



Adjustment Brush for Portraits

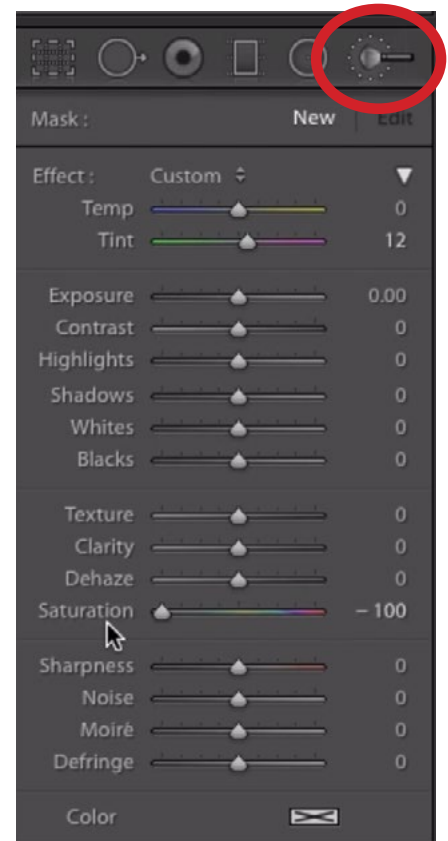
Adjustment Brush for Portraits

In this lesson, we're going to take a look at the Adjustment Brush, which can be found in both Adobe Camera Raw and Lightroom. We will actually have several segments on this topic, because I feel that it is key to being able to quickly finish an image without needing to move into Photoshop. This lesson will focus on portraits and there will be separate lessons on adjusting landscapes because there are different mindsets and techniques that are used for these types of images.

Introduction to the Adjustment Brush (Timestamp 1:25)

In Lightroom, the Adjustment Brush can be found in the Develop Module, which can be accessed by tapping the D key or by choosing the Develop option at the top of the screen. It's located on the right side of the toolbar that appears below the histogram and above the Basic panel, on the right side of the interface.

The Basic panel contains all of the essential adjustments that we use on our images. (Exposure, Contrast, Saturation, etc) When we use these sliders, the entirety of the image gets the adjustment. With the Adjustment Brush, we have all of the same sliders, but it allows us to paint in the adjustments into isolated areas. When we click on the Adjustment Brush icon to activate the tool, the area directly beneath it changes to give us settings related to the Adjustment Brush. Again, these are all of the same types of adjustments that are found in the Basic panel, with the exception of the Vibrance slider. We also have four additional sliders that are not included in the Basic panel. These are the sliders for Sharpness, Noise, Moire and Defringe.

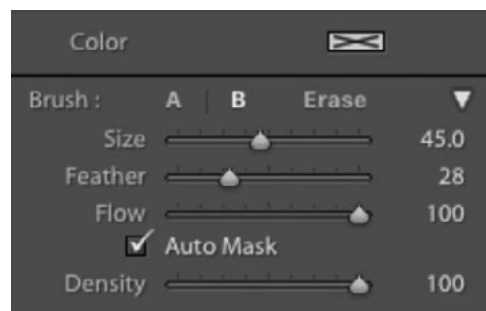


The Adjustment Brush (circled) is active and the sliders relating to it appear below the toolbar.

The Sharpness slider increases sharpness in the same way that the Sharpening settings under the Detail panel would do. The Noise slider will reduce noise in the same way that the Luminance slider would do under the Noise Reduction category of the Detail panel. These sliders allow us to apply sharpening and noise reduction to specified areas of the image. The Moire and Defringe sliders are only found within the Adjustment Brush settings because these are adjustments that you will only want to apply on a selective basis. We'll learn about these sliders later in the lesson.

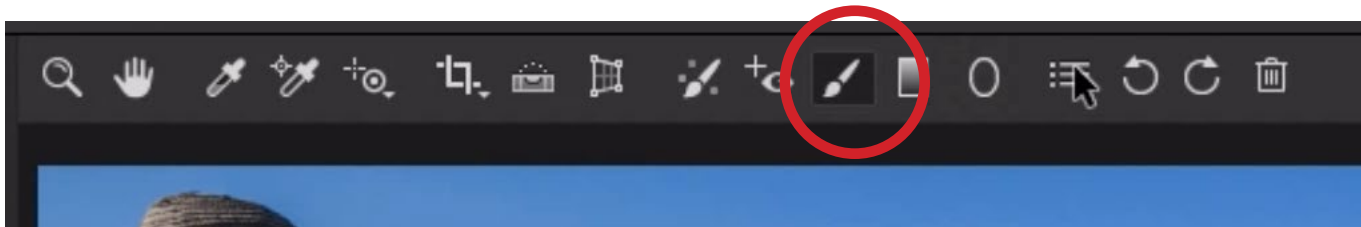
Below the Adjustment Brush sliders is a setting called Color. If we click on the little rectangle next to the word "Color," we'll get a color picker that will allow us to force a specific color into the picture.

At the bottom of the Adjustment Brush panel is a section that contains Brush settings. Remember, the Adjustment Brush will allow us to paint in a specified adjustment so we'll need to decide what kind of brush we should use to paint in that adjustment. In the Brush settings, we can control how large of a brush we're using (Size) and how soft the edge of the brush is (Feather). The Flow setting determines how much of the adjustment we get when we first start painting across the image. If we lower this setting, we will have to paint over the image multiple times in order to build up the effect. I usually keep this setting at 100 so the full effect gets painted in. Within the brush settings, there are "A" and "B" buttons, which allow us to have more than one adjustment that can be painted in. There are also Auto Mask and Density settings, which we'll cover later.



The Brush settings appear below the Adjustment Brush sliders.

All of these Adjustment Brush settings can also be found in Adobe Camera Raw. In Camera Raw, the Adjustment Brush icon can be found in the Toolbar that runs along the top of the interface. When we activate the tool, all of the Adjustment Brush settings will appear on the right side of the interface. One thing that Camera Raw does not have (that Lightroom does), are the A and B options for having more than one adjustment under the Brush settings.



In Camera Raw, the Adjustment Brush can be found in the toolbar at the top of the interface.

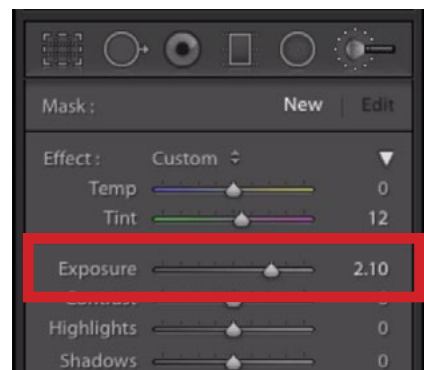
How to Use the Adjustment Brush (6:21)

With the Adjustment Brush active, we can use the sliders to dial in a particular adjustment. When we do this, there will be no visible change to the picture. That's because we have not yet used the brush to paint over the image in the area[s] where we want the adjustment to appear. When we move the mouse over the image and start to paint, we will be painting in the adjustment that we dialed in using the sliders.

