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I n t r o d u c t i o n

You certainly find, sometimes, cloud textures for your skies too artificial, or with the wrong weather, enlightenment, or colour conditions. Sometimes also, you would like to add to the mood of your lost temple in this mysterioux valley with brands of mist hanging to its broken columns, but the **Mist** function (from the World Buttons) is too uniform and artificial. If either case is true, this tutorial is written for you ! Modelling methods for clouds or mist are exactly the same. Only the thickness and the shape of the emitter will change, along with the texture parameters.
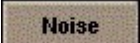

Important note : The modelling methode discussed in this tutorial uses animation tools, but give its best results for static pictures. Don't try to use this tutorial if you want to include clouds or mist made in an animation. In this case, a good variant should be to use static particles to achieve the same result, but the core parameters will be quite different in order to get satisfactory results.
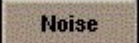
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S t e p   1 :

Start with a new Blender session (**CTRL+X**). As always, we will start by creating the emitter of our future particles system. **Select** the default plane if it is not already selected (right mouse button, it should now appear in pink). This plane already has a default material that we will not erase, but give it a transitory texture. Please call the Texture Buttons (**F6–KEY** or [icon]) and add an new texture (**ADD NEW**) by clicking on the [icon] button.

Pick [Clouds] without changing anything to the default parameters. Enter the edit mode (**TAB–KEY**) and select all the vertices (**A–KEY**). Subdivide 6 times your plane (**W–KEY** followed by **ENTER** each time) in order to get a tight mesh. Now call the Edit Buttons (**F9–KEY** or [icon]) and click 2 or 3 times on the [Noise] button.

You should note that your mesh deforms itself according to the data given by the texture, which acts like a **Heigth Map** because of the [Noise] button : the vertices associated to a dark area of the texture has been attributed a low height value, while those associated to a lighter area has been attributed higher height value. We still have to resize our emitter, far too small to be of any help. Leave the edit mode (**TAB–KEY**), press the **S–KEY**, and while holding the **CTRL–KEY**, resize the plane until you get **SizeX: 7.000**, **SizeY: 7.000** and **SizeZ: 7.000**. In fact, your new plane should have almost the same surface that your whole scene, but you will sometimes need to get an emitter 2 or 3 times greater, according to your specific needs. Note also that you can choose to start with half a UVSphere instead of a plane, in order to model your clouds.
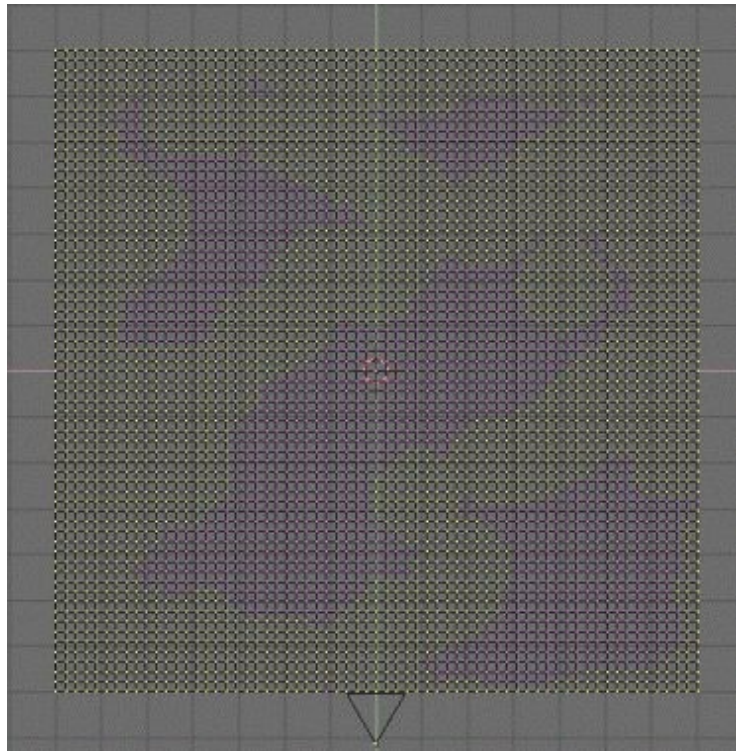
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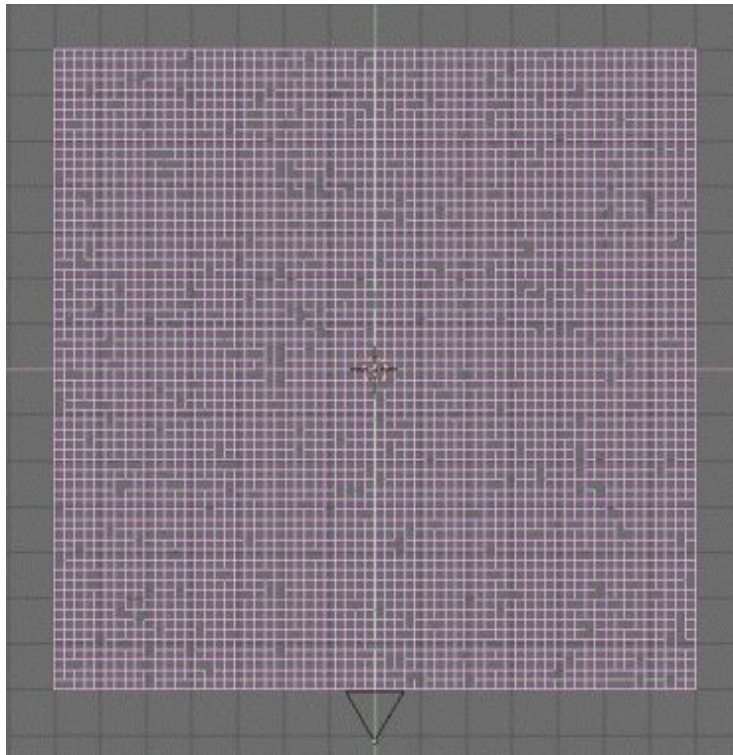
Step 2:

