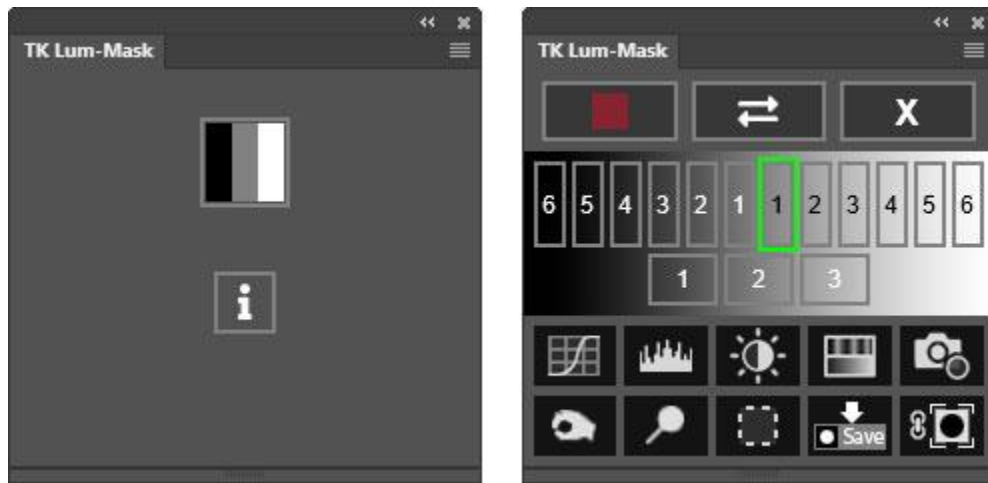# TK Lum-Mask

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The TK Lum-Mask plugin (also called the TK Luminosity Mask plugin) uses Adobe's UXP architecture for coding Photoshop extensions. This plugin's main function is to generate luminosity masks. Normally these masks take many steps to create, but the Lum-Mask plugin does all the work so that these masks are generated in real-time with the click of a button. The plugin also provides several output options to accomplish a variety of image processing goals. The plugin's code ensures that 16-bit masks are maintained throughout all steps of the process.

Luminosity masks are a type of pixel-value mask meaning each gray value in the mask is a direct representation of a specific pixel value in the image. In the case of luminosity masks, the value is pixel luminance. Masks generated using pixel data accurately and continuously adjust to perfectly match every pixel in the image. As such, they are completely self-feathering, and this provides seamless blending when they are used to adjust an image.

There are three main sections to the Lum-Mask plugin:
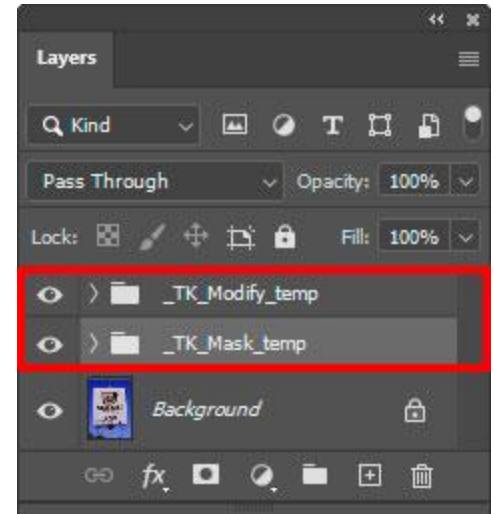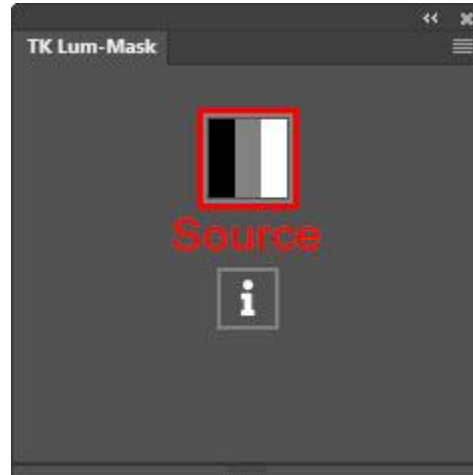
1. SOURCE
2. MASK
3. OUTPUT

These sections correspond to the steps needed to make and deploy luminosity masks. Each step has its own section on the plugin's interface. The workflow for making and using the plugin's masks generally matches the steps listed above.

NOTE #1: The Lum-Mask plugin only works on images in RGB Color mode (8-bits and 16-bits per channel).

NOTE #2: The Lum-Mask plugin is not designed to work with other "TK" panels you might be using.

