

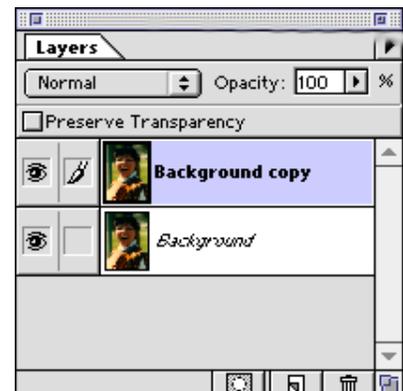
Basic Contrast Masking In Photoshop

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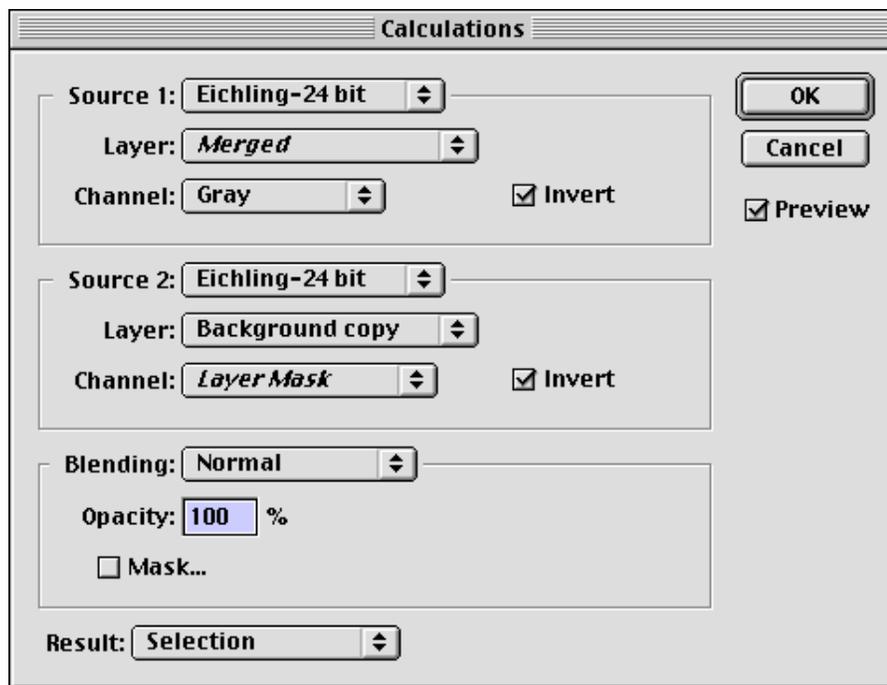
There are times when an image is too contrasty to look its best. One effective technique to correct this in the darkroom is contrast masking--masking the source with a pale inverted version of it. Doing this in Photoshop is even easier.



Take the too-contrasty image, and copy it to a new layer.
(Layer > Duplicate, or, from the Layer palette, select the layer and drag it to the document icon.)



Make a layer mask based on the light-to-dark information in the image. There's a lot of ways to do this, but I usually use Image > Calculations and merge the inverted grey channel to itself and save the results in a selection. Then add a layer mask based on the selection. Layer > Add Layer Mask > Reveal Selection.



Then, using the opacity slider and the different layer application modes in the Layer Palette, I set opacity to 100, and the mode to Screen--which will lighten the image. The layer mask will force the application of Screen to happen more for the dark areas and less for the bright areas, thus evening out the image.



Because we inverted the lightness channel--the combined grey channel--to create the layer mask, it acts as an 8-bit selection, with the brightest parts being applied least and the darkest parts applied most mask.

To fine tune this further, we could then use curves or levels on the layer mask to emphasise or deemphasise what is lightened.

Compare the original image with the final one. High-lights are not burned out, but the details in the shadows have been recovered.

