Adobe Studio on Adobe Illustrator CS

Unleash the power of gradients

Adding depth to your artwork is easy with gradient libraries in Adobe® Illustrator® and their rich variety of swatches. But you can tap the true power of gradients by knowing how to create new ones and how to modify existing gradients for your particular needs. In this project you will draw a button switch, switch plate, and an indicator light, and bring them to life with gradient fills.

1 Get started.

Choose File > New. In the New Document dialog box, set Units to Inches and select CMYK for Color Mode and click OK. If the Gradient palette is not open, double-click the Gradient button in the toolbox to display the Gradient palette. If the palette options are not displayed, click the upper-right arrow button and choose Show Options from the palette menu. Select the Stroke button in the toolbox and set the stroke to None by clicking the None icon. Click the Fill button in the toolbox to make the Fill active; then click the White, Black linear gradient in the Swatches palette.
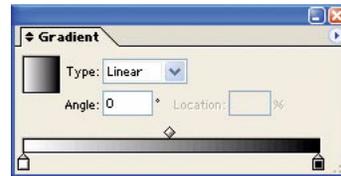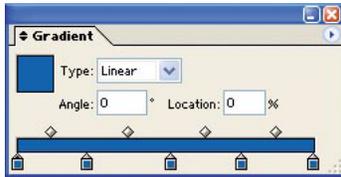
2 Modify the gradient.

In the toolbox, select the Rectangle tool and click it on the artboard. In the Rectangle dialog box, enter 4 inches for Width and 5 inches for Height, and click OK.

Make sure that the gradient is still selected. Then click the Night Blue swatch in the Swatches palette and drag it to the black square (the stop) below the gradient slider in the Gradient palette to change its color.
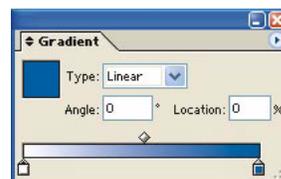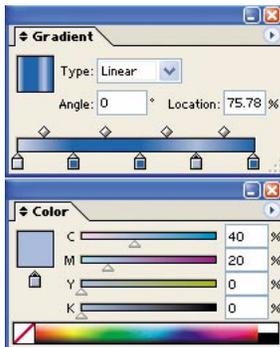
Click the blue gradient stop and duplicate it by holding down Alt/Option and dragging to the left. Repeat this process two more times. Now click the white gradient stop below the gradient slider and Alt/Option-click the Night Blue swatch in the Swatches palette. Your Gradient palette should resemble the following image.

4 Create a bevel for the switch plate.

Select the rectangle that you drew in step 2. To create the bevel, choose Object > Path > Offset Path. In the Offset Path dialog box, enter –0.15 inches for Offset; click OK. You now have two rectangles, one slightly smaller on top of the other.
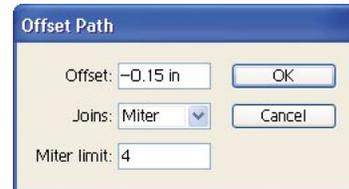
3 Create the gradient colors.

In the Gradient palette, click the left stop; in the Color palette, enter 22 for C and 11 for M. Click the middle stop; in the Color palette, enter 50 for K. Click the second stop from the right; in the Color palette, enter 40 for C and 20 for M.

5 Transform the gradient to give the bevel depth.

Select the outermost rectangle. In the toolbox, click the Gradient tool and drag its pointer vertically from the top of the image to its bottom. In the Gradient palette, click the far right stop and delete it by dragging it down and out of the palette. Repeat the process to delete the next stop on the right from the palette.

Click the dark blue stop and drag it to the extreme right of the slider bar. Select the middle stop and move it to the middle of the slider.

Drag the new gradient fill from the Gradient palette into the Swatches palette to save it.
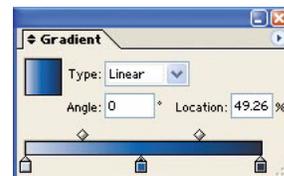
6   Complete the switch plate bevel.

Select the inside rectangle. Select the Gradient tool and drag its pointer from the top left of the image diagonally to the bottom right. Select both rectangles, group them (Ctrl/Command+Shift+G), and lock them (Ctrl/Command+2).

7   Create the button switch.

Choose Window > Swatch Libraries > Other Library > Presets > Gradients > Metals.ai and click Open. The Metals gradient palette will open in your file. In the toolbox, select the Ellipse tool, and in the Metals palette, click the Blue Steel swatch for the fill. Visually center the Ellipse tool pointer in the center of the rectangle. Press Alt/Option+Shift and draw a circle about one-half the width of the rectangle.

8   Add depth to the button switch.

Make sure that the circle is selected and choose Object > Path > Offset Path. In the Offset Path dialog box, enter –0.15 inches for Offset and click OK. Select the outer circle. In the toolbox, click the Stroke button; in the Color palette, click black; and in the Stroke palette,

enter 3 pt for Weight. In the toolbox, click the Gradient tool. Place it at the top of the rectangle and drag to the bottom of the circle to change the gradient orientation. Next, select the inner circle. In the Gradient palette, enter 90 for Angle. Select both circles and group them.

9   Create the indicator light.

With the button switch you just created still selected, copy it (Ctrl/Command+C). Choose Edit > Paste in Front to place it over the original button switch (you won't see a difference yet). Reduce its size by choosing Object > Transform > Scale. In the Scale dialog box Uniform option, enter 30%, and click OK.

Drag the resized object below the button switch. Deselect the object.

10 Color the light.

In the toolbox, click the Fill button. With the Group Selection tool, click the indicator light's center circle. In the Swatches palette, select the New Leaf radial swatch. In the Gradient palette, click the right stop, and in the Swatches palette, Alt/Option-click the Red swatch. In the Gradient palette, select the middle stop, and Alt/Option-click the Orange swatch. Select the left stop, and Alt/Option-click the Yellow swatch to complete the light.
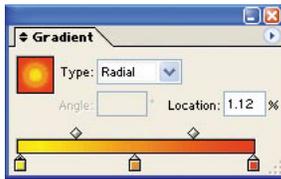
11 Fine-tune the light.

With the Group Selection tool, click the black outer ring of the indicator light. In the toolbox, click the Stroke button, and in the Stroke palette, enter 1 pt for Weight to reduce the stroke size.

12 Align the switch elements.

Unlock the switch plate (Ctrl/Command+Alt/Option+2). Select all of the images (Ctrl/Command+A). In the Align palette, click the Horizontal Align Center option to complete the design.

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