1. SOURCE

The SOURCE button for creating luminosity masks is the large black/gray/white button on the plugin's main interface. This button opens a new interface where different preset Lights, Darks, and Midtones luminosity masks can be generated and viewed on-screen. Clicking this button also creates two new groups on the Layers panel for generating the different masks.

2. MASK

The MASK section of the plugin appears when the SOURCE button is clicked.   The Lum-Mask plugin creates a "_TK_Mask_temp" group and a "_TK_Modify_temp" group on the Layers panel whenever it is generating masks. The _TK_Mask_temp" group contains layers that get adjusted as you click buttons to generate different masks. The "_TK_Modify_temp" group contains a layer for displaying an overlay that can be used to view the selected areas of the mask in red. The plugin keeps track of the different layers in these groups and makes sure the correct one is used to generate a particular mask. It is strongly recommended to NOT manually make adjustments to these layers. Also, do not manually remove these layers or groups. Doing so causes the mask being created to be lost. To exit making without using a mask, click the X button in the upper right corner. It will delete these temporary groups that are created and return you to the plugin's main interface.

The buttons in the mask-making interface are used to generate standard Lights, Darks, and Midtones luminosity masks. The button of the chosen mask will be outlined in green. The green outline keeps track of the mask's origins and makes it easier to try different alternatives.
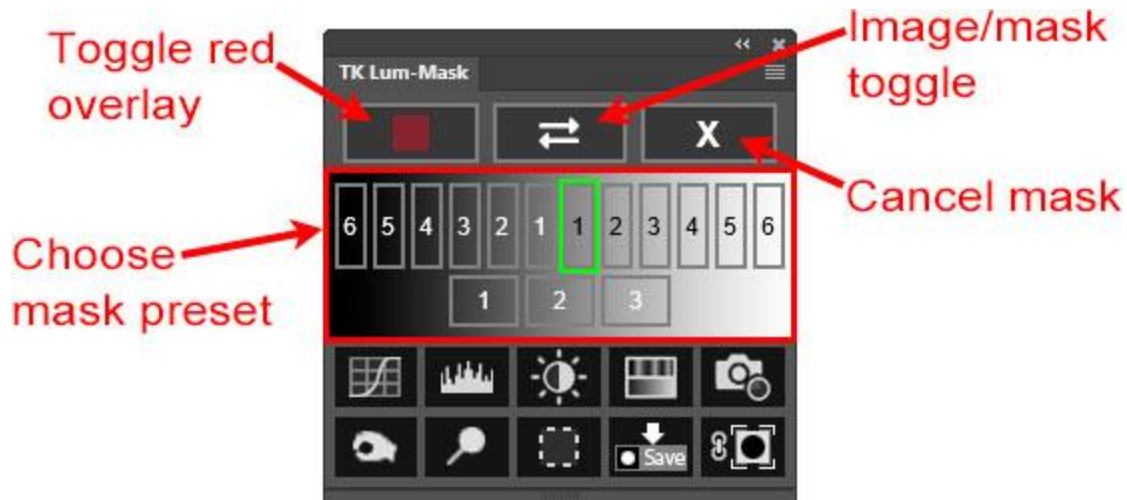
The Toggle red overlay, Image/Mask toggle, and Cancel (X) buttons are present at the top of the MASK interface.

The Toggle red overlay button changes the revealed areas in the mask to colors that range from bright red to faint pink depending on the degree to which the pixels are selected. Pixels that are 100% selected will show as a saturated red color when the overlay is active. As the degree of selection falls, so does the intensity of the color. Once pixels turn a texture-less gray color with the overlay turned on, they are 0% selected. This color overlay helps to better see weakly selected pixels that would otherwise be nearly black in the on-screen mask. The Toggle red overlay button is a toggle switch that both turns the red overlay on and turns it off. If you like this red overlay, you can leave it turned on as you try out different masks. Or you can click the button again at any time to turn it off.

The Image/Mask toggle button toggles between viewing the mask and viewing the actual image on which the mask is based. Toggling back and forth can help determine if the mask being created is targeting the correct parts of the image.

The Cancel button exits the process of generating a mask. The MASK interface is closed, the "temp" groups on the Layers panel are deleted, the main SOURCE interface of the TK Lum-Mask plugin is displayed, and the main image is once again visible in the workspace with no mask preview.

