

Photoshop Tip: Forge Old-Time Photos

Make recent pictures look like they were taken in the 1800s.

By Alex Lindsay

There's a lot more to making your photos look old than adding some sepia tone. On today's "Call for Help" I'll show you how to give your photos an antique look in Photoshop. You'll need a few graphics to begin: a base image, grunge.jpg, water.jpg, and cracks.jpg. Right-click each image and save it to your hard drive to follow along at home. Now let's walk through the steps layer by layer.

Start by opening your base image. Create the layer you'll use to add a vignette. We could do it to the original background, but we don't want it to be permanent.

1. Create a new layer by clicking the New Layer button on the Layer Palette.
2. Select All by pressing Cmd or Ctrl + A. This will select the entire image edge so we can stroke it.
3. Click Edit and select Stroke. Set Stroke to 20 pixels, Color to black, and Location to Inside. This draws the core stroke around our image and builds the vignette.
4. Click Filter and choose Gaussian Blur. Set the Radius to 20 pixels and click OK.
5. Press Cmd or Ctrl + D to Deselect and soften our edge.

Using an adjustment Layer lets you make changes to the image without committing to them permanently. You can always go back if you don't like the results.

Antique coloring

1. Add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer.
2. Set the Layer to Colorize. Set Hue to 40 and Saturation to 40.

Adjust lighting

Increase the contrast and lighten the black areas to make it look more like an old photo.

1. Add a Levels adjustment layer.
2. Set Black Input to 18 and White Input to 165.
3. Set Black Output levels to 90.

Put color back into the photo

1. Duplicate the Background layer by dragging it onto the Create Layer button.
2. Drag it above the adjustment layers. Now we can use our original layer to subtly add some of the color back into the image.
3. Set the layer to Color and its opacity to 30 percent.

This mode will only affect the color of the image below the layer. Lowering the opacity decreases the effect.

Add film grain

We're now making a grain layer. By keeping it on a separate layer, we can make changes in the future.

1. Create a new layer.
2. Click Edit, choose Fill, and choose 50% Gray from the Use drop-down menu.
3. Set the transfer mode to Overlay. Overlay is like Multiply and Screen mixed together. Gray doesn't change, colors lighter than gray get lighter, and colors darker than gray get darker.
4. Click Filter, click Noise, and choose Add Noise.
5. Set the Amount to 400 and select Gaussian and Monochromatic. It looks too grainy, but we'll fix that in a moment.
6. Set the Layer Opacity to 10 percent. You'll see a more subtle film grain effect. The key to good Photoshop effects is subtlety.
7. Create another layer, fill it with gray, and set the blending to Overlay. Here we go again.
8. Click Filter, click Sketch, and choose Reticulation.
9. Move the Density slider to 12, the Foreground slider to 40, and the Background slider to 5.
10. Set it to Vivid Light. Vivid Light is like Overlay, but it lightens and darkens by manipulating contrast.
11. Lower Opacity to 7%.

Get it dirty

Grunge maps are great tools for adding organic detail that would be hard to paint by hand.

1. Open grunge.jpg. (It's from the dvGarage [Surface Toolkit](#).)
2. Select the Move tool and Shift and drag it into the picture file.
3. Invert the layer, set it to Linear Dodge, and lower its opacity to 25%.

Linear Dodge uses the layer to lighten the image below through brightness control.

Create water damage

1. Open water.jpg. It's from dvGarage's [Water Damage](#) collection and it's a quick way to add real water damage to pictures.
2. Select the Move tool and Shift and drag it into the picture file.
3. Invert the layer, set it to Color Dodge, and lower Opacity to 35%.

Color Dodge uses the layer to brighten the image below via contrast controls.

Crack it up

It's time to make yet another Gray layer to add cracks.

1. Create a new 50% Gray layer.
2. Open cracks.jpg, also from dvGarage's Surface Toolkit, and hold down the Shift key while you drag it into the picture.
3. Open the Channels palette and drag the Blue color channel to the Create Channel button. Since our photo is black and white, any channel would work, but we'll need this alpha channel for the next step.
4. Turn off the Cracks layer. We'll bring it back in a moment.

Final lighting and texturizing

1. Select the new 50% Gray layer.
2. Click Filter, click Render, and choose Lighting Effects. This plug-in helps you simulate lights.
3. Set the Light Type to Directional. All the light will seem to come from a single direction (source) such as the sun.
4. Move the Light source to the top left. Move it around until the gray remains the same when clicking Preview. We don't want to change the overall brightness. We just want to define a direction.
5. Set the Texture Channel to Blue Copy. The texture channel creates a bump map with the black-and-white information in the selected channel.
6. Reduce Mountainous to 6 to make the effect subtler.
7. Change the Layer Blending to Overlay and lower the Opacity to 60% to blend the bumps into the scene.
8. Turn the Cracks layer back on. Invert the layer using Cmd or Ctrl + I. Set it to Screen and Opacity to 60% to highlight the bumps just a little.