

THE BLEND MODES IN PHOTOSHOP

by Cindy Gosselin

Photoshop has 27 Blend Modes, in six groupings. Blend Modes provide a way for **two** layers to interact. As you'll see, blend modes can be used with pixel layers, adjustment layers and texture layers. Blending options can be a powerful asset to increase the overall look and feel of images without getting too involved with masking.

All the blend modes appear here, on the layers panel, in a dropdown menu. Of all the available blend modes, only a handful of them are generally used in your images.

Group 1. Normal blend mode group. We will talk about Normal.

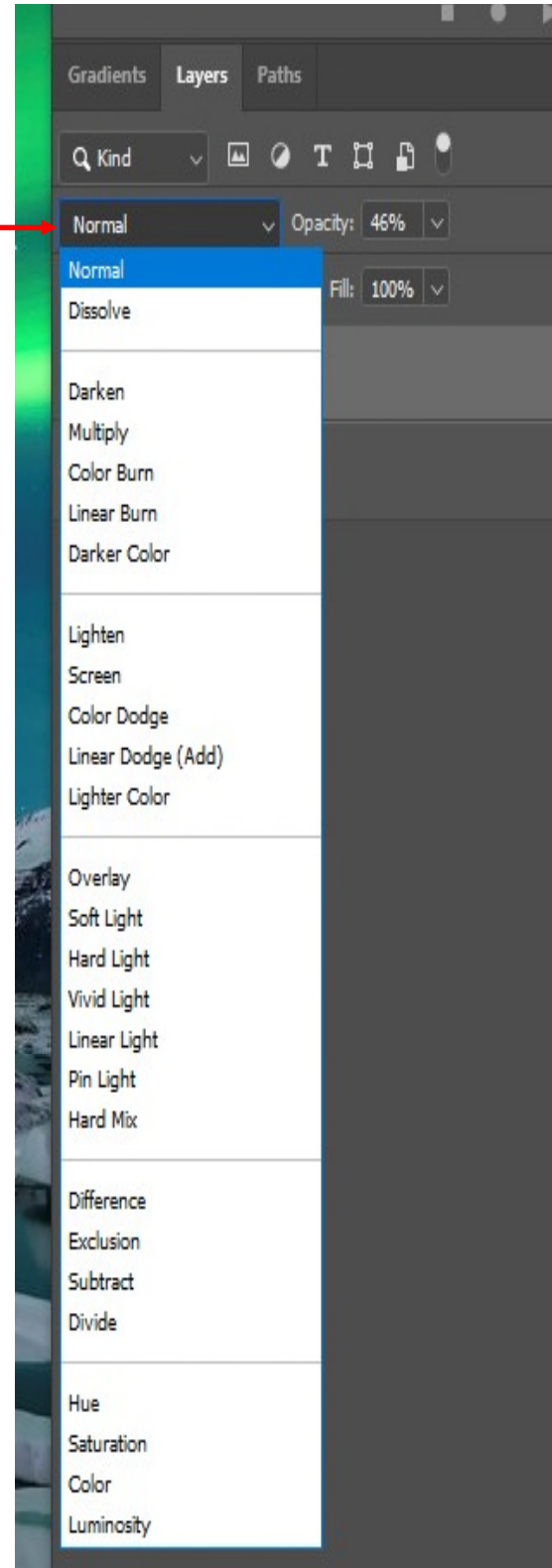
Group 2. Darken Group. These blend modes will darken and add more contrast to that layer. We will talk about Darken and Multiply.

Group 3. Lighten Group. These blend modes will lighten and brighten. We will talk about Lighten and Screen.

Group 4. Contrast Group. These blend modes are a combination between the darken and lighten blend modes as they focus on midtones. These blend modes will brighten the brights and darken the darks. We will talk about Overlay and Soft Light.

Group 5. Inversion / Cancellation Group. These blend modes are not as powerful, and are rarely used. They apply mathematical results and can invert or cancel out colors. We'll talk about Difference.

Group 6. Component Group. This group deals with the different components of color, and can create color changing effects. We'll talk about Color.



You Tube Tutorials: Two You Tube videos are excellent, one by Blake Rudis at . <https://f64academy.com/blend-modes-in-photoshop/> and one by PiXimperfect at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1D9ijh3_-I .

Group 1. Normal Group. **Normal** is default blend mode and leaves image as is, the layers do not interact with each other. Dissolve rarely used, gives grainy appearance and/or speckles.

Group 2. Darken Group. These blend modes will darken and add more contrast to that layer. In the **Darken** blend mode, the pixels on both layers will be evaluated and the darker one will be displayed. **Multiply** makes everything darker except 100% white and gives a highly saturated darker result; proves very powerful for making entire image darker and more contrasty.

