

How to Replace a Sky

This is only one of a number of methods to replace the sky. This works best with a white sky.

1. Bring your picture into photoshop or elements
2. Get a sky that you have on file and open it to bring it into editing program
 - Use control "A" to select all
 - Use control "C" to copy the sky. (It is now on the clipboard)
 - Use control "W" to de-select the sky picture
 - Use control "V" to paste it on the background image.
 - the color space may not be the same but click ok
 - if it does not fit the image use control "T" to transform the sky image
 - hold down the shift key to keep the same aspect ratio and click on the bottom corner and make it the same size as the original photograph. Click on the check mark on the top to accept the transform or hit the enter key
 - click on the move tool to move the transformed sky layer around and match it to the horizon and make sure it covers the original sky

Now for the tricky part. (Seems complicated but it's not)

1. Add a layer mask to the sky layer
 - to do this click on the "add layer button" at the bottom of the layers panel. It is the third button from the left. Hold down the shift key to make sure it is black when you click on the layer button. Alternatively, if the layer mask is white click on it to select it and hit control "i" to invert it from white to black.
2. Click on the background layer to make a selection of the original sky. You can do this in a number of ways depending. For a clear sky the quick selection tool will work or use the color range tool
 - go to select > color range and click on the original sky. If the sky has more than one color click on the eyedropper with the + sign to add to the selection. Click on the fuzziness slider to make a good black line between sky and horizon
 - We now need to blur the selection for a smooth transition. Go to select > modify > feather. Choose between 2 to 5 pixels

Now we go back to the layer mask

1. You know it is selected if there are bold lines around it. (Black if the layer mask is white and white if the layer mask is black)
2. Grab the gradient tool. It is on the left side approximately 11 tools down or press the "G" key. Make sure you choose the linear gradient and that it is black to white. Also make sure that the foreground color is black and the background color is white. You can do this by pressing the "D" key on the keyboard.

3. Draw a gradient from bottom to top. (In photoshop black conceals and white reveals) The gradient tool is not cumulative so try it a number of times until you are happy with the sky.

Clean Up

1. Sometimes parts of the original are selected and you want to remove the effect from the photograph. This is easy to do.
2. Grab the brush tool from the tool presets or press "B" on the keyboard. Make sure the foreground color is black. Paint on the layer mask to remove any unwanted selections that have been made.
3. To add contrast to the sky you can use a curves adjustment layer. To make sure that it affects only the sky click on the clipping icon at the bottom of the curves adjustment layer. Now you can add or subtract contrast and tweak it to get it the way you want it.

This sounds complicated but it is very simple. Hope that you enjoy.

Terry