Introduction

There are probably as many different ways of doing this in Photoshop as there are hours in a day, but this is how I get from the lefthand image to the one on the right.

From this

..to this

1. Original Image

I take my photos on a white background (folded piece of white paper), using my digital camera set to macro function with the flash turned off. I position the bead on the paper near a window as I like to use soft natural light. Also, in order to have the bead stand up (in this case a lentil) I have a piece of polystyrene under the paper and poke a clear stringer through and slide the bead on. If you look really closely at the bead's hole and base, you may be able to see it. I could adjust the brightness or white balance on my camera to lighten the image, but I never remember, so here's the grey image straight out of the camera.

2. Adjusting the levels

To adjust the brightness or 'levels', go up to the menu bar: Image>Adjustments>Levels. Then in the levels dialogue box you can lighten the photo by either selecting the 3rd of the 3 dropper icons (white one) and clicking on an area of the image that you know to be white (as shown below), or by manually moving the sliders. Which ever visually works best for you. I do this until the bead looks right, **not the background,** as you are going to be taking that out anyway.
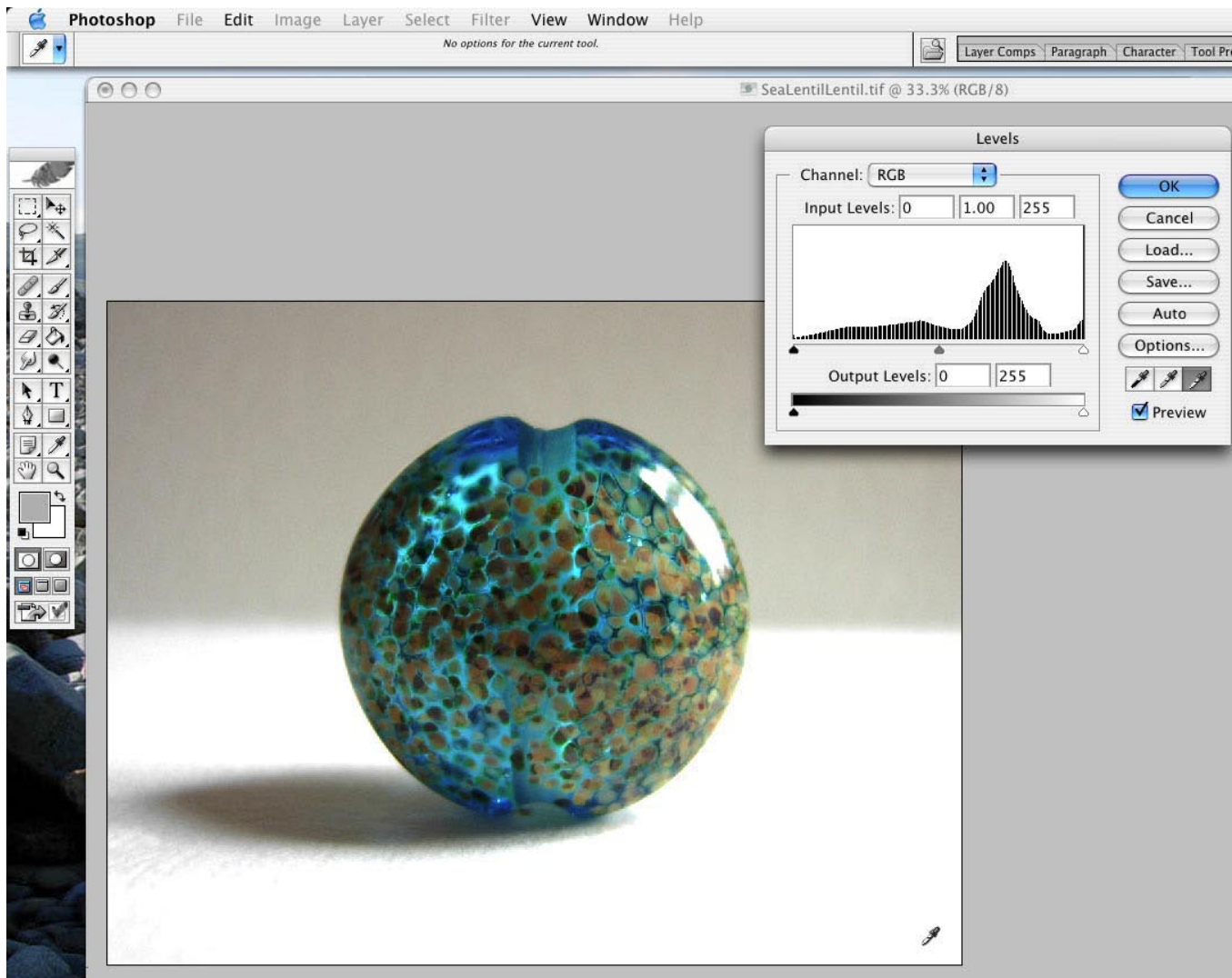

