# Shadow/Highlight Command

The Shadow/Highlight command can provide a quick, easy and effective method of lightening shadow areas of an image and darkening highlight areas. It is extremely efficient, in particular, in lightening shadow areas and putting detail into what otherwise would be blocked up areas. However, the tool does need to be used correctly in order to avoid halos and other odd things happening to your image.

The Shadow/Highlight command is not available as an adjustment layer. It must be applied directly onto and will therefore directly affect, the pixels on an image layer. As such it is best to duplicate the layer or, if your image contains multiple layers, stamp the layer.

- To copy a layer (or create a layer from a *Background*) either drag the thumbnail to the '**Create a new laye**r' icon at the bottom of the layers panel or type **Ctrl + J**.
- To 'stamp' multiple layers into one, select the top layer, hold down the **Alt Key** (**Optio**n on Mac) and select **Layers > Merge Visible** from the menu bar or **Merge Visible** from the fly-out menu at the upper right corner of the Layers panel.

Once you have prepared a layer, click to select it then from the menu bar choose **Image > Adjustments > Shadow Highlights**. The dialog box shown below left will appear in its basic form (if you have not used and altered it previously) and the image used as an example in this tutorial is shown below right. The contrast range of the scene was too wide to be able to process as a single image in Camera Raw and it was processed biased to the highlight areas.
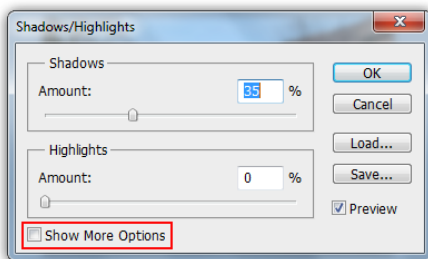
In its default configuration, the dialog box produces limited results with no scope for fine tuning. Click the **Show More Options** box to reveal an expanded and much more flexible command.

As long as the box is checked the dialog box will open in its expanded mode.


First, set the Color Correction slider to zero. This adjustment can boost saturation in an exaggerated and sometimes unpleasant way. There are better tools in Photoshop to adjust saturation.

Next, leave the Tonal Width for both Shadow and Highlights set to 50%. If you do change the values they should both add up to 100% or less. More than 100% will overlap some tonal values.

Leave the Midtone Contrast alone, initially.

Leave the Black and White Clip points set to their default.

The majority of adjustments will be made with the Amount and Radius sliders.
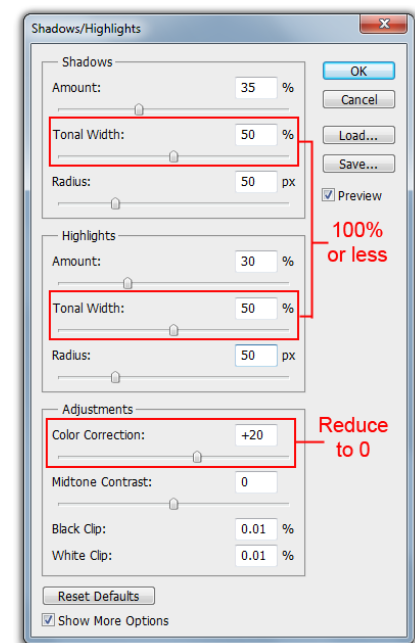
Adjust the Amount sliders to taste. Increasing the Shadows Amount opens (lightens) the shadows. Increasing the Highlights Amount reduces the intensity of the highlights.

Be wary of opening the shadows too much as there is the risk of increasing noise, particularly if there is little information in the shadow areas. A 16bit image will have a lot more information in the shadow areas than an 8bit image.

Increasing the Radius value reduces haloes and flares by spreading them across a larger area. The idea is to balance the halo reduction against loss of detail in deep shadow areas.

Toggle the Preview button frequently as you make adjustments to check the before and after states.

Click the Midtone Contrast box and use the **Shift + Up Arrow or Down Arrow** to bump the value in increments of 10. Using the arrow keys without the Shift increases/decreases values by 1.

Readjust the Highlights Radius, if necessary, once the Midtone Contrast is set to your satisfaction.

Keep in mind that the Shadow/Highlights command is resolution dependent. That means that radius settings will be based on the size of the image and will not necessarily be consistent.

Another point to bear in mind is that this command can sharpen skin, making pores and imperfections more prominent. However, if you have worked on a duplicate layer then applying a layer mask and painting on it with black will rub through to the softer elements of the underlying layer.

The image below is the final result of applying the settings above right.