We already talked about using the Brush settings to change the brush size, hardness, etc. but there is another, much easier, way of doing this. We can use the left and right bracket keys ([]) to make the brush smaller and larger. If you add the Shift key to that, you will be making the brush edge harder or softer by moving the Feather slider.

If you happen to use a trackpad, you can use two fingers to drag up and down to change the size of the brush. Add the Shift key to instead change the softness.

In the example image, there is a woman whose face is very dark. I'll use the Adjustment Brush to make it brighter. I'll move the Exposure slider to the right by about two stops. I don't know if this is the appropriate amount until I start to paint, but I know I can always adjust the slider after painting. I'll use a relatively soft brush that is just smaller than the size of her face. I'll paint over her face and you can see that it becomes much brighter.



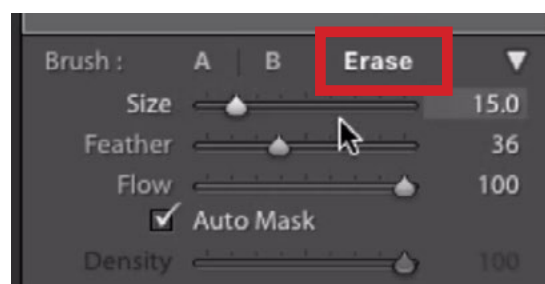
Using the Adjustment Brush settings, I set the Exposure slider very high so that I can lighten the woman's face.



LEFT: The woman's face is very dark in this image. **MIDDLE:** In the Adjustment Brush settings, the Exposure slider is set very high and the brush is being used to paint over the woman's face. **RIGHT:** After painting with the Adjustment Brush, a pin will appear over the area that was adjusted. The black dot in the pin means that it is the active adjustment.

After I paint using the Adjustment Brush, a pin will appear on the area where I painted and it will have a black dot in the middle. That black dot indicates that it's the pin I'm currently working on. I can now move the adjustment sliders and it will only affect the area where I painted. I'll adjust that Exposure slider to fine-tune the brightness of her face.

Erasing the adjustment If you ever paint too much and end up with some overspray into an area that should not have the adjustment, you can easily fix that. In the example image, I painted a little bit outside of her face so that the sky was accidentally brightened. I'll scroll to the bottom of the adjustment brush sliders to the Brush settings. Here, there is an Erase option. When I turn this setting on, the brush will remove the adjustment instead of add to it. The sliders for the brush (Size, Feather, etc.) will also change to reflect the settings last used when I used the Erase option.



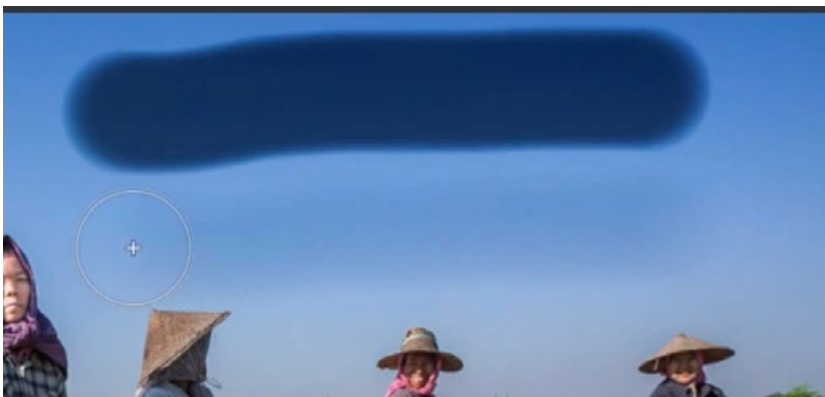
The Erase setting can be found within the Brush settings below the Adjustment Brush sliders.

Note that you can also use a keyboard shortcut to temporarily switch to the Erase mode. When using the Adjustment Brush, hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) to switch to the Erase mode. You will see the little minus sign (-) appear on the brush tip. As long as you hold that key down, you will be erasing the adjustment instead of adding to it. I'll now use a small brush to paint over the sky surrounding her face, removing the brightening adjustment from that area.



Here, I'm using the Adjustment Brush with the Erase setting to remove the unwanted adjustment around the sky area.

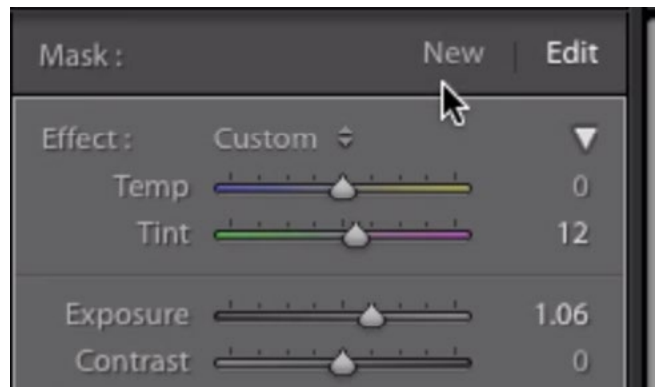
Flow The brush setting called Flow determines how much of the specified adjustment will be applied when you make your very first paint stroke. When this setting is at 100, it means the area will receive 100% of the adjustment when you apply that first stroke. Sometimes, however, an area does not need to be adjusted evenly. Perhaps one area needs more brightening than another area. When this is the case, you can lower the Flow setting so that you can gradually build up the adjustment, painting more in areas that need more of the effect.



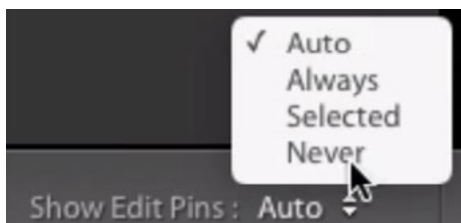
The Exposure slider was set very low and I made two paint strokes to demonstrate Flow. The Flow setting was at 100 when making the top paint stroke. The Flow setting was at 20 when making the bottom paint stroke.

You can quickly adjust the Flow setting by using the number keys on your keyboard. Tapping 5 will give you 50% flow, tapping 4 will give you 40%, etc. Whenever I'm done with an adjustment, I will usually set the Flow setting back to 100 just so that it's at this default setting the next time I use the brush.

Creating a new adjustment When you're done with the last adjustment you made using the Adjustment Brush and would like to make a new adjustment, you will click the New button at the top of the panel containing the Adjustment Brush sliders. When you do this, the little pin representing the previous adjustment will turn completely gray. It will no longer have the black circle in the middle. This means that previous adjustment is no longer active. When you move the adjustment sliders, the areas where you made that first adjustment will not change. Now, you can dial in the sliders for a new adjustment and then paint over the part of the image that needs it. A new pin will appear on the image, representing this new adjustment.



