Fill and Adjustment Layers

Fill and Adjustment Layers are one of Photoshop's most valuable features. They allow you to adjust images without altering the original. Photoshop provides a large selection of Fill and Adjustment Layers. In this chapter you will look at the EXPOSURE layer, the LEVELS layer, the BRIGHTNESS/CONTRAST layer and the BLACK & WHITE layer

Exposure layers

One of the most common problems when taking a photo is incorrect exposure. Photos that are over-exposed have too much light in them. Photos that are under-exposed are too dark. An EXPOSURE layer allows you minimize these effects.
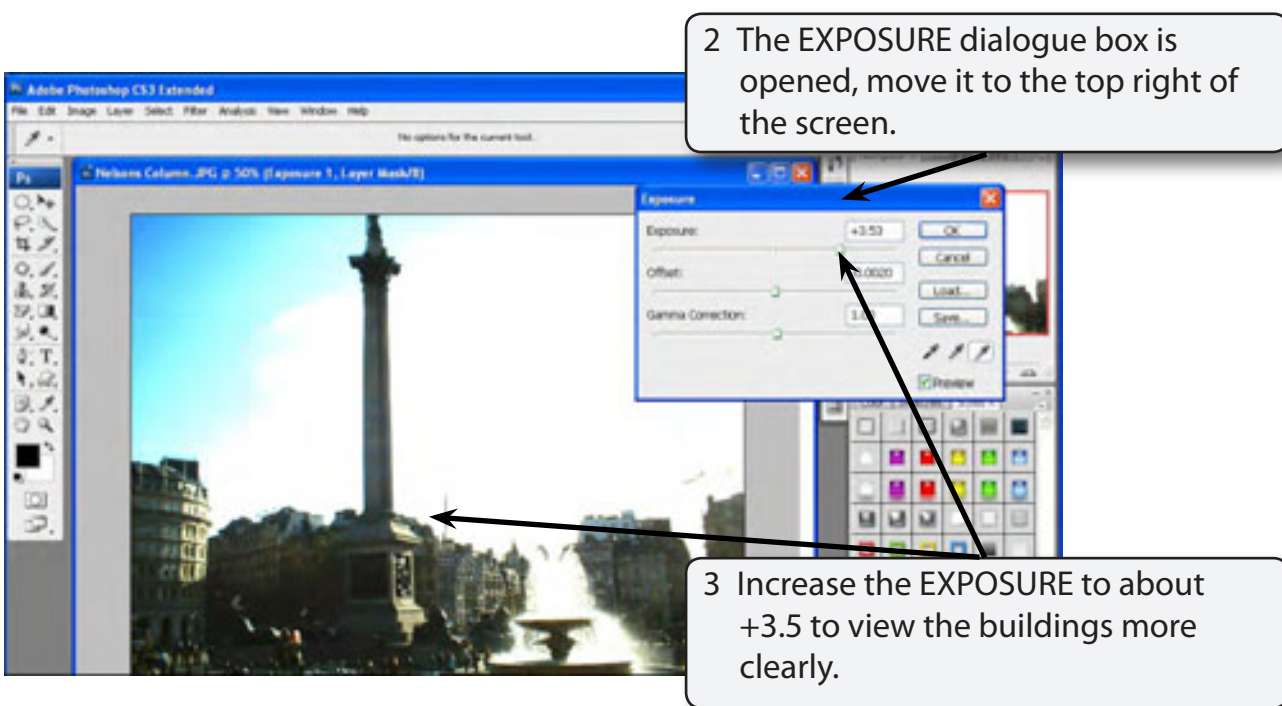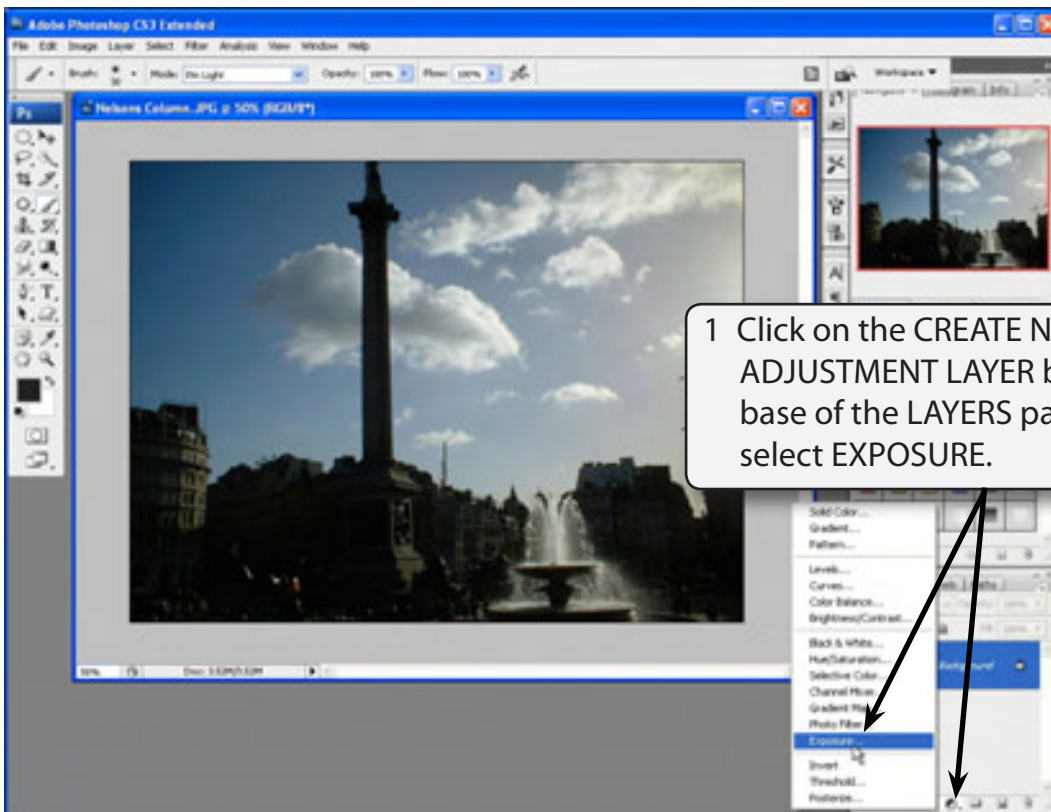
A   Loading the Sample Photo

