

LAYERS, LAYER MASKS AND LOCAL ADJUSTMENTS

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With inspiration from
David Eaves

FORMAT FOR THIS EVENING

- Short presentation covering principles of :
 - Local adjustments
 - Layers and layer masks
 - Use of PS filters
 - Blending modes
- Examples of the above in a creative way
- *Experimenting with your own images*
- *Plenty of time for discussion and problem solving*

The presentation will focus on Photoshop CS (and Elements) although other software can often do the same thing



Introduction

SOME INITIAL THOUGHTS

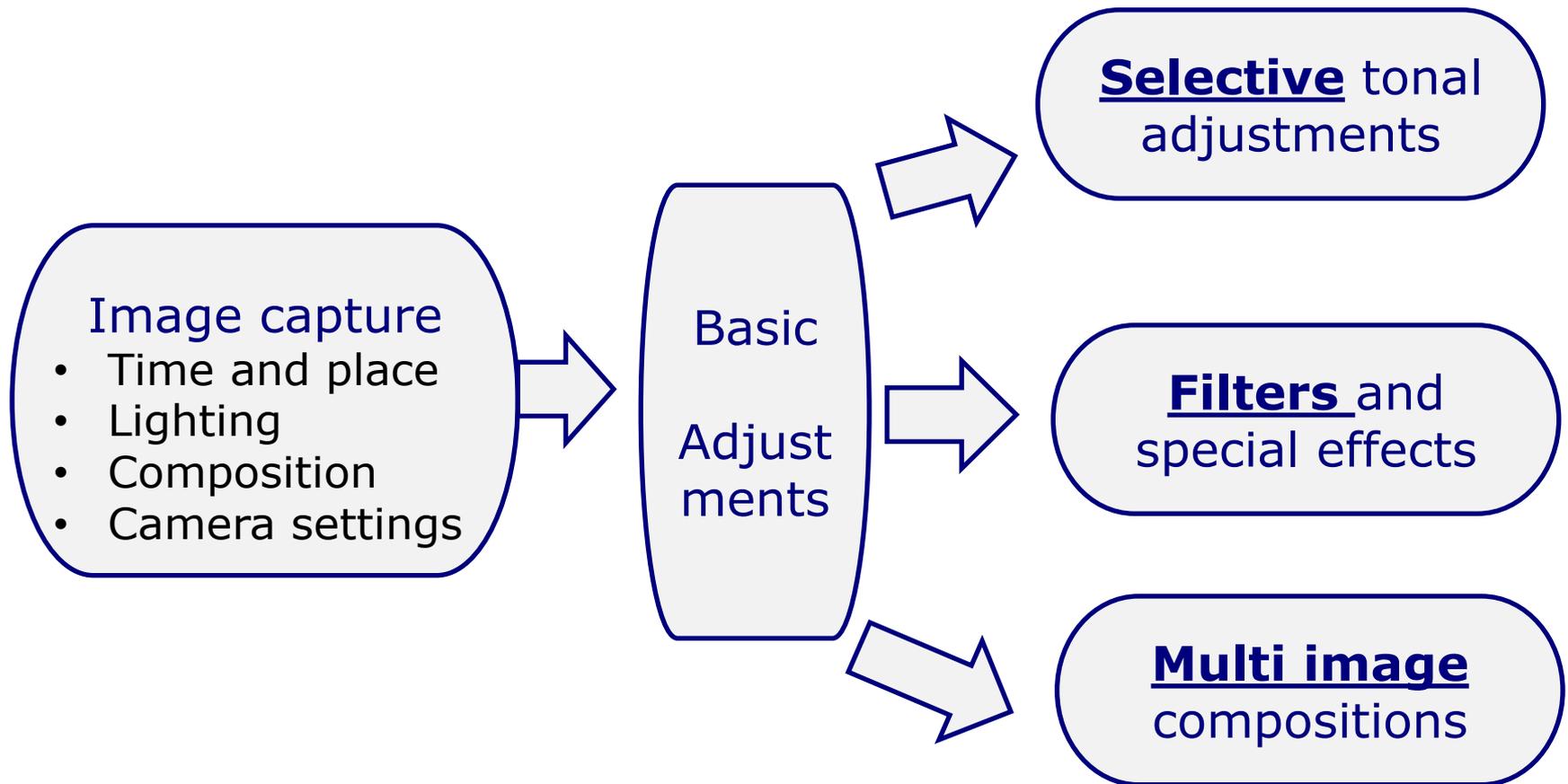
- Post processing is usually needed to improve overall image quality
- Normally better if starting with raw file
- At one time Photoshop was the main software option for this
- But now there are a range of processing software options many of which are better and/or easier to use than PS
- Often best to do as much tonal and other adjustments as possible in raw converter or other software before using PS
- But for certain effects PS is still the best (or only?) option -
- *although increasingly other different software has similar tools*

For complex tasks always use a mouse or ideally a pen tablet. Laptop touch pads are not sensitive enough.

