

Various Ways to Dodge And Burn Images

The dodge and burn tools in Photoshop are very important tools and I use them on most of my photographs.

They are found in the left hand tool box – also grouped with the sponge tool.

In most images you can dodge highlights if they are not white enough and burn the shadows to give more contrast. Photoshop CS3 and earlier had quite rudimentary dodge and burn tools but they are much improved in CS4 and 5. The sponge tool is used to saturate and desaturate areas that you use it on.

You can dodge and burn straight on to your images but I have found that there are better nondestructive ways of doing this which I will try to explain below.

Method 1: Using a 50% gray overlay

With an image open hold down the Alt key and click on the new layer icon at the bottom of the layers palette. This brings up the new layer box. Name the layer dodge & burn, choose Overlay in the Mode box and put a check in the box against Fill with Overlay-neutral colour (50% gray). Click OK. You will see in the layers palette a new gray layer but it will not affect the colour of the image. Choose the paint brush tool, make the colours black and white and the brush opacity is around 15%. Make sure that the gray layer is selected and paint black on it to burn (darken) and white to dodge (lighten) in the places where you want it. Work over the image with the brush to lighten or darken it as much as needed. Using the gray layer means that you do not get the saturation boost that you get when dodging and burning straight on to the image and the file size does not get bigger.

Method 2:

This is the same but use two different gray layers. One for dodging and the other for burning.

Method 3:

With an image open create a new curves adjustment layer by clicking on the Create New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the layers palette and click on Curves. Pull the centre of the curve up a bit. Type in 125 in the input box and 190 in the output box. Click OK. This will make the image lighter overall. In the Blend Mode box at the top of the layers palette, where it says Normal, change it to Luminosity. Click on the curves mask, the white box next to the curve on the curve layer. Click Ctrl I, the mask will then be filled with black. The black hides the lightening effect of the curves. Click on the black mask to make sure it is selected. To dodge use white as your foreground colour and a paint brush of about 15% opacity and paint on the image. To burn use another layer the same but instead of pulling the curve up, pull it down and type in 127 in the input box and 63 in the output box. Use white as the foreground colour and paint over the image. It is better to use a low opacity and paint over the images as much as needed to achieve the desired effect. This method also prevents any colour shifts in the image. Use black to paint over any area you want to undo.

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