



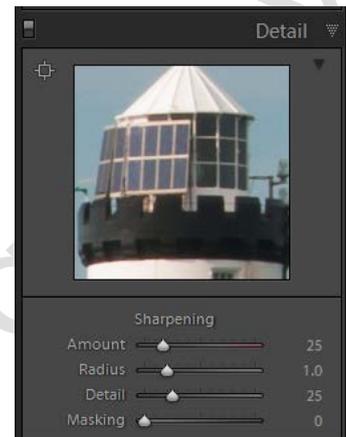
Lightroom Bitesize: Sharpening

Almost every digital photograph will benefit from a bit of sharpening. This used to be a job for high-end post-production software such as Photoshop but the later versions of Lightroom make it a quick and easy task.

Open up the **Detail** panel in the Develop module.

In order to be in control of sharpening you really need to be looking at 1:1 magnification - but the trouble is that if you are only concentrating on one small part of the image then you cannot see what is happening in other parts of the image. Fortunately this has been taken care of by virtue of a preview panel.

Note: If you cannot see it just click on the little black triangle in the top-right of the Detail panel.



To set the area showing in the preview panel just click on this little button at the top-left of the panel and then move your cursor over the main image. Click when you have found the correct position.



In this image of Black Point lighthouse at Penmon, Anglesey, Wales, I want to concentrate on the sharpening at the top of the lighthouse and so move the preview panel over that point.





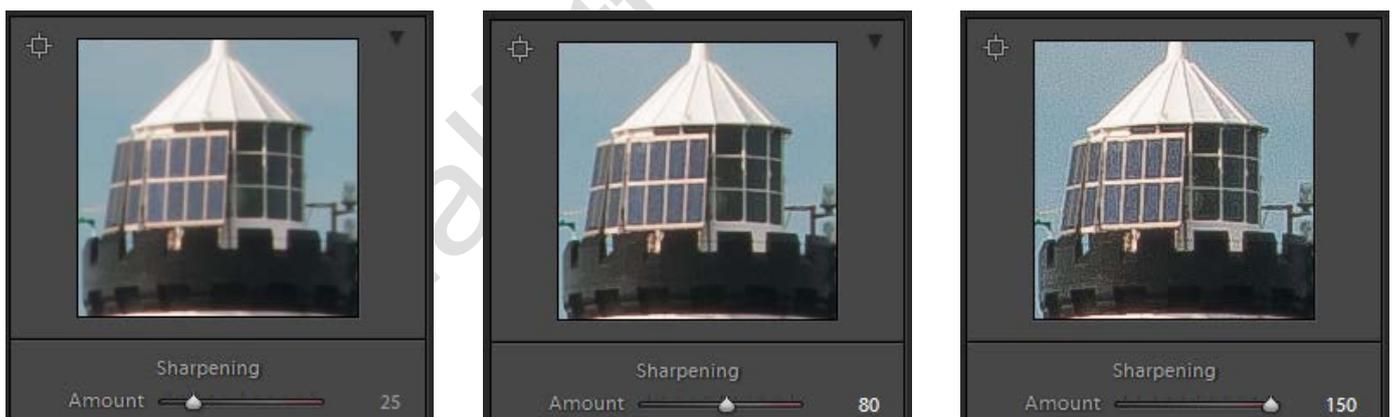
Now to look at the sliders in the **Detail** panel for **Sharpening**:

- Amount:** As it implies, the Amount slider adjusts the amount of sharpening applied. Slide to the right to increase the sharpening - but keeping an eye on the rest of the image to ensure that excessive noise or halving is not introduced. The key here is to take it just enough - but not too much.
- Radius:** This adjusts how many pixels from the sharpened edge are affected. Generally keep it low to about a setting of 1.0
- Detail:** This is useful for removing some of the halving effect that sharpening can introduce and works by controlling the amount of sharpening on the edges or 'details'. In summary, a low number applies sharpening only to the hardest edges whilst higher numbers start to affect subtle textures. Generally keep it to its default setting of 25.

Finally there is one more slider:

- Masking:** This is a fantastic tool because it gives total control on where sharpening is being applied. With photographs of flowers or people it is nice to be able to sharpen only the detailed areas. We'll take a look at this slider at the end.

Now back to the lighthouse image, at the default setting of 25 it seems a bit hazy but increasing the Amount slider to 80 starts to provide a lot more detail. However a further increase to 150 starts to introduce halving, particularly in the sky.



So you could now just move the amount back to 80 - and it would still be a great improvement. But now we will see the effect of the **Masking** slider.



Leaving the **Amount** slider set at 150, and with the cursor hovering over the **Masking** slider, press the Alt key (Mac: Opt) and the left mouse button. You will see that the screen turns white showing that all of the image is being sharpened. Now slowly increase the **Masking** slider.



