Selective Editing in Camera Raw 5

The editing tools that you saw in the last chapter are *global* editing tools. That is, they affect all parts of the image. So, when you choose to, for example, brighten the mid-tones in the image by moving the Brightness slider, *all* mid-tone values get brightened, no matter where they are in the image.

There will be times, though, when you'll want to constrain your adjustments to a specific part of your image (**Figure 5.1**).

Figure 5.1 *This image needs an Exposure adjustment. Using Camera Raw, the exposure can be lowered both to recover clipped highlights and to improve the mid-tones. However, the front of the building is now too dark. Fortunately, Camera Raw 5's Adjustment Brush can make short work of this problem.*

With older versions of Camera Raw (anything prior to version 5), you had to wait and perform these edits in Adobe Photoshop, after you'd performed your raw conversion with Camera Raw. But with version 5, Adobe added some sophisticated new capabilities that let you selectively brush on edits, so that you can easily constrain adjustments to specific parts of your image.

Start with global adjustments

Before you make selective adjustments, you need to perform any global adjustments that your image may need. In Figure 5.1, you saw an image where we needed to perform a lot of highlight recovery, as well as make a few other exposure tweaks. These resulted in a darkening of the front of the building, which we'll now fix with a selective adjustment.

It's best to make your global adjustments first, so that you know exactly what selective adjustments are necessary. If you selectively adjust first, your selective adjustments might go out of whack if you later make global changes.

Using the Adjustment Brush

The Adjustment Brush lets you paint a specific adjustment into a particular part of your image. For example, you can choose to paint an Exposure adjustment into one part of your image and a Contrast adjustment into a different part.

To use the Adjustment Brush:

1. Click the Adjustment Brush icon or press K.

2. Your cursor will now have two circles. The inner, solid circle is the brush size; the outer, dashed circle shows the amount of feathering on the brush (feathering is simply a blurring of the edges of the brush, which will cause a smooth blending of your adjustment into the rest of the image) (**Figure 5.2**).

Figure 5.2 *The Adjustment Brush shows separate circles for brush size and feathering diameter.*

3. You can adjust the size of the brush by moving the Size slider, or by pressing [(for smaller) and] (for larger). These keys also adjust brush sizes within Photoshop itself.

4. You can adjust the size of the feathering by moving the Feather slider, or by pressing Shift-[and Shift-] to decrease and increase feather size.

5. Choose a brush and feather size that will allow you the control you need to paint over the details you intend to adjust. In other words, don't pick a brush that's too big to paint over the area you want to selectively adjust.

6. Configure the sliders to perform the type of adjustment you want. You don't have to worry about getting it perfect, because you can adjust the edit later. In fact, you may even want to make a somewhat extreme adjustment just to be able to easily see your brush strokes (**Figure 5.3**). You can also adjust the value of a slider by using the + (plus) and – (minus) buttons on either side of the slider control.

Figure 5.3 *To brighten up the front of the building, I set the Exposure setting to +3.5 stops. This is far more brightening than I need, but as you can see, the extreme adjustment makes it easy to see where I've painted.*

7. Now adjust the Exposure setting as you see fit (**Figure 5.4**).

Figure 5.4 *With your brush stroke in place, you can refine your Exposure adjustment. The brush stroke will continue to constrain the effect.*

You can also adjust the Density slider to control how opaque your brush is. This allows you to brush in varying amounts of the same adjustment.

When you release the mouse button, a thumbtack icon will appear on your stroke. This allows you to select the stroke later, and either edit it, add to it, or change its settings.

Adding a brush stroke

While the image is looking better, the rooftop on the part of the building to the left is still too bright. We'll brush on an Exposure adjustment to darken it.

To add an adjustment with the Adjustment Brush:

1. If the Adjustment Brush is still selected, click the New button at the top of the Adjustment Brush controls. If it's not already selected, click the Adjustment Brush icon or press K. The New button allows you to add strokes without having to reselect the tool.

2. Paint in your adjustment as you did before. Note that you can also configure the adjustment sliders *before* you paint.

Note that strokes *can* overlap. For example, here I've added a second stroke on top of the first one on the barn roof. This allows me to brighten the mailboxes a little more (**Figure 5.5**).

