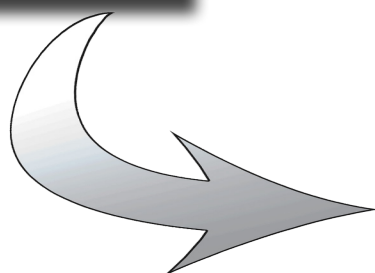


SHADES OF



GREY



*Using 50% grey
layers and Layer Blending
modes to readily control
image highlights and
shadows*

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Highlight and Shadow control

The **Dodge & Burn** tools in Adobe Photoshop® are very powerful control tools in their own right - but they do have drawbacks if used directly on your image. A single mistake can mean redoing the whole of your careful work. The usual advice to get round this is to “make a copy layer of your image and work on that”. Even this is not without it's problems for the simple reason that you can only ‘undo’ backwards step by step. Should you happen to find, some way along the manipulation, that something isn't quite how you want it then you have to step back progressively, losing all your hard work in the process. Absolutely infuriating doesn't even *start* to describe this!

The method here allows you to cancel or adjust something which you may have done (say) 227 steps ago (way before your ‘History’ palette) without losing any of the other work you have done. What's more, you don't need any artistic skills, you don't require supreme control over a paintbrush, you don't need a graphics tablet (this is perfectly easy with your normal mouse), there's no fancy masking, no tedious selecting - in fact all you need is the ability to watch what you are doing and judge when enough is enough.

So, what's the big secret? Well the big secret is that there is no secret. This is something which has been possible in Photoshop® for eons - I can't remember it ever not being there. Even better, you can do it in Photoshop Elements as well (at least, you can in Elements 7; I haven't checked earlier versions); no need to spend a wheelbarrow full of money on the full version just to use this method.

All you need to do is to use “Layer Blending Mode”. Something you've not used before? Perhaps you don't even know where to look? What “Layer Blending Mode” does is apply certain attributes to a layer **relative to the layers beneath it**. Aargh - this is all much too complicated for me! **NO. It is not complicated at all.**

Watch!

The only thing you need to know at this point is that **you CANNOT set a Layer Blending Mode for a Background layer**. It's obvious really, you can't set a mode which affects the layers below the background when there aren't any! To make sure you don't even try, the option is greyed out as a reminder.

