

VISUAL QUICKSTART GUIDE



Adobe Photoshop

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Layer Masks and Adjustment Layers

Every time you add an adjustment layer, (see Chapter 9) you get a blank layer mask thrown in. If you have an active selection when you choose the adjustment layer, the non-selected areas will be black on the resulting layer mask. If you add the adjustment layer without an active selection, the layer mask attached to it will start out white, and so it has no effect—until you paint on it in black or gray to limit the adjustment to specific parts of the image.

To use a layer mask with an adjustment layer:

1. Make a selection of the part of the image you want to adjust, and choose Add Layer Mask (**FIGURE 7.32**). Depending on the result you're after, you may want to inverse the selection (Ctrl+Shift+I/Command+Shift+I).
2. Choose an adjustment layer from the menu at the bottom of the Layers panel (🔧).
3. If necessary, choose a painting tool and paint on the layer mask in black or white to refine the mask.

TIP If the adjustment is intended to affect less than half of the image, fill the layer mask with black, and then paint in the adjustment by painting with white on the layer mask.

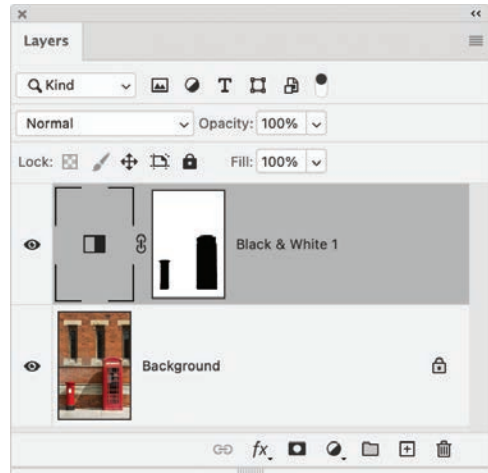


FIGURE 7.32 The Object Selection tool is used to select the mailbox and telephone box. The selection is inverted (Select > Inverse), and then a black and white adjustment layer is chosen (Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Black & White), turning the background monochrome.



FIGURE 7.33 In this example, the document is made up of two image layers.

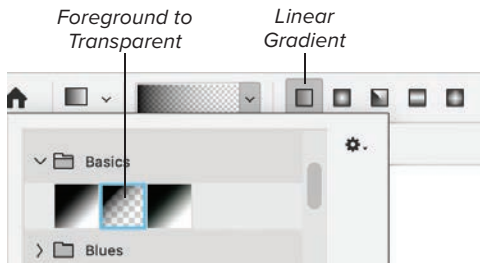


FIGURE 7.34 The gradient picker on the Options bar



FIGURE 7.35 Build up the gradient layer mask with multiple swipes to achieve the desired result.

Gradient Layer Masks

You can use a gradient layer mask to achieve a subtle transition from one image to another.

To apply a gradient mask:

1. Create a document with two or more image layers (**FIGURE 7.33**).
2. Add a layer mask to the top layer by selecting the layer and clicking the Add Layer Mask icon (■).
3. If necessary, restore the foreground colors to black and white by pressing X.
4. Select the Gradient tool. From the gradient picker, choose the Foreground To Transparent gradient and a linear gradient (**FIGURE 7.34**).
5. Making sure the layer mask is selected, make multiple swipes of the Gradient tool (from right to left in this case) to build up the gradient layer mask cumulatively (**FIGURE 7.35**).



VIDEO 7.5 Working with Gradient Layer Masks

You can also use a gradient layer mask in combination with adjustment layers to achieve a seamless transition from an adjusted to a non-adjusted portion of the image. This is particularly useful when you want to fix exposure in an image by darkening or lightening one side of the image, leaving the other side unchanged.

To apply a gradient mask to an adjustment layer:

1. Add a Curves adjustment layer (**FIGURE 7.36**).
2. Pull up the curve from the shadow area to increase the exposure (**FIGURE 7.37**).
3. To restore part of the image (in this case, the sky) to how it was before the adjustment, use a Foreground (black) to Transparent gradient on the layer mask that comes with the Curves adjustment: Select the layer mask, and drag from the top about halfway down the image. If necessary, you can make multiple swipes with the Gradient tool, to build the gradient layer mask cumulatively (**FIGURE 7.38**).



FIGURE 7.36 The image is intentionally underexposed to enhance the intensity of the sunrise.

