

Beginner Portrait Retouching Assignment

Objective

In this assignment, you will learn **non-destructive** portrait retouching techniques while keeping your subjects looking **real and natural**. You will use **Adobe Bridge, Adobe Camera Raw (ACR), and Adobe Photoshop** to enhance two portrait images—one male and one female.

Your goal is to refine your images while maintaining a **natural look** and avoiding overly processed results.

Part 1: Selecting and Importing Images

- Use **Adobe Bridge** to browse your portrait images.
- Open your selected **male and female portrait** in **Adobe Camera Raw (ACR)**.

Part 2: Adobe Camera Raw Adjustments

1. Apply a Profile or Preset

- Choose a **Portrait Profile** that enhances skin tones.
- If using **Presets**, pick one that complements the portrait naturally.

2. Light Panel Adjustments (Global Adjustment)

- Adjust **Black, White, Shadow, Highlight, Contrast, and Exposure sliders** to ensure a balanced image.

3. White Balance & Color Adjustments

- Adjust the **White Balance, Vibrance, or Saturation** if necessary.
- Use the **Color Mixer** to enhance depth, remove redness, and refine **lips, eyes, and skin tones**.

4. Cropping Decision: ACR or Photoshop?

- If the image needs **major recomposition**, crop it later in **Photoshop**.
- If only a **small crop** is needed for balance, you can do it in **ACR**.

5. Facial and Image Masking

- Use **Facial Masking** to target **specific facial features** (eyes, lips, skin).
- Use **Separate Masks** for different areas (**skin, eyes, background**).

6. Portrait Masking Features in ACR v17.0

How to Use Portrait Masking in ACR v17.0

- Open the **Masking Tool**: In ACR, click on the **Masking icon** in the right panel (**circle icon on the right**).
- Choose **Portrait Masking**: Select "**Select Subject**" or "**People**" (depending on the update terminology) to activate the AI-based portrait masking options.
- Select Specific Features**: ACR will detect and separate various **facial and body features**, like **skin, eyes, teeth, and hair**. You can choose to mask **individual features or multiple areas at once**.
- Adjust the Masked Areas**: Each feature mask offers its own set of controls, including **Exposure, Contrast, Highlights, Shadows, Texture, Clarity, and more**. Adjust these settings to achieve a **balanced, natural look**.
- Face Skin**: Smooth, adjust exposure, and correct color.
- Body Skin**: Ensure skin tones remain consistent.
- Eyes (Iris & Sclera)**: Brighten irises and reduce redness in sclera.
- Teeth**: Adjust brightness and whiteness for a natural look.
- Hair**: Modify brightness, color, texture, and contrast.

7. Skin Smoothing: ACR vs. Photoshop?

- Use **Texture and Clarity sliders** for **subtle** skin softening.
- Avoid over-smoothing**; major retouching will be done in **Photoshop**.
- Remove blemishes before softening the skin.
- Does negative clarity smooth the skin?** Yes. If using this approach:
 - Open the image into **Photoshop before adding negative clarity**.
 - **Create a duplicate layer** → Convert it to a **Smart Layer**.
 - Open the layer into the **Camera Raw Filter**.
 - Use the **layer mask** to selectively **soften only the skin** (not the entire image).
 - **Remove blemishes before applying negative clarity** for a more natural look.

► Photoshop Frequency Separation Tutorial:

Copy & Paste Link → <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMdl4133Bow&t=366s>

8. Save the Edited File as a DNG

- Save your ACR adjustments as a DNG file** before opening in Photoshop.
- This allows me to see your **raw work before Photoshop retouching**.

Part 3: Photoshop Retouching

Keep detailed notes for the steps you took during your **retouch process** for each image.

TIP: Create a Composite Layer ("The Claw")

As you progress through your edits, you may need to **merge all visible layers** into a new one while keeping your original layers intact.

- Click the **top layer** in the **layer stack**.
- Press **Shift + Option + Command + E (Mac)** or **Shift + Alt + Ctrl + E (Windows)** to create a composite layer.
- Label this layer "**Composite**" to track your work.