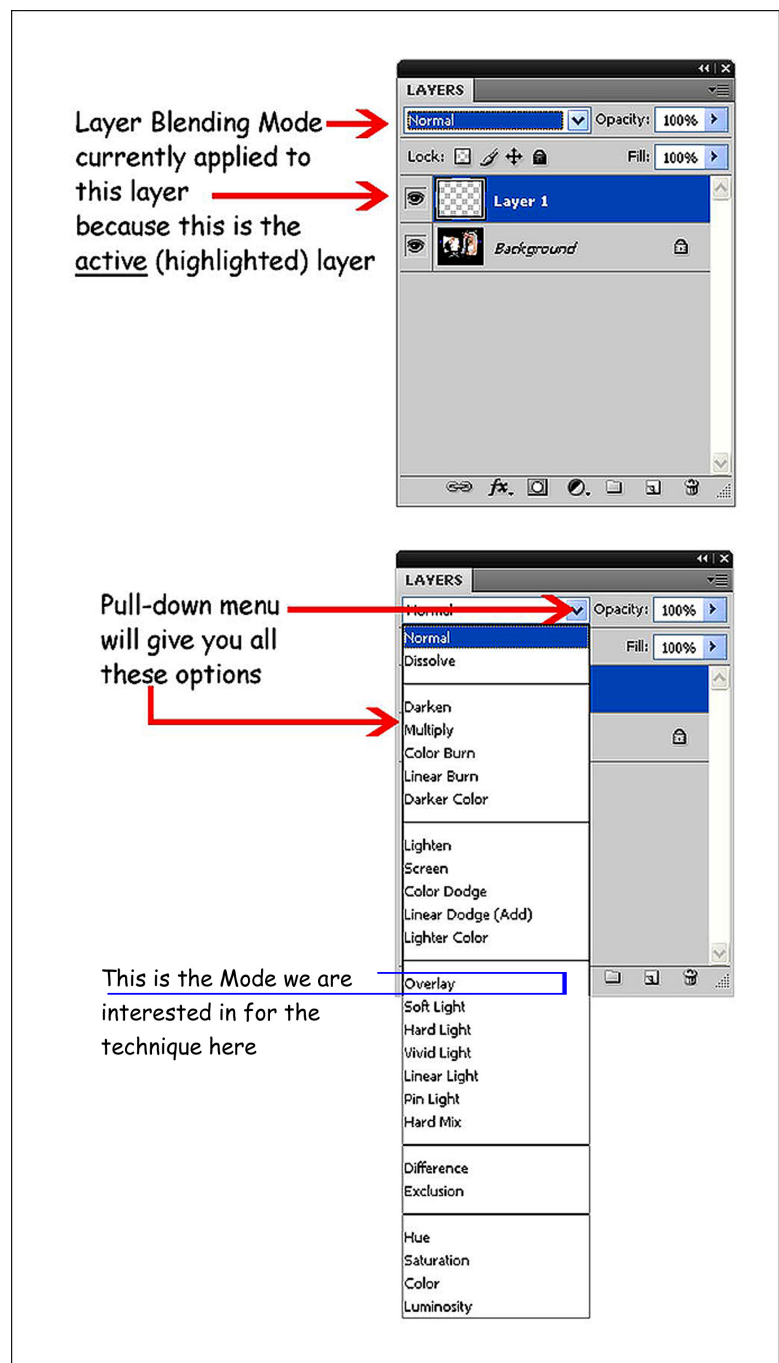


Fig. 1 Here's how to access the Layer Blending Mode palette

Not surprisingly, the first thing to do is to open the image that you need to adjust. As soon as you have done that, make a new blank layer above this - either using the pull-down menu from the top menu using:-

LAYER>NEW>LAYER

You could also click the little icon next to the trashcan at the base of the Layers palette or perhaps use the even quicker keyboard shortcut of holding down **SHIFT** and **CONTROL** at the same time and pressing the letter **N** (ie **SHIFT+CTRL+N**).

At this stage, your image will appear completely unchanged. All you have done is placed a transparent layer on top of your original.

Stage 2 is to fill this empty layer with a 50% grey. This is a two-part operation. With the pull-down menus this is:-

EDIT>FILL

or, again, the keyboard shortcut of:-

SHIFT+F5

Either of these techniques (*I personally prefer the keyboard shortcut - gives the left hand a little something to do as well*), will give you another little palette to control the fill to be applied.

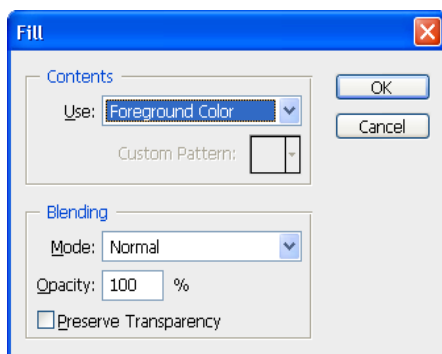


Fig. 2 The 'Fill' palette

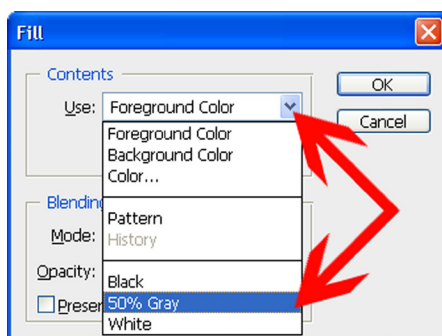


Fig. 3 The extended 'Fill' palette

In this 'Fill' palette, clicking on the down arrow next to the highlighted 'Use' box will give you the range of options. Select "50% grey" and click OK.

Don't panic. You have NOT lost your original image - all you have done is applied a controlled tone over the top of it. (If you feel the need to prove this to yourself, simply click on the Eye next to 'Layer 1' in the Layers palette and your original will be revealed.) Make sure that Layer 1 is selected and go to the Layer Blending Mode option at the top of the Layers palette and select "**Overlay**" - look at page 1 here to refresh your memory.

What you will now have is a two layer image with your original showing in all it's glory.

Make things even easier

To help you to remember which layer is doing what, I find it a good idea to change the name of the 50% grey layer from the default name of 'Layer 1' to something a bit more informative - 'Dodge & Burn' would be a good start.

