photokaboom

Learn Photography

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Photoshop Elements >
Retouching >
1 - Smooth Skin

You can use the Gaussian Blur filter, and the Eraser tool, and some shenanigans with blending modes and opacity, to produce smooth skin.

Also, have a look at Smooth Skin: Yet Another Method and Smooth Skin, Quickly.

Be sure to check off as you go along.

☐

Preparation

☐ 1) Preserve your original file.

If you haven't already done so, go to Preserve Your Original File.

☐ 2) Create a Background copy layer.

If you haven't already done so, go to Create a Background Copy Layer.

☐ 3) Be sure to use the Zoom tool to enlarge the areas to be erased.

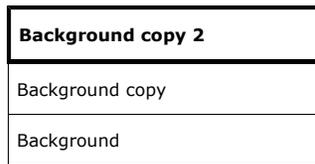| Background copy |
|---|
| Background |

Copy the Background Copy Layer

☐ 4) Make sure the Background copy layer is active (highlighted).

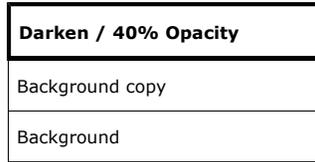☐ 5) Create another copy of the Background copy layer.

Right click on the Background copy layer, and select Duplicate Layer.

Or, drag the layer onto the Create a new layer icon.
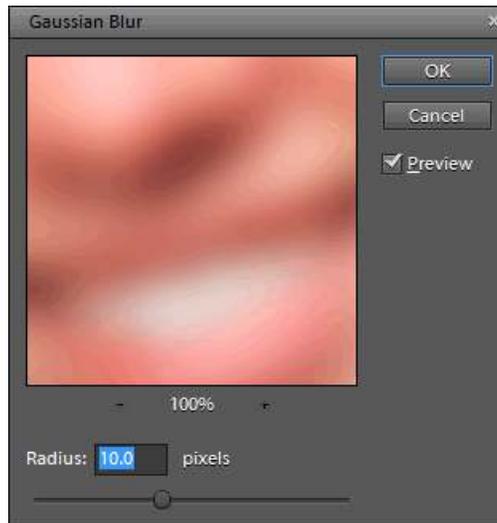
Or, press Ctrl + j.

Background copy 2
Background copy
Background

☐ 6) Rename this layer as *Darken / 40% Opacity*.

Darken / 40% Opacity
Background copy
Background

Gaussian Blur

☐ 7) Make sure the Darken / 40% Opacity layer is active (highlighted).

☐ 8) Go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur.

☐ Set the Radius to a value far higher than you would normally.

Here, the Radius was set to 10.

Copy the Darken / 40% Opacity Layer

☐ 9) Make sure the Darken / 40% Opacity layer is active (highlighted).

☐ 10) Create another copy of the Darken / 40% Opacity layer.

Right click on the Darken / 40% Opacity layer, and select Duplicate Layer.

Or, drag the layer onto the Create a new layer icon.

Or, press Ctrl + j.

Darken / 40% Opacity
Darken / 40% Opacity
Background copy
Background

☐ 11) Rename this layer as *Lighten / 30% Opacity*.

Lighten / 30% Opacity
Darken / 40% Opacity
Background copy
Background

Change the Blending Modes & Opacities

☐ 12) Change the blending modes for the top two layers— and their opacities—as follows.

Blending Mode?

At the top of the layers stack, look for the unlabeled Blending Mode box.

It's to the left of the Opacity box.

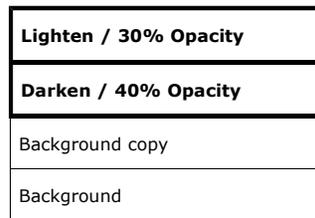| Normal ▾ |
| --- |

If you're new to blending modes, go to <u>Blending Modes</u>.

Layer	Position	Blending Mode	Opacity
Lighten / 30% Opacity	Top	Lighten	30%
Darken / 40% Opacity	Middle	Darken	40%
Background	Bottom	–	–

Merge the Two New Layers

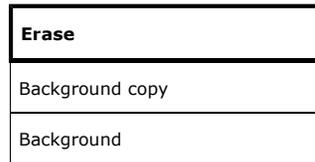☐ 13) Merge the Darken / 40% Opacity layer and the Lighten / 30% Opacity layer.

Do the following.

a) Press Ctrl, hold, and click the two layers.

| **Lighten / 30% Opacity** |
| **Darken / 40% Opacity** |
| Background copy |
| Background |

b) Press Ctrl + e.

c) Rename the new layer as Erase.

| **Erase** |
| Background copy |
| Background |

Check the Thumbnail

The thumbnail for the Erase layer should be a mixture of:

• A checkerboard pattern.

• The photograph.

If not, you missed step.

Erase Portions of the Erase Layer

For more realism, erase the smooth-skin effect from the eyes, nose (maybe), and mouth.

Where you erase the Erase layer, the in-focus Background layer will become visible.

1) Make sure the Erase layer is active (highlighted).

2) Select the Eraser tool.

Use a feathered brush.

If you haven't already done so, go to Feathered Brush.

3) Click, hold, and drag the brush over each eye, avoiding any bags and wrinkles.

4) Evaluate the erasures.

Press Alt, hold, and click the eye icon of Erase layer.

This will hide the other layers, allowing you to see more clearly what has been erased.

The erased areas are transparent (checkerboard pattern.

To unhide the layers, repeat the above action.

That is, press Alt, hold, and click the eye icon of Erase layer.

4) Erase the other parts of the Erase layer that need to be in focus, such as the eyebrows, tip of the nose, mouth, and any jewelry.

Restore Skin Texture

To make the skin more realistic, if needed or desired, go to Restore Skin Texture.

Many people will prefer the ultra smooth version, however.

Original

Retouched

Painting with a Smooth Skin

Brush

In the above sections, the entire photograph was smoothed.

This works well in the example because the background of the photograph is out-of-focus.

However, what if you have a photograph with a sharp background?

You could erase the smoothing on such a background with the Eraser tool.

Or, you can use the Brush tool to paint the smoothing effect just where it is wanted.

Do the above tutorial through where you merge the two layers, and rename the new layer Erase.

Then, proceed as follows.

1) Select the Erase layer (highlighted).

2) Create a layer mask.

The white mask will appear in the Erase layer.

3) Press Ctrl + i to change the mask from white to black.

The smooth-skin effect disappears due to the black mask.

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file:///C:/Users/cynex/Documents/My Web Sites/photokaboom.com/phot...

4) Make sure the foreground color is white.

If you haven't already, go to Foreground & Background Colors.

5) Select the Brush tool.

Feather the brush.

If you haven't already done so, go to Feathered Brush.

6) Make sure the Erase layer is active (highlighted).

7) Click, hold, and drag the brush where you want the smooth skin effect.

Saving the Photograph

If you haven't already done so, go to Saving Files.

Explanation

Read on for an explanation of how the skin is smoothed.

1 Next