



Layer Mask Tips

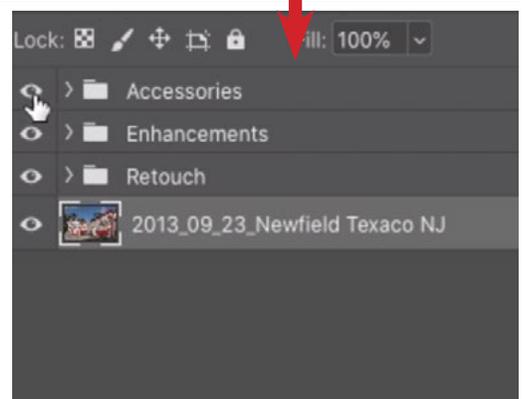
Layer Mask Tips

In this lesson, we're going to look at a series of tips related to making selections, working in Quick Mask Mode, adjustment layers and layer masks. I used all of these techniques when working on this particular image that we'll be using in the lesson video.

When you download and open the image file for this lesson, you will see that the Layers Panel is organized into folders and these folders contain a LOT of layers. I left these layers here for you to explore so that you can get an idea for how I structure my image editing process, but in this lesson, we will be working on the bottom-most, base image layer.



This is the image we'll be working on in this lesson. In the enlarged Layers Panel at right, you can see that the file is organized into layer groups. These are provided in the downloadable file so that you can see how I edited the image. In this lesson, we will be starting with just the base image layer.



Selections & Quick Mask Mode (Timestamp 5:42)

Select the vintage gas pump sign We're going to make a selection around the sign at the top of the vintage gas pump. There are a few different methods that we could use.

Marquee Tool Tips Because the sign is an oval shape, we could use the Elliptical Marquee Tool. This tool is grouped with the Rectangular Marquee Tool in the Toolbar and is designed to make selections of round and elliptical objects. With the tool active, click and drag to make a selection. As long as you have not yet released the mouse button, you can hold the Space Bar down in order to reposition the entire selection. This will help you to position the selection with more accuracy. If you need to create a perfectly circular selection, hold the Shift key down as you drag out the selection. This will constrain the proportions of the selection to a perfect circle. If you were using the Rectangular Marquee Tool, it would constrain the proportions to a perfect square.

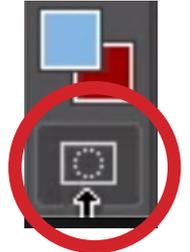


LEFT: The Elliptical Marquee Tool is grouped with the Rectangular Marquee Tool in the Toolbar on the left side of the screen. **RIGHT:** The Elliptical Marquee Tool is being used to select the gas pump sign.

Quick Mask Mode Tips Another method for selecting the sign would be Quick Mask Mode. That's the method we ultimately use in the lesson video. In Quick Mask Mode, the selection appears as a red overlay on the image, where the red area is not selected. The area that does not have the red overlay is the area that is selected.

You can change the selection in this mode by adding black or white paint. Painting with black will add the red overlay and therefore deselect the area. Painting with white will remove the overlay, therefore selecting the area.

Enter Quick Mask Mode by tapping the Q key or by clicking the Quick Mask icon that appears below the foreground/background color swatches at the bottom of the Toolbar. If you had a selection active, you will see that the selected area appears normal while the rest of the image gets a red overlay. If there is no selection active when you enter Quick Mask Mode, the image will appear normal, with no red overlay. You will need to paint in that overlay.



ABOVE LEFT: We started with an active selection.

ABOVE RIGHT: With that selection active, we tapped the Q key to enter Quick Mask Mode. This placed the red overlay on everything that was NOT selected.



LEFT: The Brush Tool is being used to paint with black. In Quick Mask Mode, painting with black will add to the red overlay, therefore deselecting the area where we paint.

That's what we'll do in order to select the gas pump sign. We'll tap the Q key to enter Quick Mask Mode and then we'll make sure that the foreground color is set to black. This is what we'll use to paint in the red overlay.

Use a small brush in Quick Mask Mode We'll activate the Brush Tool and make sure we're using a small, hard-edged brush. I almost never use a large brush when painting in Quick Mask Mode. That's because the edge of the paint stroke is not as smooth when using a larger brush. The smaller the brush, the smoother the edges of the stroke are. This is important because we need the selection edges to be perfectly smooth. It works like this because the Brush Tool is essentially creating a series of evenly-spaced dots in order to create the paint stroke. These dots are spaced at a distance of 25% of the width of the brush. The larger the brush, the larger the distance between dots. The smaller the brush, the closer the distance between dots and therefore the smoother the edge of the paint stroke.



When using a hard-edged brush, the size of the brush will determine how smooth the edge of the paint stroke is.

ABOVE: Using a large brush, you can see that the edge of the paint stroke is not smooth.

LEFT: Using a small brush, you can see that the edge of the stroke is smooth.

Use the Brush Tool to Isolate an area in Quick Mask Mode

We'll use the small brush to paint with black over the gas pump sign. This will add the red overlay. If we accidentally get some overspray, we can switch to painting with white as this will remove the red overlay.

We have perfectly painted over the sign to add the red overlay, but there's a problem. The red overlay represents areas that are NOT selected. We need to invert the selection so that the sign is the only thing that is selected. We can do this by clicking on the Image menu and choosing Adjustments > Invert. Now the sign will be the only area that is selected.



TIP: Paint the red overlay on the small area you want to target, then invert the mask. This Invert command is something that can be very useful when the area you need selected is small, as in the video example. It is often times much easier to paint the red overlay onto the small area you want selected and then invert the selection to truly isolate the area.

We'll tap the Q key again to exit Quick Mask Mode and we'll be left with the "marching ants" selection around the sign.



LEFT: We completely painted with black over the sign to add the red overlay. **CENTER:** The red area represents the area that is NOT selected, so we inverted the mask so that the sign is the only area that is selected. **RIGHT:** We exited Quick Mask Mode and are left with the "marching ants" selection.

Adjust Selected Area Using a Curves Adjustment Layer (11:30)

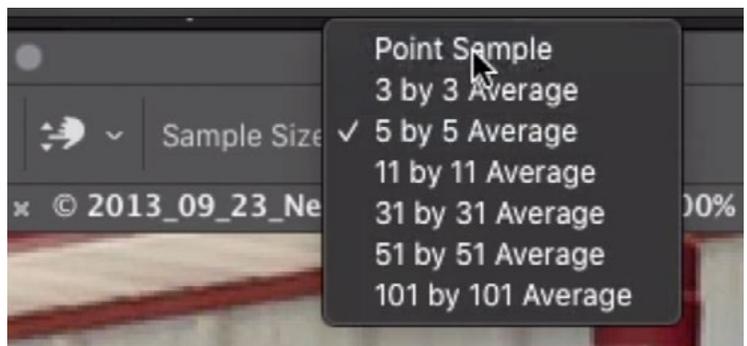
Now we'll use a Curves Adjustment Layer to adjust the area that we just selected (the sign). The selection is still active. We'll click on the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel and choose Curves from the pop-up menu. The Curves Adjustment Layer will appear in the Layers Panel and the active selection will be applied to the adjustment layer's mask. The area that was selected will be the white part of the mask, which is the area that is visible in the layer. This is where we'll be able to see the effects of the Curves adjustment.

With the Curves Adjustment Layer active, the Properties Panel will display the adjustment settings. We want to make sure that the Targeted Adjustment Tool is active. It looks like a little hand icon on the left side of the panel.



TIP: I like for the Targeted Adjustment Tool to be active all the time, and there is a setting where you can specify that. If you would like this tool to be automatically active, click on the little menu in the top right corner of the Properties Panel and choose “Auto-Select Targeted Adjustment Tool” from the pop-up menu.

When using the Targeted Adjustment Tool, we need to pay attention to the Sample Size setting, which can be found in the Options Bar above the image window (when the tool is active). The sample size refers to how large of an area it's going to look at when we click to sample an area. If we were to choose the “5 by 5 Average” option, it will take an area that's five pixels wide by five pixels tall and average it. This can be good for some applications. In this particular example, however, we want to sample a very tiny area, so we're going to make sure this menu is set to “Point Sample,” which will only sample from the single pixel that's directly under the cursor.