Actually, to make things still easier if you should ever need to undo any of your adjustments, I like to make **two** of these 50% grey layers. One, called 'Dodge' is for areas I want to lighten and the other, 'Burn' is for areas I want to darken.

Why? Sometimes (*often, I admit, caused by me taking shortcuts*) areas of dodging and areas of burning overlap. If these are on the same layer, it makes things slightly more awkward. Individual layers just speed any corrections up even more.

Now for the good bit!

All this may seem to have brought you full circle back to the beginning. Well, it **has**. It has also prepared the way for totally controlled, completely reversible lightening and darkening of selective areas. A Photoshop® version of the dodging and burning from the darkroom days of yesteryear.

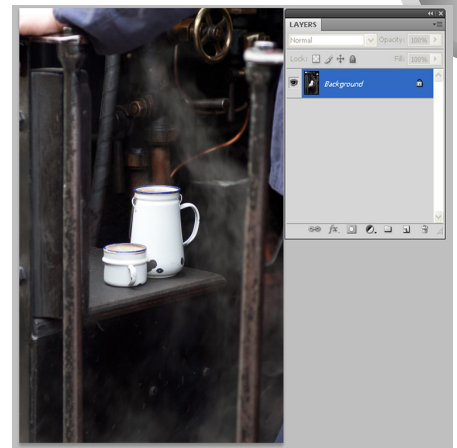


Fig. 4 Original image opened

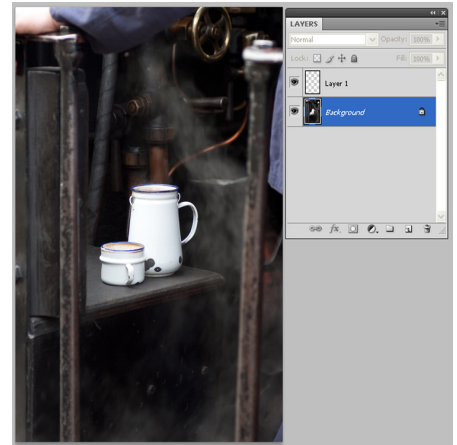


Fig. 5 New blank layer added

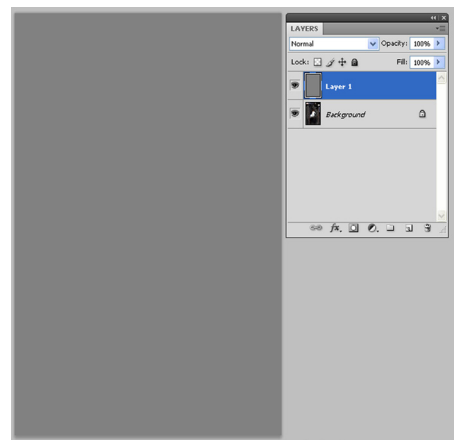


Fig. 6 Layer fill 50% grey

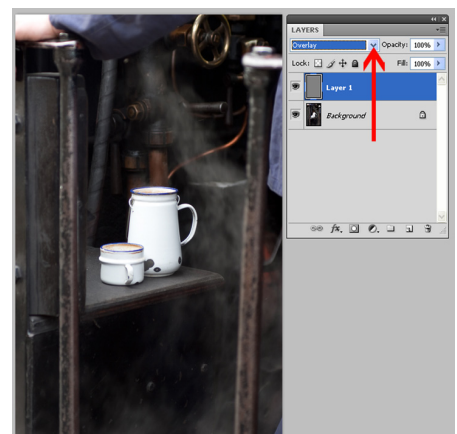


Fig. 7 Layer Blending mode = Overlay

Stop and THINK

At this moment, you are working on your ORIGINAL IMAGE - something which is fraught with potential disaster. Before you do anything else, save the layered file with a NEW NAME. This is always a good idea - preserve your original at all costs. It is a wise policy to

NEVER, ever work on the original image.

If you decide that this is too much trouble, or you simply forget then one day you will definitely over-write something irreplaceable.

It'll never happen to you? Oh yes it will. If you never believe anything else in your whole life, believe me on this!

Ok - so what's the big deal

The big deal is that there is absolutely no selection to make - you just paint on the 50% grey overlay with either black (to darken) or white (to lighten) those parts of the image which you want to adjust.

