



Shade to Light

Shade to Light

In this lesson, we're going to learn how to add light to shady areas in a photograph. There are actually two approaches to doing this, and I'm going to cover them in separate lessons. Here, we're going to either process an image more than once using Adobe Camera Raw/Lightroom or we are going to start with multiple exposures and then combine them together. Either way, we're going to end up with multiple image layers that we will then blend together.



The shadows in the image above were lightened using the technique we're going to cover in this lesson.

Process Using Only Camera Raw or Lightroom (Timestamp 5:11)

There will be some limited instances where you can fix an overly shady area by using only Camera Raw or Lightroom's Develop Module. These programs have a Shadows slider and dragging it to the right will lighten up the darker portions of the image. Note that you will have much less control using this method. Additionally, the Shadows slider will affect ALL dark areas of the image so you will not be able to selectively limit where the effect is applied.

The following are the Camera Raw/Lightroom settings that can be used to adjust the shady areas in an image. Note that Lightroom's Develop Module contains the same settings as Camera Raw.

Exposure: The Exposure slider will lighten the entire image as a whole. The bright areas will be lightened in addition to the shadows. This will mainly be useful when the image is in the raw format because you have more flexibility when adjusting raw images. They contain much more information and you will therefore be able to pull more detail out of the shadows. You will also be able to compensate for the over-brightening of the light areas.

Shadows: The Shadows slider will target the dark areas of the image, so dragging this slider up (to the right) will brighten the shadow areas. You should be aware, however, that the dark areas across the entire image will be lightened as well. This may or may not be what you want. Additionally, shadows that have been lightened like this can tend to look dull. For these reasons, I usually prefer to lighten shadows by using the following technique.



This is an example of the settings used to lighten the shadows using only Camera Raw/Lightroom.

Single-Exposure Shadow Lightening Technique (Timestamp 9:18)

Open image as smart object This technique is going to require that we open the image in Photoshop as a smart object. In Bridge, simply double-click on the image thumbnail in order to open it in Camera Raw. Then, hold down the Shift key so that the “Open” button changes into the “Open Object” button. Click this and the image will open as a smart object in Photoshop.

If you are instead using Lightroom, click on the image to make it active. Then click on the Photo menu and choose Edit In > Open as Smart Object in Photoshop.

You can tell that an image layer is a smart object because it will have a little icon in the bottom right corner of the image thumbnail. When a raw image is opened as a smart object in Photoshop, it has a special feature. At any time, you can double-click on the image thumbnail and it will open again in Camera Raw. Here, you can use the adjustment sliders to change the settings that were used to process the image. When you click the OK button to exit Camera Raw, those settings will be applied to the image layer back in the main Photoshop interface.

