

GRADIENTS

By Hummie

Gradients seem so intimidating, but once you use them, you will see that they are easy and fun. This tutorial will cover the basics of using the gradients. Specific techniques can be found in other tutorials in order to practice using gradients.

Gradients blend and fade together colors. They can be utilized with blending modes for wavy effects, used to fade into a photo, and many other applications.

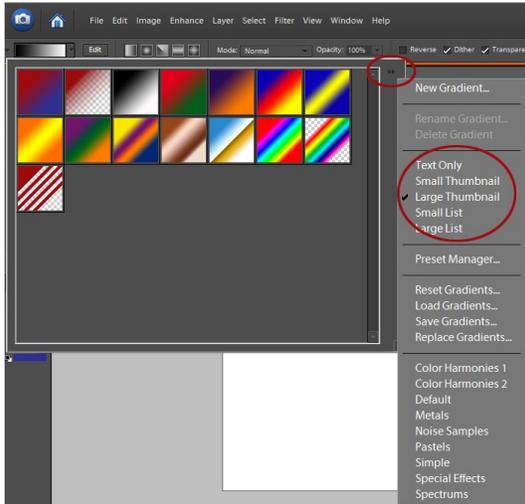
To use the gradient tool, click down with the mouse and drag it from one point to another. Apply it to an existing photo, an entire new layer, a new shape, a layer mask, or create a selection and apply it within the selection. Remember that you do not have to click at points all the way across to apply a gradient. For instance, you may want to click in the center for the first point and then the edge for the second point. Go ahead and start playing!

The gradient tool comes with some preset gradients which work well for many uses. However, you can use the gradient editor to create any gradient imaginable. In addition, gradients can be saved and reused from the editor which makes it possible for these files to be shared on the internet. You can search for free gradients on the internet to utilize rather than creating your own.

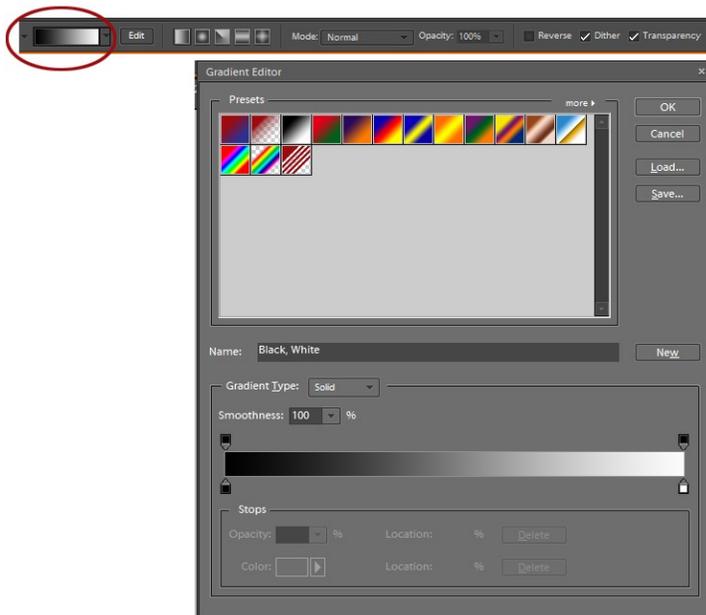
PRESET GRADIENTS



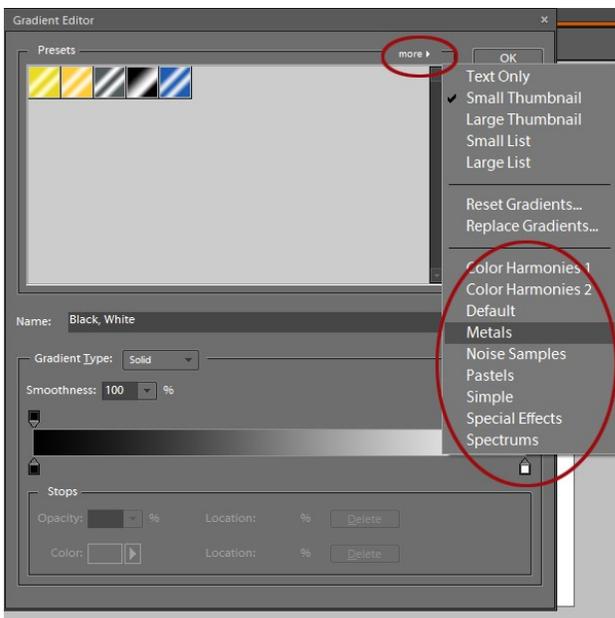
You can access the preset gradients by clicking the down arrow next to the thumbnail. This will bring up a box which you can resize by grabbing the lower right edge and dragging.