1. Setup & Non-Destructive Workflow

- Work on a background copy** (do not retouch the original background layer).
- Use separate layers** for each adjustment.
- Label layers properly** to reflect your edits.
- To view your mask: Option-click** on the **mask part** of the layer in the **layer stack**. This allows you to **see missed areas** and refine your mask for **cleaner selections**.

2. Blemish Removal & Skin Cleanup

- Use the **Remove Tool, Spot Healing Brush, and Clone Stamp Tool** to remove:
 - **Pimples, scars, blemishes**
 - **Hotspots** (shiny areas on the nose, forehead, etc.)
 - **Distracting stray hairs**

TIP when using the Clone Tool:

- In the options bar select the Lighten Mode to fix darker blemishes.
- In the options bar select the Darken Mode to fix lighter blemishes.
- Adjust **opacity (8–30%)** for subtle blending

3. Line Reduction (Not Removal!)

- Work to reduce wrinkles while maintaining a **natural appearance**.
- Create a **separate layer** remove the problem area fully then adjust layer **opacity** for fine-tuning of lines, wrinkles and dark shading.

•This will be its own layer and you must stamp the layers to continue your edit.

4. Hair & Eyebrow Enhancements

- Use the **Dodge** (lighten) and **Burn** (darken) on a separate layer to enhance hair structure.
- Darken eyebrows subtly for definition if needed.

5. Lip & Teeth Enhancements

- Select **teeth** and use **Curves** or **Hue/Saturation** to **whiten naturally**.
- Lightly **enhance lip color** with a **soft brush** and **low-opacity** explore blend modes for a natural look.

Whiten Teeth & Eyes:

- **Create a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer**
- **Teeth: Reduce Yellow Channel (-60 to -100)**
- **Eyes: Reduce Red Channel (-60 to -100)**
- **Adjust Lightness slider to desired look**

Enhancing Lip Depth & Edges:

- **Create a New Layer - Paint Black on the lips - set Blend Mode to Soft Light, and adjust opacity for natural enhancement.**

6. Localized Eye Sharpening

- Create a new duplicate (stamped) layer, use **Unsharp Mask** to sharpen the image the eyes are your focus.
- Add a layer mask to reveal sharpening only in the iris.**

7. Subtle Face Sculpting with Liquify

- Convert Liquify to a Smart Filter** for flexibility.
- Use a **low-pressure brush** to:
 - **Smooth asymmetry**
 - **Refine jawline subtly**
 - **Maintain realistic proportions**

Facial Liquify Filter Checklist in Photoshop 26.2

Best Practices:

- **Work Subtly – Keep edits natural and minimal.**

- Work on a composite layer.
- Use Smart Objects – Allows for non-destructive editing.
- Zoom In & Out – Check adjustments at different zoom levels.
- Use a Light Touch with Liquify – If using the **Forward Warp Tool**.
- Compare with the Original – Toggle preview to ensure a natural look.

Preparation:

- Open your image in Photoshop.
- Create a **Duplicate Layer** (Ctrl + J / Cmd + J).
- (Optional) Create a **Stamped Layer** (Shift + Ctrl + Alt + E / Shift + Cmd + Option + E).
- (Optional) **Convert to Smart Object** for non-destructive editing.

Accessing the Liquify Filter:

- Go to **Filter > Liquify**
- Select **Face-Aware Liquify** in the right panel.

Each facial adjustment is based on automatic face detection. If multiple faces are detected, you can select the specific face you want to edit.

Facial Adjustments Available in Liquify:

- **Eyes:** Adjust size, height, width, tilt, and distance.
- **Nose:** Adjust width and height.
- **Mouth:** Modify smile, lips, mouth width, and openness.
- **Face Shape:** Refine **forehead, chin, jawline, and face width**.

Final Check:

- Review all changes and ensure they look realistic.
- Click **OK** to apply the Liquify adjustments.
- Save your edited image.

Submission Requirements

- Submit Two Edited Portraits** (One Male, One Female).
- Submit both the DNG and PSD files with all layers intact.**
- Resize: 3000 pixels longest side, 8-bit.**
- File Naming Format:**
 - **LastName_FirstInitial_Female.Extension**

- **LastName_FirstInitial_Male.Extension**
- **Write Out Your Editing Steps** and submit via **"Add Comments"** in Canvas