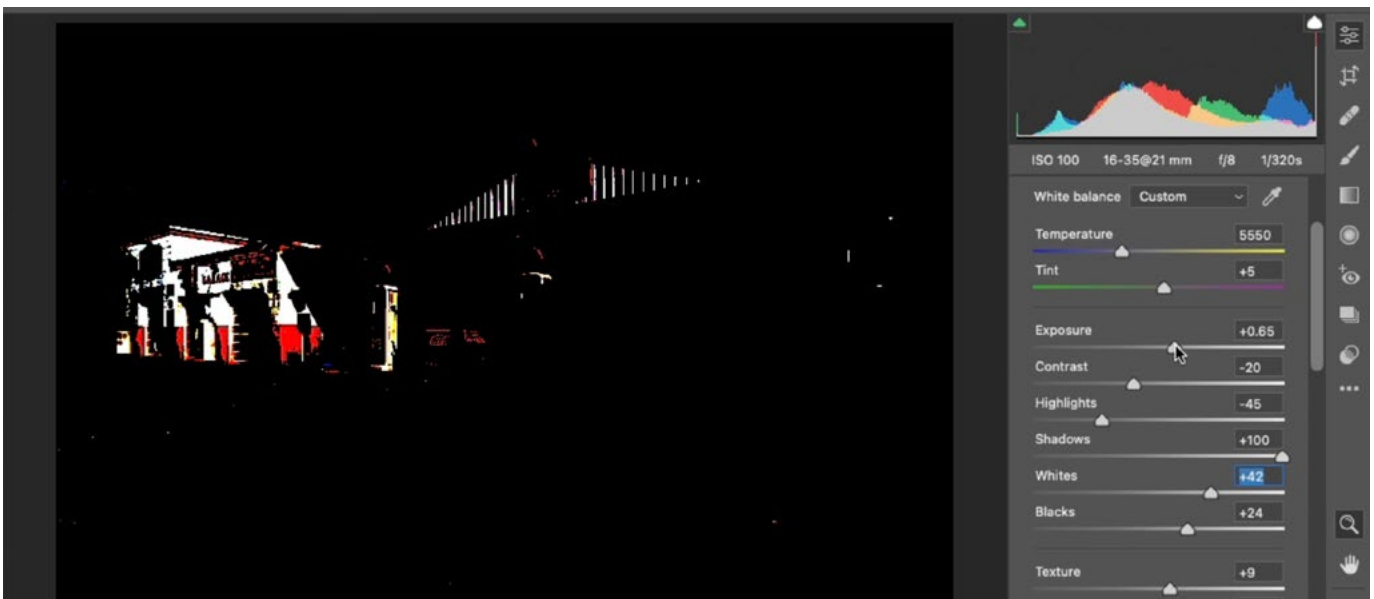


You can tell that a layer is a smart object because its thumbnail will have the above icon.

Create second version of image The shadow lightening technique is going to require that you create a second version of the image that has different Camera Raw settings applied to it. In order to do this, click on the Layer menu and choose Smart Objects > New Smart Object via Copy. This will duplicate the smart object layer, but it will do so in a special way. When you choose this “New Smart Object via Copy” option, it will create a new, identical smart object layer that is *independent* of the original layer that you copied. This means that you can make changes to this new layer without those changes affecting the original smart object layer. This is important for the technique we’re using. If you were simply to copy the layer in the standard way, it would create a new smart object that is still associated with the original image layer. If you were to make changes to it, those changes would affect all other instances of that same smart object. That’s not what you want here.

Adjust duplicate to optimize the shadow areas Double-click on the newly-created smart object layer in order to open the image in Camera Raw. Now, use the adjustment sliders to optimize the area that’s in the shade. You can ignore all the sunny areas while doing this. Those will eventually be hidden by a mask. Just adjust the image so that the shadow areas start to look sunny. This can usually be accomplished by moving the Exposure, Shadows and Whites sliders up.

As you do this, make sure that you're not losing detail in the shady areas. Make sure that the brightest part is not getting so bright that it's turning white. There is a trick you can use to determine whether that's happening. As you move the Exposure and Whites sliders, you can hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) in order to get a different view of the image that shows you what areas are losing detail. With this view, any area that's black will still have detail. Any colored area is starting to lose detail and any white area has no detail whatsoever. Just focus on the shadow areas as you move the sliders, pushing them as far as you'd like before the area starts to get a colored or white overlay.