As you do so, you will see the screen turning black, with only the strongest edges appearing in white. These are the only parts of the image that are now being sharpened. Increase until you feel that all applicable edges are showing in white.



So even with excessive **Amount** sharpening, the **Masking** slider has rectified the haloing in the sky.

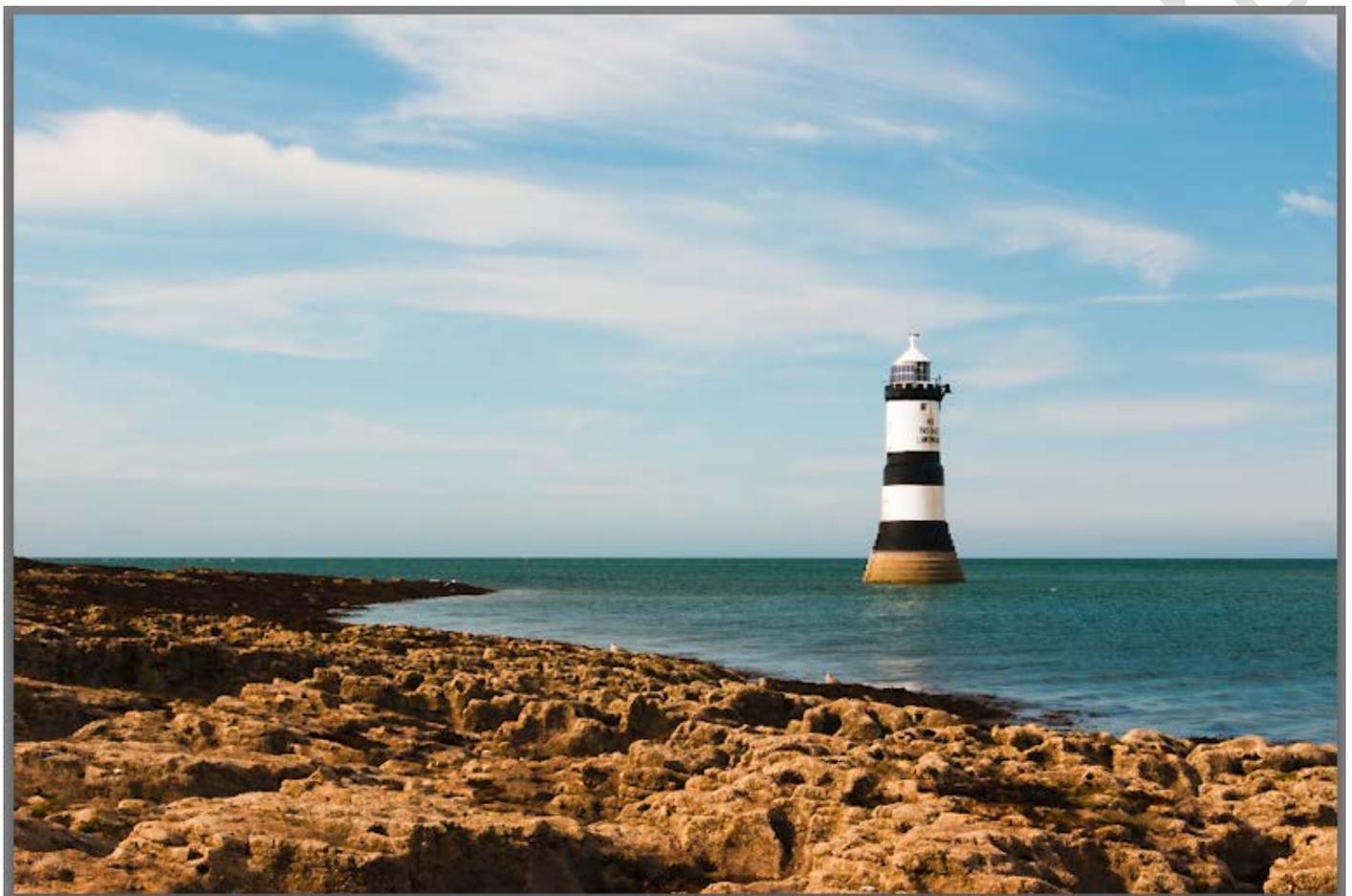
So masking isn't something you need every time - but very useful when you want to leave some areas without sharpening - such as the sky.



Top Tip!

Holding down the Alt key (Mac: Opt) works in a similar way with all of the sliders in the Sharpening module by turning the image to greyscale and accentuating the effect.

So here is the finished image:



So sharp you could cut your finger on it!

One final point - sharpening can introduce noise, particularly in the shadow areas. So you may now want to look at reducing noise in the image - because noise reduction and sharpening go hand-in-hand due to their opposing effects. It's not by chance that they live together in the Detail panel.

If you found this tutorial useful please let me know by leaving a comment on my Facebook page (or just 'Like' it) at <https://www.facebook.com/johnhallettphotographs/> . Thanks