The Mysterious Missing Mask (Photoshop)

Tip of the Week by Jan Walker on February 22, 2011

You’ve got a photo that needs some selective lightening and darkening. So how do you dodge and burn on an image without wrecking the original? There’s no adjustment layer or layer mask for that.

Well, you could duplicate the image layer, and use the trial and error method, dodging and burning -- and undoing history states until you get it just right -- but it’s so much easier to use the mysterious missing mask.

Huh, you say? Check it out...

Step 1: Discover the missing mask...

* Open an image that needs dodging or burning -- or both.

* Hold down the Alt (Mac: Option) key and click on the Create a New Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers Panel.
* A New Layer dialog box will pop up. You can name the new layer, if you want to. I’ll call mine D/B Mask.
* Set the Color to None.
* Set the Mode to Overlay, and the Opacity to 100%.
* Check the box beside Fill with Overlay-neutral color (50% gray). Click OK.
* A gray layer will appear just above your original image layer. That’s your mask.

**Step 2: Dodge, baby, dodge (or burn, baby, burn)!**

* Make sure your color chips are set to their default position of black over white. If they aren’t, press D to return them to default.
* Get the brush tool, choose a soft brush and lower the opacity substantially... I set mine to 15% -- it’s easy to overdo dodging and burning. Better to under-do it, and go over the area again if you need to lighten it more.
* If you need to lighten (dodge) an area of your image, set the foreground color chip to white by pressing X.
* Adjust the size of your brush tool to fit the area you’re working with and “paint” on that light!

* If you need to darken (burn) an area of your image, set the foreground color back to black by pressing X or D.
* Adjust the size of your brush if you need to, and “paint” in the darkness.
* Once you’re satisfied with the look of your image, save it as a .jpg under a new name.
And that’s how you dodge and burn without affecting your original image. Have fun with the Tip, and don’t forget to show us your before and after images in the Tip of the Week Gallery!

Credits:
Tip of the Week: Jan Walker
Software: Adobe Photoshop CS5
Photo: Jan Walker

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