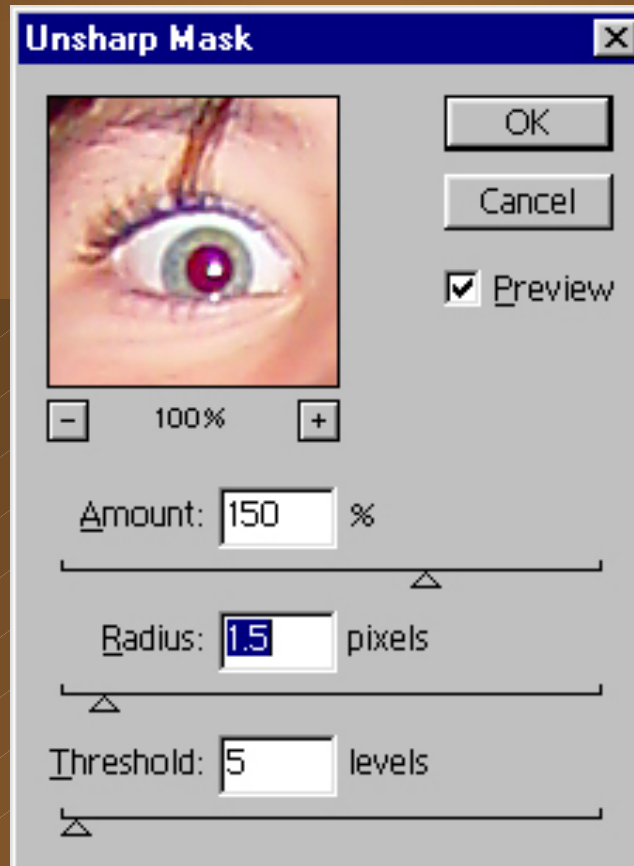# Advanced Photoshop 6
Unsharp Mask

Rick Miller

Adobe Certified Expert:
Photoshop

Unsharp Mask

Rick Miller

Unsharp Mask

◆ **The etymology of the phrase "Unsharp Mask"** is the photographic prepress industry. The process of Unsharp Masking entailed taking an original negative, compositing/overlaying it with an unsharp duplicate (that functioned as the "Unsharp Mask") to create a third piece of film which exhibited increased contrast along the edges of brightness and color values. Hence the term "Unsharp Mask".

◆ **Photoshop replicates this process digitally**, although it does so internally - behind the scenes. However, Photoshop allows us to modify/fine tune the settings that will be used in the internal process of the Unsharp Mask filter.

◆ **Unsharp Masking** doesn't increase detail, but rather the illusory appearance of detail through its use of contrast along the edges of brightness and color values.

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Unsharp Mask

◆ **Amount** is the intensity of the sharpening/contrast halo. It determines how light and dark the sharpening/contrast halo gets.

◆ **Radius** is the spread/width of the sharpening/contrast halo.