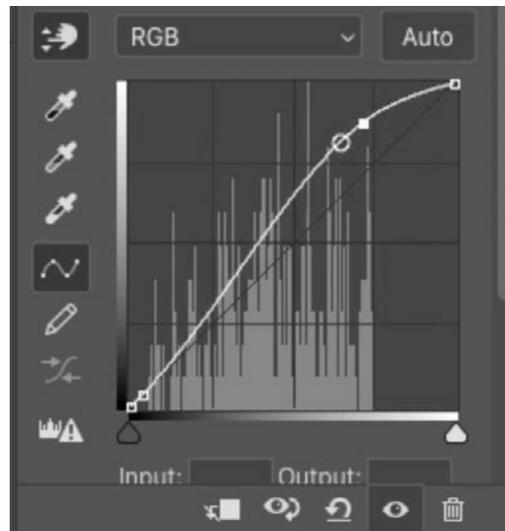
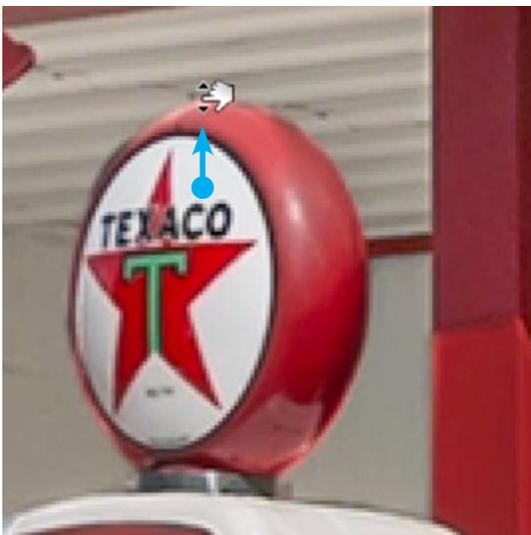
When the Targeted Adjustment Tool is active, you can use the Sample Size menu to determine how large of an area the tool will sample from.

With the Targeted Adjustment Tool, we're going to focus only on the gas pump sign, as this is the area that we isolated for adjustment. We'll use the tool to click on the darkest area in the sign, which is the black Texaco letters. When we click, a point will be placed on the curve. This point represents the tone that we targeted. We're not going to move this dot. By not moving the dot, we are locking in the brightness of the area where we clicked. Therefore, it can't change as we make other adjustments to the curve.



The Targeted Adjustment Tool is being used to click on the darkest part of the sign. This is placing a point on the curve.

Next, we'll use the Targeted Adjustment Tool to click on the brightest area within the sign. This is the area that we DO want to change. We'll click on the white part of the sign, keep the mouse button held down and drag upward. This will place a point on the curve and move that point up, making the area brighter and brighter.



The Targeted Adjustment Tool is being used to click and drag up on the brightest part of the sign. This is adding a point on the curve and then moving that point upward to brighten the area.

Access Old Selections Using Layer Masks (14:30)

The next thing we're going to adjust is the outer red portion of the pump sign. We'll first need to isolate the area with a selection and we'll again use Quick Mask Mode to do that. We'll tap the Q key to enter Quick Mask Mode and we'll make sure that the foreground color is set to black. Remember, painting with black will add the red overlay.

TIP: You can easily switch the foreground and background colors by tapping the X key on your keyboard. (Think eXchange) This can be convenient when you frequently need to switch between painting with black and painting with white.

We'll use the Brush Tool to paint with black over the entire round sign. We only want to isolate the outer red part, so we'll need to remove the overlay from the middle part. We can use the earlier selection (in the Curves layer mask) to do this.

We can take a layer mask and turn it back into a selection by holding down the Command key (Ctrl on Win) and clicking on the mask thumbnail in the Layers Panel. The "marching ants" selection will appear on the image. We'll do this to reactivate the selection that targeted the middle part of the sign.



The Brush Tool is being used to paint with black over the round sign. In Quick Mask Mode, adding black will add to the red overlay.



The layer mask attached to the Curves Adjustment Layer was created from a selection of the pump sign. We reactivated this selection by holding down the Command Key (Ctrl on Win) and clicking on the layer mask thumbnail.

Now we're still in Quick Mask Mode, so filling this selection with white will remove the red overlay. We can do this by using a keyboard shortcut. White is currently the foreground color, and we can fill a selection with the foreground color by tapping Option+Delete (Alt+Backspace on Win). If, on the other hand, we wanted to fill with the background color, we could use the shortcut Command+Delete (Ctrl+Backspace on Win).



We filled the selection with white. In Quick Mask Mode, adding white will remove the red overlay.

Now, the outer red part of the sign is the only area with the red overlay.

Takeaway: If you've made selections in the past, and those selections were used with adjustment layers, those selections will still be present in the form of layer masks. You can use these masks to get any of those selections back.

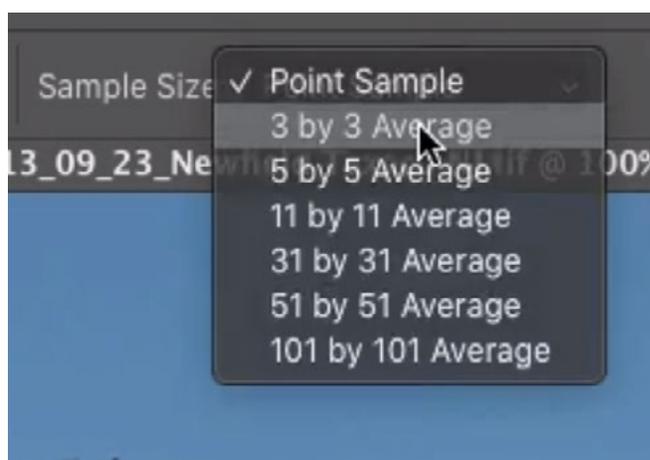
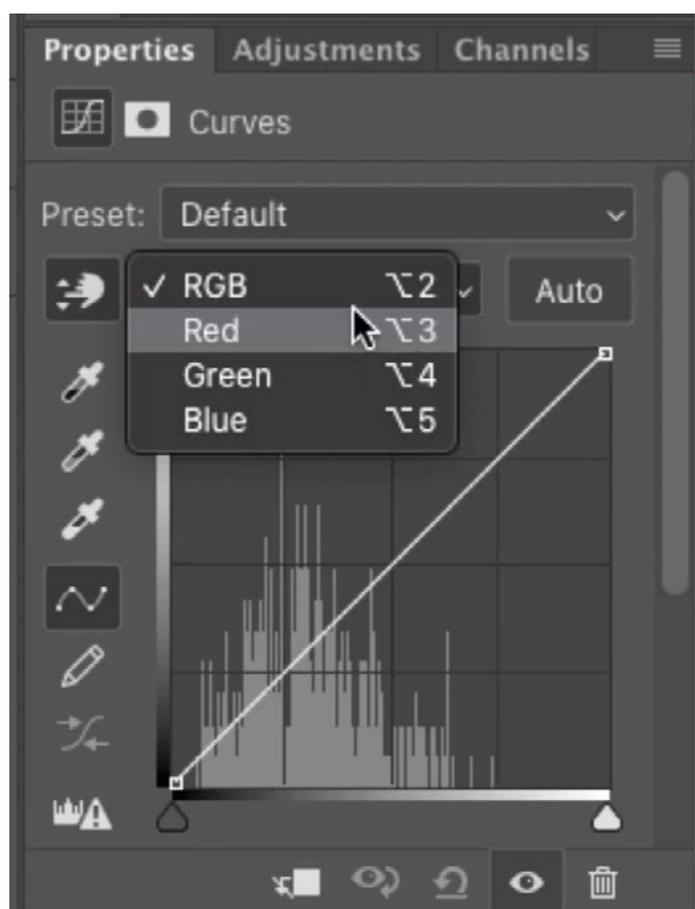
In Quick Mask Mode, anything that has the overlay is NOT selected. We need that targeted area to be selected, so we will invert the mask by clicking on the Image menu and choosing Adjustments > Invert. Alternatively, we could use the keyboard shortcut Command+I (Ctrl+I on Win). Now, the outer part of the pump sign is the only area without the overlay. This means that it's the only area that is selected. We can now tap the Q key to exit Quick Mask Mode and the marching ants selection will appear around the area.



