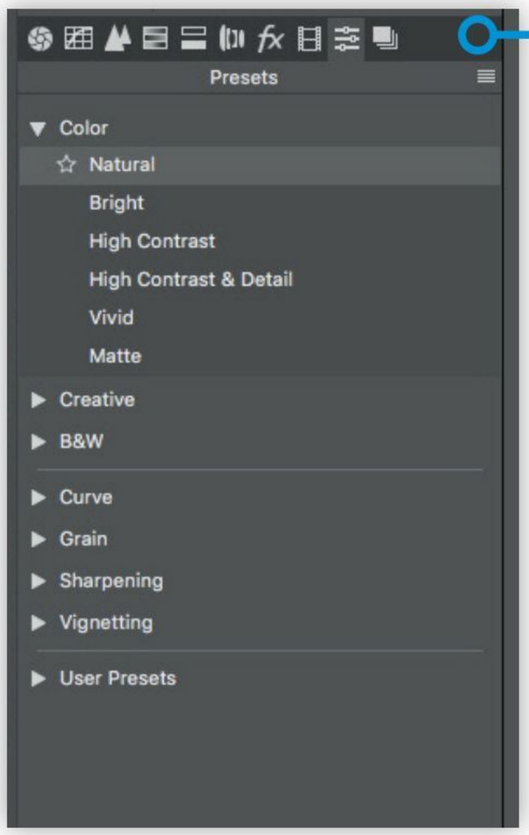
Effects

The Effects panel allows you to add Grain to your image, with three values to control its impact. You can specify the Amount, the Size of the grains and the Roughness of the image grain you apply. The other effect is Post Crop Vignetting which allows you to darken the outer edges of the photo before and after you've cropped the photo. You can control the Amount, Midpoint, Roundness, Feather and Highlights.



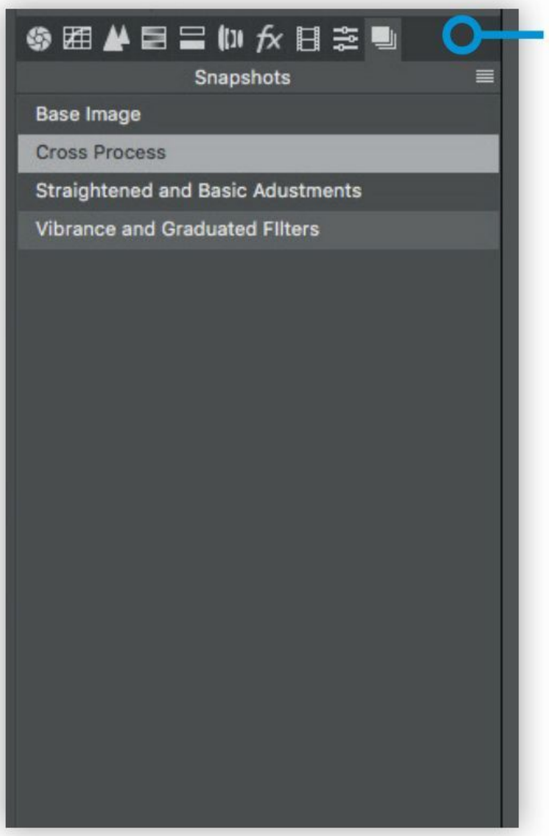
Calibration

Found in both Adobe Camera RAW and Lightroom is a module that is more powerful than it may look at first glance. Mainly used as a calibration for your camera it can be a brilliantly creative tool. You could think of it as a more refined Hue and Saturation adjustment tool. You can alter the Tint value found in the shadows of your image, as well as adjust the general use of Hue and Saturation in the Red Green and Blue channels of your image for much finer control.



Presets

This is another recent addition to Adobe Camera Raw. Normally, you can save a preferred method of image adjustment as a User Preset and that would have been that. Now, there are also a number of new Presets added that mean you can apply one-click adjustments to your photos. These presets range from High Contrast colour adjustments to Cross Process effects and a number of Creative and Black and White options too.



Snapshots

Here is another more recent feature that you normally find on another Adobe product, Lightroom. Snapshots, as the name implies, allows you to create a snapshot of a particular part of the adjustment process. If you have a set of basic edits you like, you can Snapshot it. If you then make a series of edits that you don't like, you can always go back to a previous state by clicking on one of the Snapshots you stored whilst you were working.

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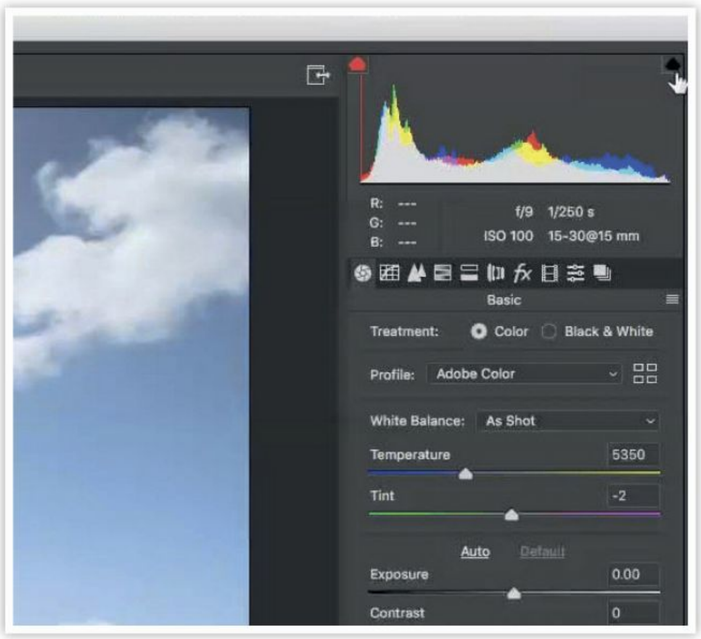
ACR Workflow

Getting the most out of your Raw files

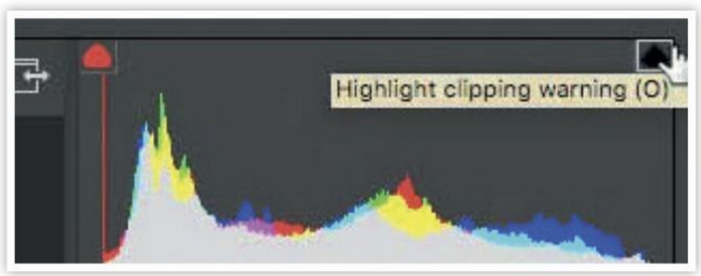
This tutorial content is available for download

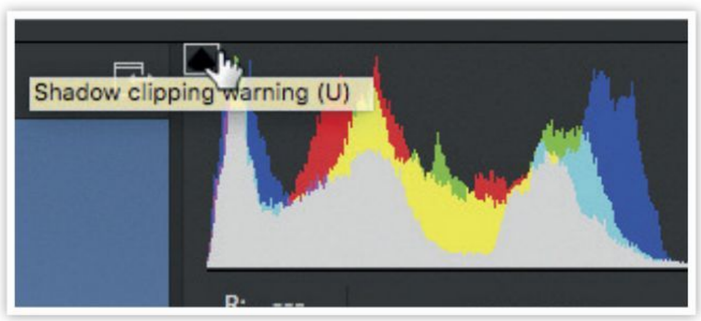
Ask any five professional photographers about the process they use to create their pictures, you'll get five different answers. The amount of processing and adjustment used will vary, depending on the job at hand and the type of final image required, as well as the type of camera used to take the photo and the use to which the photo will be put. There are certain operations that will be common to most photos that you'll want to process, so we'll take a look at a common general purpose workflow that will be suitable for most types of photo. We'll be using a coastal town photo of a fishing boat taken in Brixham on a sunny day.

01 If you look at the histogram at the top right of the screen you'll notice that the line at the right (brightest) end of the graph is peaking higher compared to the ones on the left. Ideally the graph should fill the area between the lightest and darkest ends of the range, so we need to slightly reduce the lighter end of the graph without causing under-exposure.

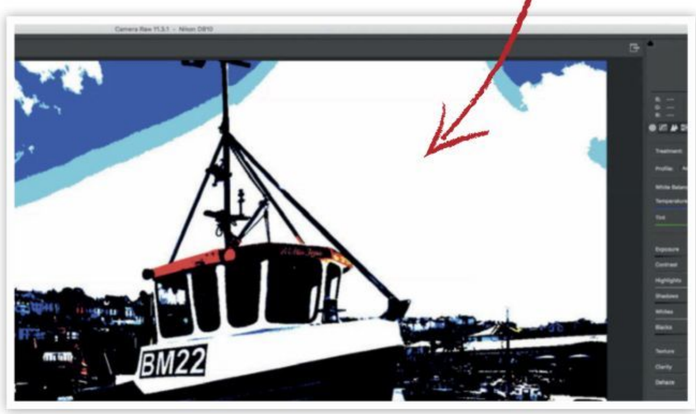


02 To ensure that we don't lose too much detail to highlight clipping, click on the arrow in the top right corner of the histogram window. This turns on the highlight clipping warning. Any over-exposed areas will turn bright red in the image window. Clicking on the left button turns on the shadow clipping warning.

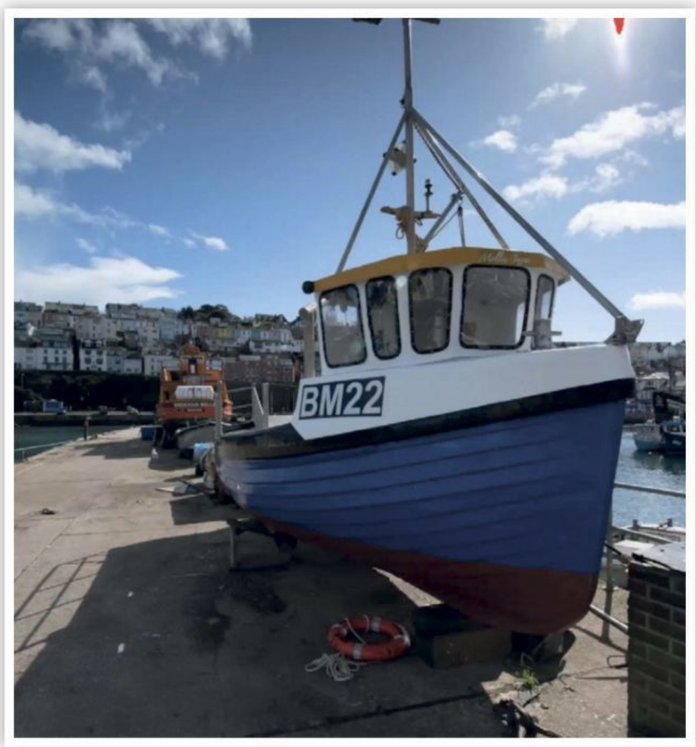


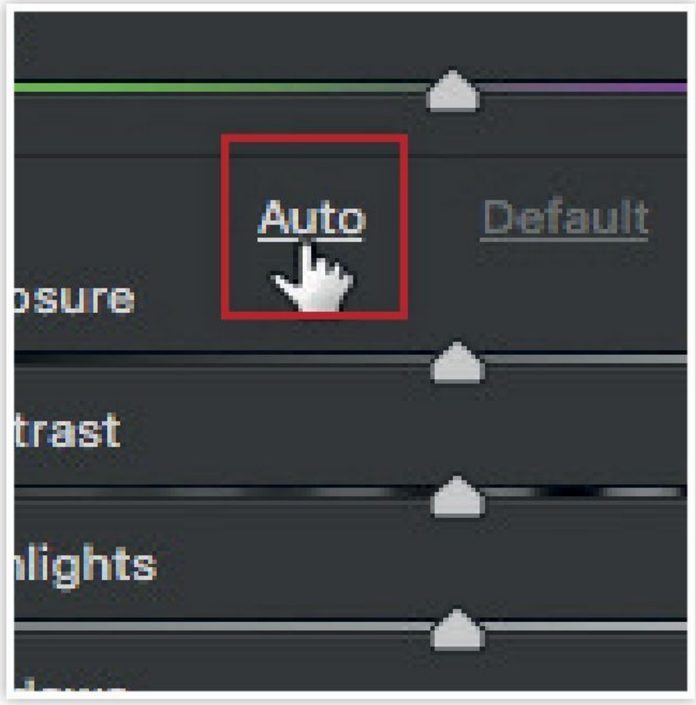


03 While holding down the Alt key (Option on Mac), move the exposure slider to the right. With the key held down, all you'll see will be the over-exposed areas. You can do this with any of the first six sliders and it's a good way to make adjustments without going too far.



