

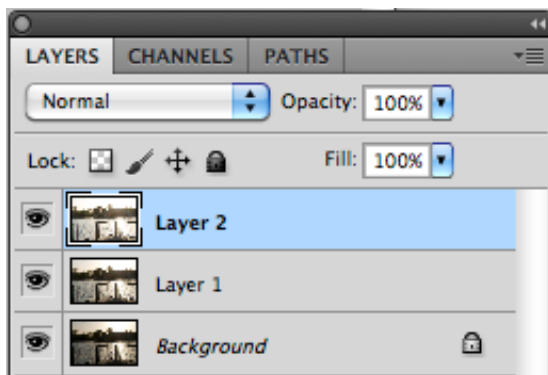
How to stack and place a sky + reflections in Photoshop

A) Procedure for Stacking:

- 1) Photograph a bracket of exposures, using a tripod. For best results, apply the zone system to gain the best exposures to work from.; if your meter shows you are exceeding the 5 stop dynamic range, you will need to use additional exposures.
- 2) Select exposures based on obtaining best shadow detail, midtones and detail in your highlights. You may not “have it all” in one exposure.
- 3) Name your dark file “dark”, medium exposure “medium”, and light exposure “light.”
- 4) Open all 3 files, *dark*, *medium* and *light* in Photoshop.
- 5) Go to *medium* file and copy, paste on to *dark* exposure: Select→All, then Edit→copy, then select *dark* and go to Edit→paste. You will end up with two layers on *dark* file.
- 6) Go to *light* file and copy, paste on to *dark* exposure: Select→All, then Edit→copy, then select *dark* and go to Edit→paste. You will end up with three layers on *dark* file.

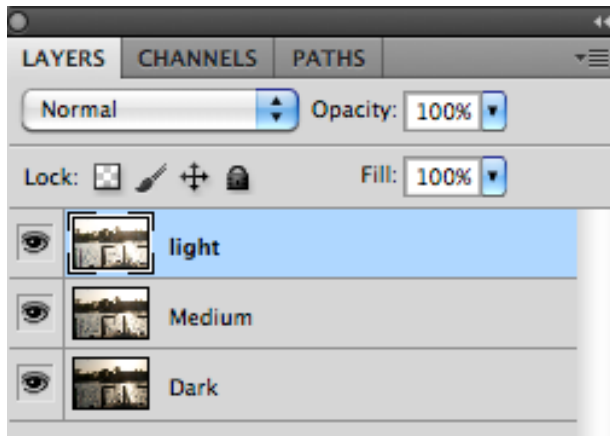
Your layers panel in Photoshop will look like this:

If you cannot see your layers panel, then go to *Window* and check *layers*.

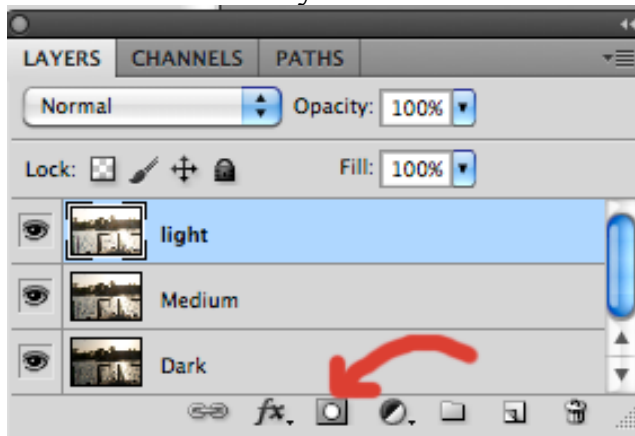


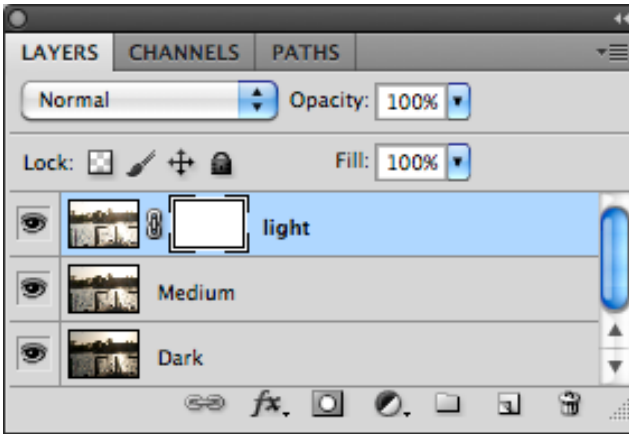
- 7) Rename your layers. Double-Click on each layer name (e.g. “background”) and type in what name you want. For this project, go to bottom layer which is “background”, double-click and re-name “dark.” Double-click on medium layer, and re-name *medium*. Double-click on light layer, and re-name *light*.