In the image here, I wanted to increase the emphasis on the steam coming down the picture from top centre towards bottom right. Not exactly easy to 'select' something as amorphous as this, you can imagine.

I made sure that the 50% grey overlay layer was selected, chose a soft edged brush, set the foreground colour to white and just painted over the steamy area. Now, the default setting for the opacity of the brush is 100% and this was very much too heavy an application - the effect was very far from satisfactory.

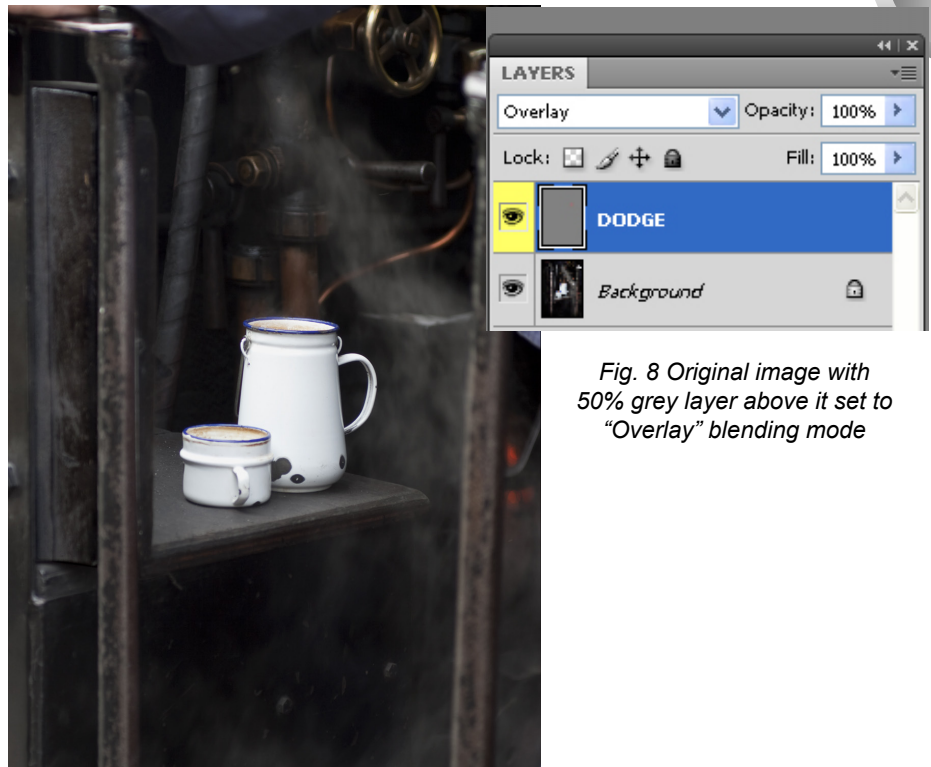


Fig. 8 Original image with 50% grey layer above it set to "Overlay" blending mode

