

FIX PHOTOS FAST



with
ACTIONS



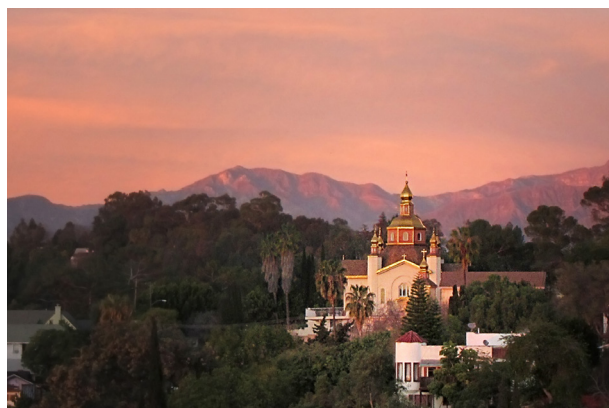
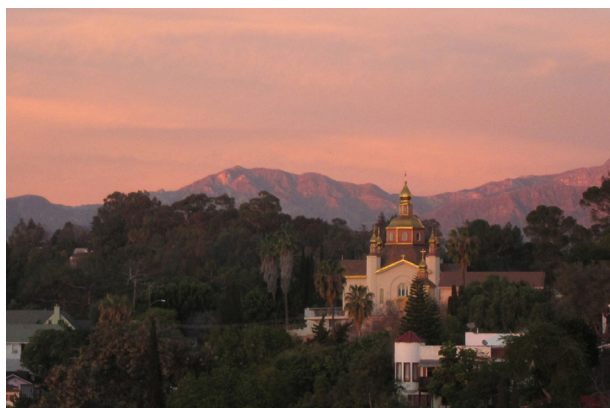
By Linda Sattgast

Actions: Fix Photos Fast! Edit Photos with Actions—Photoshop Elements

Here are the steps I took to fix photos of my own and photos submitted to me by students in the Fix Photos FAST class. For your convenience, I've included all the demo photos in your class downloads.

REMEMBER: All photos downloaded from this classroom are for your practice only and not for any other personal or commercial use.

mission.jpg



Sometimes with photos you'll strive for a feeling you were trying to capture when you took the photo, but that doesn't come across well in the actual photo. For this photo, I wanted to retain the fairytale feel of the mission building glowing in the sunset.

I use layer masks a lot in this tutorial. To follow along and understand what I'm doing, you need to know what a layer mask is and how it works. If you feel hazy about layer masks and haven't really used them, or if you watch this video and feel a little confused about what I'm doing, please watch the Pre-Class videos about layer masks.

Lighting

- Run Lighter: Shadows/Highlights-mild to lighten.
- To hide part of the effect, click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- Get the Gradient tool. In Tool Options click on the triangle to open the Gradient Picker and choose Foreground to Background. If you don't see this gradient, click on the icon in the upper right corner to get the Gradient Picker menu, and choose Reset Gradients.
- Click on the triangle again to close the Gradient Picker.

- Choose the Radial gradient. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity 100%. Don't check Reverse but do check Dither and Transparency.
- Look at your Color Chips and make sure you have white for the Foreground color. If you don't, press the letter D which gives you the default layer mask colors of white over black.
- On your document, click where you want the Shadows/Highlights action effect to be seen—on and around the mission building—and drag outward to where you don't want the effect to be seen.
- If you don't like the placement of the gradient, you can click and drag with the Gradient tool as many times as you need to get it right.

Contrast

- Run the Contrast action.
- To hide the contrast everywhere but the mission building, use a layer mask.
- Rather than create a new layer mask from scratch, you can copy the first mask you made. Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag the mask thumbnail to the new layer.
- Run Lighter: Screen.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag a copy of the mask thumbnail from the prior layer to the screen layer.

Sharpen

Another way to draw attention is to sharpen the focal area and blur everything else.

- Run Unsharp Mask: Maximum.
- Copy the layer mask from the previous layer to keep the sharpening effect focused on the mission building.
- To refine the mask and remove any sharpening from the sky and the mountains in the background, get the Brush tool. In Tool Options make sure the Mode is Normal and the Opacity is 100%. Open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes.
- Make sure the Foreground color is black. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your document brush wherever you want to remove the sharpen effect.

