

# Photographing Your Work at Home

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## Equipment you will need:

- DSLR Camera with a lens around 50-60mm. Any of these – or other models and brands will work.
  - Fixed length lens
    - [https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/247091-USA/Nikon\\_2137\\_Normal\\_AF\\_Nikkor\\_50mm.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/247091-USA/Nikon_2137_Normal_AF_Nikkor_50mm.html)
  - Macro lens
    - [https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/66987-USA/Nikon\\_1987\\_AF\\_Micro\\_Nikkor\\_60mm\\_f\\_2\\_8D.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/66987-USA/Nikon_1987_AF_Micro_Nikkor_60mm_f_2_8D.html)
  - Zoom lens
    - [https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/872406-REG/Nikon\\_AF\\_S\\_24\\_85mm\\_f\\_3\\_5\\_4\\_5G\\_ED.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/872406-REG/Nikon_AF_S_24_85mm_f_3_5_4_5G_ED.html)
- SD or Compact Flash card reader
  - [https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1457946-REG/hoodman\\_steel31\\_teel\\_usb\\_3\\_1\\_udma.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1457946-REG/hoodman_steel31_teel_usb_3_1_udma.html)
- Phone camera if you are unable to get access to a DSLR – not preferred but will work in a pinch
- Backdrop
  - White poster board (not glossy) or other true white paper. Something you could get at Michael's in their drawing paper section - even Bristol board would work for very small pieces.
  - OR white seamless background paper roll

- [https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/45468REG/Savage\\_1\\_12\\_107\\_x\\_12yds\\_Background.html](https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/45468REG/Savage_1_12_107_x_12yds_Background.html)
- Clamp lights (Lowe's or other hardware store)
  - <https://www.lowes.com/pd/ProTorch-1-Watt-Incandescent-Clamped-Work-Light/1002623134>
- Daylight balanced bulbs (Lowe's or other hardware store)
  - <https://www.lowes.com/pd/GE-Refresh-60-Watt-EQ-A19-Daylight-Dimmable-LED-Light-Bulb-8-Pack/1000444975>
- Light stand – or something tall with legs. This will be used to clamp the lamps onto. If you get creative, even the edge of a table or legs of a table could work.
- Push pins/masking tape to hang or adhere your backdrop

Useful but not necessarily required:

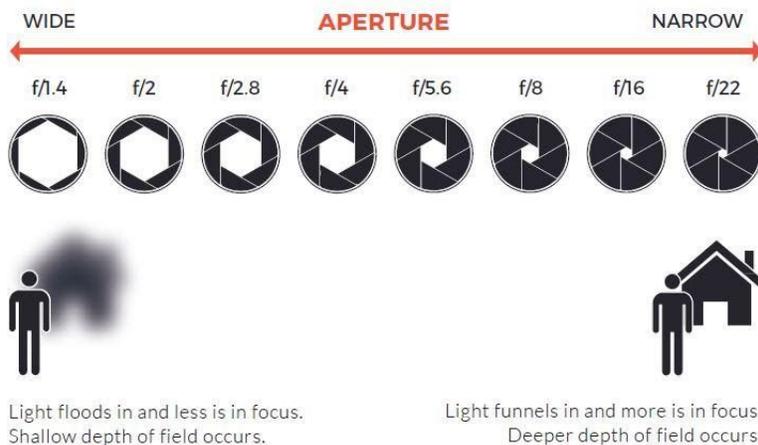
- Tripod
- Power strip for your lamps
- Colored papers or alternative backdrops
- Acrylic or other interesting surfaces



## Using Your Camera to Photograph

When shooting with a DSLR, you will have the most control over your image. This will allow you to do far less work in post, which will give you the best quality image possible. There are a few main factors that give you control over your camera.

- **Shutter Speed:** How fast the image is taken. **Never go lower than 1/100<sup>th</sup> of a second if you can help it.** As you hold the camera, you will move it and the image will become blurry if the shutter speed is slow. A tripod can help this.
- **Aperture:** Opening of the lens into the camera – how much light is getting through. It is indicated in f/stops. The lower the number, the larger the opening. **Example: f/1.4 – Larger opening = more light getting through = better in low light situations.** The higher the number, the smaller the opening. **Example: f/16 – Smaller opening = less light getting through = better in bright light.** This setting can also affect **depth of field** – how much your image is in focus. With f/1.4 or other large apertures, only a portion of your image will be in focus. With f/16, more of the image will be in focus.