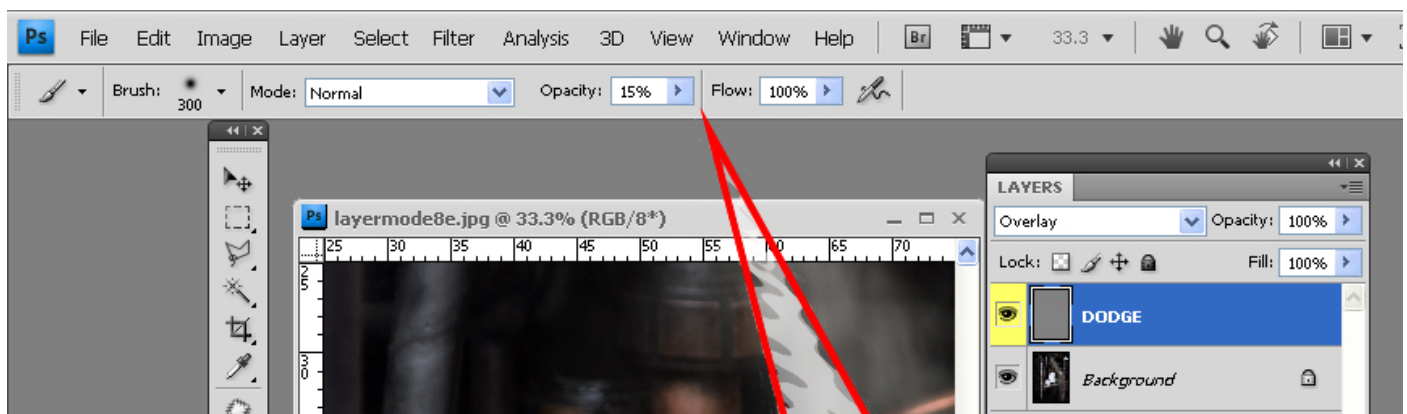


Fig. 9

Moving up to the toolbar which runs across the top of the Photoshop you will see a box marked "Opacity" which also has a slider (Adobe call these 'Scrubby sliders' for some reason - don't know why, mine slides quite smoothly) with which you can adjust the opacity. I usually start off at about 5% - that's **five percent** and gently build up the brush strokes on the 50% grey layer. The nice thing is that you can see the gentle lightening effect. You can either build stroke upon stroke until you get the amount of lightening you desire, you can change the opacity if you are impatient. You can also change the size of the brush (right down to a 1 pixel for really fine detail) and the edge softness.

Keyboard shortcuts (again, it can be useful for the left hand to control the brush properties while the right one

controls the mouse or graphics tablet pen and works on the image) are:-

- [(left square bracket key) **reduces the brush size.**
-] (right square bracket key) **increases the brush size.**
- [and **SHIFT (at same time)** **makes the brush edge softer.**
-] and **SHIFT (at same time)** **makes the brush edge harder.**

You have total control over the size of area you cover with the brush stroke, over the amount of lightening you apply and everything is done visually. No messing about with 'will that be enough/too much' because you can see at every stage how the effect is progressing.

Made a mistake? If it's the most recent thing you have done, the usual **Ctrl + Z** shortcut will take you back one step. But, and here's the really good bit - if your mistake *wasn't* the last thing, you can still undo it without spoiling all the other things

you've done. Remember how you've been painting in white on a 50% grey layer set to 'Overlay' blending mode? All you need to do to correct **any** of the countless little corrections you've made is to just PAINT OVER IT. You must set your brush to the same grey as the parts of the layer you haven't painted on - just select the eyedropper tool (press letter **I**) and click on the layer away from where you've worked. You now have your grey loaded into the paintbrush, simply paint out the mistake. Set the opacity to 100% to speed things up!

Don't forget to reset the opacity and your foreground colour to white before continuing!

You can paint over the same area several times, slowly building up the brightness until you reach the desired effect. Because you aren't using 100% opacity, you can build up the density in a highly controlled manner - for example, if you have set 10% opacity, you can paint over the same area ten times before you reach the stage where you have no more effect.

10% stroke applied 10 times = 100%.
or
12½% stroke applied 8 times = 100%

Now don't get the idea that you can just scribble away over an area until you get the effect you want. It's not

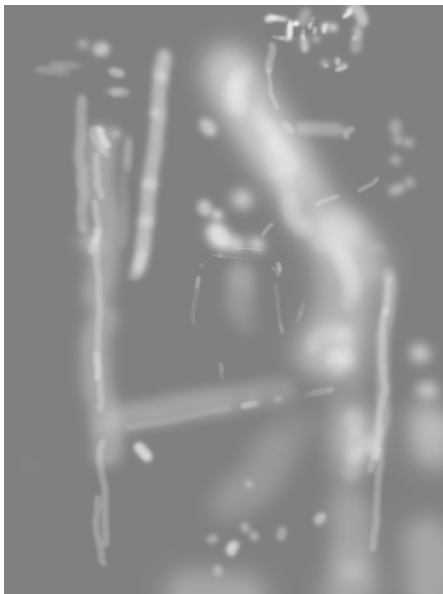


Fig. 10. Just the 50% grey layer with assorted areas lightened using brush and white foreground colour. Notice how some areas appear paler than others owing to multiple brush strokes, one over the other.

quite *that* easy - each brush stroke has to be individual to build up the density on the 50% grey layer. Ten separate 10% strokes gives 100% while one 10% stroke passed over the area 10 times still only gives you just 10%.

