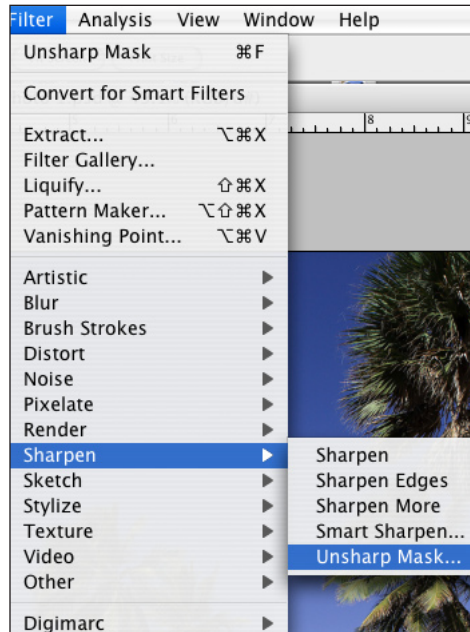


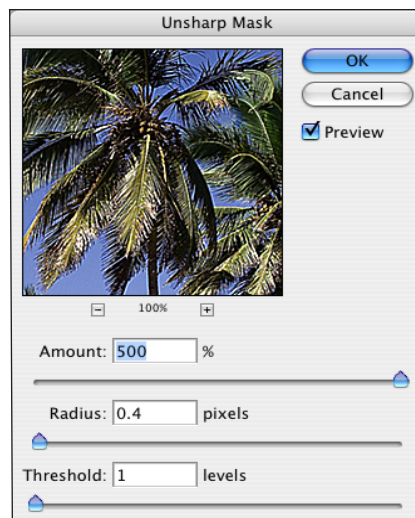
Basic Sharpening

Sharpening in Photoshop results from defining the edges of objects in order to create additional contrast between objects and the areas that surround them. Unfortunately, as with other editing in Photoshop, it is a compromise. In order to create the illusion of sharpness, the program creates a slight outline around the objects. When controlled, the overall image appears to be in sharper focus. When it is over done, the appearance of dark or light halos around objects in the image becomes evident. Getting it right is a fine balance in using the controls.

There are multiple sharpening methods in Photoshop. Some are more effective than others. Most of these methods can be found in the *Filters* Menu in the *Sharpen* category.

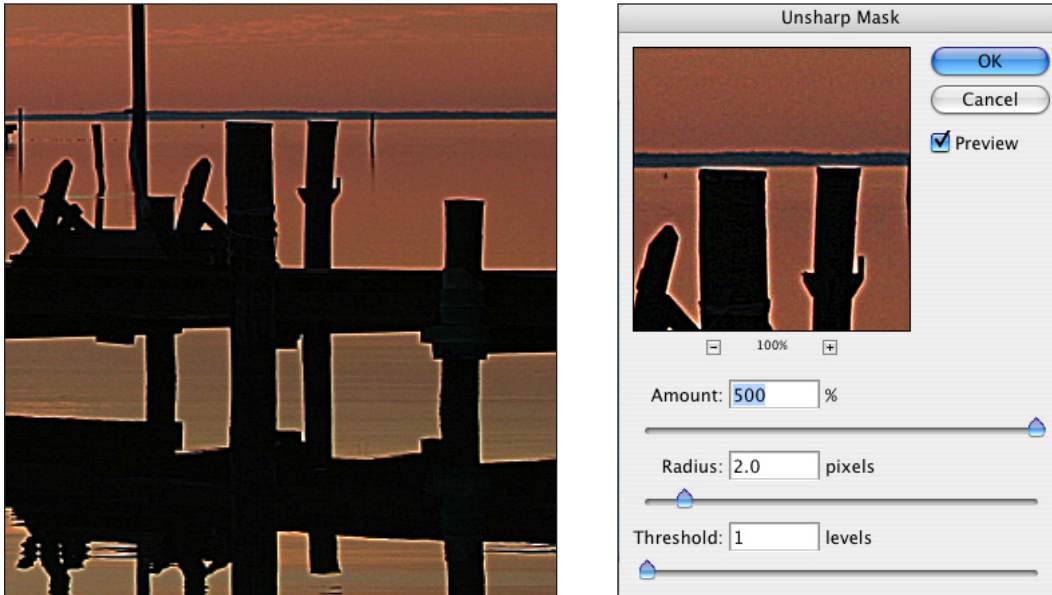


Although something can be said for the *Smart Sharpen* option, it doesn't yet have the flexibility of the tried and true option of *Unsharp Mask*. The *Unsharp Mask* has three distinct controls - *Amount*, *Radius*, and *Threshold*. *Amount* is fairly obvious in that it controls the degree the filter works. *Radius*, in basic terms, controls the width of the halo or outline that is created around contrasting values. *Threshold* refers to the number of values in contrast that must be present before any effect takes place.

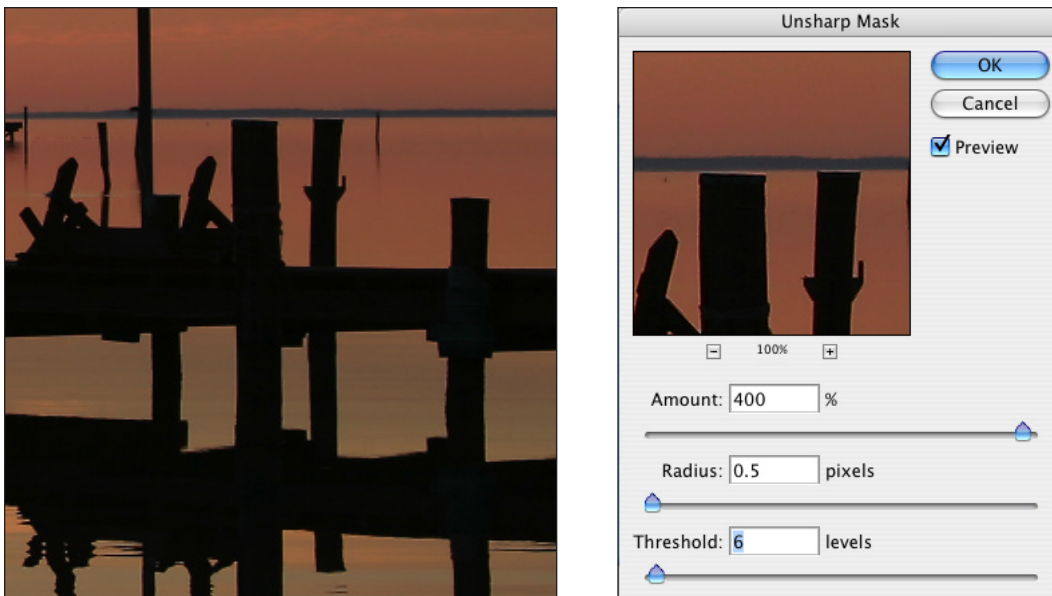


For most images, sharpness, or lack thereof, is most obvious in higher contrast areas or areas with finer detail. For this type of sharpening you would usually use a high *Amount* setting and a low *Radius* setting. The *Threshold* should be adjusted to eliminate unwanted halos in areas with less contrast.

Here is an example of an image that has been over-sharpened. Note the obvious halos in the higher contrast areas.



Below is a much more reasonable setting for this image. The obvious halos are gone. A lower *Radius* setting was used to decrease the width of the halo and a higher *Threshold* setting was used to soften the horizon line. A slightly lower *Amount* was also used.



Sharpening is almost always necessary to improve first generation digital images, such as images from your digital camera, and second generation images, such as scans.