

Dodging & Burning using Layers

This technique for dodging and burning uses a layer mask on a separate layer. I find that it works better than the Photoshop “burn” tool which always seems to introduced a colour cast when I use it. The layer is filled with 50% grey which means that the image layer beneath it is unaffected. The image can be selctively brightened (dodged) or darkened (burned) by painting over the grey mask with the brush tool. If the brush tool has black selected in the foreground colour/background colour patch in the tools palette on the left of the screen, the image will be darkened by painting over the 50% grey mask. If the brush tool has white selected, the image will be lightened when painting over the mask. Right, here goes the recipe...

1. click the “create a new layer” icon on the bottom of the layer palette while holding down the “Alt” key.
2. In the resulting dialogue box change the blending mode to soft light and tick the “fill with soft-light-neutral colour (50% grey)” check box.
3. Make sure black and white patches are selected – press “D” to quickly return them to default.
4. Paint with 5-20% opacity black brush over grey mask layer to burn and paint with 5-20% opacity white brush to dodge

As with any Photoshop tool it is usually better to use several lower opacity applications to build up the effect rather than one heavy one.