

FIX PHOTOS FAST



with
ACTIONS



By Linda Sattgast

Actions: Fix Photos Fast! Pre-Class Videos

Lesson 1: The Basics of Blending

Blend modes in Photoshop or Photoshop Elements can give an ordinary photo, or even a less than inspiring photo, an artistic look. But before you can create more advanced blending effects, you must know the basics of blending, so that's what this video is all about. I'll use a photo of a marketplace in Venice to teach you the basics of blending.

Exactly what is a blend mode? According to Adobe: "A layer's blending mode determines how its pixels blend with underlying pixels in the image." Let me demonstrate what that means. (These instructions work in both Photoshop and Photoshop Elements.).

Blend a Photo with Itself

- Blending happens in the Layers panel.
- You must have at least two layers to blend. If you have only one layer, the Blend Mode menu at the top of the Layers panel will be grayed out, which means it's unavailable.
- If you create another layer by duplicating the original layer, the Blend Mode menu becomes available. To do that, in the Menu Bar choose Layer > Duplicate Layer, and click OK to the dialog box.
- Open the Blend Mode menu and choose a blend mode.
- Each blending mode does a specific kind of blend: The top blended layer in the Layers panel will blend with the layer or layers below and create a new look. Sometimes you'll like the look, and sometimes you won't.
- For example, Multiply made my image darker. The original image was already a little on the dark side, so I changed the blend mode to Screen, which made the image lighter.
- Adjust the opacity of the layer that has the blend mode to control the amount of effect it has. For my photo, I reduced the opacity to 50%.

Blend a Photo with a Texture

Blending a photo with itself is something I do frequently to improve the look of the photo, but you can also blend a layer with other kinds of layers, such as textures.

- Open a texture, get the Move tool, press the Shift key, and drag the texture onto your photo so that it covers the photo. I used a photo of some tile as my texture.
- If you need to resize the texture, press Ctrl T (Mac: Cmd T) to get Transform options.
- You may need to choose View > Fit on Screen to see all the Transform handles.
- Click and drag from any of the handles to resize the texture to fit. It's not as important to keep a texture perfectly proportional. Just eyeball it, and if it looks okay to you, it's fine.
- Change the blend mode to create a new look. I used Overlay.

So now you know the basics of how to use blend modes, which everyone needs to know before going on to master more advanced techniques. Just remember: Every photo is different, so the look you get on your photo will vary from what I get on this photo.

Lesson 2: Blend Mode Shortcut

When working with blend modes, how do you know which one to choose? The more you work with blend modes, the more you'll get the hang of what a blend mode will do, but even now I often use a keyboard shortcut to help me quickly decide on the right blend mode.

- In the Tool Bar, get the Move tool, or simply press the letter V to get the Move tool. (I'll tell you in a moment why it's important to use the Move tool.)
- Press and hold the Shift key while pressing the plus or minus key to toggle through the blend modes. (Don't let go of the Shift key as you toggle through the blend modes. The name of the blend mode will appear in the menu field.
- This allows you to see which blend modes might work well with your photo.
- When you're finished, you can open the menu and choose the blend mode you liked the best. (I chose Overlay.)
- Adjust the opacity of the blended layer, if the effect is too strong.

Caveat: It Matters Which Tool You Choose

Here's why the active tool makes a difference as you're using this shortcut:

- Some tools have their own blending options. If you use the blend mode shortcut with a tool that has a blend mode menu in Tool Options, it will affect the blending option on the tool, and not on the Layers panel.
- The Brush tool, for example, has a blending menu. Other tools do as well, so play it safe by always choosing the Move tool, which does not have a blending menu. That way you can be sure that the shortcut will apply only to the Layers panel blending menu.
- This shortcut works on either Windows or Mac.

Windows Blending Shortcut

Windows has one additional way to toggle through the blend modes.

- Click on the blend mode menu to open it, and click again to close it. This makes the menu active.
- Press the up or down Arrow keys to toggle to the next blend mode.
- When you want to deactivate the blending menu, press Enter or click somewhere else on your document or on the program.