04 We can spend a while carefully adjusting the various sliders by hand to try and equalise the histogram, but the quickest way to get close to the optimum result is to let Camera Raw do the hard work. If you click on Auto the software will automatically adjust the image to produce a good approximation to a perfect exposure. It's probably not going to be ideal, but it will give us a good starting point. You'll notice that the sun and the clouds around it are over-exposed, but that's OK. We're looking for a good spread of tones and that includes white.





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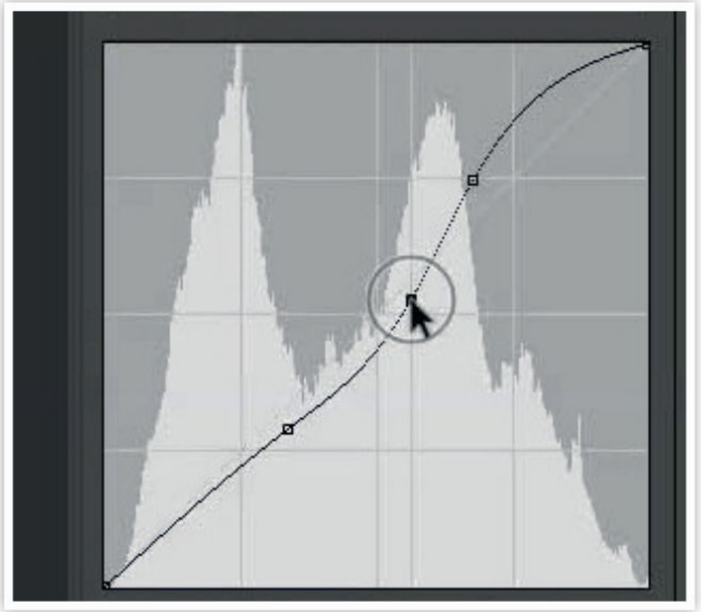
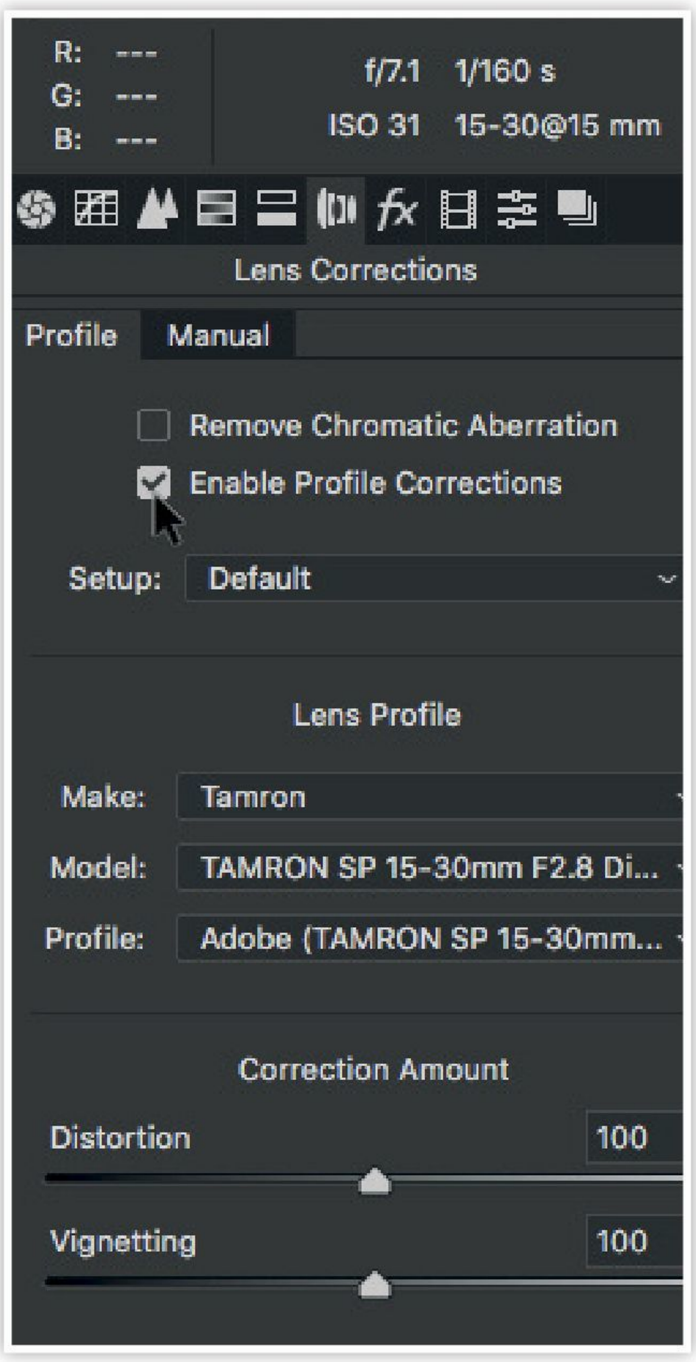
05 The Auto adjustment has made a good job of this particular picture, but for landscape shots a little bit of extra saturation usually looks good, so we'll boost the vibrance and the saturation to get the colours of the sunlight, boat and sky to really pop out.

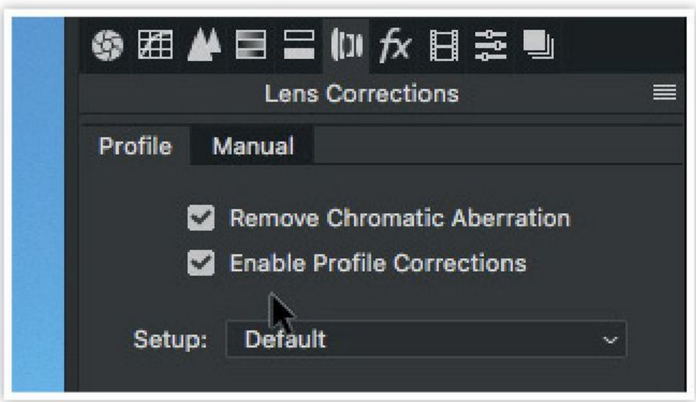
06 Adobe Camera Raw also provides a second method of adjusting contrast: by altering the tone curve. Although it's no more accurate than using the sliders many people will prefer it because it's nice and simple and gives a good visual representation of what we're doing. It's also a lot harder to burn out the highlights using curves. By boosting the highlights a lot and then boosting the other sliders in decreasing amounts we can quickly equalise the histogram without losing too much quality.

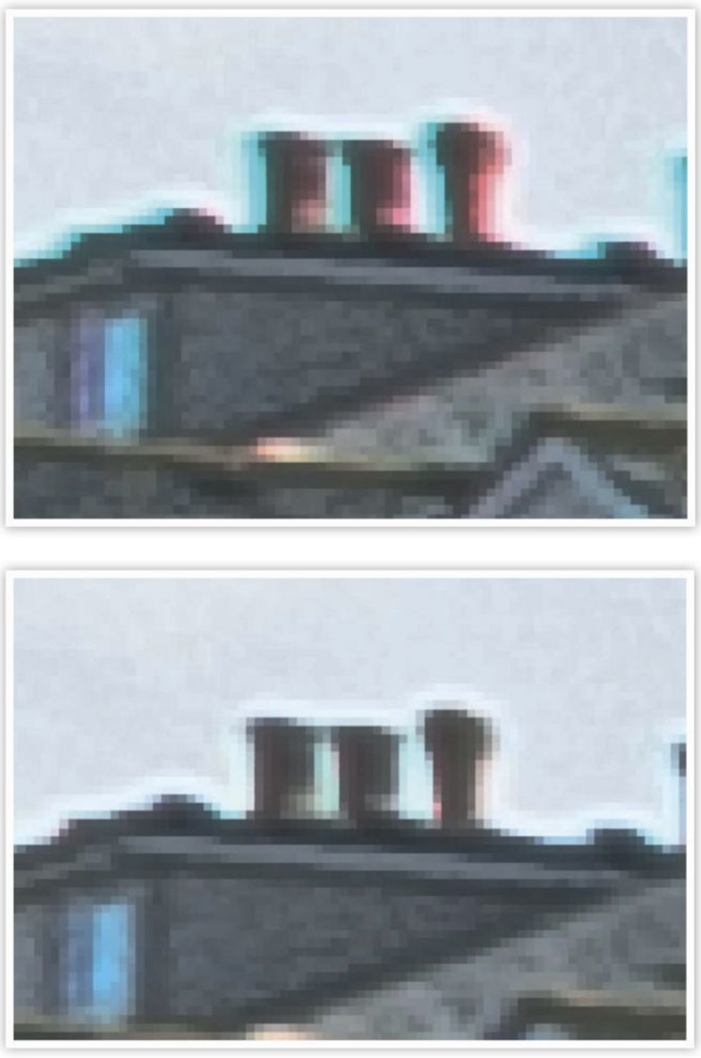


07 One of the best things about Adobe Camera Raw is its lens correction feature. The Tamron wide-angle lens used to take this picture is a nice bit of glass, but it's not perfect. Although it's hard to see at a glance, this wide-angle shot does suffer from some pincushion distortion and slight chromatic aberration. Fortunately Camera Raw comes pre-loaded with correction profiles for a huge list of popular lenses, including this one. All you need to do to automatically correct the optical distortion caused by the lens is to check the box Enable Lens Profile Corrections. You'll see the change happen to your image immediately.

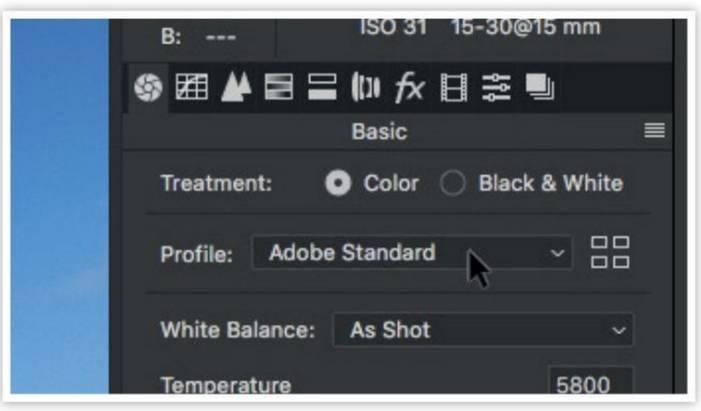


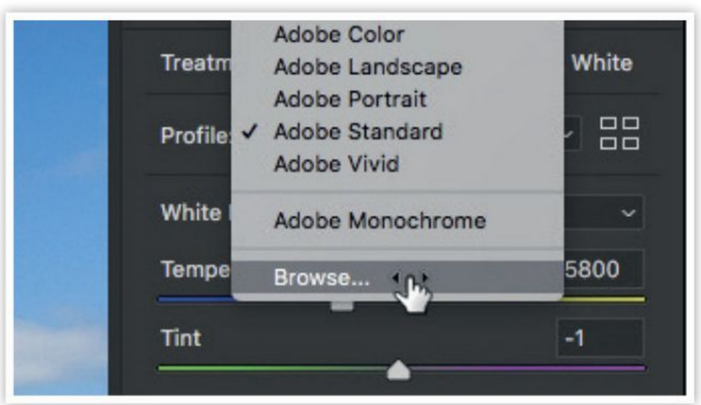
08 The chromatic aberration is just as easy to fix. Click on the Color tab in the Lens Correction palette and simply check the box Remove Chromatic Aberration. You'll need to zoom in near the edge of the frame to see the difference, but you'll notice the effects at once.