After using Quick Mask Mode to isolate the outer red part of the sign, we exited Quick Mask Mode and can now see the selection.

We now want to adjust the selected area to make it more red. We'll click on the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel and choose Curves from the pop-up menu. The selection will be automatically applied to the layer mask that is attached to this new adjustment layer. The Curves Properties Panel will appear and we'll make sure that the Targeted Adjustment Tool is turned on.

Because we want to make a color adjustment this time, we will need to use a different kind of curve. We'll click on the color menu above the Curve chart and choose Red. We'll also set the Sample Size menu to "3 by 3 Average." That's because the color pixels that make up the red we're seeing may vary, so the Point Sample option may target a color pixel that does not represent the color we're visually seeing while zoomed out.



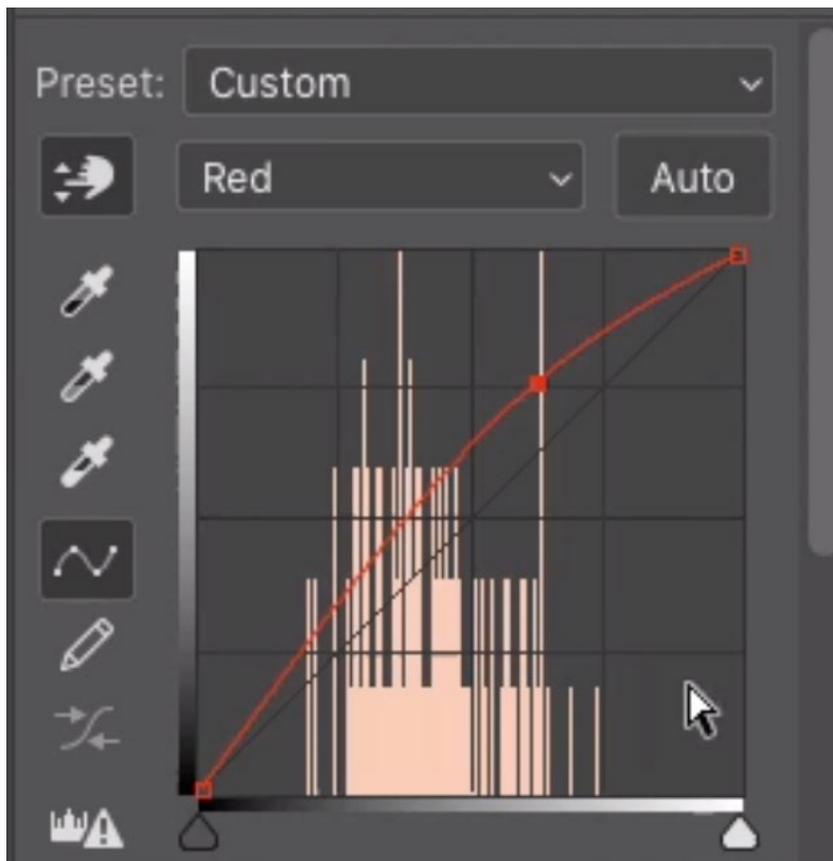
LEFT: In the Curves Properties Panel, the color menu is being set to Red. This will allow us to use Curves to adjust the reds.

ABOVE: With the Targeted Adjustment Tool active, the Sample Size menu (in the Options Bar) is being set to "3 by 3 Average." This tells the tool to sample the color based on the average hue of an area that's three pixels tall by three pixels wide.

Now, if we click with the Targeted Adjustment Tool, it will add a dot to the red curve, because that is the curve we're working on. We actually want it to add a dot to each of the three color curves. We can achieve this by holding down Shift+Command (Shift+Ctrl on Win) while using the Targeted Adjustment Tool to click on an area. We'll hold down these keys and click on the outer red part of the sign. This will place dots on the red, green and blue curves. These dots represent how much of each color is contained in the area where we clicked.



The Targeted Adjustment Tool is being used to click on the red part of the sign. We're holding down the Shift and Command keys so that a dot is placed on each of the three color curves.

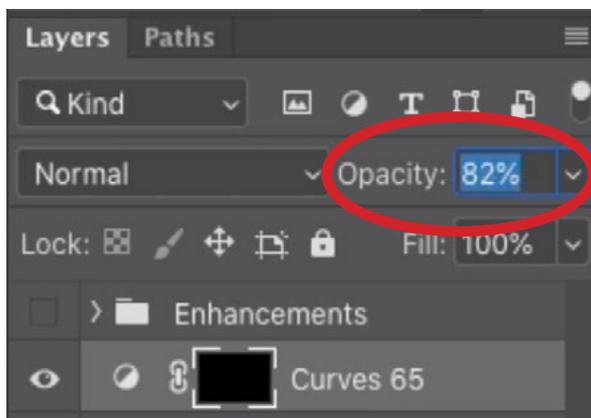
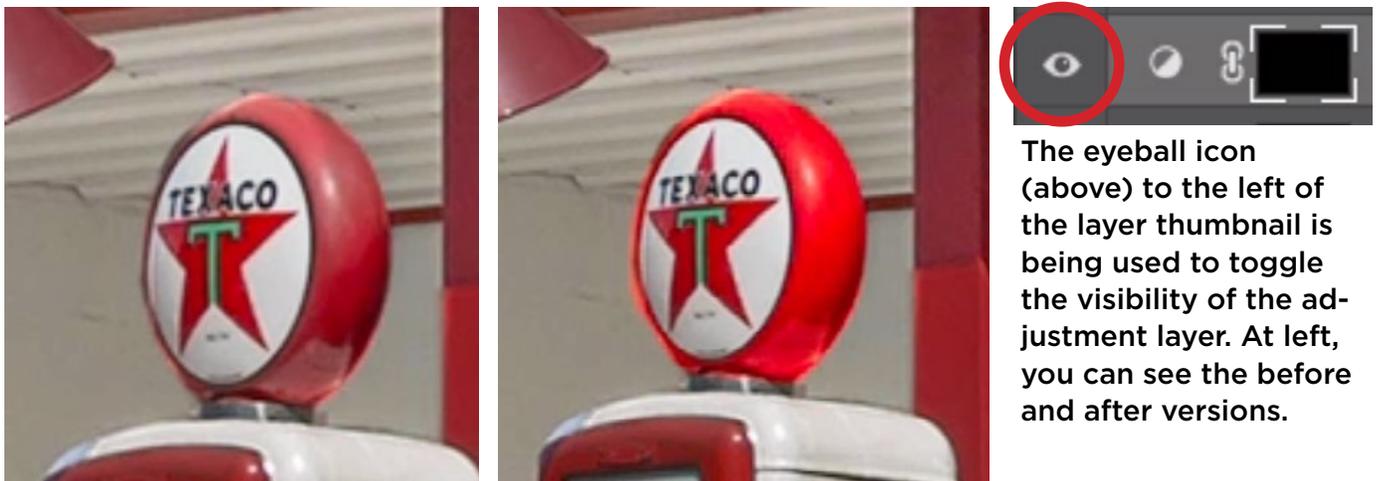


We're looking at the red curve and we want to move the dot up, adding more red to the area. We can click and drag the dot up or we can use the up arrow on the keyboard to do this with more precision. We'll move the dot up until the isolated area is more red.

The point on the red curve represents the area that we targeted with the Targeted Adjustment Tool. We are moving the dot up in order to add more red light to the area.

Because we placed a point on each of the three color curves, we have the opportunity to adjust the other colors as well. We'll set the color menu to green and adjust that dot. Moving the dot up would add more green light to the targeted area. Because the opposite of green is magenta, moving the dot down would add more magenta light to the area. We'll do the same thing with the Blue curve. Moving the dot up would add more blue light and moving the dot down would add yellow light. (Yellow is the opposite of blue.) In the video example, we move the dot down in order to add more yellow.

