

6 Simple Selections

Selections allow us to isolate a particular portion of the layer. We can then edit the selected region without affect the rest of the layer. There are many ways in which we can generate a selection in Photoshop. In this book we will start by taking a look at some of the simple selection tools.



The Magic Wand Tool

The Magic Wand tool is located fourth from the top in the Tools panels and is stacked with the Quick Selection tool. To access a stacked tool, simply click and hold on a particular tool to see the other tools available in that location. Stacked tools are indicated by the small black triangle in the bottom right hand corner of the icon.

The Options bar functions associated with the Magic Wand tool play an important role in its functionality, fig 6.1.

- Tolerance: determines how much of the image is selected when you click on a particular part of your image. A value of 10 indicates that 5 darker values and 5 lighter values will be chosen based on the position where you clicked, fig 6.2.
- Anti-alias: make selection edges smoother.
- Contiguous: when this option is selected only neighbouring pixels are selected, fig 6.2. When unchecked all pixels of the chosen Tolerance value will be selected, fig 6.3.
- Sample All Layers: if chosen, will take all layers into consideration and not just the highlighted layer.

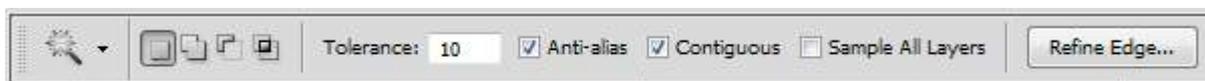


Fig 6.1 the Magic Wand tool options

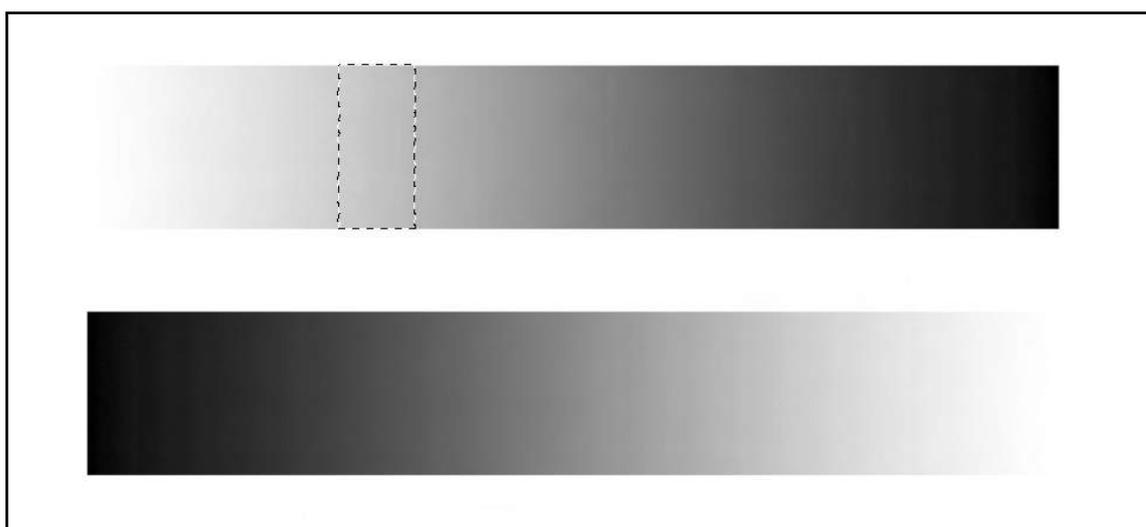


Fig 6.2 a Contiguous selection with a Tolerance of 10

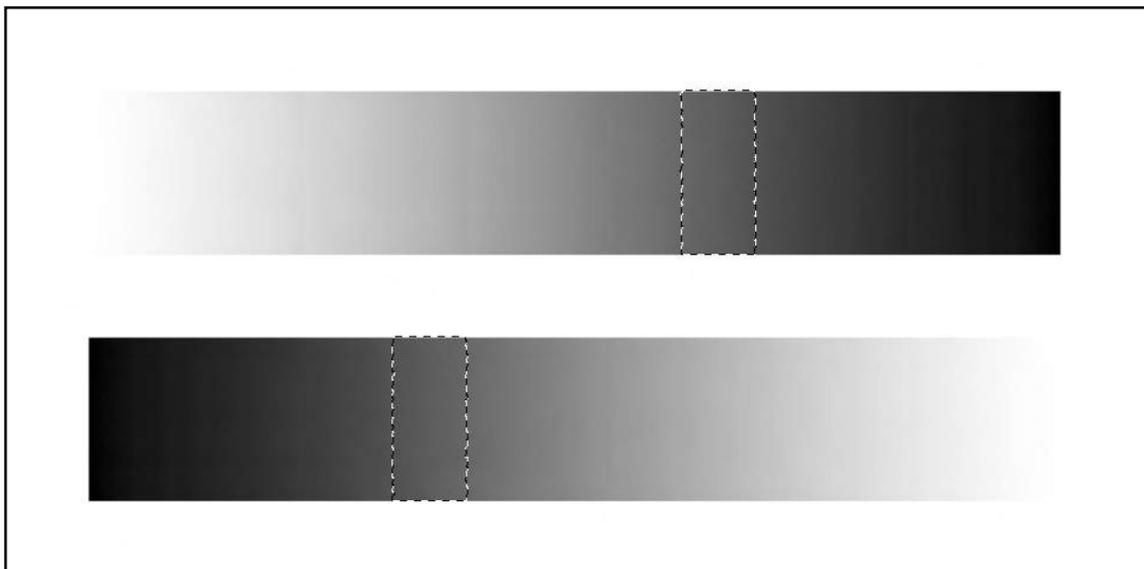


Fig 6.3 a Non-Contiguous selection, the same values are select in both gradients.

There are other icons in the Magic Wands Options that allow us to make more accurate selections.

-  Create a new selection
-  Add to an existing selection
-  Subtract from an existing selection
-  Select the intersection between two selections

In the following example we will look at making a selective edit to an image. In fig 6.4, the orange poppy was selected with the magic wand tool so that we can change the colour of the flower without affect the rest of the image. The poppy contains a surprising amount of different tones so it's very difficult to make an accurate selection. If you keep increasing the tolerance value you will get to a point where areas outside of the poppy start to become selected. We don't want this, so a better solution for an image like this, is to keep the tolerance value relatively low (in this example, I used a value of 20) and chose the Add to Selection icon in the Options bar. You can then keep clicking various parts of the flower until you are happy with the selection. If you still manage to have unwanted selection areas appear, click on the Subtract from Selection icon to remove those values from the selection (note: take care not to leave this icon selected once you've removed the unwanted selection areas).



Fig 6.4 selecting the flower for editing

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Once the selection is complete you can go to the Image menu>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. The values that I chose to use can be seen in fig 6.5.

