Total time:
4-6 hours

Difficulty Level:
Very challenging

Skill Points:
• Learning how exposure blending works
• Learning how to shoot and blend several images
• Evaluating the end result of an exposure blend
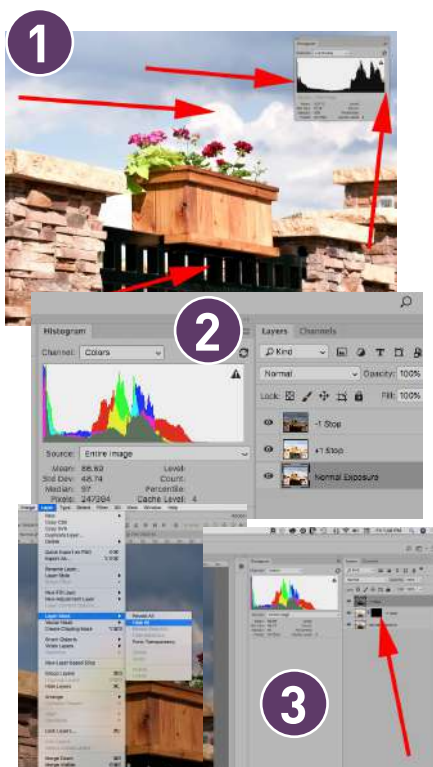
EXPOSURE BLENDING
SAVES THE DAY

Some scenes have a dynamic range outside of the camera's ability to accurately record. Exposure blending helps to **reign in** extreme contrast.

PHOTZY.COM

KEY LESSON: Exposure blending requires a layer based editing program. Keep the aperture setting the same for all exposures. Shoot one frame, at the exposure indicated by the camera meter, and then one frame that is underexposed by 1-stop, and another over-exposed by 1-stop. Sometimes 1-stop isn't quite enough exposure change. We recommend bracketing 2-stops in both directions.

EQUIPMENT: Any camera with exposure bracketing capability | Any lens | Layer-based software

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SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS

1- Normal Exposure: In high contrast situations, the camera did its best to create a balanced exposure. Yet, the histogram reveals that the dynamic range was too great, and both the highlights and shadows were clipped off.

2- Layered: Place the three images into a single multi-layered image file. Put the *normal* exposure on the bottom, the +1 stop file next, and the -1 stop file on top. Be sure to "Align" the three layers, so that there is no ghosting. You may have to crop along the edges of the shot after the alignment is complete.

3- Layer Masks: On each of the upper two layers create a "Hide All" (appears as a solid black panel) layer mask. We will use the +1 stop layer to raise the dynamic range of the shadows, and we will use the -1 stop layer to lower the dynamic range of the highlights.

Blending: Use the color white and the brush tool. Set the Hardness of the brush to 0. Set the opacity between 15% and 35 %. Select the +1 layer and paint where you wish to bring up the shadows. Select the -1 layer and paint where you wish to reduce the highlights. The histogram is no longer clipped off. If you paint the mask and don't like the result, switch the color to black and paint over the area that you're unhappy with. When you're done, you should save the file in a layered format, as well as in a flattened version.

+ 1 Stop **- 1 Stop** **Layered**

+

=

ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

1- Organize a photo shoot similar in content to the example photo: High contrast scene / Deep shadows and bright highlights / Use a static subject (no cars and no people) / Use a tripod / shoot three frames: Normal, Under 1-stop, Over 1-stop

2- Import your images into your editing software and blend them. **Watch the exposure blending bonus video**.

HOW DID YOU DO?

• Did your files line up when layered? Do you understand how blending compresses the dynamic range?
• Were you able to produce a better photograph than any of the three original image files?

READY! SET! GO! ACTION CARDS
STRETCH GOALS: EXPOSURE BLENDING

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👋 Hey there!

Let's get real for a minute… Learning photography can be super challenging! But we're here to help you every step of the way!

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