Adjusting the Look of Images
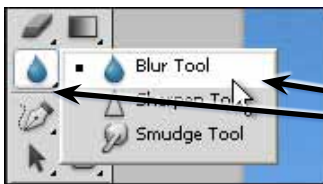
Photoshop offers a range of tools that allow you to adjust the colour and texture of images and photographs.
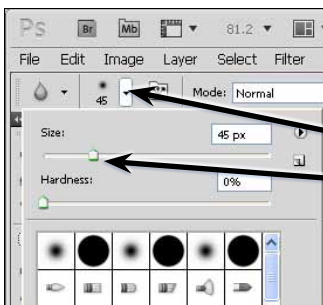
Loading a Sample File

1   Load Photoshop or close the current file then display the FILE menu and select OPEN.

2   Access the PScs5 SUPPORT FILES, open the CHAPTER 8 folder and open the LONDON image.

3   Press CTRL+0 or COMMAND+0 to set the view to FIT ON SCREEN.

The Blur Tool

The BLUR TOOL softens hard edges in an image to reduce its details. Let's make one of Big Ben's clocks a little less detailed.
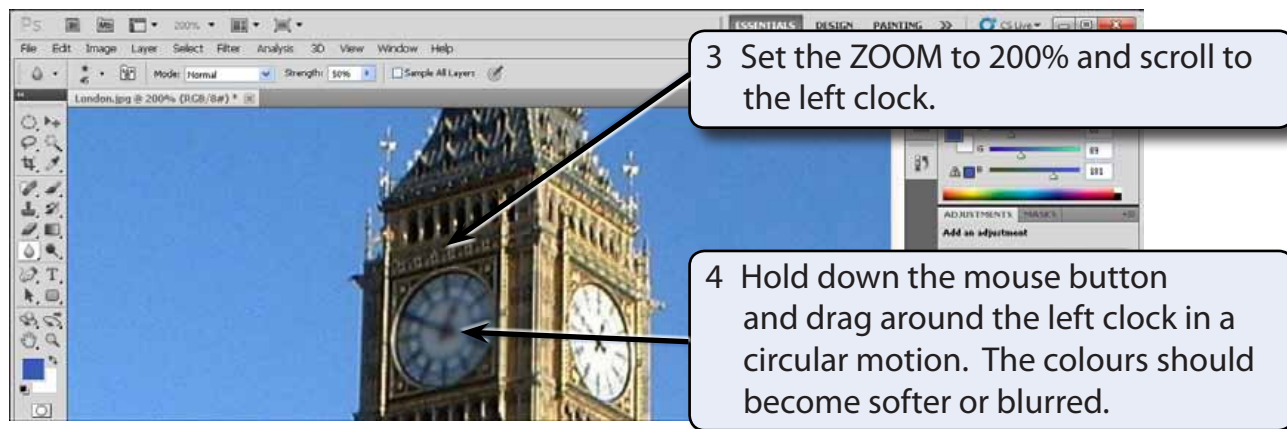

