

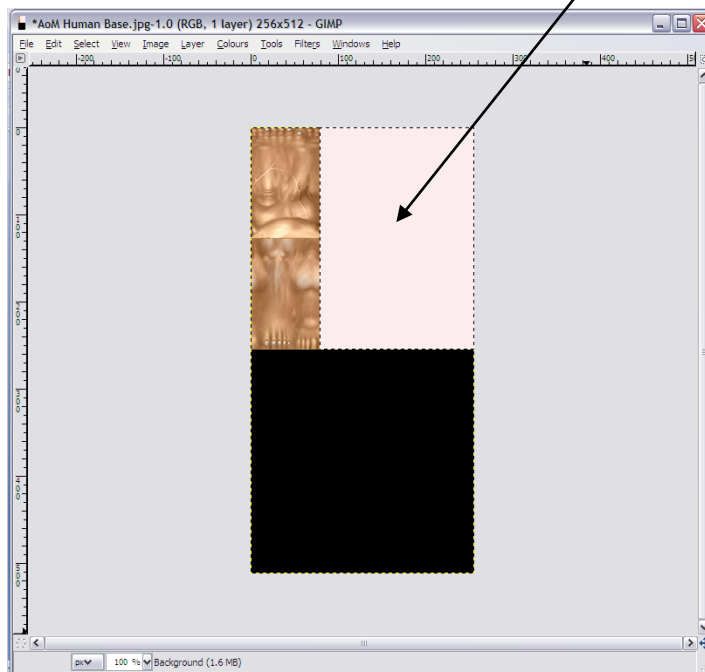
Tutorial: Fabric Folding in GIMP

This tutorial is designed to show the basics of making a fabric texture using GIMP. I will make a simple tunic step-by-step to show how to go about making a nice-looking fabric texture. The tutorial assumes you understand the basics of the program; for example adding a new layer, how to use bucket fill etc.

NB. I am using the most recent version of GIMP, 2.6.4. Some features and/or looks may be slightly different in earlier releases.

Starting Out:

First, paint the area you are going to make covered by fabric a solid colour. When making a tunic such as this, I normally use a slightly off-white colour. Be sure to put the colour in a new layer, so that you can cut parts of the tunic out leaving what was behind it intact if you need to.

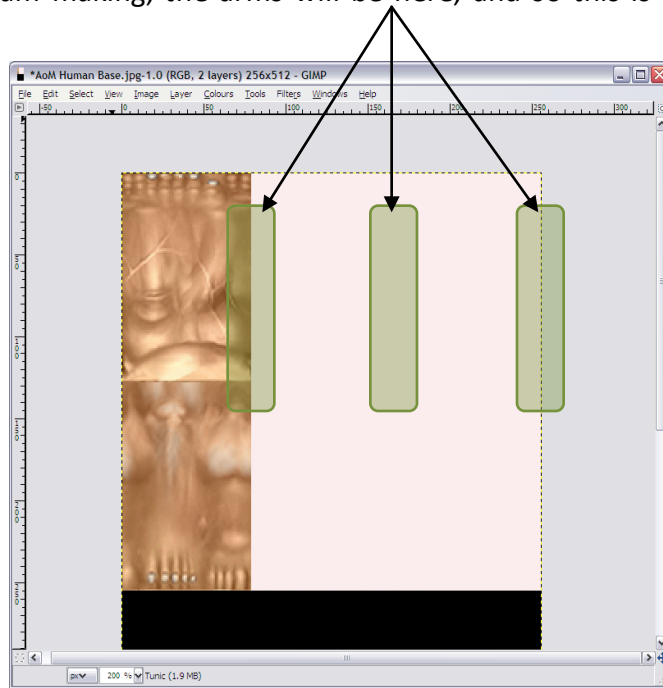


Now that you have the fabric set out, you need to add some folds. This is the hardest part of getting your fabric to look good.

