



## More Sophisticated Titling

In the previous example, you created a simple alpha channel that defined a transparent area within your title, allowing you to “knock out” the background of your title and reveal some underlying video. Now, we’re going to take things a little bit further and add some cool effects to your title by creating variations in the transparency of your text.

As you saw earlier, black areas of an alpha channel are completely transparent, while white areas are completely opaque. Alpha channels can also hold gray information, which define areas that are *partially* transparent (or “partially opaque” if you’re one of those “glass-half-full” people). In this tutorial, we’ll rebuild our alpha channel to create a title that has a smoky transparency that varies in opacity.

## Tutorial Variable Transparency

For this tutorial, you’ll need the title document that you created in the previous tutorial. If you don’t have that document, you can use the variable title.psd document located in the Variable Transp. Tutorial folder on the companion DVD. Before we begin, there’s one more thing you need to know about alpha channels.

In the previous tutorial, you created an alpha channel by defining a selection with the Type Mask tool, and then saving that selection using Photoshop’s Save Selection command. In case you hadn’t guessed already, it’s called *Save Selection* for a reason. Open the Channels palette and drag the Alpha 1 channel down to the leftmost button at the bottom of the Channels palette. You should now see a dotted-line selection of your text. This is the selection that you saved earlier, and you can use it to re-fill your text if you want to change the text’s color. You can also use the selection to change your alpha channel.

### Step 1: Load Your Selection

If you haven’t done it already, open the title document you created earlier in Photoshop. Open the Channels palette and “load” your alpha channel selection by dragging the *Alpha 1* channel down to the leftmost button at the bottom of the Channels palette. (This is the *Load Channels* button, and we’ll be using it a lot.) As you probably know, when you’ve selected an area of a document, any image editing actions—painting, filters, and so forth—will be constrained to the selected area.



## Step 2: Modify Your Alpha Channel

Just as you can paint color information into the RGB channels of your document, you can paint transparency information into your alpha channel. For example, if you were to grab the Brush tool, choose a 50% gray foreground color, and paint in your current selection, your text would appear 50% transparent when composited in your editing program.

We're going to do something a little more interesting.

Pull down the *Filter* menu, and scroll down to the *Render* submenu. Select *Clouds*. You should now see a smoky, grayscale cloud texture within your selection (Figure 17.20).

## Step 3: Look at Your Text

Press Command-D to deselect. Click on the RGB channel in the Channels palette to return to the normal, color view of your document. Your text should look exactly the same, as we've made no changes to the color information; we've only changed the transparency information that sits "beneath" the color.





Figure 17.20

By filling the text in our alpha channel with a cloud texture, we can create a turbulent field of varying transparency.

## Step 4: Save Your Document

Save your document and return to your editing package. Repeat the compositing steps that were performed in the last tutorial, beginning at Step 8.

When you're finished, you should see a title with variable, smoky transparency.

The ability to vary the transparency of an image lets you do things that traditional, analog matte compositors can't do. We'll get to even more sophisticated alpha channel work in the next chapter, but in the meantime, continue playing with some alpha channel effects to be sure you're comfortable with the concept. For example, try using the Photoshop Gradient tool to create text that fades from full opacity to full transparency (Figure 17.21).



Figure 17.21

By using gradients in your alpha channel, you can easily fade one layer into another.