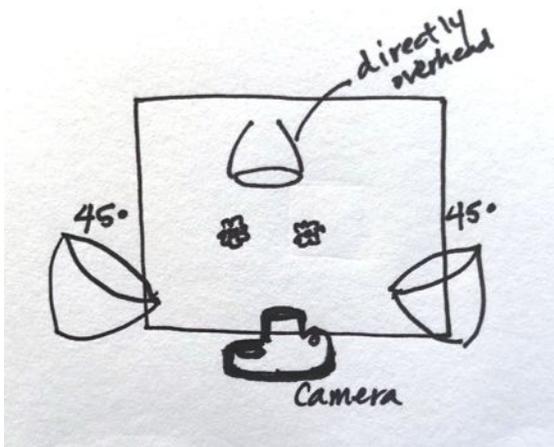
- **ISO:** How sensitive the camera is to light. **ISO 100-200 is preferred.** The higher you go, the more digital noise you create. Digital noise is when the photo looks grainy. Even still, I have had success with the ISO as high as 800 or 1000, but always aim for 200.

Main takeaways:

- These three factors all affect each other when taking a photo. To be as simple as possible, keep your **ISO at 200**, **shutter speed at 1/100<sup>th</sup> of a second or faster** (1/125, 1/160, 1/200, etc.), and aperture around **f/8 or higher** (f/11, f/16, etc.). Adjust your lighting to try to keep these settings around the same. If you need to adjust some of these settings, I'd adjust aperture first, then if needed, shutter speed, lastly ISO.