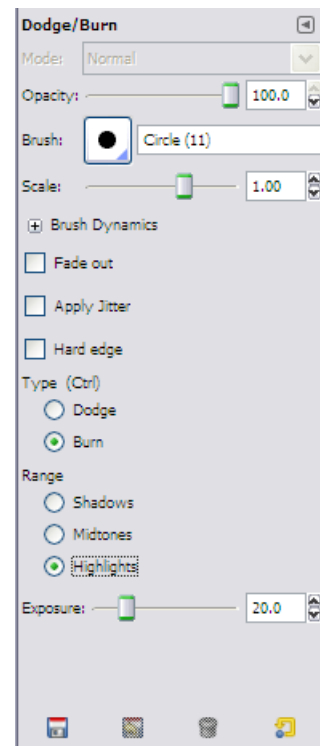
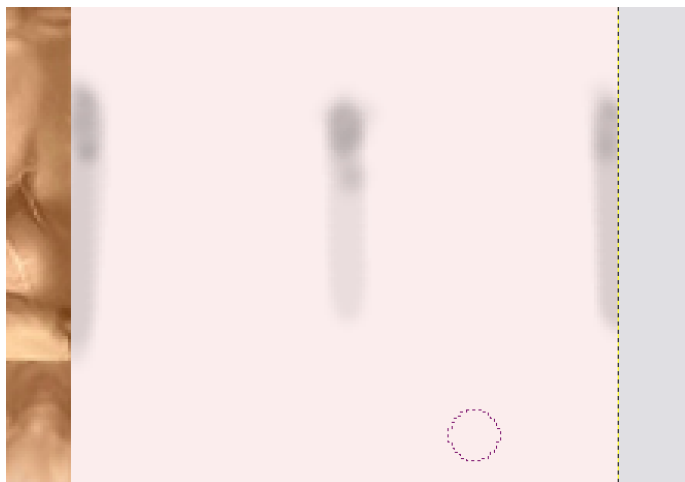
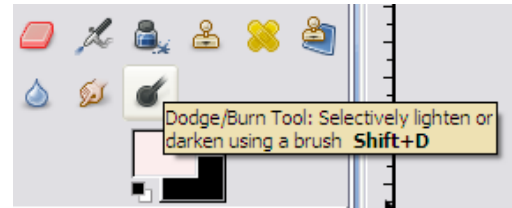
Adding Folds:

In this step, you will need to know how to use the smudge, dodge and burn tools. You now need to think about where the folds in the fabric will be. If it is a tunic, like the example, the fabric will be most creased under the arms, and least creased on the front and back. Look at your own clothes if you get confused, that's what I did when I was first practicing. If you are making a texture for a character, you need to decide what they will be wearing. If they have a belt on with the tunic then the way the fabric is folded will be different to the way it will be if there is no belt.

For the tunic I am making, the arms will be here, and so this is where the folds should start from.



Start by using the burn tool to darken the areas under the top of the arms. Make sure that you are using the burn tool not the dodge tool, and that you have the right layer selected. I normally set the exposure to about 20 for burning. You should also choose a suitable brush; I normally use Circle Fuzzy (15) or Circle Fuzzy (17). It is best to use one of the "Fuzzy" brushes, so that the edges are not too sharp.

