

TEST YOUR Skills

Design Beautiful Pages— Beautifully Blended Designs

Test Your Skills Challenge 4

Blending Mindset

The more you play around with blending, the more you can develop what I like to call a “Blending Mindset.” By that I mean that blending often comes to mind as a solution for a problem or as a means of adding an artistic feel to your page.

It’s not something that can exactly be taught—it mostly comes with experience—but I’d like to share my process with you to show you the possibilities.

To keep it simple I’ll use two photos to create a blended page. I’ve already placed them in my document and added a stroke outline and custom drop shadow to the photo of the girl swinging.

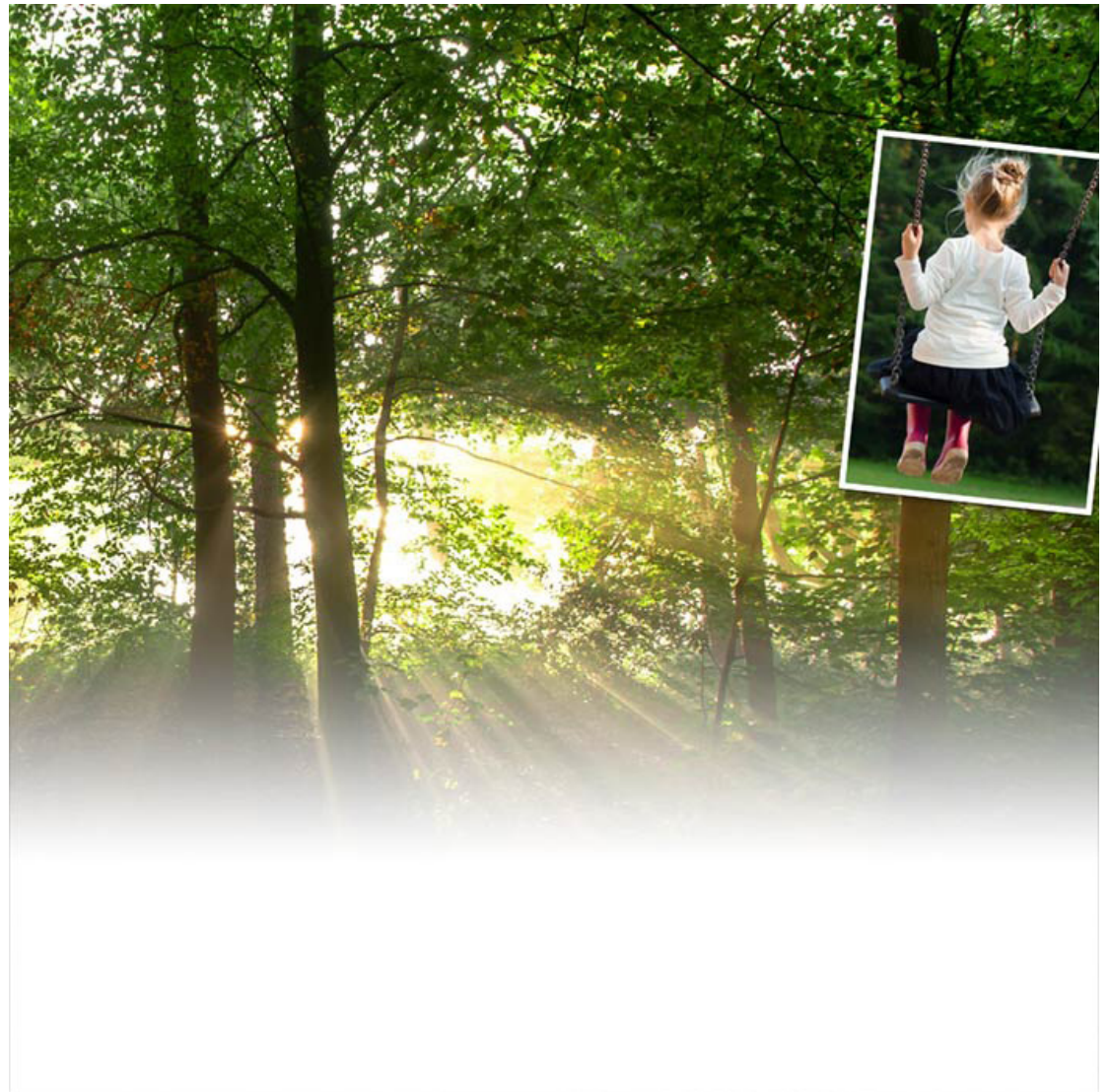
Question

How can you blend the background photo of trees onto the page without using a blend mode?