Hence you can start with the original image, Fig. 11 and reach the desired lightening in certain areas just by painting on the 'Overlay' layer to reach Fig. 12. Now in this example, the changes are not dramatic but it is distinctly possible and very, very easy to highlight just the individual threads on a screw or bolt. Imagine what a total pain it would be to select each



Fig. 11

Fig. 12 Highlight corrections applied



thread to change the brightness!

The same, only different

Ok, that's sorted out the areas you want to lighten, now to tackle the other end of the scale and look at the areas you need to be darker.

Not surprisingly, the technique is very similar indeed to what we have just accomplished - this is the 'splodge' school of painting and not 'Fine Art'. The only real difference is that instead of painting with white we are painting with black. Exactly the same principles apply, changing the brush opacity will give you different degrees of darkening, as in Fig. 9. The brush size can be changed, the brush edge softness likewise - in fact it's all pretty much the same as before but in reverse.

You *can*, if you so wish, work on the same layer as before but I find it even easier to have another 50% grey layer, still in 'Overlay' blending mode, on which the darkening brush strokes are applied. Almost inevitably, there will be places where you want to darken a part of something you have previously lightened. An example here would be the slightly curved bright strip immediately to the right of the rim of the enamel jug. Previously, the steam which passes in front of this light strip has been brightened and the effect is that now that bright strip (*it's actually the curved edge of a cast steel shelf catching the ambient light*) is a little too bright. Instead of trying to select just the shelf edge and darken it, we can simply paint over the area on the Overlay layer and darken it that way.

There are a couple of other ways in which this could be done:-

1. The previous lightening could be painted out with 50% grey in the manner described above as a way of making a correction.
2. The area could be erased from the previous layer to show the original background layer.

Both are viable but not as easy and controllable as simply painting the area darker.

As you can see in Fig. 13, most of the changes have been applied to the edge of the image, reducing the impact of the blue sleeves visible in the original. There is also a quite noticeable amount actually on the enamel container (*it's a traditional railwayman's tea can*) which has helped to contour the roundness of can and cup by darkening what little shadow there was in the original. To further strengthen the effect, I also 'enhanced' the tea stains in both vessels.