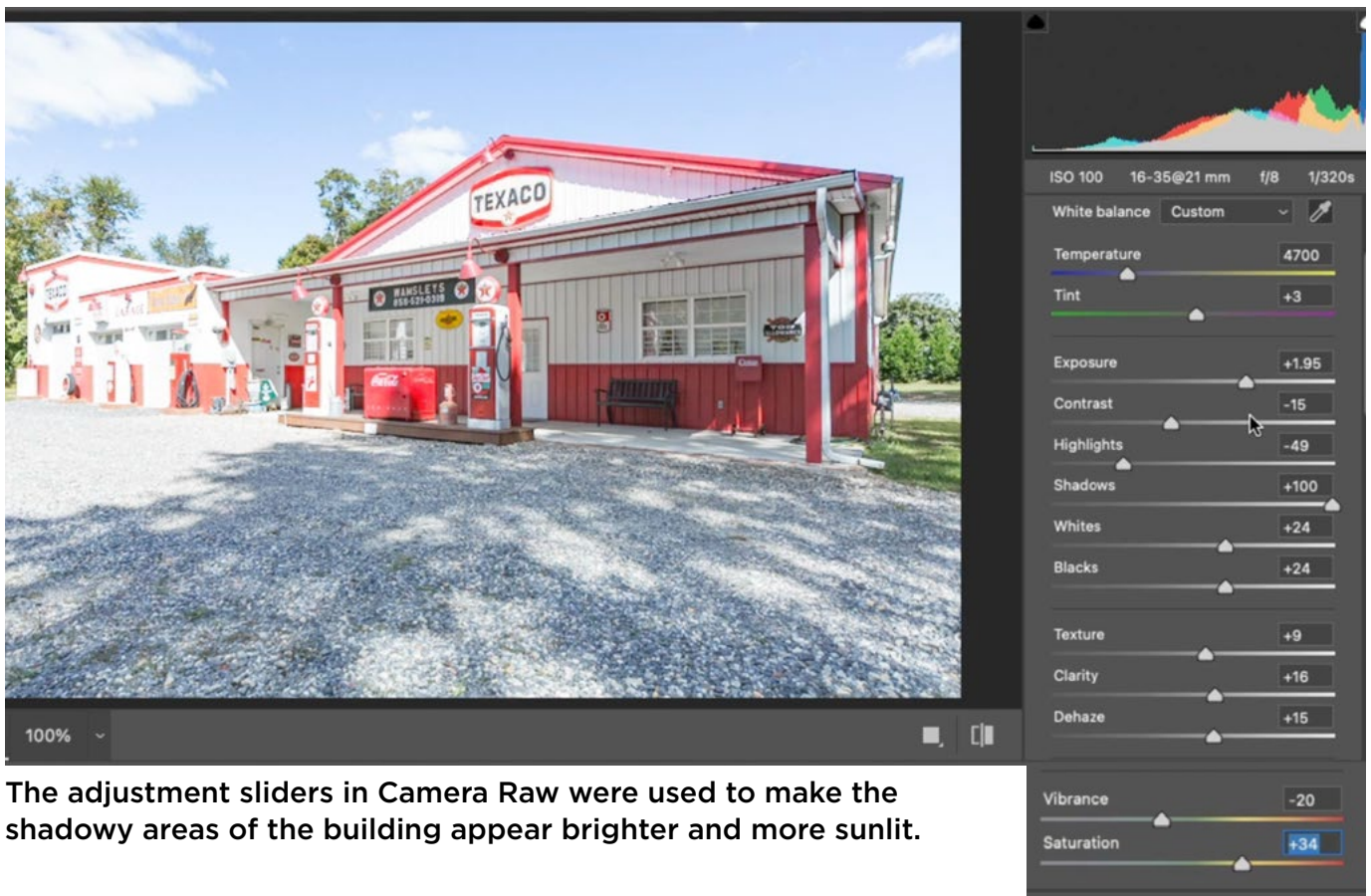
The Option key (Alt on Win) is being held down while the Whites slider is being moved. This gives us a different view of the image that shows us what areas are losing detail.

I sometimes like to also adjust the Contrast slider if the shady area started to look a little dull. The Clarity slider can also enhance the contrast in the details of an area, so you can experiment with that as well.

Shaded areas usually appear more blue in color than the sunlit areas. That's because they're being lit by the blue sky that's reflecting off of the ground. Since you want the area to look as if it's in the sun, you may want to adjust the white balance. Dragging the Temperature slider to the right will remove blue and add

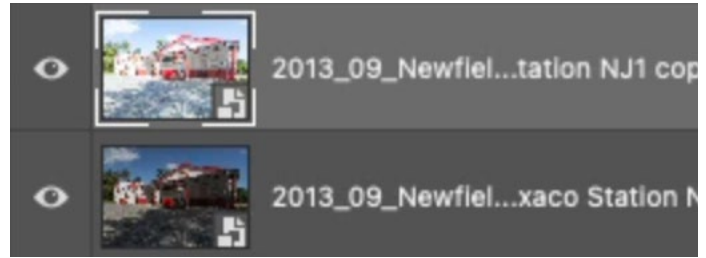
yellow, making the area appear warmer. You could also experiment with the White Balance Eyedropper, using it to click on areas that should be perfectly white.

