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This appears difficult at first but it's really not. Follow along closely and I'll show how easy it is to make an object appear Metallic.

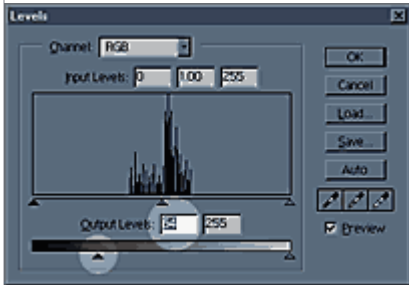
Step 1: 50% Grey

Whatever your object is..start with a flat fill of 50% grey



Step 2: Selection Samba

- 1) Using the rectangular Marquee tool Make a "banded" selection horizontally across the object. Hold down shift and create several more marquee selections of varying size across the object.
- 2) "feather" the selections by 5 pixels (keyboard shortcut alt+ctrl D ..cmd+opt D for mac users)
- 3) Open the levels dialog box(ctrl L) and increase the black output slider to about 64. Click ok.
- 4) with you keyboards arrows. move the selection down about 8 taps and invert it (ctrl+i)



Step 3: Double check

Your object should look something like this now. You can probably get the same effect by holding shift and airbrushing dark bands across the object. It's up to you...just make sure the object is all greyscale and banded like you see here.

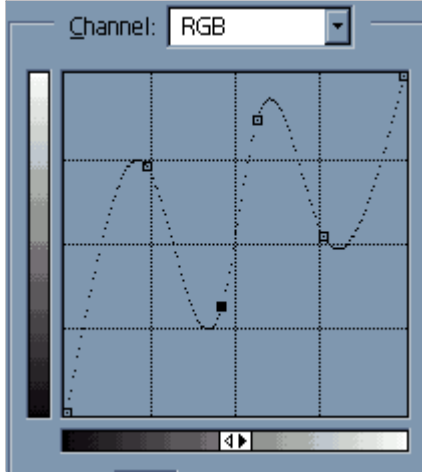


Step 4: Bevel it

If you have Photoshop 5 or higher. Add a bevel using layer effects. Once you have created the bevel...make a new blank layer beneath the object and merge the object layer down with the blank layer...this fuses the effect to the object so we can do step 5.

If you are using eyecandy...just make a nice bevel and join us on step 5.





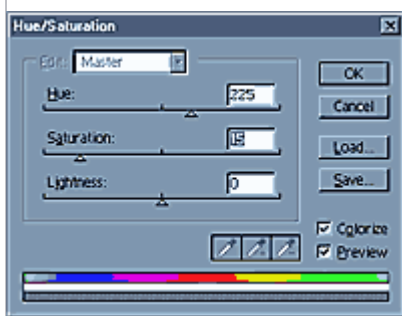
Step 5: Curve it

Here's the magic. With your object layer selected. Open your curves dialog box (keyboard shortcut ctrl+M) and make a curve kinda like you see here. Just click on the diagonal line and drag up and down.



Step 5: Double Check 2

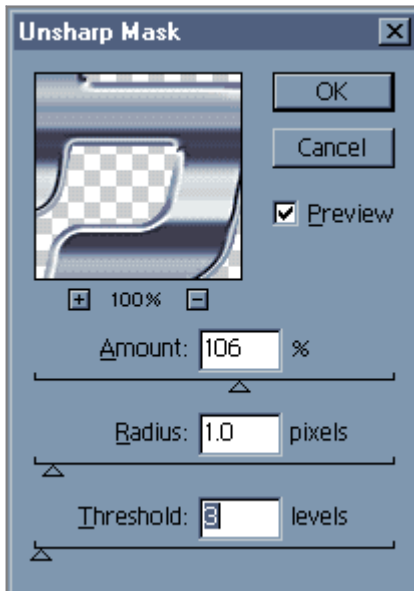
You should now look something like this. Neat eh? but it's still missing a little something.



