Introduction to Layers

Layers is a great tool for doing many creative projects in Photoshop. You can also accomplish simple changes that are very effective. The concept is to select two images, align them, and erase (or conceal) portions of the top layer so the bottom layer is visible. When you are done, you flatten the two layers into one. The Photoshop terminology can be a bit confusing, so I have my own terms: Select - Align- Erase.

Select

- Launch Photoshop.
- Open two files.

Align

If you want to copy a lighter image on top of a darker image:

- Click on the lighter file.
    - Control-A will select All.
    - Control-C will Copy
- Click on the darker file
    - Control-V will Paste

The original dark file now has a light layer on top of a dark layer.

Erase

To make the top layer erasable (i.e. to conceal it), you need to add a layer mask.

- Choose Layer, Layer Mask, Reveal All. The Reveal All mask reveals the top layer. It is a white mask.

Now erase portions of the top layer by painting portions of the mask black:

- Select the paintbrush.
- Ensure your foreground color is black.
- As you paint, the image will appear to be erased. It is being concealed. The layer mask will turn black where you painted.

If you want to un-erase anywhere, pick a foreground color of white and you can un-erase or reveal the top layer again.

- For a realistic result (especially with clouds) you can change the opacity of the paintbrush from 100% to 50% (or any other %) and create a nice transitional edge.

To finish, go to Layer, Flatten Image.

A black mask will conceal or hide the layer (erase).

A white mask will reveal the layer (un-erase).

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