When you brighten an area that used to be dark, you will often times find that the colors become more mellow. You can compensate for this by adjusting the Vibrance and/or Saturation sliders. Moving these sliders up will make the image more colorful. The Saturation slider will adjust all colors equally, while the Vibrance slider will focus on the colors that are more mellow, leaving the already-colorful areas alone. Adjust these sliders to make the colors match the vibrance of the sunlit areas.



The adjustment sliders in Camera Raw were used to make the shadowy areas of the building appear brighter and more sunlit.

When you're satisfied with the appearance of the shady areas, click the OK button to exit Camera Raw and return to Photoshop's main interface. You'll now have two different versions of the image. In the bottom [original image] layer, the sunny areas look good. In the top layer, the shady areas look good.



There are now two versions of the image. One is adjusted for the sky and other bright areas. The second is adjusted for the shadows.

Mask the top layer With the entirety of the top layer visible, the sunny areas look way too bright. You'll now need to create a layer mask for this top layer. The mask will limit the layer visibility to reveal only the shady areas you just adjusted. I like starting with a black mask, which will completely hide the layer. Then, I will paint on the mask with white in order to reveal the layer in specific areas.



A black mask was added to the top image layer.

With the top layer active, hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) and click on the Layer Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel. By holding that key down, you will be creating a mask that is completely black. With layer masks, black hides the layer and white reveals the layer.

Now, you can activate the Brush Tool and paint with white in the areas where the layer should be visible. These are the shadow areas that were optimized using Camera Raw.



The Brush Tool is being used to paint with white on the layer mask. Adding white to a mask will reveal the layer it's attached to.

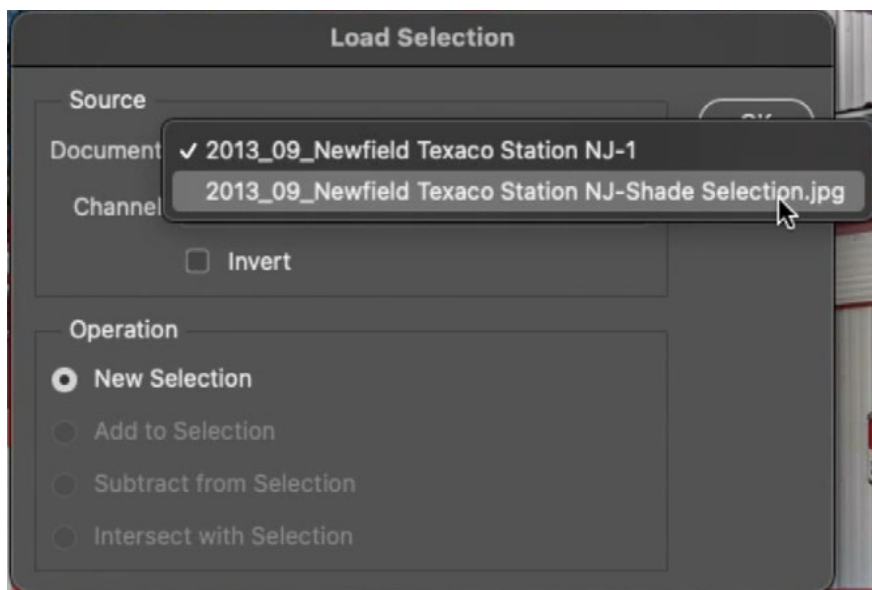
You may need to use a hard-edged brush in some areas and a soft-edged brush in other areas. It all depends on how you need the masking to blend in with the surroundings. The Brush settings can be found in the Options Bar above the image window. Note that when using a hard-edged brush, you will want the brush size to be smaller in order to create smooth lines.

Brush Tip: If you want to paint a perfectly straight line, click once with the brush, hold down the Shift key and then click again somewhere else. By holding Shift, the brush will create a straight line between the two points where you click.

