



# Pumping up your landscapes using exposure blending and luminosity masking

## Presentation

1. What is Blend If ?
2. Replace a Sky in Seconds Using Blend If
3. Complete Tonal Control Using Luminosity Masks

The **Blend If** feature in Photoshop blends one layer into another based on the content of either of the two layers. It can be used, for example, to replace a sky by making it easy for you to knock out the blue sky without having to make a complex selection.



**Luminosity masks** break an image down into various channels of **luminosity**. In other words, they allow you to make very specific selections in Photoshop based on how bright or dark an area is, for example, colored clouds during a sunset.

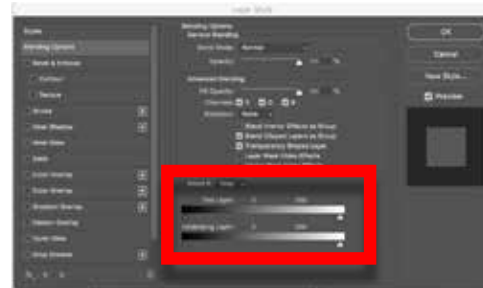
With Luminosity Masks, you use the image to craft selections from itself. This allows you to control tonal ranges in the image without ever having to touch a selection tool.

# Introducing Blend If

1

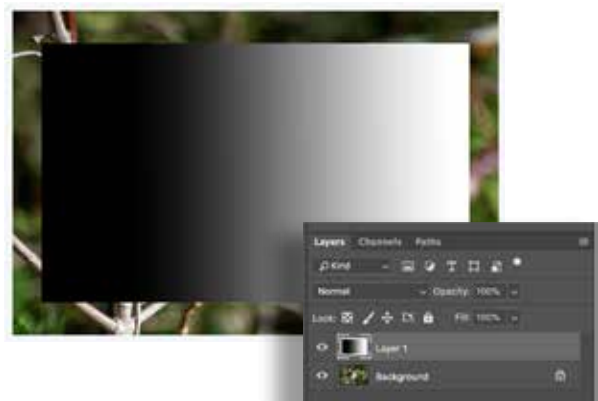
**Blend If** is located at the bottom of the Layer Style Panel.

To access the Layer Style Panel, either double-click on the thumbnail of the photo you want to work on, or **Layer>Layer Style>Blending Options**



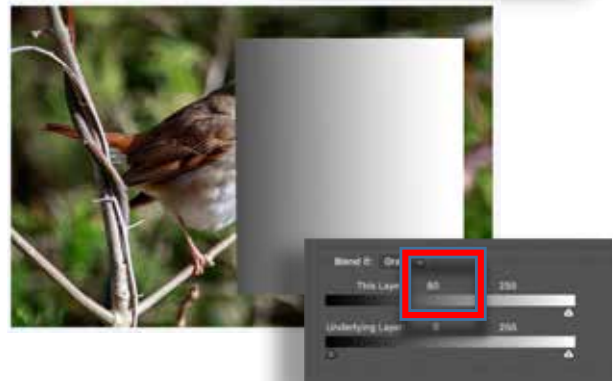
2

In this example, I have placed a photo of a black to white gradient over a photo of a Thrush.



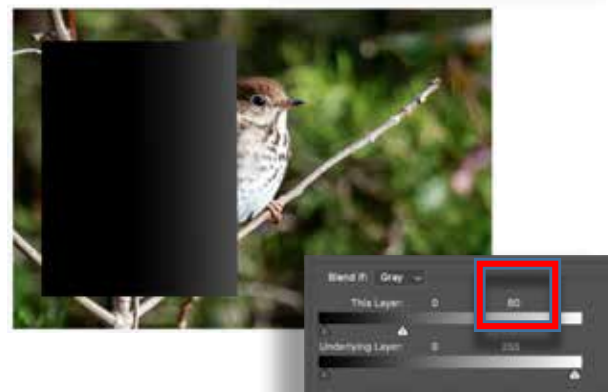
3

Moving the “This Layer” left slider, anything that is this value of gray (80) or darker, will become invisible.



4

Similarly, moving the “This Layer” right slider, anything that is this value of gray (80) or lighter, will become invisible.