Answer

You can use a clipping mask or a layer mask. In this case I used a white to black gradient on a layer mask to make the lower third of the photo taper off and disappear.



Now let's choose a background paper. My kit papers are mostly shades of cream and brown, which are neutral colors that will go well with my images.

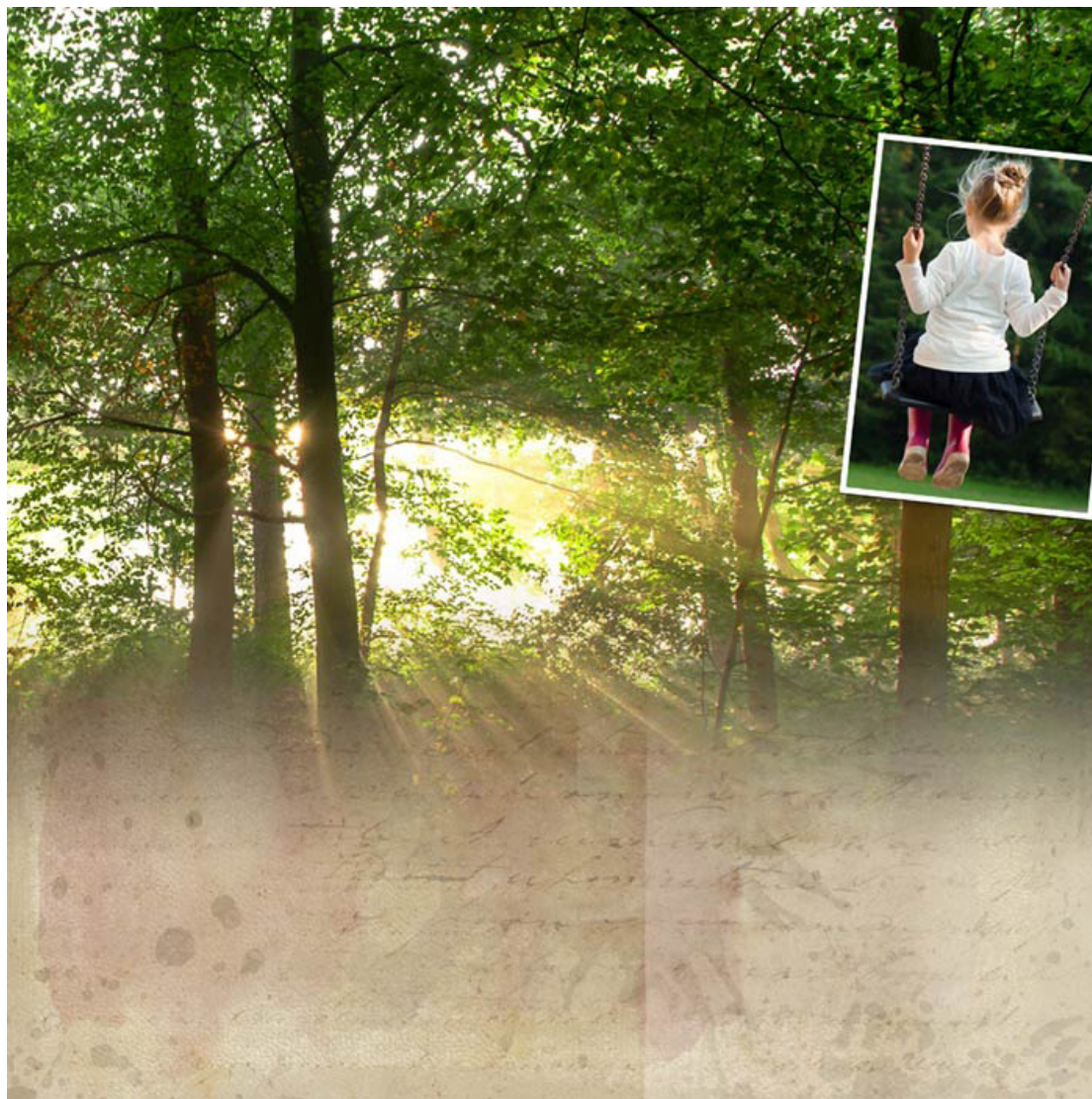
Be careful about using background colors that aren't neutral on a blended page. Color can hog the focus or detract from your image(s). If you do use a color, in general you'll want to keep it more desaturated.