When you're done with the current adjustment and would like to create a new one, click the New button at the top of the Adjustment Brush panel.



Use the menu in the bottom left corner of the image window to control when the adjustment pins appear.

You can control when these adjustment pins appear. By default, they will appear any time you hover your cursor over the image window and will disappear when you move your cursor away from the image window. This is the “Auto” setting. There is a “Show Edit Pins” menu at the bottom left corner of the image window. From this menu, you can choose when those pins should be visible.

Reset the sliders When we create a new adjustment, the Adjustment Brush sliders will remember that last adjustment that was made and the sliders will be dialed in to that adjustment. If you'd like to start fresh with the sliders, you can reset them to their default positions by double-clicking on the word “Effect” at the top of the Adjustment Brush panel.

After you've created more than one adjustment, you can go back and make changes to those various adjustments. When you hover your cursor over the image, the little pins will appear, representing each adjustment. Click on a pin to make it active. A black dot will appear inside the pin, letting you know that it's active. When a pin is active, the adjustment sliders will change to reflect the adjustments you made. You can fine-tune them as needed.

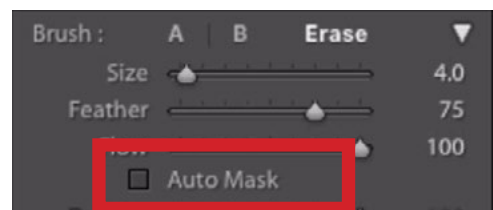
Show Selected Mask Overlay When you hover your cursor over the pin for the active adjustment, a color overlay will appear in the areas that have been painted on. These are the areas that are receiving the adjustment. If you would like to view this overlay even when you're not hovering your cursor over the pin, turn on the Show Selected Mask Overlay check box that appears below the main image window while the Adjustment Brush is active. This will permanently show the overlay for the active adjustment.



Turn on the “Show Selected Mask Overlay” check box if you would like the colored overlay to stay on the area where you painted.

Auto Mask

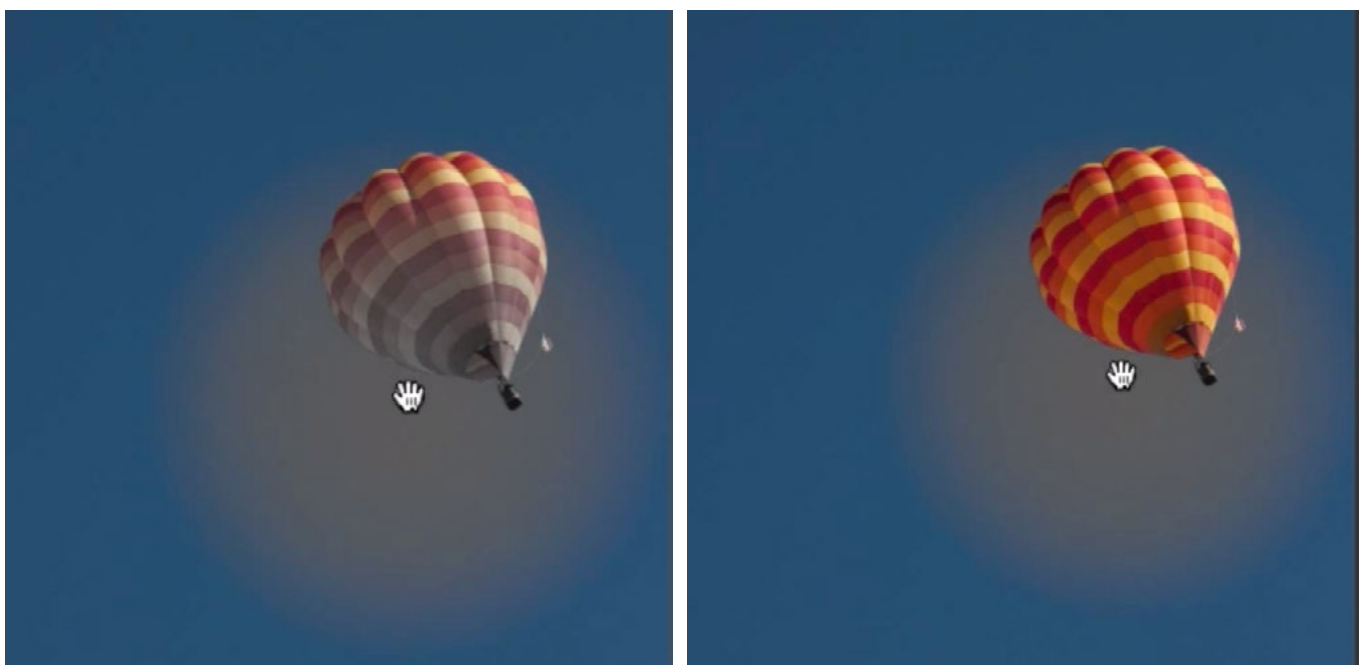
The Auto Mask check box can be found below the Adjustment Brush settings and it can help to prevent overspray when we're painting over certain objects in the image. When the Auto Mask setting is turned off, we can click on the image with the Adjustment Brush and everything inside that round brush tip will receive the adjustment. When the Auto Mask setting is turned on, it's going to look at the crosshair that's in the middle of the brush tip and it's only going to apply the adjustment to areas that area a similar color and brightness to the area under the crosshair.



The Auto Mask check box is just beneath the Brush settings.

In the video example image, I have a red and yellow hot air balloon against a blue sky. With the Adjustment Brush, I'll drag the Saturation slider all the way to the left and I'll first keep the Auto Mask setting off. I'll use a very large brush to click on the blue sky next to the balloon. Because the Auto Mask setting was turned off, both the balloon and the sky became desaturated.

I'll undo that and will now turn the Auto Mask check box on. I'll do the same thing, clicking right next to the balloon, with the brush crosshair on the blue sky. When I click, the sky becomes desaturated but the balloon remains untouched. Even though the balloon was within that large brush tip, it did not receive the adjustment because it did not match the blue sky that was under the crosshair.



LEFT: The Saturation slider for the Adjustment Brush was set all the way to the left and I used a large brush to click next to the balloon. The Auto Mask setting was turned off, so the entire area within the brush tip was affected by the desaturation. **RIGHT:** I turned the Auto Mask setting on and did the same thing. Only the blue area (sky) received the adjustment because it's the color that was under the crosshair when I clicked.

