



BLEND-IF TO ADD / CHANGE COLOURS

Adding Colour to Landscapes using “Blend-if”, Camera Raw, Curves and Gradients

Use to improve the sky and add colour to the image

Lightroom part

Open the image in Lightroom and carry out the normal Lightroom adjustments

Possibly adjust white balance to amend temperature and tint (This is most important as you want to be starting with the correct colours)

Reduce highlights and bring out shadows

Adjust Whites and Blacks

Add a little texture and clarity

Add a little vibrance and Saturation to taste

Use Graduated Filter to darken sky as required

Then open the image in Photoshop by right clicking on image to open the menu and selecting “Edit in” and then selecting Photoshop.

“Blend-if” Part

Once Photoshop has opened with the image as the background layer, create a copy of this layer by pressing Ctrl and J (Ctrl J).

Then add a new layer by clicking on the new layer icon on the bottom right icon row. This is for any minor adjustments / cloning / dodging & burning, etc that may be necessary.

Create a new “Solid” colour adjustment layer by clicking on “Adjustment layer” icon (the half circle icon) on the bottom right and selecting “Solid Colour”. Then select a colour say, yellow by clicking on the colour panel or selecting a colour from the colour library. If you already have a colour you like in the photo with the brush selected put the cursor over the colour and click the Alt button to select it. Then this will be the foreground colour and come up as the default solid colour.

Then open the Layers Style menu panel by double clicking on right side of the layer panel (to the right of the layer name) to open the layer style panel which contains blend-if.

On the blend-if section take the LH slider of the underlying layer and move it from left to right until the area of the photo is covered, then split this handle by clicking on it whilst holding down Alt and then spread to adjust as required to blend the effect in. This is to limit the effect to the lighter areas.

If you were adding the colour to the shadow areas, then it would be the opposite moving the right hand handle to the left.

The colours on screen will look horrible at this point.

Then click Ok and change “Blend Mode” to “Soft Light”. This will reduce the impact of the colours. Have a look at all the lightening ones (Screen, Overlay, Soft light, vivid light, saturation, etc to see which looks best).

Once done double click on the layer name and rename to suit. It’s very important to name the layers to avoid confusion.

For more complex changes you can create a separate new layer for more colours so if you added yellow to start with to enhance a sunset you may want to add some red as well.

Repeat as required with as many colours as you like all on separate layers and named.

Double click on layer to open and change the colour / saturation / brightness / colour as you go to create a better mix.

if you want to add a colour to the shadows then repeat as above and move the RH Blend if slider instead.

When finished with each colour you can fine tune by adjusting “Opacity” of the layer as required. Then fine tune everything at the end by adjusting the opacity of each colour as required to get the look you want.

You can also take make a mask and mask out areas you do not want to be affected; this is the more adjustable way. Alternatively use the eraser tool and with a very soft brush remove areas you don’t want. Adjust the flow to a low number say 5%.

You can also select the sky and create a mask of it. Go back to the original layer or the layer after any cloning adjustments and select the sky. Then create a mask on the colour required and by holding Alt on the sky mask drag it to the colour mask and ok to change the mask. You can adjust the mask as required in the normal way using a white or black brush (Press D to get the white & black colours back if you changed the foreground colour). You may need to invert the mask by pressing Ctrl I on it.

When finished group these “Blend-if” layers by selecting all by using the shift key and hitting Ctrl G and name the group Colour blending.

You can now go back to the new layer created earlier to carry out any minor adjustments / cloning / dodging & burning, etc.

Have a look at a colour look up adjustment. Click on half circle icon on the bottom right and select “Color Lookup” and go through the 3DLUT files list to see what looks best.

Try different blend modes and opacity on this layer to get the effect you like.

Curves part

If required, you can adjust the highlights and shadows by adding a “Curves” adjustment layer by clicking on the adjustment menu icon and selecting Curves.

Pull the middle down a bit and possibly lift the highlights (towards to top left) up a bit.

Pulling up the extreme LH slider a little makes a matt affect.

Adjusting opacity of the layer can help make it look more natural

Add a second “Curves” adjustment layer to “Dodge” and “Burn” the image. Pull up a point on the RH side then double click on layer to open “Blend-If” panel and adjust as normal moving the underlying layer slider from left to right.