If you find any of the transitions to be overly abrupt, you can use the Blur Tool (It's icon looks like a water drop) to paint over the transition line. This will soften the line and the transition.

Note: Since this lesson is not about selections in particular, we're not going in-depth on the selection-making process. There is a selection file included with this lesson, which can be used with the example image. It looks like a black and white layer mask and it can be used to create the layer mask for the top image layer. You would do this instead of using the Brush Tool to manually mask the layer.

If you would like to load the selection, open the selection file in Photoshop, along with the image file you're working on. Make sure that the mode of the selection image matches the mode of the photograph image. The mode will be listed in the image tab that also contains the file name. If the mode does not match, you can change it by clicking on the Image menu and choosing Mode.



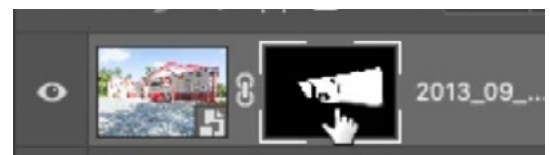
A selection file is included with this lesson. Here, that file is being loaded using the “Load Selection” command. We are choosing the name of the selection file from the Document menu.

If the mode matches, you can load the selection in the image document. Make sure the image/photograph document is in the forefront. Then click on the Select menu and choose to Load Selection. The Load Selection dialog will appear. Use the Document menu to choose the name of the black and white selection document and then click OK. The “marching ants” selection will be loaded on the image.

Now that the selection is active, click on the Layer Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel. The layer mask will be created and the selection will automatically be applied to the mask. The areas that were selected will be the white parts of the mask. The white parts of the mask represent the parts of the layer that are visible, so the brightening effect will only be applied to those shady areas.

