Complete Digital Photography
Seventh Edition

Selective Edits
in Camera Raw

by Ben Long
If you’ve read Chapter 18: Masking, you’ve already seen how Camera Raw lets you edit your raw files. What we haven’t looked at yet are some tools built in to Camera Raw that let you apply selective adjustments, very much like the ones we’ve been creating with Layer Masks.

**Newer Versions Only**

Versions of Camera Raw prior to version 5.3 lack the selective editing features discussed here.

Camera Raw’s Adjustment Brush lets you easily brush on effects to create localized adjustments, just like you would create with an Adjustment Layer and Layer Mask in Photoshop. In this tutorial, we’ll perform a localized adjustment directly in Camera Raw.

**S t e p  1 :  O p e n  t h e  I m a g e**

Download the image *Couch.CR2* from the Chapter 19 section of the companion web site. Open the image.

**S t e p  2 :  I n i t i a l ,  G l o b a l  A d j u s t m e n t s**

Right off the bat, you can see that the image needs some significant adjustments. Severely overexposed. This was a fairly high dynamic range situation, and even with the external flash (you can see the reflection in the woman’s sunglasses) it was still difficult to get the exposure evened out.

Begin, just as you always would, by addressing the overexposure problem. When you’re done, you should have an image with a well-exposed sky, but the process of recovering the sky should have a foreground that’s a little dark (Figure 1).
After our initial edits, we end up with an image that has a well-exposed sky, but that is too dark in the foreground.

**Step 3: Select the Adjustment Brush**

The Adjustment Brush is the fifth tool from the right on the Camera Raw toolbar. Select it now and hold the mouse over your image. You should see a brush tool composed of two circles (see Figure 2).

With the Adjustment Brush selected, we have a brush built out of two circles.

The inner circle shows the main part of the brush, the part that receives a 100 percent stroke. The outer area represents a feathered circle that surrounds the brush, to give it a soft edge.

Adjust the brush size (you can use [ and ], just like you can in Photoshop) to about 20. I chose this size because it’s about the side of the top part of the couch, which is what we want to brighten.
**Step 4: Brush on the Adjustment**

Set the Exposure slider to +.3 stop. Ensure that the other adjustment parameters are at 0. Then brush with the Adjustment Brush across the woman, and the top of the couch. The area you brush across will brighten because it will receive a .3-stop increase in exposure (Figure 3).

![FIGURE 3: Painting over the couch adds our adjustment to only that area.](image)

**Step 5: Edit the Adjustment**

With your stroke in place, you can now further refine the adjustment. Try different exposure levels, or any of the other raw controls. Note that you can even change white balance!

Note the green circle that appeared where you first clicked the mouse. This “pin” represents the brush stroke. If you mouse over the pin, a gray overlay will appear, which shows the area covered by that stroke (see Figure 4).

![FIGURE 4: If you mouse over a stroke’s pin, you can see exactly what the stroke covers.](image)

If you have multiple strokes in an image, you can click a stroke’s pin to call up its
settings. In this way, you can alter the parameters for any stroke at any time.

Note the New, Add, and Erase buttons above the Exposure parameter. When Add is selected, any new brush strokes will be added to the currently selected brush stroke, which means that new strokes will apply the same parameters as the currently selected stroke.

When New is selected, any additional strokes will create an entirely new adjustment, that can have its own set of parameters.

Erase lets you erase parts of a stroke. This is handy for times when your brush was too big, or you simply did some sloppy painting.

The Stroke Is Really a Mask

The way that Camera Raw is working this effect is the same as when you paint a stroke into the Layer Mask of an Adjustment Layer. If you imagine the entire image being covered with a black mask, then the stroke that you just painted represents a white hole in that mask. When you mouse over the Pin marker, Camera Raw is simply displaying the hole as gray instead of white.

