

## TONAL CONTROL (DODGING and BURNING) – ‘OVERLAY’ METHOD

This method is to be preferred to that using the actual ‘Dodge & Burn’ tools in Photoshop, which are destructive and less flexible. Before you start, you may wish to make a duplicate layer and work on that rather than the Background layer - although I don't as it doubles the file size - but this will probably be considered 'bad practice' by some!!

With your image open in Photoshop go to **LAYER**, then **NEW LAYER**. A window will come up in the centre of your screen. The default name is ‘Layer 1’ but you can change this if you want to e.g. ‘Dodge and Burn’ Click the arrow in the **MODE** box. This will drop down a list of numerous layer modes. Choose **OVERLAY**. You can also use SOFT LIGHT or HARD LIGHT for weaker or stronger effects.

Leave the Colour box as ‘None’. Leave the opacity box at 100%  
Leave the box ‘Use previous layer to create clipping mask’ un-ticked  
Tick the box headed ‘Fill with overlay neutral colour [50% Gray]’

When you have completed the above, click on OK and the window will disappear

From the usual Photoshop tool list select the brush tool. (Short cut ‘B’) Choose a SOFT brush I use max softness 100% or hardness 0%. Use the square brackets (to the right of the letter ‘P’ on your keyboard) to get the size of brush you want. ‘Overlay’ should appear in the box top left - Photoshop normally defaults this to ‘Normal’, so make sure Overlay is displayed..

Look at the two overlapping squares nearly at the bottom of the tool list (usually on the left of your screen). Make sure these are set at black and white. Choose **white** to dodge (lighten) and **black** to burn (darken), whichever one is on top is the one that is operative - you can alternate between the two by tapping the letter ‘X’ on your keyboard.

Look at the **OPACITY** slider on the top menu bar. It will be defaulted at 100%. This is far too strong. I normally use between 5% and 20%, very occasionally stronger, as it is better to build up an effect rather than try and do it all at once. You can adjust the slider appropriate to different parts of the image, as you burn and dodge. The adjacent ‘Flow’ box should be left at 100%. Each time you click and hold down, tone will be added or reduced as you click and/or drag.

I tend to use big brushes for skies and sweep across the image, but then smaller brushes to darken/lighten in more detailed areas. It may help to enlarge your image on the screen when lightening/darkening small areas (Control + (plus) to enlarge and Control – (minus) to make smaller on screen.

Experiment to get the effect you want. You cannot do any damage to your image, as it is reversible if you go too far either by going back in the ‘History’ (or Control-Z to go back one steps or Control-Alt-Z to go back more than one step, on your keyboard), or simply dodging or burning back. Unlike the Photoshop ‘Burn and Dodge’ tool, this method does not destroy pixels and thus won't degrade your image.

If, in extreme cases (such as very dense black or a very light highlight), the overlay method may not go far enough. You can then try ‘Hard Light’ as your blend mode instead of ‘Overlay’. Alternatively, you can open up a second ‘Overlay’ layer and repeat the process.- but beware, this will considerably increase your file size! As these layers do increase your file size considerably (they are not ‘Adjustment Layers’) you may wish to flatten, or ‘merge visible’ the layer when you are happy with the results.

You may find that when you next open Photoshop, that ‘Overlay’ is still displayed, as the programme will remember it. If that is the case, then you don't have to open a new layer. but as you will then be working on the background layer, you may wish to duplicate that first.

A final tip to maximise the rich black tones in your image is to ‘clip’ the blacks in levels (or curves) Open up a Levels adjustment layer and move the left hand slider slightly *into* the

histogram pyramid. This will clip some blacks in small areas but this isn't usually a problem if not too large or important. Your blacks will be enriched throughout, as in an ordinary histogram, only the extreme left part of it will give true black in your the picture and it can appear flat. You will need to trial and error to see how far you can, or want, to go.

Any problems give me a call on 01206 384315 and I will talk you through it.  
*Colin Westgate June 2010 (updated 2016)*