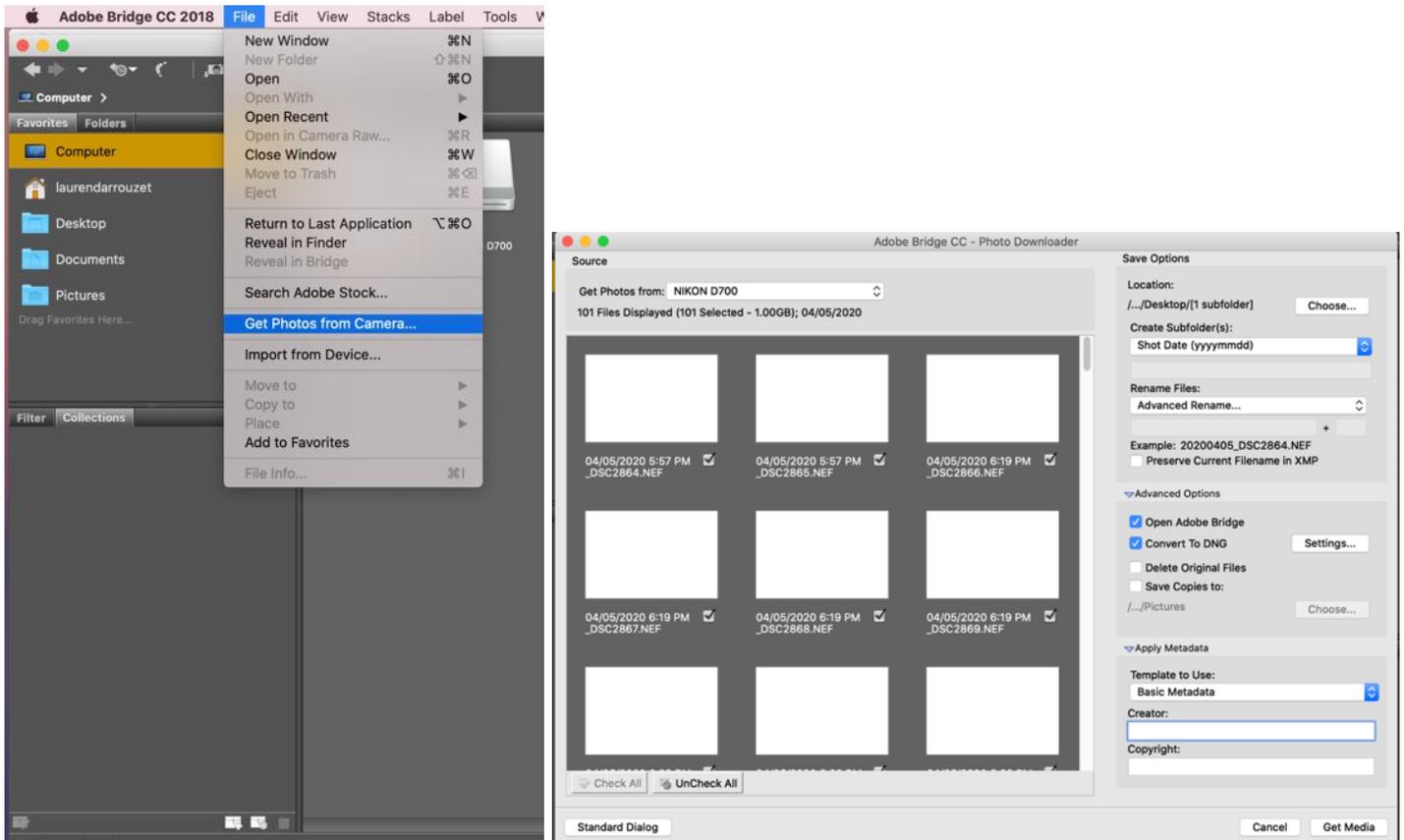
## Lighting

- Every piece will need something slightly different, but a general rule is to have **two lights on either side of your subject at a 45° angle to the subject**. The lights should be raised slightly above it and face mostly on the backdrop. A light directly above the piece is helpful as well.
  - **A tip:** try to light the background without over lighting the piece. Two lights on the background, one on the piece. Pulling the piece closer to the camera will also help with lighting.



- If you are going to use natural light, North or South facing light is ideal. This way you will avoid direct sunlight and can get a more balanced looking image. However, direct sunlight can have its benefits if you are looking for an image with a harsh shadow.