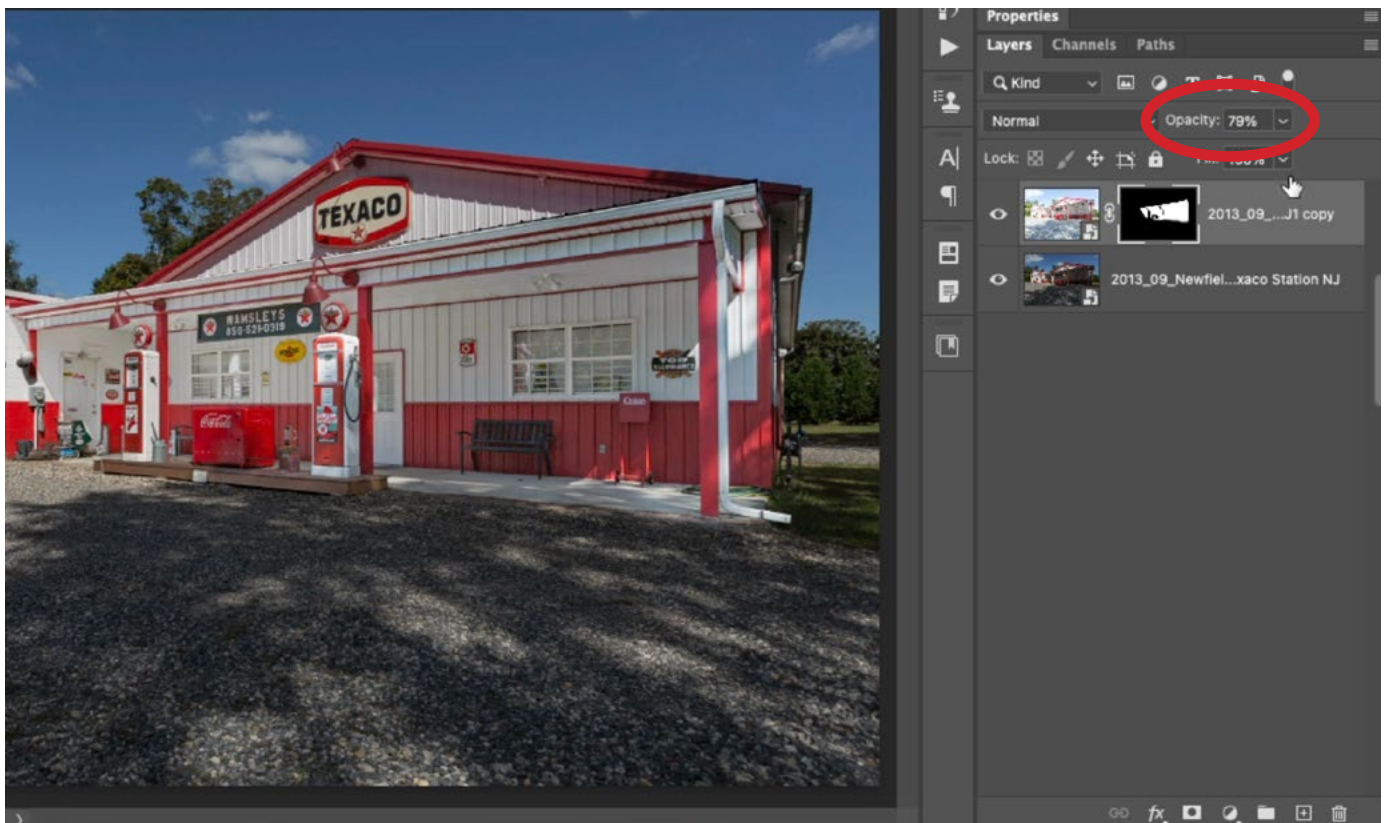


Above: The selection file was loaded as a selection in the active image. RIGHT: A layer mask was added and that selection was applied to the mask.



If the result looks too extreme, you can lower the opacity of the top layer. The Opacity setting can be found at the top of the Layers Panel. I like to move the opacity to zero and then gradually increase it until the result looks ideal.

Remember, you can always adjust the Camera Raw settings that were applied to the image layer by double-clicking on the layer thumbnail. This will re-open the image in Camera Raw and you can fine tune the settings. Click OK when you're done and the image layer will be updated in Photoshop's main interface.



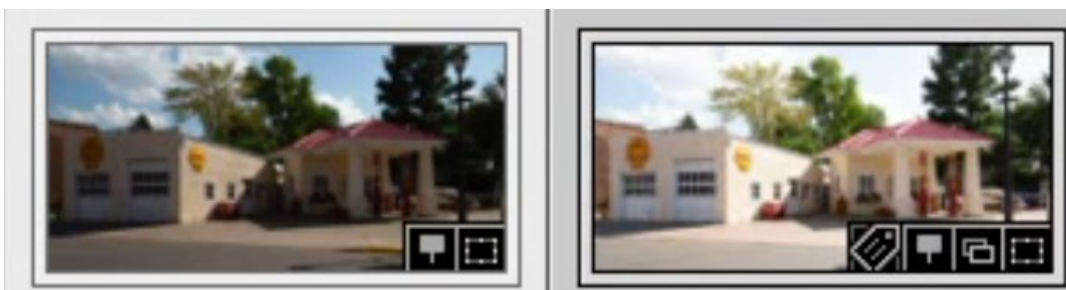
The brighter layer was masked so that the brightening effect is only visible in the shadowed areas of the image. Here, the Opacity setting is being used to fine-tune the strength of the effect.

Bracketed-Exposure Shadow Lightening Technique (25:14)

In the method above, a single exposure was used. That exposure was duplicated and the copy was processed differently than the original (to lighten the shadows). The next technique will use bracketed exposures. When out shooting, you can set your camera to use auto-bracketing, which causes the camera to take more than one picture each time you press the shutter. I usually set mine up to take three shots at two stops apart. Therefore, I will get one normal exposure, one shot that is two stops underexposed and one shot that is two stops overexposed. These exposures can then be combined, using the following technique, to brighten the shadows in the image and make them look more sunlit.