1 Click and hold down the mouse button on the tool below the ERASER TOOL and select the BLUR TOOL.

2 In the OPTIONS BAR click on the BRUSH SIZE arrow, set the SIZE to 45 pixels then click on the arrow again to close the panel.
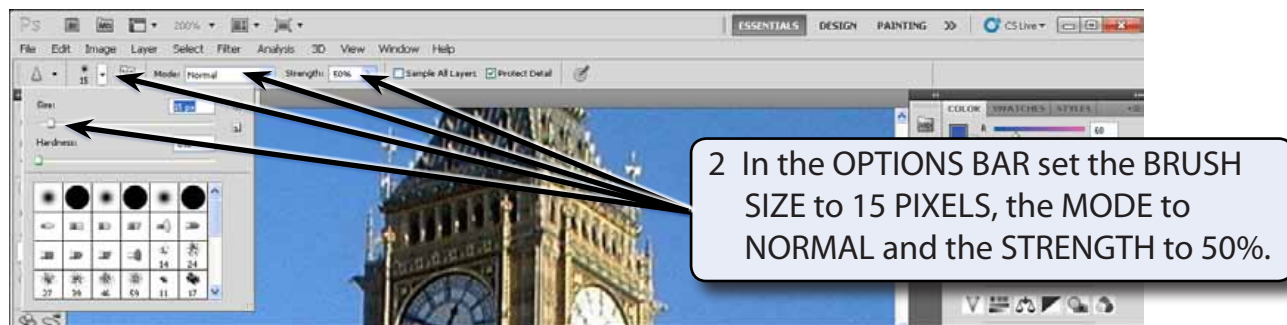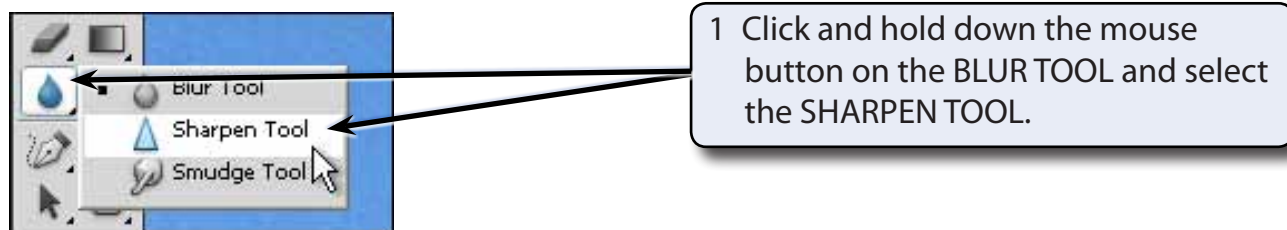
NOTE: You can also select a brush from the brush types in the lower section of the BRUSH panel.

3 Set the ZOOM to 200% and scroll to the left clock.

4 Hold down the mouse button and drag around the left clock in a circular motion. The colours should become softer or blurred.

5 The items in the OPTIONS BAR allow you to change the BRUSH SIZE, the MODE which is the way the paint blends with the pixels, and the STRENGTH of the blur.

6 Try a few of the options then STEP BACKWARDS (ALT+CTRL+Z or OPTION+COMMAND+Z) to undo the changes.

The Sharpen Tool

The SHARPEN TOOL has the opposite effect to the BLUR tool. It sharpens soft edges to increase the clarity or focus.

