Lightroom Tips and Tricks

Using Range Masks for Local Enhancements

By Chuck Palmer

Note to Photoshop users. . . Adobe Camera Raw has similar tools and functions as Adobe Lightroom Classic. You can use many Lightroom tips and tricks in Camera Raw too!

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Lightroom users enjoy selectively enhancing their photos with the help of the local adjustment tools in Lightroom's Develop Module. The Graduated Filter, Radial Filter, and Adjustment Brush allow you to localize many effects to enhance or correct your images. In recent Lightroom releases, all the local adjustment tools were made even better with the introduction of Range Masks to improve selectively when applying effects. Let's look at using the Color Range Mask option on the Graduated Filter Tool to select and enhance just the sky in this example image.

| Before Image	After Sky Enhancement

Step 1 – Open the image in the Develop Module and select the Graduated Filter from the tool bar at the top of the Basic Panel. Double Click on the Word "Effect" to zero out all the sliders.
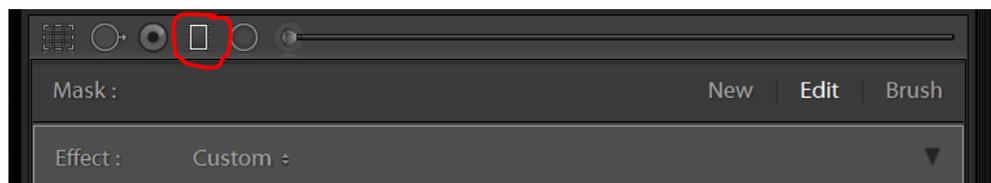
Step 2 – Set the following sliders to the values noted: Exposure -29; Highlights – 36; Clarity +33; Dehaze +12; Saturation +10. Move the Graduated Filter Tool to the top of your image. Click and Drag Down to the desired level to select the sky. Hint: Toggle the visibility of the Graduated Filter Overlay by hitting the letter "O" on your keyboard.

Step 3 – Select the "Color" option in the Range Mask menu, then Click on the Eye Dropper tool in the left corner of the panel.
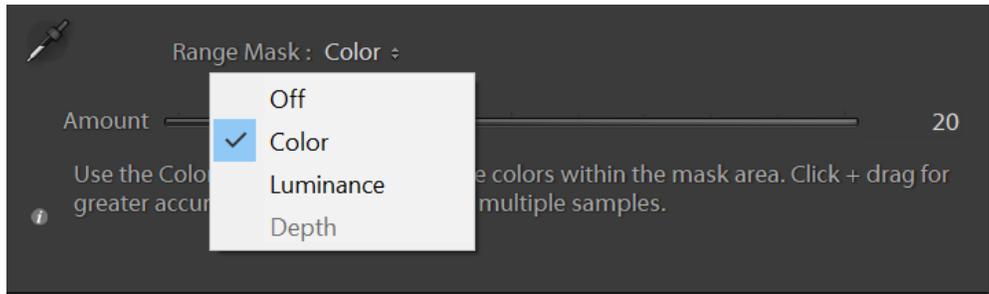
Step 4 – Hold down the Shift Key. Notice the Eye Dropper Tool on your curser has a little Plus Sign (+) added to the Eye Dropper. While holding down the Shift Key, click and drag on the blue sky you want to select. You are selecting the various shades of blue that make up the sky in your image. Park the Eye Dropper tool back in its space when you have completed selecting a couple of areas.

Step 5 – Hold Down the Alt Key while moving the Amount Slider to the left or right. You will notice your image now shows the Range Mask you have created. White areas of the mask image will reveal any enhancement you make to your Graduated Filter. Black areas will mask or prevent any enhancements from being applied. Adjust the Amount Slider until you have refined the Color Mask to your satisfaction. For our example image, a value of 20 was selected. See the final Color Mask for our example image below. Note the blue sky is selected (white area) and will therefore receive any enhancements made to the Graduated Filter applied. The black areas will not be affected by any adjustments.

Step 6 – Refine the effect sliders in your Graduated Filter applied. Try changing the Temp and Tint Sliders to refine the color of your sky, try varying the Dehaze slider to your liking. Hint: After making your final adjustments, save your finalized adjustments in a Preset by selecting "Save Current Settings in New Preset" in the drop-down menu next to the word Custom at the top of the Filter Effects panel. You might name your Preset "Sky Enhancement". Your new Present will now be included in this same drop-down menu.

You will notice you can create a Range Mask by Luminance (light contrast) or Color. Experiment with the different range masks on different images. Ask yourself which selection would best differentiate the selection mask you are trying to create. Luminance of Color? The more you experiment, the more skilled you become at effectively using Range Masks on any local adjustment tools in Lightroom.

Have Fun… shoot often… and may only the remarkable images be yours.

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