

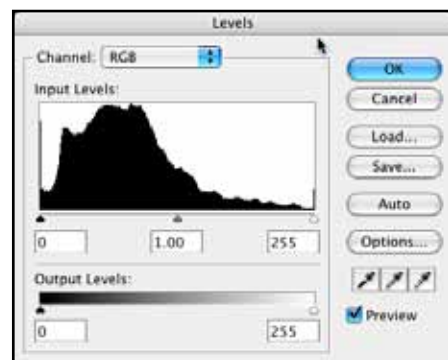
Using the Shadows and Highlights Tool

by Photographer Raymond Klass

Photoshop® has come out with another interesting tool that is perhaps the best new feature since *Image Adjustment Layers*. Called the *Shadow / Highlight* tool, it enables photographers in particular to deal with those often tough lighting conditions we find in the field. Best of all, the tool is essentially a one step solution to implement.

This is a feature you will likely find handy, but not appropriate for all images. It works best with images where either the *Highlights* are too bright, *but not blown out*, or the *Shadows* are too dark, *but not blocked up*, or both need some extra manipulation to look their best. I use this tool if levels won't cut it to fix the exposure issues. These images most often have a very high contrast range.

Looking at the image to the right, it would seem obvious to take the image in *Levels* and begin lightening the dark foreground to bring some detail into the grassy shore. The issue with this approach is that the sky is so bright we would lose any detail in that strip.



If we were to try and darken the sky and regain some of that detail, we would further block up the already dark foreground.

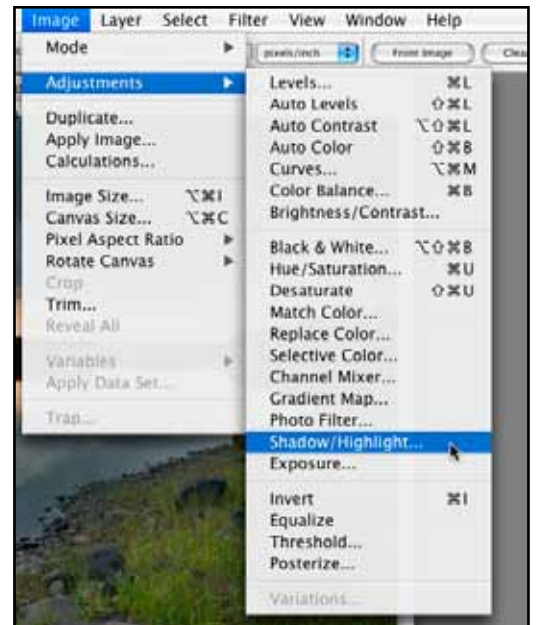
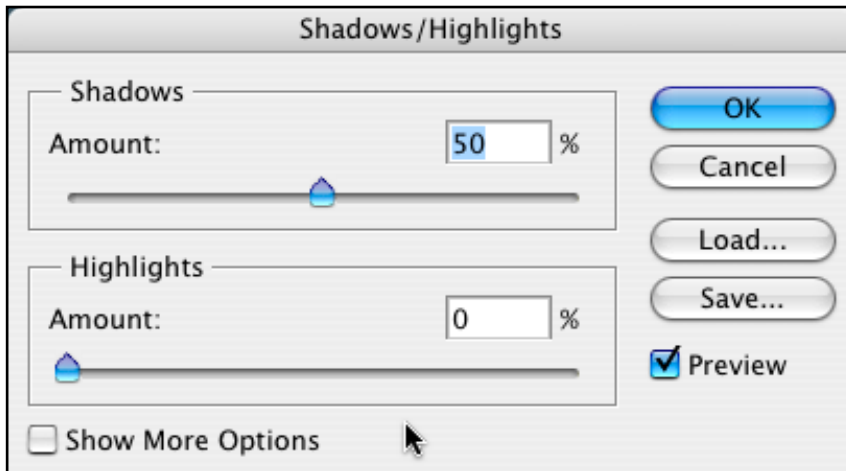
Luckily this instance is where the *Shadow / Highlight* tool excels. It allows us to do different corrections to the *Highlights* and the *Shadows*.

Step 1. Open an image that would be appropriate to use the *Shadow / Highlight* tool with. Basically you are looking for an image that you would like to treat the *Shadows* and *Highlights* differently. Darkening the already bright *highlights*, and lightening the dark *shadow* areas.

Step 2. If your *Layers* palette is not already open, click *Window: Layers* to open the palette. If there is more than one layer, you will need to flatten the image. Do this by clicking the *Layers* menu and then selecting the *Flatten Image* option.



Step 3. Click the *Image* menu and the select *Adjustments*, and finally click on the *Shadow / Highlight* option to select the *Shadow / Highlight* tool.