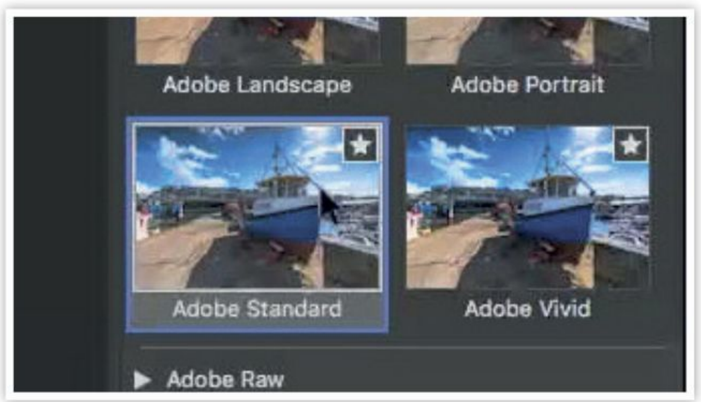




09 The next step is largely a matter of personal taste, but you can also choose to use a preset profile for the colour calibration too. In the Basic tab, click on the Profile panel and from the drop-down menu select your preferred profile. Choose Browse to see more. There are now a number to choose from. This sets the colour rendering profile to the preset.







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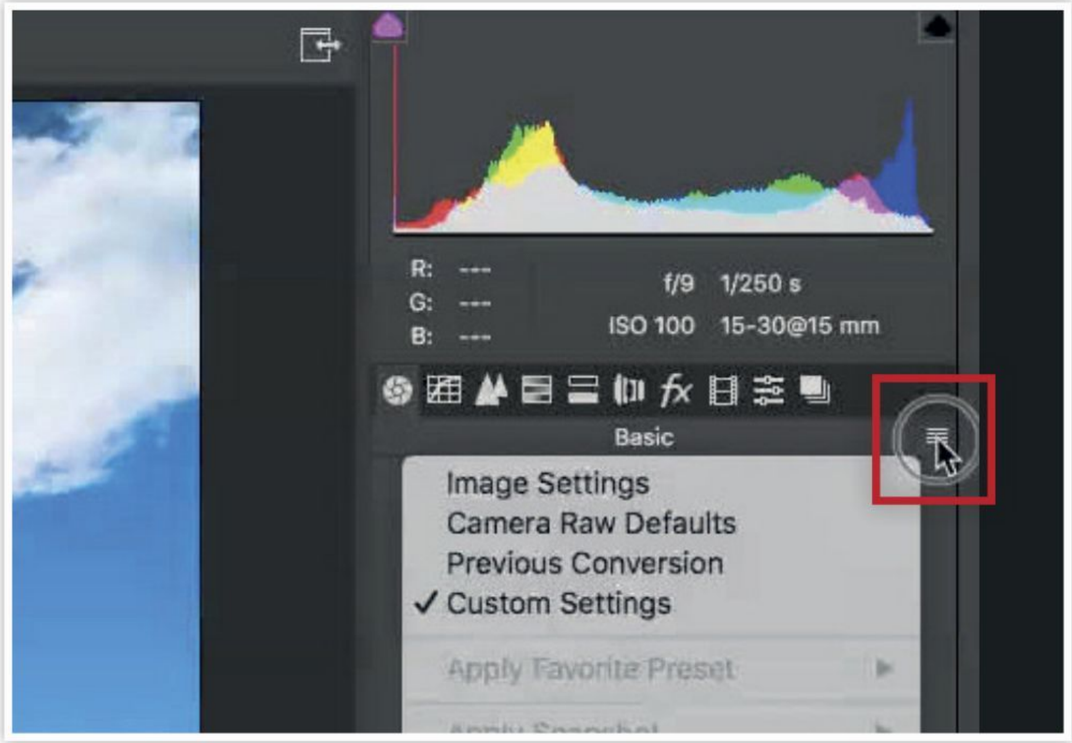
10 For this particular image, the sky is a bit lighter than it needs to be, but we can easily darken it down a bit by adding a high quality digital graduated filter in Camera Raw. Click on the Graduated Filter button at the top of the screen and you'll see the filter control palette appear. Set the exposure slider to about -1.5 or -2, then in the image window drag down from the top of the picture to just below the horizon line to apply the filter. If you hold down the shift key while dragging, it will stay parallel with the top of the frame.

11 Finally we have the output options. Camera Raw gives you the option to output the processed image in a number of different ways, but which one you use will depend on what you want to do with the finished image. For most purposes the default settings will be ideal, but you may need to select a different colour space and for maximum colour fidelity you can output in 16-bit format. You can also choose an image size different from the native resolution of your camera, but be aware that choosing a larger size doesn't magically create new pixels; the image will be enlarged using Photoshop's bicubic resampling algorithm. If you're planning to print the picture you might also want to look at the sharpening options. When you're happy with your choice, click OK and then Open Image. The picture will now open in Photoshop, from where you can either carry out more editing, or save the picture in JPEG or TIFF format.

12 You also have the option to save a particular group of adjustment settings in order to use them later on other images. You can apply a selection, or all the settings at once, if you wish. Once you have a group of adjustments you want to save, click on the small icon to the left of the Presets tab to call up the Settings options menu.



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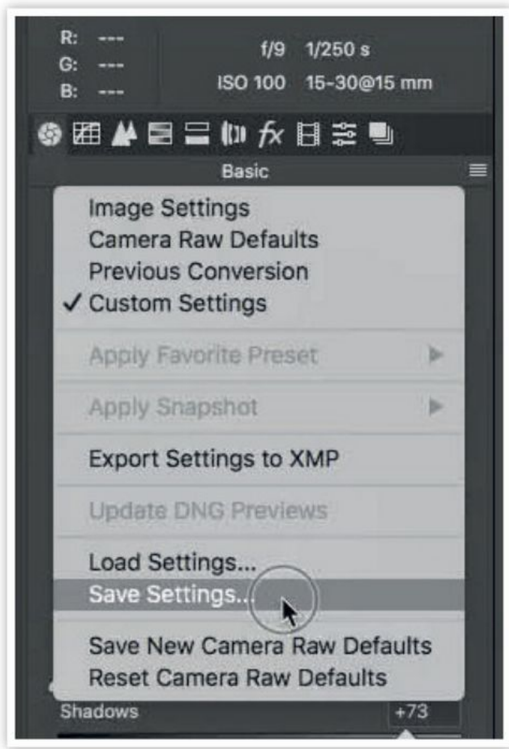
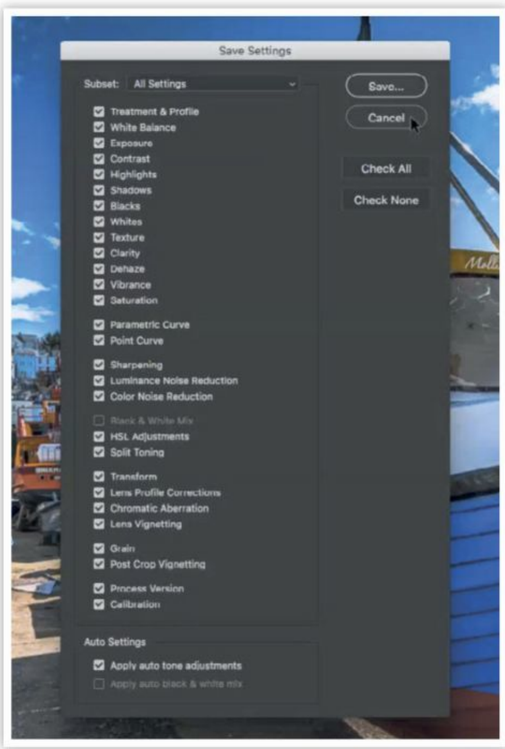
USEFUL TIP

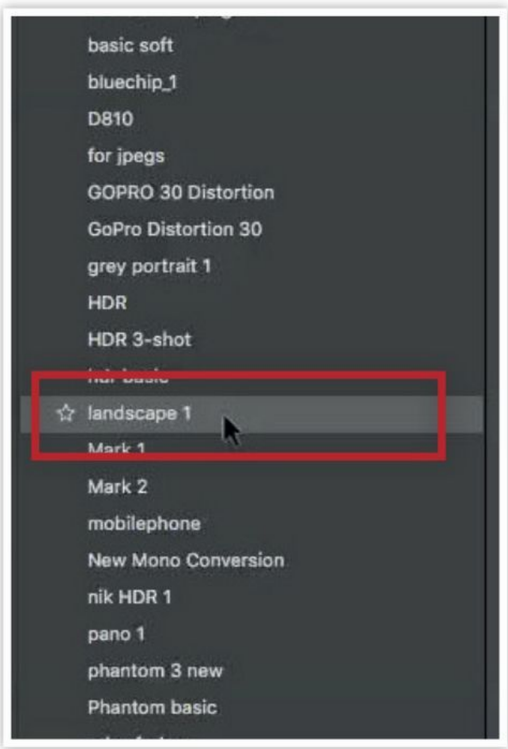
Any adjustments you make to your image do not directly affect the Raw file. They are added to an XMP file that is used to keep a record of all your image modifications. When you finally save your images, to preserve as much detail as possible, try saving your photos as TIFF files instead of JPEG, since it uses lossless compression and keeps all that detail in your images.

13 From the Settings options menu, choose Save Settings. This will open the Save Settings dialog panel where you can specify which settings can be saved. You can choose to Check All or manually choose by checking or un-checking your preferred adjustments listed in the panel. Click Save and name your Preset. Our example is called 'landscape 1.xmp'.

14 Once saved, the Preset you created is added to the list of User Presets. If you have an image to wh ich you want to apply this Preset, open it in ACR as normal and then scroll down to where 'landscape 1' is listed. A real-time display shows the effect it has on your image. If you click it, the adjustments will be applied to the new image.







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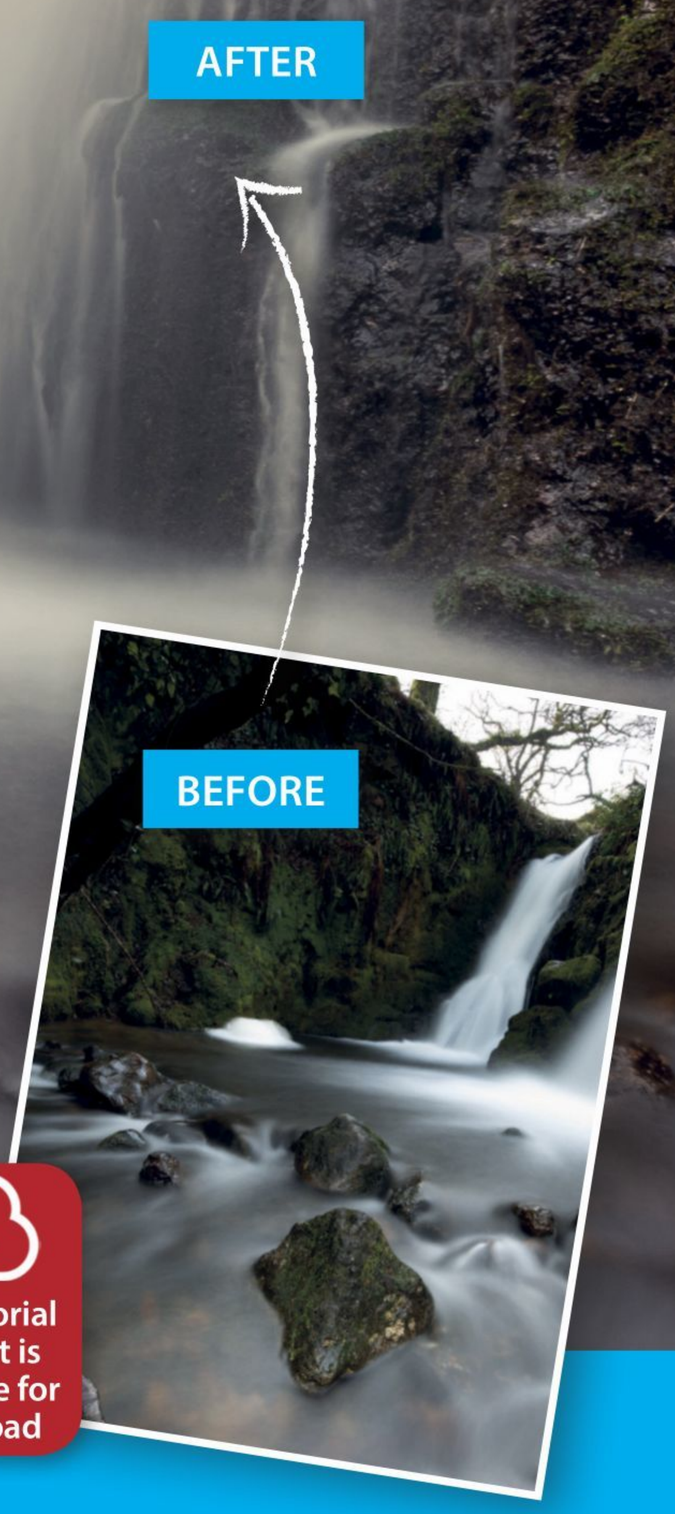
Introduction to Lightroom CC



This tutorial content is available for download

Processing Raw files with the new mobile focused version

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom has always been regarded as the professionals choice for image processing and asset management with your photo library. Not only can you process your images, you can catalogue them, create websites and books, as well as integrate them into maps with geo location data. More recently, Adobe released two updated versions of the software. Lightroom Classic CC is the desktop version pro users will be family with but there's also a brand new streamlined and redesigned version, called Lightroom CC. This is a more cloud orientated mobile version that lets you capture images, upload to the cloud and edit them on a compatible device, no matter where you are. In many ways you can see Lightroom CC as the big cloud-based brother of Adobe Camera Raw. Any users of Adobe's Creative Cloud Photography Plan get Photoshop CC, Lightroom Classic CC and the all new Lightroom CC in their monthly subscription. Let's take a look at the new boy on the block and show you what it's capable of.