Step 5: colorize it

Hit Ctrl+U to bring up your hue & saturation dialog box. Click on the "Colorize" box on the lower right and slide hue to about 225 and saturation down to about 15. This will make the metal kind of blueish. You can color it however you want though.

Click OK



Step 6: sharpen it

I know the filter is called "Unsharp" but it does just the opposite. Run the filter with settings similar to what you see here and it will make the darker parts of the chrome "pop" out a bit and lend an air of realism to the whole effect.



Step 7: drop shadow and completion

There ya go! A drop shadow...maybe a few lensflares and you have a cool chrome object and you never had to resort to a 3D application.

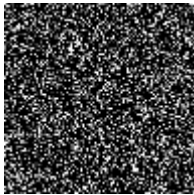
Rain

I just posted this as a response on Megatokyo's board...figured it was valuable enough to post here as an effect tutorial.



Step 1: Have a source pic

Make sure you got something to rain on...not really a step 1 but I had to start somewhere.



Step 2: Make some noise

Create a new layer above the background layer and fill it with black.

Run Filter>Noise>Add Noise

Choose: Gaussian, Monochrome and an amount of around 65..depends on how big your pic is and how much rain you want.

Motion Blur



Step 3: Motion Blur

Now...run a motion blur filter
>Filter>Blur>Motion Blur

Use a setting similar to what I have here.

Change the layers blending mode to "Screen"
(That makes all the black transparent)

Now do this:

>Image>Adjust>Levels

Slide the central grey arrow to the right till the rain looks right.



Step 4: Tada

Now you have rain! Easy!

Add to it's realism by adding puddles and reflections on hard surfaces..make little white "v"s where the rain bounces off stuff in the foreground.

Smoke

How to make a smoking Gun, Cigarette...whatever. EASY!!



Step 1: Choose your smoking object

In this case...it's a gun...now I know guns only smoke for a second after you shoot them but there are certain liberties the entertainment industry takes with physics...like spaceships making rumblesounds and firey expositions in the vacuum of space. Smoking guns just add drama to a picture.



Step 2: Airbrush

On a new layer..Airbrush some grey over the origin of the smoke. Use a soft brush setting and a lower opacity.



Step 3: Spatter fun

Now we need some "pepper". Change you airbrushes setting to "dissolve" and shoot some white and black particles onto the grey spot. Not too many...just enough to smear



Step 4: Smudge

Grab the smudge tool (looks like a pointing finger) and smear the pixels upward in an "S" like motion. Don't worry if the effect is too severe right now...just smooth it all out.



Step 5: Finishing Effects

Grab your eraser tool and set it to airbrush with a soft brush setting and trim out the unwanted smoke. Use the dodge and burn tools to add highlites and shadows to the smoke. Re-smear any pixels or effects that look "too hard"

Lower the smoke layers opacity to taste.

Neon Sign

Neon signs are also really easy to make in Photoshop 5. I'll show you both ways in case you have an earlier version.



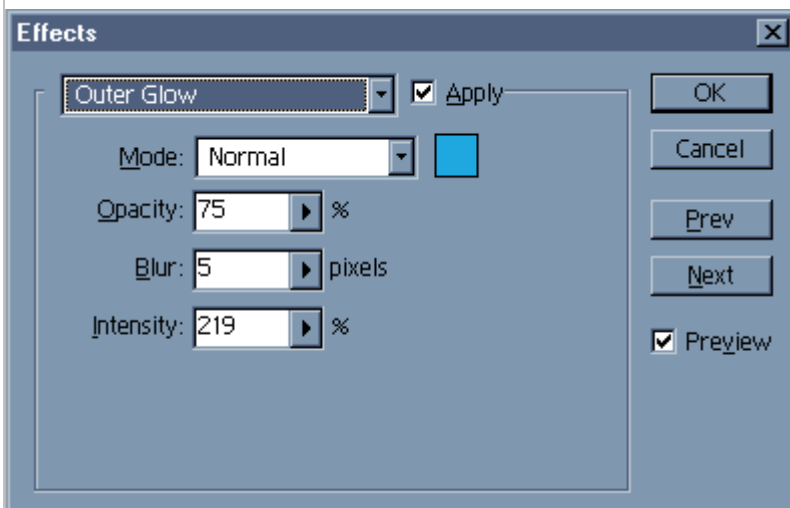
Step 1: make it dark

Your background should be dark and use colder nighttime colors.



