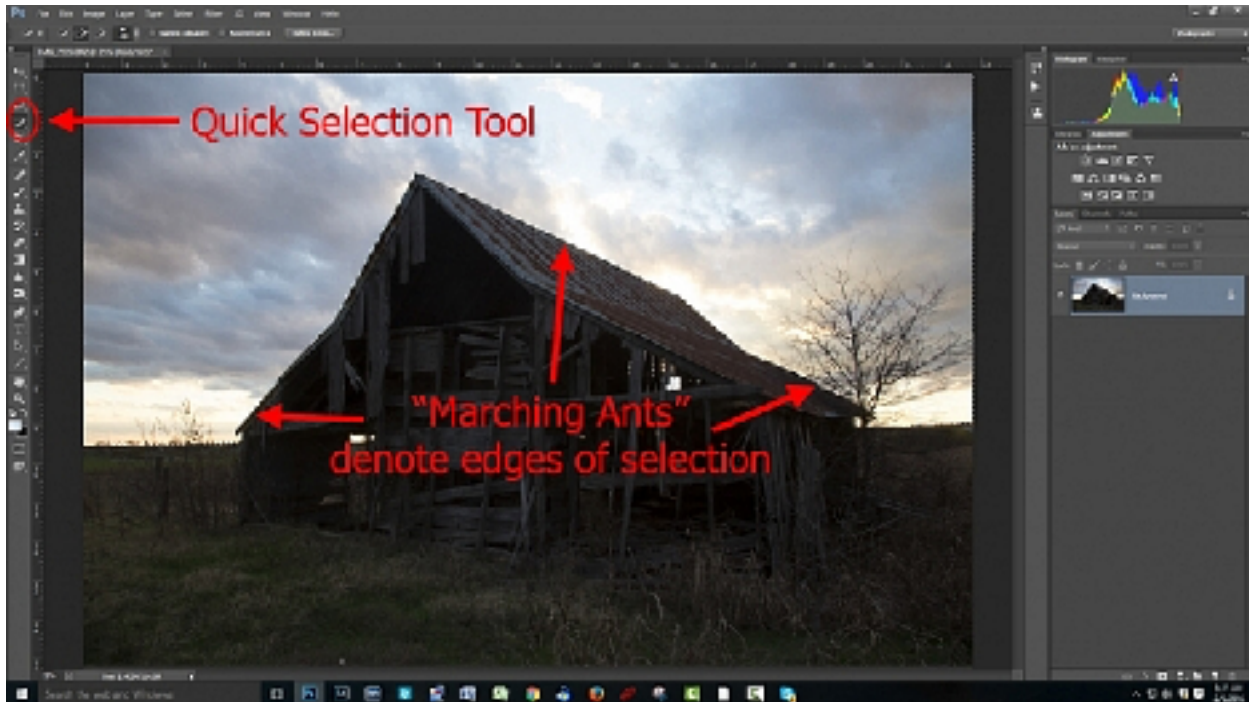
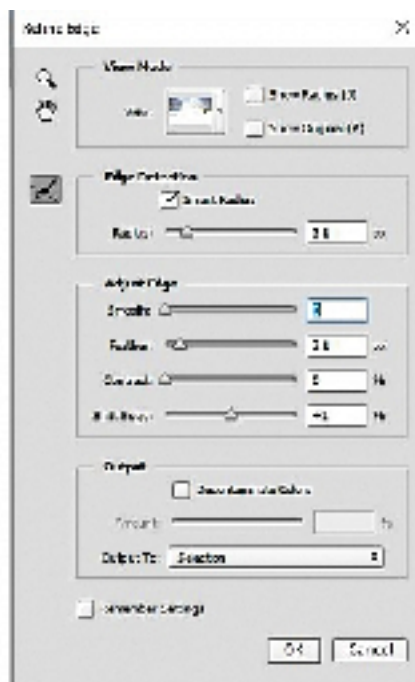


Layer Masks Tutorial

1. The goal is to lighten the barn and grass and darken the sky using layer masks
2. To darken the sky in the image, the first thing you need to do is select all the pixels in the sky. To do so, use the PEN tool to create a selection or use the Quick Selection or the Magnetic Lasso tool from your tools panel.



