What Do I DO With Photoshop? How Do I Make My Image Look Better?

- What is the subject? What caught your eye? What are you trying to show/convey? What makes the photo interesting?
- What is the mood, or what do you want the mood to be? What do you think or feel looking at it, or what do you want others to think and feel?
- What is distracting from the subject and mood?
- What style/s would complement the subject and mood?
- Does the image remind you of something else that you could reference or borrow from?
- What is the technical image quality - will it allow you to do what you want, or force you to artfully disguise shortcomings?

- How do you make the subject stand out?
- What details add to the subject and mood? Do they need emphasis?
- What do you need to do to clean up the image?
- What things do you want to minimize or get rid of?
- What is the focal point - where is the first place your eyes go? Where is second and third place - where does your gaze want to wander, or is it stuck in one place? What can you do to direct attention to where you want it?
- Is color adding to the photo, or distracting from the real interest? Would a little more or less saturation or vibrance improve things?
- Does the photo look dull or flat? Should the highlights be brighter and/or the shadows darker, or does less contrast help create the desired mood?

The viewer's attention will go to the areas of sharp focus and the areas that are brightest/have the most contrast first. Faces, people and text in the photo will also draw the eye.

Bright or contrasting things near the edges of an image can be distracting. Cropping, burning and using vignettes can help reduce edge distractions.

Use dodging and burning (and other tricks) to enhance light, highlight/shadow contrasts, eyes, faces, and interesting subject textures, and to dull down distracting elements.

If you want to emphasize depth or the subject, you can add contrast and sharpness to the subject/things in the foreground, and reduce them for background areas.

People:
In shadowy/poor light some dodging to bring out the face and person is often helpful, but if overdone (as with anything) looks fake. Often eyes can use a little bit of brightening of the whites and maybe some darkening of the pupils, and skin blemishes can be removed if desired.

Adjustments Styles

Add an adjustment
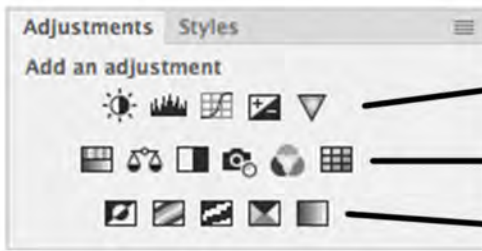
Brightness/Contrast, Levels, Curves, Exposure, Vibrance/Saturation

Hue/Saturation Color Balance, Black & White, Photo Filter, Channel Mixer, Color Lookup

Invert, Posterize, Threshold, Selective Color, Gradient Map

Layers   Channels   Paths

Kind

Normal   Opacity: 100%

Lock: Fill: 100%

Levels 1

Background
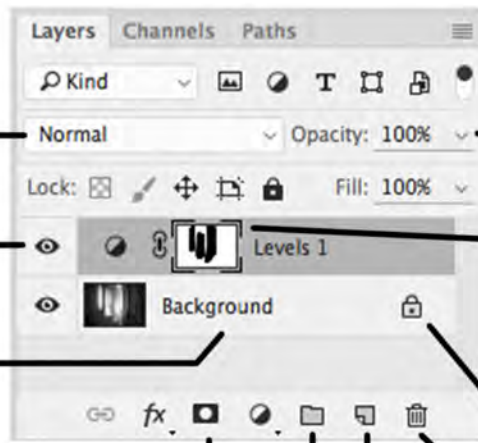
Blend Mode - set how the layer combines with the layers below it.

Controls how visible the layer or its effect is

Layer Visibilty - Show or hide the layer by clicking on the eyeball icon

Layer Mask - controls what areas of the layer are visible or hidden. White areas are visible, black areas are hidden. Click on the Layer Mask icon and use brush tools (and others) to edit. Command-click on the layer mask to load it as a selection.