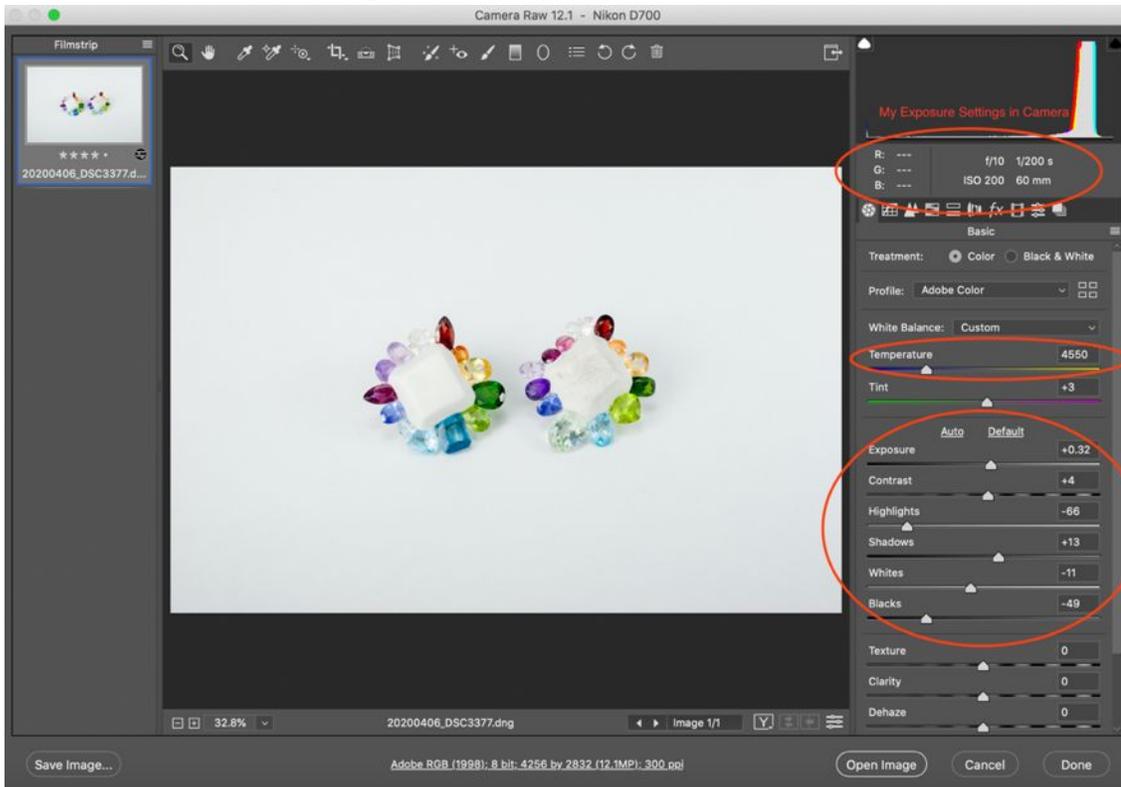
## Downloading Your Photographs



- Open Adobe Bridge and under **File** click **Get Photos from Camera**. The photo downloader will pop up and you can choose where to download your files, what the folder name will be, any additional titles you want for each file.
- Once your photos are downloaded, use Adobe Bridge to select which image you feel looks best. Which background looks whitest? Is the object in focus?

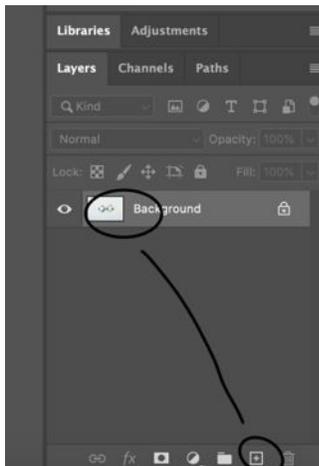
## Basic Editing

- Try to do most of your editing through **Camera RAW**. Here, the image has all of its original information with no loss, so edits here won't degrade the final image.
- I almost always keep my **color temperature at 4550**. It looks most like cool daylight.
- You can use the Auto setting to adjust the image, but I prefer to do it manually, by eye. **Exposure, Contrast, Highlights, Shadows, Whites, and Blacks** are all very useful to get the image where you want it to be before editing in Photoshop.

