

HOW TO: Digital Blend

Digital cameras have a dynamic range of 6 1/2 stops from the lightest (highlights) to the darkest (shadows) areas. Many times the scene we want to capture digitally or even on film exceeds the capabilities of the medium. In film we use a split neutral density filter to correct for the extended range making our scene reproducible on film. In the digital realm we can shoot two shots (on a tripod) one for the highlight area and another for the shadow area and blend them together creating one image with good highlight and shadow area.

Technique:

- 1) Photograph your subject on a tripod.
 - Expose one image for the highlights
 - Expose a second image for the shadows
- 2) Open the two images in Adobe Photoshop
- 3) Hold the shift key on the keyboard
 - Drag one image onto the other image file. (dark image on top)
 - (By holding the shift key, Photoshop will center the image on the canvas)
 - The dark layer, will hide the lighter layer below. (You cannot see the other exposure)
- 4) Create a layer mask on the top layer
- 5) Choose a soft large brush and paint on the layer mask to reveal the exposure below.

-Option: Command "i", will inverse the mask layer revealing the layer below. You can then paint back in the top layer. Use what ever way works for you. I use both ways depending on my image.

Another Technique (Technique credited to: George DeWolfe of CameraArt's Magazine)

- 1) Photograph your subject on a tripod.
 - Expose one image for the highlights
 - Expose a second image for the shadows
- 2) Open the two images in Adobe Photoshop
- 3) Hold the shift key on the keyboard
 - Drag one image onto the other image file.
- 4) Create a layer mask on the top layer (white)
- 5) Click on the background layer
 - command "a" to select the background layer
 - command "c" to copy the background layer
- 6) Hold the option (control for PC) key click on the white layer mask. (the image turns white)
- 7) Command "v" to paste the background layer into the layer mask. (now you have a B&W mask image)
- 8) With the B&W mask displayed -go to Filters -Blur -Gaussian Blur
 - Set the radius to 40
- 9) Click on the background layer
 - Done

-Don't forget, white balance, color correction, and cleaning up of the image (dust etc.)
-EXPLORE