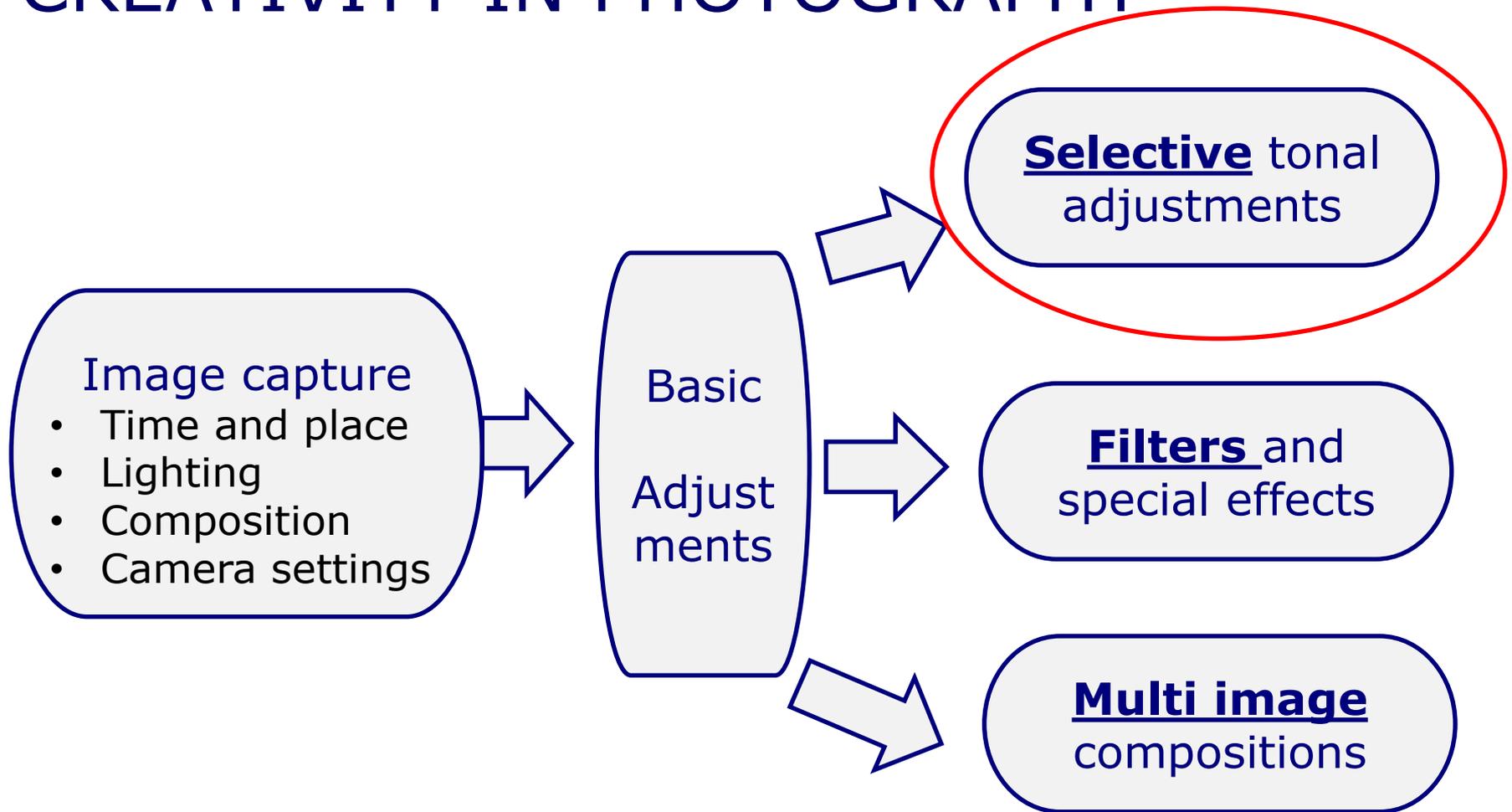
PHOTOSHOP

- Photoshop has a huge range of options many of which are not user friendly
- Within PS there are many different ways to achieve the same effect
- The actual approach and available tools depend on whether CS or Elements and which version you have
- There are many on line video tutorials to help but make sure it applies to your version of Photoshop
- Experiment but then decide on the main things you wish to use and then
- Practice, practice, practice - so it becomes second nature