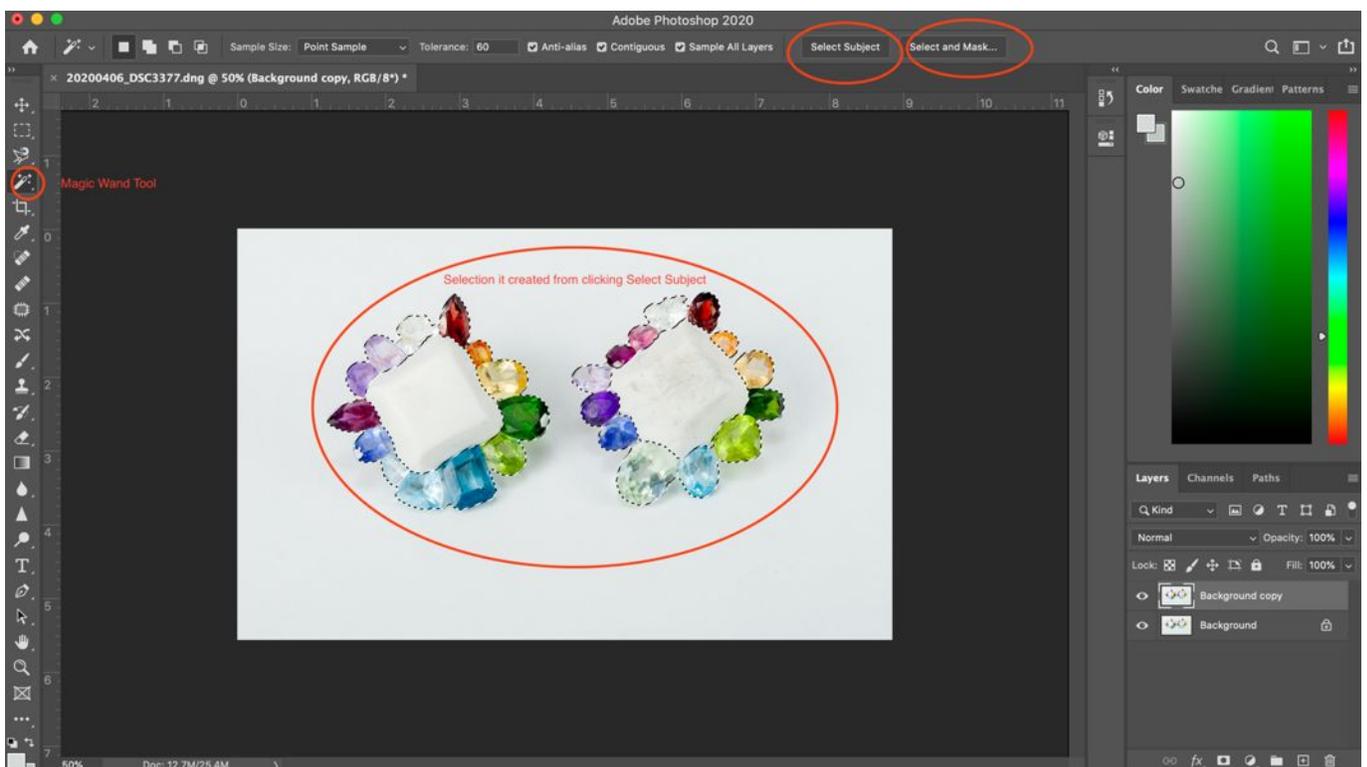


- **Crop your image** to desired size.
- **SAVE** your file. As good practice, it's better to save things up front than to do a bunch of work and lose it by accident.
- Before editing your image, **duplicate your background layer**. You can make edits on this layer – like spot healing, reducing noise, sharpening – and it won't affect the original layer. If you don't like

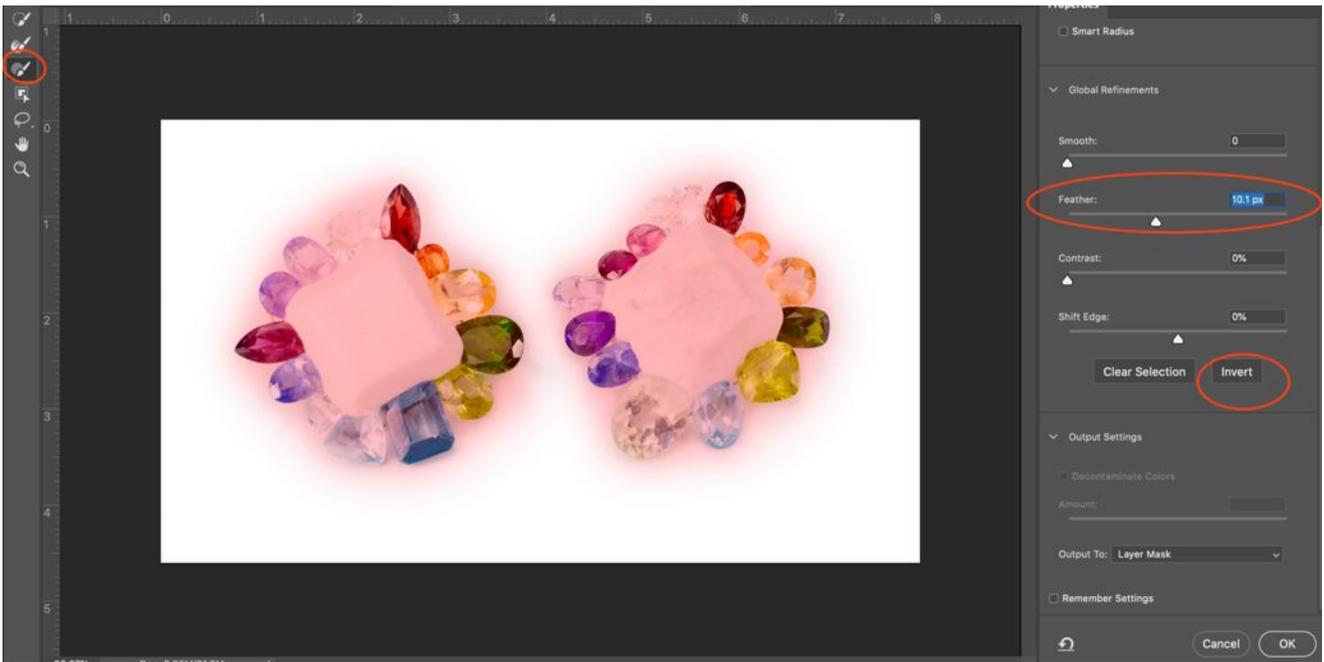
something you've done here, you can simply delete the layer and start a new one.