Layer Name - double-click to edit to something more meaningful if desired

Lock - prevents certain layer actions. Click on the lock to disable, or right-click and choose 'Layer From Background'
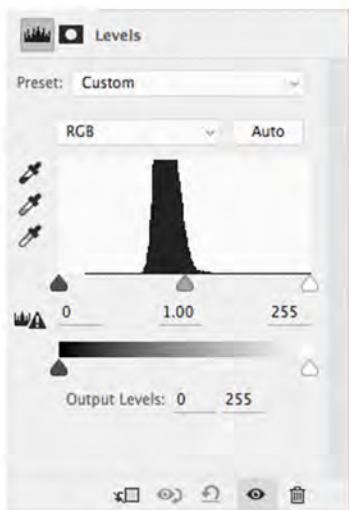
Add layer mask to selected layer

Group Layers - select the desired layers and drag them into the folder to create a new layer group

Create a new blank layer

Drag undesired layers to the trash

Properties Panel for Levels Adjustment Layer

Levels

Preset: Custom

RGB   Auto

0   1.00   255

Output Levels: 0   255

Histogram - shows the amount of pixels at each level of brightness in the image, from 0 (black) to full brightness/white.

Crop Tool (shortcut = C)
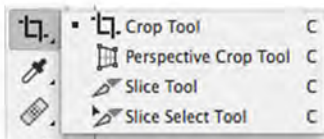
Set to unconstrained or blank to crop to any shape, choose a preset ratio like square or 5x7, or set your own ratio

Use this to click and drag a line along any element in the photo (the horizon line or the edge of a building, for example) that you want to be perfectly horizontal or vertical

Make sure 'Delete Cropped Pixels' is <u>unchecked</u>!

Reset, cancel or accept the current crop. You can also hit the Escape key to cancel and the Return/Enter key to accept

Healing and Stamp Tools (shortcut = J for Healing, S for Stamp)
Use on a copy of the image layer for non-trivial work
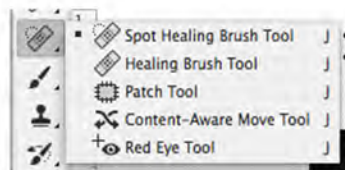
Good for removing dust spots and other small blemishes

When you need to tell Photoshop what to use to patch over what you want to remove. Hold down the Option key and click once on the area you want to sample from, then paint over the thing to be removed. The crosshair will show exactly where Photoshop will copy from.

When the healing brush tool isn't doing exactly what you want, try this. It works the same way - Option click on the source to copy from, then paint over where you want to copy to.

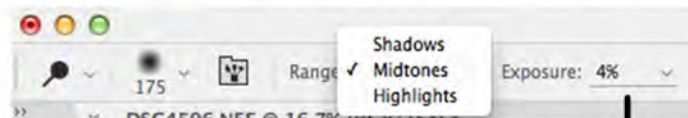*If nothing seems to be happening, check to make sure you are working on the right layer

Dodge and Burn Tools (shortcut = O)
Use on a copy of the image layer
If colors become too saturated, set layer blend mode to Luminosity
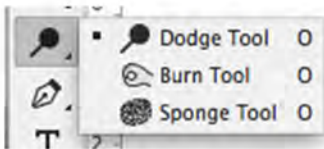
Use the Dodge tool to lighten things and the Burn tool to darken things.

Select the range of tones you want to lighten or darken

Set the exposure. <u>Usually a value between 3-5% gives you the control you need</u> for fine work, but sometimes you may need to crank it up

*If nothing seems to be happening:
   - Check to make sure you are working on the right layer
   - Check to make sure the Range is set to the tones you are working on

Lasso Tool (Shortcut = L or Shift L to cycle through Lasso tools)


    1.   2.   3.   4.   5.
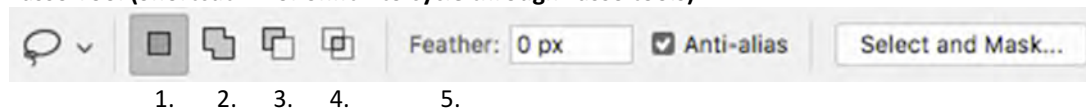
- **Use:** click and drag to outline the desired area. If you release before getting back to the starting point, Photoshop will draw a straight line between the start and end points to complete the selection.