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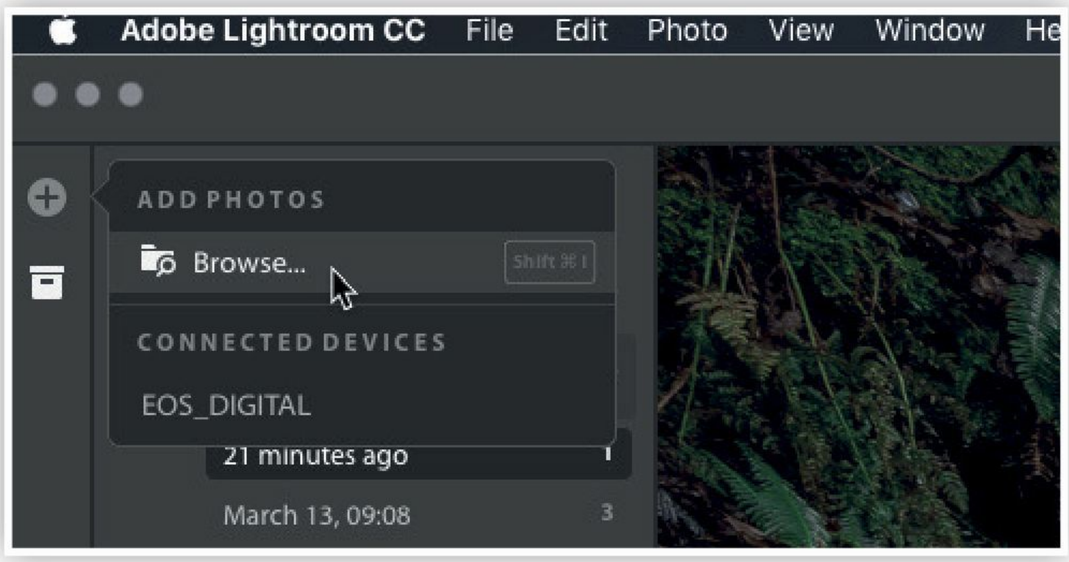
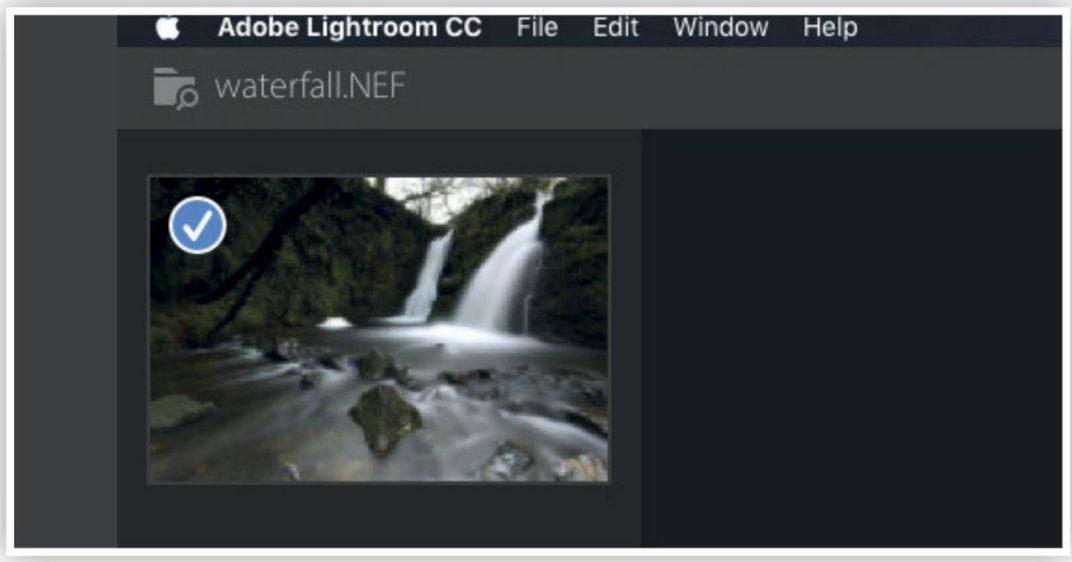
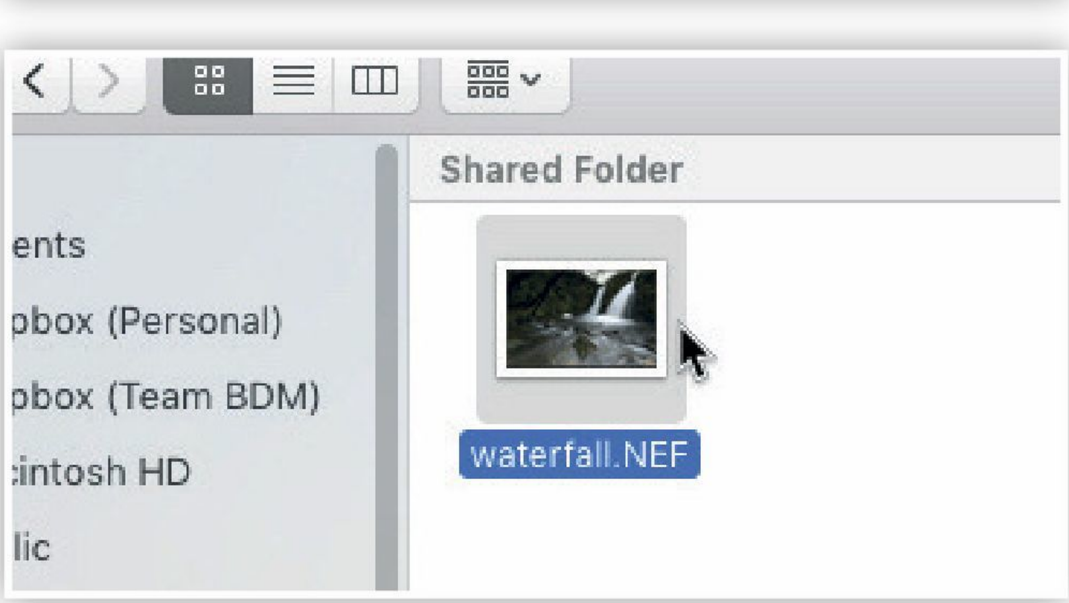
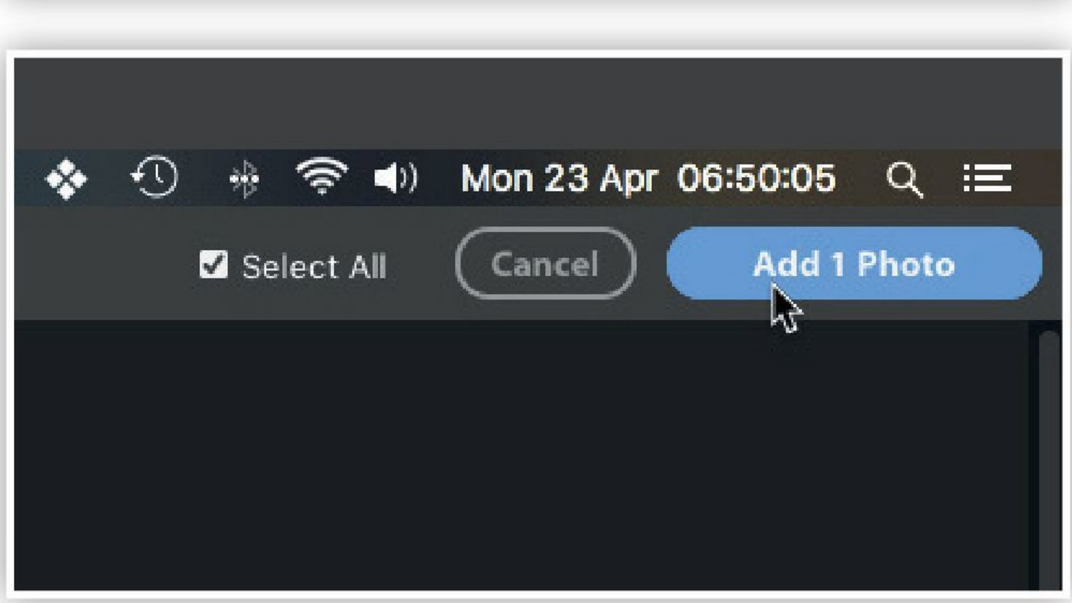