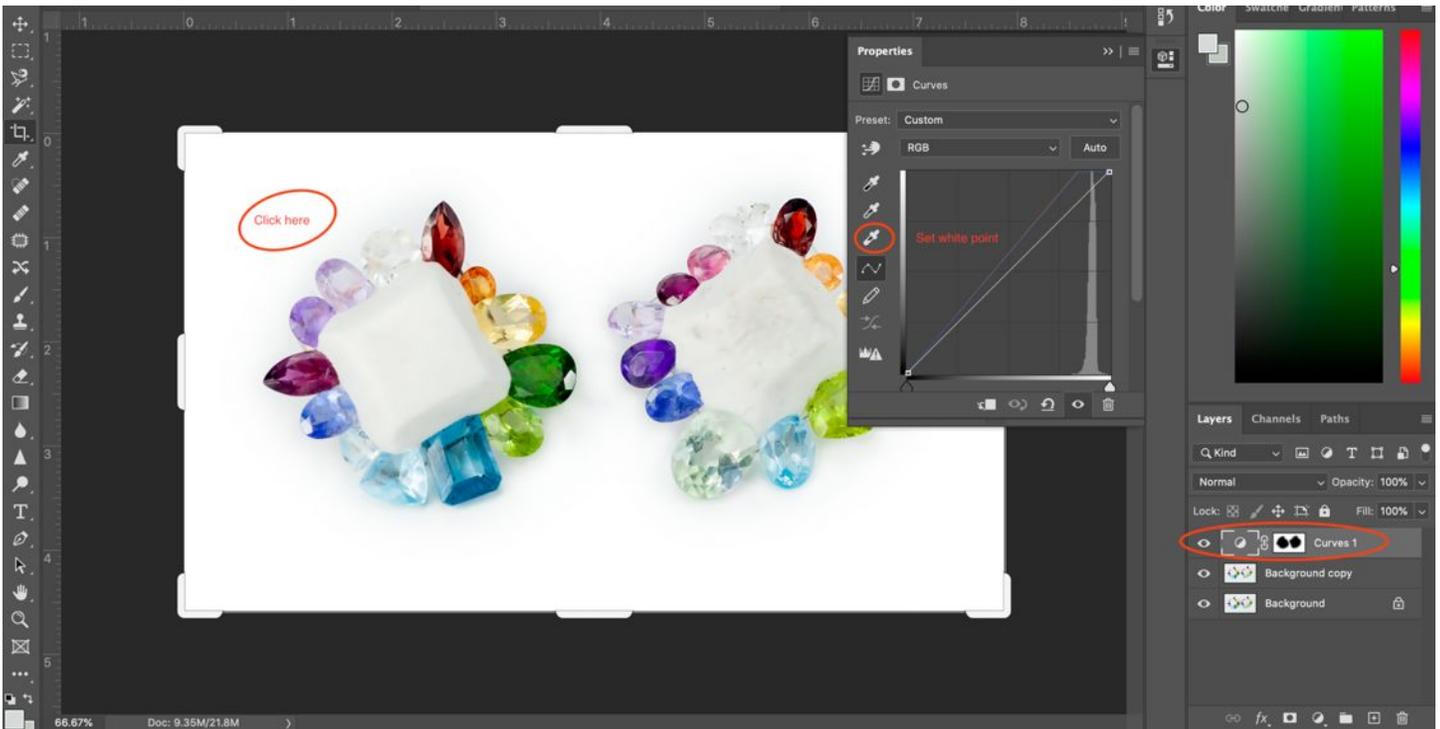
- If you want to make the background completely white without it affecting the whites of the object, select the object by **clicking the magic wand and then clicking Select Subject**.



- If it doesn't grab your entire desired image, click next to it on the **Select and Mask** option. Here you can use a brush to paint in areas you want to select.
- The **feather** option is always useful when you don't want a hard edge on your selection.
- If you are wanting to edit the background of your image, click **invert** so the selection will now be the background.



- Next, add a curves layer. This is where you can set the **white point** of your image. **Click on Layer – New Adjustment Layer – Curves**. The layer mask you just created with your selection is now attached to the Curves layer, which will allow you to edit only the background without it affecting your object.

