

How to Use Gradients in Photoshop Elements

- The Gradient tool is found in the Draw section of the tool panel just under the eraser tool and above the shape tool. It looks like a rectangle with a gradient in it.
- In the gradient tool options you will find the standard gradients included with Photoshop Element. You can also choose what type of gradient you want, reverse the gradient, apply transparency and dither, and pick a blend mode.
- The gradient tool changes the actual pixels in your art, making it difficult to modify or make changes later.
- The Gradient Fill Adjustment Layer is a nondestructive way to create gradients that can be modified later. At the top of the layers panel you will see a circle, half white and half colored. If you hover your cursor over it a flyout menu opens indicating that it is the "Create new fill or adjustment layer" icon. Click and hold to get the drop down menu. Select Gradient (second choice from the top).
- When you select a Gradient Fill Adjustment Layer the Gradient Fill dialog box opens and a new adjustment layer is added to the layer stack. Here you can choose your Gradient, Style, Angle, and Scale. You can also choose to Reverse the gradient, apply dither or Align with a layer.
- By clicking on the arrow next to the gradient swatch. A new Gradient dialog box will open with a pull down menu allowing you to choose from multiple categories of gradients. Hover the cursor over the gradient to see the name, which many times will indicate the colors in the gradient.
- In the Style drop down menu you can choose the type of gradient. Choices include Linear, Radial, Angle, Reflected, and Diamond. Choose them to see what happens to your gradient, and pick the style you like.
- The Angle controls the angle of the gradient. Move the line around the circle to change the angle, or type in a value in the box.
- Scale determines how large the transition area is from one end of the gradient to the other.
- Reverse will make the gradient go in the opposite direction, essentially, reversing it. Click on it to see the effect.
- Dither will smooth the gradient. Sometimes you can see lines in your gradient. These lines are called "banding". Dither will help minimize the banding in your gradient.

- Align with layer uses the bounding box of the layer or the selection on the layer to calculate the gradient. Most of the time you will want this to be selected.
- To edit a gradient, click on the gradient in the Gradient Fill dialog box. The gradient editor will open.
- If you click on one of the color stops on the bottom of the color bar it will be selected. The small triangle above the stop will be black. You can edit the colors by clicking on the color swatch, which will open the color picker.
- Click along the bottom of the color bar to add colors to your gradient.
- Click and drag the small diamond shapes between the color stops to change the transition points between the colors.
- The stops along the top of the color bar control the transparency of the color. Click on one to select it. (The small triangle at the bottom of the stop will turn black). Then adjust the opacity.
- You can choose different gradients by using the pull down menu next to Preset.
- If you create your own gradient, and would like to save it, give it a name and click Add To Pre..., which will add it to the current preset group.
- To delete a gradient, Right Click (windows) or Control Click (Mac) and choose Delete Gradient.
- To delete a stop, select it and click the trash can, or just drag it down or up.
- You can add gradients to selections, type or shapes, and if you use the adjustment gradient fill layers you can go back and edit the gradients at any time.