**STEP 6: DELETE THE STROKE**

In addition to altering the parameters of a stroke, you can also delete a stroke. We’re going to try a different way of performing the same edit we just made, so click the stroke to select it and press the Delete key to delete it. Undo to restore the brush stroke.

Like all edits in Camera Raw, the Adjustment Brush tool is non-destructive. You can alter or delete brush strokes at any time. Whether you want to perform a localized edit in Camera Raw or in Photoshop is up to you. The Adjustment Brush is a little harder to control than the paint brushes in Photoshop, so for some edits you’ll probably have an easier time working with Adjustment Layers.

However, with the Adjustment Brush, you have the ability to perform localized highlight recovery, using the Exposure slider. So you might find that it allows for some edits that aren’t possible in Photoshop.

**Gradient Adjustments in Camera Raw**

Camera Raw provides an additional tool for making localized adjustments. The

**STEP 1: OPEN THE IMAGE**

Download the image `desert.CR2` from the Chapter 19 section of the companion web site. Open it in Camera Raw, and you’ll see an image that has a decent
exposure in the sky, but a foreground that is too dark. We could try to paint some brightness into the foreground, but there’s an easier tool (Figure 1).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image1.png}
\caption{The foreground in this image is a little dark. We’ll fix it in Camera Raw with a different type of localized adjustment.}
\end{figure}

**Step 2: Select the Graduated Filter Tool**

Just to the right of the Adjustment Brush is the Graduated Filter tool, which applies settings through a gradient, to create the same type of graduated effects that we created in the last section.

**Step 3: Make a Gradient**

Set the Exposure slider to +1 stop. I don’t know if this is the right amount of brightening, but we can always adjust this later.

Click near the top of the ground area and drag up through the mountains (Figure 18.52). You’ll see two lines, a green one and a red one. Green represents the beginning of the gradient where the full effect gets applied, and Red represents the ending where no effect is applied.
FIGURE 2: The foreground in this image is a little dark. We’ll fix it in Camera Raw with a different type of localized adjustment.

The foreground immediately looks better, but let’s punch it up a little more. Drag the Contrast slider to the right, and notice that only the foreground receives a contrast adjustment. I found a Contrast setting of about 50 looked good.

Like Adjustment Brush strokes, you can click the ends of the gradient to move them to adjust the size of the gradient. You can also alter the parameters of the gradient after selecting either point, or delete the gradient by clicking it and then pressing the Delete key.

The Brush and Graduated Filter tools let you perform a tremendous amount of selective editing in Camera Raw—possibly all that you’ll need.

Targeted Adjustment

Camera Raw offers one other selective editing tool, the Targeted Adjustment tool. With the Targeted Adjustment tool, you can click and drag any color in your image and automatically alter its properties. By default, the Targeted Adjustment tool alters brightness, but we’re going to use it to adjust the saturation of the desert image.

**Step 1: Configure the Tool**

Click and hold on the Targeted Adjustment tool until a menu appears, then select Saturation (Figure 3).
FIGURE 3: Here, I’m configuring the Targeted Adjustment tool to modify saturation. I can also have it alter Hue or Luminance. If I select Parametric Curve, then it will adjust brightness, while Grayscale Mix will let me alter the gray tones that are associated with specific colors in the image.

**STEP 2: ADJUST SATURATION**

Now click on the desert floor and drag to the left. Watch what happens to the sliders on the right side of the screen. The tool has automatically identified which color ranges are relevant, and is lowering the saturation in those ranges.

FIGURE 4: When I click and drag on the desert floor with the Targeted Adjustment brush, I can raise or lower the saturation of the relevant tones.

It’s important to understand that the Targeted Adjustment tool does not just adjust the colors of the object you clicked on. It has no way of knowing what that “object” is. Instead, it samples the color at the point that you clicked and adjusts all the colors in the image that match. As you can see here, it targets a wider range than just the single red pixel I clicked. It adjusts a range of red tones.

Targeted Adjustment can be a great way to brighten skies or other large areas of color.

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