# Replace a Sky in Seconds with Blend If in Photoshop



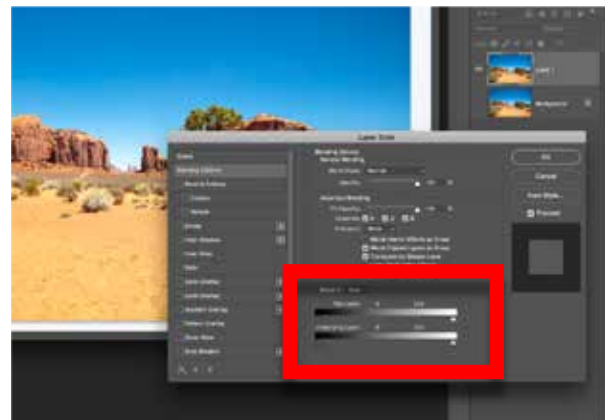
1

First, make a copy of the background layer. Press Command/Control J. And turn off the background layer. This works really good with photos that have flat blue skies, because we are going to use the blue to hide the sky in the image.



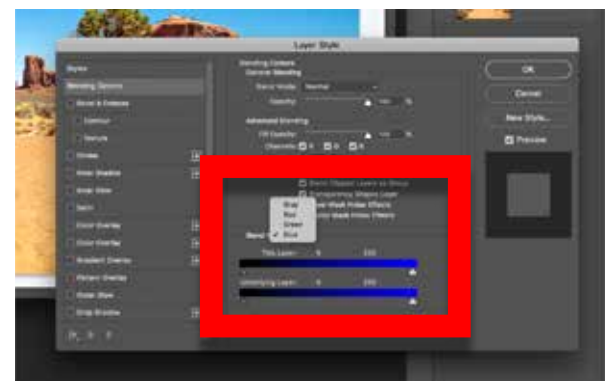
2

Double click on Layer 1. This opens the Layer Style box. You'll see the Blend If section here in red.



3

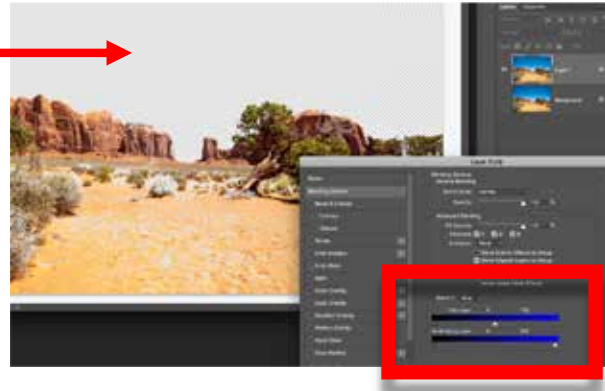
We can remove the blue sky, by removing the highlights from the blue channel instead of the grey, shown here in red.



## Replace a Sky (Page 2)

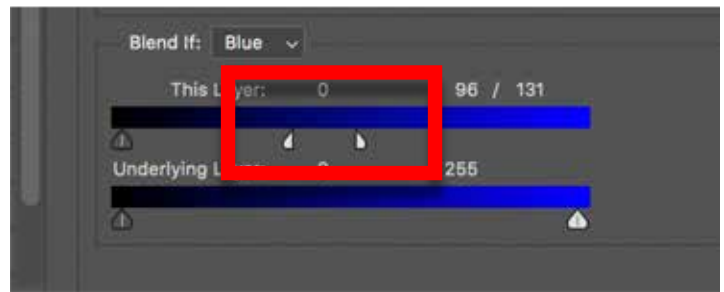
4

Now remove the sky by moving the slider on “This Layer” (the current layer) from the right to left and the sky disappears.



5

To make the removal of the sky smoother, hold the option/alt key and click on the slider – it breaks the slider into two. Now separate the slider to soften up the transition.



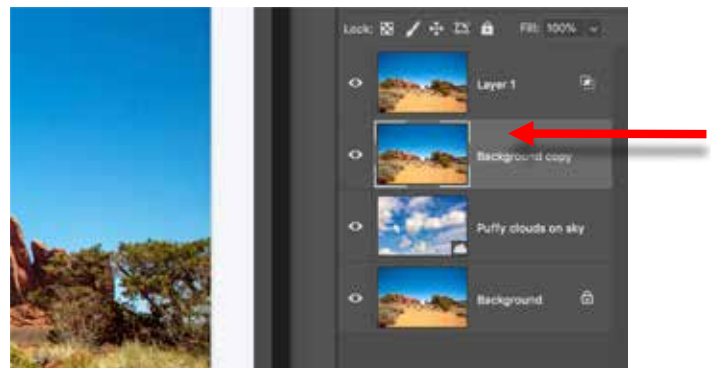
6

Now let's bring in the new sky by (a) dropping it over the current Layer 1 and (b) making it bigger by holding shift + option/alt together to increase the size from the center of the photo. Hit Enter.