CREATIVITY IN PHOTOGRAPHY



CREATIVITY IN PHOTOGRAPHY



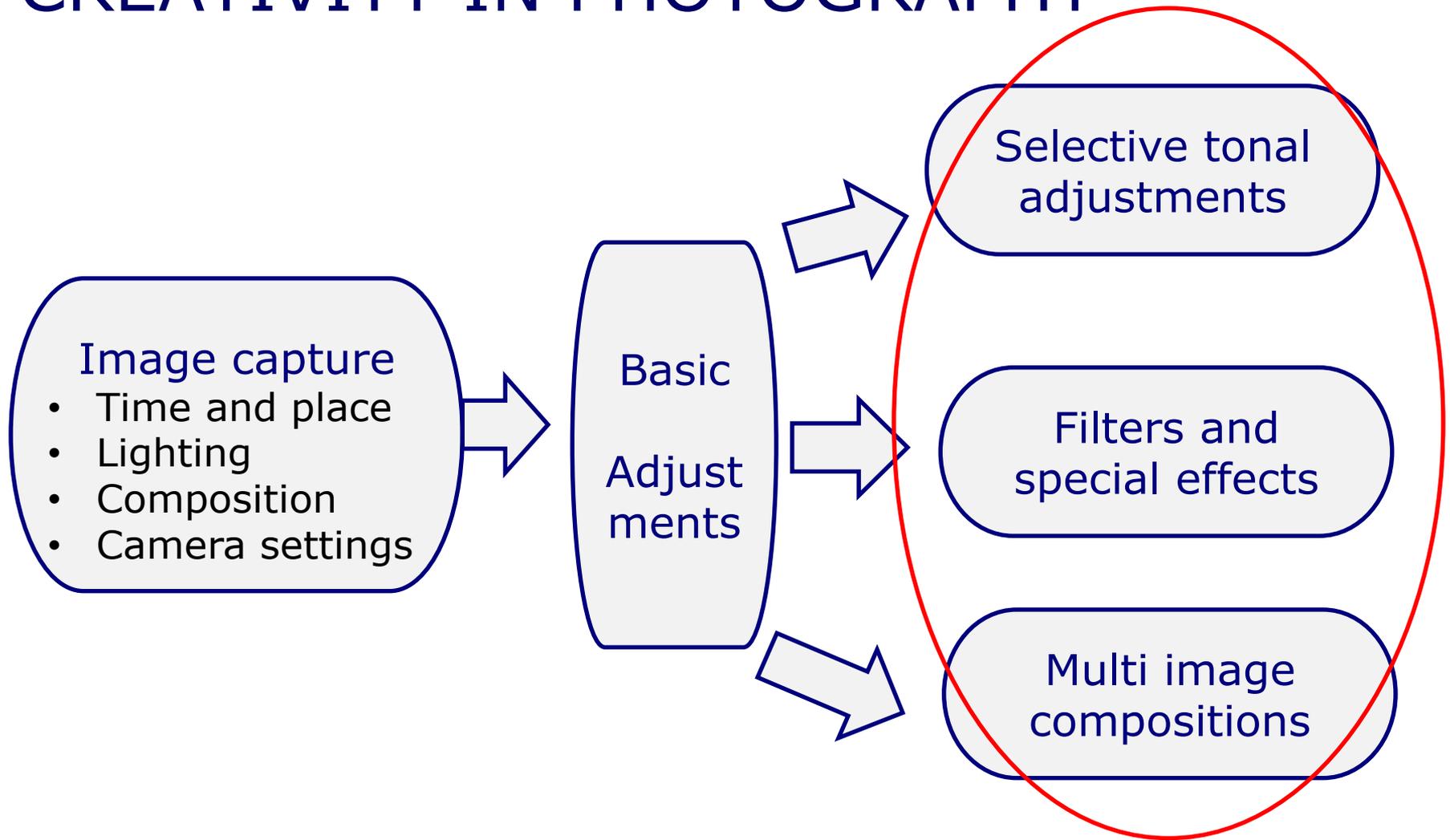
LOCAL ADJUSTMENTS WITH AND WITHOUT PHOTOSHOP

- Most (but not all) images can be further enhanced by local adjustments (i.e. changes to exposure/clarity/ etc. etc.) on only part of the image
- Local adjustments are now very easy and probably better in software like Lightroom
- However this can be done in PS as well
- Whichever software you prefer, the use of local adjustments should be part of your routine post processing



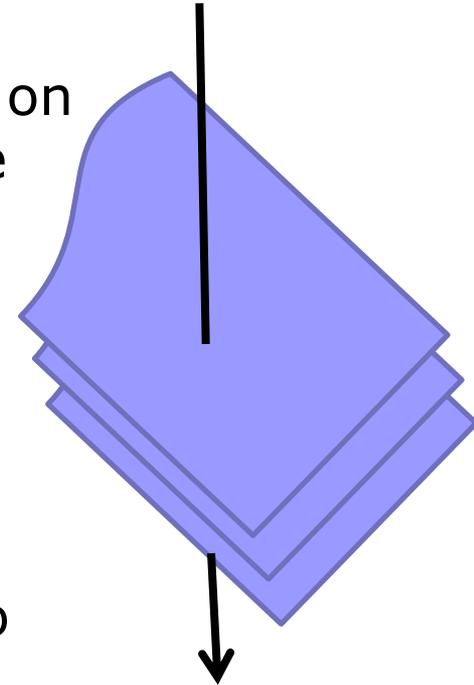
Layers and layer masks in PS

CREATIVITY IN PHOTOGRAPHY



HOW DO PS LAYERS* WORK

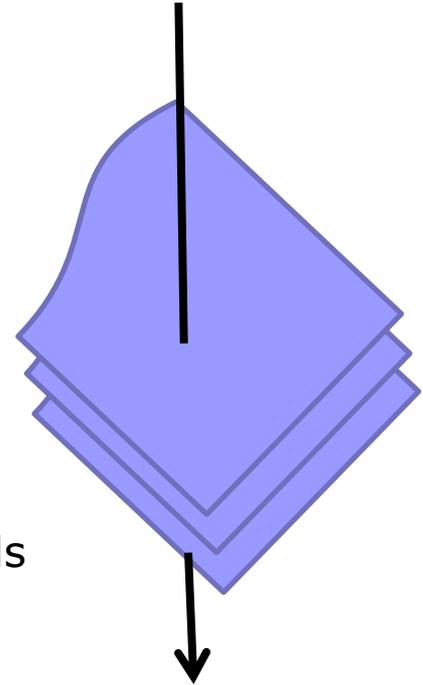
- Imagine a series of clear acetate sheets (layers) stacked on top of each other
- As you look down through the stack the images on each layer “combines” to form the overall image
- Each layer can be:
 - The background layer (the starting image)
 - A copy of the background layer – possibly with cloning
 - A layer with a filter effect applied e.g. blur
 - An adjustment layer (e.g., saturation, hue, levels, etc.)
 - A solid coloured layer
- At the end the layers can be merged together to form a final image



