

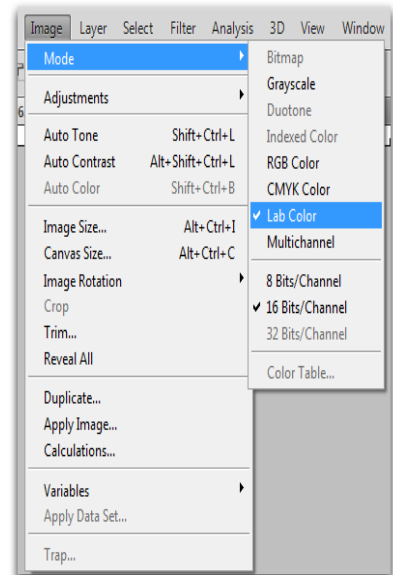
High Pass Sharpening

There are various methods of sharpening in Photoshop. The most used is probably the Unsharp Mask Filter but, although it works very well when applied correctly, it can easily produce harsh results with, quite often, obvious 'Mackie lines' showing on edge elements of the image. This method of High Pass sharpening is easy to apply (though requires more steps than Unsharp Mask) and is able to produce sharpness without overdoing the effect. The amount of sharpening is variable and easy to determine.

Open the image to be sharpened.

Convert the image to Lab Color.

Image > Mode > Lab Color.

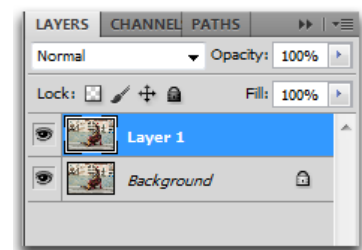


Duplicate the layer.

Layer > New > Layer or

Drag the Background layer to the icon that looks like a piece of paper with a curled up edge at the bottom of the Layers dialog box. or

Hit Ctrl+J (Shortcuts are quicker).



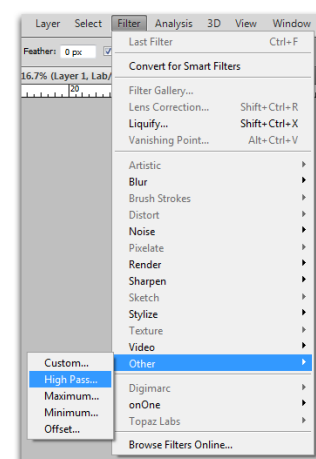
Go to Channels (The Channels palette is usually located along with Paths next to the Layers palette.

Click the eye icons next to the 'a' and 'b' channels to disable them. Now only the Lightness channel (the monochrome elements of the image) is active.



Select the High Pass filter.

Filter > Other > High Pass.



Set the Radius to about 3 pixels at the bottom of the High Pass dialog box. This setting can be varied according to how much sharpening is required. 3 or 4 pixels is about right for images that require little sharpening. The edge thickness can be seen in the dialog box. The correct amount of sharpening to apply will come with more use and experience with this method of sharpening.

Click OK to apply the filter.

Once the filter is applied, change the Blend Mode of the High Pass layer to Overlay.

Tick the drop-down arrow just under the Layers tab where 'Normal' will be showing and from the menu select Overlay.

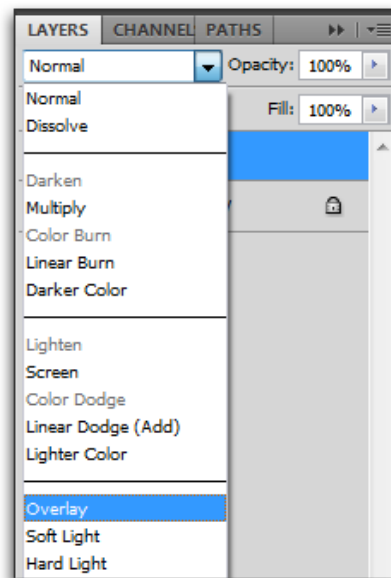
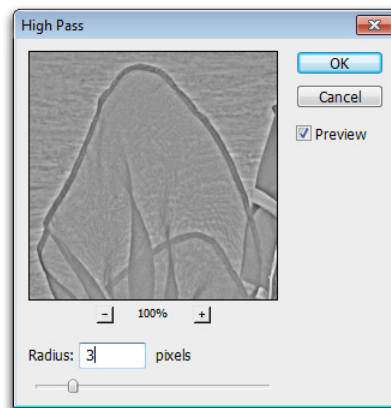
Merge the layers.

Layer > Merge Visible.

Convert the image back to RGB.

Image > Mode > RGB.

To check the amount of sharpening, increase the size of your image to 100% and check the 'before' and 'after' results. The best way to do this is to open the History palette and select the 'Open' state to check the before then click back to the last 'Convert to RGB' to check the after.



Before



After



This is a small section of the image that was sharpened. The building detail in the background is sharper without any Mackie lines showing while the mask on the right has maintained its smoothness.

The image used here was high resolution and generated from a RAW file. An image captured as a JPEG would require little or no sharpening as sharpening is always applied in camera.