7

Next, put the sky behind Layer 1. If you look closely, some areas other than the sky were removed. To fix this, make one more copy of the background layer, turn it on, and move this copy above the sky.



## Replace a Sky (Page 3)

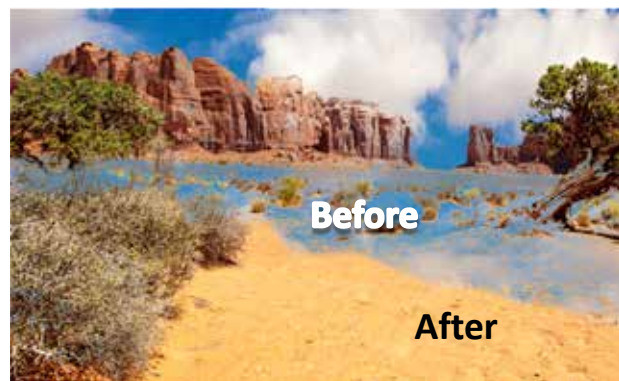
8

To fill in those areas where the sky has “bled through,” hold the option/alt key and click on the mask button. This creates a negative mask. The sky reappears.



9

Now set the foreground color to white, hit “B” and begin to brush those areas to remove the unwanted sky. (Hit “D” to change the background/foreground colors to white and black and then hit “X” to change colors.).



10

To better see where the sky has “bled through”, click on the sky and then choose a solid color adjustment layer, and hit Enter. Here I chose red. Brush with white over the red areas (other than the sky).



11

Finally, if you think that the sky is too saturated, click on the sky layer, and then click on the Curves Adjustment and reduce the tone. (You can also use the Hue/Saturation Adjustment to reduce the saturation.) I then flattened the image and cropped the top and bottom. Done!





# Pump Up Your Landscapes with Luminosity Masks



## Why Luminosity Masks?

Luminosity Masks come to the rescue when your intended subject does not have an easily seen border – like colored clouds during a sunset. With Luminosity Masks you don't need to create physical selections as you would with the lasso or quick-selection tool.

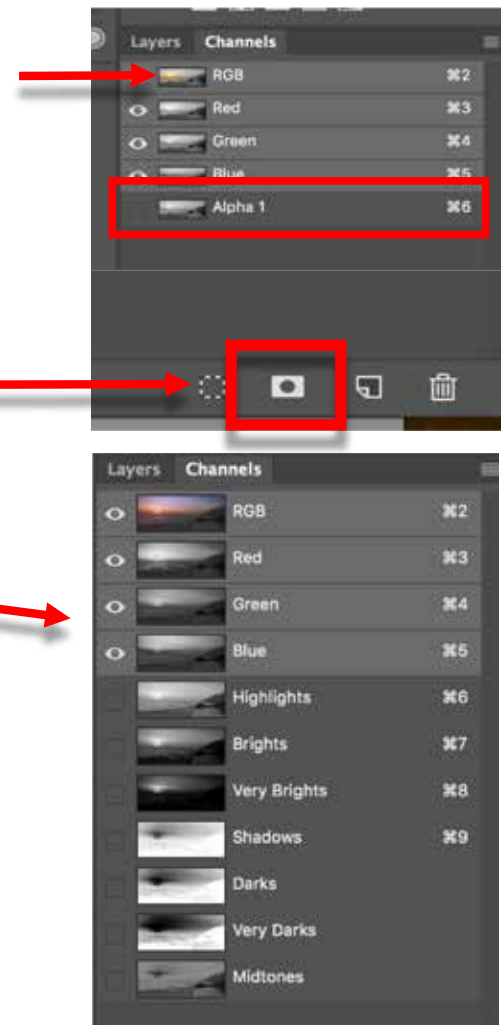
Rather, Luminosity Masks use Photoshop's **Channels panel**. The top channel (**RGB**) is a composite of the separate Red, Green and Blue channels.

