

Selective Sharpening/Blurring

Need to selectively sharpen or blur part of an image? If so try one of these procedures. I use it to sharpen a portrait, sharpening the eyes but not the rest of the skin.

Procedure 1

This procedure will also use Snapshots and the History brush that may be new to you.

First turn on Allow non-linear history. You can do this by going to the History palette and using the flyout menu (left click on the little arrow at the right of the History Tab) then choose History Options and then check Allow Non Linear History. This will save History states but allow you to step over them.

- 1) Open an image and then use the Unsharp Mask filter with a very high Amount setting. Be bold and use values in the 400 to 500 range.
- 2) Create a Snapshot by going to the bottom of the History palette and clicking on the Camera icon.
- 3) Make the History State prior to the Unsharp Mask state the active state. You will now be operating on the image prior to the Unsharp Mask operation.
- 4) Go the Snapshot that you created in Step 2 and check the leftmost square in the Snapshot. That will allow that snapshot to be the pixel source for the History Brush.
- 5) Select the History Brush tool in the Tool palette.
- 6) Set the Opacity of the History Brush to a small value, maybe 25%. This allows you to control the amount of the sharpened effect from the Snapshot that will be applied to the image. Also select the size of the brush you desire to use.
- 7) You are now ready to selectively sharpen the image.
- 8) Using the History Brush paint over the portion of the image you want to sharpen. If you do not release the mouse button or release the tablet pen you will only sharpen the image to the degree set by the Opacity of the brush. If you want to sharpen more release the mouse or pen and paint again.
- 9) You can also selectively blur an image using the same basic technique replacing the Unsharp Mask filter with a Gaussian Blur one in the procedure above.

Procedure 2

This procedure has the added flexibility of not permanently altering any pixels in the base image.

- 1 - duplicate your image onto a new layer
- 2 - use Unsharp Mask at a high setting on the new top layer (the settings you recommended would work fine)
- 3 - adjust the opacity of that layer downward to taste
- 4 - delete the areas that you don't want sharpened on the top layer using 1 (or more) of 3 ways depending on the specifics of the image:
 - A. For small areas: use the erase tool set to brush - fine tuning accomplished by adjusting the brush opacity setting
 - B. For large areas such as sky - Make selections, feathering, and cutting them
 - C. For maximum flexibility - create a layer mask on the sharpened layer and masking out the areas I don't want sharp using any of the painting tools, selection tools or gradient tool. This allows me to come back later and resharpen or unsharpen areas by manipulating the layer mask with either black or white - perfect for fine tuning later.

As in Procedure 1, the same technique can also be used for blurring portions of an image. This is useful in portraits to soften blotchy or wrinkled skin.