3. OUTPUT

The OUTPUT section of the Lum-Mask plugin is the bottom two rows of buttons. This is where the mask that is being generated and viewed on-screen is actually turned into a mask or selection and put to use to alter the image. The figure below identifies each button, and the paragraphs that follow describe the operation of the buttons and provide additional information regarding their use.
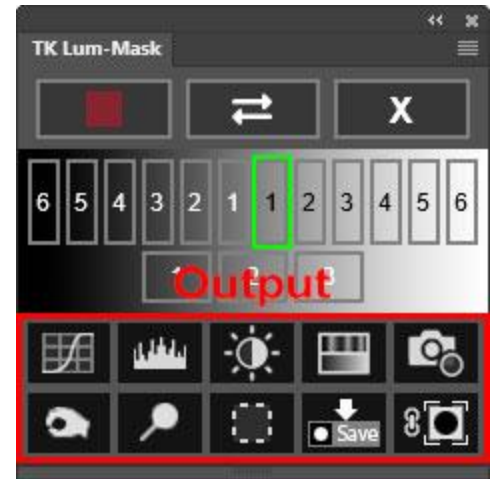
NOTE: With the exception of the Save Mask button, the groups and layers creating the on-screen mask are removed from the Layers panel when output occurs. It's not possible to reuse mask previews because generally the Layers panel will be needed to further adjust the image once the mask is deployed. If there is a mask that you want to reuse in the future, first save it using the Save Mask button so it can be accessed via the Channels panel later.

Curves, Levels, Brightness/Contrast, Hue/Saturation, and Photo Filter buttons. These buttons create the corresponding type of adjustment layer with the on-screen mask as the layer mask on the layer. The Properties panel opens to facilitate making the appropriate adjustment. The layer mask filters the adjustment to the pixels selected by the mask.

Selection button. This button loads the on-screen mask as a selection. This is usually done in order to paint on a layer mask (mask painting) or for burning and dodging the image on Burn/Dodge layers.

NOTE: The plugin hides selections edges (marching ants) by default when it creates an active selection. It also displays a red selection indicator around the

perimeter of the plugin whenever there is an active selection. So even though no selection edges are visible, the plugin continues to remind you when there is an active selection. These default options can be modified in the panel's preferences accessed via the fly-out menu.

Save Mask. This button saves the on-screen mask as an alpha channel on the Channels panel. A dialog window opens to allow you to give the mask a new name.

NOTE: Unlike the other output options, saving the on-screen mask as a channel does not delete the on-screen mask. The mask can still be deployed using other OUTPUT options after saving it as a channel mask.

Apply button. This button applies the on-screen mask as a layer mask to the active layer. To choose the layer that gets the mask, click on it to make it active BEFORE clicking the Apply button. Then, when you click the Apply button, the on-screen mask gets added as a layer mask to that chosen layer. If you don't specifically choose an active layer before clicking this button, the layer that was active before generating the mask receives a new layer mask matching the on-screen mask.

4. Tooltips

The plugin has help messages coded into all buttons. Tooltips are accessed by holding down the "ALT" key (Windows) or "option" (Mac) and moving the mouse over buttons. The information about that button appears in a separate window either at the top or the bottom of the panel. As long as the tooltip window is open and the ALT/option key is pressed, the mouse can be moved to different buttons and the tooltip changes to match the new button when the mouse moves over it. These tips are especially useful when first starting to use this module in order to learn the functions of the icon buttons.
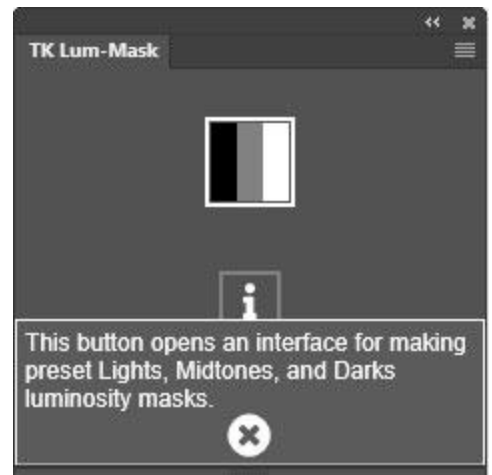
NOTE: You need to actually move the mouse over a button with the ALT/option key depressed for the tooltip to appear. You cannot roll the mouse pointer onto a button and then press the ALT/option key to access the help message. Moving the mouse over the button while holding down on the ALT/option key is the trigger that opens the help message window to open and display tooltip.

5. Preferences—the fly-out menu

Clicking the menu icon in the upper right corner opens the module's preferences and provides access to other features.

Version—This is the current version number for this plugin.

Language—While English is the default, users can choose to change to a different language. For languages other than English, button names, tooltips, and error messages change to the chosen language. A few things, like layer names for special layers generated by the module, remain in English

Show selection indicator—When checked, the active selection indicator displays around the module's perimeter whenever there is an active selection even if the selection is not sufficient to trigger the presence of selection edges (marching ants) or if the selection edges have been intentionally hidden.

