Sky Drama

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by Jen White

Turn so-so skies into spectacular skies with this two-step process involving the Gradient tool.

Step One: Choose Your Photo

- Open an image (File > Open) that has a so-so sky.
- In the Menu Bar, choose File > Duplicate. (PS: Choose Image > Duplicate.)
- In the dialog box, click OK.
- Close the original photo. The duplicate photo should now be active.
- Press the letter D to set the Color Chips to the default of black over white.

Step Two: Create a Gradient

- In the Layers panel, click on the Create A New Layer icon.
- Get the Gradient tool.
- In the Tool Options, open the Gradient Picker and choose Foreground to Transparent.

Note: If you do not see Foreground to Transparent:
Photoshop Elements: Open the drop down menu and choose Default. Open the flyout menu and choose Large List.

Photoshop: Open the flyout menu, choose Reset Gradients, and click OK. Open the flyout menu again and choose Large List.

- In the Tool Options, set the Mode to Normal and the Opacity to 100%. Uncheck Reverse. Check Transparency and Dither. Click on the Linear Gradient icon.
- On the photo, hold down the Shift key and click and drag from the top of the photo to slightly past where the sky ends. (See the screenshot.)
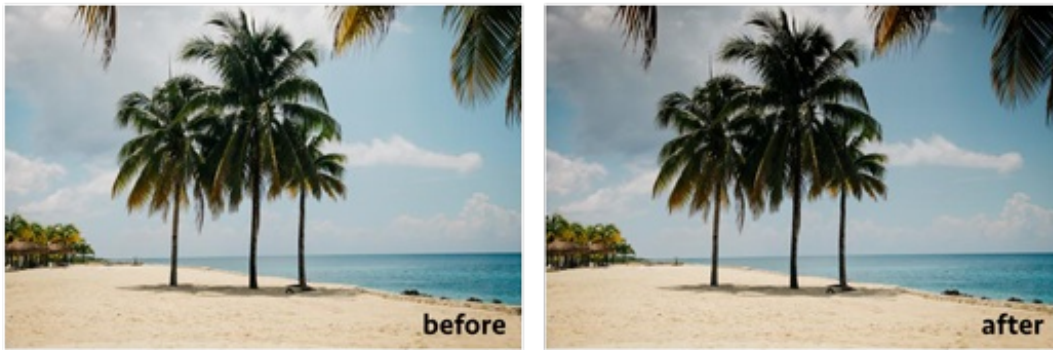

When you let go of your mouse, a black gradient should appear.

Step Three: Blend the Gradient

- In the Layers panel, set the Blend Mode to Soft Light. You should notice a difference in the intensity of the sky.
- To lower the effect, reduce the opacity of the gradient layer.
- To increase the effect, press Ctrl J (Mac: Cmd J) to duplicate the effect.

Step Four: Merge and Save

- In the Menu Bar, choose Layer > Flatten Image.
- Save the photo (File > Save As) as a high quality JPG file with a unique name.

Credits
Photo: Clem Onojeghuo
Original Tutorial: Jan Walker, 2011

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