1 Click and hold down the mouse button on the BLUR TOOL and select the SHARPEN TOOL.

2 In the OPTIONS BAR set the BRUSH SIZE to 15 PIXELS, the MODE to NORMAL and the STRENGTH to 50%.

3 Try painting above the clock at the right side of Big Ben and the building should become sharper.
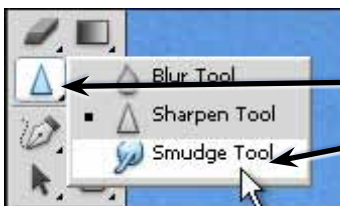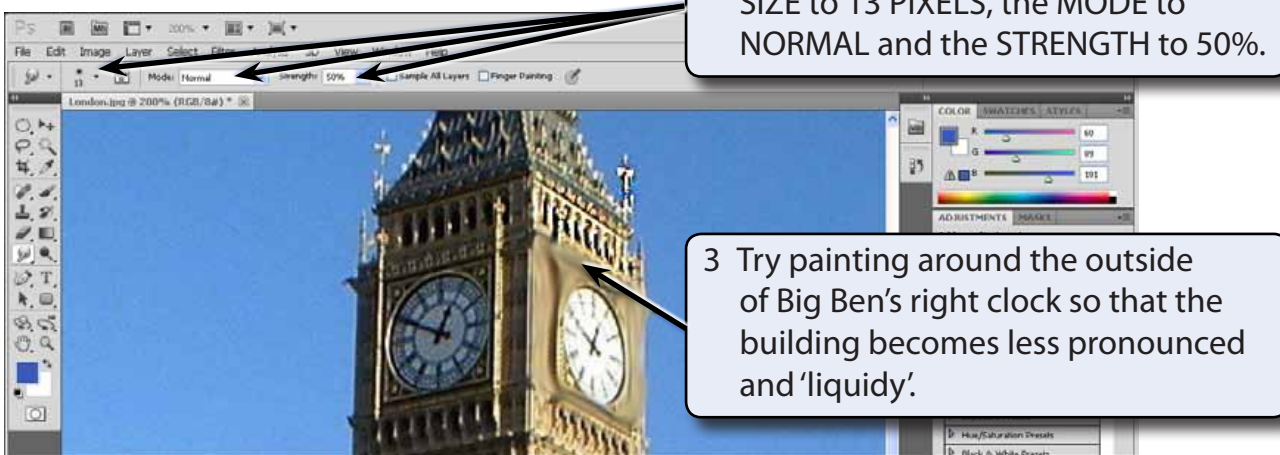
4 Try some of the other settings in the OPTIONS BAR.

5 STEP BACKWARDS (ALT+CTRL+Z or OPTION+COMMAND+Z) to undo the changes.

The Smudge Tool

The SMUDGE TOOL picks up the colour where your cursor is and pushes it in the direction that you drag so that colours run into one another.

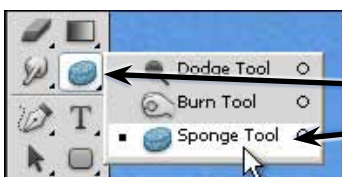1 Click and hold down the mouse button on the SHARPEN TOOL and select the SMUDGE TOOL.

2 In the OPTIONS BAR set the BRUSH SIZE to 13 PIXELS, the MODE to NORMAL and the STRENGTH to 50%.

3 Try painting around the outside of Big Ben's right clock so that the building becomes less pronounced and 'liquidy'.
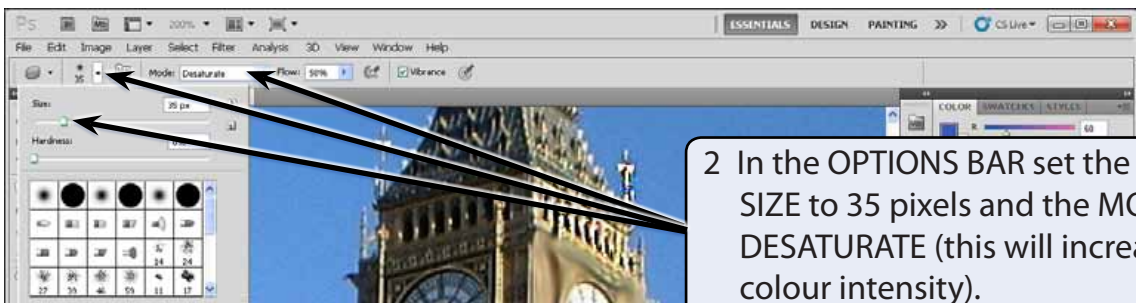
4   Again, the OPTIONS BAR can be used to adjust the degree of smudging. Experiment with some of the settings then STEP BACKWARDS (ALT+CTRL+Z or OPTION+COMMAND+Z) to undo the changes.

The Sponge Tool

The SPONGE TOOL changes the saturation or vividness of colours.

1 Click and hold down the mouse button on the button to the right of the SMUDGE TOOL and select the SPONGE TOOL.

2 In the OPTIONS BAR set the BRUSH SIZE to 35 pixels and the MODE to DESATURATE (this will increase the colour intensity).

NOTE: You can increase the FLOW if you want the sponge effect to be more pronounced.

3 Drag around the right clock of Big Ben and its colour should become less pronounced or duller.