Step 2: Pick a round font

Neon signs are basically bent tubes filled with glowing gas. There aren't any sharp corners so pick a font the has rounded edges. I usually make the font color white. The NEON colors are produced by the filters in the next few steps.



Step 3: Layer Effects

If you have photoshop 5 or higher you can do it this way. Don't fret if you dont..i have alternative steps listed below.

Make your settings similar to what you see here. Do this for both Inner and Outer glow. Make sure you use the same color.



Step 4: Add a drop shadow

Add a drop shadow and call it good. Maybe airbrush some of the signs color onto the wall it's attached to.



Alternative step 1

Type your text. Only this time..instead of white, use the color you want the neon sign to be.



Alternative step 2

Select the text (cntrl-click the layer the text is on). Contract your selection by a few pixels. Feather the selection by a few pixels and create a new layer..fill the contracted, feathered selection with white.



Alternative step 3

Now..go back to your base neon color layer and apply a gaussian blur to it. Make about 3 copies of this blurred color layer to enhance the effect.

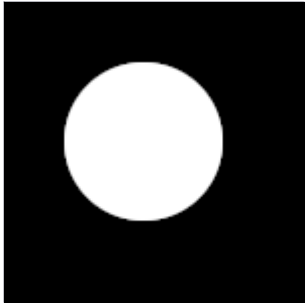


Alternative step 3

Now add a drop shadow and airbrush some of the neons color onto the background layer to make it believable. There's a few extra steps to this alternative method but the results are a little more realistic. Try this technique with outlined text.

Fire/Plasma Ball

Fireballs are really easy but it's best if you have a WACOM tablet so you can take advantage of its pressure sensitive features.



Step 1: make a ball

Make a white ball on it's own layer...easy



Step 2: Make a glow

I don't use Layer effects for this. I make a copy of the ball. Select it...expand the selection by 5 pixels..feather the selection by 5 pixels and fill it with orange or a good fire color.

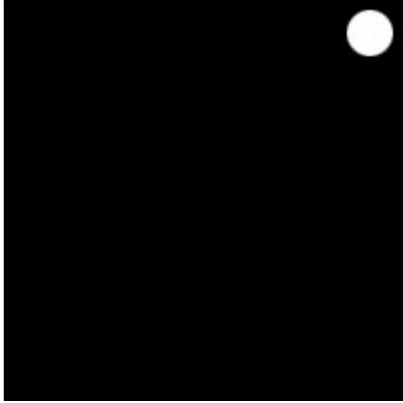
I then merge the original white ball onto the orange glow I created...should look like this.



Step 3: Get to smudgin'!

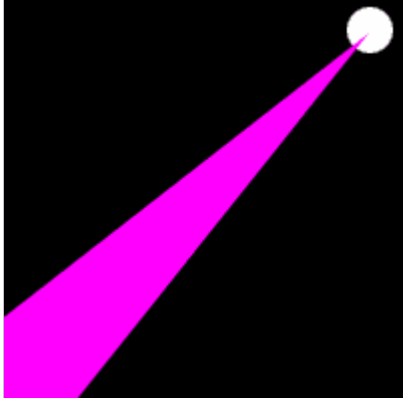
I start with a larger brush setting and softly drag from the center out. I then choose a smaller brush setting and make the little wisps you see around the edges. If this was blue it would make a nice Plasma ball. The Wacom tablet allows me to control where the wisps fade out. If you don't have a wacom tablet you may have to go back in with the eraser tool and taper off the wisps manually. If you smear the ball in one direction only you can add the illusion of motion. Give it a try!

