

Photoshop Elements Workshop Notes

Graduated Neutral Density (ND) Filter

Levels adjustment layer

Open the image, create a New Adjustment Layer (Layers, New Adjustment Layer, Levels). Drag the Mid-tones slider right, from 1.00 to a value of approximately 0.47 to darken the sky and create more intense colours. This adjustment improves the sky but makes the foreground look too dark; don't worry about this because we will restrict the effect to the area where it's needed.

Set up the Gradient tool

Check the foreground/background colours (left tools pane) and press X to switch the foreground and background colours in the Tools panel to white Foreground and black Background, if they're not already. Select the Gradient tool (left tools pane) and click the Linear button in the Options panel at the bottom, then click the Edit button below the gradient swatch to open the Gradient Editor, click the Foreground to Background preset (top left swatch) and click OK. The Gradient tool is now enabled create a white-to-black linear gradient.

Draw a gradient

Select the Levels Layer mask (currently a white rectangle) by clicking its thumbnail. Left click on the image just outside the top of the visible image, hold down the shift key and click-and-drag to draw a line from the top of the image to the horizon, holding down the Shift key so the tool draws a straight line. The white parts of the mask will reveal the Levels adjustment and black areas will hide it, so only the sky will now be darkened.

Fine-tune the effect (Optional)

If need be you can re-draw the gradient on the mask until you're happy with the effect, and you can also adjust the Levels sliders to intensify or tone down the darkening effect. As a finishing touch you can boost the blues in the sky by adding a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer (Layer, New Adjustment Layer, Hue/Saturation), selecting Cyans from the menu at the top of the Adjustments panel, and setting Saturation to +30 to boost the blues in the sky.

When you are happy with the effect flatten the image (Layer, Flatten Image).

Replacing a Colour

Open an image you want to change the colour on

Make a selection of the area of the image that you want to change, using one of the selection tools (left tools pane) - Lasso tool or Quick selection tool (give it a slight feather of 0.5 to 2.0 pixels and copy to a new layer - Edit, Copy then Edit, Paste; it will automatically paste to a new layer. Clean up edges of the selection (if necessary) in the appropriate layer using the eraser tool. You can use the Quick Selection tool to add or subtract from the selection until you get it right.

Change the foreground colour (eyedropper or swatch).

Select the layer containing the newly cleaned up selection and select the item using the Quick Selection tool. Now create a solid colour fill layer (Layer, New Fill Layer, Solid colour). You could also

click on the half white/half black circle (choose the top item called Solid Colour). The new Layer will appear at the top of the Layers palette with a Layer Mask representing the area we selected in white. Your photo will now appear to have a blob of the Foreground Colour over the area you selected.

Go to the Layers palette again. Make sure the new Solid Colour Fill layer is active by clicking on it. Now click and hold on the box that says Normal to reveal the list of Blend Modes. Go down near the bottom of the list and choose Colour for the Blend Mode. All the detail comes through in your image. You can adjust the saturation of the new colour by selecting the layer of the original colour and adjusting the brightness (Enhance, Adjust Lighting, Brightness/Contrast); simply adjust the Brightness slider.

When you are happy with the effect flatten the image (Layer, Flatten Image).