Click on the flyout arrow and choose various sizes for the thumbnails.



In addition, you can access the gradients by double clicking on the thumbnail box on the gradient toolbar and it opens up a popup box to the gradient editor. You will see a few rows of preset gradients. The first two gradients use the foreground and background colors.



Click on the flyout arrow indicated as "more." At the bottom of the popup index you will see names of other gradient libraries. Click on these library names to bring up more preset gradients grouped as categories. Click on the icons for the presets and then play with them to see what they do. Oh, always fun to play!

OPTIONS ON TOOLBAR

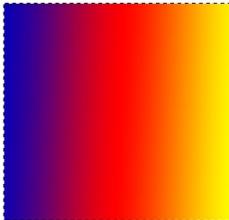
1. Gradient thumbnail.



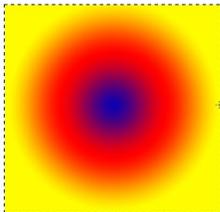
2. The second clickable on the toolbar is the “edit” button. It will bring up the editor just as clicking on the gradient thumbnail will do.



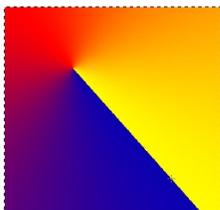
3. The next section on the toolbar changes the pattern type of the chosen gradient.



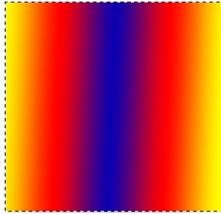
Linear is the most commonly used as the colors flow in a straight line when applied.



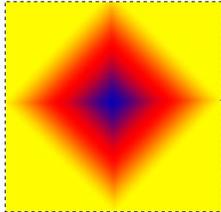
Radial throws the colors of the gradient out in a sunburst effect. To use this pattern, drag from the center to the edge.



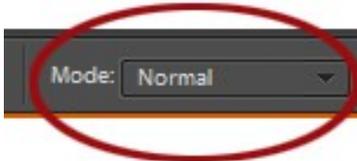
Angle creates a counterclockwise swirl from the first clicking point.



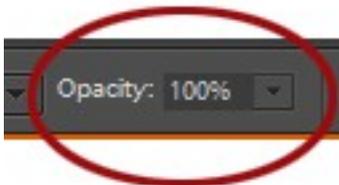
Reflected creates a mirror from the center out to each edge. To use this pattern, drag from the center to the edge.



Diamond creates a diamond shape from the center out to the edge. To use this pattern, drag from the center to the edge.



4. The mode is a drop down menu for choosing an assortment of blending modes available.



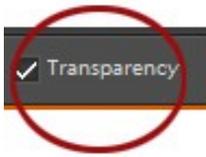
5. The opacity is useful when applying the gradient directly onto a photo to allow the photo to show through. However, if the gradient is applied to its own layer, the opacity of that layer can be utilized.



6. Reverse is a handy option as it will reverse the order of the color. For instance, if the gradient is set to apply black first and move into white, the reverse of that would be to apply white first and move into black.