> **NOTE**
>
> **Brush Strokes and Preview:** Camera Raw's Preview button will deactivate the effects of brush strokes only if you have the Adjustment Brush selected.

Figure 5.5 *Here I've added a second Adjustment Brush stroke to reduce the over-exposure on the roof of the barn.*

Editing an existing stroke

In Chapter 4, you learned that the adjustments you make in Camera Raw are stored as a separate list of edits that get applied to your image data on the fly, any time the image needs to be displayed or output. The strokes you make with the Adjustment Brush are stored in the same list, so they can be adjusted at any time.

To alter an existing Adjustment Brush stroke:

1. If you haven't already, select the Adjustment Brush. With the Adjustment Brush selected, mouse over one of the thumb-tack icons that's superimposed over a stroke, and Camera Raw will display a gray overlay that shows the extent of the stroke **(Figure 5.6)**.

Figure 5.6 *If you mouse over a brush stroke's thumbtack icon, Camera Raw will display an overlay that shows the size of the stroke.*

2. Click the thumbtack icon. It will fill with a black dot, and the Camera Raw sliders will adjust to whatever settings were associated with that stroke.

3. Adjust the settings, and your edited stroke should change.

If you want to change the shape and coverage of a stroke, just use the Add and Erase buttons above the sliders. Click Add, and any painting you do will be added to the currently selected stroke. Click Erase, and you can erase parts of the stroke.

To delete an existing brush stroke:

1. Select the Adjustment Brush.

2. Click the thumbtack icon for the stroke you want to delete.

3. Press the Delete key or click the Clear button.

If you have multiple strokes, you can remove them all by clicking the Clear All button that sits beneath the adjustment sliders.

If you'd rather see exactly where the brush stroke is that you're editing, click the Show Mask check box at the bottom of the Adjustment Brush controls. The same overlay will appear, indicating where your brush stroke is. This can make fine adjustments and edits easier.

If you want a more visible overlay, click the color swatch next to the Show Mask check box and choose a different color.

Adjusting the color of an image

As you can see from the slider selection, you can brush on Exposure, Brightness, Contrast, Saturation, Clarity, and Sharpness. These effects are no different than when you apply them globally, as you did in the last chapter.

You might already have noticed that Camera Raw's White Balance controls are not available for selective editing. However, using the Color control, you can apply a color tint to any part of the image.

To use the Adjustment Brush Color control:

1. Select the Adjustment Brush.

2. Click the color swatch, and Camera Raw will present you with the Color Picker (**Figure 5.7**). Click anywhere in the gradient display to select a hue that you want. You can use the Saturation slider to choose a color with more or less saturation. In this case, I'm going to choose a warmish red tone with the goal of adding some warmth to the front of the building. When you have a color you like, click OK.
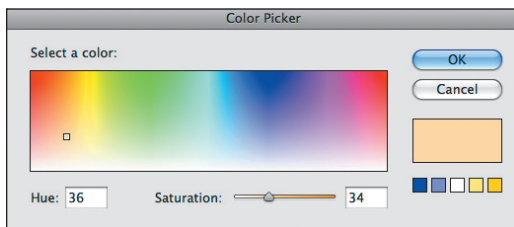

Figure 5.7 *You can select a new color for the brush stroke overlay.*

3. Now paint on your image. The Adjustment Brush never paints a solid color. Instead, it tints your image with that color, preserving the original brightness values.

4. Adjust the Density slider as needed. If the tint is initially too strong, try lowering the Density slider. This will make the brush stroke less opaque and the tint less pronounced (**Figure 5.8**).

Figure 5.8 *I've warmed the front of the building by adding a tint color to my brush stroke.*

As with all edits, you can erase, add to, or modify your color tinting adjustments.

Deactivating the color tint

Note that once you set the color tint, all future brush strokes (and Graduated Filter operations, which you'll learn about next) will have that tint.

To deactivate the color tint, click the color swatch and select white. If you want to remove the tint from a brush stroke you've already made, select the stroke first.

Using the Graduated Filter

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The Graduated Filter tool lets you make an adjustment to your image by applying it through a linear gradient filter. This can be an ideal way to darken skies or brighten foregrounds, and is akin to attaching a gradient filter to the end of your camera lens.