A photo that is under-exposed has been prepared for you and it will need to be adjusted so that the buildings in it can be more clearly seen.

1   Load Photoshop or close the current file.

2   Display the FILE menu and select OPEN.

3   Access the PScs3 SUPPORT FILES, open the CHAPTER 14 folder and load the NELSON'S COLUMN file.

4   The photo is too dark to see the buildings clearly.

B   Inserting the Exposure Layer

The EXPOSURE LAYER is added on top of the background layer and it will not alter that layer in any way.

1 Click on the CREATE NEW FILL OR ADJUSTMENT LAYER button at the base of the LAYERS palette and select EXPOSURE.

2 The EXPOSURE dialogue box is opened, move it to the top right of the screen.

3 Increase the EXPOSURE to about +3.5 to view the buildings more clearly.

4 Select OK to accept the change.

C Displaying Part of the Background Layer

Unfortunately the sky and the fountain are now over exposed and do not look natural. When you create an EXPOSURE layer a MASK is included in the layer. This allows you to paint over parts of the background photo that have better exposure.
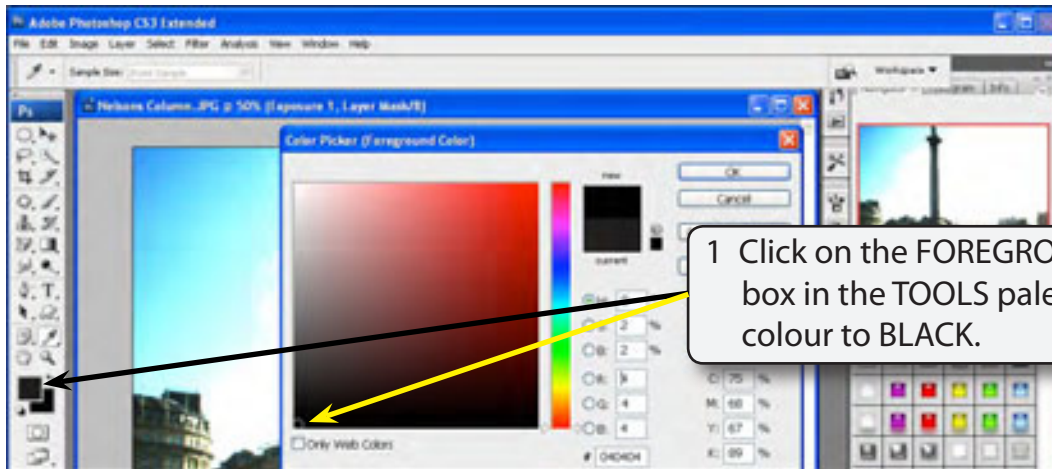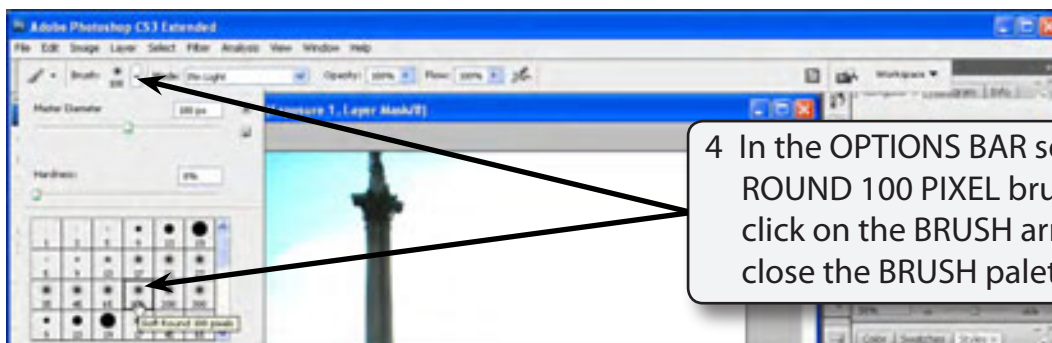

1 Click on the FOREGROUND COLOUR box in the TOOLS palette and set the colour to BLACK.

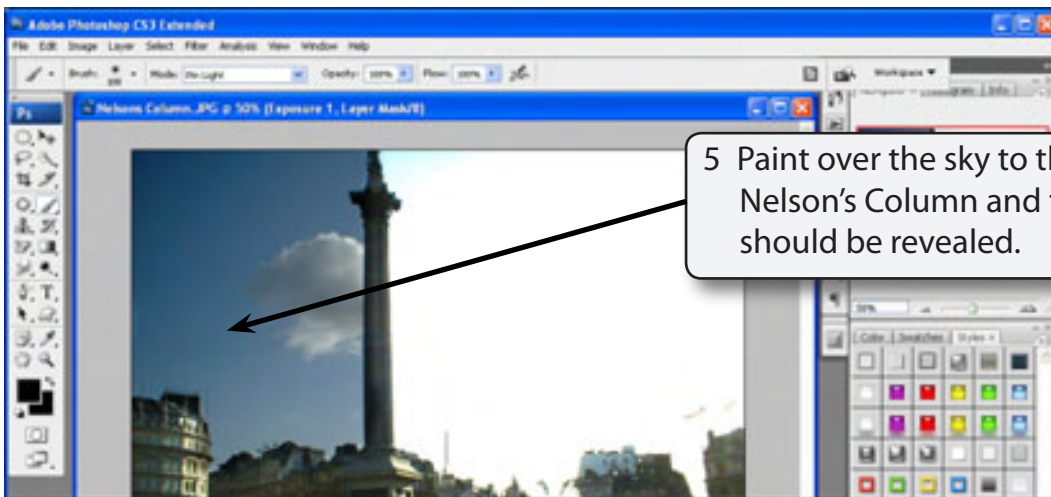2 Select OK to set the colour.
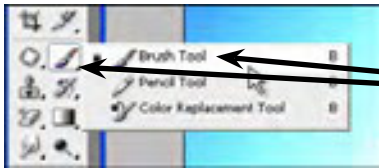
3 Select the BRUSH TOOL from the TOOLS palette.

4 In the OPTIONS BAR select the SOFT ROUND 100 PIXEL brush size then click on the BRUSH arrow again to close the BRUSH palette.

NOTE: **A soft brush usually gives best results when painting over a layer mask.**

5 Paint over the sky to the left of Nelson's Column and the original sky should be revealed.

NOTE: i **You can use the [key to reduce the brush size for painting close to the buildings.**

ii **You can use the UNDO command or STEP BACKWARDS command if you make a mistake with the painting.**

6 Paint over the right side of the column, but leave the areas close to the buildings and fountain.