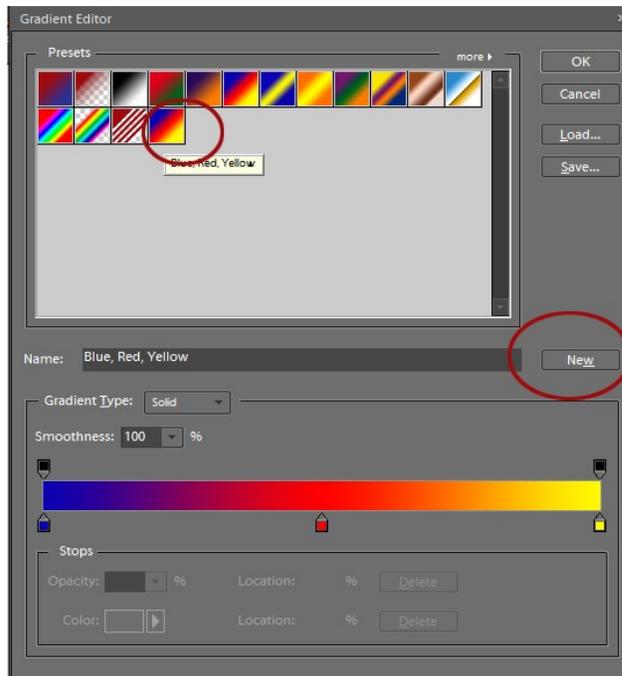


7. Most often the dither box should be checked as it keeps the transition of the blending softer.

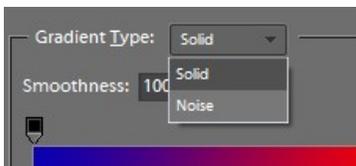


8. The transparency box is often always checked. This allows the gradients with transparency in them to work correctly.

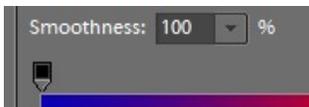
GRADIENT EDITOR



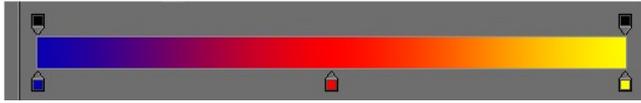
To create a customized gradient, first choose a base type of gradient from the presets and make changes to it. When finished, click on the “new” button. You will see a new thumbnail at the end row. Rename the new gradient by typing in the “name” field.



The next box allows a choice for Gradient Type. The most common type is “solid,” as the result is a smooth transition between solid colors. The second choice is “noise” which is not similar to the noise options found under the filters, but rather can be considered as randomness of colors along a spectrum. To observe the effect of a noise gradient, look at the preset samples in the “noise sample” library and play with them.



The next box is a setting for Smoothness which controls how even the transition appears between colors.

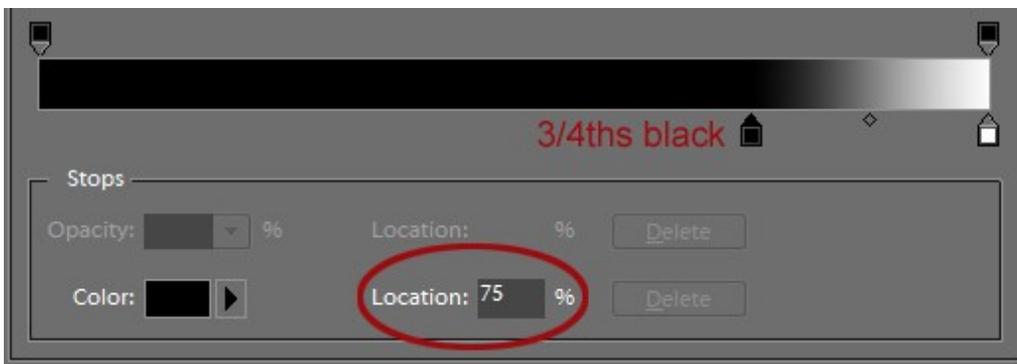


The gradient bar is intimidating upon first sight.

The tabs on the gradient bar are called “stops.” The stops below the bar are called “color stops.” The stops above the bar are called “opacity stops.”



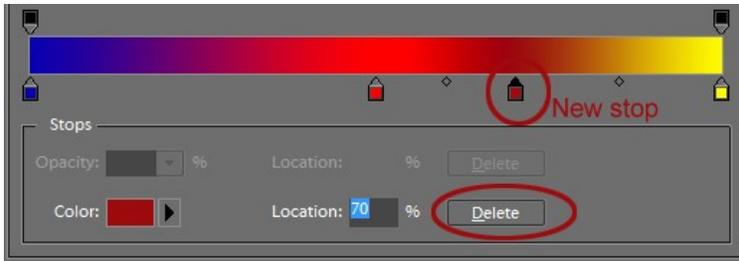
If you click on a stop, the triangle pointer on the end turns black to indicate it is the active stop.



Sliding a stop from right to left changes the point which the transition of colors takes place. For example, in a black to white gradient, moving the black slider three-fourths of the way to the right will produce a gradient that when applied contains black three-fourths of the distance and white one-fourth of the distance. When a stop is active, a “location” field is available in the area at the bottom of the editor which allows for exact placement of stops in percentages for more preciseness.



