

Replacing a Neutral Density Graduated Filter Using Photoshop

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Density and Color Gradient Style Filters

Load a picture into Photoshop. Set foreground/background defaults to black/white. Click on the Adjustment Layers icon and select *gradient*. Click on the down arrow next to the long rectangular Gradient bar in the *Gradient Fill* window. Click on the third box from the upper left. This should give you a gradient going from white at the top to black at the bottom.

The Style is linear, which means the gradient goes smoothly from white to black. White brightens a picture and black darkens a picture. The gradient can be reversed by changing the angle or putting a check mark in the box marked Reverse. Note that by clicking and dragging inside the picture the gradient can be moved up or down. However, the gradient still goes from white to black.

Select *Scale* and increase the scale to greater than 100%. Note that the gradient within the picture increases so that the top moves up off the screen and the bottom moves down off the screen. Select *Scale* and decrease the scale to less than 100%. Note that the gradient is decreased. If the scale is changed to less than 100% then the gradient changes more abruptly. Click on the gradient displayed in the large window and drag it up and down to see what happens.

Always put a check in the Dither box to prevent banding.

Select different Styles such as *Linear, Radial, Angle, Reflected* and *Diamond*. Check out each by changing the scale and checking and unchecking *Reverse*.

Foreground to background, black to white, lightens and darkens. 50% gray has no effect. Reflected can give you dark at the top, light in the center, and dark at top and bottom.

Click anywhere inside the long rectangular Gradient box. This will bring up the Gradient Editor. Slide the sliders and release the mouse button to see the affect they have. Note that the lower sliders can increase the white or black areas of the gradient. Click on the upper slider. The *Opacity* box becomes active. Decrease the opacity to see what happens. The opacity can be decreased in two ways. One, click on the right facing arrow and slide the slider, or two, click anywhere on the word "Opacity", hold the mouse button down, and slide the little hand left or right. 0% opacity would make it go from black to transparent as opposed to black to white. Play with the sliders, the *Opacity* and the *Location* to see what happens and to understand the operation of the *Gradient Editor*. The *Gradient Type* should be Solid and the *Smoothness* should be set to 100%.

Click OK to go back to Gradient Fill and click OK to go back to the picture in Photoshop. Notice that you can't see the picture because the gradient overlay prevents the picture from showing through. Change the *blend mode* to *Overlay*. Overlay has the properties of lightening the light areas and darkening the dark areas so the picture will exhibit those characteristics. Also, try changing the *blend mode* to *Soft Light*.

Now that we've learned the characteristics of Gradient we'll start from the beginning but we'll do it differently. Drag the Gradient Fill layer into the trash can. We're going to start all over.

This time hold down Alt, click on the Adjustment Layers icon and select Gradient. In the mode box change the *blending mode* to **Overlay**. Remember, **Overlay** lightens lights and darkens darks. Click OK. . Click on the down arrow next to the long rectangular Gradient bar in the **Gradient Fill** window. Click on the third box from the upper left. This should give you a gradient going from white at the top to black at the bottom. Click anywhere in the rectangular **Gradient** window and select the third box from the upper left which is Black, White. This fills the picture window white to black, top to bottom. Click OK. Put a check mark in Reverse if necessary and always put a check mark in Dither to eliminate banding. You can click on the picture and drag the gradient up and down. Change angle and scale as necessary or reverse it. See if you can get the affect you want.

At this point you should have darkened the upper portion of the picture and lightened the lower portion (or vice-versa). This should give you the affect of a graduated neutral density filter.

If you can't seem to get exactly what you want, adjusting all the controls available to you, then click anywhere in the long rectangular Gradient box. This brings up the Gradient Editor. Set Gradient Type to solid and Smoothness to 100%. Click on the lower sliders and try adjusting them. Notice that by sliding the lower left slider to the right (and releasing the mouse button) you create a larger dark area and by sliding the lower right slider to the left you create a larger white area. Clicking on the upper slider will activate the Opacity box which will give you additional options. When you are done, click OK twice and you'll be back to your picture. Additional Photoshop tools might be necessary to help make the final adjustment. The best tool at this time should be the mask in the Gradient Fill layer. Using the brush tool in the tool box set to about 25 and swiping areas of your picture should add the finishing touches.

Try changing the *blending mode* to **Soft Light**.

Consider using the "Reflected" option or the "foreground to transparent" option.

If all else fails, send me an email: cgerston@cox.net

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