Portrait Editing 101

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Learning Objectives:

Take a portrait photo from dull to fabulous with a few simple steps. We'll walk through how to use Adobe Photoshop to adjust contrast and hue, smooth skin and brighten eyes to make the most of your portrait photography.

Key Takeaways:

1. Always shoot for your best. Many aspects of photography (mostly focus) cannot be fixed in photoshop. You can’t make someone smile bigger or change their angle. Tip – use a subtle flash or bounced light source whenever you can.
2. Shoot in RAW format for the most editing options.
3. Only touch up portrait photos as much as you need to. You want your subject to look their best but natural.

Notes:

Photoshop steps in this tutorial:

1. Open raw image file in **Adobe Lightroom** or **Bridge**
2. **Crop** image to desired size
3. Adjust **Brightness/Contrast**, **Color Balance**, **Highlights/Shadows** and **Saturation** to desired levels
4. Open file in **Adobe Photoshop**
5. Use **Spot Healing Brush Tool** to remove small, high-contrast blemishes, hair flyaways, spots on faces or clothes. Use the **Zoom tool** to zoom in as close as needed to get to see the details.
6. Create **Duplicate** layer to create a **Layer Mask**
   * **Invert** *(CMND + I)* your duplicate layer to flip all colors
   * Under blending mode menu, select **Vivid Light** to increase contrast
   * Under filter menu, select “other,” and then **High Pass …** to sharpen image. Set high pass radius to 24 pixels
   * Under filter menu, select “blur,” and then **Gaussian Blur …** to smooth image. Set gaussian blur radius to 2.4-3.0 pixels
   * Add **Layer Mask** by holding ALT and clicking layer mask icon Icon

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7. Select your **Paint Brush Tool** and make sure foreground color is set to white.
   * Set paint brush opacity to 30-50% and size to 50-150 pixels. You are now using your paint brush tool to paint the layer mask you created onto the original layer.
   * Use your paint brush tool in areas you want to touch up. Most important are under eyes, areas with heavy wrinkles or discoloration.
8. To see the changes you made more clearly, toggle the **Visibility Icon** next to the layer mask on and off.
9. Once you’re happy with the changes, **Select All Layers** and right-click to select **Merge Layers**. This will create one layer.
10. To whiten teeth:
    * **Zoom in** on the person’s mouth
    * Click on the **Magic Wand Tool**. Set the tolerance level to somewhere between 10-40. It will depend on your image’s size and how different the colors are. The lower the number, the more specific the tool will select.
    * Hold the **Shift key** down as you click around the parts you want to whiten.
    * Once the area has been selected, from the top menu, select **Image > Adjustments > Hue/Saturation**. In that panel, make small adjustments to the **Saturation** and the **Lightness**. Be very subtle with these adjustments. A little bit goes a long way.
11. Once you’re happy with everything, save your final file as a **.jpg** or a **.png.** Select file size for the medium you’re going to use it for.
    * + - * Print – 300 dpi in the largest size you can.
          * Web – 100 dpi and only as large are you need. Large images will slow down your site.

*\*Note: Above instructions are for Mac users. Keyboard alternatives will be different on a PC.*

Helpful Resources:

* A few online portrait retouching guides:
  + <https://www.skillshare.com/blog/heres-how-to-retouch-portraits-using-photoshop-a-guide/>
  + <https://digital-photography-school.com/3-steps-to-photoshop-retouching-for-naturally-looking-portraits/>
  + <https://youtu.be/Yp_pXajhy40>