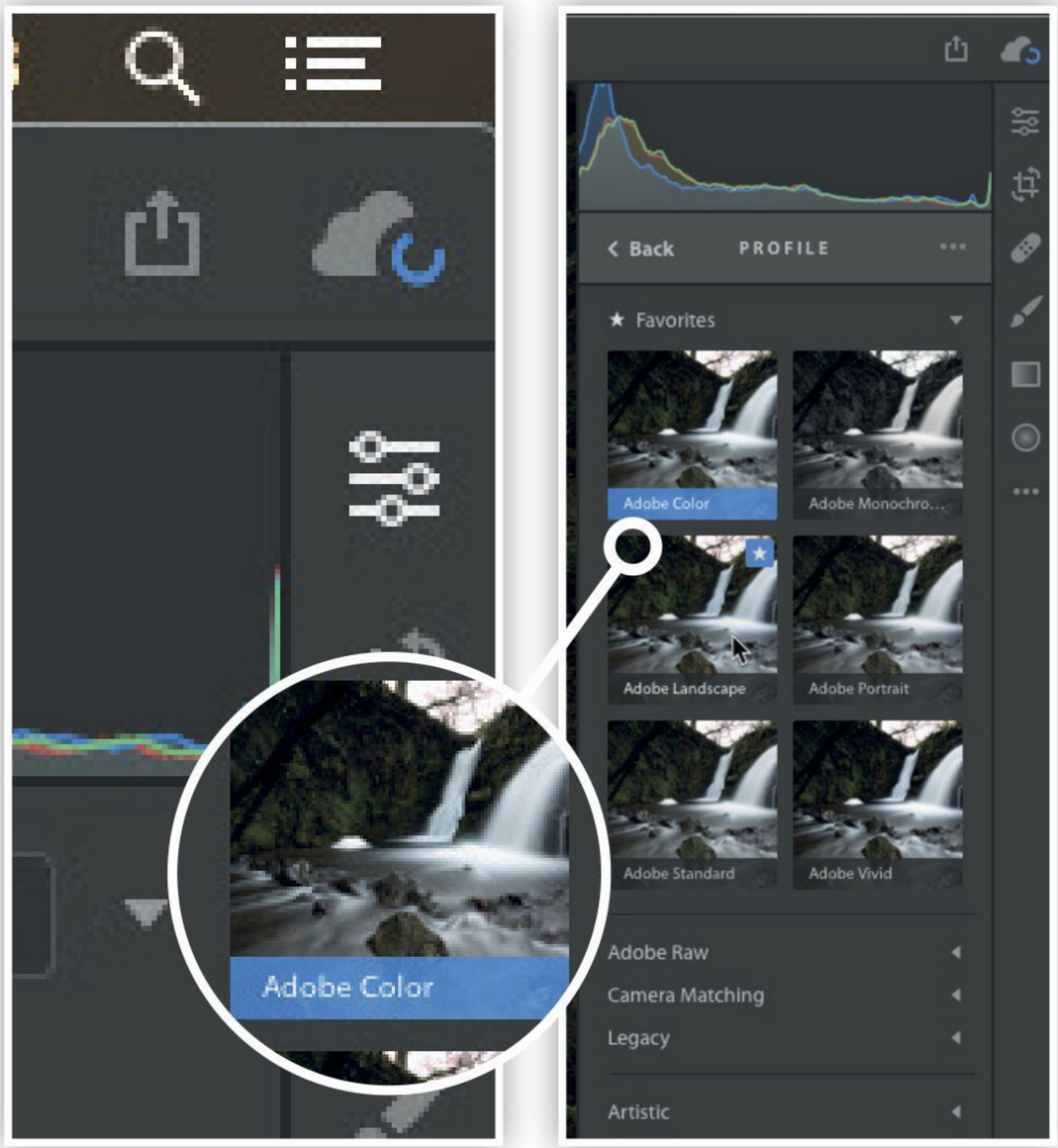


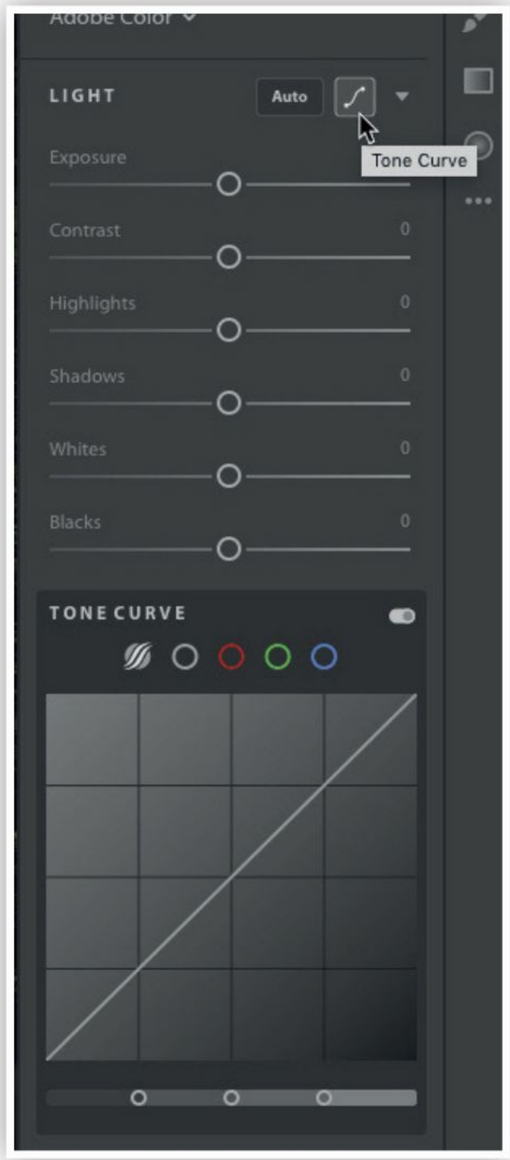


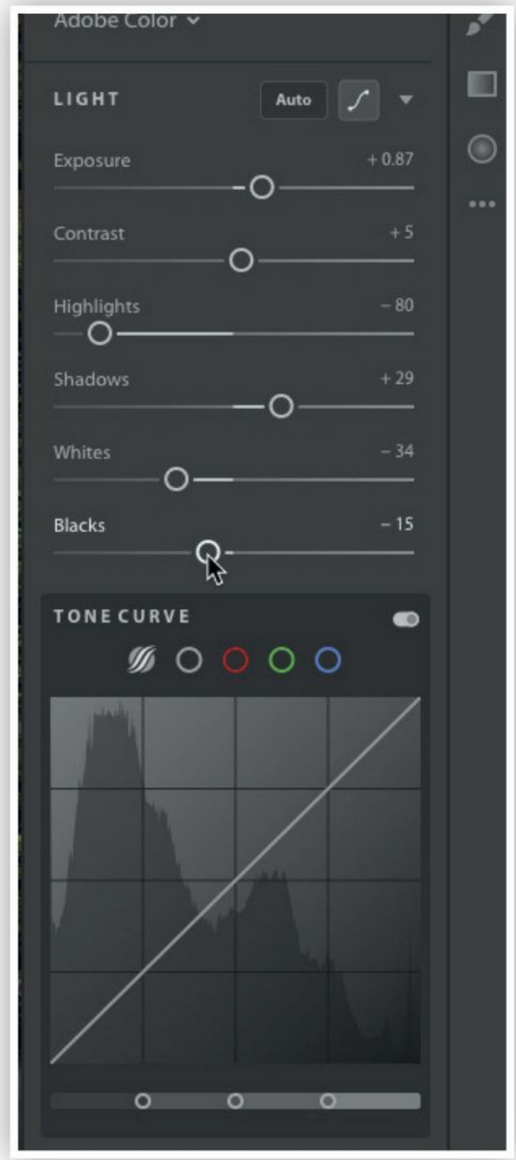


01 Open Lightroom CC and you can add new photos to your library by clicking the plus symbol in the top left corner and then clicking on Browse. For our example, we browsed to a Nikon Raw file of a waterfall. Double-click it to continue.

02 The 'waterfall.NEF' file will be imported to Lightroom CC. Click on the Add 1 Photo button to add the image to your current library. You have the option of importing to named libraries if you want. You can view your image under the Recently Added tab.







03 Ranged down the right side of the screen are the main tools for processing your photos. Click on the Edit icon (E) to open the image editing tools. The Profile panel allows you to add a number of preset colour and filter effects to your image.

04 Beneath Profile is the Light panel. This contains the main Exposure and Contrast sliders for the basic adjustments to your image. We adjusted the image to brighten it but retained detail in both highlight areas and shadows.

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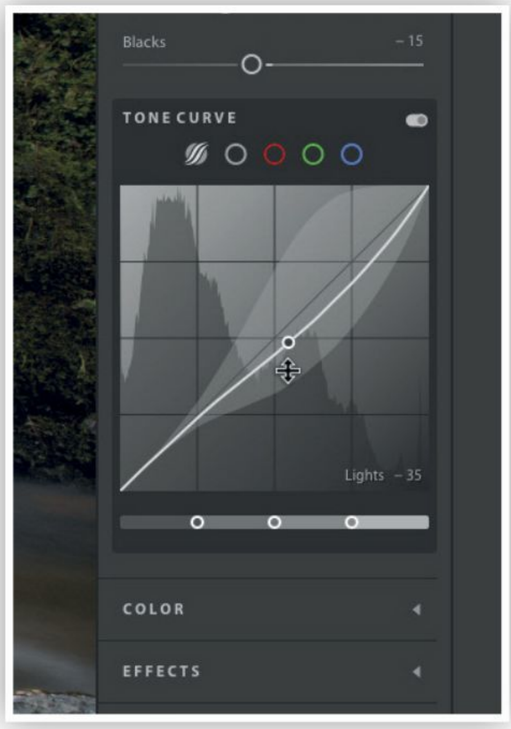
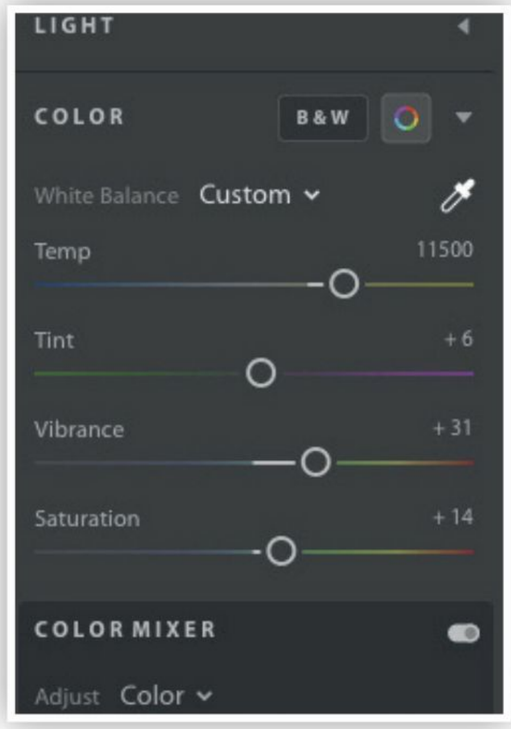
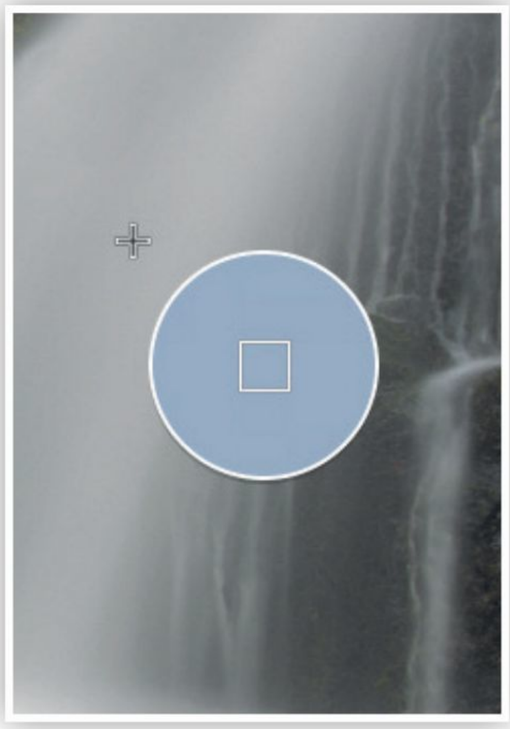
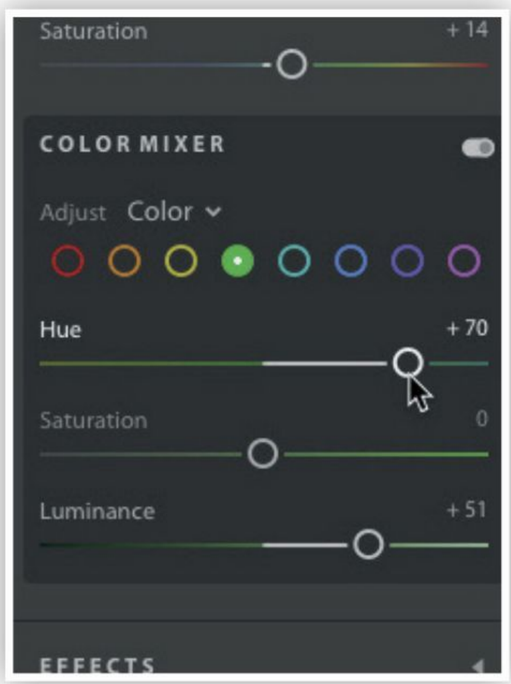






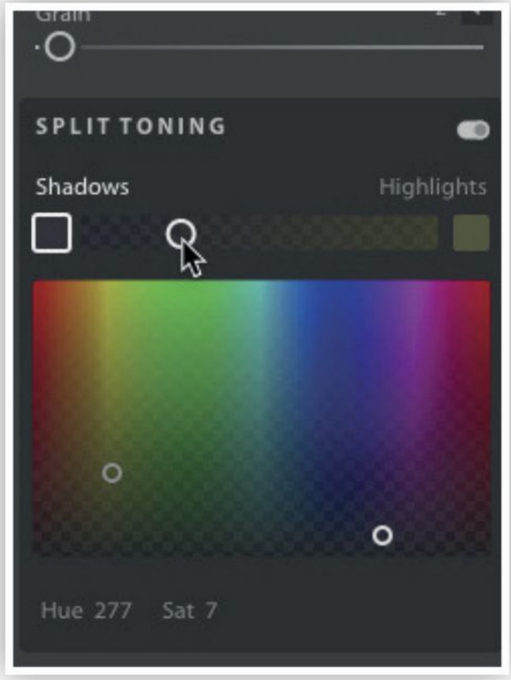
05 You also have the option to use the Tone Curve tool, much as you would in Photoshop. Dragging a point on the curve alters Shadow, Dark, Light and Highlight values. You can also affect the values of the individual colour channels of Red, Blue and Green.