Blur

Now we want to do just the opposite: We want to slightly blur the rest of the photo, but rather than blur a layer that's already been sharpened, click on the visibility icon of the Unsharp Mask layer to hide it temporarily and click on the Lighter-Screen layer to make it the active layer.

- Run Reduce Noise-maximum. When the dialog box comes up, click Continue. Normally we only use Reduce Noise to reduce digital noise, but a side effect is that it softens the photo, making it look slightly blurred.
- Use the Brush tool with the Foreground color set to black to brush away the blurriness wherever you don't want it, in this case, over the mission building.
- Make the Unsharp Mask layer visible again by clicking on the space for the Visibility icon.

Final Action Edits

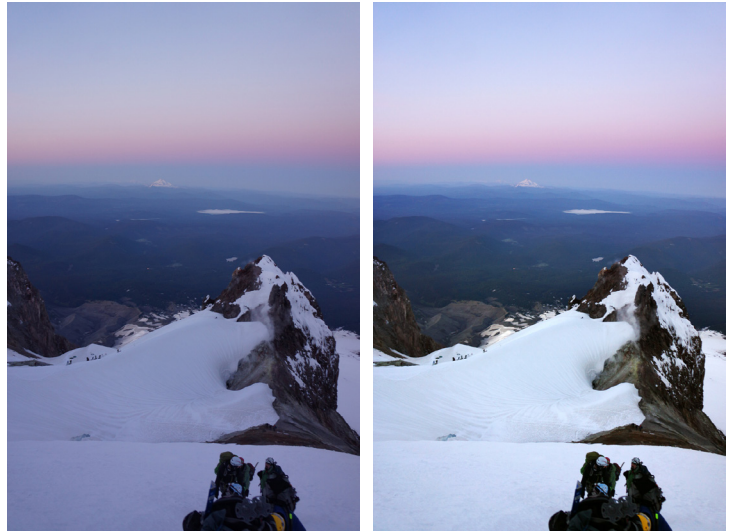
- To add additional sharpening, in the Layers panel make sure the top layer is active.
- Choose Sharpen SOME: High Pass. Click Continue to the dialog box.
- Brush over just the building to make it even sharper.
- Run Lighter-Screen.
- Click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- Get the Gradient tool and use the same Tool Option settings as before. Make sure the Foreground color is white. Click below the mission building and drag upward to about two-thirds of the way to the top of the photo.

- Run Levels Adjustment. Adjust the sliders below the histogram as needed. I used 12 for the Shadows, 1.06 for the Midtones, and 237 for the Highlights.
- Copy the layer mask from the previous layer by pressing Alt (Mac: Opt) and clicking and dragging the mask thumbnail to the Levels Adjustment layer.
- Run Color Boost. Reduce the amount to +10. Click OK.
- Run Darker: Multiply.
- Click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- Get the Gradient tool and use all the same settings as before, but make the Foreground color black. If you need to switch Color Chips, click on the double arrow icon. Zoom out so you can drag beyond the edge of the photo. Click on the mission building and drag to the upper left beyond the photo.

mountain-2.jpg

This photo was taken by my son at dawn from either the summit or near the summit of a snow-capped mountain looking across to another snow-capped mountain in the distance. I wanted to enhance this photo so it wouldn't be so dark, but I wanted to retain the magic of the early morning light.

- There's a slight color cast so run the Color Cast action. This blows out the sky a little bit.
- To hide the upper part of the Color Cast layer, click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- Get the Gradient tool. In Tool Options open the Gradient Picker and double click on Foreground to Background. If you don't see this gradient, click on the icon in the upper right corner to get the Gradient Picker menu, and choose Reset Gradients.
- Click on the triangle again to close the Gradient Picker.
- In Tool Options, choose the Linear gradient. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity 100%. Don't check Reverse but do check Dither and Transparency.
- Look at your Color Chips and make sure you have white for the Foreground color. If you need to switch Color Chips, click on the double arrow icon.
- On your document, click where you want the Color Cast effect to be seen—just below the horizon—and drag upward to where you don't want the effect to be seen. Press Shift as you drag to maintain a straight line. When you let go of the mouse, the mask will fill with the gradient, which will hide the upper part of the Color Cast layer.
- To add a bit of light and contrast, run Lighter: Levels.
- Adjust the sliders to your liking and click OK. I moved the right slider under the histogram to the left to 225 and the middle slider to the left to 1.11.



mountain-3.jpg



This photo is typical of many landscape photos where the terrain is dark and the sky is light. Here's how I fixed the problem.