Diamonds indicate the midpoint between two color stops where the colors change from one to another. Click on a stop to make the diamonds visible. The diamonds are only visible next to the active stop. Sliding the diamonds will affect how much the color is used. For instance, two diamonds moved very close to a black stop will lesson the amount of black in the gradient. Moving the diamonds farther from the stop will increase the amount of black in the gradient.



To add a new stop, click anywhere in the blank area below the gradient bar. The new stop will be the color of your foreground color. To delete a stop, click on the delete button. The delete button is grayed out until a stop is made active.

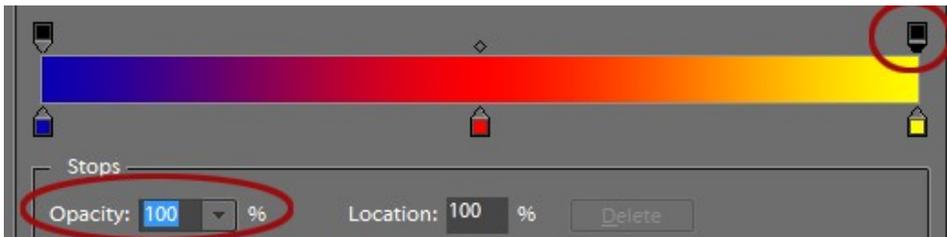


To change the color of an active stop, click on the box next to the word “color” to bring up the color picker. In the alternative, the flyout arrow provides a choice to use the foreground color, background color, or user color. To copy a color which is already contained in the gradient, simply hover over

the gradient bar and the eyedropper will appear. Click down on the color you want to copy to another stop.

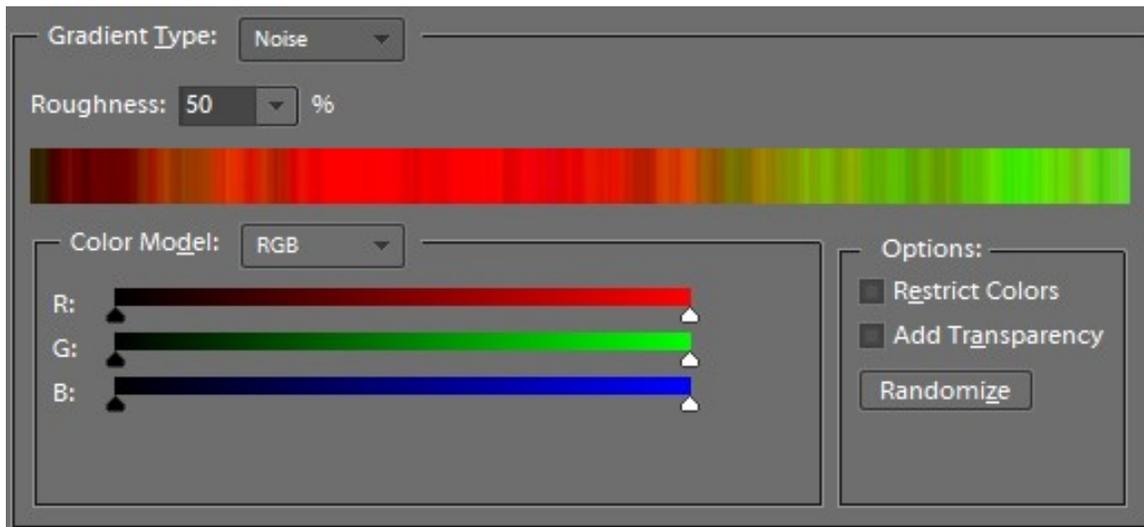


The opacity stops work very similarly to the color stops in the way they can slide, location, be added, and deleted.



When a stop is made active, the options at the bottom are no longer grayed out and the opacity slider can be utilized to set the opacity of the gradient. Adding opacity stops allows for more control in the fading in and out of the colors.

Noise type gradients have special settings not seen in the solid type gradients.



1. Roughness controls the percentage of the range of colors utilized. For a softer gradient with less colors, use a smaller percentage. For a wider and rougher gradient, use a high percentage.

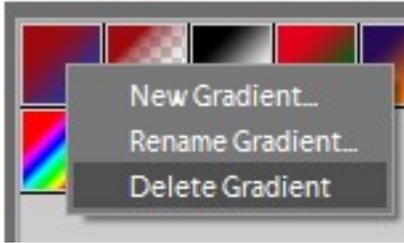
2. Color Model sets the color model in which you will work when using the sliders below. To read and understand more about color models, see the “Hue, Saturation, Value” tutorial. These color models can also be found in other areas of PSE, including the Color Picker. The RGB color model brings up sliders for red, blue, green. The HSB color model brings up sliders for hue, saturation, and brightness.

