



## Photoshop Elements

### Extracting and Manipulating Images

In order to have the most control of an image you need to be able to isolate it on a layer by extracting it from the unnecessary.

Your ability to make good selection and painting skills will serve you well.

Remember to have your Acquisition file and a different Manipulation file. That way you can always return to your unedited file to start over or steal good unaltered parts from.

“Practice is the best of all instructors.” – Publilius Syrus

### Extracting

#### Delete!

You can remove large amounts of unwanted image by making a selection and deleting it!

#### Erase!

To start to remove finer details from an image, you can erase it.

**Eraser** – This tool changes pixels in the image as you drag the tool depending if you are on a locked background layer (background color) or just a layer (transparency). Adjust your Eraser in the Options Bar:

Brushes - you can pick a soft or hard brush tip.

Size – you set the size of the brush in pixels.

Mode – you can use a Brush with a softer edge, a Pencil for a hard edge, or a Block which is a 16 pixel square.

Opacity – you can set the strength of the erasure. Sometimes a semi-transparence look is what you are going for.

**Magic Eraser** – This tool is similar in the thought of the Magic Wand in how it works within a range of similar pixels. So, it changes all similar pixels as you drag it over an image. On a layer that isn't the locked background, the pixels are erased to transparency. Adjust your Magic Eraser in the Option Bar:

Tolerance – you can set the range of colors that will be erased. Lower tolerance doesn't erase many pixels, higher erases much more.

Anti-Alias – you get smoother edges.

Contiguous – Erases only pixels that are adjacent to the one you clicked on. Uncheck this option to erase all similar pixels in the whole image.

All Layers – this will erase throughout all visible layers.

Opacity – you can set the strength of the erasure.

**Background Eraser** – This tool turns color pixels to transparent pixels by sampling colors found in the crosshair of the tool and removing any color similar. Background Eraser's pointer is a circle with a cross hair indicating the tool's hotspot. As you drag the pointer, pixels within the circle and of a similar color value as the pixel under the hotspot are erased, but not the other colors. It is not easy to use and you want to zoom in to see what you are doing. You need to set your Options first before dragging your tool through the image.

Brush Preset Picker – You can pick your brush, I found a larger one might be the better choice.

Limits - Contiguous erases the pixels that are

connected to each other and Discontiguous only erases the pixels that are in the hotspot. Tolerance – you can set the range of colors that will be erased.

## **Magic Extractor!**

In the full version of Photoshop, you can use Masks to “mask out” parts of an image you want. The Magic Extractor tries to use the same idea as Masks, but it does more guesswork for you. I’m not a fan of this tool and it takes a lot of trial and error to get it to work just right. You would use the Magic Extractor to make accurate selections based on the appearance (a guess) of foreground and background areas that you specify by painting different colored marks over them. You can preview your work and fine-tune the selections. But, once you mark the areas and close the dialog box, only the foreground area appears in the photo and deleting the background.

The steps are as follows:

1. Select the image you want to extract, it can be a loose selection because you can easily delete the extra parts later.
2. Choose Image > Magic Extractor and the dialog box will appear.
3. With the Foreground Brush tool click various times or draw lines to mark the area you want to extract. Be sure to select examples of color and texture to guarantee a better selection.
4. Switch to the Background Brush tool and click the area that you do not want included in your selection.
5. Click Preview to see your current selection. Remember you can hit Reset to remove all marks and start over.
6. Then make any fine-tunes the selection, and then again.
7. Click OK to extract the selected areas.

## **Masks!**

Masks are worth learning and experimenting with. Photoshop lets you create masks in the following ways:

**Quick Mask** mode lets you edit any selection as a mask. The advantage of editing your selection as a mask is that you can use almost any Photoshop tool or filter to modify the mask. Click on the Quick Mask button, try the Paintbrush tool on the image, and then click on the Edit Standard Mode to see the selection.

**Masking Layers** allows you to edit a layer mask to add or subtract from the masked region. A layer mask is a grayscale image, so areas you paint in black are hidden, areas you paint in white are visible, and areas you paint in shades of gray appear in various levels of transparency. Here is how I remember it, black fishnet stockings you can see through and white opaque tights you cannot.

**Alpha channels** Lets you save and load selections. You can edit alpha channels using any of the editing tools. When a channel is selected in the Channels palette, foreground and background colors appear as grayscale values. You can reuse stored selections or even load them into another image.

An easy way to start learning how to use a mask is making a selection and hit the add layer mask button in the layers palette, everything not selected is now masked out.

## **Transforming**

Now that you have extracted an image you can transform it.

Those little handles (squares at the corners) are there for you to pull and twist. Remember to hit enter to finish the job.

The cursor will remind you what you can do based on the arrows that appear.

Don’t be afraid to try something and hit undo, then try again. It is good to see how it works and fiddle with it.

## **Rotate!**

Choose Image > Rotate

Pay attention to what you are rotating.

- 90° Left, Layer 90° Left, and Selection 90° Left

Rotates the photo, layer, or selection a quarter-turn counterclockwise. (Rotate Selection is only available when you have an active selection in an image.)

- 90° Right, Layer 90° Right, and Selection 90° Right

Rotates the photo, layer, or selection a quarter-turn clockwise.

- 180°, Layer 180°, and Selection 180°

Rotates the photo, layer, or selection a half-turn.

Custom – have an angle in mind, just type it in.

## **Scale!**

Choose Image > Resize > Scale

Remember to Constrain Proportions check it in the Options Bar or hold down the shift key.

## **Askew! Bless you!**

Choose Image > Transform > Skew

Or

Image > Transform > Distort

Play with this!

## **Perspective!**

Choose Image > Transform > Perspective

## **Free Transform!**

Choose Image > Transform > Free Transform

## **Clone Tool**

My first rule of using the Clone Tool is to use a separate layer to clone on. Then you don't mess up your original. Set in the Option Bar to sample all layers.

The Clone Stamp tool paints with an image sample. You can "clone" sampled parts of an

image to replace imperfections. Check your options bar before starting to use the Clone Stamp. You must set a sampling point on the active layer by holding down the Alt key (you will see a target cursor) and clicking the mouse before you paint with the Clone Stamp tool.

Choose a brush size that would work for you. Set to sample All Layers. Play with which Aligned works best for the painting. Then paint away!

## **Spot Healing Brush**

This tool samples pixels for you around a selection to remove blemishes and other imperfections. You can either click once on a blemish, or click and drag to paint in an area. Just like the Clone Stamp tool, look at your Option Bar. If Proximity Match isn't working for you try the Create Texture option, it is similar to the clone tool. Also, you can set a source, like a pattern to paint with.

## **Stealing from Sources**

Sometimes it helps to take parts of other photos to create a refined image. Always shoot extra shots because you can use those parts. You never know what "sources" will come in handy later.

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