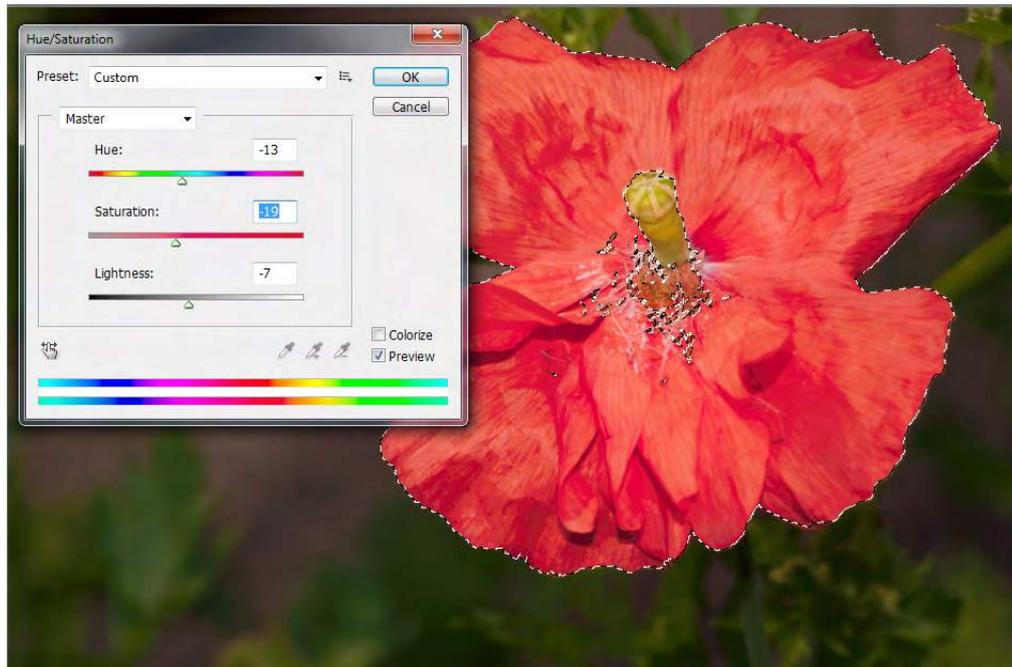


Fig 6.5 the Hue/Saturation adjustments are only applied to the selected area.

Not only can you apply Adjustments to selected areas, you can also apply filters from the Filter Menu. In fig 6.6 you can see that the Filters>Artistic>Plastic Wrap filter has been applied to the same selection



Fig 6.6 the selection was used to apply the Plastic Wrap filter

Selections can be saved and loaded from the Select menu, fig 6.7. If you've taken the time to make a selection, it is a good idea to save it in case you decide to make further edits. Once you've finished with your selection you can remove it by choosing Deselect from the Select menu.

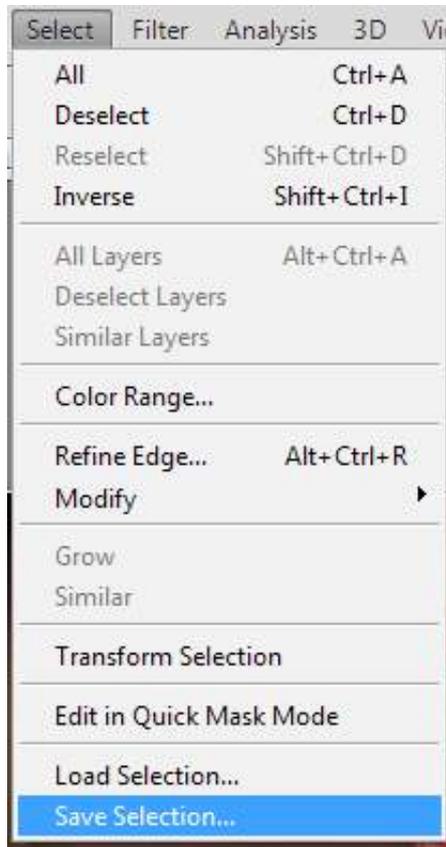


Fig 6.7 the Select menu

The Marquee Tools

The Marquee tools allow us to draw basic shapes with selections, fig 6.8. As with the Magic Wand tool, the selection can then be used to edit the image.

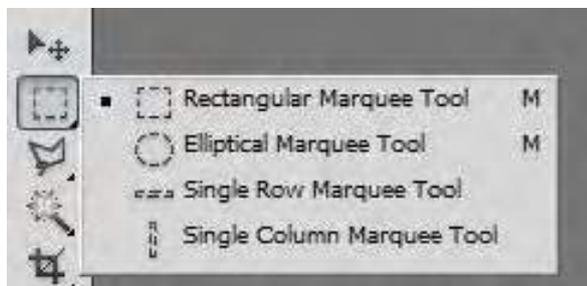


Fig 6.8 the Marquee selection tools

The Options bar for the Marquee tools is very similar in appearance to that of the Magic Wand tool. However, you will notice that you also have an option called Feather. By default, the Marquee tools will define a hard edged selection. However, by entering a pixel value in to the Feather option we can create a selection that will have a soft edge. Soft feathered selections can be very useful as they allow us to blend edits with underlying layers, fig 6.9.