- ➢ **To cancel unfinished selections in process (applies to all selection tools):** press the ESC key.
- ➢ **Moving selections (applies to all selection tools):** in normal/single selection mode (1), click and drag inside a selection to move the selection boundary itself as opposed to moving the thing that was selected.
- ➢ **Selection modes (apply to all selection tools)**
    1. Normal/single selection mode: If you make a selection and then click outside that selection to start another one or add to it, the first selection will disappear.
    2. Additive mode: after making a first selection, additional selections can be made to add to it.
    3. Subtractive mode: after making a first selection, additional selections can be made to subtract from it.
    4. Intersect mode: after making a first selection, when another selection is made, the only area that will remain selected is where the two selections overlapped.
    5. Feather: a radius of 0 (default) will give the selection a hard edge. Increasing the radius will soften the edge, making the transition from selected to unselected along the border more gradual.

Polygonal Lasso Tool (Shortcut = L or Shift L to cycle through Lasso tools)
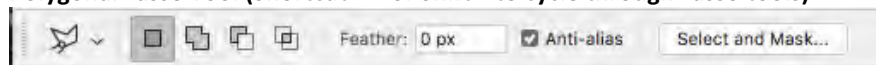
- **Use:** Photoshop will draw a straight line between points where you click (so a good tool to use to make selections with straight edges). The selection will not complete until the cursor returns to the starting point. A small circle appearing next to the tool cursor means you have returned to the starting point and can click to complete the selection.
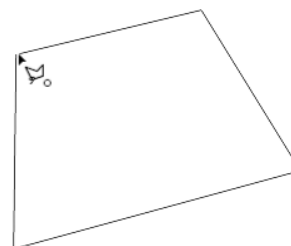
Magnetic Lasso Tool (Shortcut = L or Shift L to cycle through Lasso tools)

- **Use:** Click to start a selection, and then drag along the edge of the area in the image to select, and Photoshop will try to detect and stick to the edge as you mouse along near it. Click at any point you wish to help define the path.
- **To go back and correct the path**, mouse backwards and press Delete/Backspace to remove points.
- Like the Polygonal Lasso tool, a small circle appearing next to the tool cursor means you have returned to the starting point and can click to complete the selection.
- **Options:**
    1. Width: sets the distance from the cursor within the tool will search for edges.
    2. Contrast: sets the minimum contrast between areas that the tool will consider as an edge.
    3. Frequency: Sets how often points are added along the edge path.

Marquee Tools (Rectangular Marquee Tool and Elliptical Marquee Tool, shortcut = M or Shift M to cycle between them)


- **Use:** click and drag to outline a rectangular or elliptical selection
- **To make perfect square or circle** selections, hold down the shift key while dragging (will only work for first selection)
- **To start drawing from the center point**, hold down the Option/Alt key while dragging (will only work for first selection)
- **Style:**
    1. Normal = click and drag to define the area.
    2. Fixed Ratio = type in a width and height to constrain selections to a certain proportion.
    3. Fixed Size = type in a width and height (give units: px, in, cm, mm, pt, pica) to constrain selections to a certain size.
- Click on double arrows to swap width and height values.

Quick Mask Mode (Shortcut = Q) - Making selections with paint tools (Brush, Pencil, Paint Bucket, and Gradient Tools)

- <u>Enter and exit</u> quick mask mode by:
1. Pressing the Q key
2. Clicking the quick mask mode icon near the bottom of the toolbar
- When in quick mask mode, selected areas remain clear. Unselected areas are masked in red.
- To edit the selection, set the foreground and background colors to the default black and white (press D for default)
- Use any of the paint tools.
- Use black to mask (deselect) areas.
- Use white to select areas.
- Use the X key to swap black and white back and forth from foreground to background (or click the bent arrow next to the foreground/background color boxes).
- Use gradients or shades of gray to feather selections or create partial selections.
- Exit quick mask mode to make the selection active and check it.