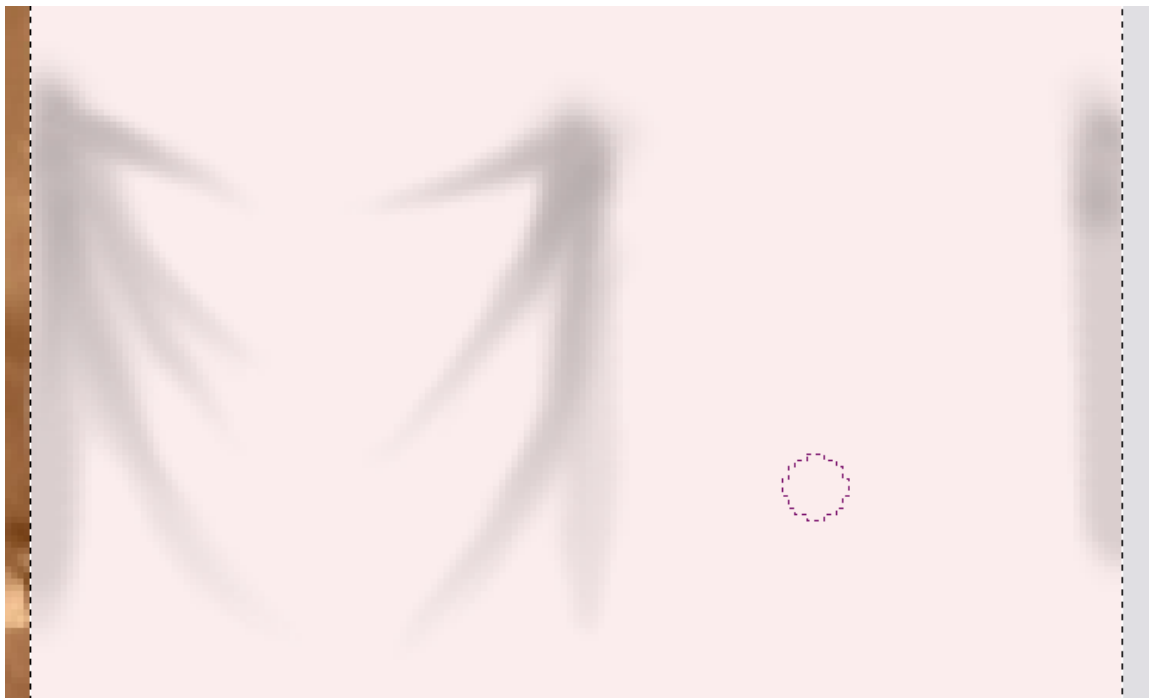


I burnt the top of the arm area more heavily, because this is where most of the folds in the fabric are. I am now going to use the smudge tool to make the actual folds in the fabric. I will smudge the burnt areas in towards the centre of the front of the tunic, but not at 90° to the arm, because this looks unnatural.

Use a smaller brush for the smudging; I normally use Circle Fuzzy (13) or Circle Fuzzy (11). I leave the “Rate” alone usually. This is simply how much of an effect the brush has. If it is 100 the smudge will be even all over where you drag, if it is 0 then there will be no smudge. At the default, 50, the brush smudges for a while but it fades out, making for realistic-looking folds.

You may need to smudge over the same area a few times to shape the fold how you want it, and to make sure it is long enough to be recognisable. If you are unsure of where to place the folds, look at how your clothes crease naturally when you wear them.

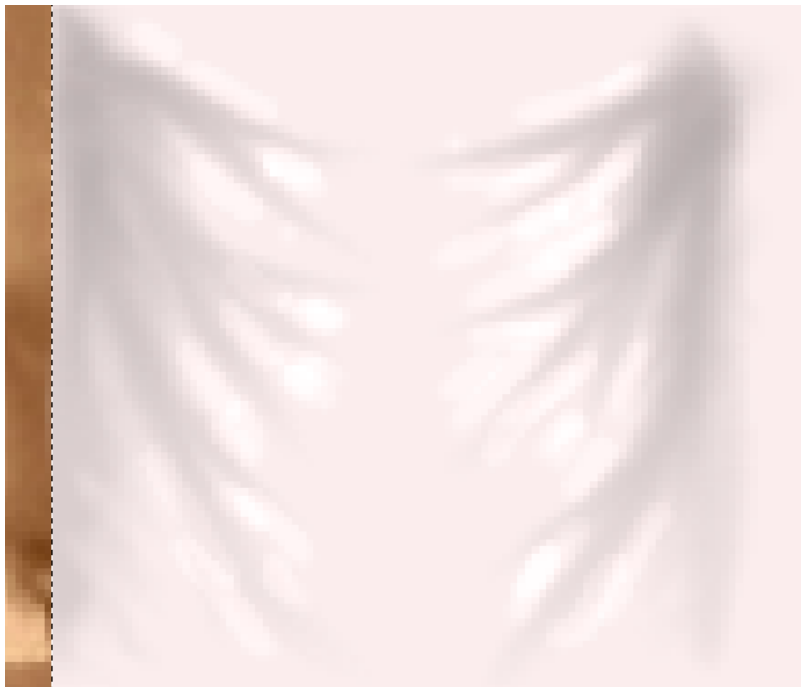
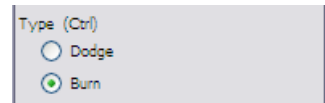
You should end up with something like this. Note that I also smudged the original burnt areas to make them less blocky, and more like they fade to a stop. Repeat this technique on the back.