I get a lot of questions on how to make energy bolts like they use in Dragonball or in StarBlazer (Wave Motion Gun..YEAH). Here's a recipe for a cracklin' energy blast you can use to destroy things with.



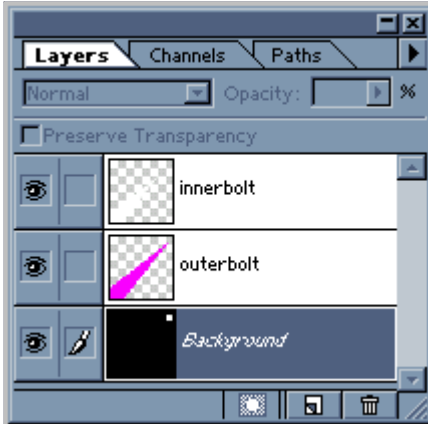
Step 1: Choose your source

The blast has to come from somewhere. I put a circle here for tutorial purposes but you just pretend it's a gun muzzle or someones hand, k?



Step 2: Make the base of the bolt

Use the polygon lasso tool and click out a blast beam selection in perspective like you see here. Make sure it's on it's own layer. Fill it with a good bolt color...light blues, purples, greens and reds are good. Make sure it's a bright color high on the saturation.



Step 3: Getting in touch with your inner bolt

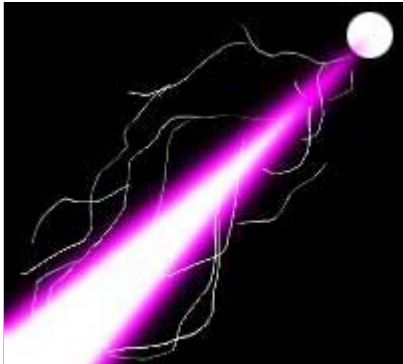
Now...create a new blank layer above the outer bolt. ctrl+click on the outerbolt layer to make the bolt a selection. Contract this selection by a few pixels and fill this new contracted selection with white on it's own layer. You should now have something like you see here.



Step 4: Blurry

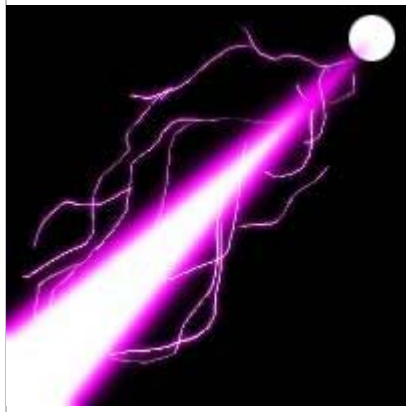
Apply a gaussian blur to each layer. Play with the settings..I used a 2.5 pixel blur...you may need less or more depending on the size of your picture.

This technique also makes a good light saber.



Step 5: snap, crackle, pop

On another new blank layer, grab your paintbrush, set it to 1 pixel, 100% opacity, normal blendingmode and brush out some lightning forks along the beam.



Step 5: Glow

If you have photoshop 5 or higher you can apply the "OuterGlow" layer effect to the lightning layer. Use the eyedropper to select the outer glow color from the beam itself.

TaDa.

If I was actually using this in a pic I'd probably sharpen the beginning of the beam a little and add a lensflare or muzzle flash to the origin.

Displacement Maps



Displacement Maps are useful for making 2D patterns "wrap" around fold or curves on an object with a perceivable depth.

I was studying Intron Depot 2 and noticed Master Shirow uses displacement maps a lot when texturing clothing or monsters.

I'm no master Shirow and this art to the left was a bit rushed but hopefully it will be enough to help you unlock the secrets of this advanced photoshop technique.



First...prepare your lineart like I've shown you in past tutorials on coloring.

Place the lineart on it's own layer and change it's blending mode to "Multiply".

This will allow you to paint and work on layers underneath the line art without painting over or obstructing the lineart.