- I tried Lighter: Less Contrast and Lighter: Shadows/Highlights-medium, and I liked the result of Shadows/Highlights better. Remember, the actions make it easy to quickly try out more than one option so you can pick the effect you like the best.
- Don't be afraid to run a second Shadows/Highlights action. I ran the Shadows/Highlights-mild action, and it lightened the dark areas just a bit more.
- To darken the sky, run Darker-Multiply and mask away the effect on the lower part of the photo. To do that:
 - Click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
 - Get the Gradient tool. In Tool Options open the Gradient Picker and double click on Foreground to Background. If you don't see this gradient, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Gradient Picker menu, and choose Reset Gradients.
 - Click on the triangle again to close the Gradient Picker.
 - Choose the Linear gradient. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity 100%. Don't check Reverse but do check Dither and Transparency.
 - Make sure the Foreground Color Chip is white. If you need to switch Color Chips, click on the double arrow icon.
 - On your document, click where you want the Multiply effect to be seen and, since the landscape slopes downward drag diagonally to where you don't want the effect to be seen. When you let go of the mouse, the mask will fill with the gradient, which will hide part of the layer.
 - If it's still too light in the sky, run the Darker: Multiply action again.
- Click on the Add Layer Mask icon and use the Gradient tool again to hide all but the sky and snow covered mountains.
- Run Lighter: Levels. Adjust the sliders to your liking and click OK. I used 11 for the left slider, 1.20 for the middle slider, and 243 for the right slider under the histogram.
- Run Contrast.
- Run Color: Boost and change the Saturation to +10. Click OK.
- To remove some of the color effect, in the Layers panel click on the Add Layer Mask icon. Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity should be 100%.
- Make sure the Foreground color is black. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your document brush wherever you want to remove the Color: Boost effect.

mountain-4.jpg

mountain-4-with-selection.psd



With this photo I want to show you a couple of tricks you can use when you need them. The photo of my son on the mountain would be really great if it was lighted correctly, so let's start with the action I most often use in cases where there's a big contrast between dark and light.

- Run Lighter: Less Contrast
- Run Lighter: Shadows/Highlights-mild two times.

Note: I found out which actions worked the best by experimenting.

Now we have the background about where we want it, but the figure is still way too dark.

- Run Lighter: SCREEN. That looks better on the figure, but it lightens the background as well. I could add a layer mask and paint on it to affect only the figure, but in a case like this where the edges of the figure are sharp, it can sometimes be easier to create a selection outline first and then make the mask based on the selection.

Masking with Selections

- Get the Quick Selection tool.
- Adjust the size of your brush and click and drag to select different parts of the figure.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) as you click and drag if you want to deselect an area.

The Quick Selection tool is only for the initial selection. To make sure the selection is satisfactory, you must zoom in and inspect the entire selection.

- You may be able to add or subtract using the Quick Selection tool.
- Other times it's easier to use the Lasso tool. In Tool options click on the Add to Selection icon. Feather should be 0 and check Anti-alias.
- Click and drag to add to the selection outline, or press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag to subtract from the outline. When you let go of the mouse, the two ends of the outline will join.

Once you're finished inspecting and repairing the entire outline, you're ready to move on. Even though creating a selection takes a bit of time, it's very helpful in the long run. To save your selection:

- In the Menu Bar choose Select > Save Selection.
- Choose New for the Channel.
- Give your selection a name, and click OK.