Color Range Selection Panel

• Go to Select > Color Range • Drag the panel off to the side if it's in the way, then mouse over the image - the cursor will be an eye dropper to sample with. • Click on the color you want to select. In the preview window, selected areas will appear white. • Use the Fuzziness slider to control how exact the color match has to be in order to be selected. (Do you only want to select areas of exactly the same color, or do you want to select a range of similar colors?) • Hold the shift key and click, or choose the additive eye dropper, to select more than one color or area to sample from. • Choose Localized Color Clusters to limit the selection area; use Detect Faces and Range to further refine the selection. • Check the Invert box if you want to invert the selection (sometimes it's easier to select what you don't want than what you do want). • The Select menu at the top of the panel gives preset options.	
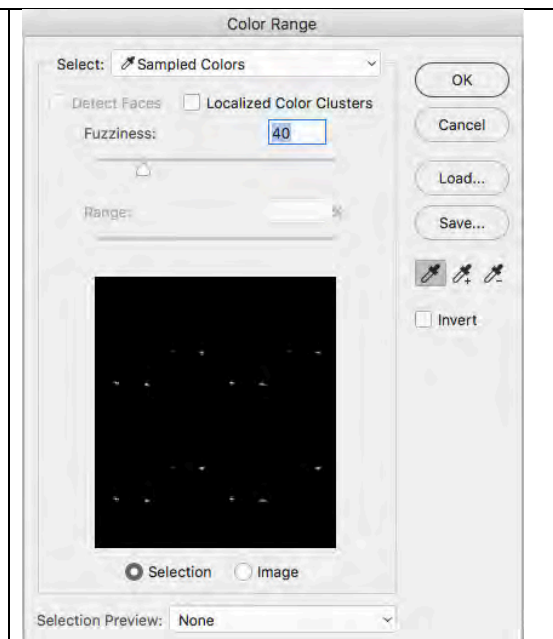
Focus Range Selection Panel

• Go to Select > Focus Range • Use the view mode dropdown menu to choose how you want to see the selection preview. • Use the sliders to adjust the selection • Click on Select and Mask if you wish to make further adjustments.	
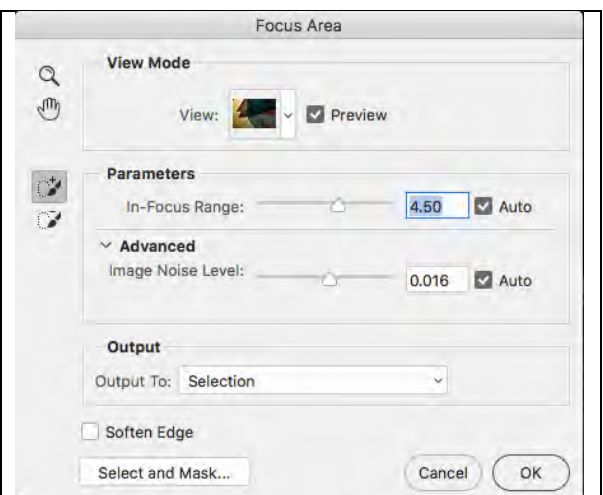
Selection Commands
- Select All = Command A
- Deselect All = Command D
- Invert the selection = Command Shift I
- Copy = Command C

Modify Options Menu
- Border: Will take a selection and save only the outside edge of it - input the width in pixels to set the desired border thickness.
- Feather: Soften the selection edge from selected to unselected over an input border width.
- Expand and Contract - make the selection grow larger or smaller.
- Smooth - use to reduce variation in a selection edge.

Select and Mask - opens up a new window:
- Left hand side has tools like the quick selection tool, lasso, brush, and refine edge brush
- Right hand side has sliders to control the modify options above, as well as how the final selection is output (as a selection, layer mask, etc.)
- Click OK or hit the Return/Enter key to accept changes.
- Click Cancel or hit the ESC key to close the window without saving changes.

Transform Selection - use to move, rotate and resize selections. Click the checkmark or hit Return/Enter to accept. The options menu gives precise control over location, angle, and size, as well as the ability to warp the selection (click on the warped grid icon on the right-hand side).