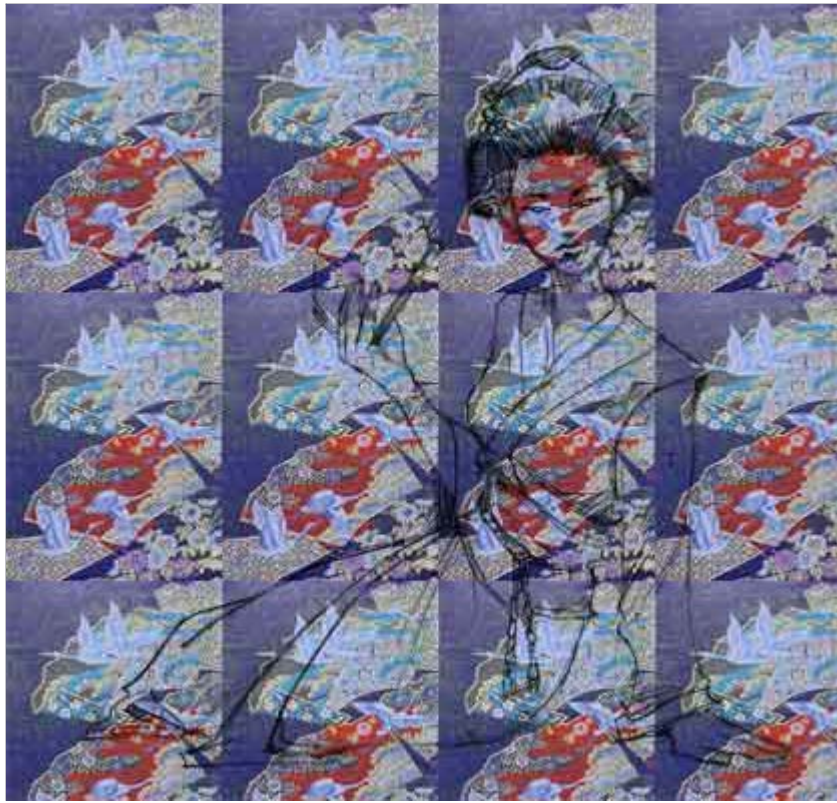
Basically, "Multiply" makes white invisible whereas "Screen" makes Black invisible



Color in the portions that will not be affected by the displacement map.

In this pic I just plan on adding patterns to the Kimono, OBI and Fan.

I've already chosen my pattern and used the eyedropper to grab complimentary colors from the pattern so the Kimono's trim will look nice with it when I apply it.



Create a new layer above your color layer and below your lineart layer. Name it "Pattern" so you know what it is later.

Find a pattern on the net or scan one in that you like. Fill the entire layer with this pattern.



Hide your pattern layer by clicking the EYE off.

Switch to your channels palette , Create a new channel and mask out the part of the drawing you want to apply the pattern to. (Paint the area white)

If you see only black, make sure you click the "EYE" on for the RGB channel. Your new Alpha channel should then be 50% red so you can see what your painting over.



Make a copy of the channel you just masked out and begin shading it to match the light source you've established in your picture. Apply a Gaussian Blur of a few pixels when you have it shaded the way you like it.

Copy this channel (select all, COPY) and paste it into it's own document. (ctrl+N , ctrl+V). Make sure the new document's mode is set to "Grayscale"

Flatten the new document and save it as "displacement.psd"

Go back to your main art document and make the "Pattern" layer active by clicking on it.

Go to your filters menu and choose "Distort>Displace"

Choose the default setting of 10,10..repeat edge pixels. Click OK and browse to the "Displacement.PSD" document we previously saved. Click OK.

Now your texture is "wrapped" around the folds and curves we shaded. If the effect is too strong..undo the filter and redo it with a lower setting like 5,5 or so.

Use the mask channel we made that doesnt have shading to select the textured area. Invert the selection and trim away the excess pattern.



Now the pattern is wrapped but still requires some shading. Use the dodge tool to add highlights in the appropriate areas. Repeat this process for any other areas you want to wrap a pattern around. Go back to page 1 to see the completed version of this piece.