To see the effect of the adjustment, we can toggle the visibility of the adjustment layer by clicking the eyeball icon to the left of the adjustment layer in the Layers Panel. If the adjustment is too extreme, we can either adjust the points on the curve or we can simply lower the opacity of the adjustment layer by using the Opacity slider at the top of the Layers Panel.

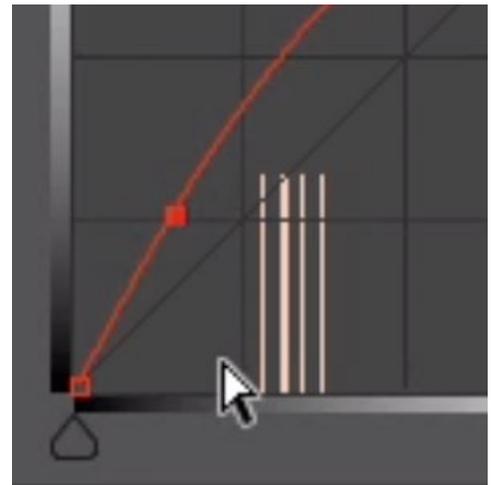


If an adjustment is too extreme, you can either change the adjustment layer settings or lower the opacity of the adjustment layer, as shown at left.

Additional Curves Tips

The active point When there is more than one point on the curve, you can tell which point[s] is active because it will be solid. The points that are not active will be hollow.

Select & deselect points The active point will be deselected if you click away from it with the mouse. It can be difficult to click on a point to select it without actually moving the point as well. To prevent this, you can use the plus and minus keys (+ -) to target points. If there are no active dots, tapping the plus key (+) will select the bottom-most dot and then move up to the next higher point every time you click the key. Use the minus key (-) to go the opposite direction.



When using Curves, the active point will be solid and the points that are not active will be hollow.

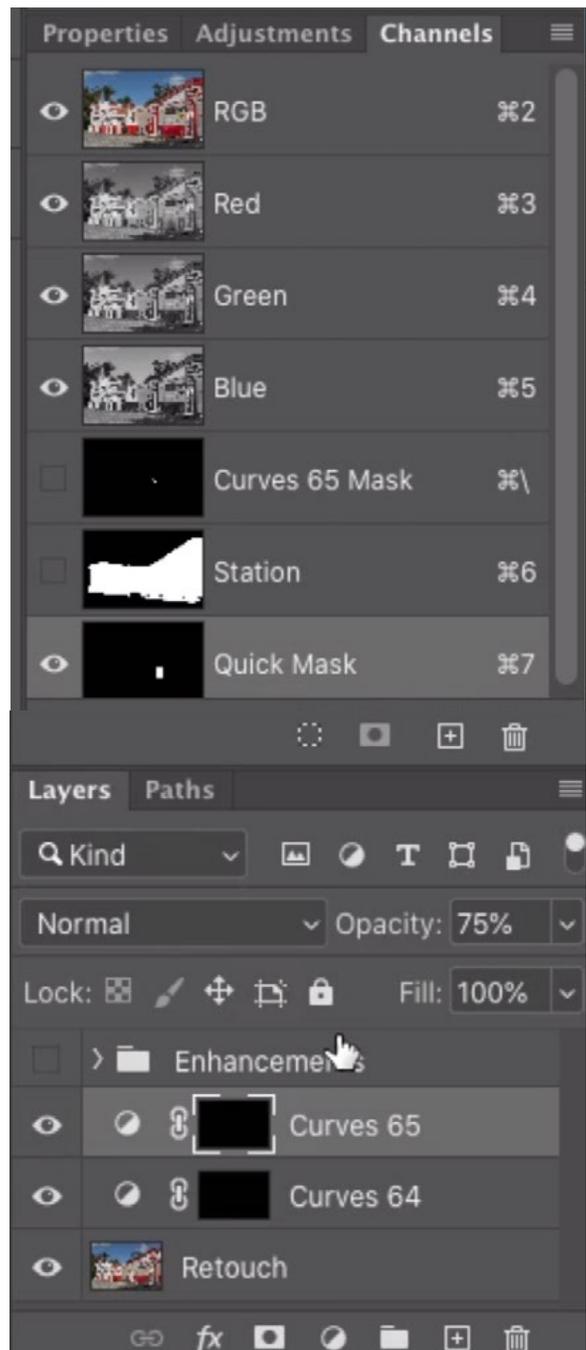
Using Channels to Make a Selection (22:15)

Now we're going to use a different technique for making a selection. This will involve using channels. We'll use this technique to make a selection of the word "Regular" on the gas pump. We'd like to isolate this area so that we can adjust it to become more red.

By default, the Channels Panel is grouped with the Layers Panel in Photoshop. I sometimes like to be able to look at the Layers Panel and the Channels panel at the same time, so I will move the Channels Panel up, to become grouped with the Properties Panel. You can move a panel by clicking and dragging on the tab that contains the panel name.

How Quick Mask Mode relates to channels

When we work in Quick Mask Mode, it is basically creating a temporary channel. If you looked in the Channels Panel while in Quick Mask Mode, you would see a channel called "Quick Mask" and it is overlaid on the image. If you would like to see JUST the quick mask, and not the image it's overlaid on, you can turn off the visibility of the RGB channel (the top-most channel) in the Channels Panel. Then you'd be seeing just a black and white view of the Quick Mask. This could help you to better see any imperfections in the mask. Turn the visibility of the RGB channel back on to see the image again. When we turn off Quick Mask Mode, it disappears from the Channels Panel.



We moved the Channels Panel up so that we can view the Channels Panel and the Layers Panel at the same time. We are viewing a selection in Quick Mask Mode and you can see that there is a temporary Quick Mask Channel.

Load a channel as a selection Earlier in the lesson, we learned that you can turn a mask into a selection by holding down the Command key (Ctrl on Win) and clicking on the mask thumbnail. You can ALSO Command+click on a channel to load that channel as a selection. This can be useful in helping us to isolate certain elements in the image. We're going to use this to isolate the word "Regular" on the gas pump. In the Channels Panel, we can click on the individual color channels (red, green and blue) to view them in the main image window. We want to click through these channels while paying attention to that word that we want to isolate. In each color channel, we need to compare the word to its immediate surroundings, looking for the channel that shows the most contrast. In our example, that's the blue channel. We're going to load that blue channel as a selection by holding down the Command key (Ctrl on Win) and clicking on the thumbnail for the blue channel. Then, we're going to enter Quick Mask Mode by tapping the Q key. This basically creates a temporary duplicate of the blue channel in the Channels Panel.



After viewing the individual color channels, we found that the blue channel created the most contrast between the word and its surroundings. We loaded the blue channel as a selection by holding down the Command key (Ctrl on Win) and clicking on the channel thumbnail.