Hold down the Command/CTRL key and click on the thumbnail for the composite RGB channel and Photoshop will create a selection based on the luminous values of the image: Pixels with a luminous value that registers above the midpoint will be selected, so the selection is being created using the brightest pixels.

At the foot of the Channels Panel is an icon that looks very much like the Add a Mask icon from the Layers panel. This icon is used to Save the Selection as a Channel. When you click it, a new Channel will appear called "Alpha 1." And beginning with "Alpha 1," to build a full series of light, dark and midtone Channels.

In this tutorial we'll create our own Luminosity Masks. However, there are two luminosity based extensions that you can try.

They are Lumenzia by Greg Benz and Raya Pro by Jimmy McIntyre. Greg Benz offers a free Luminosity Mask Photoshop Action that automatically creates 19 Luminosity Masks. His webpage is: [gregbenzphotography.com](http://gregbenzphotography.com).



# Creating your own Luminosity Masks

**Step 1:** Switch to the Channels panel. There is a composite RGB channel at the top. Hold down the Command/Ctrl key and click on the composite RGB channel. Photoshop will create a selection based on the luminous values of the image.

**Step 2:** At the foot of the Channels panel is an icon that looks like the Add a Mask icon from the Layers panel. In the Channels panel it is used to Save the Selection as a Channel. Click it, and a new channel will appear called "Alpha 1." Double-click the name and rename it "Highlights."

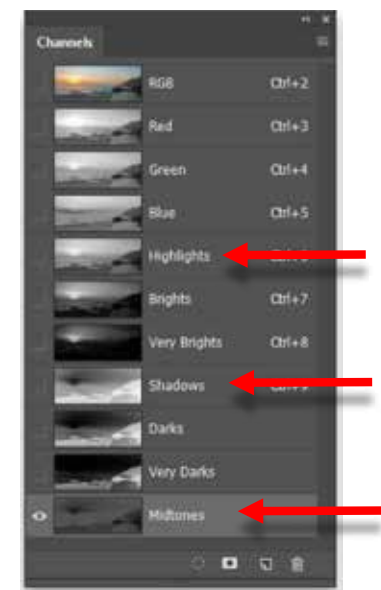
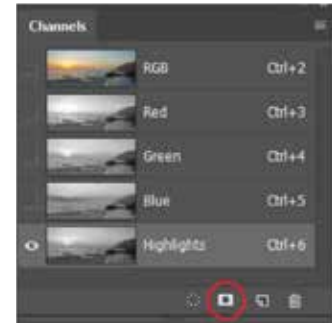
**Step 3:** While the selection is still active, hold down Shift-Option-Command (Shift-Alt-Ctrl). Notice when you move the cursor over the channel thumbnails, it changes to a hand with a dotted box containing an X. This indicates that the cursor is in *selection intersect mode*, so when you click on the Highlights thumbnail, the selection is intersected with itself, which narrows the selection to even brighter pixels in the image. After creating the new selection, use the Save Selection to create a new channel. Name this channel "Brights."

**Step 4:** Use the same technique as in **Step 3**, but this time click on the Brights channel. Create another new channel from this selection and call it "Very Brights."

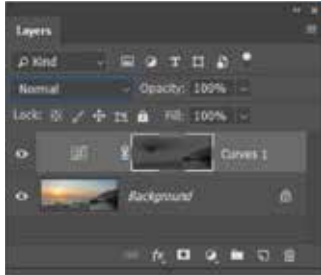
**Step 5:** Now let's do the shadows and dark areas. Command-click (Ctrl-click) on the Highlights channel to load it as a selection. Then, go to Select>Inverse to select the pixels with the exact opposite luminosity values (the darker values). Create a new channel and call it "Shadows."

**Step 6:** Hold down Shift-Option-Command (Shift-Alt-Ctrl) and click to intersect the Shadows selection with itself. Create a new channel and name it "Darks." Then intersect the selection with itself again and create a new channel called "Very Darks."

**Step 7:** Now the Midtones. Command-click (Ctrl-click) the Highlights channel, then hold the Shift-Option-Command (Shift-Alt-Ctrl) keys and click on the Shadows channel. This creates a selection of the intersection of the Highlights and Shadows. Create a new channel from this selection and name it "Midtones." Then be sure to press Command/Ctrl-D to cancel the selection before moving on.



