Smart Sharpen

Filter / Sharpen / Smart Sharpen.

As you can see, Smart Sharpen has amount and radius controls. These controls function similarly as they do with the Un-Sharp Mask. Gaussian blur option is the standard blur option used by USM. The Lens Blur option produces perceived sharpening effects with a smaller radius than USM. This is a big benefit with images that have fine detail. **I use the Lens Blur option most of the time** The Motion Blur option has to do with improving the blurring due to motion (e.g., camera movement).

Sharpening an image in Smart Sharpen starts out the same as in USM. Adjust the Amount and radius settings for the mid-tones. Start by double clicking the zoom tool and then set the amount to 500 and the radius to .1.Then highlight the radius number (.1) and tap on the up arrow key on the keyboard until the mid-tones look good. Sharpening will vary from image to image depending on the size of the file, so the numbers on my examples may be different than yours.

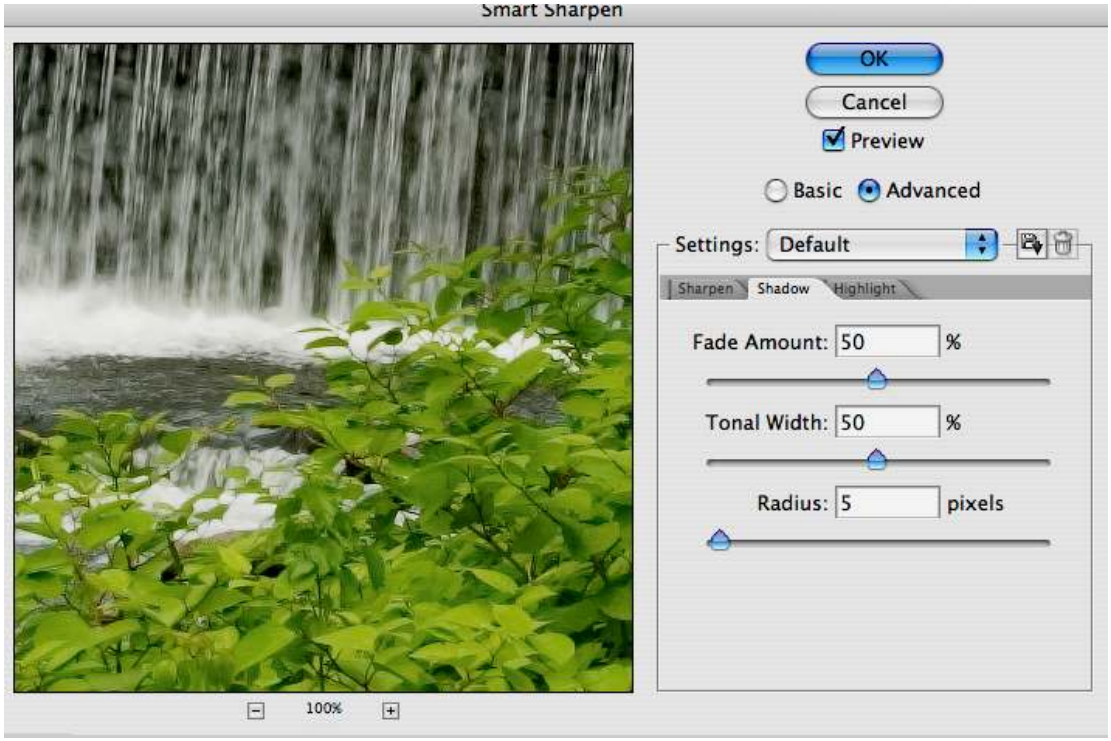
More Accurate option: is slower than the Un-sharp mask filter however the results are superior.
Now that the Mid-Tones have been sharpened, the Highlights need to be addressed. The highlights need to be protected from over

sharpening. The setting you just made for the Mid-tones can cause some of the Highlights to blow out. Click on the Highlight tab.

This menu has three controls.

Amount: How much the sharpening in the highlights is reduced. The higher the setting, the more the sharpening is reduced. A setting of 0 will result in no reduction. A setting of 100% will result in no sharpening of the highlights.
Tonal Width: determines which tonal values will be affected by the reduction in sharpness. Smaller values of Tonal Width result in only the lightest highlights being affected by the sharpening reduction. Larger values of Tonal Width will result in a wider range of the highlights being affected.
Radius: The radius setting determines how many pixels, around a particular pixel, will be evaluated to determine to which tonal area a pixel belongs (i.e.), is that particular pixel a highlight, mid-tone, or shadow).

I like less sharpening in the shadows too. Shadows contain most of the noise in the image. Reducing the sharpening in the shadows will reduce the amount of noise in the image.



Tips for speeding up the filter:

Turn off the preview button. You won't see the effects of your changes on the original image, but the changes will appear more quickly in the small preview window. Click, hold down and then let go in the small preview window to see sharpening.

You can also make a small representative selection of your image before opening the filter. Find the optimal setting, then close, deselect and apply the filter to the entire image.

If you use Smart Sharpen on a layer, you can add a mask for even more refinement between the Shadows, Mid-tones, and Highlights.