Question

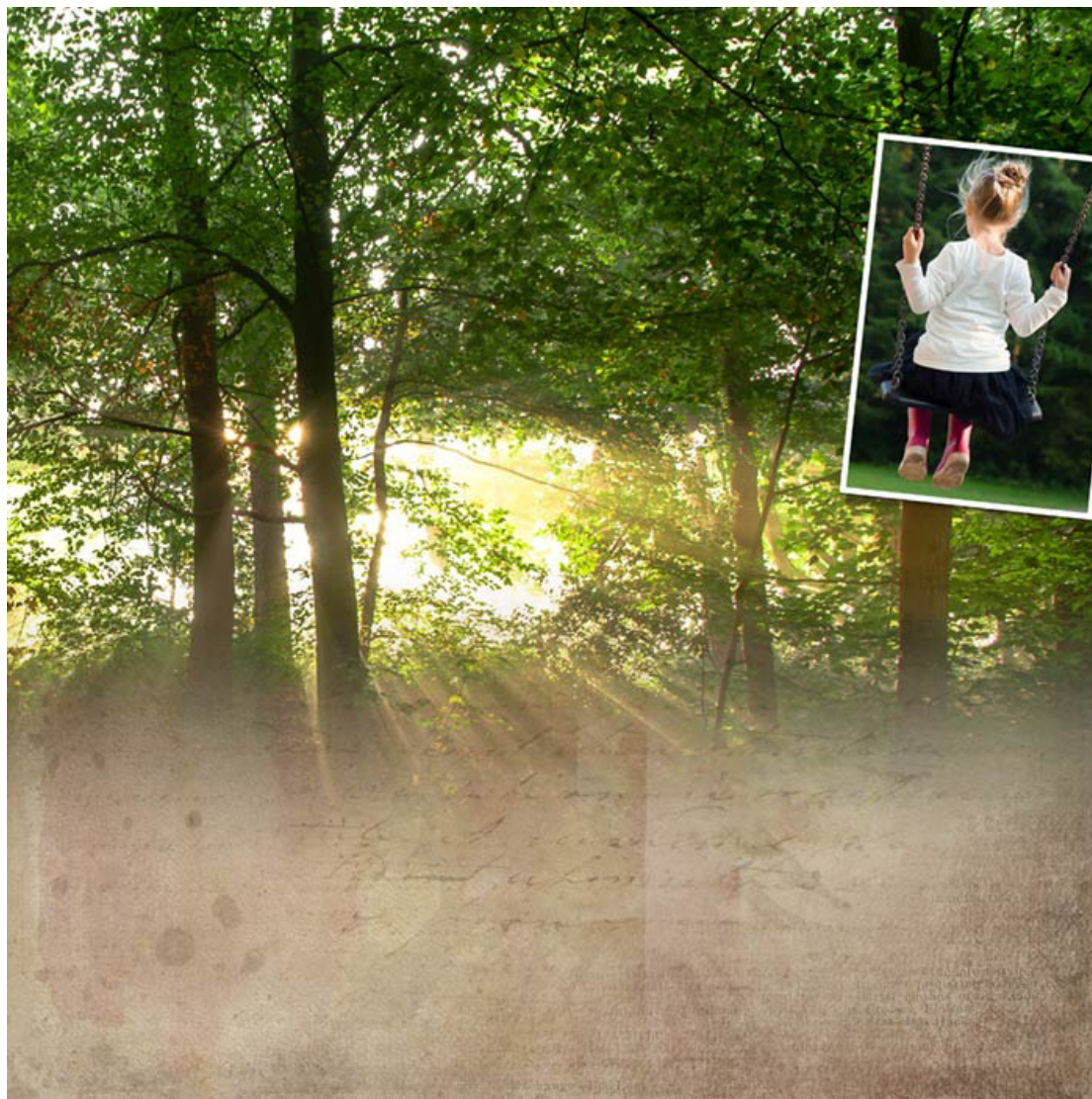
Which of these two papers would look best behind my image? Is there a third alternative?