Go to the RGB box on the properties layer panel by clicking on the layer. If you decrease blue, it adds yellow as yellow is opposite to blue on the colour wheel.

To select where on the image this effect shows, click on the mask and invert (Ctrl I) so it hides everything and then you can use the white brush to add to the areas you want. Dabbing can look effective.

Once finished group the curves layer together and name Curves.

Gradients Part

Gradient Layer (Can add some colour to the whole image so the light takes up some of the sky colour, just a hint is best)

Create a new layer (A transparent layer not a copy of the previous layer).

Select the gradient tool from the tool’s menu.

Select a gradient. Either of the first two in basic can work but often foreground to transparent works best.

Double click on the colour bar on the top row to open the gradient editor

Double click on LH handle under the bar to open the Colour Picker then either select a colour using the colour libraries or select colour picker and select a colour from the colour panel. For a sunrise or sunset select a red or orange colour and click OK.

Then double click on RH handle under bar and select a colour (Say yellow)

You can then move the small diamond handle in the middle to adjust the transition if required.

Then click Ok.

Select the type of gradient you require from the top line; Linear works best here for sunrise or sunsets

Then select the mode it can be Normal, Overlay, Soft Light, etc, but normally Soft Light works the best, then set the opacity.

Make sure Dither (which reduces banding) and Transparency are ticked. Reverse (which does what it says) should be un-ticked.

Place your cursor near the top centre and drag down to where you want the effect to be.

If it's not right just hit Ctrl Z to delete and try again until it looks ok.

You can adjust the overall layer opacity as well if required.

Enhancing the Sun

If you have a visible sun and you want to enhance the sun and/or make the sun look more realistic you can add a "Gradient" over the sun.

Create a new layer (A transparent layer not a copy of the previous layer).

Select the gradient tool from the tool's menu.

Select a gradient. Either of the first two in basic can work but often foreground to transparent works best.

Double click on the colour bar on the top row to open the gradient editor

Double click on LH handle under the bar to open the Colour Picker then either select a colour using the colour libraries or select colour picker and select a colour from the colour panel. For the sun select a yellow colour (This will be the centre of the sun) and click OK.

Then double click on RH handle under bar and select a colour (Say Red for the outer parts of the sun)

You can then move the small diamond handle in the middle to adjust the transition if required.

Then click Ok.

Select the type of gradient you require from the top line; Linear, Radial, Angle, Reflected or Diamond. For the sun, its Radial

Then select the mode it can be Normal, Overlay, Soft Light, etc, but normally Soft Light works the best, then set the opacity.

Make sure Dither (which reduces banding) and Transparency are ticked. Reverse (which does what it says) should be un-ticked.

Place your cursor on the centre of where you want the gradient to start (i.e. for the sun it will be in the centre of the sun) and drag out the line as required. If you get this too big or small just hit Ctrl Z to delete and try again until it looks ok.

You can adjust the overall layer opacity as well if required.

Adding Lens Flare

If you want to add a lens flare create a Stamp Visible Layer (SVL) by going to the top layer and pressing Ctrl + Alt + Shift + E. Then create new separate layer and fill with black (Alt + Backspace)

Go to Filter menu / Render / Lens Flare and select lens type to use.

Move point over sun (you may need to change opacity to see through the layer to locate the lens centre) and change lens to suit and adjust brightness. Use "Screen" blend mode to show flare on image. Blur and adjust final opacity as required.

Camera Raw part / Lightroom Final Edit

If you haven't already done overall changes in Lightroom or if you want to do further amendments at this point you can open Camera Raw and carry them out here or wait until you save and then do then back in Lightroom (which I prefer).

To do this now in Camera Raw create a "Stamp Visible Layer". Press Ctrl + Alt + Shift + E

Convert this Stamp Visible Layer (SVL) to a "Smart Object" by going to the "Filter" menu and select "Convert for Smart Filters"

Then go to Camera Raw with the SVL selected by going to the "Filter" menu and select "Camera Raw Filter"

Adjust as you would in Lightroom then save.