Your layers will now look like this:

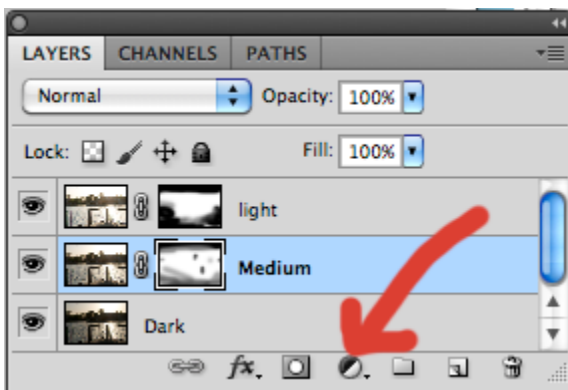


- 8) Re-save your new layered file with your project's name. In this case, call it "Gazebo." This way, you have left your "dark exposure intact. Close your dark, medium and light files. You will now only work on "Gazebo."
- 9) Start with the top layer, which is light. Add a layer mask. Here is what the icon for layer mask looks like:

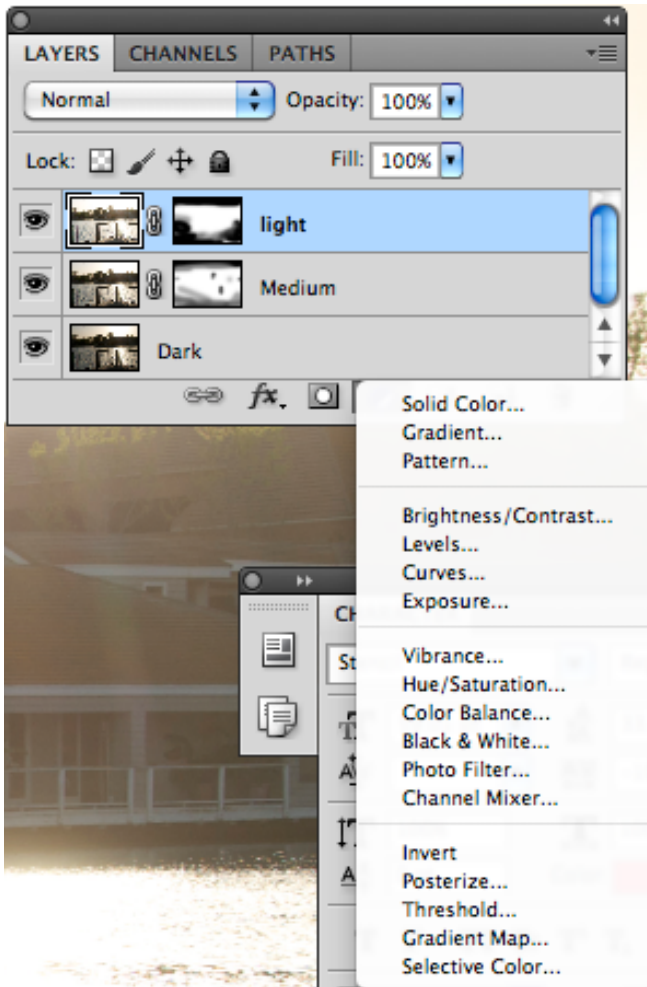




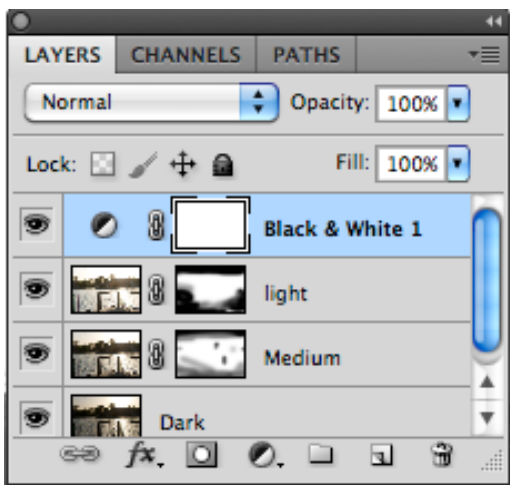
- 10) Select Brush tool; hit **D** for default – to keep brush paints black and white. If you hit **X**, you can go back and forth between black and white. This controls your painting when you use layer masks.
- 11) Pick a brush. Use big, soft brushes for painting in a darker sky (by exposing darker layers underneath). Make brush bigger or smaller by using bracket key. In CS5 or above, there are many other ways to change your brush sizes.
- 12) You will see the layer underneath when brushing on the layer mask with black. Continue painting, using opacity controls to refine your work. If you make mistakes in painting, no worries! Just hit X and paint out the problem on that layer's layer mask, and refine.
- 13) To make your work black and white, click on top layer (called *light*). Click on icon that looks like a circle divided into black and white.



A drop down menu will appear:



Select *Black and White* from this drop down menu; and mix to your heart's content. Your layer panel will now look like this:



Procedure for Adding a New Sky:

- 1) Open a sky file from your sky library.
- 2) Copy and paste the sky on top of the gazebo file.
Or you can actually drag it in in CS5
- 3) To see the layer underneath need to change sky layer opacity to approx. 50%
- 4) Rename layer sky
- 5) Use Transform tool. Your Sky may take up entire image so you can use the free transform tool to change the size & proportion of the sky.
Shortcut: **Control T**. Use handles to distort the sky and move it around until it looks good to you.
- 6) Go to warp icon on top (it toggles between free transform and warp)
- 7) While using the Transform tool, and you want to keep sky in exact proportions, use the shift key to only change size, yet keep proportions constant.
- 8) Next paint in and out as needed by adding another layer mask
- 9) Use soft black brush to get rid of the sky you don't want. (Go to **D** for default, then toggle between black and white by using **X**).
