

Create a Bokeh Background Image

This tutorial uses the Gradient Mesh in Illustrator for the background and Photoshop to create a Bokeh brush.

Background: Illustrator Gradient Mesh

1. Create a rectangle for your background and fill with the colour of your choice:



2. Select the rectangle then go to Object>Create Gradient Mesh.



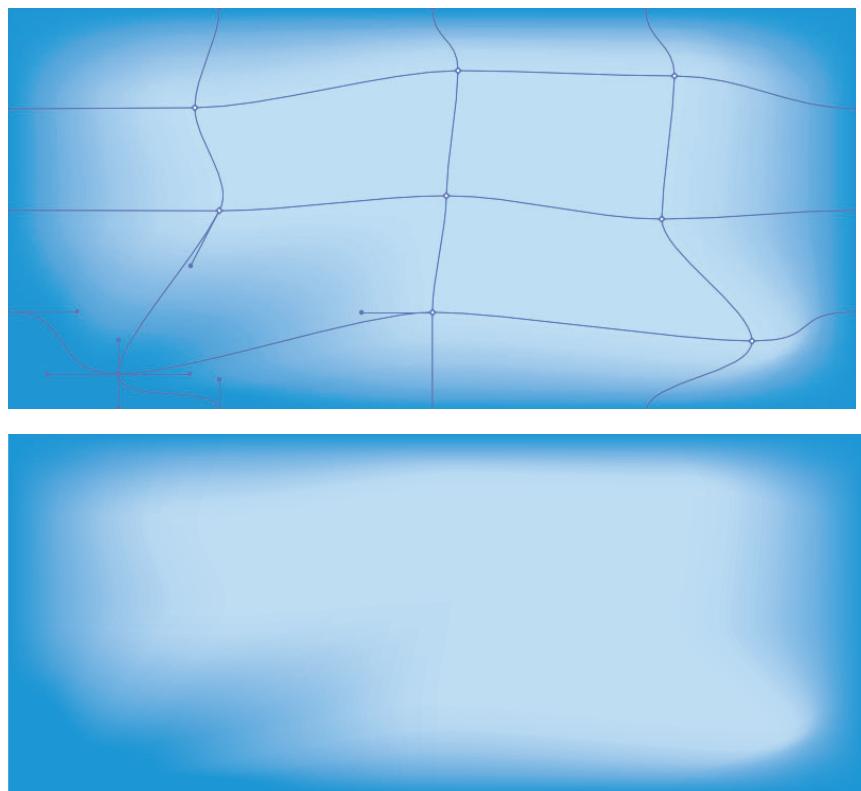
The example above is of a 4 x 4 mesh but you can change the numbers to suit yourself. Note that Appearance is set to 'Flat'.

3. Select the Direct Selection Tool (A) to select individual anchor points in the mesh, then select the Eyedropper Tool (I) to pick up a swatch colour of your

choice. Hold down Shift while selecting the mesh anchor points, then select the new point-fill colour to colour it quickly.



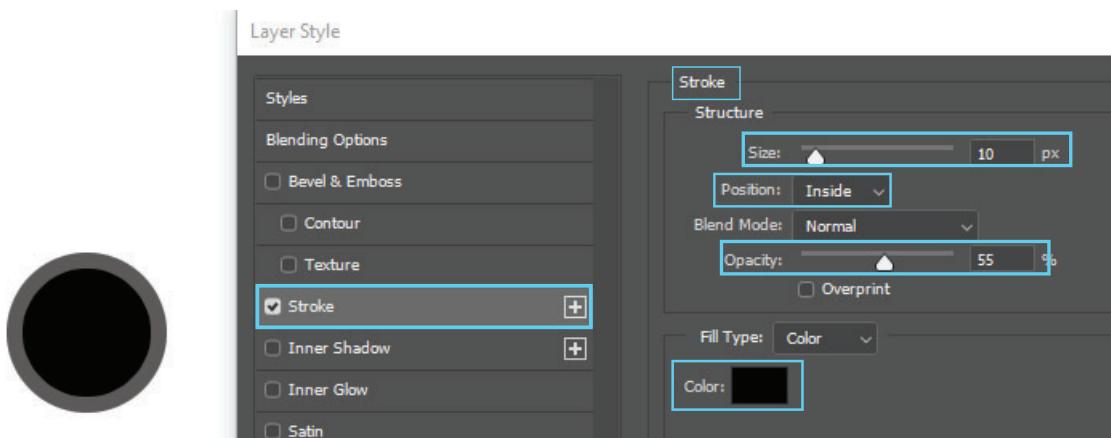
4. Select individual points and manipulate the bezier handles to create a less uniform spread of the new colour(s):



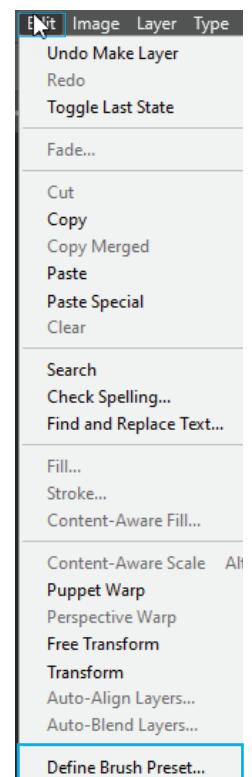
That's it for the basic background. Over to Photoshop.