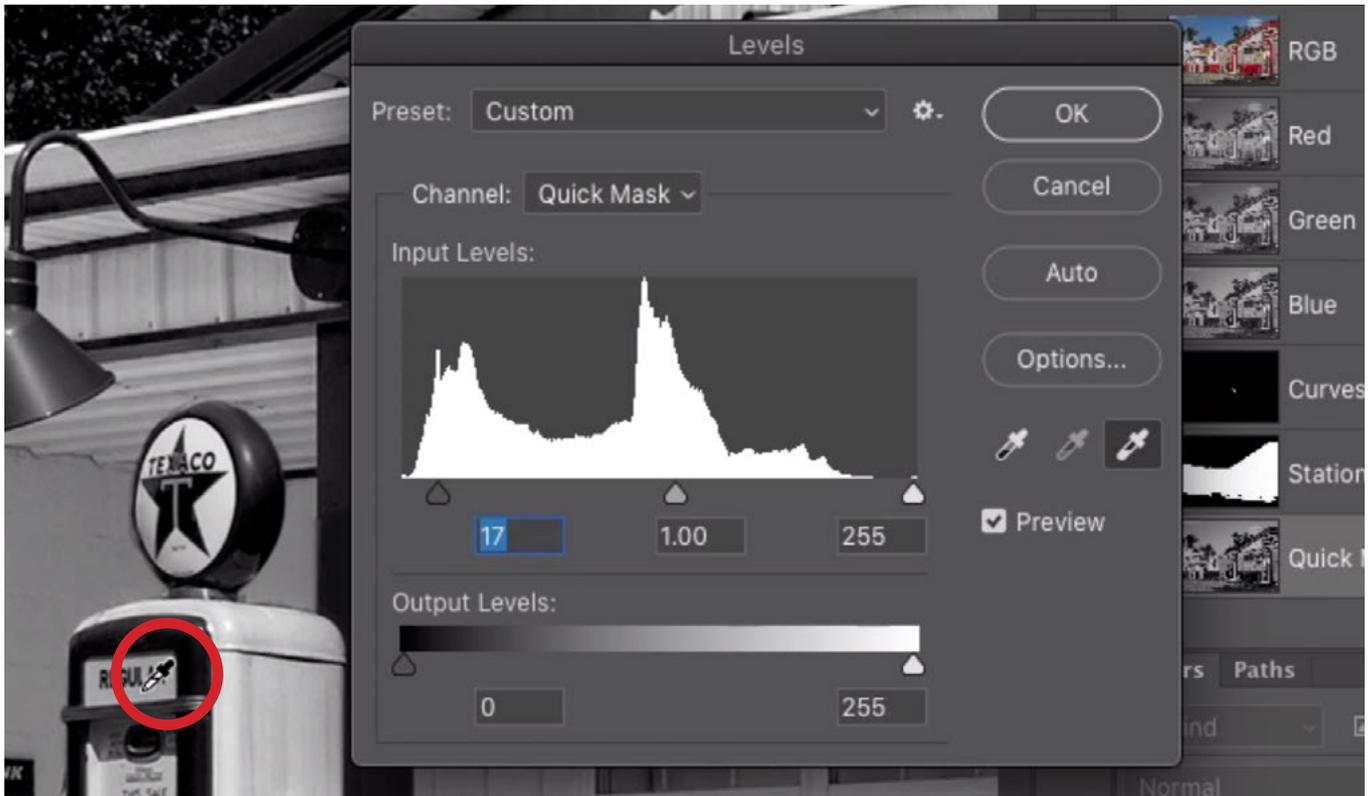


After turning the blue channel into a selection, we tapped the Q key to view the selection in Quick Mask Mode. You can see that there is now a new, temporary, Quick Mask channel.

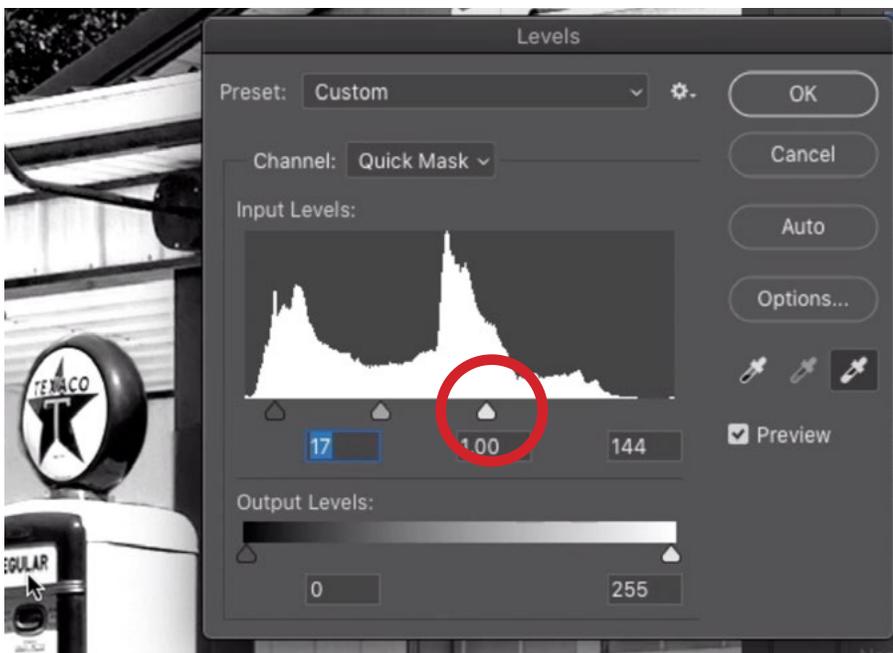
Adjusting a channel We're now going to adjust this new channel. Before doing so, we want to view this Quick Mask channel by itself, without the color image visible behind it. We'll click the eyeball icon to the left of the RGB channel thumbnail in order to turn off its visibility. Now we're just viewing the black and white Quick Mask channel.

We'll click on the Image menu and choose Adjustments > Levels. The Levels dialog will appear, containing the bar chart and some sliders beneath it. The slider on the right can be used to force areas to white and the slider on the left can be used to force areas to black. The eyedropper tools to the right of the Levels chart can be used to automatically position the sliders to determine the black point and the white point. Whenever an eyedropper tool is active, the Sample Size menu will appear in the Options Bar. Because the area we're about to isolate is very small (the word on the gas pump), we're going to set this Sample Size menu to "Point Sample." This will tell the eyedropper to sample a single pixel.

We'll activate the black eyedropper and we'll use it to click on the word "Regular." This will adjust the Levels slider to force that area to become black. Then we'll activate the white eyedropper and use it to click on the light area that surrounds the text. This will adjust the right levels slider to force that area to become solid white.



ABOVE: The black eyedropper was used to click on the text. This moved the black slider to the right, forcing that text to become black. Here, we are about to use the white eyedropper to click on the light area surrounding the text. That will move the right slider, forcing the area to white.



LEFT: The white eyedropper was used to click on the area surrounding the text. You can see that this moved the white Levels slider.

We could manually fine-tune the results by adjusting the sliders below the Levels chart. The slider on the left will force areas to black. The slider on the right will force areas to white and the slider in the middle will control the transition. When we adjust the sliders, we are ONLY paying attention to the word we're isolating and the area that immediately surrounds it.

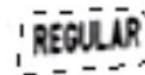
Clean up the rest of the channel to isolate the word

The word "regular" is now isolated from the area that surrounds it, but we need to clean up the rest of the image/channel so that the word is the ONLY thing that is isolated. We'll start by using the Lasso Tool to make a selection around the word. We really want the opposite (where everything EXCEPT the word is selected), so we'll click on the Select menu and choose Inverse.



The Lasso Tool was used to make a selection around the word and then the selection was inverted to include everything EXCEPT for the word.

Next, we're going to fill the selected area with white. We'll make sure that the foreground color is set to white and we'll use the keyboard shortcut to fill the selection with that foreground color. Fill a selection with the foreground color by tapping Option+Delete (Alt+Backspace on Win). We'll deselect the area and the entire image window will be white except for the word "regular," which is black.



Everything except the word was selected and we filled the selection with white.

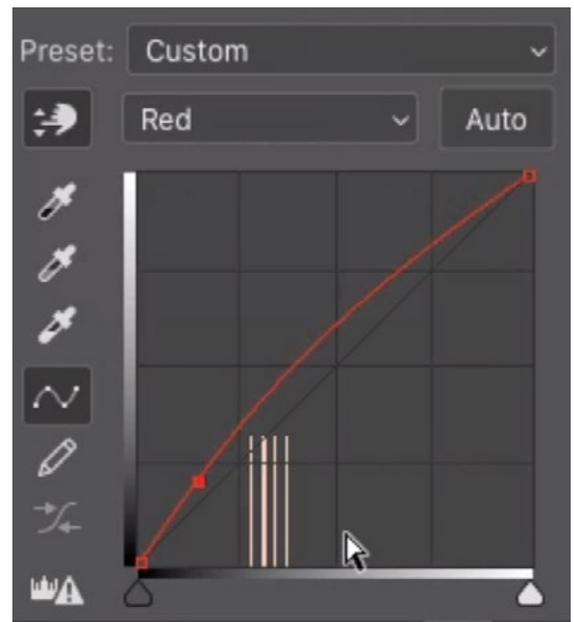
In Quick Mask Mode, black indicates what is NOT selected, so we'll need the opposite of what we have. We'll invert the mask by clicking on the Image menu and choosing Adjustments > Invert. Now, the word is the only area that is selected in the image. We'll tap the Q key to exit Quick Mask Mode and the "marching ants" selection will appear around the word.