* The same principle applies to other software with local adjustments (e.g. Lightroom brushes), but the way they work vary

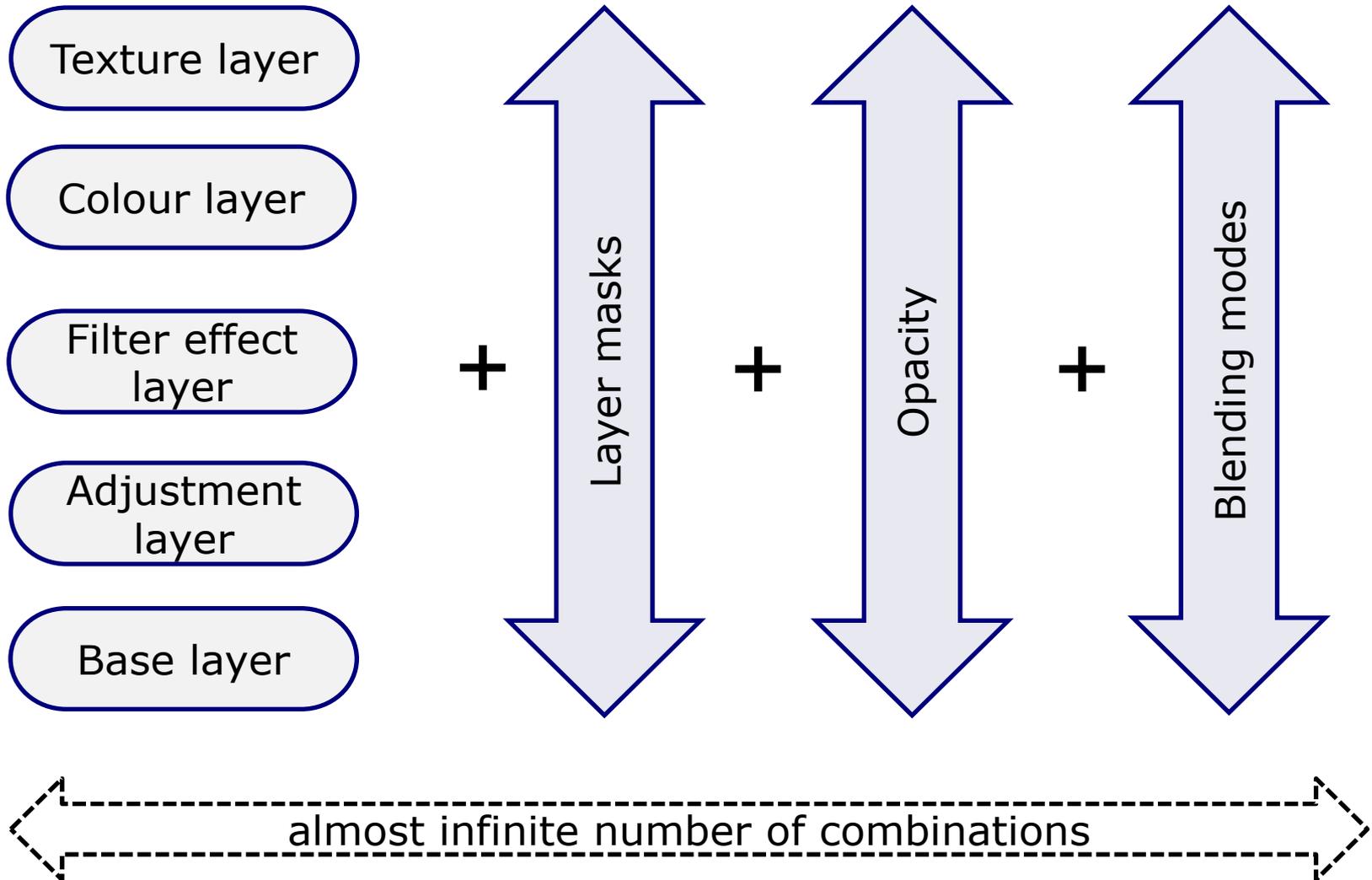
WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH LAYERS?