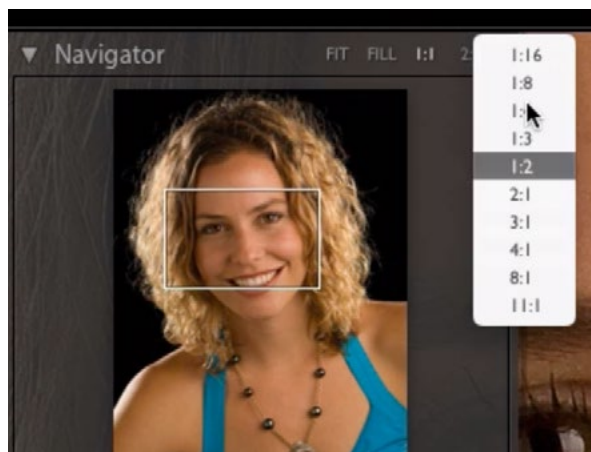
When painting with the Adjustment Brush while using the Auto Mask setting, you need to be careful that the brush crosshair only touches areas that you want to receive the adjustment. If the crosshair happens to move over another object, that object (or part of it) will start to receive the adjustment as well.

Note that the Auto Mask setting is available both when you're adding to the adjustment and when you're erasing from it.

Before and After view If you would like to see what the image looked like before you ever used the adjustment brush, click on the little “light switch” that appears at the very bottom left corner of the adjustment slider panel. Click the switch again to turn the adjustment brush settings back on. In Camera Raw, there is an icon that looks like three little adjustment sliders in the bottom right corner of the image window. Click and hold on this icon to view the “before” version.

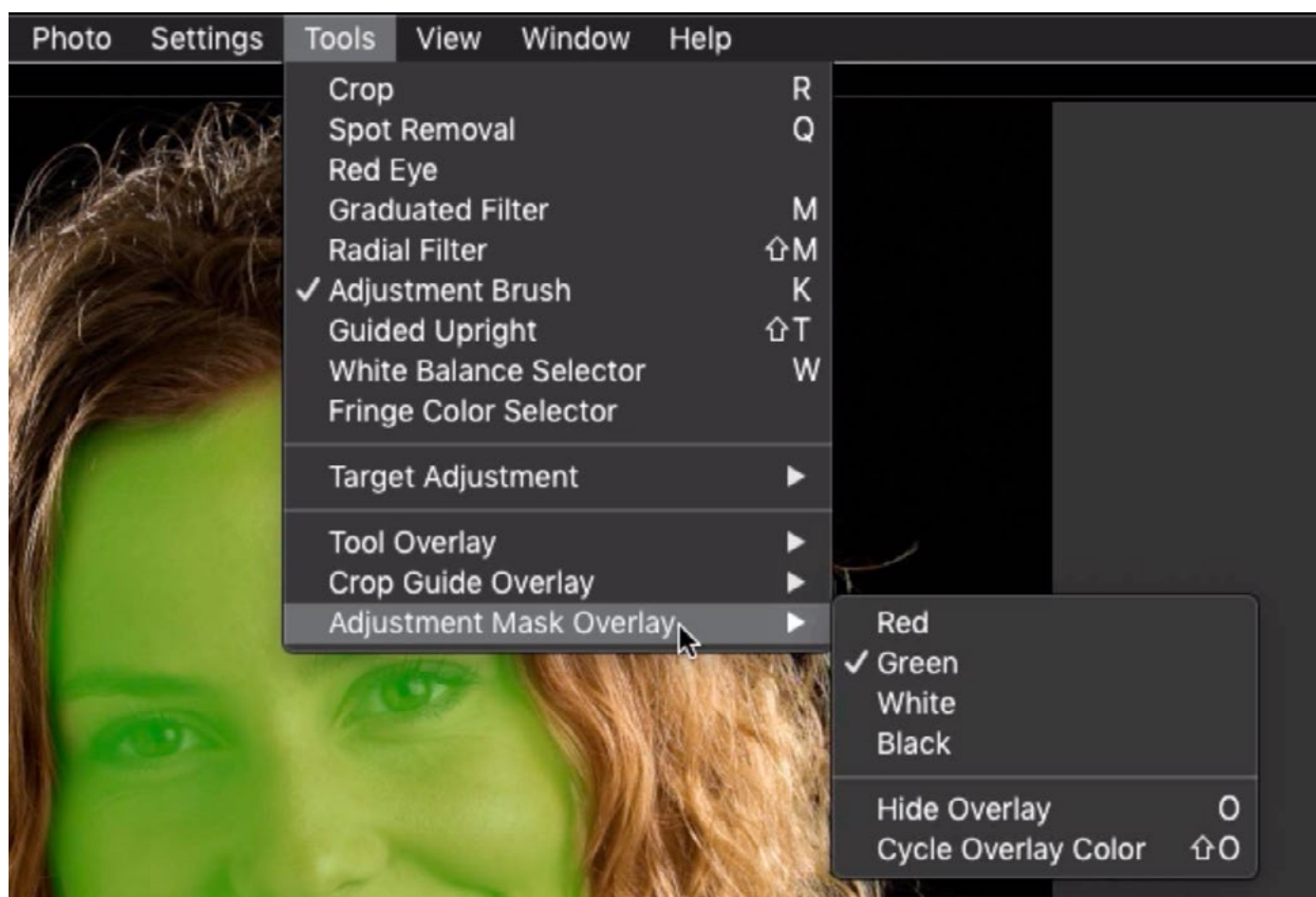
The Adjustment Brush with Portraits (25:10)

Zooming on the image When working with portraits, you'll probably want to zoom in on the image so that you can more easily see and paint over the eyes, teeth and other smaller features on the face. With the adjustment brush active, you can zoom in on your image by holding down the Space Bar and then clicking within the image. This will zoom in on the image to the zoom level that you have specified in the Navigator panel on the left side of the interface. If you would like to change the zoom level, you can choose a different zoom ratio at the top of this panel or click on the little menu in the top right corner to get a larger list of zoom views.



The settings at the top of the Navigator panel will allow you to specify the zoom ratio.

Selected Mask Overlay I usually like to start with the adjustment sliders at their default positions while painting in the area where I want the adjustment. I will not be able to visually tell where I've painted because the sliders have not yet been moved. Because of this, I like to turn on the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box so that I can see a colored overlay where I paint. Note that you can change the color of this overlay by clicking on the Tools menu at the top of Lightroom's interface and choosing Adjustment Mask Overlay. This menu will offer various color choices. In the video example, I'll set the overlay to red.



Here I am using the Tools menu to change the mask overlay from green to red.