3. Under the “options” box, you can restrict colors to keep them from getting too saturated or add transparency to put a random amount of transparency into the gradient. The Randomizer button affects the transparency. Continue to click this button until you see something pleasing to your eye.

SAVING GRADIENTS

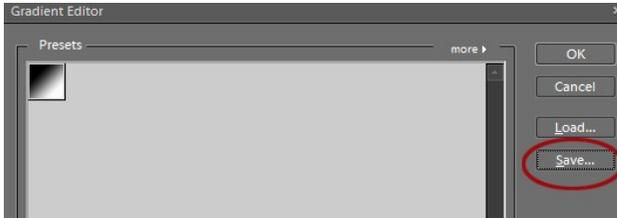
Saving gradients, just as in saving brushes, can be a little tricky.

Gradients cannot be saved individually. They are saved as a “library.” However, if you have only one gradient in the library, it could be a single gradient in a file, but it is helpful to think of the save button as a “library” (category) in order to understand how the save feature works.



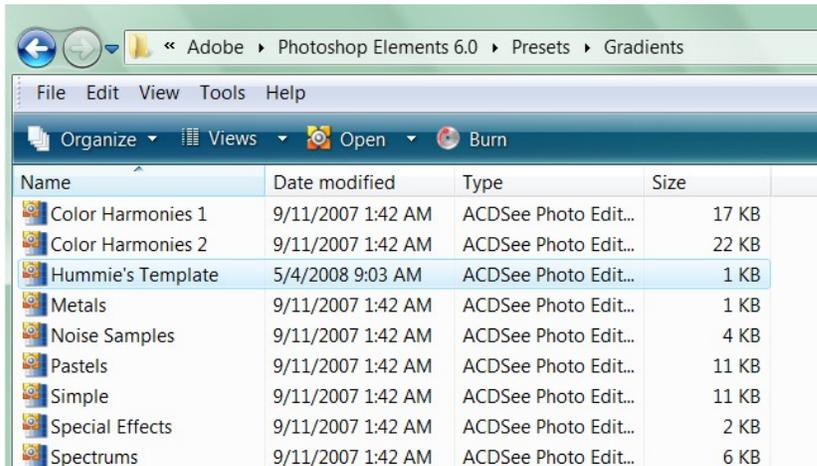
The new gradient is created within an existing library. Therefore, to save the gradient into a new library, all other gradients in the existing library must be deleted. Oh, does this make you as nervous as it does me? How intimidating is it to be deleting default gradients?

To delete the gradients, right click on the thumbnail and choose delete. Please note, this is also where you can rename gradients.



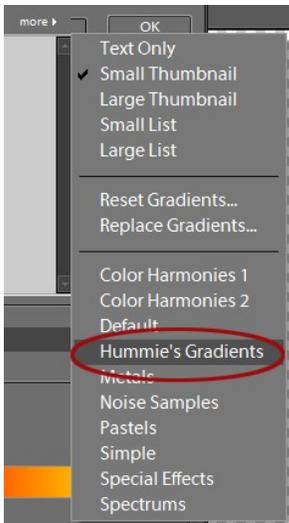
Once all gradients have been deleted but the ones which you want to remain in your new .grd file, click the save button. Navigate to where you would like to save the gradient. The default folder is the

Adobe preset folder. As long as you do not gather too many gradient files, it is okay to store them all here. Most digital scrapbookers do not collect too many of these files. However, if you do collect too many, it may be wise to save them in another folder of your hard drive and then load them individually when needed. Too many files in the preset area will make the program take longer to open up.



Since deleting the default gradients can be so intimidating, I have created a template file for your use. The download is in the forums. Rename this file to reflect that they are your gradient's (i.e. Hummie's Gradients) and place it in the preset folder.