Note: I saved this selection for you in the PSD version of this file that you'll find in the download folder called images-06-edit-with-actions. I named the selection "figure." To access my selection:

- In the Menu Bar choose Select > Load Selection. Choose "figure" from the menu and click OK.
- Click on the Add Layer Mask icon, and it will mask away everything but the effect on the figure inside the outline.
- Run the Lighter: SCREEN action as many times as you need to lighten the figure. (I ran it two more times.)
- To copy the original layer mask to the new layer, press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag the mask thumbnail to the new layer. (For earlier versions that can't do this, check the Pre-Class video, Copy a Layer Mask, for an alternative method.)

If we zoom in, though, we can see the noise that always happens when you lighten a very dark image. To minimize noise:

- Run Reduce Noise-medium.
- Run Sharpen SOME-High Pass. Brush wherever you think the image could use some sharpening.

Color Fringe

There's one more problem I addressed in the video: some of the edges have a weird color fringe—which can happen when you make such drastic changes to the lighting and/or color of a photo. To remove the fringe colors:

- Make your selection active again by choosing Select > Load Selection OR you can Ctrl click (Mac: Cmd click) on one of your masks.
- In the Layers panel, click on the Add New Layer icon. By painting on a new layer you can make adjustments later if you need to.
- Change the blend mode of the new layer to Color.
- With the Brush tool selected, press Alt (Mac: Opt) to get the Color Picker icon. Click on a correct color next to the fringe to change the Foreground color. Let go of the Alt or Opt key.
- Brush along the edge to change the color.
- Sample a new color frequently so you're always painting with the correct color.

Once you're finished going around all the edges, zoom out and look to see if there's anything else you want to do. I decided to add contrast to the mountains, but not on the figure. To do that:

- In the Menu Bar choose Select > Inverse. That selects everything BUT the figure.
- Run the Contrast action. This still affects the entire layer, so click on the Add Layer Mask icon to mask away the figure and show the effect only on the background.

In other words, when you have a selection outline active when you click on the Add Layer Mask icon, the selected area shows up as white on the mask, which makes that part of the layer visible. The area that isn't selected shows up as black on the mask, which hides that part of the layer, giving you the exact effect you want—contrast on the background, but not on the figure.

mountain-1.jpg



This photo of a snow-capped mountain looks hazy. Sometimes haze is similar to a color cast.

- Try running Color Cast. It may not help every hazy photo equally well, but it does a good job with this one.
- Run Lighter: Levels and adjust the sliders under the histogram to make the upper mountain less hazy. I used 225 for the right slider and 0.60 for the middle slider.
- In the Layers panel, click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- Get the Gradient tool. In Tool Options open the Gradient Picker and double click on Foreground to Background. If you don't see this gradient, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Gradient Picker menu, and choose Reset Gradients.
- Click on the triangle again to close the Gradient Picker.
- Choose the Linear gradient. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity 100%. Don't check Reverse but do check Dither and Transparency.
- Look at your Color Chips and make sure you have white for the Foreground color. If you need to switch Color Chips, click on the double arrow icon.
- On your document, click where you want the Levels effect to be seen and drag down to where you don't want the effect to be seen. Press Shift as you drag to maintain a straight line. When you let go of the mouse, the mask will fill with the gradient, which will hide part of the layer.
- Run Lighter: Less Contrast.
- Run Contrast.
- Run Lighter: Shadows/Highlights-minimum.
- Run Contrast. Reduce the opacity to 35%.
- Run Sharpen: Unsharp Mask-medium.

pool.jpg



This is a favorite photo of mine. I love the golden feel, but it's just a little too yellow.

- Run Color: Reduce Yellow.
- Run Lighter: Shadows/Highlights-mild.
- Run Contrast and reduce the opacity to 20%.

To bring back some of the magic golden color:

- In the Layers panel, click on the Background layer to make it the active layer.
- Press Ctrl J (Mac: Cmd J) to duplicate the layer.
- Click and drag the Background copy to the top of the Layers panel.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the Add Layer Mask icon to hide the Background copy layer.
- Get the Brush tool. Open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes. In Tool Options make sure the Mode is Normal. Choose the Opacity you want. I set the Opacity to 20%.
- Make sure the Foreground color is white. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your document brush wherever you want to bring back some of the golden color.