I felt that the darker paper would make my image too dark, since a lot of the trees and leaves are backlit and thus dark, so I chose the lighter paper.



But then I added the dark paper above the light background paper and masked in just a bit of the darker paper around the lower edges and corners.

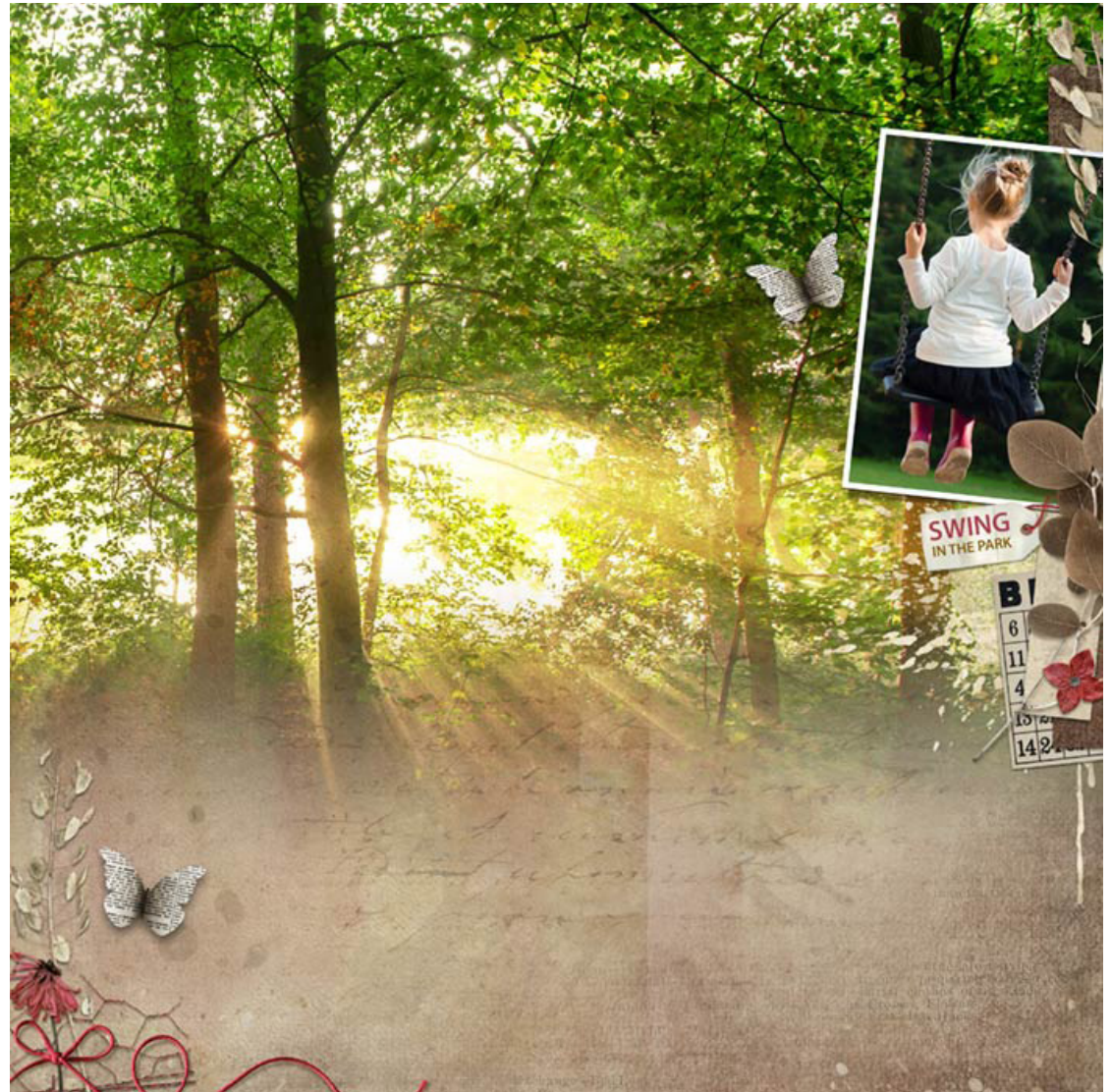


Here's my page after adding the elements. By placing a cluster of elements