

MONTAGES

I am giving instructions for Photoshop but you may find that it is similar in other photo editing programs.

The secret to a successful montaging is to get the light direction right in all the components of the image. There are several ways of doing montages and I will run through a few of them.

- 1 Joining two or more images together to make a scene.
- 2 Putting an object into an image to add to the scene.
- 3 Creating an image from several other images.

To join two images together you need to have them both open. You can then either click and drag the whole of one image on top of the other or you can select a portion of the image and click and drag that across onto the other. If you hold down the shift key while dragging it will position the image exactly in the middle. Instead of dragging you can right click and select copy on the first image and right click and select paste on the second image. You can also access the copy and paste from the Edit menu at the top of Photoshop. When you have put one image on the other you will find that you now have two layers and the copied image should be the top layer. If you do not have a layers palette showing on your screen go to Windows at the top and go down the list and click on Layers. Back to our images – click on the layer mask icon at the bottom of the layers palette. That will put a white square next to the image in the layers palette. Make sure your foreground colour is black and background colour is white in the left hand tool box. Select the brush tool from the left hand tool box, make the brush quite big and very soft then paint on your image where you want to rub the top image away. If you were joining a sky from the bottom image and the land from the top image then you would paint over the sky, of the top image, so that the bottom image shows through. Remember that you are painting onto the layer mask so if you make a mistake you can change the brush colour to white and paint to retrieve the part of the image you mistakenly painted out. Sometimes you will find that the colours of each image is not quite the same so you will need to tweak them with curves or some other tool to get it looking like it matches.

To put an object into a scene you need to have both images open. With the lasso tool in the left hand toolbox draw a selection around the object you want to add to an image. Click and drag your selection across to the main image. You can then move the object around until you get it in the right place and it looks like it is natural. You can also resize the object with any of the transform tools under Edit. Create a layer mask as the instructions above and paint away the unwanted portion of the object. Use a large soft brush for large areas and use a harder edge brush for more defined edges resizing it to suit. You can make a new object go out over the edges for a special effect by enlarging your canvas and resizing the object to hang over the edge of the image. A border can be put around the main image by going to the layer that it is on and click on Edit, Stroke. Choose your colour and size and click ok. Flatten all layers when finished and save.

Creating an image is basically done as above. This method works well with fireworks so I will take you through doing that. Make a new page by going to File, New and choosing the size and resolution of the new page. You need to ensure that the page you have made is the same resolution as the images you will be using. Make the page black by going to Edit, Fill and choose black. Open all images in the programme you are using. Select a fireworks burst from one image you want to use

and drag it onto the new page you made. Roughly position the object where you want it then go to the blend modes on the layers palette. Where it says Normal, click the little arrow to get other options and go to Screen. This will blend the black background of the fireworks burst with the black background of the new page. If you find that the fireworks background is still showing through then it is too light and you need to make sure you are on the fireworks layer then go to curves and drag the line down. Do the same with as many fireworks images as you want making your new image into a pleasing arrangement. Using the Blend Mode technique also works when placing a moon into an image but you can also try Lighten Blend Mode and use the one that looks best.

In most montages you should make sure that it looks real. The eye is quick to pick up anything that is not in a natural position or is out of proportion. Also avoid very sharp edges that look like something has been cut out and pasted in. Always ensure the light is coming from the same direction when adding objects to images.

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