

Photoshop Elements Lesson

Adjustment Layers and Masks
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Adjustment Layers allow you to adjust all or part of a image and come in several flavors: Levels, Brightness/Contrast, Hue/Saturation, Gradient Map, Photo Filter, Invert, Threshold, Posterize. Adjustment Layers are available in both Photoshop and Photoshop Elements, however you will find more adjustment layer types in Photoshop CS3/4.

There are two distinguishing features of Adjustment Layers

1. They allow you to adjust only part of the image
2. They allow you to change the adjustment later

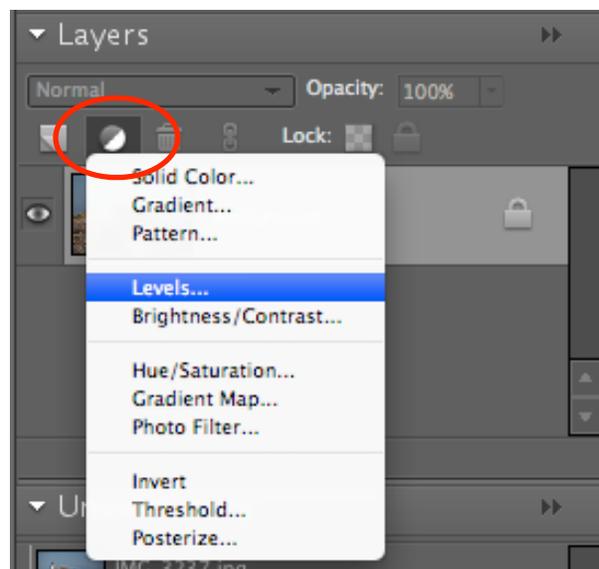
Layers:

In Photoshop and Photoshop Elements, changes to an image can be “layered” on top of one another with different opacities and blending modes. Think of a layer as putting a transparency on top of your image and making changes on the transparency. Layers allow you to make incremental changes to your image and apply that change in a variety of ways. Regular layers are created by creating a new layer and adding something to such as text or another image, or by copying an existing layer and then making some change to that copy. You may want to use a Layer if you are going to do something complicated and want the easiest way to get back to your original or if you want to only apply the change at a partial opacity.

Adjustment Layers:

Adjustment Layers are another kind of layer which allow you to make an adjustment against all the layers below it. Adjustment layers allow you to go back at anytime and adjust the layer settings. Adjustment Layers also come with layer mask. The layer mask allows you to control where the adjustment is applied.

★To create an Adjustment Layer go to the Layer Menu and choose **Layer > New Adjustment Layer ...** or use the **Create Adjustment Layer icon** in the Layers Pallet (as seen on the right)

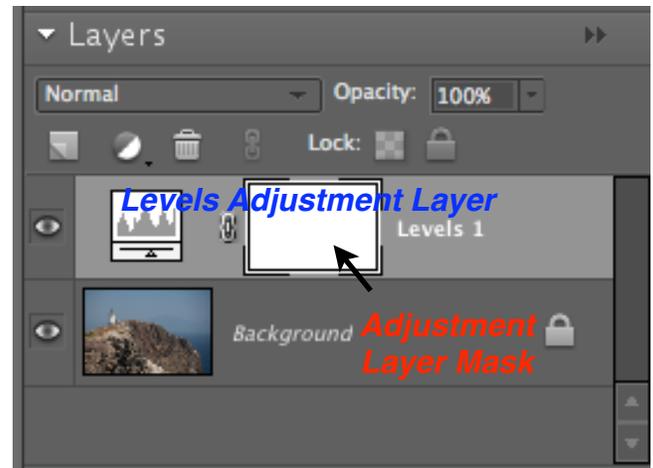


Adjustment Layer Mask:

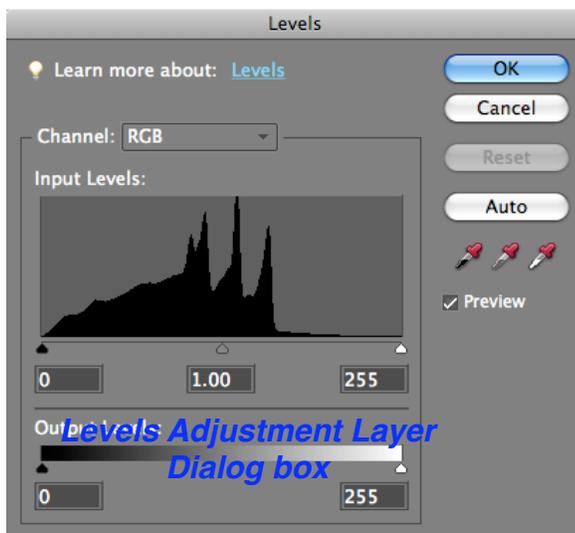
When an Adjustment Layer is created, it is created with an Adjustment Layer Mask. The mask allows you to select where in the image to apply the adjustment.

The mask provides a gray-scale drawing surface the size of your image. Where ever you create a black area on the mask, the effects of the adjustment layer are **masked out** of your final image. A gray area masks out with an opacity equal to the gray level. White applies the full strength adjustment. You can use many different tools to “draw” on the mask, for example the paint brush, paint can, or copy and paste from any other layer.

★ To work with the Adjustment Layer Mask, make sure the layer is selected and showing light gray. Then click on the mask area. It will show a double line around its border as is shown in the figure on the right. Make sure your foreground color is black or some value of gray.



Example: Adjust part of the image with a Levels Adjustment Mask



1. Select the top most layer (or the Background layer if you only have one layer).
2. Create a new Levels Adjustment Layer, the layer will be created above the previously selected layer and the adjustment dialog box will open.
3. Adjust the parameters as desired and click OK. (Use the Preview button to toggle on/off your adjustment while you are making the change.)
4. Mask out the adjustment on part of the image by drawing with black on the Layer Mask with any drawing tool such as the brush tool.

Free Layer Mask Tool for Photoshop Elements

In the full Photoshop CS3/4 program, layer masks can be applied to any layer. This is a feature that is missing in Photoshop Element and the biggest differentiator for photographers between the two programs. However, there is a free Layer Mask Tool that adds this capability to PSE.

<http://graphicssoft.about.com/od/pselements/qt/layermasktool.htm>