It can be very difficult to create a smooth transition into and out of an edited area when using the paintbrushes, but the Graduated Filter allows you to blend an edit into your image in a seamless manner.

Consider the image shown in **Figure 5.9**. We need to darken the sky to bring out more contrast. If we use a global adjustment, the foreground gets too dark.

Figure 5.9 *In this image, the sky needs a different adjustment from the foreground. Blending those two adjustments can be tricky, though. Fortunately, the Graduated Filter tool makes it easy.*

More important, though, the image remains a little too flat. Because it's so evenly lit, there's no discernible sense of depth in the scene.

We could use the Adjustment Brush to darken only the sky, but it's difficult to create a realistic-looking boundary between the darkened sky and the foreground (**Figure 5.10**).

Figure 5.10 *With the Adjustment Brush, it's hard to make a smooth transition between the sky and the ground.*

While this doesn't look too bad, there's still little sense of depth to the scene, since the whole image is fairly evenly exposed. We'll solve both problems by using the Graduated Filter to darken the top part of the sky, while creating a smooth lightening toward the bottom part of the sky.

To use the Graduated Filter:

1. Select the Graduated Filter tool or press G.

2. Drag from the point where you want your effect to be fully applied, to the point where you want it to have no effect at all (**Figure 5.11**). Note that everything *above* the start point will receive the full effect. Everything *below* your end point will receive no effect at all. To be able to see the effects of the gradient, you might need to first dial in a rough adjustment. In this case, I dialed the Exposure slider down two stops.
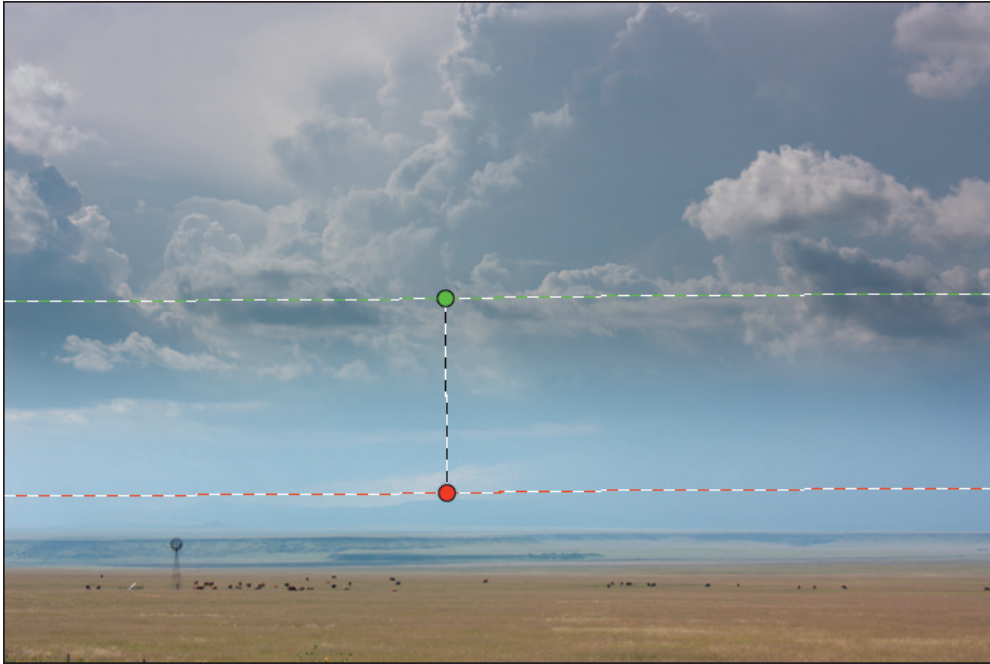
Figure 5.11 *Our first gradient darkens the sky. Because it's a gradual adjustment, the darkening is slowly "rolled off" until no adjustment is added at all.*

In this case, we created a gradient that went straight down. There might be other times when you need to create a gradient at an angle.

3. Now we'll refine our adjustment until the sky looks the way we want. In this case, an adjustment of –1 stop works well.

4. Refine your gradient. Now that we can see the effects of the gradient, we'll go back and reposition the start and end points to better apply the effect. To adjust the gradient, simply click the red and green points and drag.