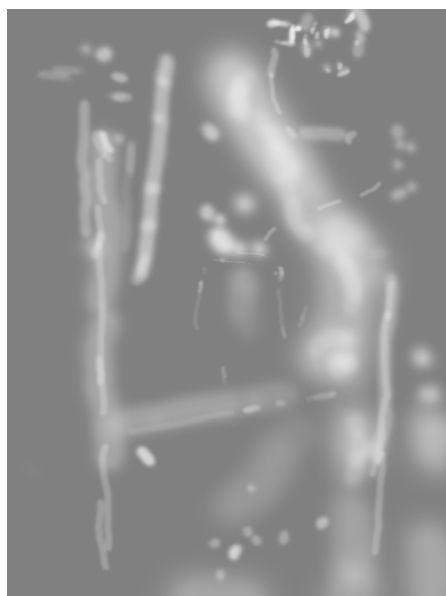
Fig. 13

Fig. 14 Shadow corrections applied





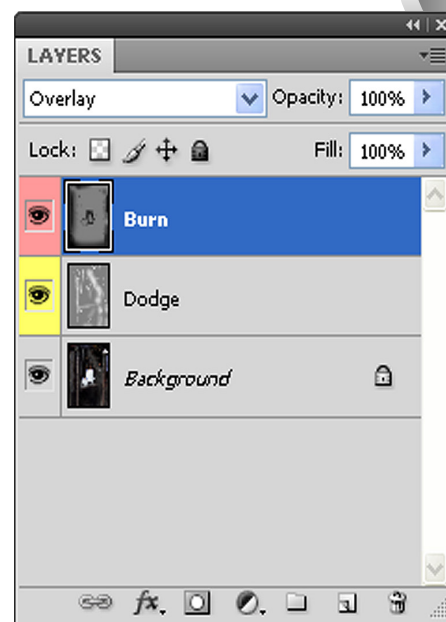
+



+



Fig. 15 Both Highlight and shadow corrections applied



Summary

1. Open your original image file
2. Create a new layer (or two)
3. Select this layer and fill with 50% grey from the drop-down menu
4. Change the Layer Blending Mode to **Overlay**
5. Set the foreground/background colours to black/white (**Shift+D**)
6. Select soft edge brush of appropriate size
7. Change Brush Opacity to between 5 and 30%
8. Paint on the Overlay layer - use black to darken
- use white to lighten
9. If using two layers, remember to change layers when you swap from 'burning' to dodging!! The keyboard shortcut to change layers is pretty easy too - **ALT** + **[** (the LEFT **square** bracket) makes the layer below the current one into the active layer while **ALT** + **]** (the RIGHT **square** bracket) makes the layer above the current one active instead. (To clarify, if you refer to Fig. 15 on page 7 you will see that the top layer is active - holding down ALT and pressing the left square bracket would deactivate that layer and make the 'Dodge' layer beneath it active.)
10. You can also toggle foreground and background colours simply by pressing 'X' once for each change. Hence the quick and easy way of changing from 'Burn' to 'Dodge' layers (in the above example) and changing the colour on the brush would be **ALT** + **[** , release these two keys and tap **X**. Quick 'n easy indeed!
11. At this point, **STOP** and **THINK. Don't automatically 'SAVE'.** Choose **'SAVE AS'** and **CHANGE THE FILE NAME.** This saves the horrible feeling when you save over previous work. To avoid this problem, I have created a Photoshop® action which makes a 'Copy of the Original', generates two 'Overlay' layers and closes the original file unchanged. You don't need to search for this Action - it's in the zipped folder where this tutorial came from - so you've already got it.



(Change the **at** to the normal **@** symbol then I get **your** email not the spammers junk.)

Gentle modification of individual highlights and shadows to accentuate the depth of the carving. The effect is quite subtle and most noticeable in this small size round the eyes and on the moustache.

Camera Original



Camera Original

Harsh overhead noon sun completely shaded the musician's face. Using Dodge & Burn on Overlay layers enabled emphasis to be placed on the musician rather than the harbour background, showing detail in his shirt, face and headwear. The bright boats were darkened too.

Using the Burn and Dodge tools on Overlay layers permitted removal of the indifferent background and provided the opportunity to add lustre to the already shiny hair, to moisten the lips with additional gloss, to slightly brighten the whites of Kerry's eyes. The major work involved the

contouring of the shoulder nearest the camera and enhancing the make-up, especially on the cheekbones.

I perhaps shouldn't mention this but I also reduced the effect under her eyes of those late nights spent ensuring the day was perfect.

An exceptionally hot day had left the delightful Bride looking more than just a little 'shiny'. To return to her previously matte skin appearance, I applied a tiny amount of Gaussian Blur just to the skin, avoiding areas of detail like the eyes.





Judge ye not. This young lady was actually a student on a 'Film, Television and Photography Make-up' course - here appearances really were deceptive as I didn't even recognise her in her crisp white uniform the following day!

In contrast to most of the examples here, the great majority of the 'dodge and burn' applied was burning to accentuate the ridges in the lips, to further reduce the underlying lustre of the skin and to darken the 'dirt' on her face and neck. The biggest correction, though, was to the whites of her eyes. It wasn't possible (or within the scope of the tuition) to reduce the clarity of her eyes, nor tone down the almost startling blue of the irises with make-up alone. In keeping with the

general theme of the make-up, the make-up tutor, the student doing the work, the subject and I all felt that greater impact would be achieved by toning down the healthy appearance of the eyes. Similarly, although inevitable because of the direct and harsh nature of the lighting used, I felt that the catchlight in her eyes was too bright and detracted from the sombre mood required hence they were toned down on the 'burn' overlay layer.

I probably don't need to tell you that the student who applied this 'style' now has a very successful career working in the film industry. The young lady seen in this image now owns three popular Beauty Salons locally (I believe that this 'look' is not part of the repertoire on offer to clients).

see previous page



Stone corbel, Bank Street, Edinburgh. Emphasis placed more firmly on the stone decoration by burning in the surrounding stonework and lightening the face, leaves and scrollwork. Individual shadows within the scroll and leaves could be burned in using a very fine brush and varying degrees of opacity of the brush.

There is a school of thought which decrees that there should be just a single catchlight in each eye. So I removed the three lower ones, leaving just a vestige still visible. While on the 'burn' layer, I also darkened the edges and corners. Changing to the 'dodge' layer and the white brush (at 5% opacity only), I further enhanced the gloss on the lips to make them more luscious. The usual lightening of the eyes was not necessary here as Annette has naturally bright eyes.