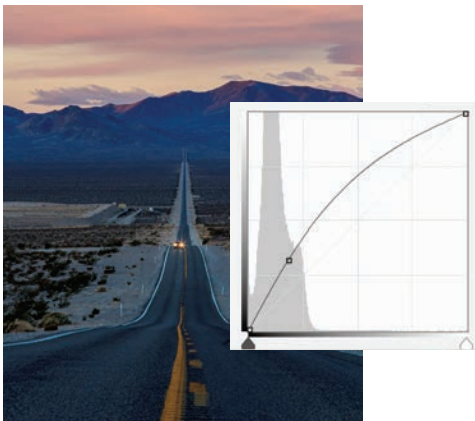


FIGURE 7.37 Pulling up the curve adds light, improving the exposure in the lower two thirds of the image, but at the same time causes the sky to become overexposed.



FIGURE 7.38 To restore the sky, a Foreground (black) to Transparent gradient is added to the layer mask, dragging from the top of the image. Where the gradient is black it protects the layer from the curve adjustment.

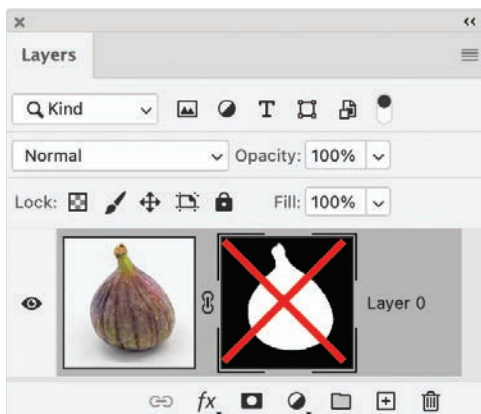


FIGURE 7.39 The layer mask disabled



FIGURE 7.40 Different ways of viewing the same thing: the image with layer mask applied (left); viewing the mask itself

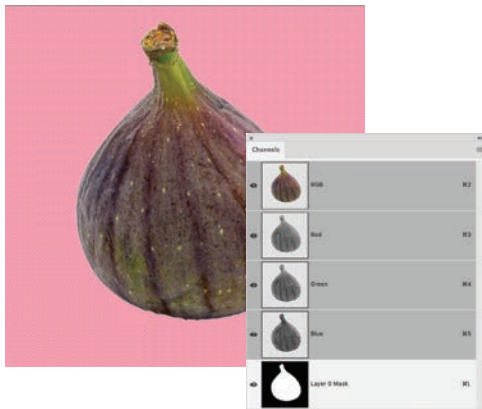


FIGURE 7.41 Viewing the layer mask as a color overlay

TIP When viewing a mask as a color overlay, the mask color has no effect on how the masked areas of the layer are protected.

Managing Layer Masks

Here are some essential techniques for keeping on top of your layer masks.

While editing, it's useful to swap back and forth between seeing a layer with and without its mask. Likewise, it's sometimes easier to understand and edit a layer mask by viewing it in grayscale or as a color overlay on the layer. You can toggle these views as often as necessary.

To disable or enable a layer mask:

1. To see the layer without its mask, Shift-click the mask thumbnail in the Layers panel. A red X appears over the mask thumbnail, and all the layer's content becomes visible (**FIGURE 7.39**).
2. Shift-click again to enable the mask.

To view a mask as grayscale:

1. Alt/Option-click the layer mask thumbnail to view just the grayscale mask (**FIGURE 7.40**).
2. Alt/Option-click the layer mask thumbnail again to view the layer. Alternatively, click the eye icon on the Properties panel.

To view the mask as a color overlay:

1. Alt/Option+Shift-click the layer mask thumbnail to view the mask as a color overlay. Or, open the Channels panel and click the eyeball next to the layer mask (**FIGURE 7.41**).
2. If you need to change the layer mask color—perhaps for more contrast against the colors in the image—double-click the layer mask channel in the Channels panel and choose a new mask color in the Layer Mask Display Options dialog.

To apply or delete a layer mask:

1. To permanently apply a layer mask, right-click the layer mask thumbnail, then choose Apply Layer Mask. But, be careful: any pixels made fully or partially transparent by the layer mask are permanently deleted, and can't be recovered except through Undo.
2. To delete a layer mask without applying the changes, right-click the layer mask thumbnail and choose Delete Layer Mask (**FIGURE 7.42**).

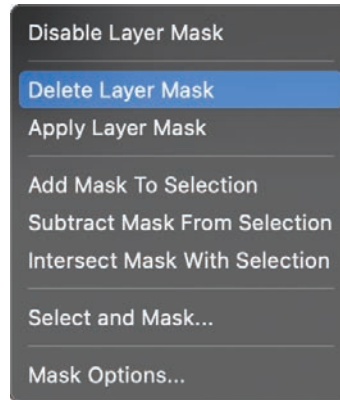


FIGURE 7.42 Deleting the layer mask restores the layer to its unmasked state.