Transform Selection options menu bar
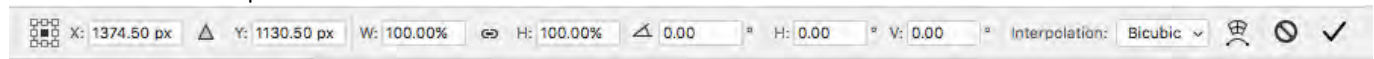
Once you have made a selection you could:

Create an Adjustment layer - the selection will disappear, but the adjustment layer will have a layer mask made from the selection.
> **To re-edit a layer mask at any time:**
> - Click on the layer mask icon so you are working on the layer mask itself, not the layer
> - Use a paint tool (brush, pencil, paint bucket or gradient tool). Paint with white to select areas, paint with black to deselect areas
> - Command-click on the layer mask icon at any time to create the selection again.

Add a layer mask to an existing layer - say you want to blur out the background of an image. You could copy the image layer, then select the background. To make a layer mask of the selection, click on the 'Add layer mask' icon [image] at the bottom of the Layers panel. When you apply the blur filter it will work on the whole layer, but only the unmasked areas will show. This method once again allows you to go back and refine what shows or doesn't show at any time.

Apply a Smart Filter/s to only a selected area of a smart object - convert the layer you want to work on to a smart object (if you haven't already), and once you have your selection ready, go up to the filter menu and apply the filter of your choice (some filters will not work with smart objects). When the filter is applied, you will see the Smart Filters for the layer have a layer mask made from the selection. The drawback is that only one layer mask can be used for all the smart filters applied to that layer.

Copy the selection to a new layer (Command J) - the selection disappears, but the new layer has only the selected pixels in it from the previous layer.
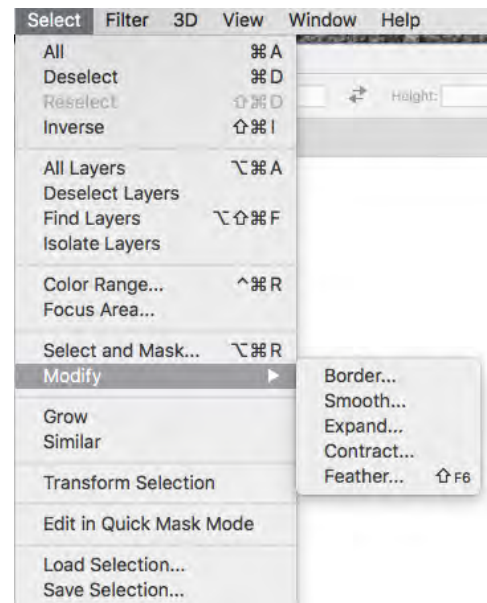
Smart Objects - smart objects are pixel layers, also known as raster layers, that have been saved as a file within the open Photoshop document. One advantage of using smart objects is that filters applied to smart objects act like adjustment layers, in that they can be hidden or re-edited at any time. A filter applied to a regular layer alters the pixels, on the other hand, and once applied cannot be undone without going back in history (if the file has not been saved and it is still possible to go back in history) and undoing any later work.

- **To turn a layer into a smart object** - right-click on the layer and choose Convert to Smart Object.
- **To directly edit a smart object** - double click on the layer icon, or right click on the layer and choose Edit Contents. This will open the smart object layer in a separate tab. Edit the layer as desired, then Save it to have those changes applied.
- **To turn a smart object back into a regular layer** - right-click on the layer and choose Rasterize Layer.

Filters - filters are generally applied in the last phases of image editing, after everything else has been taken care of.

➢ **Make sure you apply filters only to smart objects or copies of the layer you wish to change.**
➢ **The moment filter use becomes apparent, the image loses honesty for the sake of style.**

