Removing distractions from your images

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PLAN FOR TONIGHT

- A short presentation covering
  - Assessing your image for distractions
  - What can you do about this in post processing
  - Techniques available
- A quick question/discussion session
- Informal practice sessions using your own images and laptop

ASSESSING YOUR IMAGE

IMAGE ANALYSIS

- Look at your image and ask what is the main subject?
- Does the eye automatically focus on and come back to this?
- If not why? What is distracting the eye away from the subject?
  - Are there bright spots which draw the eye towards them rather than the subject?
  - Are there visible dust spots, particularly in plain areas of the image?
  - Is the background messy so that it competes with the main subject?
  - Are there small objects or areas which distract from the subject (e.g. poles or wires)?
  - Are important parts of the subject (e.g. hands or other body parts) cut off by mistake?
  - Are there strong colours in the background (e.g. red object) which draw the eye away from the subject which might be a more muted colour?
  - Are there large areas of blocked out shadows which are not contributing to the image?

Watch out for obvious "judge bait"

REMOVING DISTRACTIONS

- Ideally train yourself to identify and eliminate distractions at the point of capture – sometimes small changes in angle of positioning of the lens can make all the difference
- However, in post processing there is much that can be done to remove or minimise distractions

Whatever isn't *adding* to the photo is taking away from it.

REMOVING DISTRACTIONS

TOOLS AVAILABLE

- Cropping/rotation
  - Can often remove distractions (and improve composition) with cropping <u>or rotation</u> of image
  - For example crop out boring or too contrasty skies
  - If small parts of the subject are "chopped off" then consider more severe cropping to make this look deliberate
- Clone tools
  - Remove the distraction by cloning using a variety of crop tools
  - Note that these vary between software and software version
- Layer masks
  - Soften or reduce contrast/saturation of messy background
  - In extreme cases move subject onto a new background altogether
- Convert to mono
  - This may eliminate otherwise distracting strongly coloured objects in the background

SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

- For cloning or other adjustments always do on a separate layer (or layers) to the background
- Process
  - First edit the image (focussing on the main subject) for optimum exposure, levels/curves, saturation, colour balance, clarity, sharpness etc.
  - Assess the overall image <u>carefully and objectively</u> to check if any distractions
  - Crop or rotate where possible to remove distracting elements
  - Remove or modify the distraction(s) by cloning or other tools using separate layers/layer masks
  - Leave the image and look at again in a few days time to see if any distractions were missed

Crop, Rotate, Clone

CROP AND/OR ROTATE

- The easiest and quickest way to remove distractions is by simple cropping and/or rotating the image
- However make sure that you have sufficient pixels left for adequate image quality

CLONING IN PHOTOSHOP

- PS has a number of cloning tools, but these vary with version
- Other software may also have cloning options
- Cloning basically allows to copy pixels from one part of the image to another in order to remove unwanted elements of the original image
- Clone stamp tool
  - □ One of the more useful tools
  - □ Choose right brush size/hardness (Note [and] change size quickly)
  - □ Choose source area (hold alt/click) – note cursor changes to cross
  - □ Release alt key, move cursor and paint into new area
- Healing brush tool
  - □ Uses context sensitive approach to try and match surrounding area where object being removed
  - □ Spot healing brush is good for small quick clean ups
  - □ Healing brush (or patch tool) can handle larger areas

Other software often has similar cloning tools – check yours to see what is possible

CLONING TIPS

- There are lots of optional features in PS clone tools- stick with the basic ones first
- Always clone on a copy layer (or more than one if complex)
- Zoom in close when cloning small areas
- Use soft edge brush to blend more easily but make brush harder near defined edges
- Do easy cloning first and then decide whether the trickier cloning is really needed
- When dealing with patterns choose pixels from the area which best matches the target area
- Watch out when dealing with lines that these match
- Try not to select from adjacent areas – pattern repetition is giveaway