- Each layer can be:
 - Switched on or off
 - Faded by reducing opacity
 - Copied or deleted
 - Have the order changed
 - Worked on by selecting
 - Used for complex cloning
 - Blended in various ways
- For each layer a “mask” can be applied*
 - This allows all or only a part of the layer to be seen
 - Changed by using brush tool: white reveals, black conceals
- Layers can be linked – this allows an adjustment layer to only affect linked layers



* Make sure that the mask is highlighted when modifying the mask

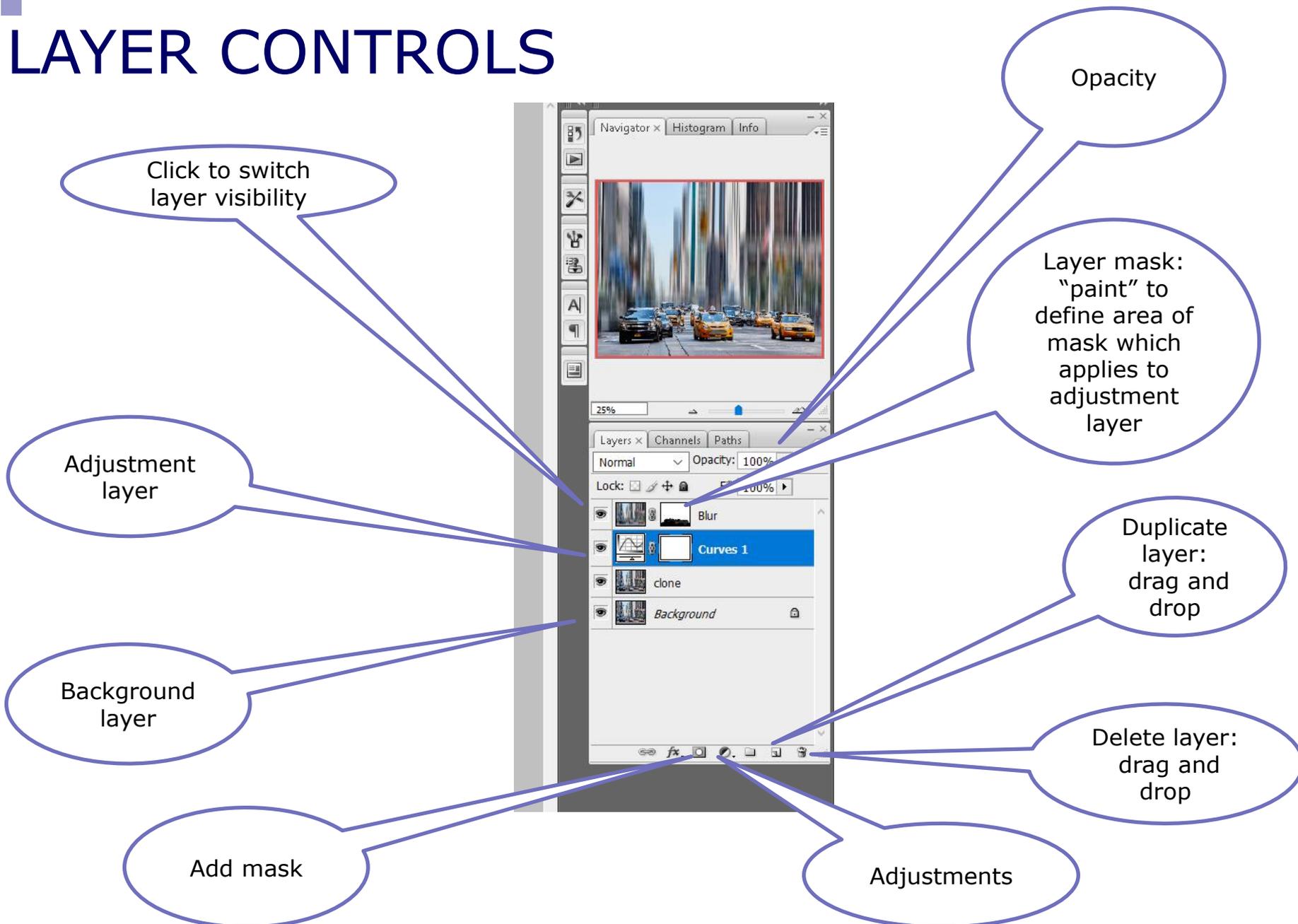
LAYER COMBINATIONS



LAYER TIPS

- Easiest to move around image and expand/contract using “navigator” tab
- Carry out any adjustment
 - On new layer not on “background”
 - For multiple adjustments or complex cloning use separate layers
 - In both cases easier to go back one stage if mistake rather than losing all corrections
- Can save work in progress on image (including layers) but only as large PSD (or TIFF) file
- Only when happy with final image should you “flatten” image and save for final output as TIFF or JPEG file