# Introducing Luminosity Masks



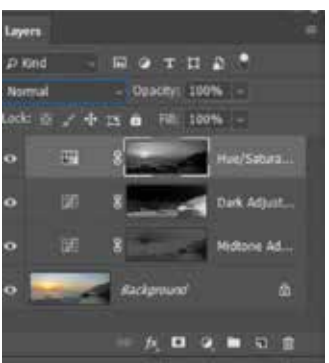
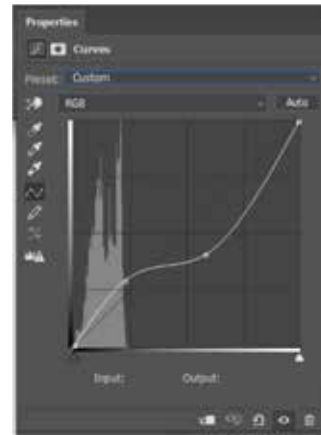
**One.** We'll start by increasing the contrast of the Midtones in this image. First, click on the composite RGB channel. Load the Midtones selection by clicking on Command/CTRL Midtones channel thumbnail. Then add a Curves adjustment layer by clicking on the Curves icon in the Adjustments panel.



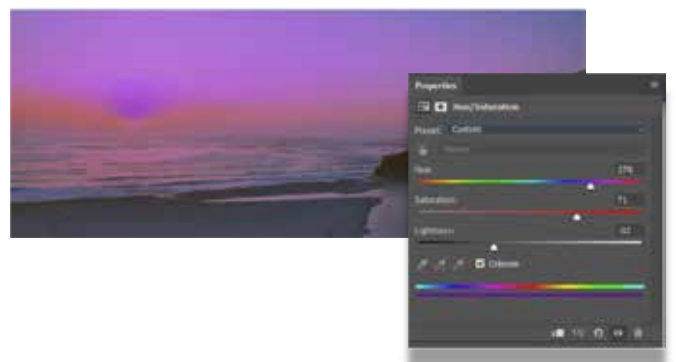
**Two.** Rename the Layer "Mid Adjust." Now, add a point at the lower left of the curve and pull downward about half a square. Then add another point at the center of the grid.



**Three.** Load the Very Darks channel as a selection and add another Curves adjustment layer. Adjust the curve in a loose "S" shape. This slightly brightens up the darkest areas of the image without touching the highlights or midtones. Rename this layer Dark Adjust.



**Four:** Load the Brights selection and then add a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Click on the Colorize option in the Properties panel and set the Hue to 278, Saturation to 71, and the Lightness to -32. This adds a purple coloring to the sunset sky that's attractive. But would work better if it blended more with bright yellow and oranges of the sun.

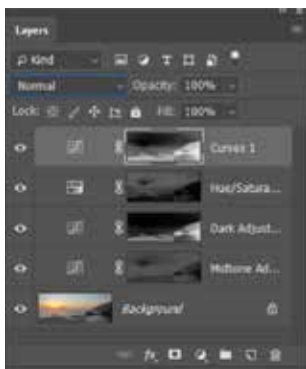




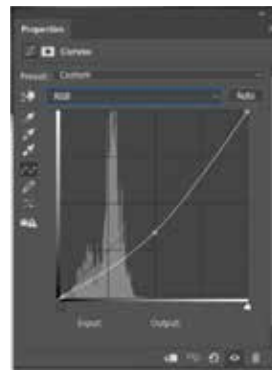
## Introducing Luminosity Masks cont'd.



**Five.** Load the Very Brights channel as a selection and then click on the mask for the (existing) Hue/Saturation adjustment layer so you can edit the mask directly. Press X until the foreground color is set to black and hold down the Option/Alt key while tapping the Delete/Backspace key twice. This fills the selection with black and because it is being performed on the mask, it conceals the colorize effect. This allows the natural sun color to shine through and blend seamlessly with the added purple.



**Six.** Load the Darks channel as a selection and add another Curves layer to adjust the tonal values of the dark areas of the image. Add a point on the center of the curve and pull down half a grid space. This adds a final layer of enhanced contrast to the image.



**Seven.** The usefulness of luminosity masks isn't confined to just sunset images. Luminosity masks allow to make very specific selections based on how bright or dark an area is.