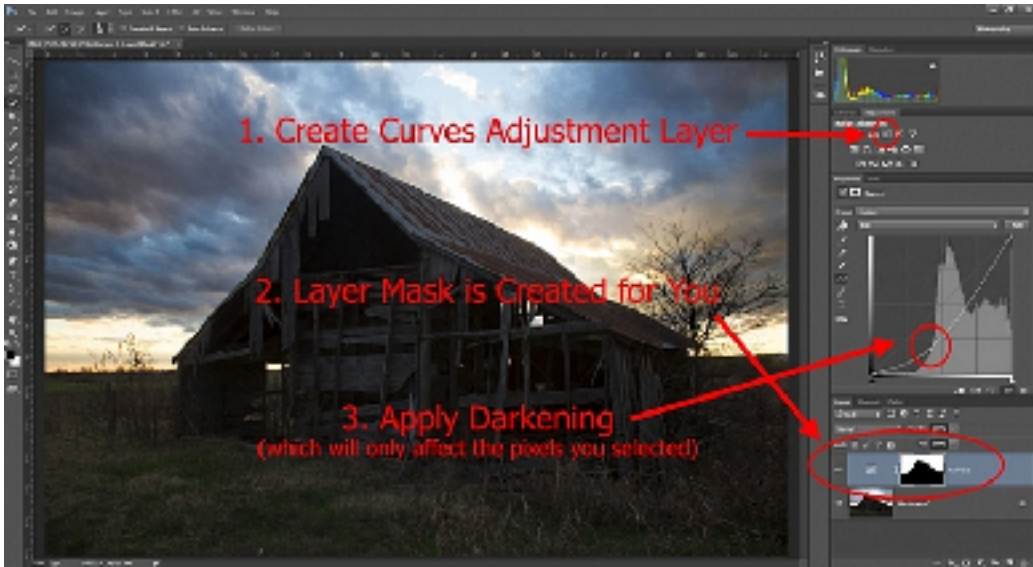
3. Once you make your selection, you can refine it a bit if you wish. GO TO> SELECT> Refine Edge dialog box and make adjustments there. Here just experiment with the different settings to get the selection you want.....