Minimizing Skin Texture (27:14)

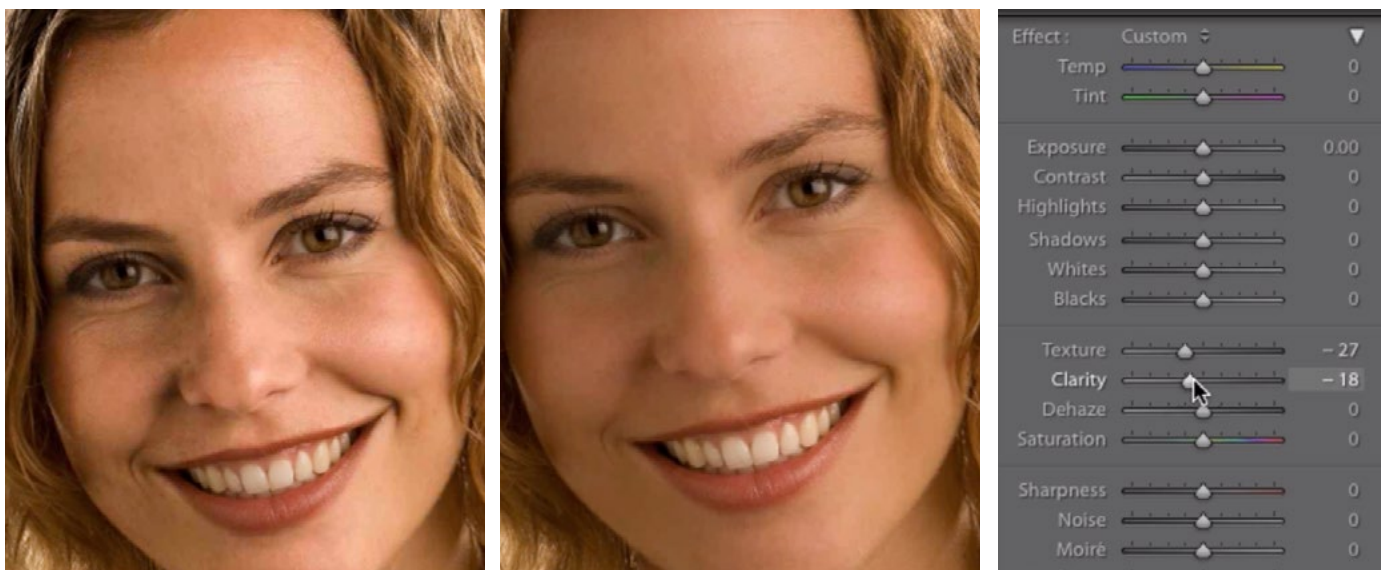
The Adjustment Brush can be used to selectively minimize skin texture. This will give the skin a smoother, softer look. I'll start by activating the Adjustment Brush and making sure that all of the sliders are at their default positions. I'll turn on the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box so that I can see where I've painted. I'll use a soft brush (With the Auto Mask setting off) and paint over the face. I will hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) to then erase the adjustment area from areas that were accidentally painted on, like the eyes and teeth, etc. I don't want a softening effect in these areas. When I'm happy with the adjustment area, I will turn off the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box to remove the colored overlay.



With the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box turned on, I painted over the face, which is the area I want to receive the adjustment. Here, I am using the brush at the Erase setting to remove the adjustment from areas like the eyes and mouth.

Now it's time to dial in some adjustments. When it comes to skin, and the pores and wrinkles that appear on skin, I find that the Clarity and Texture sliders are going to do the best job at softening. The Texture slider affects all of the really fine little details in the skin. Bringing this slider up will emphasize those details, which is not what we want. I'm going to move this slider to the left, into the negative settings. This will soften those features, making them less visible. Note that it's easy to go overboard here and drag the slider so far to the left that the effect looks artificial. I will be careful to not do that, making sure that I'm moving the slider only far enough to apply a little softening while still maintaining a natural look.

The Clarity slider will affect the larger details that are more pronounced (wrinkles, for example). Moving this slider to the right will emphasize those features and moving it to the left will make them less noticeable. Again, be careful that you don't move this slider too far to the left as this will make the skin look flat and unnatural.



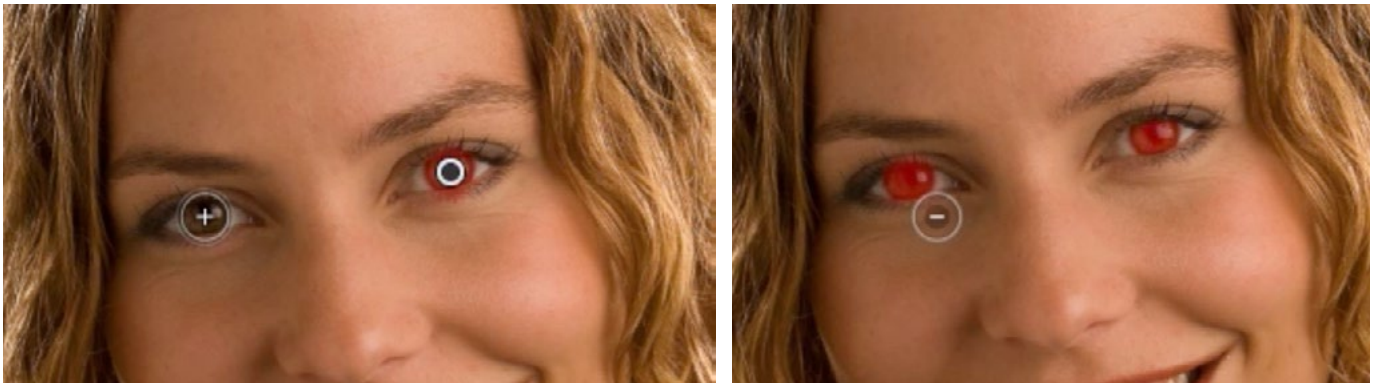
LEFT: This is what the face looks like with the Clarity slider at a very high setting.

CENTER: Here, the Clarity slider is at a low (negative) setting.

RIGHT: Here, you can see the adjustments I ultimately used to soften the skin.

Accentuate the Eyes (34:05)

The Adjustment Brush can also be used to enhance the eyes in a portrait image. With the Adjustment Brush still active, I'll create a new adjustment by clicking the "New" button at the top of the adjustment slider panel. I'll make sure the sliders start in their default positions and I will turn on the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box. This will allow me to see the adjustment area as I paint. I'll use a small, semisoft-edged brush and will paint over the pupil and iris of her eyes. If I get any overspray, I'll hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) to set the brush to the Erase setting and I'll carefully paint over the areas that should not receive the adjustment. When I'm happy that the adjustment area only covers her eyes, I will turn off the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box.