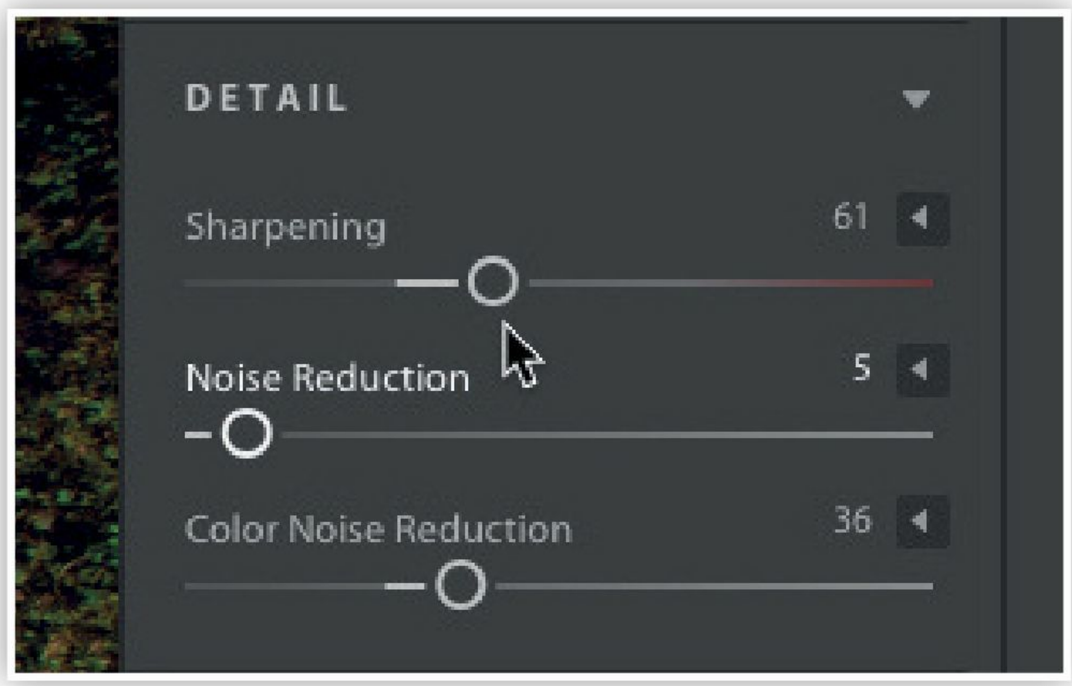
06 Next comes the Colour panel. Here you can alter White Balance manually or by using the White Balance Selector (W). You can also alter the Tint, Vibrance and Saturation to achieve the desired look in your shot.



07 The Colour panel also offers the Colour Mixer tool where you can alter the Hue, Saturation and Luminance of nine primary colour hues. For example, we've altered the Greens Hue to make just the greens in the image brighter and more vibrant.

08 Then you can access the Effects panel. This contains the Clarity, Dehaze, Vignette and Grain sliders. Clarity and Dehaze help control mid-tone contrast while Vignette allows you to darken the image edges. Grain lets you add a film grain effect.





09 Split Toning is a method that lets you add a colour tint to both highlight and shadow areas in your image. You can choose the colour, strength and balance of colours between bright and dark areas by using the Split Toning tools.

10 The next panel contains Detail adjustments. This is where you can control Sharpening in your image as well as use sliders for Noise Reduction and Colour Noise Reduction. It is recommended that you work with your image at 1:1 magnification to see their effects.

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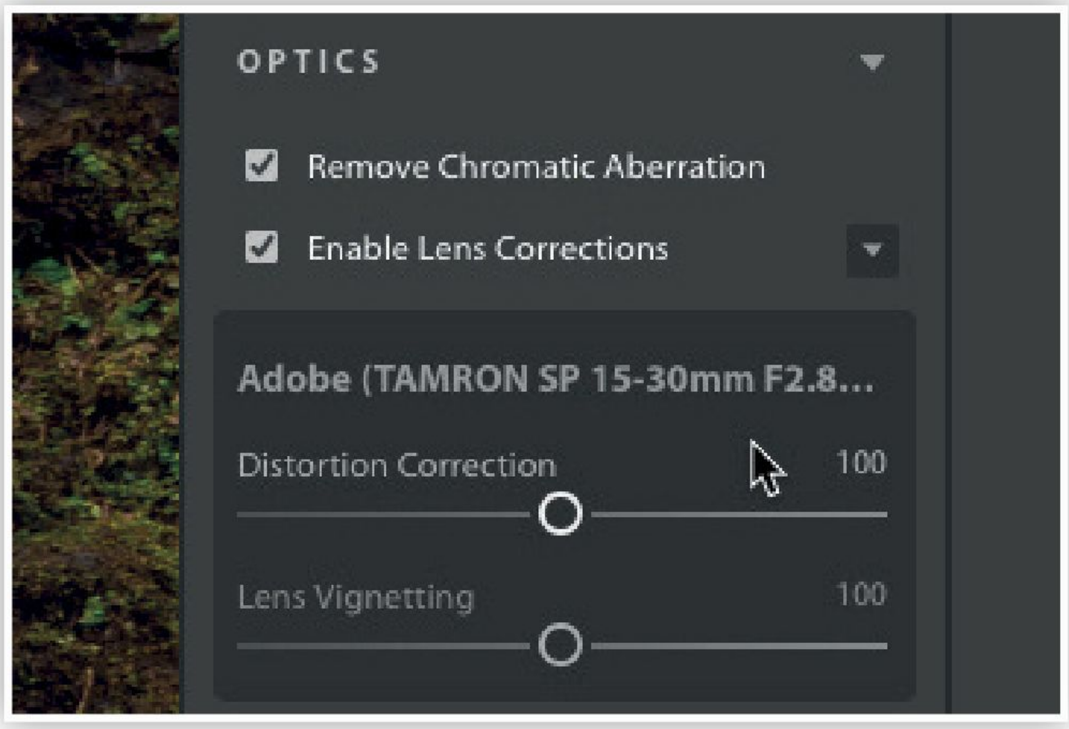
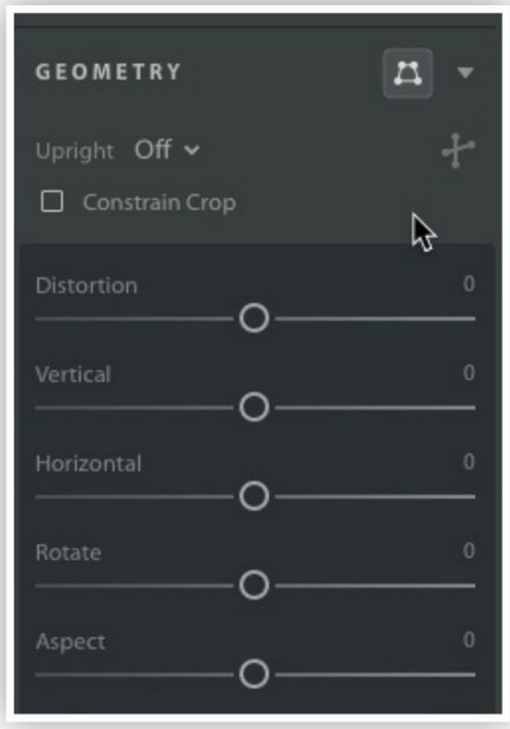
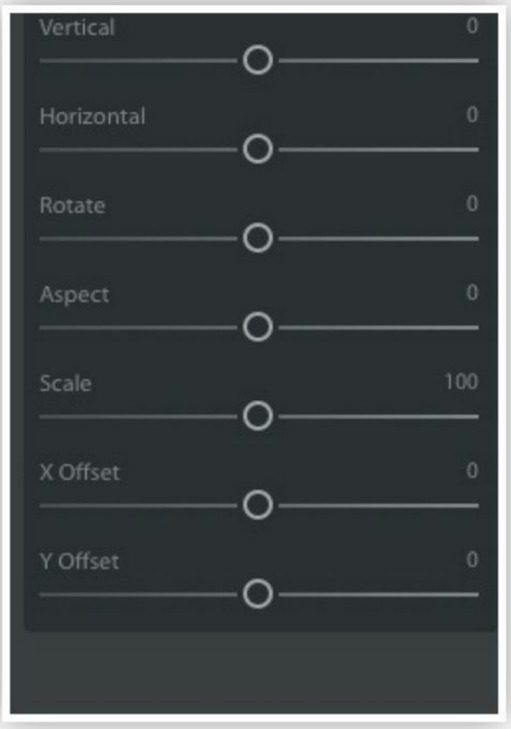
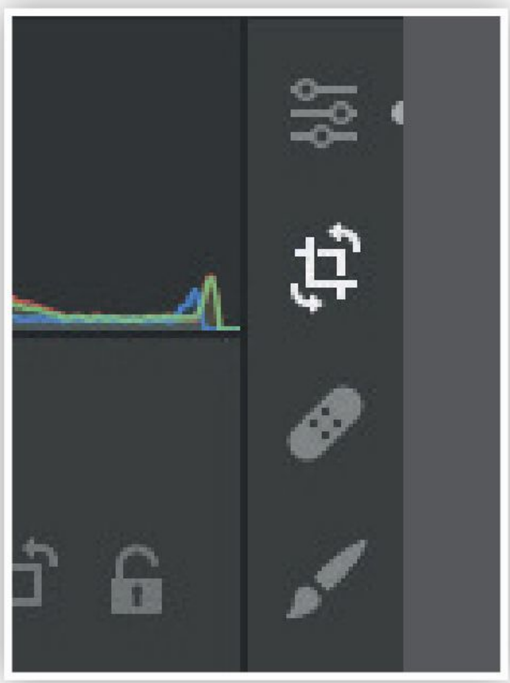


11 Below Detail comes Optics. Clicking on the Remove Chromatic Aberration and Enable Lens Correction buttons removes colour aberrations and distortion created by the lens you used to take the photo.

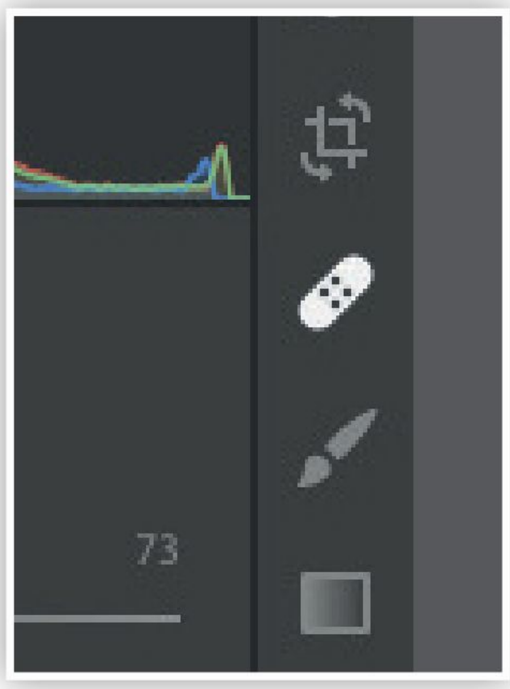




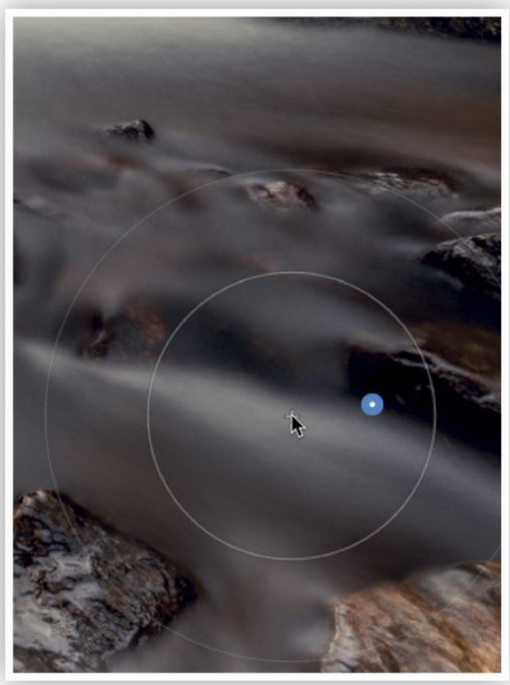
12 The last panel is Geometry. You can physically alter the shape, size and rotation of the image. It is particularly useful for removing unwanted perspective and converging verticals in architectural shots.