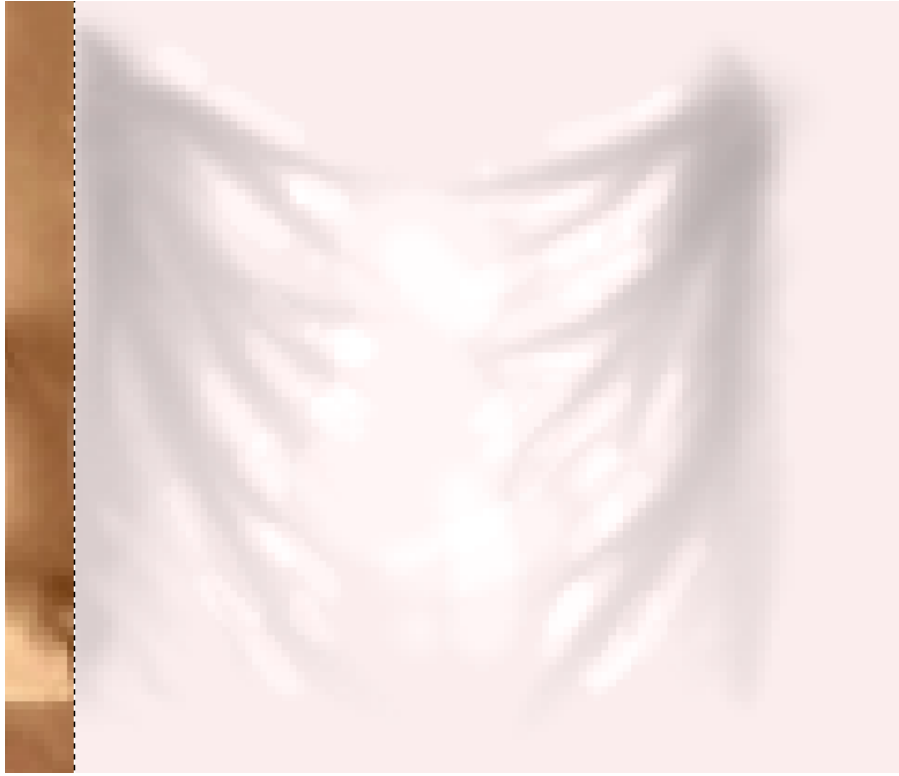
Now take a smaller brush (I normally use Circle Fuzzy (7) or Circle Fuzzy (9) for this) and add more detail into the folds, such as smaller folds coming off the main ones. Smudge more folds in, until you are happy with how it looks.



Next, go back to the Dodge/Burn tool. Where before it was set to Burn change it to Dodge. I normally now reduce the exposure to about 10, and use a smaller brush size than I did for the folds. Now dodge between the folds, to make them look less like just shadows.



Now take a larger brush, and lightly dodge in what is the centre of the chest, being careful not to damage any of the folding too much. It should end up something like this.



Folding the Bottom of the Tunic:

The technique for folding on the bottom half of the tunic (i.e. below the belt) is similar. I added a quick belt in for the purposes of this tutorial.



Now we need to make the folds for below the belt. Begin by shading the area behind the belt (which is in a new layer) using the burn tool with similar settings to those you used when burning the area where the arms are. Be sure to have the tunic layer selected, not the belt layer when doing this.

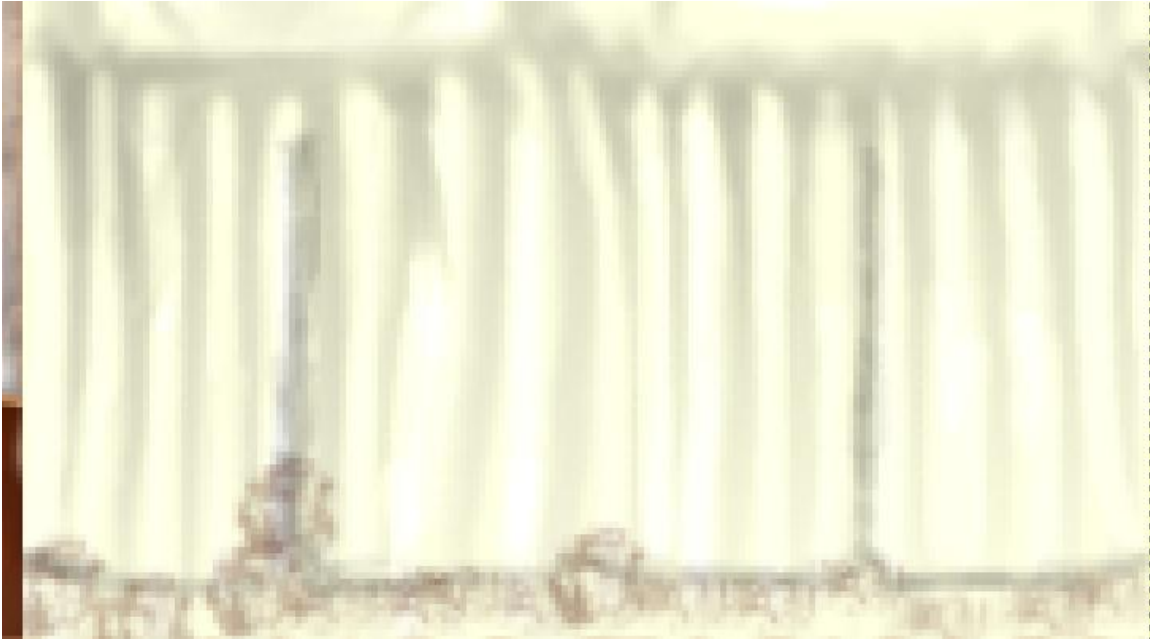
You should burn it so that the area directly below the belt is also slightly burned. You should end up with something like this.