- 10) Brush over the trees without worrying about their outline because it'll make it slightly glow which is natural (as long as you use a soft brush)

Procedure for Adding a Reflection of Sky to your Lake:

- 1) To add a reflection of the sky, need to copy the sky once again.
- 2) Use shortcut **control J** to copy a layer; in this case it is SKY.
If you need to get a new sky layer if no longer intact, find your original sky and copy-paste it into this gazebo file. Bring down opacity so you can see through your new sky.
- 3) Use shortcut **control T** to go to Free Transform tool, use the handles invert the layer by bringing down top handle.
- 4) Hit return to end free transform.
- 5) Call this layer *Reflection*.
- 6) Reduce the opacity of this layer if you want to reduce the intensity of the reflection
- 7) If the reflection covers other objects such as the rocks in the foreground, brush them out with black.

Procedure for adding foreground elements (Gazebo Tip)

- 1) Make a selection of a foreground element, by lassoing the shape. If the shape has straight lines, you can use the fly out menu and use the polygonal lasso tool.
- 2) Copy/paste selection on top layer, so it is in front.
- 3) Magnify (zoom in) and clean up your selection by using adding a layer mask or carefully using the eraser tool. Keep your brushes so

Other hints:

- Use harder brush and zoom in when you work on details.
- When you make a mistake and need to go back can go to window menu and then go to history and go back in time OR simply repaint layer mask.
- Want to paint out clouds from gazebo? Zoom in and use a brush on the sky layer; to make a straight line use the shift key from where you want the straight line to start. Move to end point click and then end shift.

Remember....

- While using layer masks, make sure you are painting within the thumbnail. Otherwise, you are going to paint over your photograph and ruin it.
- Keep it natural looking....your painting technique makes your photography your own unique work of art.
- Have fun; you can always easily make fixes while still in layers.

When you are done...

Save this version as a .PSD file (Adobe Photoshop).

Also flatten (go to layer menu drop down to bottom and select flatten) a version and save as a .JPG file so you may share this finished work on Smugmug, your blog and print.