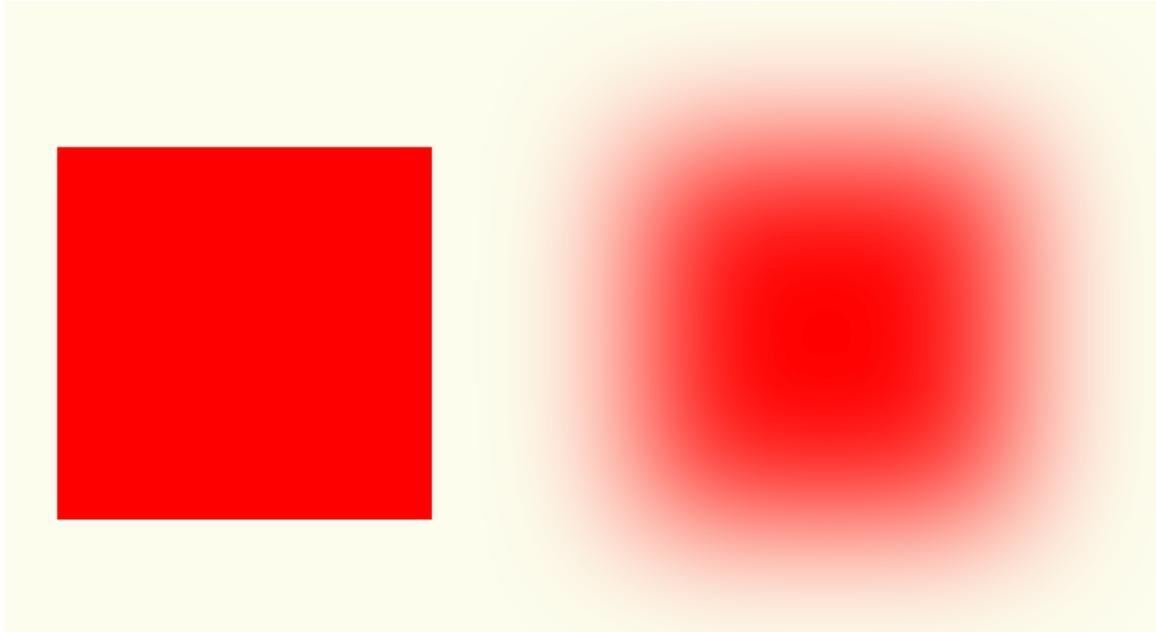


Fig 6.9 a hard edged selection and a feathered selection filled with the foreground colour

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As well as being able to edit the content of a selection on a layer that contains an image or design, we can also create a new empty layer and use the active selection to:

- Fill with a colour (fig 6.10)
- Stroke with an outline (fig 6.10)
- Paint or Clone inside (fig 6.10)
- Apply an Adjustment or Filter to the selected area (as was saw with the Magic Wand tool, fig 6.6 and 6.7)

The Fill and Stroke commands can be found in the Edit menu, fig 6.12.