in the lower left I created a diagonal flow through the rays of light coming through the trees and up to the photo.

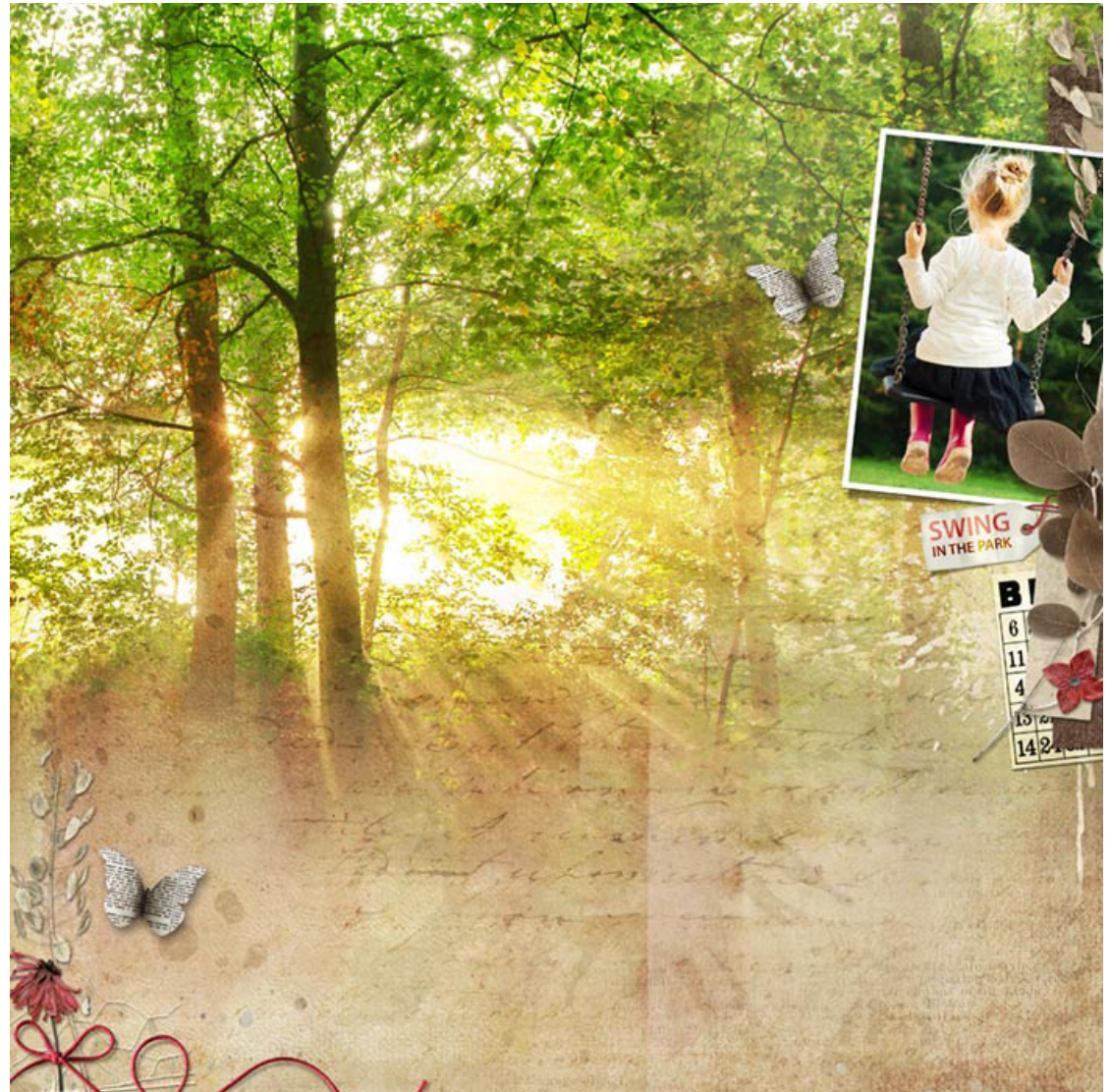
Notice that I applied the principle of repetition by using elements that repeated the color of the little girl's cute red boots. I also repeated the shades of cream and brown. The splatter image would be counted as a blended image since it's a 2D element.