LEFT: We inverted the mask so that the word was the only area that was selected.
RIGHT: Then we tapped the Q key to exit Quick Mask Mode and were left with the “marching ants” selection.

Adjust the selected area We'll now use a Curves adjustment to make the isolated area (the word) more red. We'll click on the Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel and choose Curves from the pop-up menu. We had an active selection so that selection will automatically be applied to the mask attached to the adjustment layer.

The Properties Panel will appear and we'll make sure that the Targeted Adjustment Tool is active. We want to place a point on each of the three color curves. To do this, we'll hold down Shift+Command (Shift+Ctrl on Win) while using the eyedropper to click on the red text of the word “regular.” By holding down those keys, we're placing a point on each of the three color curves. We can use the color menu above the Curve chart to switch between the three color curves. The point on each curve represents how much of that color is contained in the area where we clicked. We can move those points up and down to adjust each color individually. We'll set the color menu to work on the red curve and we'll move the dot up, adding more red to the word that is isolated. We'll also tweak the dots on the blue and green curves.



The Targeted Adjustment Tool was used to place a point on the color curves, representing the text area. Here, the dot on the red curve is being moved up in order to make the area more red.

When to use channels to make a selection

In the previous example, we used channels to select the word on the gas pump. I use this technique any time the thing I want to select is radically different (in either brightness or color) from its immediate surroundings. Another example would be the white “Coca Cola” text on the vintage ice box. The text is white and the surroundings are red. We could follow the same process for selecting this text.



This is another example of when channels would be useful for making a selection. The text differs greatly from its surroundings.

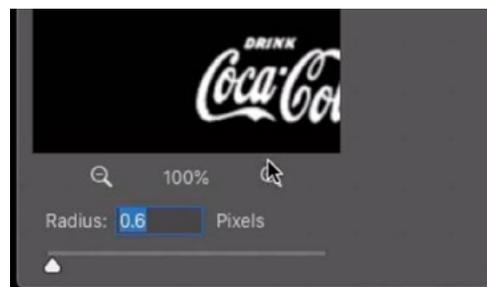
Soften the edge of a selection/mask (39:56)

We used the Quick Mask/channels technique to isolate the Coca Cola text while viewing the Quick Mask as a channel. The text is the only area that is white, which means that it is selected. The problem is that the edge of the selection/mask looks a little jagged. There are a few different ways of softening the edge of a mask:

The Blur Tool This tool looks like a water drop in the Toolbar on the left side of the screen. Painting on a mask with this tool will soften the edges. The Strength setting (in the Options Bar) will determine how strong the blurring will be. You need to be careful with the Blur Tool, however. If you don't get the entire area in one brush stroke and you end up painting over one spot twice, that spot will be twice as blurry.



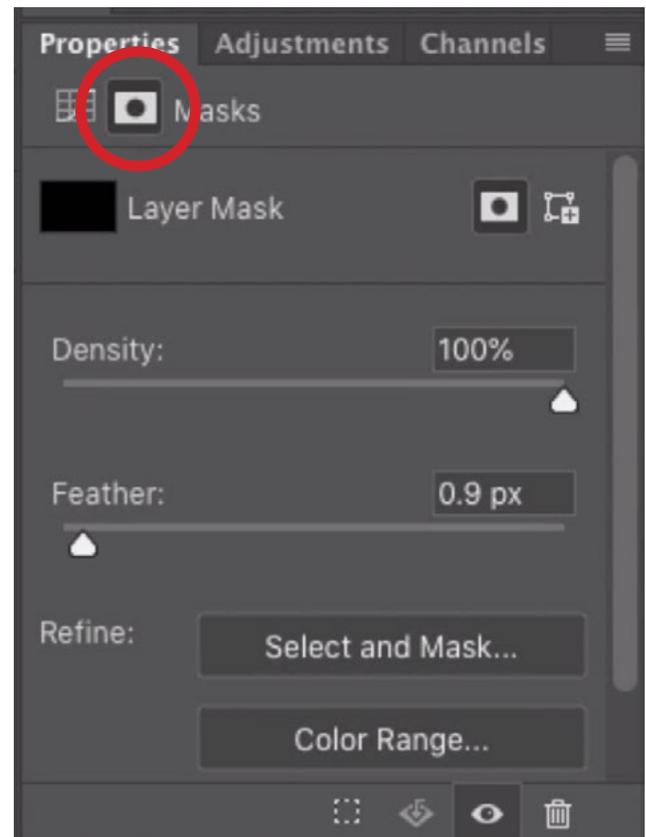
The Gaussian Blur Filter Another way you could soften the edges of a mask is by using the Gaussian Blur Filter, which can be accessed by clicking on the Filter menu and choosing Blur > Gaussian Blur. In the settings dialog, you will only need a very low setting on the Radius slider (less than one pixel) in order to soften the edge.



The Gaussian Blur filter can be used to soften a selection edge.

The Feather Command This is something that can be done to a selection when it is NOT being viewed as a mask. Instead, you would use this when viewing the selection in the form of “marching ants.” With the selection active, click on the Select menu and choose Modify > Feather. A settings dialog will appear, allowing you to choose how strongly you’d like to soften the edge of the selection.

Adjust Layer Mask Settings This method for smoothing the edges is something that you would do to a layer mask. This method is the most versatile and it is the method that we’ll use in the video example. With the selection of the Coca Cola text active, we created a Curves Adjustment Layer and the selection was automatically applied to that layer’s mask. The Properties Panel appears, showing the Curves settings. At the top of the Properties Panel, there are two icons. One of them represents the current adjustment layer (Curves in this case) and this is active by default. This is why we automatically view the curves chart and settings. The other icon looks like the layer mask icon. If we click this, the panel will change to display settings relating to the layer mask. This is what we want. Here, there is a Feather slider that can be used to soften the edge of the mask. Usually, a setting of less than one is sufficient.



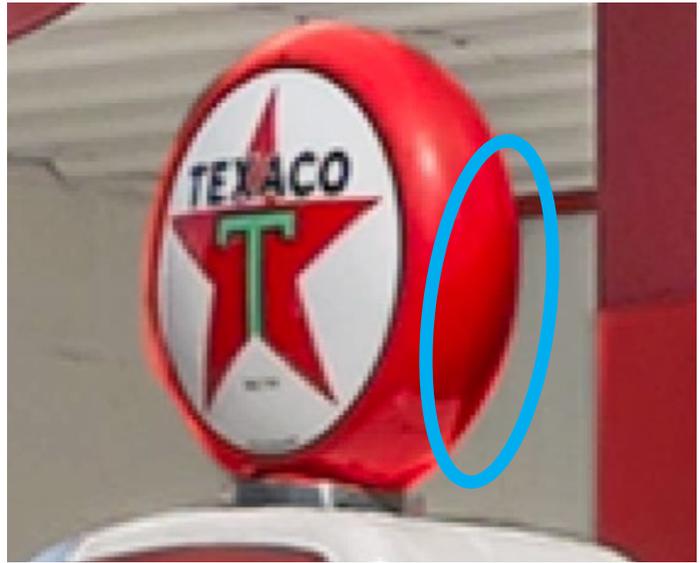
At the top of the Properties Panel, we clicked on the layer mask icon in order to view the settings related to the mask. We are using the Feather slider to soften the edges of the mask.

The Fade Command (43:40)

In an earlier tip, we adjusted the outer red part of the gas pump sign to make it more red. After evaluating this area, I find that the dark, shadow portion of that area is a little too saturated. We're going to fix that.

We'll click on the adjustment that is affecting this area in order to make it active. We'll make sure that the mask is active and not the layer. It will have little white brackets around its thumbnail, indicating that it's active. We're going to use the Brush Tool to adjust mask, hiding the saturation effect on the area that looks too colorful. We'll make sure that we're using a really soft-edged brush and that we're painting with black. Adding black will hide the adjustment in the areas where we paint.