Load files as Photoshop layers Look at the bracketed exposures in Bridge (or Lightroom) and choose the one where the bright areas (the sky, etc.) look good. This will serve as the base exposure. In the video example, this was the middle, normal exposure. Use Camera Raw (or Lightroom's Develop Module) to adjust this image to optimize those bright areas. As you do this, ignore any areas in shadow. In the video example, the image was optimized to make the sky and background buildings look good. The main subject building looks dull, but that's ok.

Next, choose the exposure that will be used for the shadow areas. This will likely be the brightest exposure. Adjust this image to optimize the parts of the image that are in the shadows. These are the areas that you'd like to appear more sunlit. Ignore all other parts of the image as you do this.



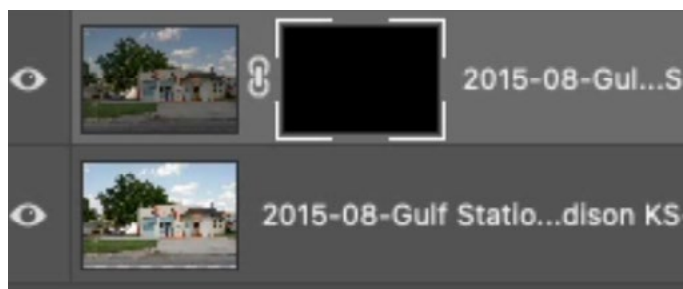
These two exposures will be merged to optimize all areas of the image.

After both images have been optimized, open them into a single Photoshop document. In Bridge, you would select both images and then choose Tools > Photoshop > Load Files into Photoshop Layers. The images will be loaded as separate layers in a single Photoshop document.

If you were instead using Lightroom, you would select both images, click on the Photo menu and choose Edit In > Open as Layers in Photoshop.

Align layers If you were shooting handheld when capturing the exposures, there's a good chance that they won't align perfectly. You need the images to be perfectly aligned. You can align them by selecting both layers, clicking on the Edit menu and choosing Auto-Align Layers. When the dialog appears, you can keep it set to the default choice (which is Auto) and then click OK. Photoshop will attempt to perfectly align the layers.

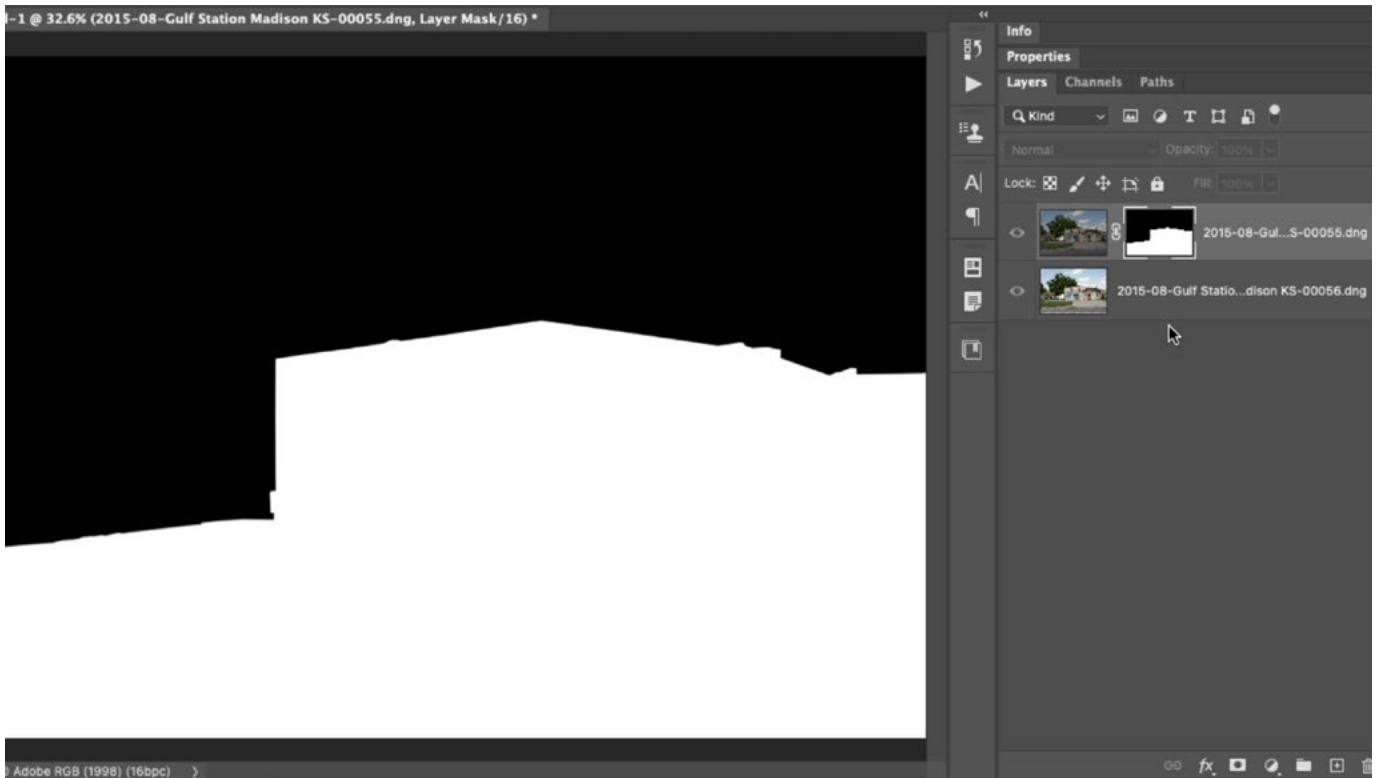
Mask top layer The next step will be to mask the top layer. If you'd like to again start with a black mask, hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) and click the Layer Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel. A black mask will hide the entirety of the layer, so you can use the Brush Tool to paint with white on the part of the image that is in the shadow.