To create a subtle frame effect around the edge of the photo:

- Run Darker: Multiply.
- Add a black mask by pressing Alt (Mac: Opt) and clicking on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- With white as the Foreground color, use the Brush tool at 50% opacity to brush around the edges of the photo to reveal the darker layer.

To add a focus of light on the main subject:

- Run Lighter: Screen.
- In the Layers panel, press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the Add Layer Mask icon to get a black mask.
- Get the Gradient tool. In Tool Options open the Gradient Picker and double click on Foreground to Background. If you don't see this gradient, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Gradient Picker menu, and choose Reset Gradients.
- Click on the triangle again to close the Gradient Picker.
- Choose the Radial gradient. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity 100%. Don't check Reverse but do check Dither and Transparency.
- Make sure you still have white for the Foreground color. If you need to switch Color Chips, click on the double arrow icon.
- On your document, click where you want the lighter effect to be seen and drag out to where you don't want the

effect to be seen. When you let go of the mouse, the mask will fill with the gradient, which will reveal part of the layer.

- Use the Brush tool to refine the mask as desired.
- Brush wherever you want to include the lighter color.
- Click on the double arrow icon next to the Color Chips to switch the Foreground Color to Black.
- Paint over the wall to remove the lighter effect.
- Run Lighter: SCREEN again.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag a copy of the mask thumbnail to the new layer. (For earlier versions that can't do this, check the Pre-Class video, Copy a Layer Mask, for an alternative method.)

This retains the artistic sense of this photo without it being overpowered with the yellow cast of the sunset.

dappled-light.jpg

(Student Photo)

This photo is dark and was taken in dappled light. Here's how to minimize these problems:

- Run Lighter: Less Contrast two times.
- Run Contrast and reduce the opacity to 25%.

You could stop here or add the following steps to make the photo look even better:

- Run Lighter: Screen.
- In the Layers panel, press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity should be 100%.
- Make sure the Foreground color is white. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your document brush wherever you want to reveal the Lighter-SCREEN layer.
- Run Lighter-SCREEN again.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag the mask thumbnail from the first Screen layer to the new one. (For earlier versions that can't do this, check the Pre-Class video, Copy a Layer Mask, for an alternative method.)
- Click on the double arrow icon next to the Color Chips to switch the Foreground color to black. On your photo, brush wherever you want to remove the Lighter-Screen effect.
- Run Reduce Noise-Minimum.
- On the photo, brush to remove the Reduce Noise effect on places that should be sharp, like the eyes and mouth, etc.
- Run Sharpen: Unsharp Mask-medium.
- Run Brush Away Blemishes to lighten the dark under-eye area. When the Gaussian Blur dialog box appears, adjust the Radius as needed. I used around 20 px. Click OK.
- In Tool Options, set the Opacity to around 30%.
- On your photo, brush to soften lines.

You can minimize dappled lighting even further with cloning, as I teach in Section 07 Other Editing Tools. Watch Video 07-06: Clone: Soften Dappled Light if you want to learn more about cloning.



mother-daughter.jpg

(Student Photo)



This photo has several problems: it's a low resolution 72 ppi photo, and it has color and lighting problems. The lights in the background are also a little distracting, but I teach how to remove unwanted objects in Section 07 Other Editing Tools, so I won't tackle that in this video.

I started with color because that was the first thing that popped out at me when I looked at this photo. The photo has an orange look, so it's a little hard to tell if red is the problem or if yellow is the problem.