Create a Bokeh Brush in Photoshop

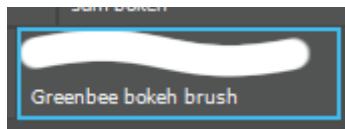
1. Create a new document of any size.
2. Create an ellipse (U), approx 100 x 100px.
3. Double-click on the Layer the ellipse is on and apply the following settings:
 - Fill with Black (000000).
 - Stroke: 10 px
 - Position: Inside
 - Opacity: 55%



4. Select the ellipse then go to: Edit>Define Brush Preset and give it a name,
5. Delete the ellipse. It's done it's job; Photoshop has created a brush from it.

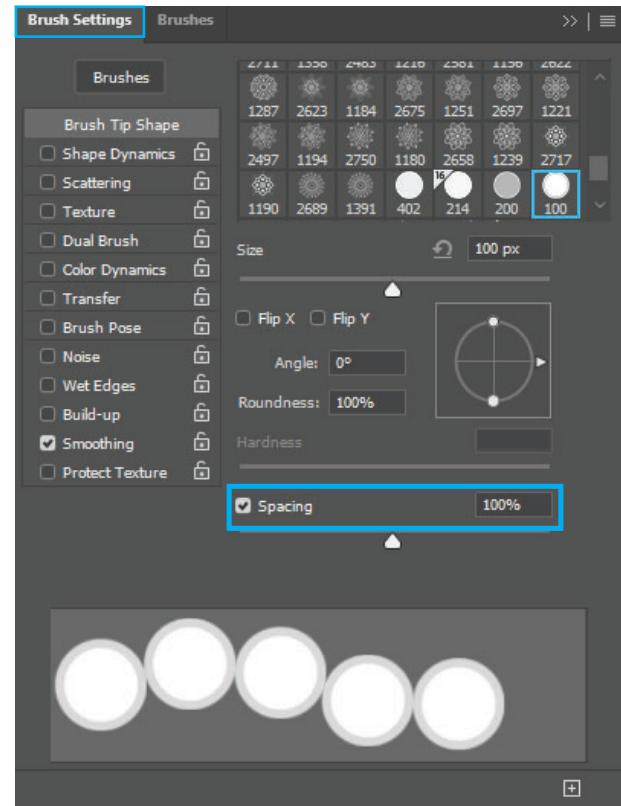


6. Select the Brush Tool then select your brush from the brushes drop-down list (F5).

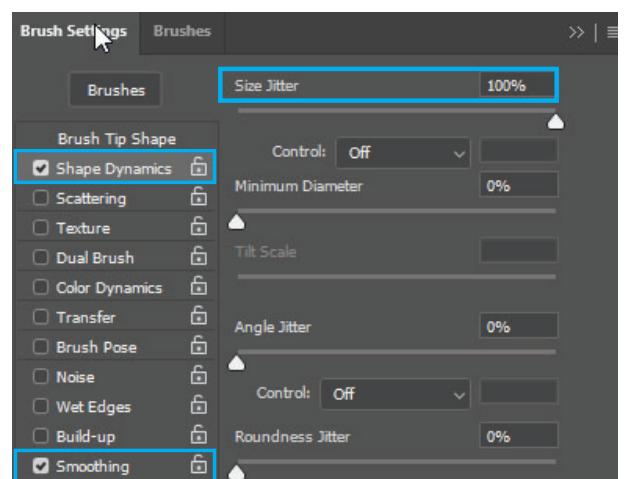


7. Go to Brush Settings:

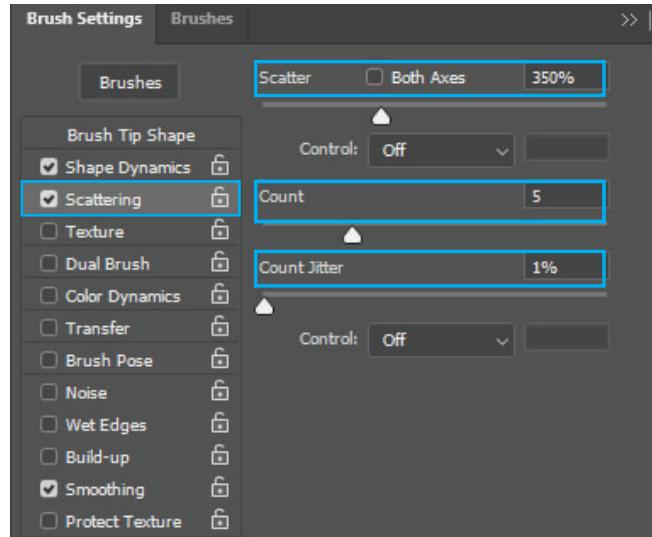
a. Go to Brush Tip Shape and set Spacing to 100%:



b. Select Shape Dynamics and apply the following values:

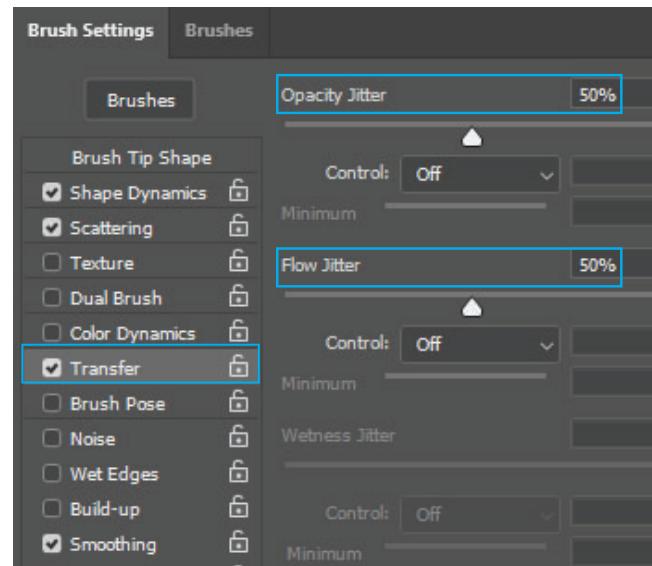


c. Select Scattering and apply the following values:



d. Select Transfer and apply the following settings:

Close the Brush Settings. Your new bokeh brush is ready to choose.



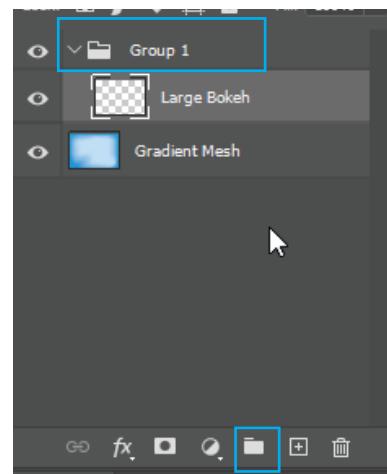
8. Select and copy the gradient mesh you created in Illustrator. Paste it into your Photoshop document; PSD automatically places it on a new layer.

9. Select the folder icon at the bottom of the Layers Palette to create a folder.

10. Set the Blend Mode to Colour Dodge.

11. Create a new layer and call it Large Bokeh.

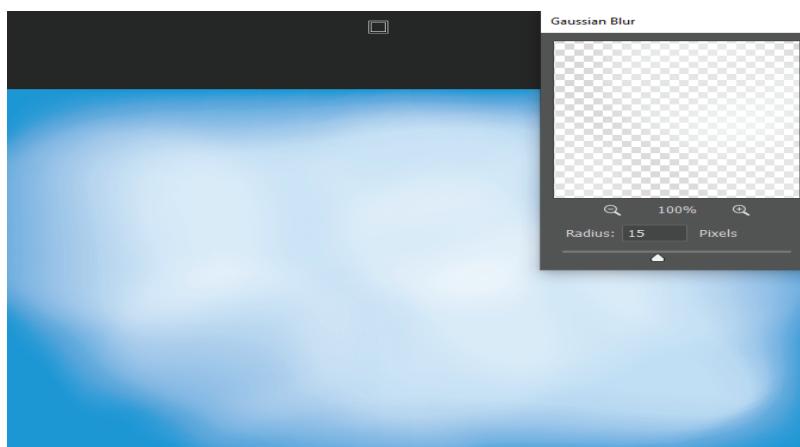
12. Select your brush and, select White as the Foreground colour.



13. Make the brush fairly large, eg, 400px, and draw a spread of bokeh across the page.



14. Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and apply the blur to a radius of 15px:

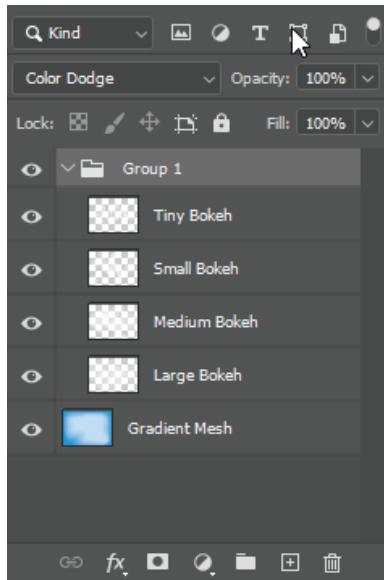


15. Create a new layer inside the group folder and call it Medium Bokeh. Make the brush smaller, eg, 250 px and draw another spread of bokeh across the page. Apply a Gaussian Blur of 10 px.

16. Repeat step 14 but call the layer Small bokeh, make the brush 150px and apply a Gaussian Blur of 5px.

17. Repeat the step again, call the layer Tiny Bokeh, make the brush 80px and apply a Gaussian Blur of 1px.

Your Layer Stack should look like this:



And you are done! You have a beautiful Bokeh Background. Hopefully you have an end result something like this:



Options to play with:

Change the Opacity setting of the brush you are using to create different dynamics/effects.

Hope you found the tutorial easy to follow and have produced something worth following the tutorial for.