Group 3. Lighten Group. These blend modes will lighten and brighten. **Lighten** does the opposite of Darken, it shows only the lighter color of the two layers. **Screen** uses brightness of top layer to brighten appearance of base layer and is the opposite of multiply. Everything gets brighter on Screen mode.

Group 4. Contrast Group. These blend modes are a combination between the darken and lighten blend modes as they focus on midtones. These blend modes will brighten the brights and darken the darks and give different lighting style choices. **Overlay** combines multiply and screen. It's ultimately used to create more contrast. Overlay is one of the most used blend mode. **Soft light** works similar to overlay but has a softer appearance. Soft light is very useful as a dodge and burn tool. (See advanced techniques section).

Group 5. Inversion / Cancellation Group. These blend modes are not as powerful, and are rarely used. They apply mathematical results and can invert or cancel out colors. **Difference** is the most useful in this group, and is simply the difference between two interacting colors. Using difference as a blend mode layer will make colors look inverted. But, you can use it to align layers in HDR or light painted images. The aligned areas will show as black and/or will not exhibit inverted colors.

Group 6. Component Group. This group deals with the different components of color, and can create color changing effects. Using the **Color** blend mode will apply color throughout the image; and you can use a solid color layer to impart different tonalities to your image. **You can also clone in the color blend mode to correct color abnormalities while keeping the underlying texture in those areas.** (To do this: add a blank layer above the image layer, set the blank layer to the color blend mode. Using the clone tool; "sample" the color you wish to use in order to remove the unwanted color. Clone as normal at 100% and the obtrusive color will be removed while keeping the underlying texture of the subject intact).

TEXTURES

So, now that we've looked at the blend mode options, let's see how blend modes can alter the look of two layers, when one layer is a texture.

Textures are an excellent means to add drama, mood, etc. to an image. Many clubs have "rules" when it comes to the use of textures in an image. OUR rules state that: "The use of textures, patterns, and/or brushes is allowed, whether purchased or created by the maker." (Don't forget to take images that can serve as textures whenever you have your camera or cell phone out. You can photograph mud, wall paper, concrete, etc. to serve as a texture).

And, remember when I went through WHAT each blend mode accomplishes??? You can absolutely forget all that.... with textures, experimentation is the main course of action!! Have fun! Using textures with blend modes is magical. (The most common blend modes used with textures, however, are Overlay, Soft Light, Multiply, Darken).

Typically, a texture layer sits above the main image. Choose a blend mode for the texture that brings out the look or mood you want. And of course you can reduce the opacity of textures, use many textures on one image, mask out areas of textures (even masking out at reduced opacities, etc.) I've added a small bullet point in the advanced portion on how to remove the "obvious" textured portion of an image, but not the color of the utilized texture itself.

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES TO TRY

- Dodge and Burn with **Soft Light** Blend Mode: Create a new layer and fill with 50% gray (Edit>Fill>50% Gray). Set this layer to soft light blend mode. "Burn" with a black brush and/or "Dodge" with a white brush at reduced opacities. Will get slightly lighter and slightly darker tones. You will never get pure white or pure black.
- Opacity vs. Fill: I've mentioned that you can always change the opacity of a layer in the various blend modes. However, there are eight blend modes that react "better" when you change the "FILL" instead of changing the opacity. These are: Color Burn, Linear Burn, Color Dodge, Linear Dodge, Vivid Light, Linear Light, Hard Mix, Difference. When you use these and want to mitigate the effects, try reducing the fill rather than the opacity.
- Image Optimization: Create a curves adjustment layer and set it to luminosity blend mode. Create a second adjustment layer of Hue/Saturation and set this to Color blend mode. Adjust properties / sliders to taste to bring out color, detail and mood of an image.
- Removing portions of texture: This works especially well on faces, skin or anywhere you do not want the heavy texture to be apparent, but **NEED** to keep the color of the texture. On the texture layer, use the lasso tool to define the area where you need to remove the texture. Blur this area by going to Filter>Blur>Gaussian blur.
- Removing Halos: Use Clone brush with the BRUSH on DARKEN blend mode. Process: Duplicate image. Get the clone stamp tool and choose the first area to work on. Change the BRUSH blend mode to DARKEN. (This step is absolutely essential. Don't be confused by the blend mode of the layer. You need to adjust the blend mode of the brush, which is changed on the top menu bar.) Use clone tool as normal (Hold the ALT/OPTION button on your keyboard and select the area you'd like to sample from. The area you select will be the area that Photoshop takes pixels from to replace the halo area).