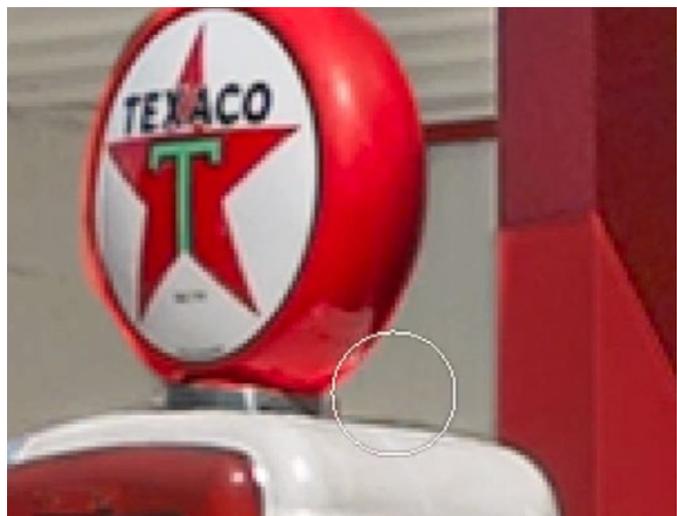
We'll use that soft brush to paint with black over the area that is too colorful, hiding the adjustment. The problem is that the effect was too extreme. I didn't want to remove quite as much color. There is a way to lesson the effect of the last step you took in Photoshop and that is by using the Fade command.



The adjustment caused the dark, shadow portion of this sign to become too colorful. We're going to correct that.



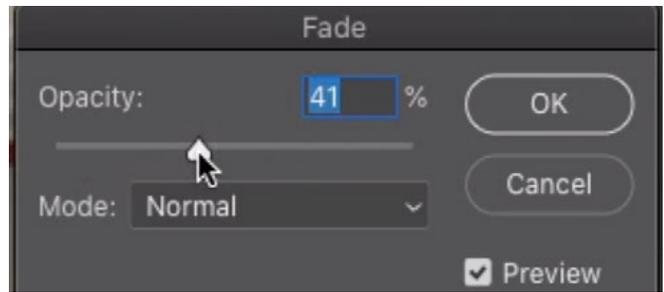
The white brackets indicate that the mask is active.



We're painting with black on the mask to remove the brightening effect from the adjustment.

We'll click on the Edit menu and choose "Fade Brush Tool." If it was a different tool or feature that you just used, that is what will be listed in this menu.

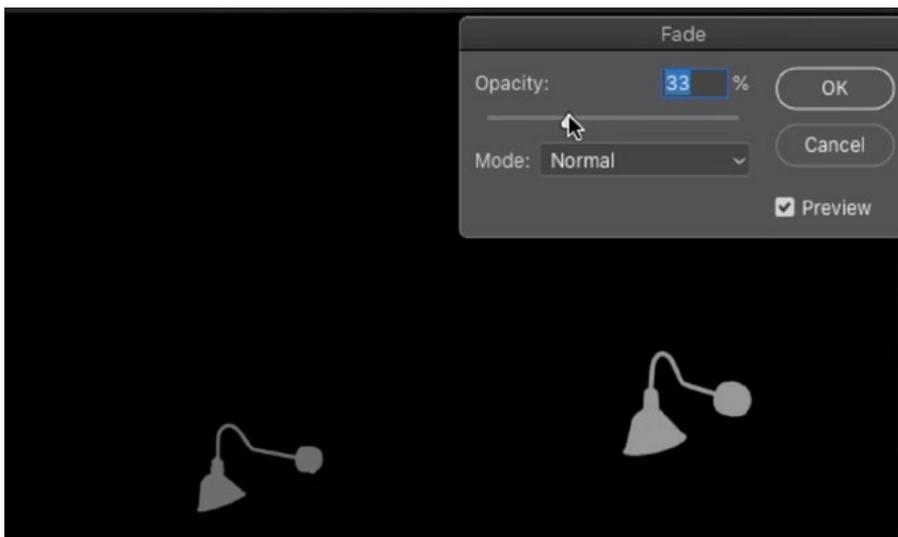
The Fade dialog will appear and it will contain a single slider: Opacity. This slider will allow us to change the opacity of the brush we just painted with, but we're doing it after the fact.



The Fade command will allow you to lower the opacity on the very last thing you did. In this case, we're lowering the opacity of the last brush stroke.

I also used the Fade command after adjusting the red lamps in the image. There is one Curves Adjustment Layer that is being used to brighten all of the red lamps on the building. After making this adjustment, I saw that some lamps became too bright and colorful. Each lamp would ideally require a different amount of the Curves adjustment. I fixed this by working on the mask directly in the image window. You can view and edit a mask directly in the image window by holding down the Option key (Alt on Win) and clicking on the mask thumbnail in the Layers Panel.

To apply a different level of adjustment to one of the lamps, I used the Brush Tool and painted one black stroke to cover one of the lamps, making the area completely black. Then I used the Fade command to lower the opacity of this stroke to achieve the level of gray that would reveal the appropriate amount of the adjustment. I did this for each of the individual lamps.

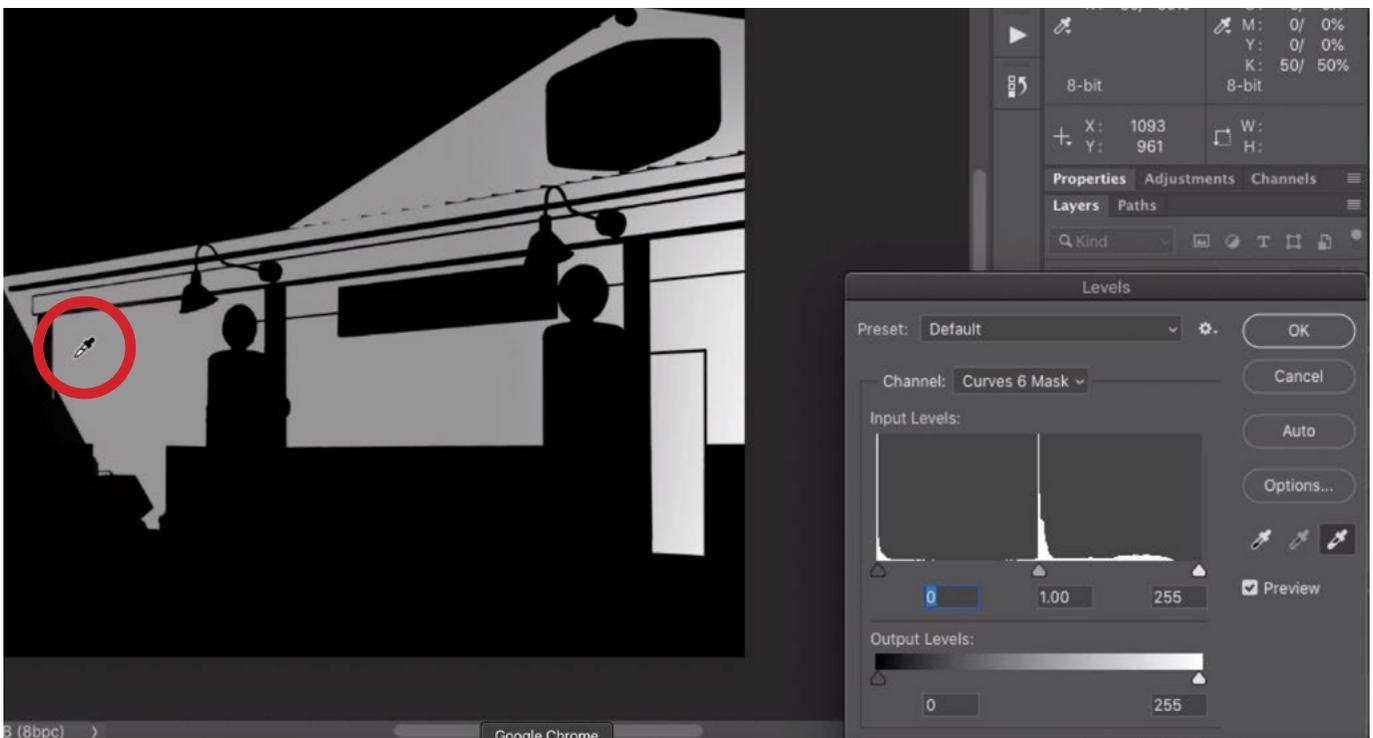


We are viewing the layer mask in the image window and we painted with black to completely hide the lamp on the left. Here, we are using the Face command to lower the opacity of that brush stroke.