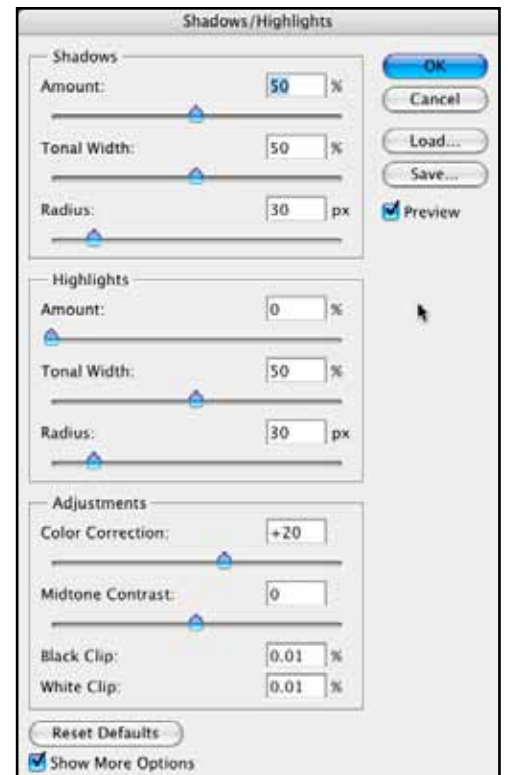
Step 4. If this is the first time you are using the tool, the basic version of the tool will come up by default. While this watered-down version can be effective for some images, I would recommend at least giving yourself the option of using the rest of the controls. Click *Show More Options* if it is not already checked.

Step 5. This brings up the advanced view of the *Shadow / Highlights* tool. You will notice that the box is divided into 3 sections, *Shadows*, *Highlights*, and *Adjustments*.

The *Shadows* and the *Highlights* boxes have three identical sliders. They do the same job, just that they affect different areas of the image, the *Shadows* adjustments only affecting the *Shadows* and so on.

The *Amount* slider controls how much lightening of the *Shadows*, or darkening of the *Highlights* will occur. The *Tonal Width* slider controls what Photoshop® considers *Highlights* or *Shadows*. Sliding it to the right lets Photoshop® act on more tones, while to the left limits the tones. The *Radius* box controls the transition area between the *Highlight* or *Shadow*, and the rest of the image.

Finally, the *Adjustments* panel has two sliders to help correct color and tone that can become unnatural when lightening and darkening are done to an image, the nice thing about all of these sliders is that you can see what they are doing to the image as you slide them, and base your adjustments by sight.



First for this image, I will adjust the **Shadows**. Of course, if an image only needs adjustments in the **Shadows** or **Highlights**, feel free to skip one of the boxes, here we will be adjusting both. I begin by sliding the **Amount** slider to **100%**. This helps me judge just what tones are being affected by the **Tonal Width** slider just below. I watch the image, and slide the **Tonal Width** slider back and forth until just the areas I want to adjust are being affected.

Next, I return to the **Amount** slider, and slide it back until I get the desired tone in the **Shadows**. Finally, I go to the **Radius** slider. This slider is a little more difficult to get a grasp of as you are first starting with the tool. Basically it controls the radius of a blur around the edge of where the **Shadow** adjustment is occurring. A higher **Radius** means more blur, and therefore it hides the lightening more. Generally speaking, the more lightening of the **Shadows**, the larger the **Radius** will need to be to effectively hide the correction. I slide this until I can no longer tell that any correction was done.

This process is then repeated for the **Highlight** sliders. I work them in the same order. In this image, there will be a stronger and larger correction to the shadows, as they need more than the small area of the **Highlights** that we will darken in the lower portion of the sky.

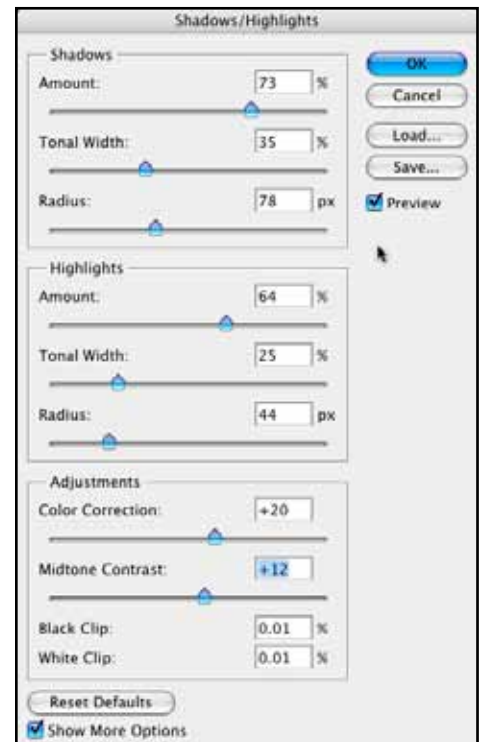
Finally, I look to the bottom panel with the color and contrast correction. Most images don't need any adjustment, but feel free to play around here. I slide them and simply decide if I like the effect better or worse than what I had before. Once satisfied, click **OK**.



Original



Final



Settings Used