We will now cut 2 or 3 nice clouds in our mesh. Enter the edit mode (**TAB−KEY**) and activate the circular border select tool (**B−KEY** two times). Now you can select all the vertices you do NOT want to use for your clouds. Don't try to get perfect shapes... On the contrary, stay impredictable... You should get something like this.
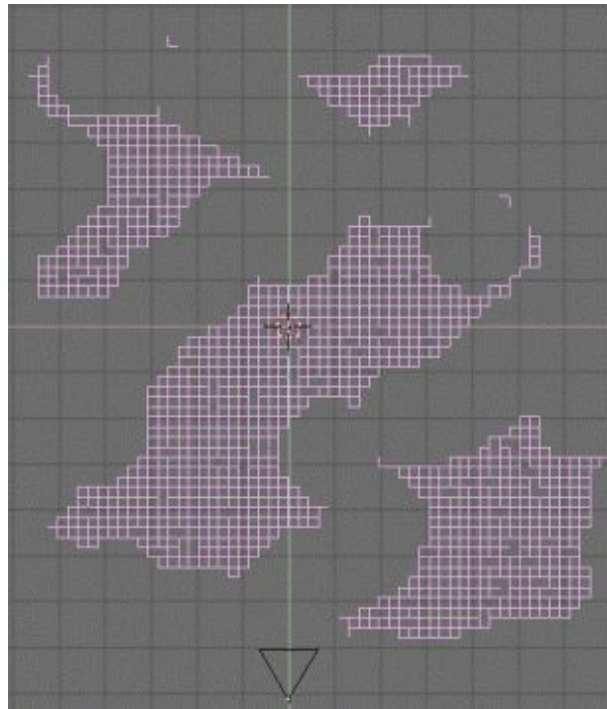
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S t e p   3 :

The yellow vertices will be deleted by pressing **X–KEY** and by validating **vertices**. It could be a good idea to slightly change the height of some of your clouds, according to your wishes (circular border select (**B–KEY** two times) all the vertices of a same cloud, toggle to the front view with **NUM–1**, press the **G–KEY** and lower your clouds). You can then leave the edit mode (**TAB–KEY**) because our emitter is ready for use ! In order to do things the cleaner way, we will take the habit to delete immediately our Height Map even if, in fact, we will use the same texture later... Go back in the Texture Buttons (**F6–KEY** or [⬛]) and delete your cloud texture by clicking the [✗] button.

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S t e p   4 :

In front view (**NUM–1**), move (**G–KEY**) your clouds in the upper direction by a grid unit (hold **CTRL–KEY**). Toggle to camera view to check the correctness of your clouds location. The main advantage of this method is that you could duplicate (**SHIFT+D**) your emitter prior to applying animation effects, and that you could get, this way, a shadow on the floor, which is far more realist than a simple sky texture. Do you have the same thing as me ? Perfect, let's see what's next.