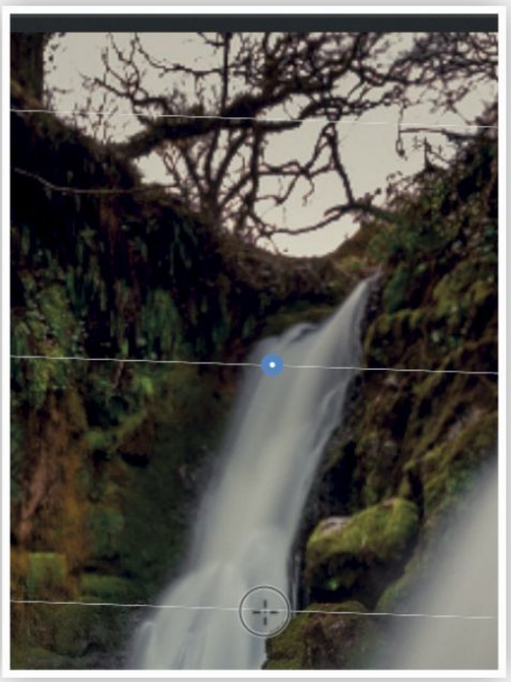
13 Back to the main menu. The next tool is the Crop & Rotate tool (C). You can crop your images manually or choose a preset from a number of popular image aspect ratios. The Crop & Rotate feature also allows you to rotate and flip your images.



14 The Healing Brush tool (H) is useful for removing any unwanted objects and dust or dirt from your photo. Simply choose the Clone or Heal mode and brush over your target. It will then use nearby image data to remove the unwanted item.



15 The Brush tool is next. This lets you make targeted adjustments, by simply adjusting your settings and brushing over the area in question, such as reducing the exposure in the foreground of the image. You can also erase brush strokes if required.



16 Linear Gradient (L) behaves like a digital version of the graduated filters used by photographers on their lenses. You can click and drag a graduated filter across your image, to either darken or lighten areas based on your settings.

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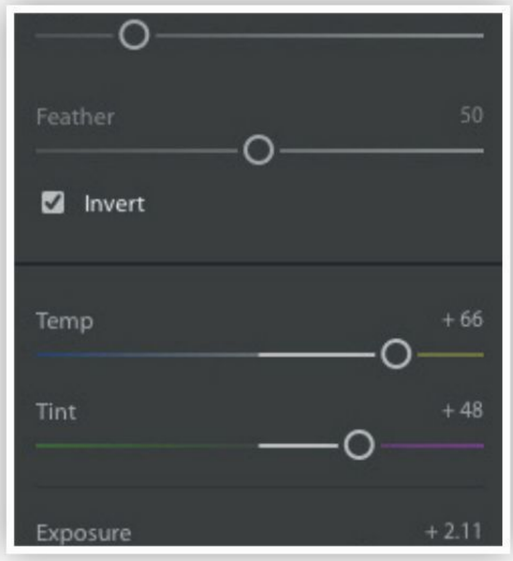
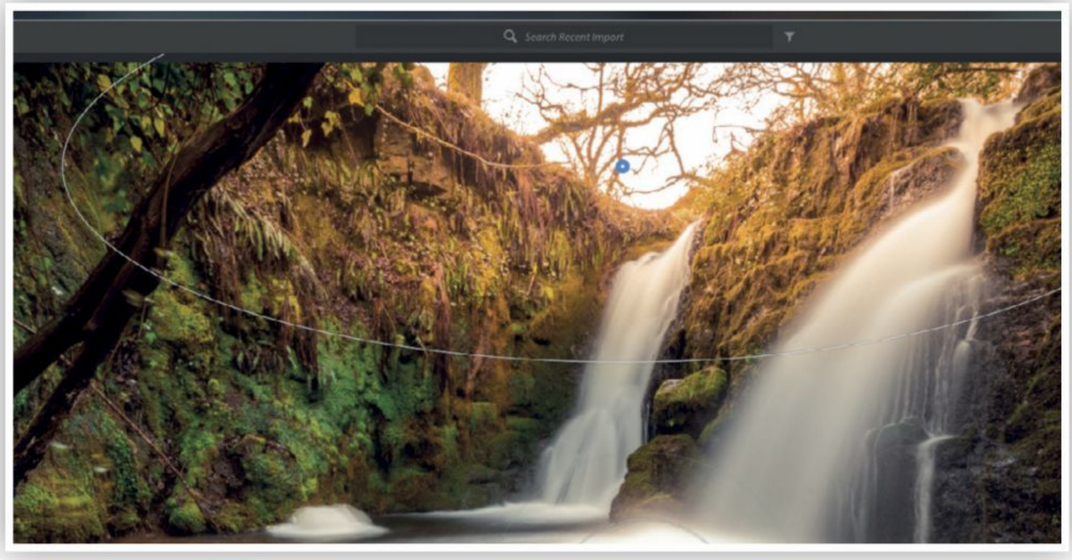
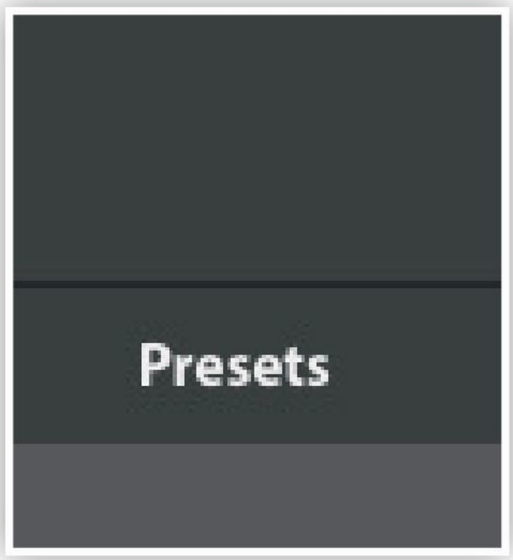
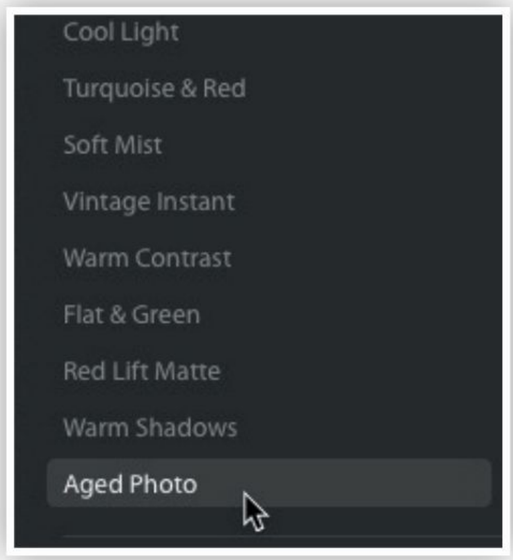


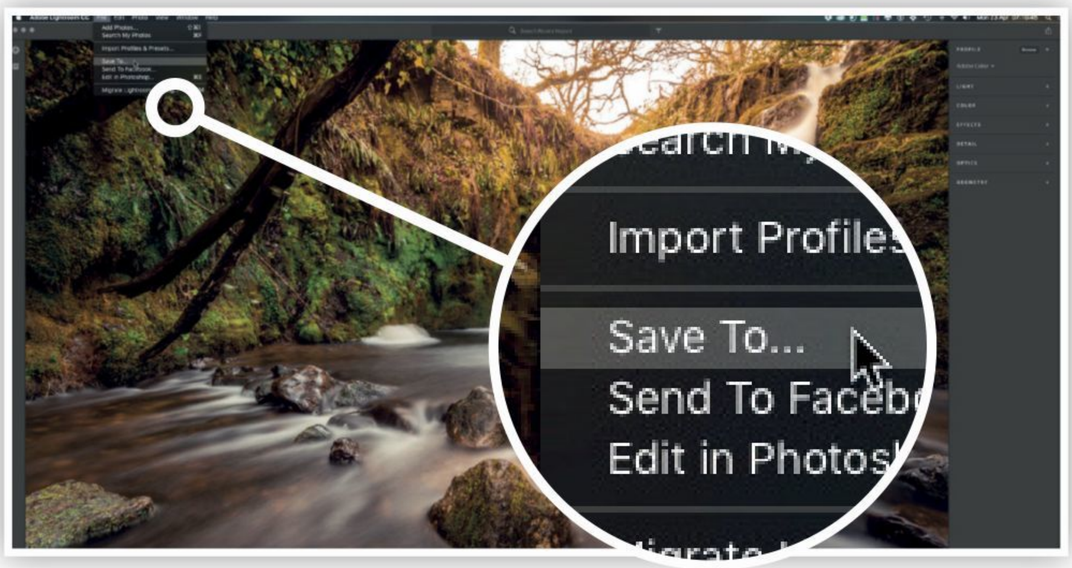


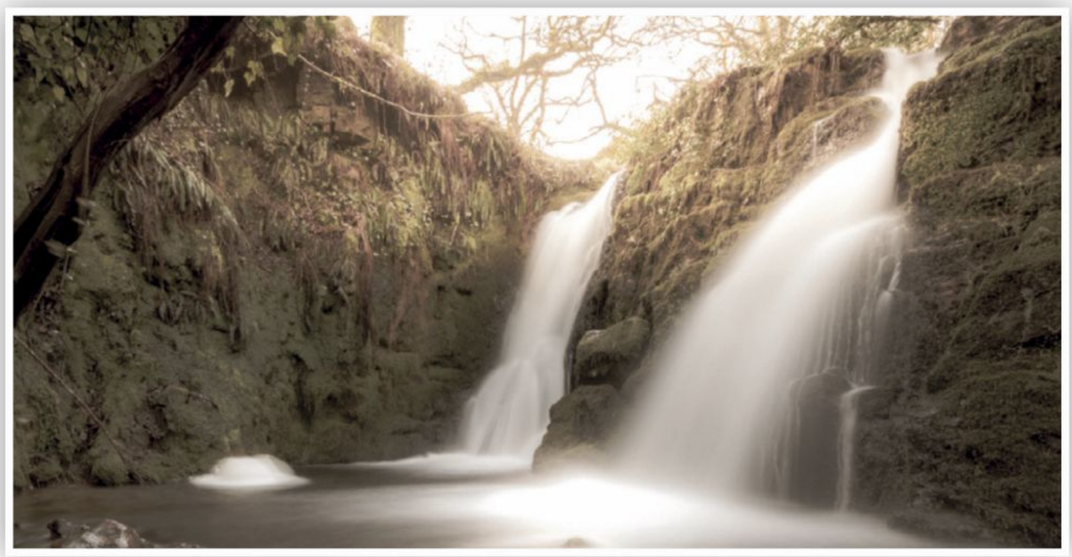
17 Finally, the Radial Gradient Tool (R) is a circular version of the Graduated Filter. It can affect anything inside it or be set to only affect anything outside. We used a bright yellow Radial Filter to create a pool of warm light at the top of the photo.