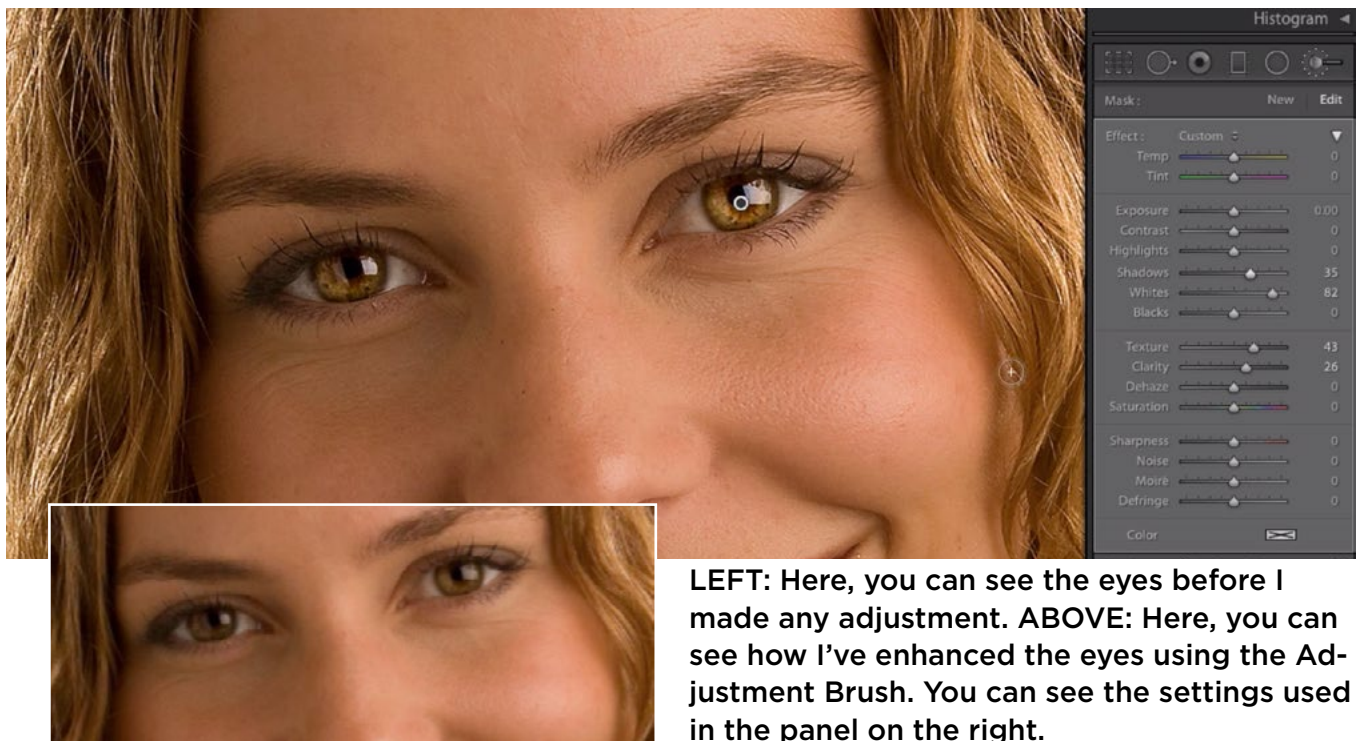


LEFT: With the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box turned on, I am using the Adjustment Brush to paint over the iris and pupil of the eyes. **RIGHT:** I am using the Adjustment Brush with the Erase setting to remove the adjustment from the area surrounding her eyes.

Now it's time to move the adjustment sliders to enhance the eyes. When it comes to eyes, I like to increase the Whites slider a bit. By moving the Whites slider to the right, it will take the brightest portion of where I've painted and make it even brighter.

The Texture and Clarity sliders can also be used to enhance the details in the eyes. Sometimes, when you increase Clarity, it actually makes the eyes a little darker so you may need to compensate by adding a little brightening. This can be done with the Highlights slider, the Shadows slider or the Exposure slider.

The whites of the eyes can also be brightened using an adjustment that increases the Whites, Highlights or Exposure. Be very careful when doing this, however, as it's easy to overdo the brightening effect here and make the eyes look unnatural. It's usually only the slightest adjustment that's necessary.



LEFT: Here, you can see the eyes before I made any adjustment. **ABOVE:** Here, you can see how I've enhanced the eyes using the Adjustment Brush. You can see the settings used in the panel on the right.

Brightening the Skin (37:24)

Now let's look at how we can brighten the skin in general. I'll create a new adjustment by clicking the New button at the top of the Adjustment Brush sliders. I'll adjust the sliders before painting on the image. I'd like to brighten the skin, but I'd like to gradually paint in the brightening effect because I might want some areas to be brighter than others. I'll move the Exposure slider to the right by about a stop and a half. Then, I'll set the Flow slider to a lower setting of around 15-20. This will tell the brush to only apply 15% of the brightening effect on each stroke.

I'll start to gradually paint in the brightening effect on the face, painting only on areas that I want to brighten. When doing this, the effect should be subtle and almost unnoticeable. After looking at the results, I can always adjust the Exposure slider to make the areas where I painted brighter or darker. If I find that I over-brightened just one area, I can always use the Adjustment Brush set to the Erase setting. When using the Erase setting, I will make sure that the Flow slider is at a low setting so that I can remove the adjustment a bit at a time.

Enhance the Teeth & Lips (41:00)

I'll now use the Adjustment Brush to brighten the teeth. I'll create a new adjustment by clicking the New button at the top of the Adjustment Brush sliders. This time, I will first use the brush to determine the area that should receive the adjustment. I'll turn on the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box so that I can see where I'm painting. I'll also set the Flow setting to 100 here because I want the teeth to receive 100% of the adjustment.

Because the teeth are a different color from the surroundings, I will turn the Auto Mask check box on. This will help to prevent overspray when I paint because the brush is only going to target areas that are similar to the color and tone that's under the crosshair. I'll then use the brush to paint over the teeth. When I paint over the mouth, the Auto Mask feature will prevent the brush from painting on the gums and lips.



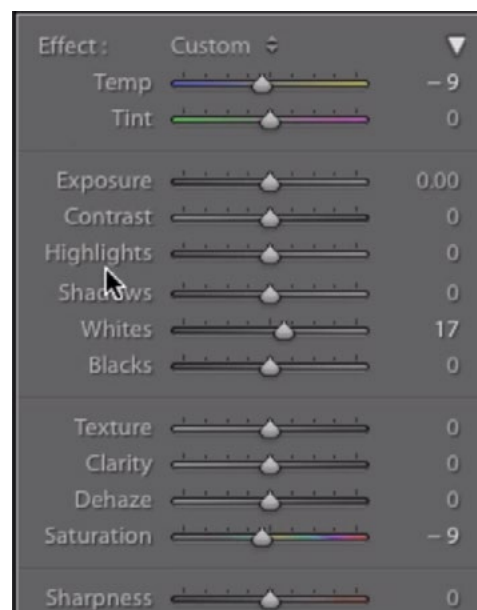
With the Auto Mask setting turned on, I am using the Adjustment Brush to paint over the teeth.

In the video example, I have my mask overlay color set to red. This is actually not ideal in this situation because the surrounding area (lips and gums) is red also. If there were any red overspray in these areas, it would be very difficult to see. Because of this, I will change the color of the overlay by clicking on the Tools menu and choosing Adjustment Mask Overlay > Green. After I do this, I can see that there is some overspray on the lips. I'll set the Adjustment Brush to the Erase setting and I'll paint over that overspray so that the lips do not receive the adjustment.