Auto-hide selection edges—When checked, selection edges (marching ants) are automatically hidden when the module generates a new selection. If you prefer to always see selection edges and to hide them manually, uncheck this option.

Auto-show Properties panel—When checked, the module opens the Photoshop Properties panel automatically when it creates a new adjustment layer where layer properties can be adjusted, e.g., Curves and Levels. If you have the Properties panel open all the time in your workspace or prefer to open the Properties panel manually, uncheck this option.

How to access tooltips—This option opens a Photoshop alert describing how to access tooltips for this module, which is to hold the "ALT" key (Windows) or "option" key (Mac) and move the mouse over a button.

Instructions PDF (English)—This option opens a URL to download the TK Luminosity Mask instructions manual.
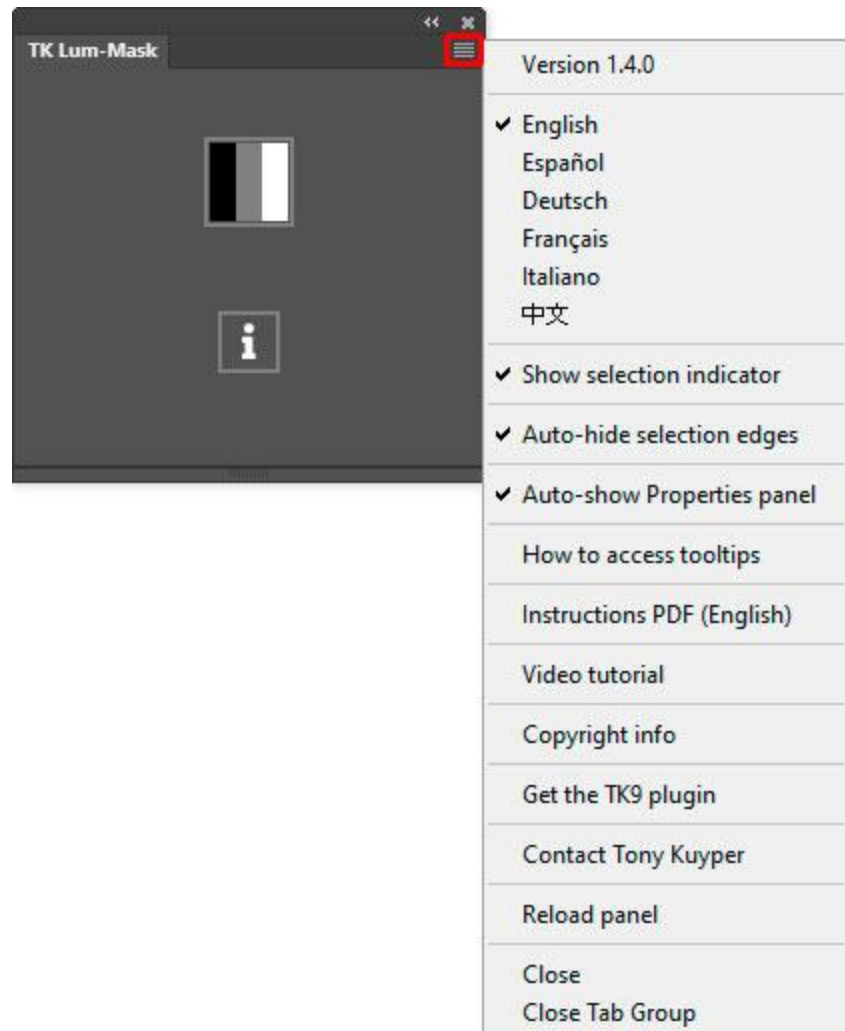
Video tutorials—Click this option to open a website for a short video tutorial on how to use this plugin when developing images.

Copyright info—This option opens a message window in Photoshop that reviews copyright and end-user license agreement information.

Get the TK9 plugin— This option opens a link to read about the features in the TK9 plugin and to watch some videos on how it works. The TK9 plugin is an upgraded version of the TK Luminosity Mask plugin. It makes additional types of masks (zone masks, color masks, Blend If masks, and saturation/vibrance mask), offers ways to modify the masks on the fly, and has several additional output options.

Contact Tony Kuyper—This option opens a website to contact the plugin's developer, Tony Kuyper.

Reload panel—This option reloads the panel. This is rarely necessary but can be used to reset the panel if it appears to not be working properly.

I hope you find the TK Lum-Mask plugin helpful in your processing workflow. If it is useful, please give it a 5-star rating in Adobe Marketplace in order to help other photographers find it. If it is not useful or if you encounter any problems, please contact me to recommend improvements or access technical support.