



The Healing Tools

Master the Healing Brush, Spot Healing Brush, and Clone Stamp tools for speedy image tidying and flawless retouching

In this lesson, we'll look at the two healing tools: the Spot Healing Brush and the older Healing Brush. They're most commonly used to tidy up images, a task at which they excel. Whether you need to get rid of a sensor mark, hide an annoying landmark or remove imperfections on skin, the healing tools are the number one choice. Both brushes could be described as Intelligent - they analyze the area you want to fix and come up with a solution of their own.

The Healing Brush works in a similar way to the Clone Stamp tool. Hold down Alt to target a source area, and then use this region to paint over your imperfections. It's most effective when you target an area of similar tone and color. For example, if you wanted to remove a pimple, hold down Alt and click a clean area next to the spot. Then paint over it and watch it disappear. The tool differs from the Clone Stamp tool in that it will automatically recognize the area you want to remove, and in most cases, match the tones and colors for a seamless fix.

The Spot Healing Brush there's no need to hold down Alt and define a source - you simply paint over the problem area and the tool performs a neat trick. This is one aid guaranteed to impress any non-Photoshop user who happens to be looking over your shoulder. A couple of clicks are all it takes to look like a retouching pro. The Healing Brush gives greater control, but because the Spot Healing Brush doesn't require you to define a source, it's probably the more useful of the two. There is also a great feature called Content-Aware. This makes your fixes far more intelligent, as you'll see...

Perfect portraits with healing tools

Eradicate skin problems, tone down bags under the eyes and de-wrinkle your subjects

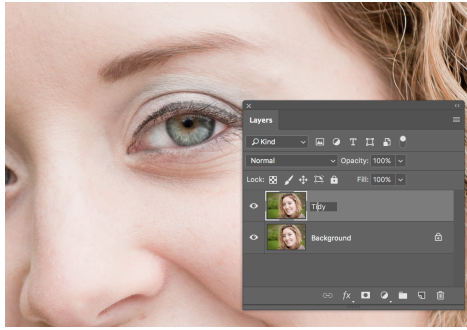
The healing tools are most effective when you use them to remove marks or blemishes from clean areas. This makes them ideal for working over skin to get rid of pimples, tone down any unattractive lines and give your subjects a bit of polish. In fact, the tools perform so well that the temptation is often to go too far when retouching a face. Luckily, when you overdo it, you have the option to tone down your healing strokes, as long as you create a new, empty layer above your image layer, then check Sample All Layers in the Options bar. Once you've made your corrections, lower the opacity of the layer to make the effect subtler.

The Spot Healing Brush feeds on nearby pixels to perform its miraculous fixes, so it's important that they're smooth, clean and low contrast. Try removing a stray strand of hair against a neutral background and the tool will do a grand job. But then try healing a grey strand in the thick of someone's hair. More often than not you'll get blotchy results. With experience, you'll soon learn to recognize the areas where the tool will perform well, and also which ones to avoid.

Remove Blemishes

1. Duplicate background

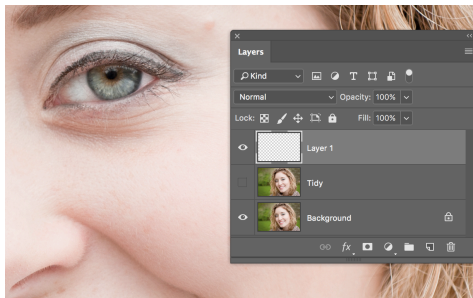
Open a portrait and press Command J to duplicate your Background layer. Rename it 'Tidy'. Select the Spot Healing Brush and dab over areas needing a fix. Use the square bracket keys to resize your brush as you work.



2. Start healing

Switch to the Healing Brush to work on edge areas that need more control.

Hold down Alt and define a source similar to the area you'd like to fix, and then paint over it. Then go to the Layers Panel and click Create new layer to get a new layer.



3. Sample all layers

Switch to the healing brush then go to the Options bar and check Sample All Layers. Zoom in and paint around any blemishes you want to remove. Afterwards, reduce the opacity of your new layer to 50% to fade the effect.