A frequent application is to lighten the whites of the eyes and the teeth (*though not here!*). Basic rule of thumb: never have the teeth whiter than the eyes - apparently this indicates ill health!



Making it even easier

Call me lazy if you like but I'm rather fond of finding an easier or a more efficient way of doing things. If it saves time and also helps to prevent little mistakes like saving over the top of your original file, then it shoots straight to the top of my favourites list.

With that in mind, here's a little something which fills all those criteria. It's a Photoshop® Action, specially created to make life easy. It's free to use and it was included in the Zip file you downloaded to get at this Tutorial. So you don't even have to go looking for it - you've already got it!

What the Action does

Once you have installed the Action in your Actions folder and loaded it into Photoshop®, at the press of a single button (Function key 8 or **F8**) the following sequence will happen:-

1. A duplicate of your image will be created.

2. Your original image will be closed (without saving - so it is perfectly safe and unblemished).
3. A duplicate of the background layer will be created. This gives you the freedom to make adjustments to the image itself and still have an original for comparison.
4. The foreground and background colours will be reset to default colours of black and white respectively.
5. Two new layers will be created, each filled with 50% grey and each set to Overlay in the Layer Blending mode.
6. The Brush tool will be selected ready to paint in BLACK.
7. The BURN-IN layer will be selected.

You are now poised to start making corrections. It is your choice what brush opacity to set, remembering that a low opacity may be slower to work with but it also allows you greater control.

The file you are now working on is **NOT** the original, **has not been saved** and **MUST** be saved before closing. A temporary name of "Copy of Original" has been set by the Action - don't forget to change it otherwise you could still end up losing all your work. The second and subsequent times you use this action, the file will also be named "Copy of Original"; save it and you simply overwrite your first piece of work. So - **DON'T FORGET TO CHANGE THE NAME!!**

In fact, if you like me you have developed the habit of **CTRL+S** (keyboard shortcut for 'Save') every time you pause for thought, it might come under the heading of "An Awfully Good Idea" to change the name right at the outset to save little mishaps!

Phil

OK - so what do I actually do with this Action?

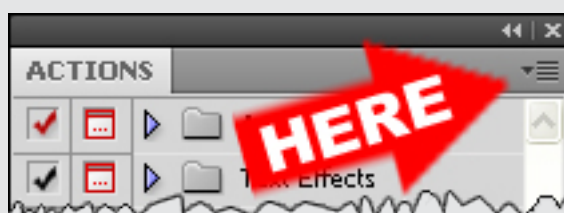
It's all very well having this really useful little shortcut - but it does no good sitting in my Download folder.

What you need to do is to get it into your 'Actions' folder within Photoshop® and then load it ready for use.

First, locate the Actions folder - for CS4 first locate where the programme is loaded (often in C:\Windows\Program files). Then look for 'Presets' and within that you will find the 'Actions' folder. Copy the action and paste it into this 'Actions' folder. Half way there already!

Now you need to make it available for use. This is done by:-

1. Opening Photoshop.
2. Selecting the 'Actions' palette (either the Windows pull-down menu or simply **ALT+F9**).
3. With the Actions palette open, look in the TOP RIGHT corner - you will see a tiny down-arrow under the X.
4. Click on this arrow which will give another pull-down menu. Select 'Load Actions...' and then choose "50% Overlay".
5. All done - ready for use.



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The KISS Method

Keep It Simple

OK, so you've had all the hereinafters, the wheretofores and the insomuchas bits and bobs - hopefully now you'll be fully conversant with the ideas and principles of using the Dodge & Burn tools in a totally controllable, fully reversible and subtle manner. Let's boil it all down to the bare method and look at a simple summary.

1. Load the free Action into your version of Photoshop.
2. Open your image file.
3. Press **F8**.
4. Change the default name and save the new image file.
5. Adjust the brush size using **[** for smaller and **]** for larger.
6. Gently paint on your image the areas you want to darken.
7. Press **X**.
8. Hold **SHIFT**, tap **[** then release **SHIFT**.
9. Gently paint on your image the areas you want to lighten.
10. Save the image file.
11. Relax - it's finished.

A word of warning. Once you have seen how absolutely simple it is to make some really subtle but important improvements to your image, you may find yourself using it on virtually every image. It's a very addictive technique.

PW