Mask Properties

The Properties panel (**FIGURE 7.43**) is the place to adjust the density (opacity), the amount of feather applied to the edges of a selected layer mask or vector mask, and more.

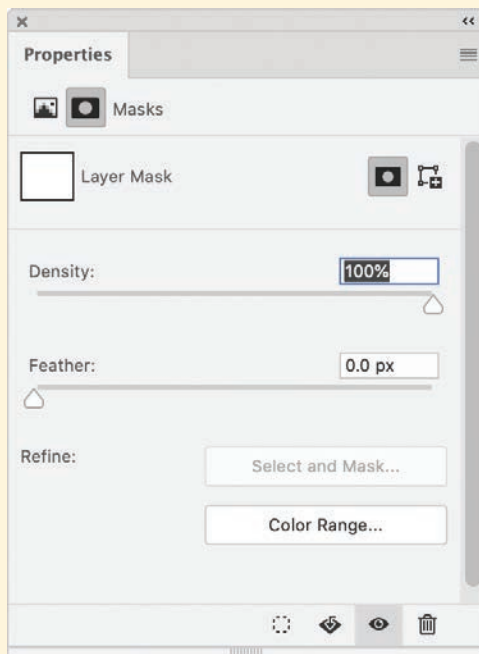


FIGURE 7.43 Double-click a layer mask to bring up the Properties panel.

- **Density** lets you control mask opacity non-destructively. At 100%, the mask is opaque and conceals any underlying area of the layer. Reducing the density shows more of the area under the mask.
- **Feathering** blurs the edges of the mask to create a softer transition between the masked and unmasked areas. The feathering goes both ways from the mask edge.

You can also apply a couple of Refine options to layer masks.

- **Select and Mask** lets you modify mask edges using the Select and Mask dialog box, as well as view the mask against different backgrounds. By default, changes are output to a new mask.
- **Color Range** lets you refine the mask using the color range options. The color range you create will intersect with already selected portions of the mask, meaning that you'll end up with less of the layer visible than before.

The Invert button reverses white and black. Hidden areas become visible, and vice versa.

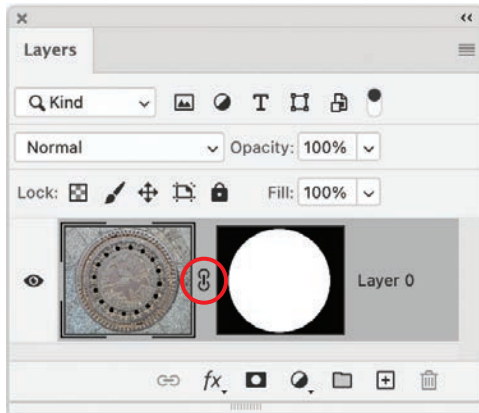


FIGURE 7.44 The link between layer and mask

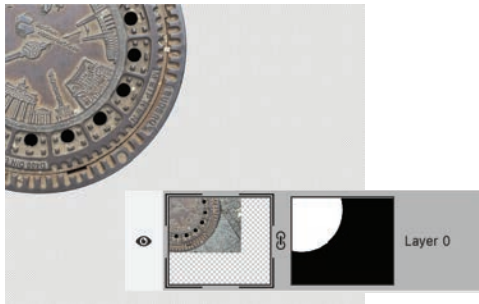


FIGURE 7.45 When a layer and its mask are linked, both are moved or transformed together.

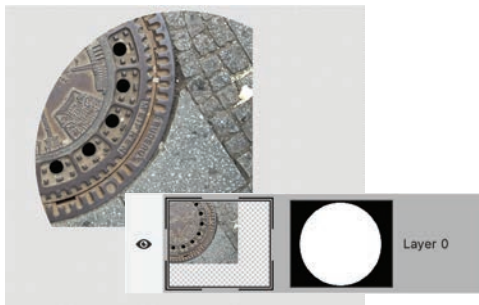


FIGURE 7.46 When they are not linked, either the mask or the layer can be moved independently.

Linked layers and masks

By default, a layer or group is linked to its layer mask or vector mask—you'll see a link icon between the thumbnails in the Layers panel (**FIGURE 7.44**). When you move or transform (scale, rotate, etc.) either the layer or the mask, both layer and mask are moved or transformed together (**FIGURE 7.45**). Unlinking the layer from its mask lets you move the mask's boundaries separately from the layer (**FIGURE 7.46**).

To unlink layers and masks:

- Click the link icon to link/unlink the layer and its mask.