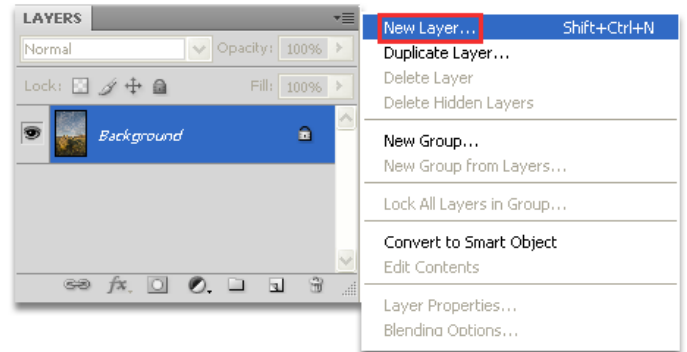


Dodging & Burning - Gradient Neutral Density Effect An Alternative Method

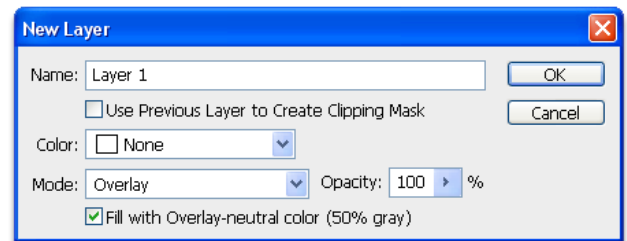
The Dodge & Burn tools in Photoshop are not necessarily the best tools to use for the job. The method outlined below is much more flexible, dodging and burning without increasing contrast. The method can also be used to create a gradient neutral density filter to your image.

This tutorial has been prepared using Photoshop CS4 but it will work with any version. The only difference will be the icon at the top of the Layers panel. In previous versions this will be a right facing diamond.

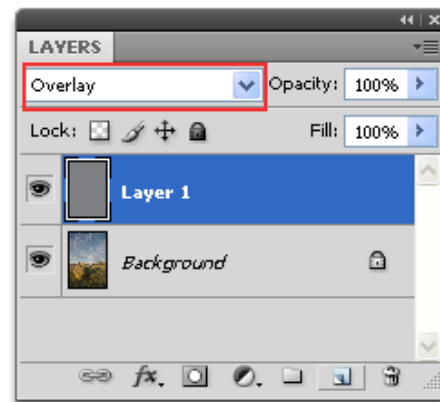
Click the small icon at the top right of the Layers panel and select **New Layer** (top option) from the menu listing.



In the New Layer properties, change the Mode to Overlay. This will enable the checkbox underneath to become available. Tick the box to fill the layer with a neutral grey. You can, if you wish, name the layer at this stage.

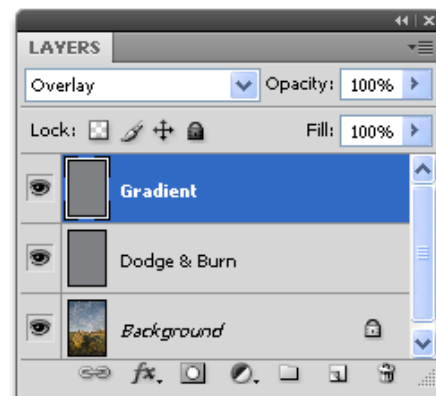


The new layer will show above the image layer and the Blend Mode will show Overlay. Although the layer is filled with grey you will still be able to see your image as the Overlay blend mode will disregard neutral grey.



If you now paint with black you will darken the image and if you paint with white you will lighten the image. Each time you paint you will darken or lighten as appropriate so it is best to lower the opacity of the brush you are using considerably. Try somewhere between 10-15% initially remembering that each time you paint you will increase the intensity. Change brush size to match the adjustments and vary the intensity of your painting strokes where necessary.

As well as being a great method of dodging and burning the same procedure can be used to create the perfect neutral density gradient. This can work very well on skies to produce a natural-looking darkening or on the foreground to darken it.



What is needed is a gradient of black to neutral, for darkening and white to neutral for lightening. To do this a new layer will need to be created in exactly the same way the initial dodge & burn layer was created. The Layers panel, shown right, has the layers renamed to identify them.

Ensure your colours are set to default (black/white). Press the 'D' key, if they are not. Then press the 'X' key to reverse the colours so white is on top.

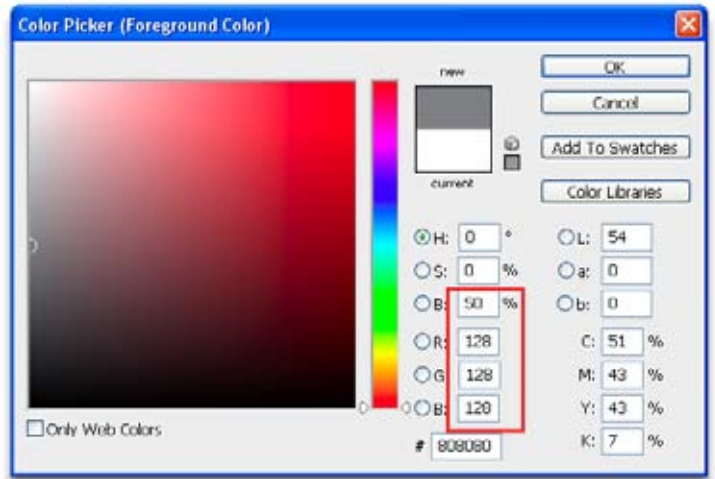


Click the white square to bring up the Color Picker.

Either change the 'B' Brightness setting to 50% or change each of the RGB settings to 128. This will create a 50% neutral grey. Changing one setting will automatically change the other.

Click OK.

The foreground/background colours need to be reversed so that black is foreground and neutral grey is background. Hit the 'X' key to reverse the colours.



Select the Gradient tool from the toolbox.

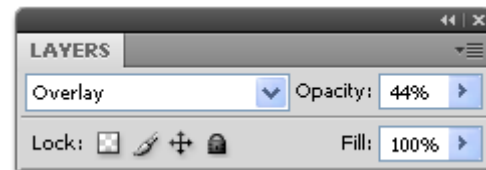


Check the Options bar to ensure that the gradient shows and the correct Gradient type is selected.



Drag a line from the top of your image to the horizon. A gradient will be applied from black through to neutral.

It is quite probable that the effect will be darker than required. If it is, reduce the opacity of the layer until the density required is obtained. The Layer Opacity is shown at the top of the Layers panel to the right of the Blending Mode. Hold your mouse over the word opacity, just to the left of the white box showing 100%, and a 'scrubby' slider will appear. Drag to the left and watch your image as the opacity of the layer reduces and the gradient fades.



The same effect be applied to the foreground to darken it but a new Overlay layer will need to be created. This time the line would be drawn from the bottom upwards as far as is required. The line can be drawn at an angle if required. If the darkening is not in the correct place just redraw the gradient. Each new iteration will overwrite the previous one.

Should a lightening effect be required then the gradient should be made from white to neutral grey.