LEFT: After changing the overlay color to something other than red, I can see that there is some overspray on the lips. RIGHT: I am using the Adjustment Brush in the Erase setting to remove the adjustment from the lips.

Now that I've painted over the area I want to adjust (the teeth), I'll use the Adjustment Brush sliders to dial in the adjustment. I'll first turn off the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box to remove the green overlay. When it comes to teeth, I will move the Whites slider up slightly to add a bit of brightening. (Again, not too much or they will look artificial.) I will sometimes also move the Saturation slider to the left just a bit to remove any yellow cast. If you ever have teeth that are extremely yellow, you can also move the Temp slider to the left just a bit, introducing a little blue into the area. Blue is the opposite of yellow, so when you add blue, you are absorbing some of the yellow.



Here are the settings I used to enhance the teeth.

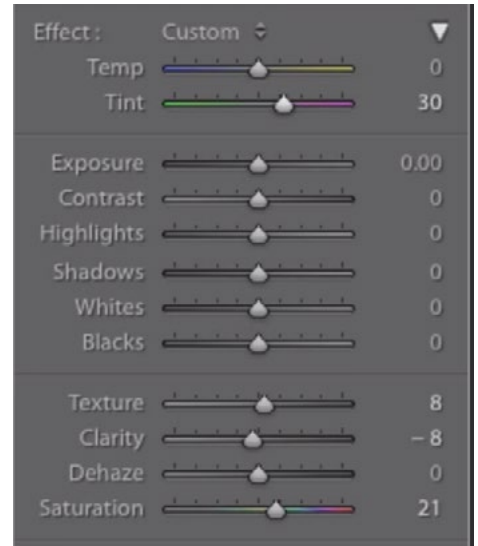
I'll create a separate, new adjustment to work on the lips. I'll make sure that all of the Adjustment Brush sliders are set to their default positions and I will turn on the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box. Because the lips have a pretty well-defined edge, I will use a brush that has only a slightly soft edge, which means the Feather slider will be set fairly low. Then I'll use the Adjustment Brush to paint over the lips. It's a very precise area, so I will need to go back and forth between the paint and erase settings in order to precisely target the lips. Remember, you can hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) to quickly shift to the Erase setting when painting with the Adjustment Brush. After the lips have been isolated, I'll turn off the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box.



I used the Adjustment Brush to paint over the lips and I am now using the brush in the Erase setting to remove any overspill so that the adjustment only affects the lips.

When it comes to lips, I like to bring up the Saturation slider a bit in order to make them more colorful. You can also control the detail in the lips by adjusting the Texture and Clarity sliders. I'll move the Texture slider up a bit to emphasize the tiny details and crackles in the lips. Note that there are also instances where you'll want to move this slider down, smoothing out those details instead. It all depends on the person and what you like. I find that I tend to reduce the texture with older people and increase the texture with younger people. The Clarity slider can be used in the same way, to either accentuate the larger details or to soften them. I usually move this slider down a bit to soften those details.

You can also adjust the color of the lips using the Temp and Tint sliders. Moving the Tint slider to the right will make the lips look more pink. Again, this is a personal preference and you can experiment with the colors for each image you work on.



Above, you can see the before and after versions of the lips as well as the settings that were used.

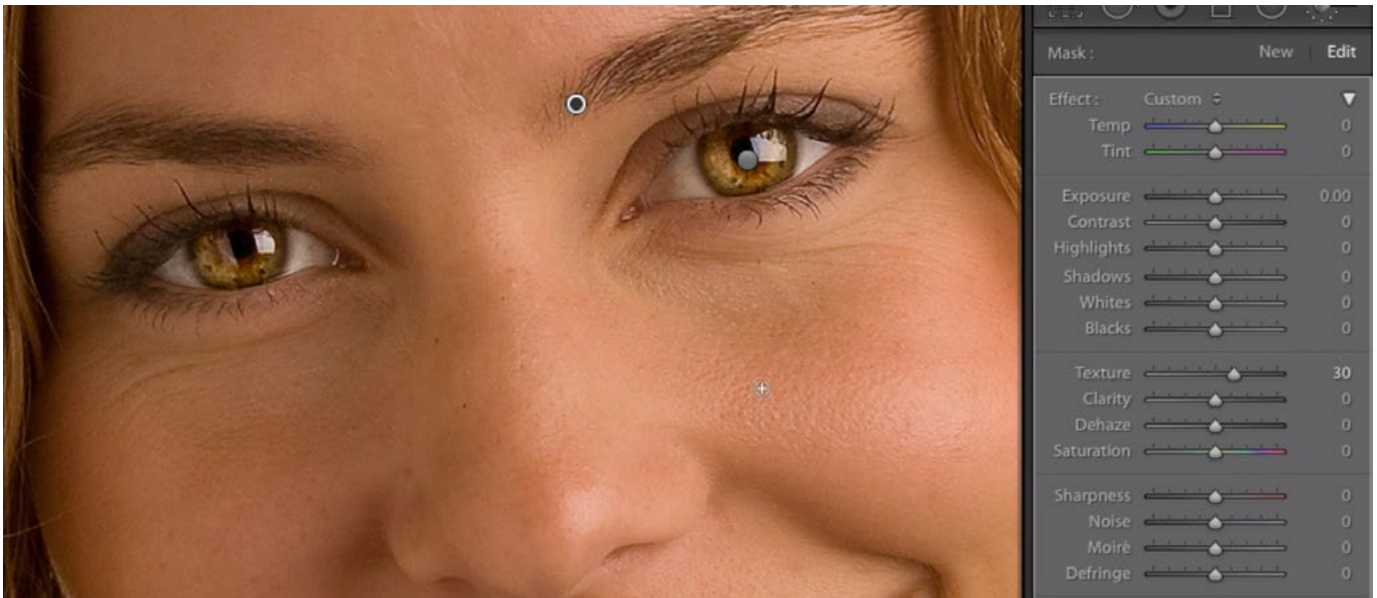
Enhancing Hair (53:55)

Bring out detail in the Eyebrows The Adjustment Brush can also be used to enhance the details in hair. I'll start with the eyebrows. I'll create a new adjustment and I'll make sure that all the Adjustment Brush sliders are at their default positions. I'll turn on the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box and then use the brush to define the area I'm going to adjust. Because I'm working with hair, I'll use a semi-soft brush that has a Feather setting of 50%. I'll paint over the eyebrows and then turn off the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box.



I used the Adjustment Brush to paint over the eyebrows using a soft brush.

Now I'm going to work with the Texture slider because I find this setting does a good job at making hairs stand out. I'll move this slider to the right, just enough so that the details pop out a little more. I usually do not use the Clarity slider here because any skin that is visible between the hairs will usually become brighter, creating a look that's less than ideal.



