

# PHOTOSHOP SELECTIONS

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Selections are used in many computer applications to work on part of the document. A selection may be deleted, dragged and dropped, cut, copied, moved, pasted to another part of the document. In most documents, making a selection is by mousing down on a word or cell and dragging over what you want to select. The selection is highlighted to distinguish it from the rest of the document.

Photoshop is different. There are several tools and menu items for making selections. The selection may be regular-shaped, or follow subject boundaries. They may be hard edged or soft edged, or follow the sharpness of the image. A selection can be moved around, filled with colour or patterns, or used to create a new layer or mask. These in turn are used to selectively develop parts of an image.

Understanding selections is fundamental to mastering Photoshop development.

## A SIMPLE EXAMPLE

Thanks to Vi for the suggestion for easy introduction into the power of selections.

Open Photoshop and create a new blank document. Any size will do.

Set the Working Space to Photography. (MENU: Workspace > Photography).

Choose a selection tool, such as the Polygonal Lasso Tool. With it, draw a shape on your document. The shape will be shown with Marching Ants to show it is a selection. Select the brush tool. Set a colour to paint with, and paint over the document. You will see that the brush is restricted to the selected area.

Invert the selection MENU: Select > Inverse. This selects the remainder of the document. Then feather the selection edges MENU: Select > Modify > Feather and set the amount to 10 px. Now choose the brush and a contrasting colour. Make the brush hard edged. You have made the selection edges soft, so you can paint over the edge of the selected area, showing its soft border.

You will have learned:

Selections restrict the work you are doing to the inside of the selection. The outside is protected.

The edge of a selection is shown with marching ants, but these give no clue as to the hardness of the selection.

## SELECTION TOOLS

The simplest way of making a selection is with the selection tools. Some of these are:

*Rectangular marquee tool*: rectangular selection, or square if the shift key is held down

*Elliptical Marquee tool*: elliptical selection, or circular if the shift key is held down

*Lasso Tool*: will make an irregular selection. Continue to the start point to close the selection.

*Polygonal Lasso Tool*: Creates a polygon, straight lines until you click at a point.

*Magnetic Lasso Tool*: The tool will select the nearest edge it finds.

*Quick Selection Tool*: Follows edges to make a selection of part of an image. One of my favourites.

## MODIFYING A SELECTION

Once you have made a selection with one tool, you can add to it, delete from it, or sometimes choose an area shared by two selections with any of the selection tools. On the Tool Options bar, you will find the tool ikon repeated with a + or – sign. Choosing the + ikon, makes the mouse pointer add to an existing selection. The – ikon will enable deleting from a selection.

## THE SELECT MENU

The Select menu gives options for making and modifying selections.

Deselect removes the marching ants and the selection is lost. If you want to use the selection again, it should be saved.

The Colour Range dialogue box enables the selection of particular colours in the image. You use an eye dropper tool to sample colours. This feature can be used in + or – mode to add to or delete from an existing selection.

The Focus Range dialogue box enables selecting of the in-focus (sharpest) parts of an image.

When the selection is active it can be modified by: MENU: Select > Modify. The choices here enable the selection to be smoothed and also feathered.

The most accurate but tedious way of making a selection is to draw a pen path around what you want to select, and then turn the path to a selection. Look up Pen Paths in Photoshop help.

*Whenever you have a selection that follows an edge, feather that selection by a 0.2 to 2 px so that subsequent work with it is not so obvious.*

## WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A SELECTION?

Once you have a selection it can be filled with a colour, pattern or gradient as described above.

It can be converted to a new layer. Duplicate it (Command/Control + J) or alternatively Copy the selection (Command/Control + C) and paste it Command/Control + V). A new layer will be added above the active layer with just the selected pixels.

It can be used to create a Layer Mask. In this case, just click the Add Mask button. The selected part will be white. Learn more about masks in a later.

The most common uses for selections is for creating or modifying masks, or for creating a new layer to work on a particular part of the image. The methods described here are fairly simple ways of creating a selection. Much

more elaborate selections can be made from Channels. These select a particular colour or tone in an image, but match the sharpness subtly. More about these selections in other articles.

## USING CONTENT-AWARE FILL TO REMOVE AN UNWANTED FEATURE

This example shows one use for a selection. If you have a small unwanted feature in an image, such as a piece of litter, it can often be removed by this technique. To work properly, the defect must be surrounded by continuous texture and tone. Using the Lasso tool, roughly select the defect and some surrounding image.

Then MENU: Edit > Fill. Ensure the Contents box has Content-Aware selected, and colour adaption is checked. Click OK and the defect will be replaced with colour and texture based on the surrounding pixels.

## MAKING A VIGNETTE USING A SELECTION

This is an example of the use of a selection to apply a vignette around an image. The vignette should be subtle so that it concentrates on the subject, but is not obvious.

First make a selection around the main subject that takes up about half to 2/3 of the image. While a rectangular or elliptical marquee tool could be used to do this, it is recommended to use the Lasso tool to draw a less regular shape and disguise the vignette. Invert this selection so that it is the outer edge of the image is the selection. Feather the selection by a lot – say 200 px.

Now click on the Levels icon in the Adjustment Panel. This will add a levels layer with a mask. The outer edge of the mask will be white, and the inner part black. Darken the edges to add a vignette using the levels sliders. Repeat this to make a subtler vignette.

Adding a vignette should be the last thing you do to an image.

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