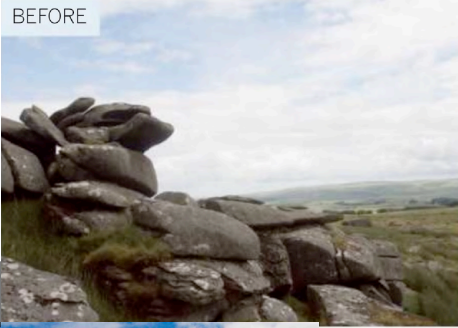


BEFORE



AFTER



Adjustment Layer Masks In Action

Discover How To Modify an Adjustment Layer's Mask To Modify Selected Areas Only Rather Than The Whole Photo

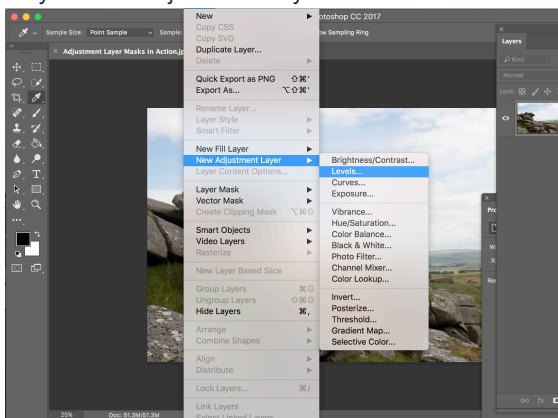
Layer masks are a powerful tool because they enable you to modify selections made by Photoshop's selection tools until they are perfect. By painting white or black strokes on a mask you can show or hide pixels on the image layer the mask is attached to. This enables you to hide an unwanted sky, for example, and show through a more interesting one on another layer underneath.

But layer masks are also invaluable when it comes to common image adjustments. In fact, every adjustment layer you create comes with a ready to use layer mask.

In the case of our starting image here we need to darken the over-exposed sky with a levels adjustment layer to reveal missing detail and color. However, this will plunge the correctly exposed foreground rocks into silhouette. We can apply black paint to specific sections of the mask so that it only darkens the sky.

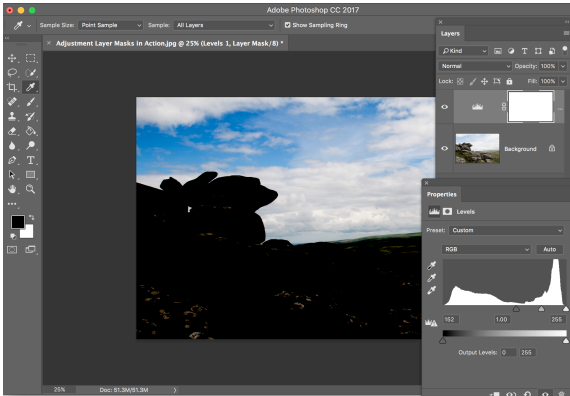
1. Create an Adjustment Layer

Open the "Adjustment Masks in Action.jpeg" image. The sky is over-exposed. To restore sky detail, from the menu bar go to "Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels." Click OK. A Levels adjustment layer will appear in the Layers panel.



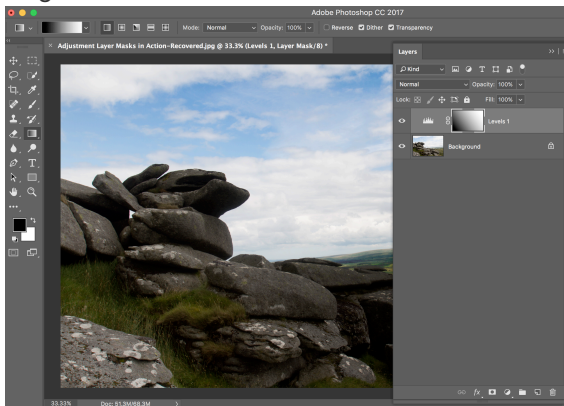
2. Darken the Sky

In the adjustment layer panel, we've dragged the black point slider right across to the right to darken the sky. This 'clips' all the darker information in the rocks so that they come out as a near solid black, but that doesn't matter because of what we're going to do next.



3. Mask the Rocks

Select the layer mask thumbnail in the layers panel to edit it. Add a black-white gradient (using the gradient tool) on a slight diagonal so that the black area 'masks' the rocks from the levels adjustments made.



4. Subtle is Best

Look at your results. The sky is darkened nicely, and by using the gradient tool we've blended this darkening effect subtly with the rest of the photo.