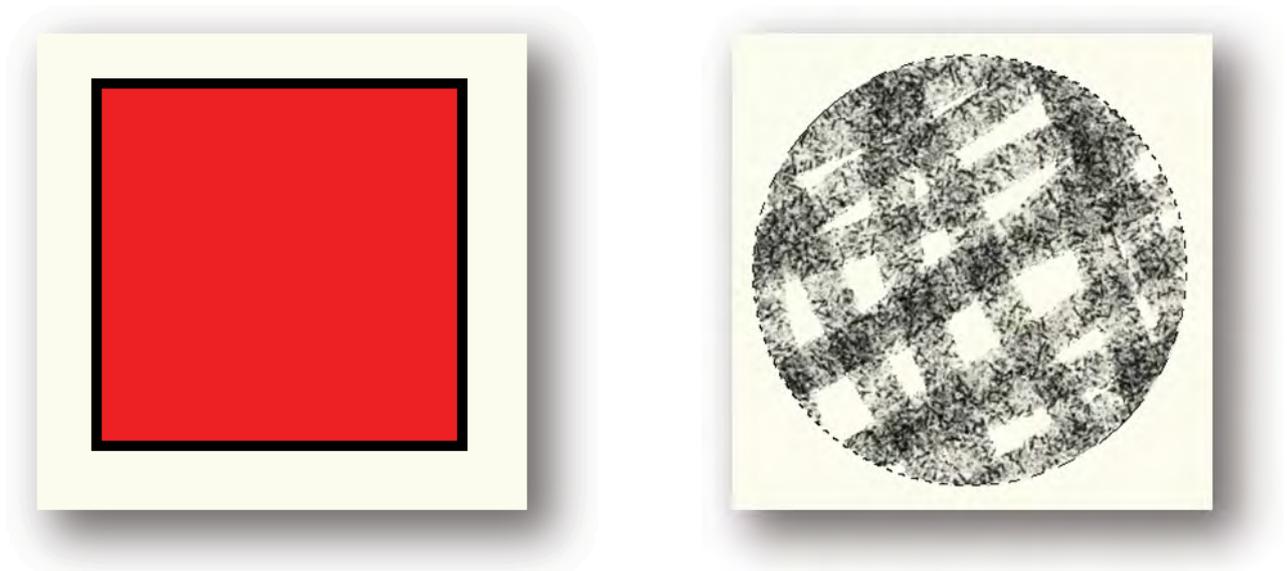


Fig 6.10 the square selection has had a red Fill and a black Stroke applied and the circular selection has been used to contain brush strokes created using the Brush tool.

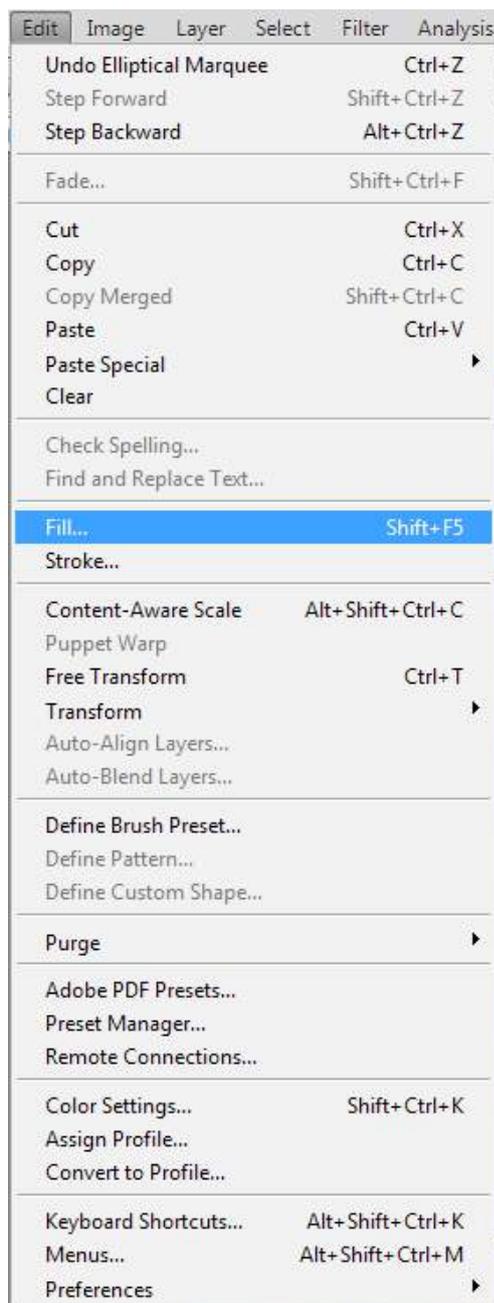


Fig 6.12 the Fill and Stroke commands in the Edit menu

Marquee Selection Modifier Keys

When drawing a selection using the Marquee tools there are a number of keys on the keyboard that will alter how the selection is drawn.

- Shift key – constrains the Rectangular and Elliptical Marquee tools to a perfect square or circle respectively.
- Alt key – draws a selection from the centre instead of the edge.
- Space bar – allows the selection to be moved during the drawing process.

- Shift key (after the selection is drawn) – temporarily chooses the Add to Selection option.
- Alt key (after the selection is drawn) – temporarily chooses the Subtract from Selection option.
- Shift and Alt - temporarily chooses the Intersect with Selection option.



Fig 6.13 the “Add to Selection” and “Subtract from Selection” options have been used create a more complex selection shape. The selection was then filled with a gradient using the Gradient tool.

The Lasso Tools

Another set of selection tools are the Lasso tools, fig 6.14. These tools are used to create more of a free-hand drawn selection.

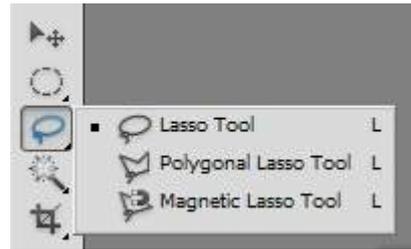


Fig 6.14 the Lasso tools

The Lasso tools comprise of:

- The Lasso tool – a completely hand drawn selection.
- The Polygonal Lasso tool – draws straight lines between clicked points.
- The Magnetic Lasso tool – used for drawing selections around image contents by detecting contrast changes around the edge of the subject.