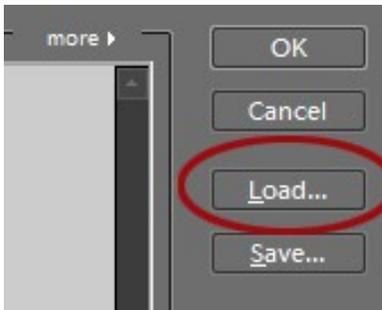
C:\Program Files\Adobe\Photoshop Elements 6.0\Presets\Gradients



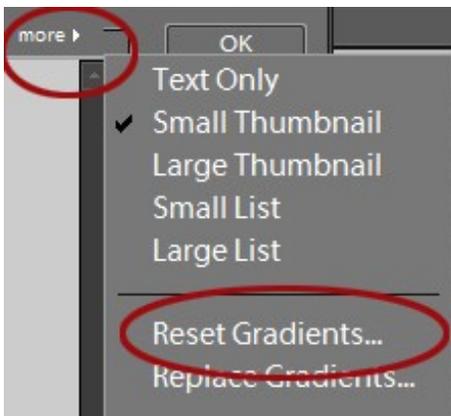
Restart Photoshop Elements. Now you will be able to see this new file within the list of the other libraries.

When creating a new gradient, create them within this library. After the gradient is created, click the save button and choose your gradient file in the browser window (which most likely defaults to the preset folder where your gradient is located). You will be asked to confirm replacement of the file.

Please note that if you do edit this file, you will need to go into your preset folder in order to copy and paste the file to back it up to wherever you back up your photos and other files. The stress of lost work and files is not fun!

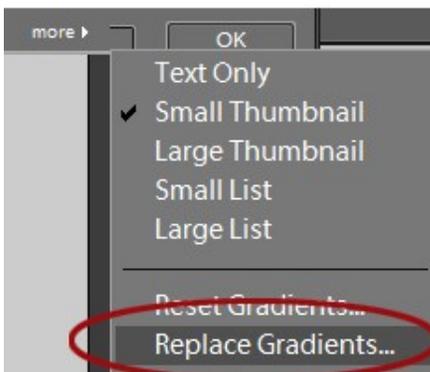


If you collect gradient files in a different folder than the preset folder, you can utilize the load button to install them. However, this will probably scare you also! When gradient files are loaded, they appear at the bottom of the active library. It is important to remember that loading gradients is only a temporary install. As long as you do not hit the save button, no permanent damage will be done.



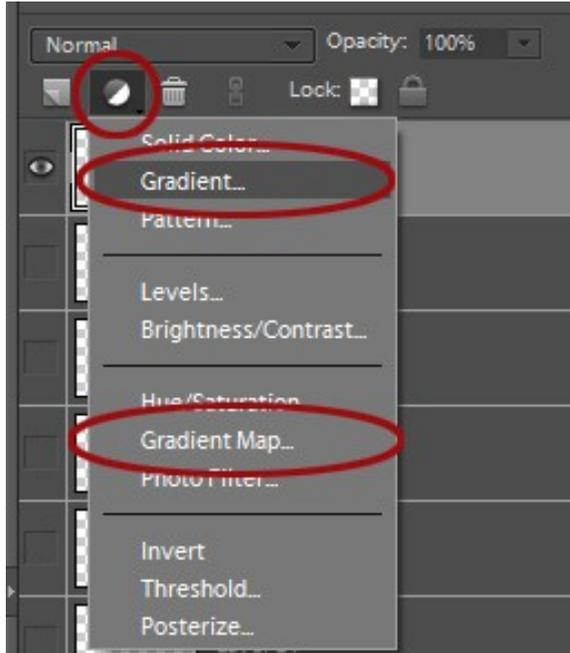
Should the gradient libraries get messy from loading files or creating new files, remember that the libraries can all be set to default by clicking on “Reset Gradients” under the “more” flyout menu.

Whew, doesn't it feel good to be clean and organized again? However, remember to save any new gradients you have created that you want to keep before resetting or you may lose them.



You will note that there is an option to “Replace Gradients.” Be careful utilizing this function. Should you mess up a gradient file and you do have a backup of that file, utilize this function to replace the backup file with the one currently in the preset folder. Be careful to have the library to be replaced as the active library. Of course, I would probably just navigate to the preset folder to copy and paste the backup file into that folder instead of utilizing this function.

ADJUSTMENT LAYERS



I do want to point out that gradients can also be utilized as a new adjustment layer. The first choice for gradient works similarly to the gradient above. However, this will be covered under an advanced tutorial or in specific tutorials for techniques.

The second adjustment layer that can be found is a “gradient map.” This does not work similarly to the gradient uses above, but rather works to replace colors of an image with the colors of the gradient. This adjustment is most used to tweak photos. This will be covered with an advanced tutorial.