Layer Masks Tutorial

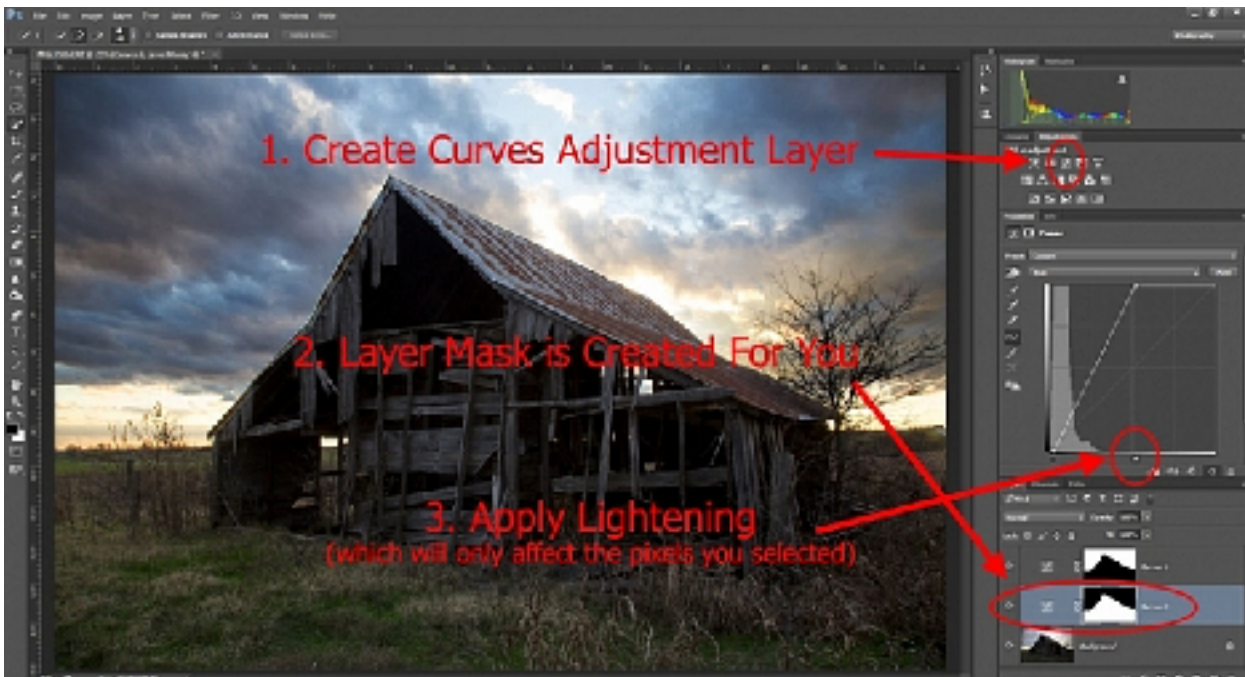
4. Add a Curves adjustment layer to begin darkening the sky. Just pull the line down to the picture. Pull it down to the left of the main cluster of pixels so that the curve is steepened through that main cluster.

You could also use a LEVELS adjustment layer.....if you know LEVELS better.



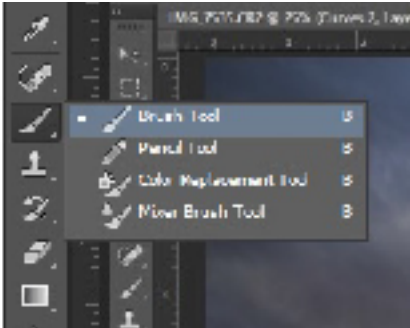
5. GO TO (Select > Inverse). You now have a selection of everything but the sky, which is what you want.

6. Create a Curves adjustment layer (or whatever tool you prefer to use) and apply the effect. Once you brighten the foreground, here is how it looks:



Layer Masks Tutorial

7. You may find that there are parts of the image that don't look quite right. Perhaps there are pixels included in one of your masks that you didn't want, or conversely you missed pixels that should have been in the image. You can clean up the mask after the fact. I find that the easiest way is to use the Brush tool.



8. Select the Brush tool on the tools panel. Once you do so, pay attention to the foreground color, that which the brush will use.

If you set the brush to white, it will add to a selection (show the layer through the mask).

If you set the brush to black, it will remove pixels from the selection (hide the layer with the mask). Some keyboard shortcuts to keep in mind are B to bring up the Brush tool in the first place, then D to make sure the colors are set to the default (black and white), and finally X to switch between black and white.



Press "D" to ensure colors set to black and white

Press "X" to switch between black and white

The Brush tool is great because you can set the hardness of the edge. Start by keeping it at its softest setting, and just changing the size of the Brush by using the bracket keys [and]. Use it to touch up the selection (mask) where needed (make sure you are painting on the mask NOT on the actual layer). Another tip is to press ALT (option on a Mac) while clicking on the mask in your layers palette, which will cause the screen to display the mask only. That way you can see exactly where your mask is being applied. Press ALT again while clicking on the mask to go back to normal view.

Once you have done this a few times and start to master it, there are a lot of other additional techniques you can add to further enhance your photos. For example, while this article showed you how to use masks where you have defined edges, you can gradually blend in effects using masks as well. Further, while in this article we only affected brightness, you can use layer masks to affect color, brightness, and contrast to a great degree.

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