Copying a Selected Item to a New Layer

The act of copying a selected item to a new layer is a crucial editing technique in Photoshop. It allows you to work non-destructively, by applying edits to a new layer instead of the original pixels that are located in the Background layer. It also allows you to duplicate items to create composite images (fig 6.15) or complex designs.

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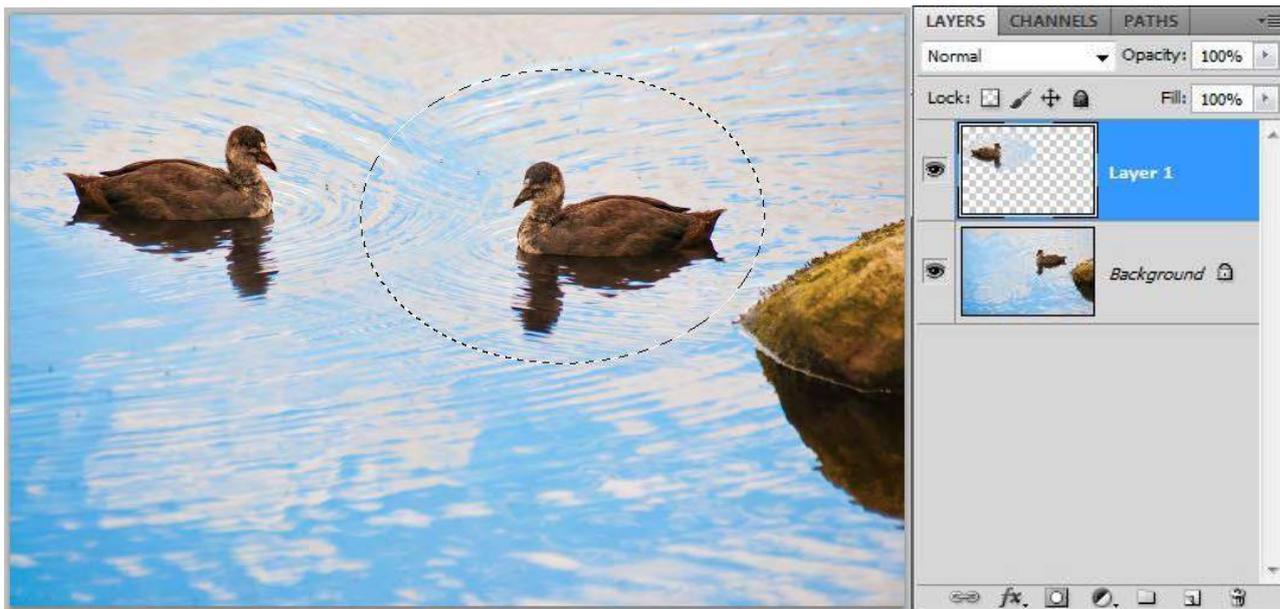


Fig 6.15 the bird has been selected and copied to a new layer, as indicated by the layers panel on the right.

There are a number of ways to copy an item to a new layer. Once you've made your selection, go to Layer menu and choose New>Layer Via Copy. Alternatively, you can use one of the most useful keyboard shortcuts in Photo shop to do the same task – Ctrl J. When you make the new layer it will appear as if nothing has changed, this is because the duplicate item will be in perfect register with the original image below. Select the Move tool (the first tool in the tool bar) and reposition the item as required. If you are using an image as in fig 6.15, a large feathered selection will help the new layer blend more effectively with the one below for a more seamless result.

It is often the case that you will wish the copies item to be of a different size or orientation to the original, fig 6.16 . This can be achieved by going to the Edit menu and choosing one of the Transform commands (covered in depth in book 2 of this series). In fig 6.16 the item has been scaled down slightly and flipped horizontally, so that it appears to be a little further away and swimming in the opposite direction. Once you've made your Transform edits, you must click on the tick in the Options bar in order to accept the changes (if you don't like what you've done, click on the X to cancel the edits).