Question

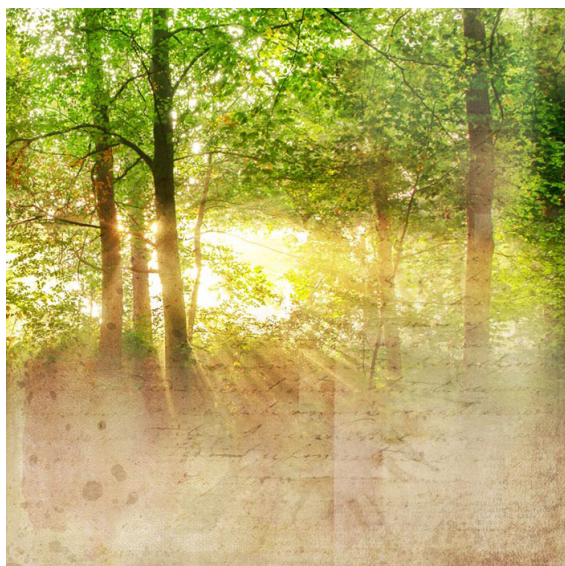
Is there somewhere else I could use blending? (Hint: I used blending 5 more times.)



Here's my finished page. Compare the prior image with this one and see if you can locate the five places where I utilized blending.



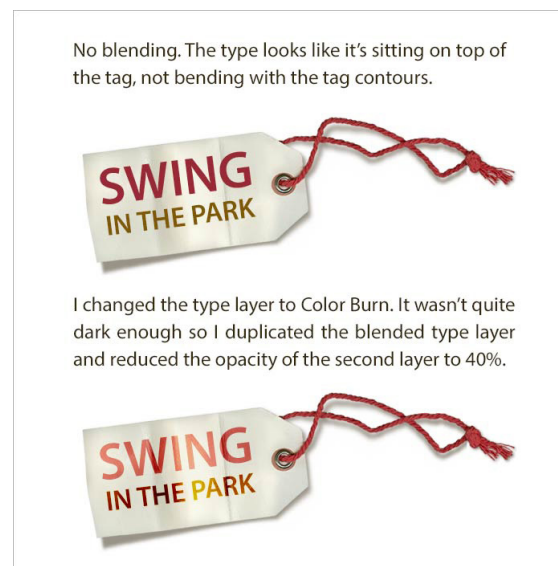
Here are the five places where I added blending.



Just for fun I decided to duplicate the lighter background paper, place it above the photo and original background papers, and change the blend mode. Overlay brightened the image and made it feel more artistic. I loved it!



I clipped the same light beige paper to my image and changed the blend mode to Overlay at 90% opacity. A beige or light brown textured paper is great for making a photo a little lighter, warming it up a bit, and giving it a slightly artistic feel.