Camera Raw Filter - this is the panel that appears when you open a raw image file. Besides the Basic options shown by default, the icon tabs include options for adjusting tone curve, detail, hue/saturation/brightness/gray scale (super-handy way to adjust things on a color-by-color basis), split toning (give different color casts to the highlight and shadow areas), lens corrections (reduce distortion and color fringes), and effects such as adding a vignette or grain.
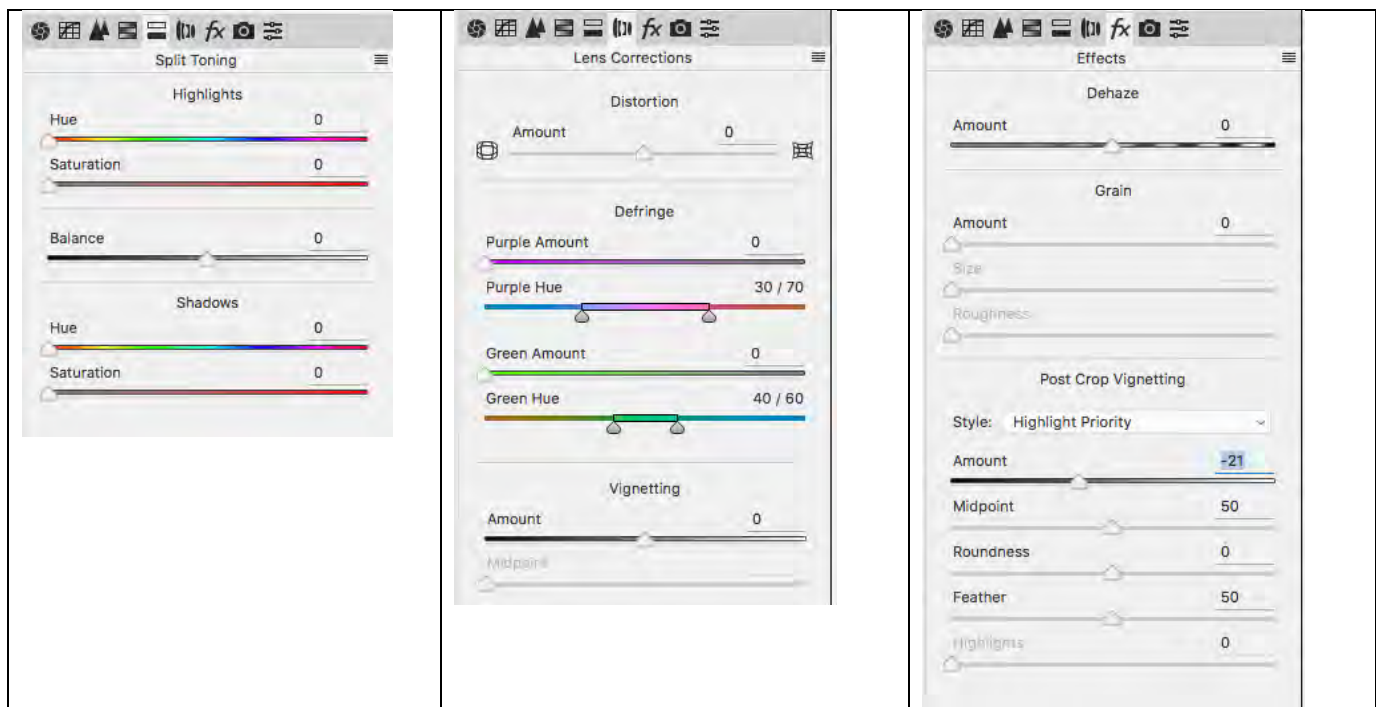
Lens Correction Filter - has a few different options not found in the Camera Raw filter panel.

Sharpen filters - Unsharp Mask and Smart Sharpen. **Sharpening is usually the last step, and at least a small amount is usually needed. The amount can depend upon in-camera sharpening, personal aesthetic and purpose, and the intended output (screen or print, glossy paper or matte).**

- **Amount** controls the strength of the effect - how much the contrast is increased along any detected edge. Avoid over sharpening. In general, 100% or less is all you need - the effect should be subtle.
- **Radius** - controls the width in pixels out from any detected edge that the effect is applied. In general, a radius of around 2 pixels is a good starting point.
- **Threshold** – higher numbers confine sharpening to larger edges with more contrast. Usually leave at 0 and control what you are sharpening by using selections and masks.

Blur filters - Gaussian blur, lens blur, motion and radial blur, and the blur gallery can be useful for certain effects.