◆ **Threshold** is what I refer to as the include/exclude parameters of the USM filter. It looks to the luminosity/brightness values of neighboring pixels to determine whether they are to be "included" or "excluded". For example, If two neighboring pixels have luminosity values of 220 and 225 respectively - with a threshold setting of 3, they will be "included" in the sharpening process as their luminosity values are greater then 3 luminosity values of difference. If however the threshold setting was changed to 10, then they would be "excluded" from the sharpening process as their luminosity values are less then 10 luminosity values of difference. Threshold is used to suppress noise.
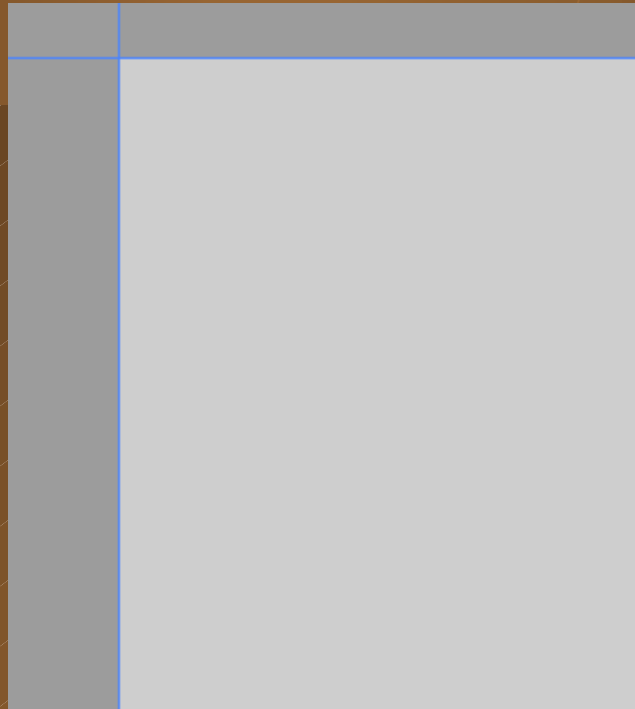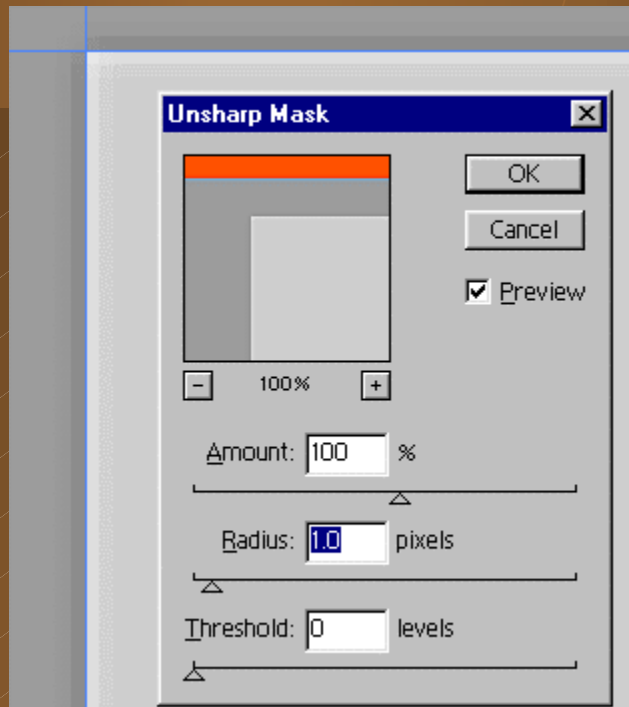
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Unsharp Mask

◆ **Without Sharpening**

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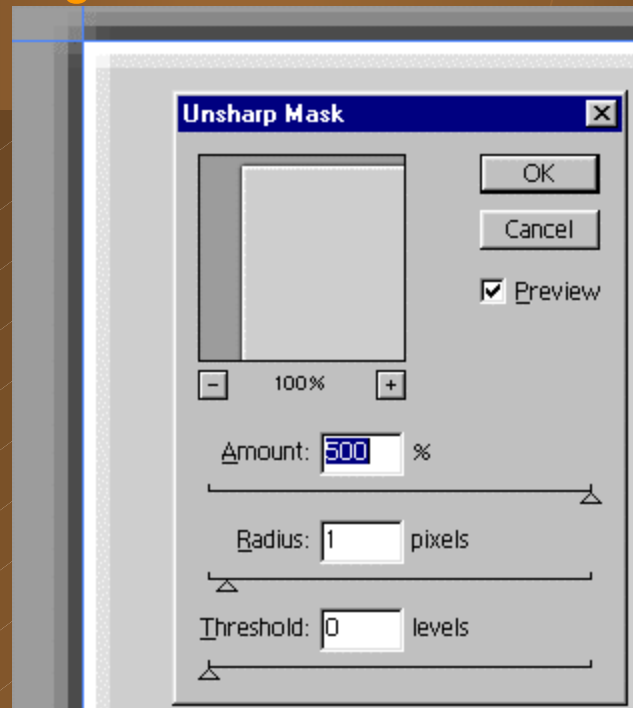Adobe® Certified Expert

Unsharp Mask

◆ **With Sharpening:** **Amount setting of 100**

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Unsharp Mask

- **With Sharpening:** Amount setting of 500.
- Notice the intensity of the light and dark areas of the sharpening halo.

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Unsharp Mask

- **With Sharpening: Radius setting of 3.**
- Notice the spread of the sharpening halo vs. the previous example of 1.

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