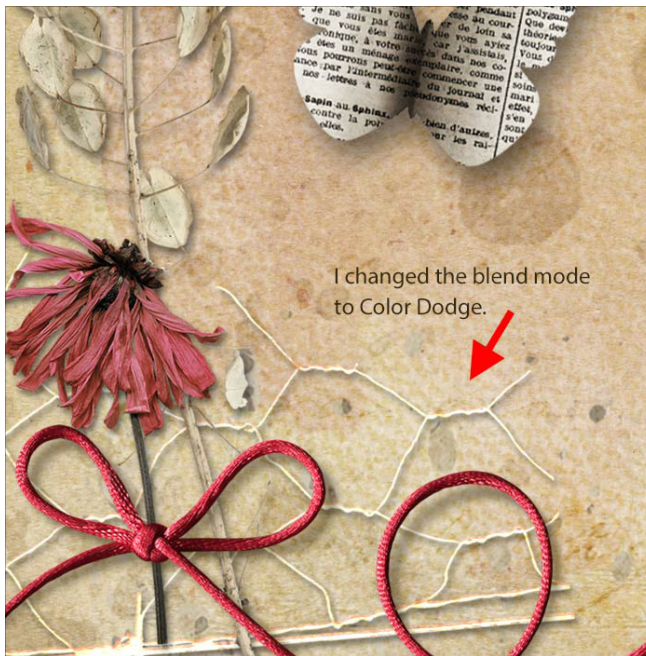
Whenever you have a paper or tag or journaling tag that's bent, it's a prime candidate for blending type above it. This will cause the type to look like it's bent also.



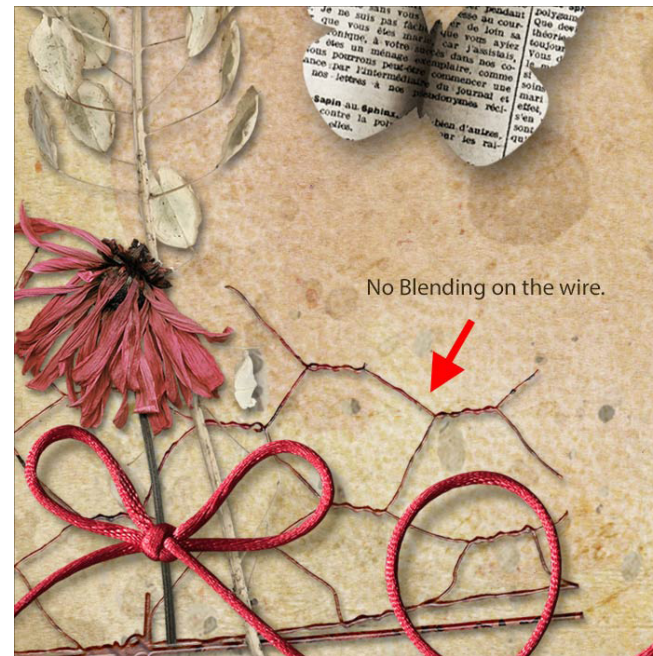
I felt the card was a little blah and wanted to lighten it. I could have lightened it using other methods, but I decided to try scrolling through the blend modes.



I really liked the result of Hard Light! Since it didn't seem like enough effect, I simply duplicated the card. Because blending interacts with the paper or objects behind it, you get a varied effect that can be desirable—or not! In this case I liked it.