Tips for Working with Shades of Gray in a Mask (51:40)

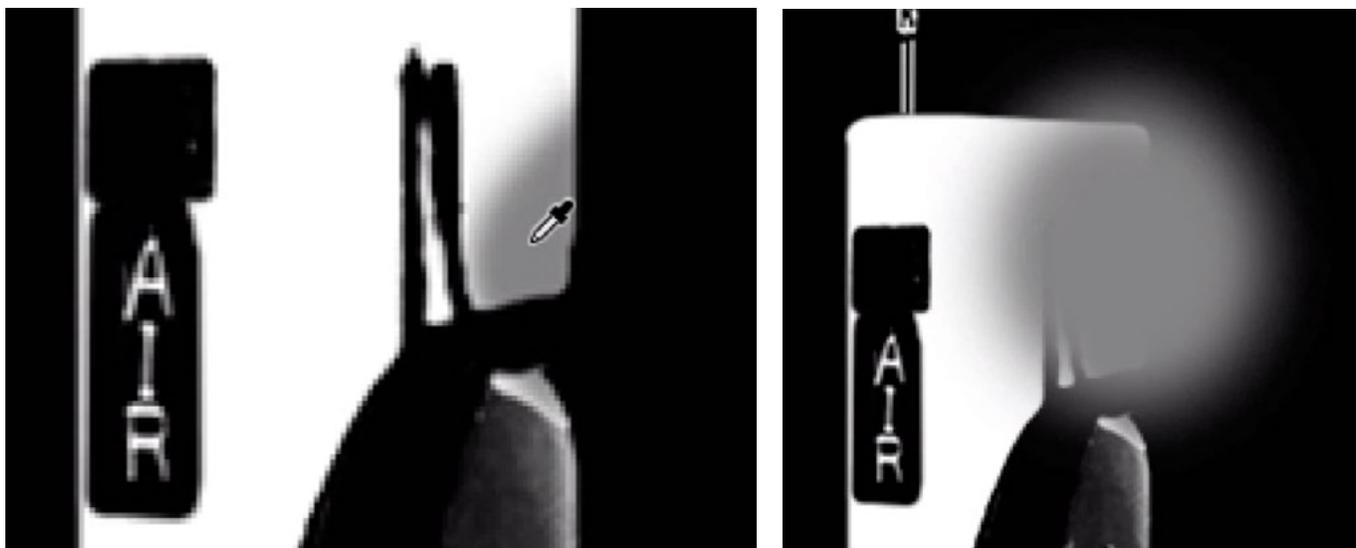
In a layer mask, black areas completely hide the layer (or adjustment) and white areas completely reveal the layer. Shades of gray can also be used to partially hide the layer or adjustment. Let's look at some tips for working with shades of gray in a mask.

Apply adjustment directly to a mask You can apply an adjustment directly to a mask while viewing the mask in the main image window. Remember, you can view a mask in the image window by holding down the Option key (Alt on Win) and clicking on the mask thumbnail in the Layers Panel. Levels would be a good example of an adjustment that can be used to work directly on a mask. In the Levels dialog, you could either use the sliders to force areas to black or white or you could use the eyedroppers.



A Levels adjustment is being applied directly to the layer mask, which is being viewed in the image window. In this example, the white eyedropper is about to be used in order to force the targeted area to white.

Sample a shade while using the Brush Tool When painting on a layer mask, you may want to paint with a particular shade that is already in the mask. There is a way that you can sample that exact shade and set it as the foreground color. With the Brush Tool active, hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) and the brush tip will temporarily change into the eyedropper (for as long as the Option key is held down). Use the eyedropper to click on the shade that you want to paint with. The shade will be set as the foreground color and you can now paint with it.



ABOVE LEFT: With the Brush Tool active, we are sampling a shade from the layer mask. **LEFT:** That shade was set as the foreground color. **ABOVE RIGHT:** We are painting on the mask using that color we just sampled.



Paint using Blending Modes When painting on a detailed mask, it can be sometimes be difficult to avoid getting overspray. Blending Modes can be used to avoid this in some situations. You can change the blending mode of the Brush Tool by using the Mode menu in the Options Bar (When the Brush Tool is active).

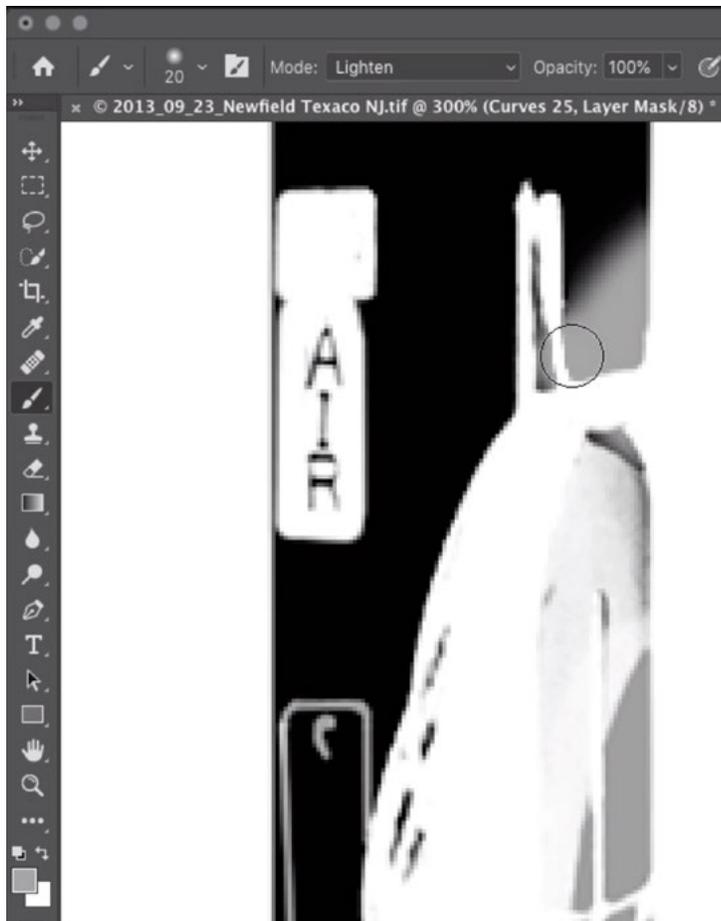
If you're using the brush to darken an area and you don't want the brush to be able to accidentally lighten another area, you can change the blending mode of the brush to Darken. In Darken mode, the brush will only be able to darken the picture.

The Lighten blending mode would do the opposite. When painting with the brush in Lighten mode, it will only be able to lighten things. It will be incapable of darkening anything on the mask.

NOTE: After using the Brush Tool in a different blending mode, it's a good idea to change the blending mode menu back to Normal. That's because the brush will remember the mode whenever you next use it, and that could mess you up a bit.

When you think you're done

Finally, after you're finished working on an image, it's a good idea to take one last look at all of your layer masks, just to inspect them to make sure that they are all as clean as they can be. Do this by viewing each mask in the main image window. Remember, you can view a mask directly in the image window by holding down the Option key (Alt on Win) and clicking on the layer mask thumbnail in the Layers Panel. This black and white view will give you a large view of the mask and you can edit the mask while in this view, if need be.



The Brush Tool is being used to paint on the mask while in Lighten mode. You can see that, even though we're painting with gray, the brush is not applying that gray to the white area. That's because it's only capable of darkening things while in this mode.

USEFUL KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Mac Shortcuts

Q key: Quick Mask Mode

X key: Swap foreground and background colors

Option+Delete: Fill with foreground color

Command+Delete: Fill with background color

Command+Click on Layer Mask icon: Turn mask into a selection

Command+I: Invert (Commonly used to invert a mask)

B key: Activate Brush Tool

Windows Shortcuts

Q key: Quick Mask Mode

X key: Swap foreground and background colors

Alt+Backspace on Win: Fill with foreground color

Ctrl+Backspace: Fill with background color

Ctrl+click on Layer Mask icon: Turn mask into a selection

Ctrl+I: Invert (Commonly used to invert a mask).

B key: Activate Brush Tool