

Fun with Gradients: A Tutorial for Photoshop CS and Elements by D. R. Doede

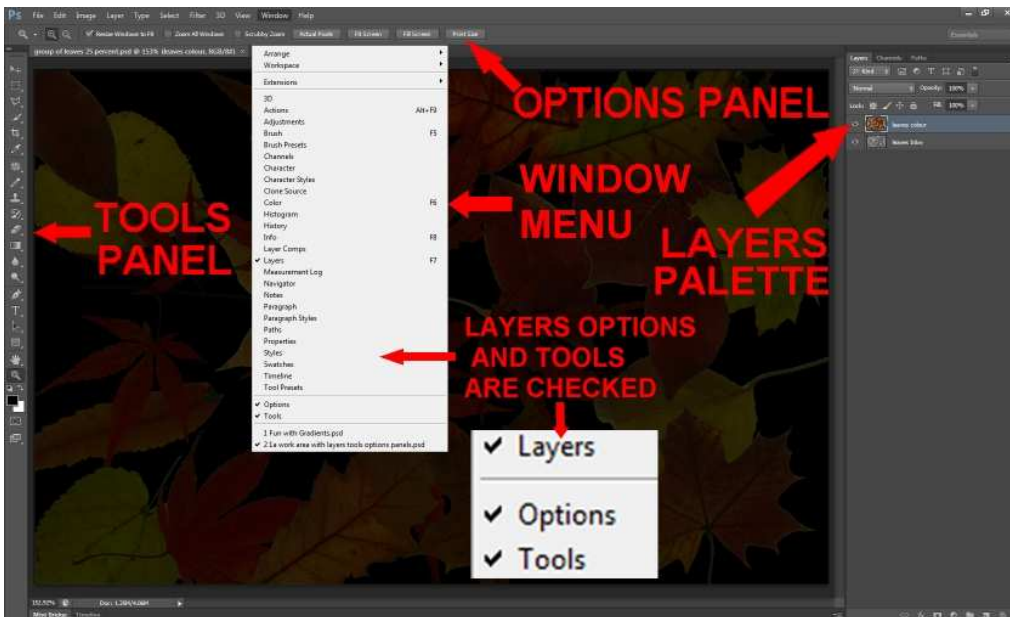
Note: This tutorial was written with reference to CS6, as that is the image editor that I currently use. It should work with any version of Adobe Photoshop or Elements (version 9 or later) that supports the use of layer masks. Depending on which version of the software you have and how you have it set up, the location/selection method for some of the tools may vary somewhat from those described here.

This is a nice technique that I like to use from time to time. It involves using the gradient tool to gradually fade one image into another. In this example we will fade from a colour to a black & white image. There are many other effects that can be achieved.

If you are not familiar with layer masks, (or even layers for that matter), do not worry. This tutorial includes a small "hands on" file (approx. 3 MB) in PSD format: "Fun With Gradients.psd", available on the Trillium website:

<http://www.trilliumphotoclub.org/tutorials.html>

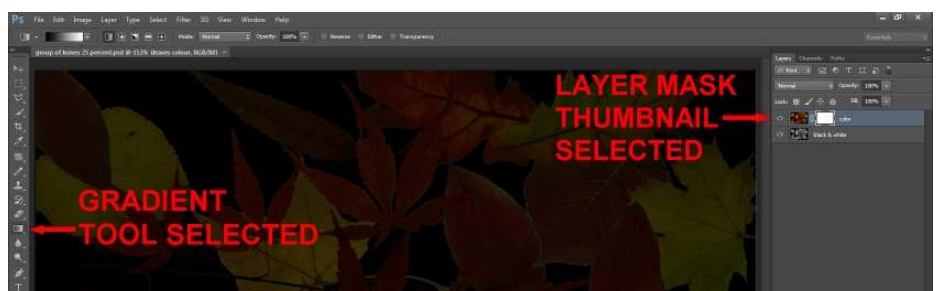
Scroll down to the link for the "Fun with Gradients" tutorial and follow the instructions to download the PSD file. This file has 2 layers : color and black&white. The layer mask has already been applied to the layer named "color". Once you have downloaded the file, open it and proceed as follows:

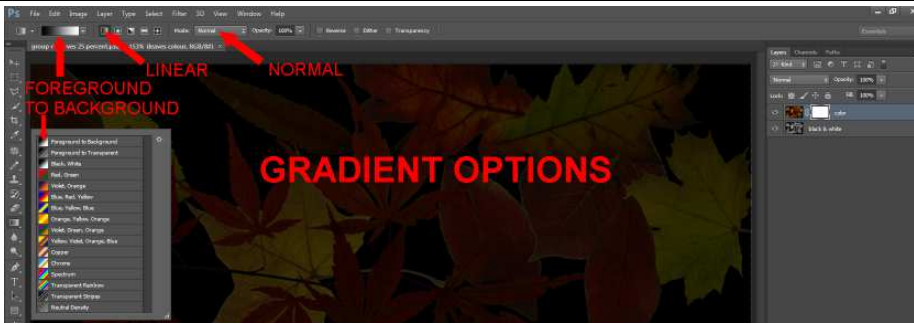


1. To start out, make sure that the "Layers" palette, and "Tools" and "Options" panels are all open and visible on your monitor.

To open them: Click on "Window" at the top of the screen, and on the drop-down menu that appears, place a check mark on any that are not already open.

2. Be sure to click on the Layer Mask thumbnail to select it; a white border will appear. Select the "Gradient" tool (in CS6 near middle of the of the tool panel), or use keyboard shortcut "g".





3. In the Options panel select "Foreground to Background" from the presets, and "Linear Gradient" for gradient type. Set the mode to "normal" and set opacity to 100%.

4. Finally, click on the image and drag your cursor across, up, down or diagonally, wherever you want the gradient to be. You will probably have to experiment a bit to get the hang of it...if you're not happy with your first try, just click and drag again until you get something you like.

the result of dragging the cursor from left to right



the result of dragging the cursor from top to bottom

This very versatile technique can be used in many ways. A few examples are shown below.

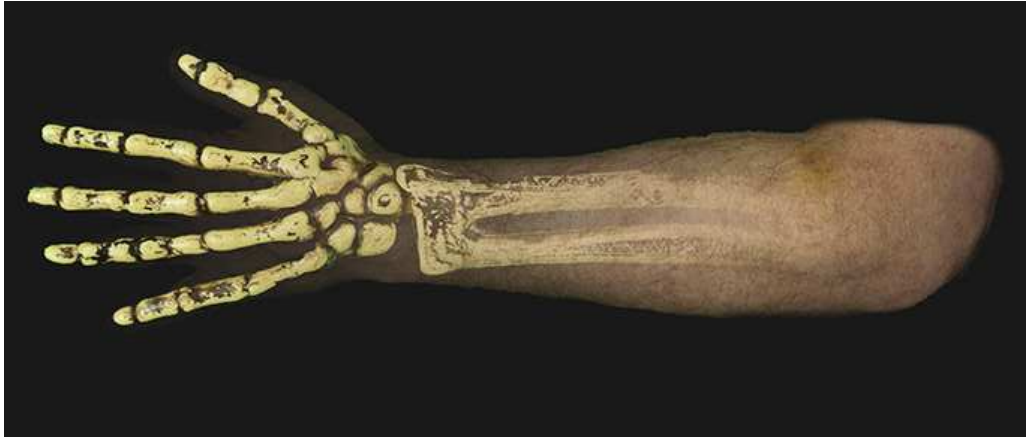


In the above image, the top layer is a solid color. A gradient is used to gradually fade from the bottom upward to reveal the mermaids.

Here 2 gradients are used: one to fade out the upper portions of the ruined building, and another one to create a seamless transition from the scorched earth to the sky



Fun with Gradients Tutorial: Conclusion



In this image a gradient was used to fade the arm out to reveal the bone underneath, creating an X-Ray effect.

In this image, a gradient was used to gradually fade the trees, on the top layer, out into the sky, on the bottom layer

