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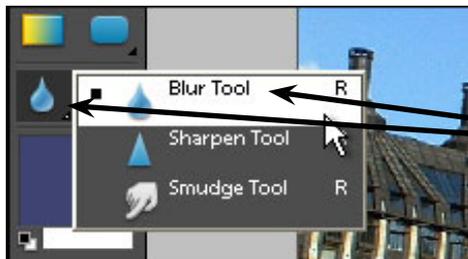
Photoshop offers a range of tools that allow you to adjust the colour and texture of images and photographs.
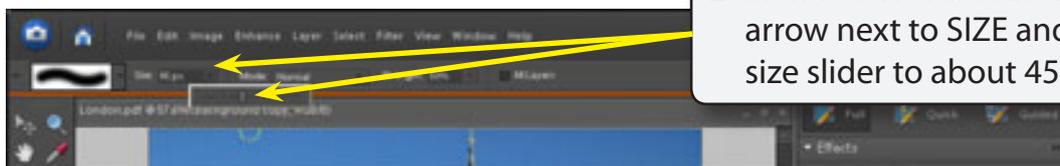
Loading a Sample File

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

2   Access the PSE6 SUPPORT FILES, open the CHAPTER 7 folder and open LONDON.JPG image.

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.
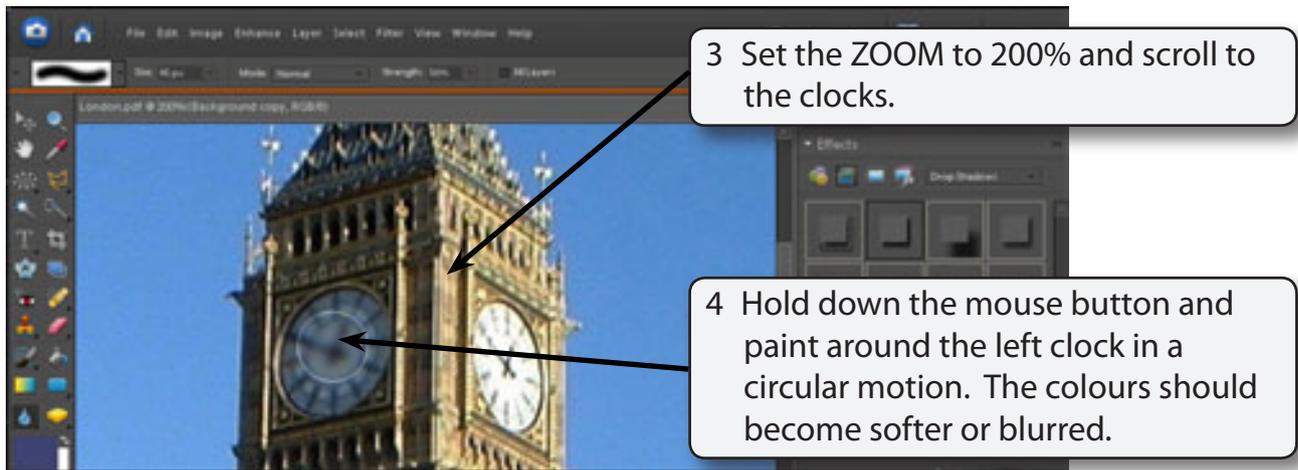
1 Click and hold down the mouse button on the second last tool and select the BLUR TOOL.

2 In the OPTIONS BAR click on the arrow next to SIZE and set the brush size slider to about 45 pixels.
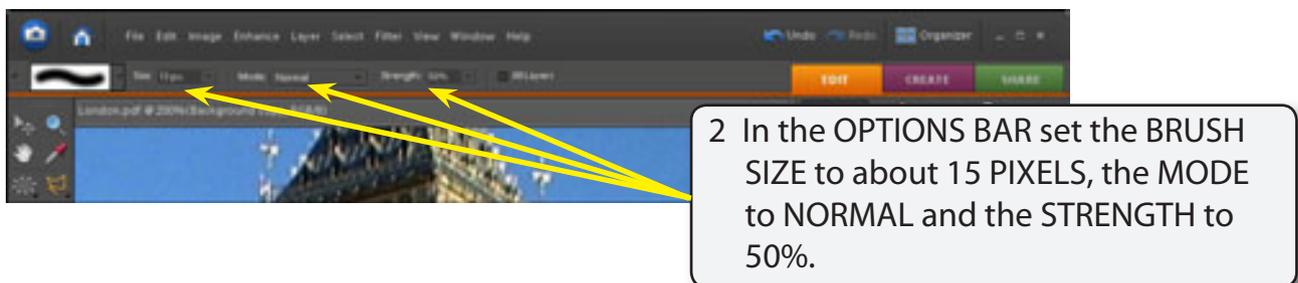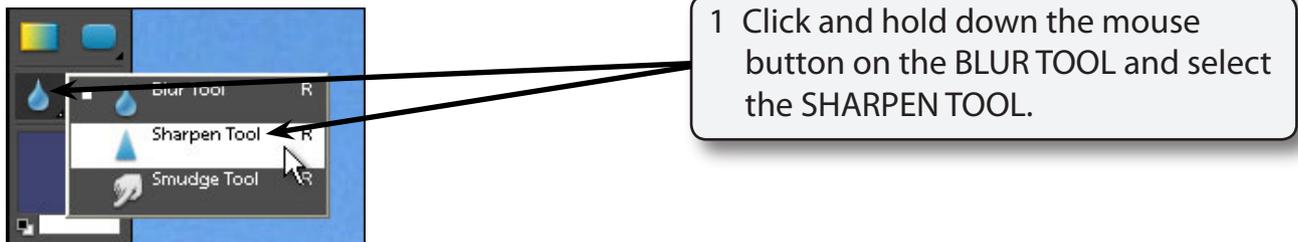

NOTE: You can also select a brush from the SHOW SELECTED BRUSH PRESETS box at the left of the OPTIONS BAR.

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3 Set the ZOOM to 200% and scroll to the clocks.

4 Hold down the mouse button and paint 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 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 press CTRL+Z or COMMAND+Z a few times 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.

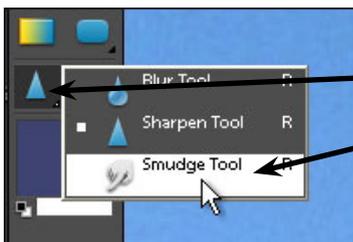2 In the OPTIONS BAR set the BRUSH SIZE to about 15 PIXELS, the MODE to NORMAL and the STRENGTH to 50%.

3 Try painting above Big Ben's right clock and the building should become sharper.

4 Try some of the other settings in the OPTIONS BAR.

5 Press CTRL+Z or 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 about 13 PIXELS, the MODE to NORMAL and the STRENGTH to 20%.

3 Try painting around the outside of Big Ben's right clock so that the building becomes less pronounced.

4   Again the OPTIONS BAR can be used to adjust the degree of smudging. Experiment with some of the settings then press CTRL+Z or 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 last tool in the TOOLS palette and select the SPONGE TOOL.

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

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

NOTE: You can increase the FLOW if you want the sponge effect to be more pronounced. The Sponge tool removes colour as you paint.