Both images were loaded as separate layers in a single Photoshop document. A black layer mask was added to the top layer.

This will reveal the layer in the areas where you paint. If you get any over-spill with the brush, you can always paint with black to correct it.

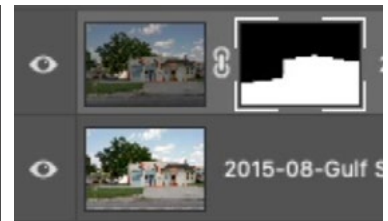
It can sometimes be useful to view the mask in the main image window. You can do this by holding down the Option key (Alt in Win) and clicking on the layer mask thumbnail. In the video example, we painted on the layer mask to create an outline around the area we wanted selected. Then, while viewing the mask in the image window, we filled that outline with white in order to completely cover the shadowed area. To exit this view, you can do the same thing. Hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) and click again on the layer mask thumbnail.



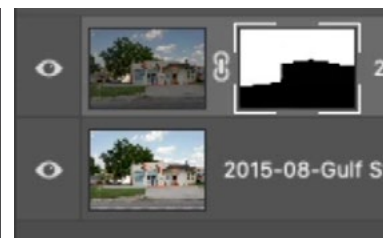
The layer mask is being viewed in the main image window. This can make it easier to see and work with the mask.

Now, depending on which layer was on top, you may or may not have the result that you want. If the bright layer (the one that was optimized for the shadows) was on top, then you WILL have the result you want, with the brighter layer only being visible in the areas that were in the shadow. If the darker layer (the one that was optimized for the sky) was on top, then you'll have the opposite of what you want.

If the mask is revealing the opposite of what you want, you can invert it by using the keyboard shortcut Command+I (Ctrl+I on Win). This is what we did in the lesson video. The dark layer was on top and we masked the layer to reveal the building and hide the sky. The result was a dark building and a bright sky. The wrong areas were masked. When we inverted the mask, the dark image became masked to hide the building, allowing the bright layer underneath to show through.



The mask hides the opposite of what we want here. The dark version of the building is visible and the overly bright version of the sky is visible.



Here, the mask was inverted to hide the building in the dark version of the image. This reveals the brighter building in the underlying layer.

Crop the image if necessary If you had to align the two layers, there is a chance that the edges of the frame won't line up, and you may have some empty canvas area around those edges. If that's the case, you can use the Crop Tool to crop those areas out of the frame.