You can see the adjustment to the eyebrows above. The Texture slider was used to make the fine details stand out.

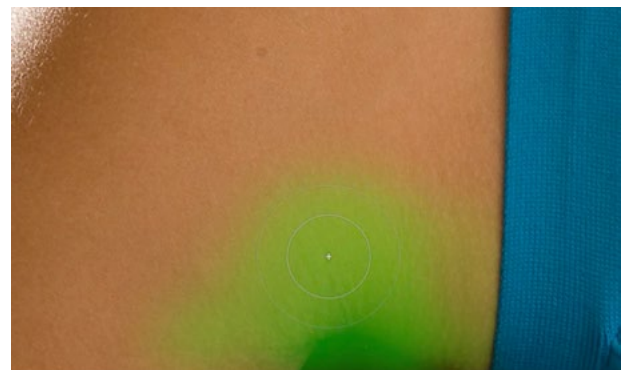
Add highlights to the hair I want to gradually paint in some highlights to certain areas of the hair. I want some areas to receive more of an adjustment than others, so I will not start by painting on the hair. I'll instead start by dialing in the adjustment. I'll move the Exposure slider up by about 3/4 of a stop (.75). Then I'll set the Feather slider to 100 so that the brush will be very soft. The Flow setting will be lowered to about 40 so that I can gradually paint in the adjustment. Then, I'll use the brush to paint in the areas that I'd like to highlight. Because the Flow setting is low, the effect will build up with each paint stroke, allowing me to apply different amounts of highlight to the various areas.



The Exposure slider was moved up and the Adjustment Brush is being used to gradually paint in some highlights to the hair. The buildup is gradual because I am using a low Flow setting.

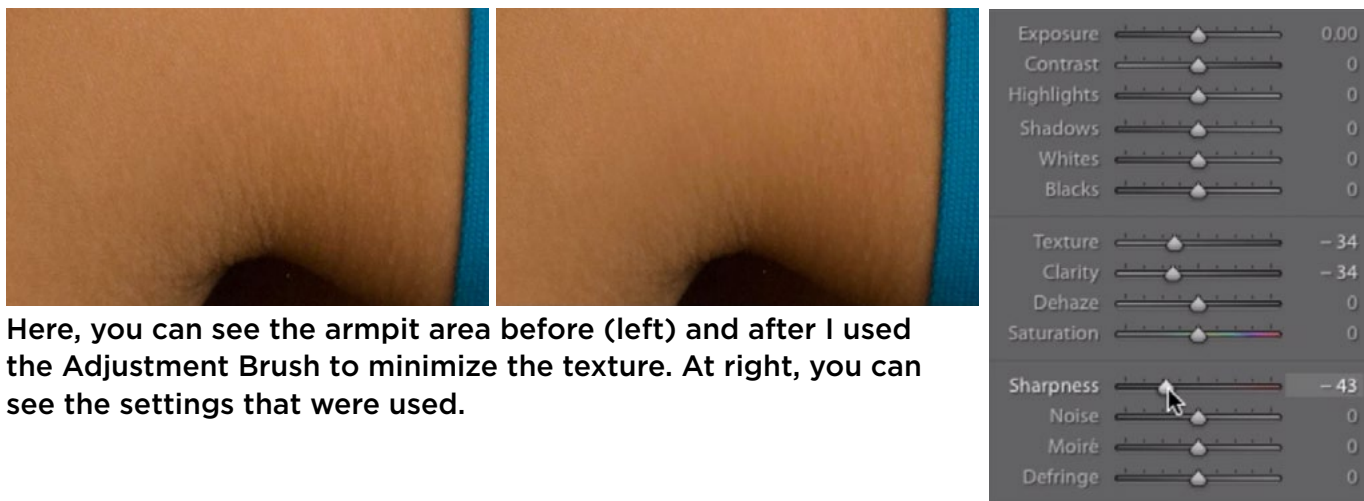
Enhancing Skin on the Body (56:57)

Now let's look at how the Adjustment Brush can be used to enhance the skin in the bottom part of the image (the skin on her body, not her face). If there are any areas that have too much texture, we can smooth them out using the Texture, Clarity and Sharpening sliders. In this image, I want to remove some of the texture in the area around her armpit. I'll create a new adjustment and make sure the Adjustment Brush sliders are set to their default positions. I'll turn on the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box and then use a soft brush to paint over the armpit area. The mask overlay will allow me to see where I've painted. When I'm satisfied, I'll turn the check box off to remove the overlay.



I am using a soft brush to paint over the armpit area. I want to minimize the texture here.

Now I'll work with the sliders. Both the Texture and Clarity sliders will affect the details, so I will move those sliders to the left a bit, smoothing out the fine details. The other slider I can use here is Sharpening. Lightroom automatically applies some sharpening to every image and this sharpening will accentuate any fine details. I don't want that here so I will move the Sharpening slider to the left, therefore removing any sharpening that was applied on import.



Here, you can see the armpit area before (left) and after I used the Adjustment Brush to minimize the texture. At right, you can see the settings that were used.

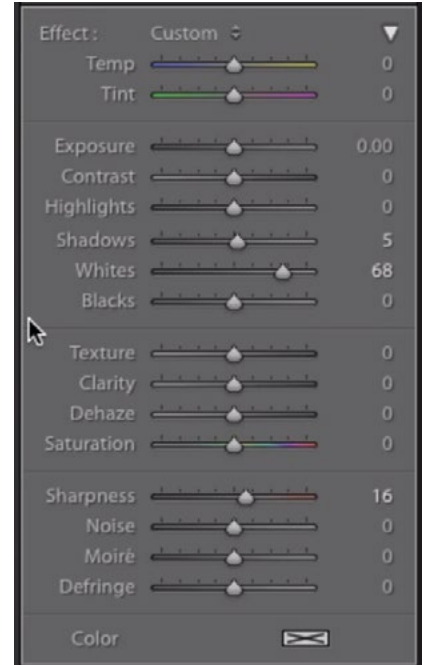
Enhancing Jewelry (58:55)



With the Auto Mask setting turned on, I used the Adjustment Brush to paint over the necklace.

You can also enhance any jewelry in portrait images using the Adjustment Brush. In the example image, I will use the Adjustment Brush to paint on the necklace. Because it's got such well-defined edges, I can turn on the Auto Mask check box, which will help to prevent overspray as I paint. Again, I will keep the "Show Selected Mask Overlay" check box turned on so that I can see where I'm painting. I'll turn the check box off once I have finished painting.

To enhance jewelry like this, I like to increase the Whites slider because it adds a bit more of a shiny effect. I will also sometimes increase the Sharpness slider in order to make the fine details stand out.



Here, you can see the necklace before (left) and after the adjustment as well as the sliders used (right).