LAYER CONTROLS



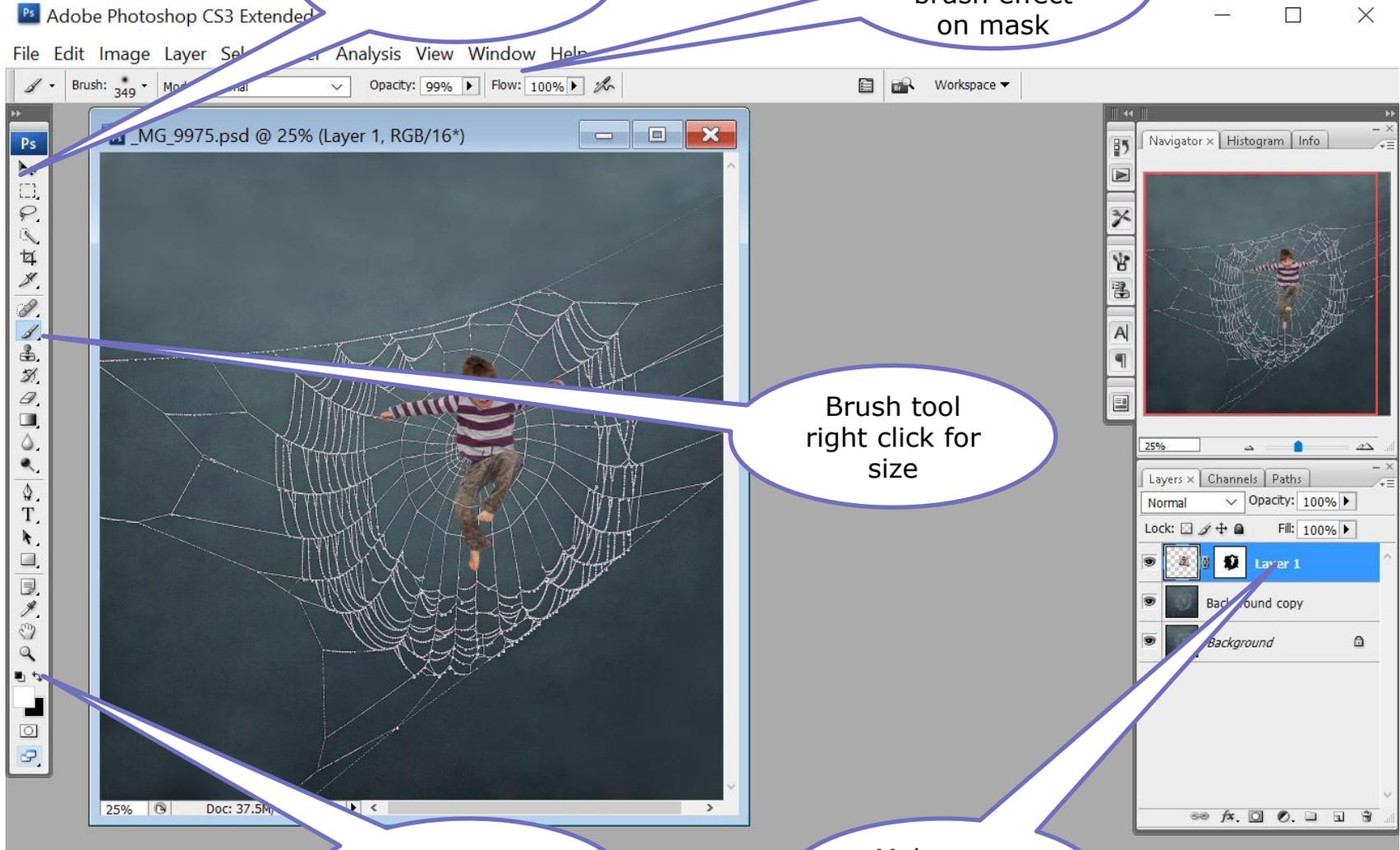
Move tool

Opacity and flow affects brush effect on mask

Brush tool right click for size

Black/white switch

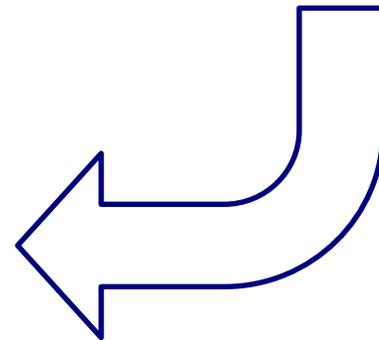
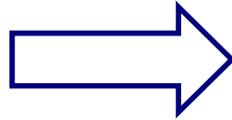
Make sure mask is live when brushing