Now smudge folds vertically downwards, or just off from vertical. These can be as long or short as you like; just do it until they look right to you. Mine in this example are rather short.



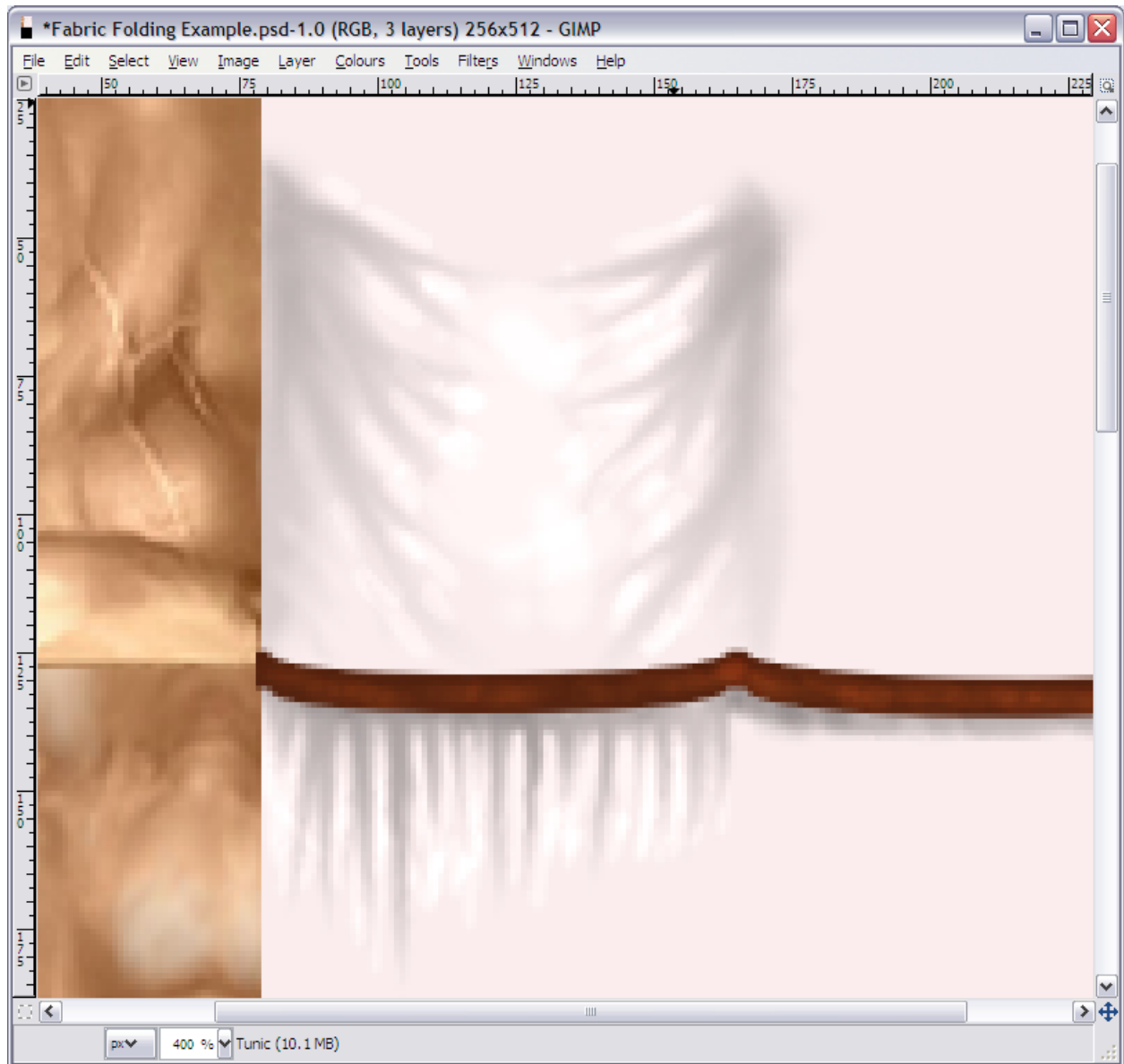
And then in this separate example they go almost to the bottom of the tunic. In this example I have hidden the belt to show the start of the folds. You may wish to increase the rate of smudging from its initial 50 if you are going to make longer folds like in this example.



Now, use the dodge tool in the same way as you did on the chest folds, and dodge between the darker areas.



You can now dodge the rest of the tunic, like you did in the middle of the chest, if you want to, although it doesn't really make a big difference. The finished front half of folding on my tunic looks like this.



This is far from a finished texture though, the back still needs folds to be made in the same way, and other minor details can be added.

However this was a tutorial about fabric folding, so won't cover those. I hope this helps.