CROP AND CLONE 1
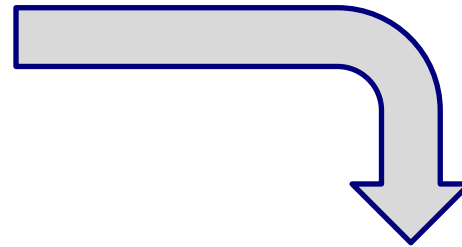
CROP AND CLONE 2

ROTATE, CROP AND CLONE 3

Using layers and layer masks

EXAMPLE 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
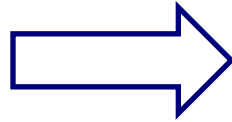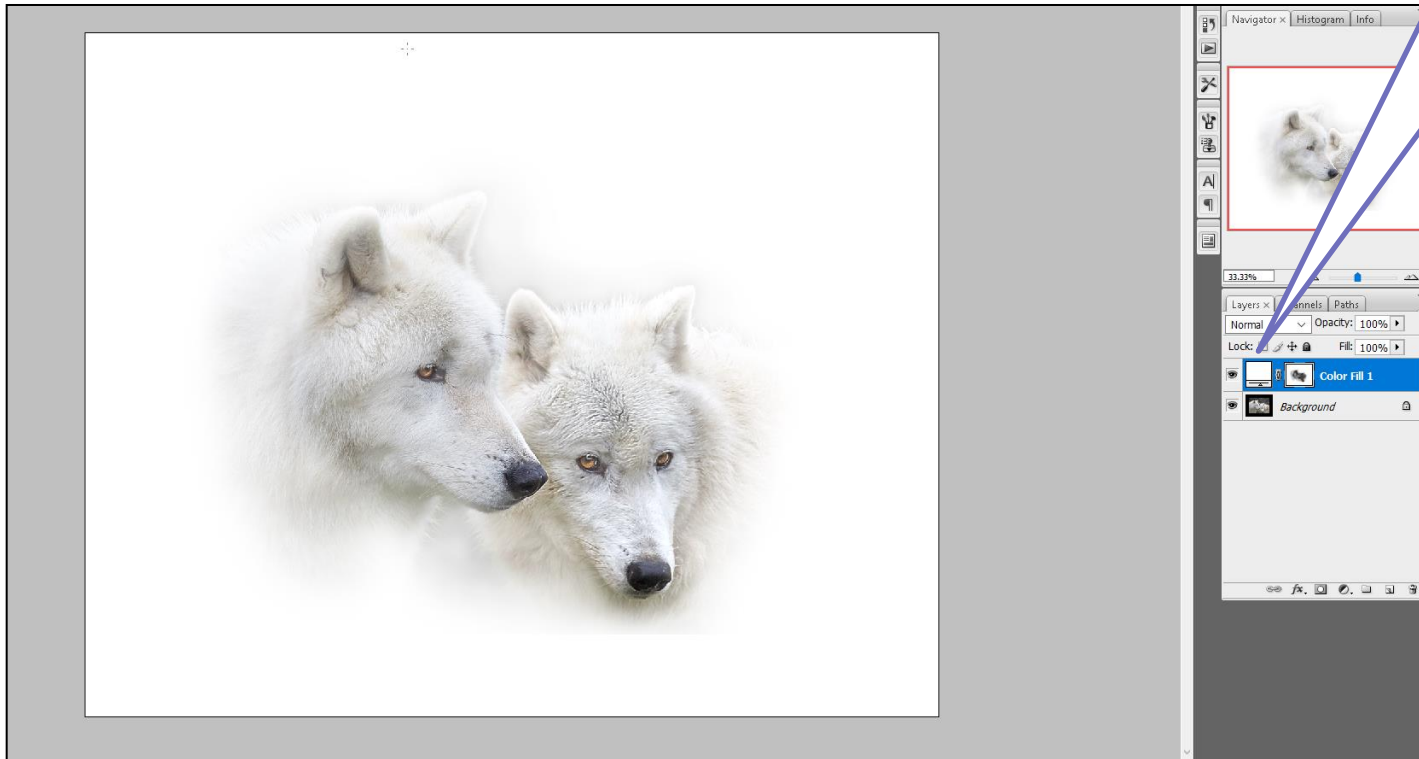- But more subtle effects can be achieved by adjusting the opacity to make a more limited impact

EXAMPLE USING SEPARATE LAYER
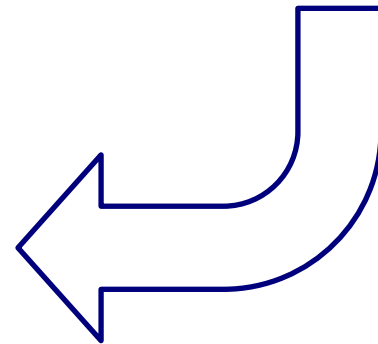
COLOUR ADJUSTMENT LAYERS

Colour adjustment layer

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

YOUR TURN TO HAVE A GO!!

Go slowly and always make sure you do adjustments on different layers