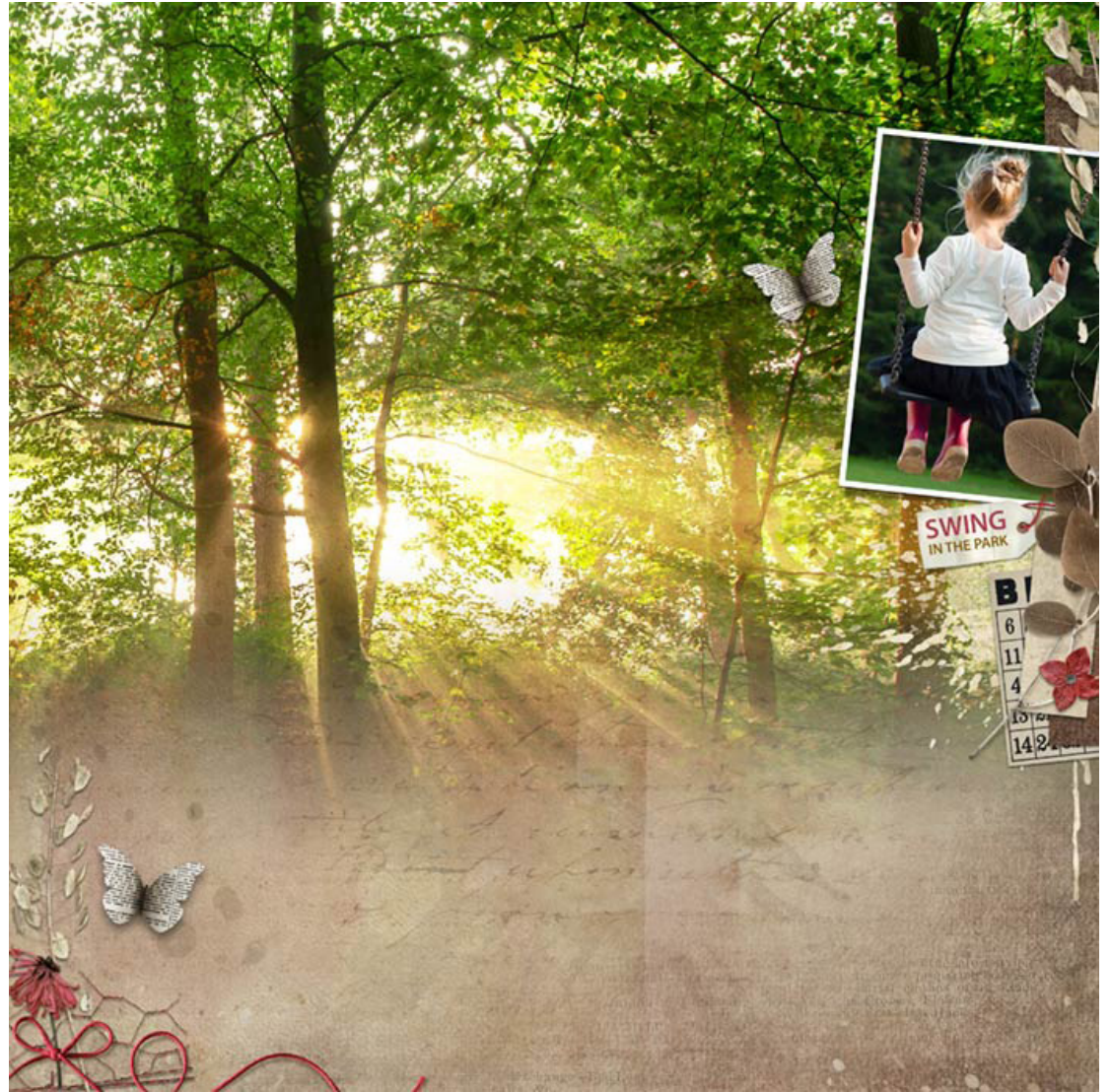
Just for fun I decided to toggle through the blend modes. I was amazed and delighted when I came to Color Dodge and it totally fixed the problem by making the wire a lighter color that filled in the space without being too noticeable.



I liked the wire in the left corner cluster but I couldn't get it positioned just right. No matter where I put it I didn't care for the result. I needed something in that spot, but the wire seemed a bit busy.

To Review

Here's my page without any blending other than a layer mask gradient on the background image.



Here's my page after applying quite a bit of blending.

Credits

Swing In The Park

Page by Linda Sattgast

Kit: Embrace by Laitha Designs

Font: Myriad Pro

Wrap Up

Some of the blending I used on this page was known territory for me, gleaned from past experience. After awhile you'll know what kinds of textures and colors will probably work to create a nice effect using the few go-to blend modes, as I taught in one of my instructional videos.

But having a "Blending Mindset" means you'll often think of blending as a possible solution to something you want to change. You won't know if it'll work out, but you take a few seconds to toggle through the blend modes anyway.

And, lo and behold, sometimes that does the trick with very little effort on your part. And sometimes you even get a super cool effect! A lot of the blending I did on this page was the second kind of blending—simply experimenting.

But first you must learn to think of blending as a possible solution or you'll never even try it.

I challenge you to develop a Blending Mindset!

