Adobe Photoshop Unsharp Mask - CS3 (and newer versions)

When images are reduced in size in Adobe Photoshop the details tend to blend together and edges get soft therefore requiring sharpening. The easiest and safest way to deal with this degradation of the image is to use the Unsharp Mask filter.

Normal sharpening filters are not designed for photographic images and will sharpen the image randomly; the Unsharp Mask filter will sharpen only the areas where one color area meets another one, sharpening the edges between those areas.

The Unsharp Mask Filter has three settings, Amount, Radius and Threshold.

Amount - smaller, lower resolution images (like images intended for web viewing) require less sharpening than larger, higher resolution images (intended for high quality printing).

Radius - determines how many pixels will be included around the area that will be sharpened, larger pixels require fewer pixels and higher resolution, smaller pixels require more pixels.

Threshold - a 0 Threshold sharpens all the pixels in an image and as the threshold value goes up the amount of contrast between pixels becomes greater before they are also considered for sharpening.

1. Open the image in the document window if it is not already open, and select it if other images are open.

2. Click Filter-->Sharpen-->Unsharp Mask to open up the image in the Unsharp Mask dialog box.

3. Check the Preview checkbox to see the effects on the entire image in the Document window.

4. Slide the Amount slider to the right to increase the contrast in the edge pixels being sharpened.

5. Slide the Radius slider to the right to increase the number of pixels surrounding edge pixels that affect the sharpening. Eventually the image becomes quite distorted.

6. Slide the Threshold slider to the right. Threshold defines how different the sharpened pixels must be from the surrounding area before they are considered edge pixels and sharpened by the filter. The higher it goes, the softer the effect.

7. Use the sliders to choose the effect you like and click OK.