2. Using the dodge tool

To remove any unwanted grey areas surrounding your bead, I find the easiest way is the dodge tool (looks like a black magnifying glass in your tools palette) I usually use the following settings, but feel free to fiddle around with the brush size and exposure to suit your image.

Then simply use the tool to lighten the areas you want white (as shown in the next image). This tool is good because you don't have to be too accurate. You can sweep up to the edges of your bead without the darker parts being too badly affected. Obviously if it's a white or ivory bead you'd have to be more careful as this tool targets the light bits.
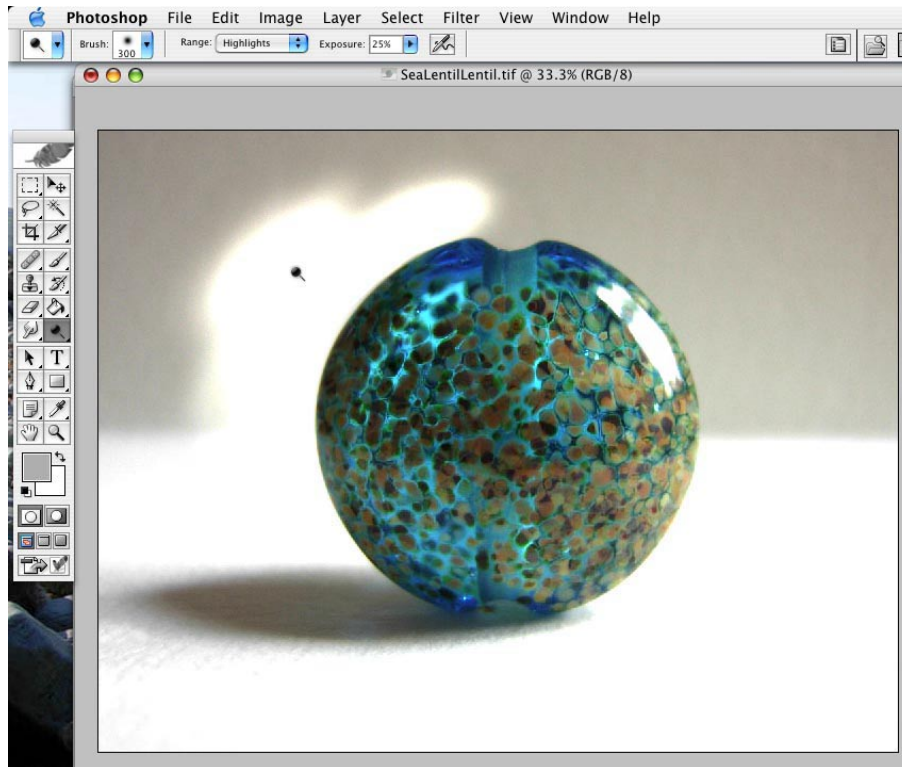
4. Cleaning up the shadow

This stage may not be necessary, but on this image I felt the remaining shadow was a bit long and messy. In the Layers Palette: Menu bar>Window>Layers

make a new layer. Then select the brush tool in the tool palette, and I tend to give it the following settings (again chose your own if you want to).

Paint out any extraneous shadow until you're happy with how it looks. Doing so on a new layer makes it easier to use the eraser tool to remove any overspray on the bead.

When you are satisfied with the results, flatten the image in the layers palette (resize if you need to) then save, and you're done!

So to summarize:
1. Open image.
2. Adjust levels.
3. Use the dodge tool.
4. Tidy up shadow on a new
   layer then flatten.
   (Optional)
5. Save.