

Simulate a Graduated Neutral Density Filter

This technique is for an image that has been properly exposed for the sky, but underexposed in the foreground.

Go to the adjustment layers icon at the bottom of the layers palette (it's the one that is half black, half white) and choose Levels.

In the levels dialog box, move the WHITE slider toward the left, until the sky is almost completely blown out, and the foreground is now "correctly exposed". You may also want to move the midtone slider (the GRAY one) slightly to the left or right, depending on your image. Click OK.

You now have an adjustment layer, with it's own mask.

Check to be sure that the adjustment layer is active, and that the mask is active (it will have a bold outline).

Make sure the default colors are set to Black and White, then choose the Gradient Tool.

Now find a spot on your image that is just above the horizon. Click , hold, and drag the cursor straight down (you will see a line) ending just a little below the horizon. When you let go of the cursor, you should see the original sky come into view. In order to pull in a perfectly straight line, hold down the Shift key.

Notice how applying a gradient to the mask makes it look like an actual graduated neutral density filter.

To see only the mask, hold down the ALT /OPTION key and click once on the mask. To return to viewing the image, go alt /option click once more.

There may be some areas of the image that need fine-tuning. You can selectively work on the mask by using the brush tool. Switch back and forth between black and white by using the X key. Remember that you can adjust the opacity of the brush up in the options bar.