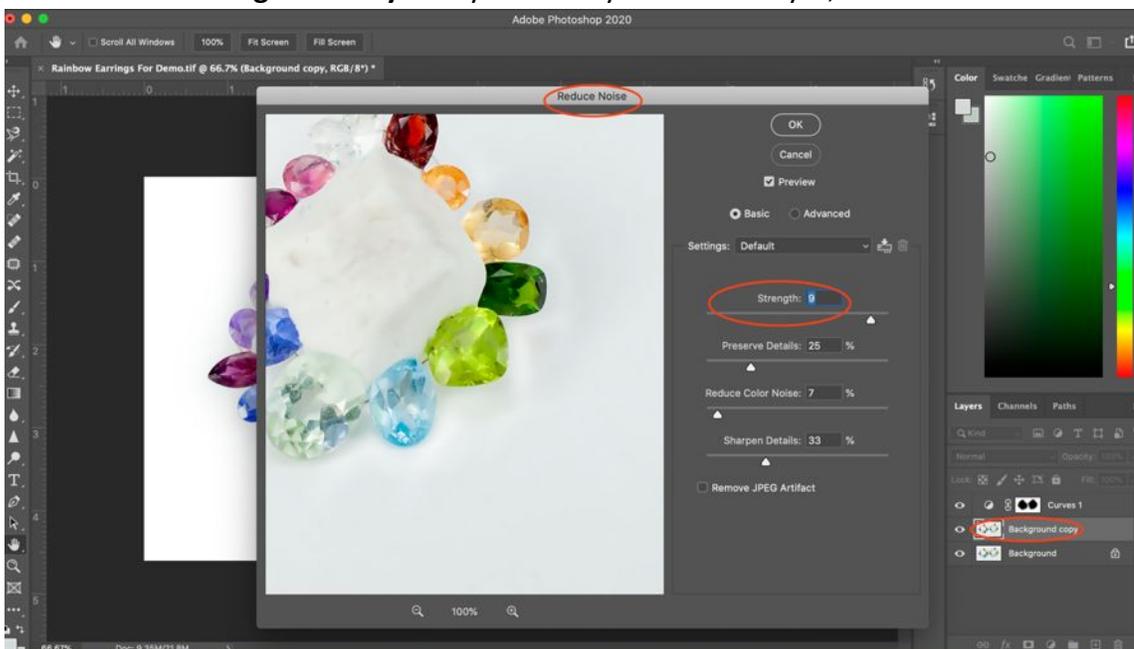


Final Image

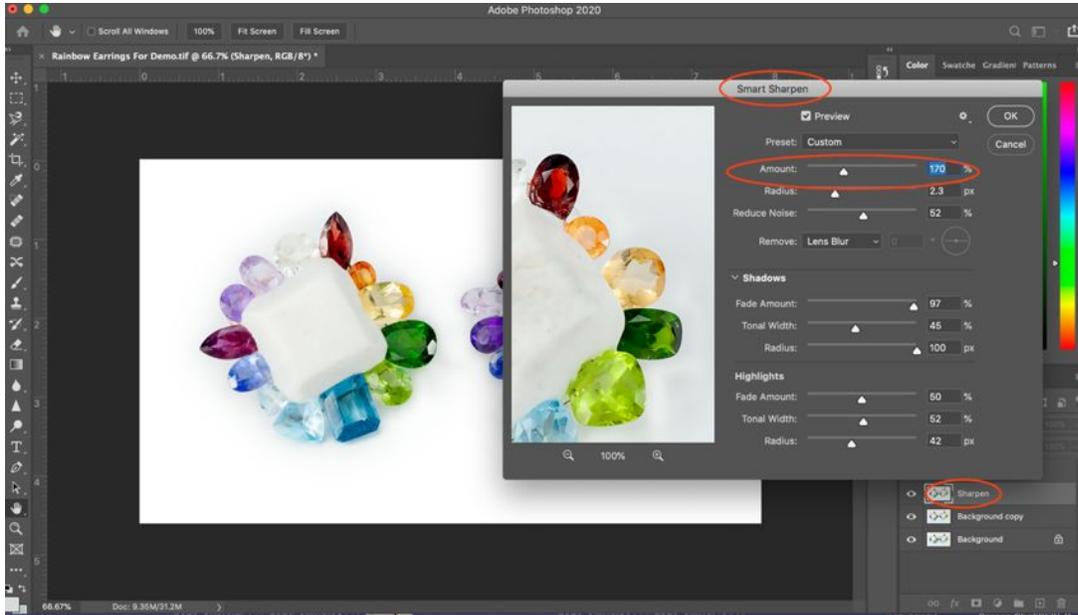


### Options for Making Further Edits

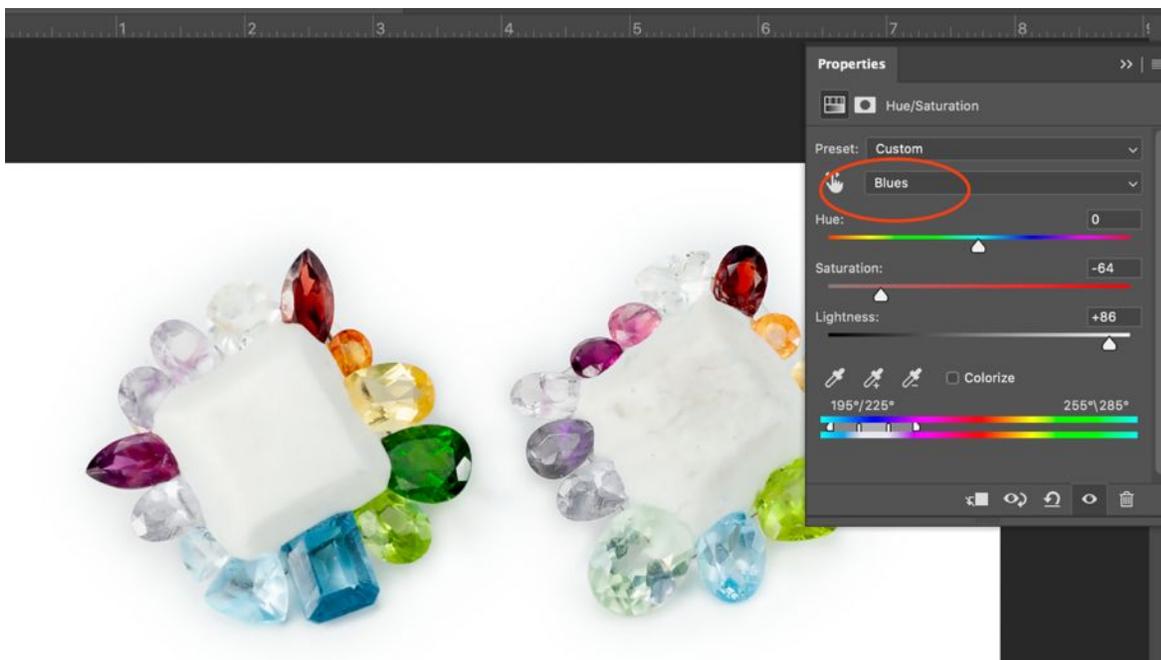
- Reduce Noise: If you had to shoot your image with an ISO higher than 200 and your image looks a little grainy, click on **Filter – Noise – Reduce Noise**. A dialogue box will pop up and you can choose how much noise reduction you would like using the **Strength** option.
  - **Something to note:** When you use a filter like Reduce Noise, make sure you are clicked on your **Background Layer**. If you are in your Curves layer, it won't edit the actual image.



- Smart Sharpen: If you feel your image is lacking detail, click on **Filter – Sharpen – Smart Sharpen**. Here you can choose the amount of sharpness you need. Zoom in on your image and click and unclick **Preview** so you can see the difference it is making.
  - **Another tip:** If you want to isolate these actions, such as reduce noise, sharpen, or any other filters, **make another copy of your background layer and rename it to the filter you are adding**. This way, if you decide you don't like what you've done, you can delete the layer without it affecting other edits you've made.



- Hue/Saturation: Create a new adjustment layer titled Hue/Saturation. Here you can **use the dropdown box under “Custom” to choose a color you'd like to change**. If you feel you have too much blue in your image, you can lower the **Saturation** using the slider. If you want your blues to be brighter, you can increase the **Lightness**. In this image I've lowered the saturations on the blues and increased the lightness. You can tell the difference in the color of the stones.



In summation, photographing your work at home is all about **practice**. Find a place in your apartment or home where the light is best, or where you can set up an area with lights. Often, you can just use the natural light to take a good photograph. Photographing outside can also be a good choice. Think about what you want to highlight in your piece. If you absolutely must, using your **phone camera** is an option you can use. Try to **set up the lights as you would with a DSLR and edit just like I've shown above**.



Feel free to explore Photoshop as well. Try different adjustment layers and filters. Getting creative can really help an image to stand out. Try out different backgrounds and lighting setups so you have as many options as possible. And remember, **SAVE your work** and **back up your files**.

Getting that perfect image is satisfying and completely do-able with just a home setup. Have fun!