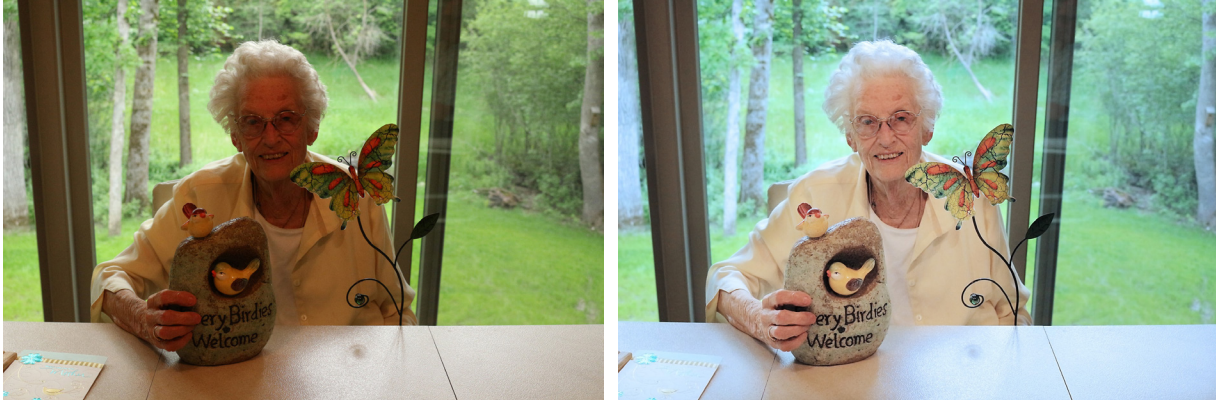
- Run Color Cast. This doesn't do much, but it makes the photo look a little more yellow.
- Run Reduce Yellow two times.

When you get to the point where the lighting is a bigger issue than the color, switch to lighting. You won't be able to tell the fine nuances of what you need to do with color if the lighting is really bad.

- Run Lighter: SCREEN four times.
- Reduce the opacity of the top Lighter: SCREEN layer slightly. I used around 85% opacity.
- Run Color: Cooler two times.
- Run Contrast.
- Run Color: Reduce Red.
- In the Layers panel, press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the Add Layer Mask icon to get a black mask, which will hide the Reduce Red layer.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity should be 100%.
- Make sure the Foreground color is white. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your document brush wherever you want to reveal the Reduce Red layer.
- Run Reduce Noise-medium. Brush away some of the effect over areas that should be sharp.

Mom.jpg

(Student Photo)



In this photo the background is well lit but the subject is too dark and has a color cast. I started with the lighting, since both problems were about equal.

- Run Shadows/Highlights medium.
- Run Lighter: Less Contrast. The background of the photo will be too light.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the Add Layer Mask icon to get a black mask.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes. The Mode should be Normal. Set the Opacity to whatever you want. I'll use 50%.
- Make sure the Foreground color is white. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your document brush wherever you want to reveal the Lighter-Less Contrast effect.

Note: When using a large soft brush, stay away from the edges of your subject so the lighting effect doesn't accidentally spill over onto the background. Reduce the size of your brush to brush along edges.

- Run Reduce Red.
- Run Cooler Color.
- Run Contrast.
- Run Cooler Color.
- Run Cooler Color.
- To remove the Cooler Color effect from the photo background, press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag the mask thumbnail you created earlier to the top Cooler Color layer.
- To soften the skin run Reduce Noise: Medium. Brush away areas that should be sharp, such as the eyes and mouth.
- Run Lighter: High Key. Copy the layer mask from the Cooler Color layer to the High Key layer using the same steps you used earlier. (For earlier versions that can't do this, check the Pre-Class video, Copy a Layer Mask, for an alternative method.)
- Run Sharpen: Unsharp Mask-medium.
- Run Contrast. Reduce opacity to 20%.

El Paso.jpg

(Student Photo)



This photo has mostly a lighting and contrast problem.