Our sky now has a little more drama in it. In addition to being darker, it has a greater sense of depth thanks to the transition to the lighter part of the sky at the bottom of the gradient.

Using multiple Graduated filters

Just as with brush strokes, you can create multiple Graduated filters, allowing you to apply different effects to different parts of your image. I'll create a second filter to tone the ground in the image.

To create additional Graduated filters:

1. If the Graduated Filter tool is still selected, click the New button at the top of the Graduated Filter controls. If it isn't selected, select it in the toolbar or press G.

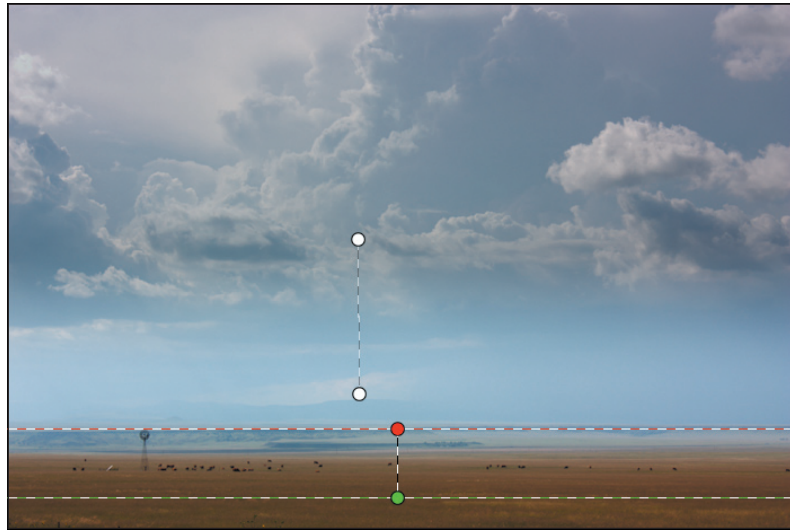2. Click to drag a new gradient; then configure it as desired (**Figure 5.12**).

Figure 5.12 *With a second gradient, the foreground is similarly darkened with a graduated effect.*

As with brushes, you can go back and edit or delete a gradient at any time. Just select the gradient tool; then click on the gradient you want to edit or delete, and adjust accordingly.

Combining brushes and Graduated filters

There's no reason you can't use both Graduated filters and the Adjustment Brush on the same image. Brush and filter effects are stacked in the order in which you apply them. In other words, if you apply a Graduated Filter to darken part of an image and then brush over that same area with the

Adjustment Brush, the brush effects will be applied after the Graduated Filter effects (**Figure 5.13**).

Figure 5.13 *Using the Adjustment Brush, we can apply some localized contrast adjustments to make the sky a little more dramatic.*

The Tone Curve Controls

While the basic image-editing controls in Camera Raw are powerful, an additional adjustment is also provided, in the form of *curves*. If you're accustomed to working with the Curves control in Photoshop, then Camera Raw's curve edit will feel familiar. With it, you can perform additional tonal adjustments, to improve the contrast in your image.

Curves allow you to adjust the brightness of specific tonal areas in your image, making it yet another way to perform a type of selective editing.

To access the curve controls, click the Tone Curve tab in the Camera Raw window (**Figure 5.14**).

It's very important to understand that the Camera Raw Tone Curve is a separate adjustment that is applied to your image *in addition to* the edits you make with the adjustment sliders. The bulk—or all—of your raw work will still be done using Camera Raw's sliders. The Tone Curve controls don't provide any functionality that you can't get in Photoshop. However, as you'll see in Chapter 6, you can batch-process your adjustments along with the rest of your raw editing workflow, which allows you to easily apply the same Tone Curve adjustment to many images.
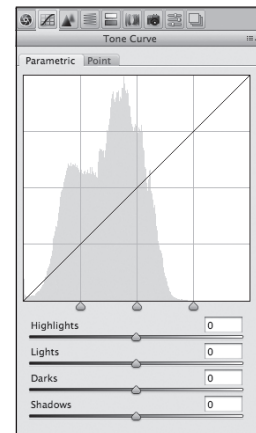

Figure 5.14 *The Tone Curve controls are used to add tonal adjustments to your image.*