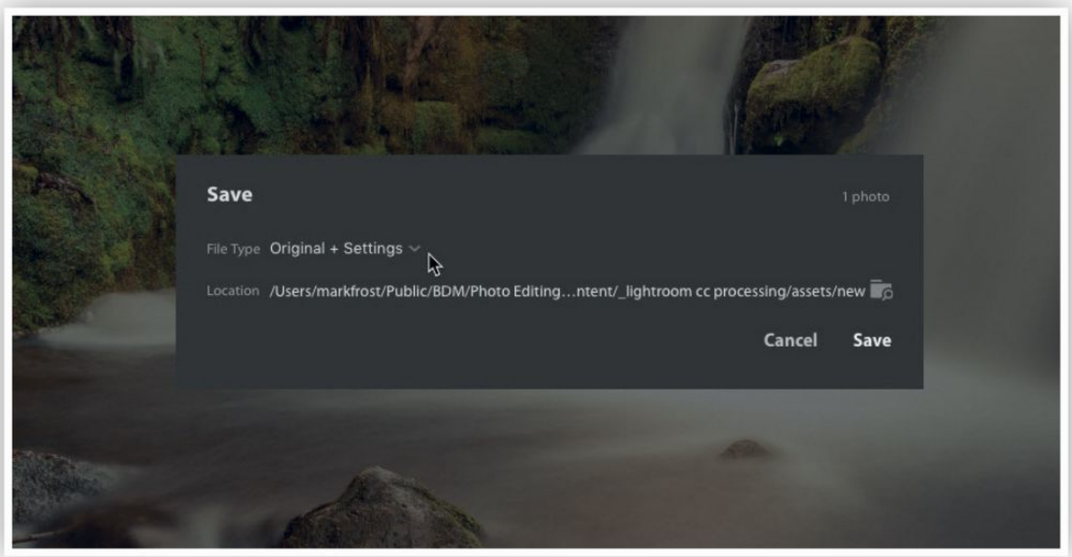
18 You can also brush the Radial Filter effect and make more targeted adjustments to the image. We added warmth and increased exposure to the water tumbling over the rocks near the front of the image.











19 Finally, if you click on Presets at the bottom of the toolbar, you can access the full range of filters for a one-click creative effect to dramatically alter your photo: from Black and White conversions to Aged Photo and even Grain effects.

20 Once you have your image the way you want it, you can save a copy of it from the cloud, to your computer. Go to File > Save To; this will call up the Save panel. Choose from either Original + Settings or JPEG. You'll need to choose a destination for the files too.

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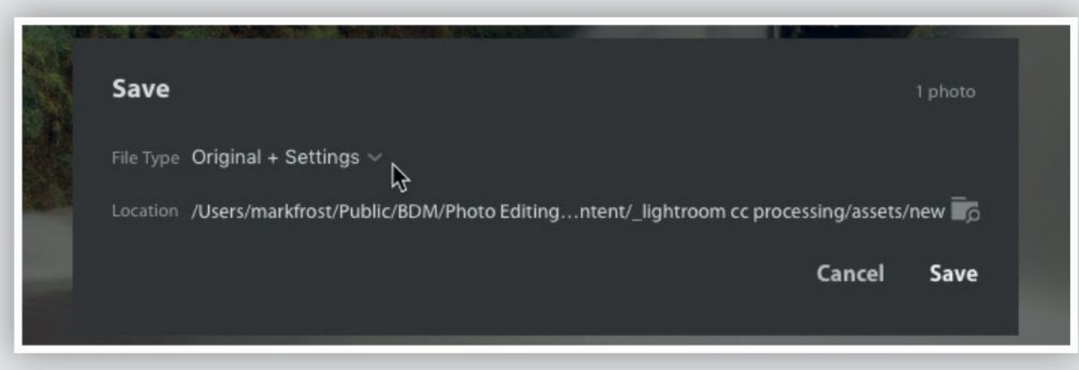

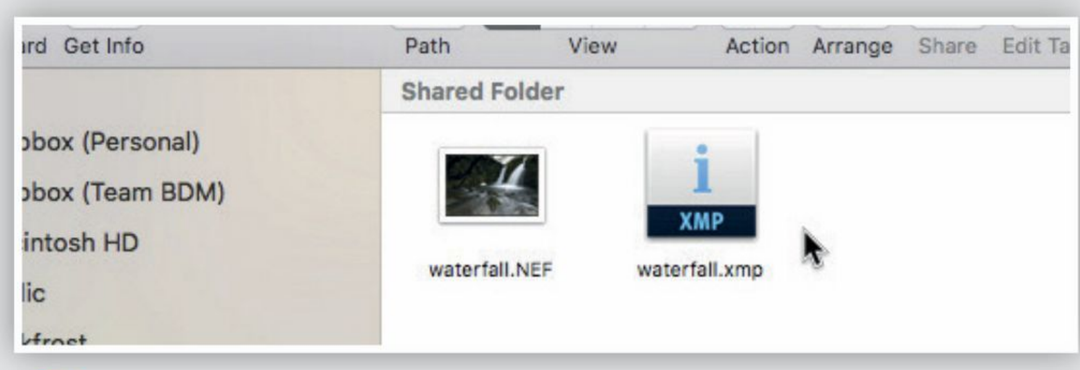

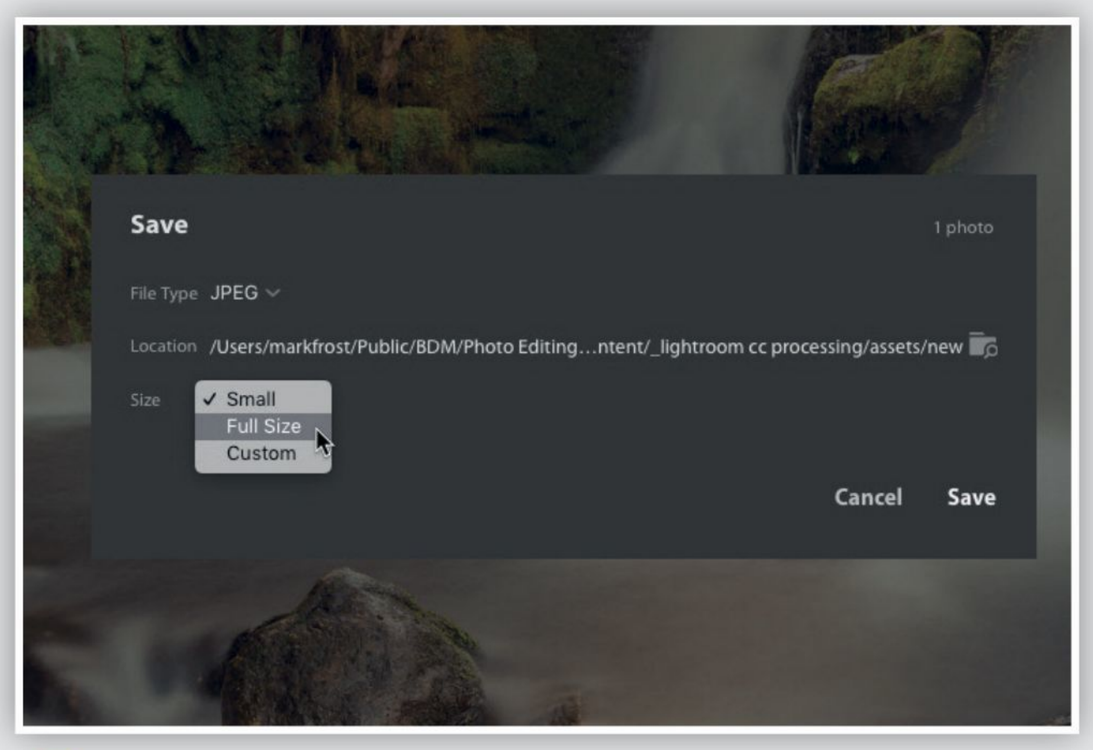

21 If you choose Original + Settings, your Raw file will be saved locally to your computer, along with an XMP file. This file contains all the non-destructive edits made to your image; you can alter those settings at any time.

22 If you choose JPEG, you have the option to select Small, Full Size or Custom as the image size. When you have the size you want, you can then press the Save button to download a JPEG to your machine with all the edits in place.

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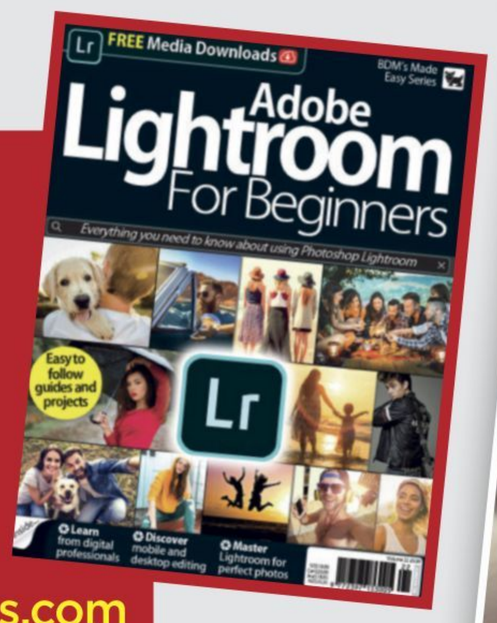

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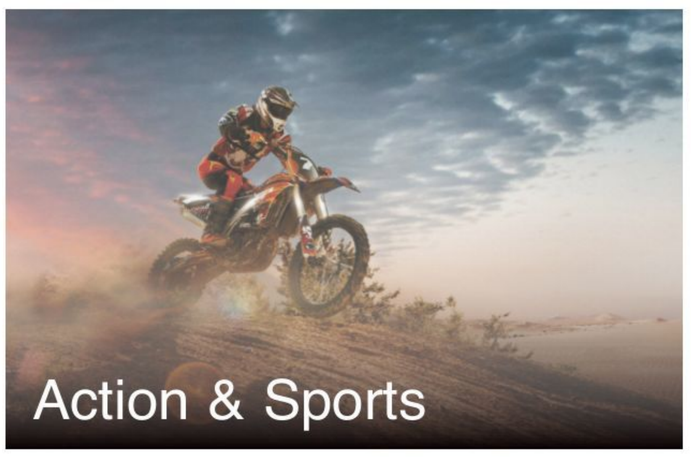

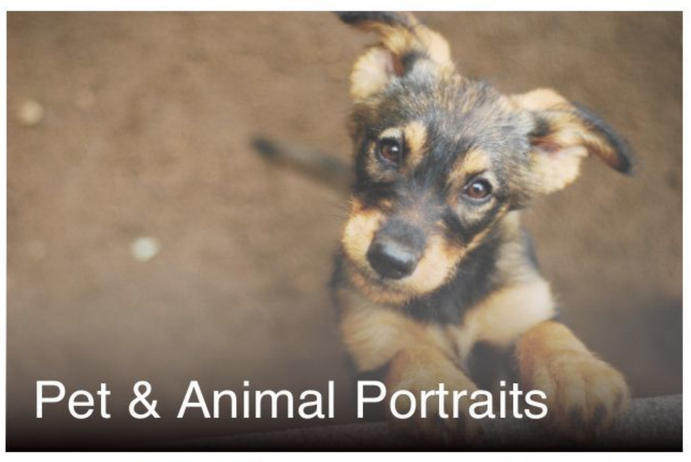

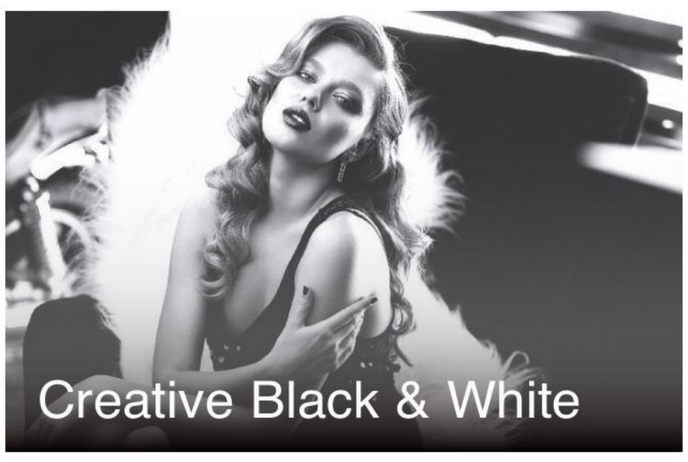

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