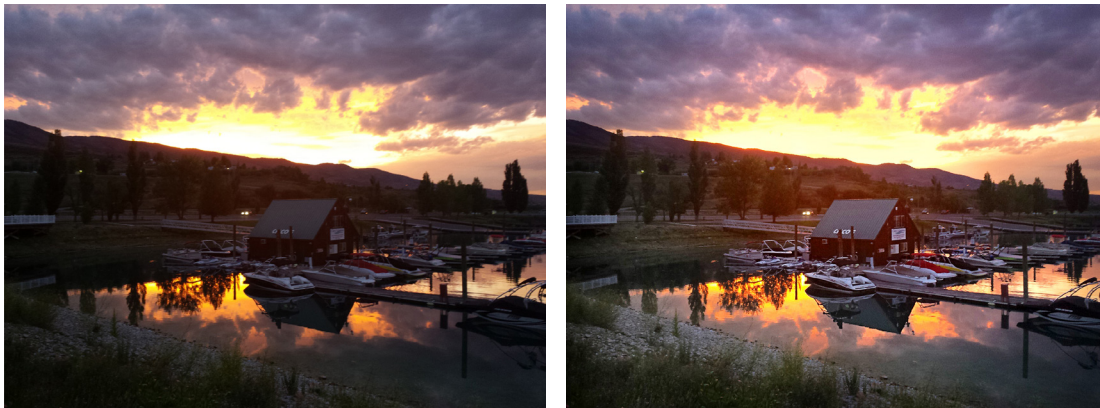
- Run Darker-MULTIPLY three times.
- Run Lighter: Less Contrast two times.
- Run Shadows/Highlights-medium.
- Run Darker: MULTIPLY.
- Click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- Get the Gradient tool. In Tool Options open the Gradient Picker and double click on Foreground to Background. If you don't see this gradient, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Gradient Picker menu, and choose Reset Gradients.
- Click on the triangle again to close the Gradient Picker.
- Choose the Linear gradient. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity 100%. Don't check Reverse but do check Dither and Transparency.
- Look at the Color Chips and make sure the Foreground color is white. If you need to switch Color Chips, click on the double arrow icon.
- On your document, click where you want the Darker-Multiply effect to be seen and drag down to where you don't want the effect to be seen. Press Shift as you drag to maintain a straight line. When you let go of the mouse, the mask will fill with the gradient, which will hide part of the layer.
- Run Darker: MULTIPLY again.
- In the Layers panel, press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag the mask thumbnail from the previous layer to the new layer. (For earlier versions that can't do this, check the Pre-Class video, Copy a Layer Mask, for an alternative method.)
- If you need to adjust the mask, get the Brush tool. In Tool Options, open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes. The Mode should be Normal. Adjust the Opacity as needed. (I used 100%.)
- Make sure the Foreground color is black. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your document brush wherever you want to remove the effect of the Darker: Multiply layer.
- Run Contrast. In the Layers panel, increase the opacity to 100%.
- Run Darker-Multiply again and create a gradient mask as before, but drag the gradient further down into the city a bit more.
- Run Shadows/Highlights: Medium.
- In the Layers panel, click on the Add Layer Mask icon.

- Get the Gradient tool. Use the same settings as before, but choose the Radial gradient. On your photo, click in center and drag a short distance beyond the edge of the photo.
- Run Sharpen: Unsharp Mask-medium.
- Run Sharpen Some: High Pass. Brush over the center to sharpen the houses.

With some photos like this you end up going back and forth pushing one piece of the photo ahead, which causes a problem elsewhere, so you fix that, then you push it forward in another area, going back and forth. As long as some progress occurs, you can keep going, tweaking it bit by bit until you're satisfied with the outcome. I recommend that you only do this much work on a photo if it means something special to you!

marina.jpg

(Student Photo)



This marina photo was submitted by one of my students, and it has some really good points: it's a beautiful scene and has an amazing reflection in the water, but it does have some problems.

Problem 1: The white area in the photo shows lack of detail that can't be recovered.

Problem 2: It's a little blurry, which may be hard for you to see on the video screen.

Problem 3: It's a little too dark. We need to see the marina a little better to appreciate the scene.

I started with the lighting, since it was the most obvious. I'll try two different lighting actions to see which one I like the best: Lighter: less Contrast and Shadows/Highlights: mild.

I liked the lighting in the center more on Lighter: Less Contrast, but I liked Shadows/Highlights better overall.

- Hide the Lighter: Less Contrast layer, and make sure the Shadows/Highlights layer is active.
- In the Layers panel, click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes. The Mode should be Normal and the Opacity should be 100%.
- Make sure the Foreground color is black. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your photo, brush around some of the edges to remove the lighter effect. This will frame the photo and keep some of the drama.
- Click on the Lighter: Less Contrast layer. Click on the visibility icon of this layer to make it visible.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the Add Layer Mask icon to add a black mask.
- Change the Foreground Color Chip to white by clicking on the double arrow icon.
- On your photo, brush in the center to reveal the nice golden color.