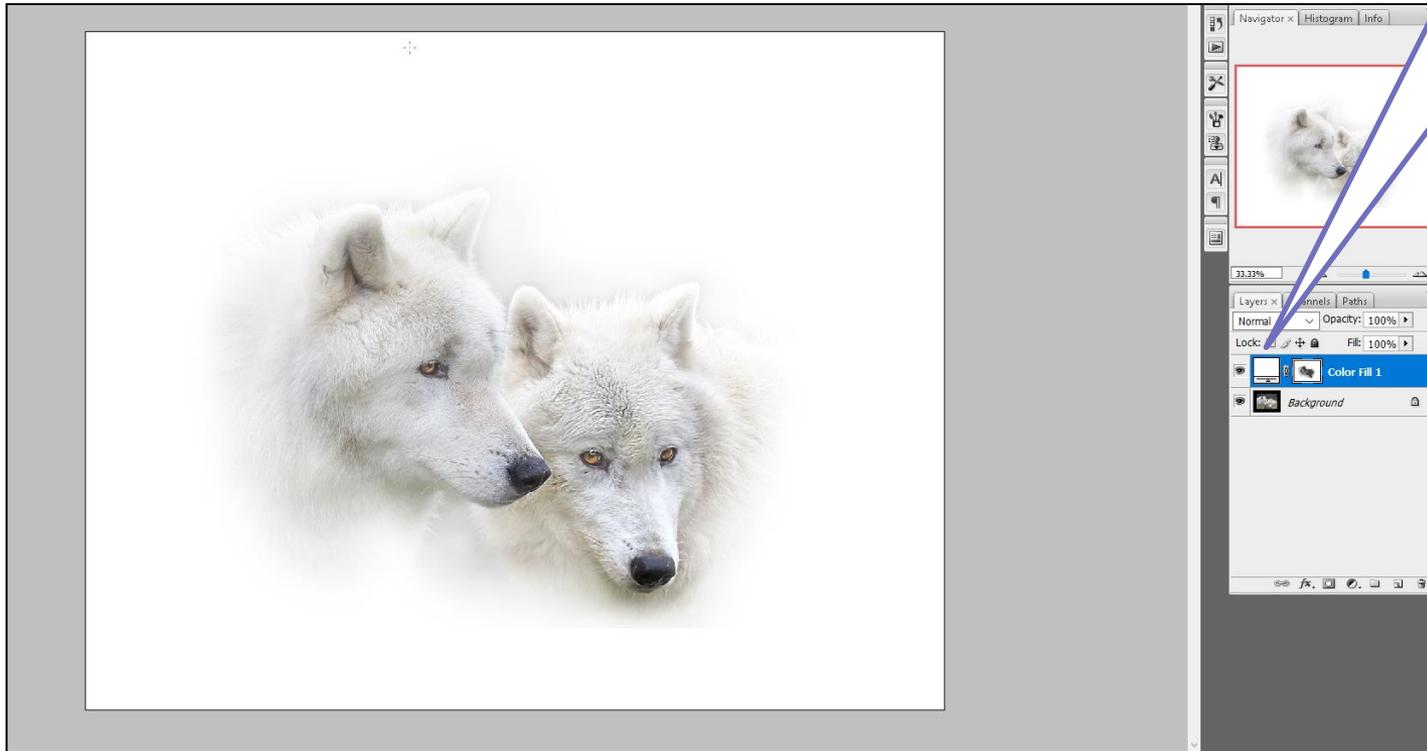
Using layers and masks in PS

USING LAYERS CREATIVELY



COLOUR ADJUSTMENT LAYERS

Colour
adjustment layer



Can add adjustment layer which can be masked so applies to only part of the image

USING FILTERS

- Can also add a filter effect to one layer and blend with the layer below
- Photoshop has a number of built in filter effects and can buy others as plug-ins (e.g. Topaz)
- Note that not all filter effects work with 16 bit files
- Extreme use of filters is often not liked by judges
- But more subtle effects can be achieved by adjusting the opacity to make a more limited impact

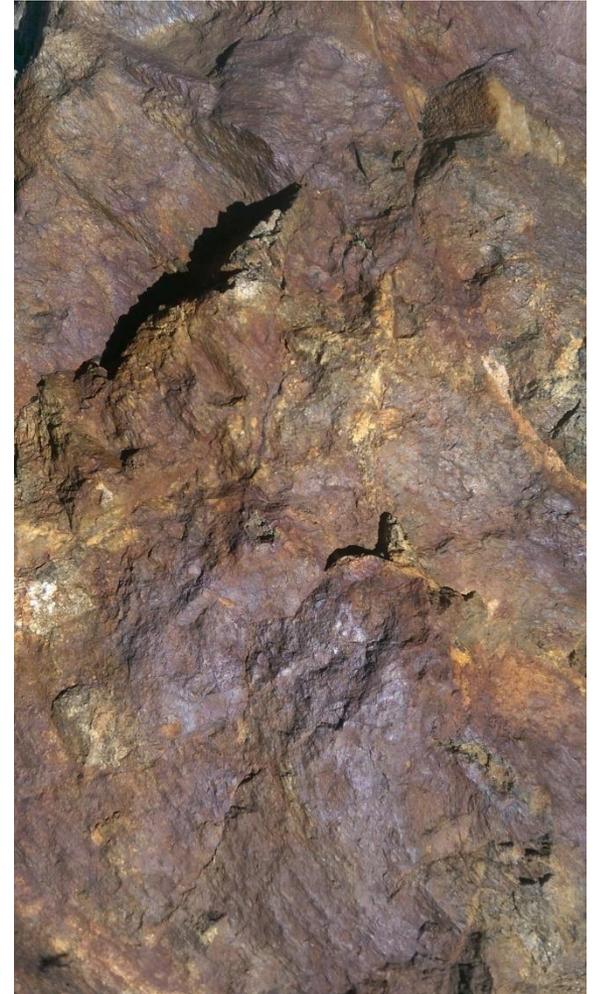


MULTI LAYER EXAMPLE



TEXTURE LAYERS

- For some creative effects you can add a texture layer over your image and use layer mask and opacity to adjust the effect
- Texture layers can be found free (or paid for) on the web. Or you can make your own
- Add the texture image as a new layer and then use opacity/layer mask to obtain the effect you want



BLENDING LAYERS

- You can “blend” the layers together in different ways
- The blending mode controls how the pixels in the different layers interact with each other
- Normal default – no interaction between layers (top layer dominates)
- There are then five other groups within which each mode broadly has the same effect
- However, the maths behind this is complex and the effects are often unpredictable to the average user
- Often best to experiment and see what happens

PS BLENDING MODES

Commonly
used modes



Normal
Dissolve
Darken
Multiply
Color Burn
Linear Burn
Lighten
Screen
Color Dodge
Linear Dodge
Overlay
Soft Light
Hard Light
Vivid Light
Linear Light
Pin Light
Hard Mix
Difference
Exclusion
Hue
Saturation
Color
Luminosity

