

# Luminosity Masks

What is a mask? A mask hides parts of your face and reveals other parts of your face. This is the same concept for masks in digital photo editing. They reveal some parts of an adjustment layer and hide other parts

You can create advanced selections made by brightness (luminosity) in the photo

Luminosity masks are a method for creating good, dependable, seamless selections in Photoshop. Good for making sky selections around leaves of a tree or someone's hair against a bright background.

They allow very targeted changes, affecting only specific portions of a photo

They allow smooth blending of HDR combinations of images

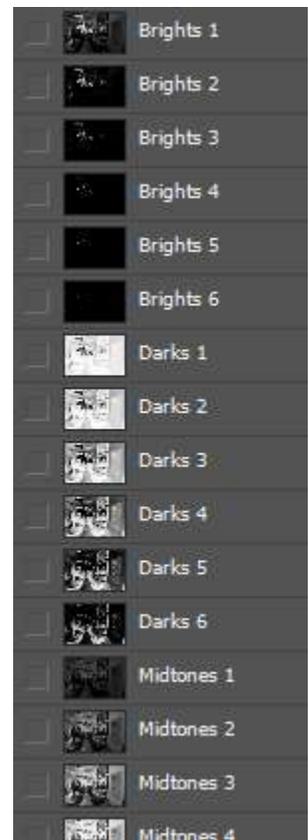
Lightroom and Adobe Camera Raw now have luminosity and color masking but third party luminosity mask tools can make better selections. These masking tools also do not work for blending two or more photos together.

Download actions or plug-in panels for Photoshop for creating luminosity masks. See two references at the end of this document. You can also create your own but it is time consuming and tedious

## HDR blending

Start with two or more photos

- Start by selecting two or more images in Bridge or Lightroom. Right click on them and select "Open As Layers in Photoshop"
- Stack the images in the Layers panel so the darkest exposure is on top and the lightest on the bottom
- Unless the exposures were taken on a tripod, select all the layers and choose Edit > Auto Align from the menu
- With the darker exposure (underexposed) layer above the lighter layer, create a totally black layer (Hide All) mask by holding the Alt (Option on a Mac) and clicking on the layer mask icon at the bottom of the layers panel
- Create the luminosity masks using actions of your choice. When completed, the Channels panel should look something like the image on the right
- Go to the Channels panel and select the channel that best reveals the areas you want to change. My experience is that a more restrictive mask often works best for luminosity painting
- CTRL + Click on that channel
- Click on the RGB channel to return to your color image
- Back on the Layers panel, select the black mask you



# Luminosity Masks

- created
- With the brush tool, and white as the foreground color, paint on the black mask in the areas selected by the luminosity mask channel to reveal the areas of the exposure you want to see
  - If you have 3 exposures, therefore, 3 layers, place the Normal exposed layer in the middle and add an all-white (Reveal All) mask to this layer
  - Paint with black on the white mask to conceal the dark mid-tones on the Normal exposure in order to allow the lighter tones from the Overexposed image on the bottom layer to show through

**Before**



**After**



This method means that instead of sliding sliders and typing numbers in control panels in HDR software, you are able to paint the effect exactly as you want it. There is almost a tactile quality to this in that you immediately see on your monitor what your painting does to the image. You can add more or less paint as

# Luminosity Masks

desired and can easily reverse what you did. Nothing is permanent with the masks. As the image develops in Photoshop, you can even return and update the blending masks if need be.

You are determining how the blend occurs and how it will look in the end.

## **Luminosity Mask tools**

Shutter Evolve – Jimmy McIntyre - <http://www.shutterevolve.com/>

The Easy Panel is free

Raya Pro - \$45 – very powerful;

Tony Kuyper - <http://goodlight.us/index.html>

Free Actions – work in Elements

Free Panel

Advanced Panel - \$35