- Run Sharpen SOME: High Pass. Adjust the Brush tool as necessary and brush over areas that should be sharp—mainly the marina and boats in the center of the image.

Lighten:

The next thing I did was add a little more drama.

- Run Lighter: Levels. Under the histogram change the left setting to 11, the middle setting to 1.10, and the right setting to 223.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the Add Layer Mask icon to get a black mask.
- Make sure the Foreground Color Chip is white.
- Paint on your photo to add the light streaming outward from source.

To Reduce the White Area:

- Click on the Create a New Layer icon.
- In the Layers panel, change the blend mode to Darken.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options, change the Opacity to 30%.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) to temporarily access the Eyedropper tool. Click on some yellow in the photo to sample the color.
- Brush over white area to make it yellow instead of white. This won't affect any area that's darker than the yellow color, so you don't have to be real careful about staying right inside the white area.
- In the Layers panel, reduce the opacity of this layer to 50%.

Finishing Touches

- Run Color: Boost.
- Run Post Noise Sharpen.

People-1.jpg

This photo is a little faded, and it has a color cast.

- Run the Color Cast action.
- Now we need to darken the photo. There are two actions that darken. I tried both and found that I liked Darker: Less Contrast better.
- The face was still a little too light, so I ran Darker-Less Contrast.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the Add Layer Mask icon to get a black mask that hides the Darker-Less Contrast layer.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options make sure the Mode is Normal and the Opacity is 100%. Open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes.
- Make sure the Foreground color is white. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your document, brush wherever you want to add the Darker: Less Contrast effect.
- Now his face is a little too red so run Color: Reduce Red.
- Run Color: Cooler. Reduce the opacity to 75%.
- Run Sharpen: SOME High Pass. Brush over areas that should be sharpened



Balloon.jpg

This is one of those photos that has dark and light areas, and when I see that I always like to try Lighter: Less Contrast first.

- To add the effect only to the balloons, get the Quick Selection tool. In Tool Options make sure the Add to Selection icon is selected. Sample All Layers and Auto Enhance can be unchecked. Brush over the balloons to select them, adjusting the brush size as needed by pressing the right or left Bracket keys.
- If you want to adjust the selection, it's often easiest to do with the Lasso tool. In Tool Options, make sure the Add to Selection icon is selected. Feather should be zero and check Anti-Alias. If you need to subtract from the selection, press Alt (Mac: Opt) to get a minus sign next to your cursor.
- Once you have your selection, in the Layers panel, click on the Add Layer Mask icon. This will hide the Lighter: Less Contrast effect everywhere but the balloons.
- Run Lighten: Shadows/Highlights mild. This takes away some of the contrast.
- Run Contrast.
- To lighten the balloon a bit more, run Lighter: Screen.
- Repeat Lighter: Screen to lighten the balloon even more.
- Press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag the mask thumbnail from the Lighter: Less Contrast layer to the Screen layer. (For earlier versions that can't do this, check the Pre-Class video, Copy a Layer Mask, for an alternative method.)
- Finish up with Sharpen: Unsharp Mask-medium.



train.jpg



This photo just needs a few tweaks.

- To address the lighting, run PLAY ALL Shadows/Highlights. The first layer, Shadows/Highlights-minimum, looks good for his face.
- Shadows/Highlights-mild is too much for his face, but it reveals more detail on his shirt and background.
- Delete the top two layers by clicking on the Shadows/Highlights-medium layer to make it the active layer and Shift clicking on the Shadow/Highlights-maximum layer to select it as well. Press the Delete key.

- With the Shadows/Highlights-medium layer active, press the Alt key (Mac: Opt key) and click on the Add a Layer Mask icon to get a black mask, which will hide the medium layer.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options make sure the Mode is Normal and the Opacity is 100%. Open the Brush Picker and choose a soft, round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes.
- Make sure the Foreground color is white. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch colors.
- On your document brush wherever you want to reveal the lighter effect.
- Run Reduce Red and lower the opacity to 50%.
- Run Brush Away Blemishes and brush on the skin to even out skin tones.
- Run Unsharp Mask-medium.