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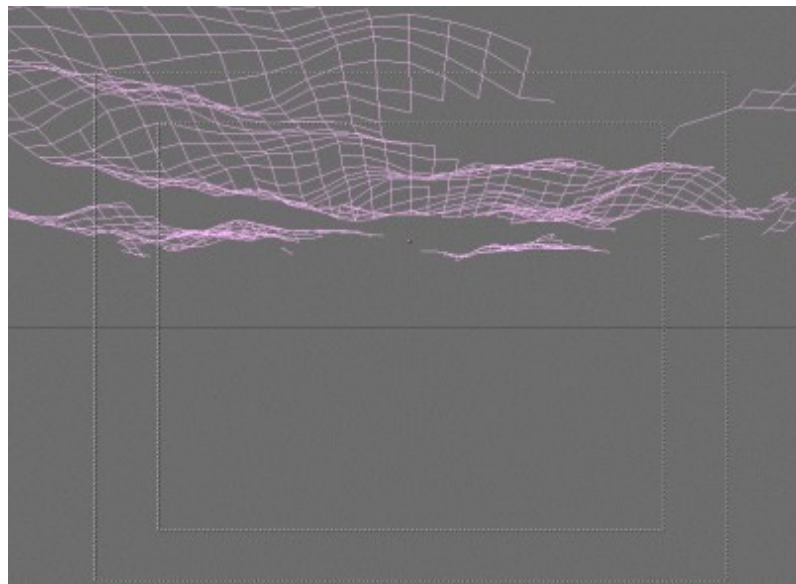
S t e p 5 :

Call the Animation Effects with **F7–KEY** or by clicking the [5] button. Click on the [NEW Effect] button, then on [Build ▬] and hold to have the time to select the **Particles** effect. Set **Tot: 3000**, **Sta: –100.00 and Randlife: 0.200**. We will use particles multiplication, so set **Mult: 1.000** and **Child: 1**. We don't want the particles to spray too much from the emitter : **Rand: 0.001**. The particles won't be wind–sensitive, so set all the **Force** values to 0.000.

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S t e p   6 :

Call the Material Buttons (**F4–KEY** or [●]). With your emitter selected, add a new material (**ADD NEW**) by

clicking on the [-] button. Turn your physical particles system into a luminous halo system by activating

the [Halo] button. Activate the [HaloTex] button, which will be useful during the next (and last) step. Set the
Halo colour to **R 1.000**, **G 1.000** and **B 1.000**. The followinf parameters should each time adjusted to the results
you want to achieve, but these values are a good starting basis : **HaloSize: 0.40**, **Alpha 0.250** and **Hard 30**. Hard
and Add are the two essential parameters, as it could get tricky to adjust these both parameters to achieve your
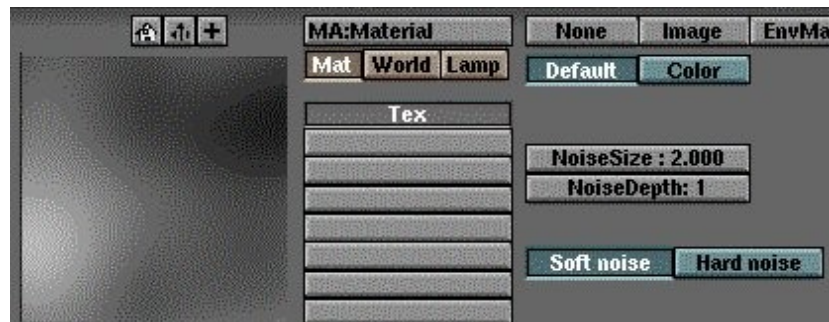goal.

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S t e p   7 :

Call the Texture Buttons (**F6–KEY** or [icon]) and add a new texture (**ADD NEW**) by clicking on the [icon] button. A row of texture types should appear. Pick **Clouds** in order to access the cloud procedural texture parameters. Set **NoiseSize: 2.000** and **NoiseDepth: 1**.

Let's go back into the Material Buttons (**F4–KEY** or [icon]) to tune our parameters. In the right area devoted to the texture parameters, replace the default pink colour by an immaculate white : **R 1.000**, **G 1.000** and **B 1.000** (a light green or grey could be very good looking in the case of a mist). Activate the **Col** and **Alpha** buttons. Set **SizeX 0.500** and **SizeY 2.000**. At last, set the Alpha channel with the **Var 0.250** slider. These last parameters will certainly have to be adjusted in the case of a mist (in particular, you can try to set **SizeX** and **SizeY** to 0.250 or 2.000 and see the result).

Good looking, isn't it ?