Darken Modes

Lighten Modes

Contrast Modes

Comparative Modes

Composite Modes
(Hue, Saturation, Luminosity)



Composite images

COMPOSITE IMAGES

- Many images in national/international competitions are composites
- Can use composite images to:
 - Put people in better backgrounds
 - Improve high dynamic range by blending two different exposures of same image
 - Put in a “better” sky to enhance image
 - Or whatever your imagination wishes for “creative” images

Note - composite images are not allowed for nature or some other competitions

COMPOSITE IMAGES

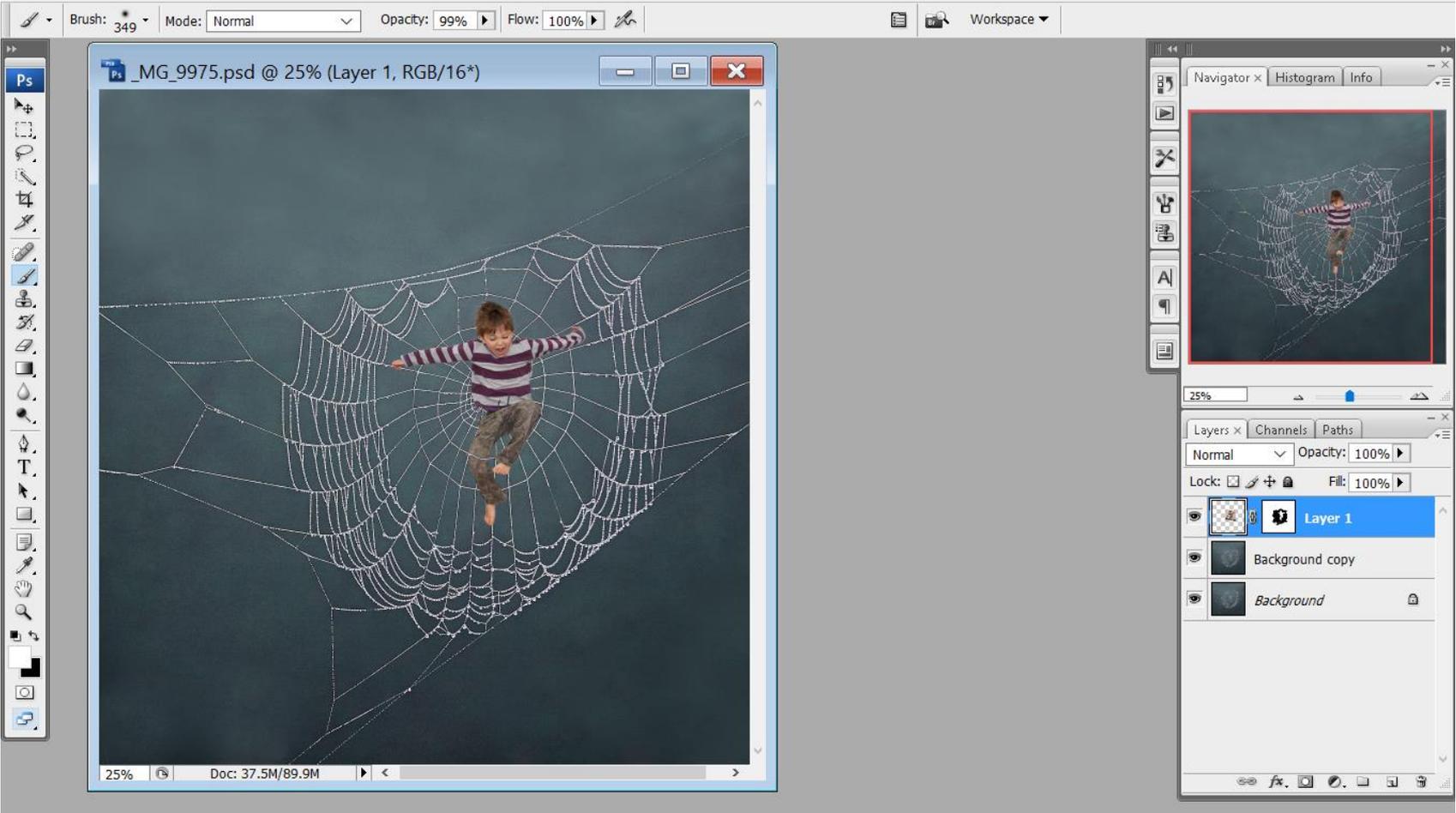
- Open two (or more) source images - minimise each for easier viewing
- Make rough selection of element to be copied
- Copy and paste, or drag and drop, the selection into background layer
- Place roughly in right place and resize to suit (edit>transform>scale and hold shift key to keep proportions constant)
- Can move new layer around using move tool
- Create layer mask
 - Click on mask and choose brush (adjust size/softness as necessary)
 - Use black/white brush to isolate figure by painting around edge
 - Use opacity/flow to soften edges or difficult areas like hair
- Inspect closely at high magnification. Adjust mask further if necessary. Can also add shadows (see David Eaves notes)

Note - ensure direction of light is similar to background image.
Check shadows if bright

AN EXAMPLE

Adobe Photoshop CS3 Extended

File Edit Image Layer Select Filter Analysis View Window Help





WHAT CAN YOU DO
WITH YOUR IMAGES?