

## Layer Mask Procedure

There are several ways that single elements from an image can be extracted from its background. In this example we will be using LAYER MASKS. This is a more advanced method but one that is easy to use once the technique has been mastered.

The following procedure assumes you want to remove surplus pixels from part of an image, the source image (the sailboat), and move it into a separate destination image (the picture of the Lake). You can use many different elements from images to create a final composite image. We are going to use just one in order to demonstrate the procedure necessary to extract the sailboat from its background and move it into the picture of the lake scene.



Figure 1



Figure 2

1. Open the source image and the destination image so both are visible on screen. Click the sailboat image to make it active. You could move the entire image to the destination image if you wanted too (select All from the Select menu) and then choose the **Move** tool and drag the image onto the open destination image.
2. However to reduce the amount of pixels being moved simply choose the **Lasso** tool and drag a rough selection around the picture element you wish to move. See above. Left click inside the rough selection (fig 2), keeping the mouse button held down drag the selection directly onto the Lake scene image (fig 3)



Figure 3

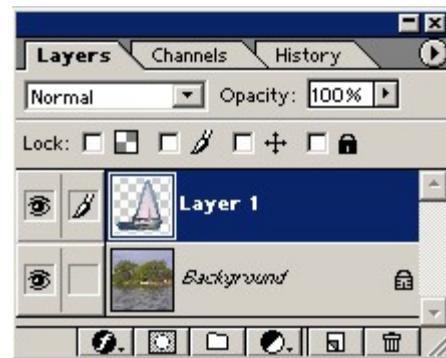


Figure 4

3. Release the mouse button when you see a plus sign next to the cursor.
4. A new layer will be automatically created and placed above the Background image of the lake scene (fig 4). Notice the transparent area around the sailboat and also surplus pixels still to be removed (layer 1 thumbnail)

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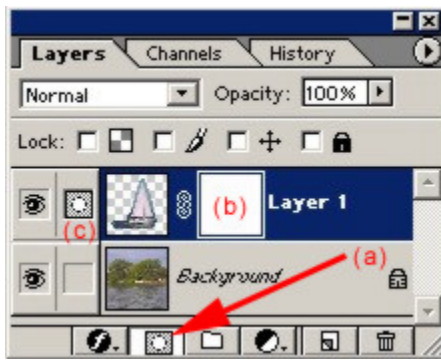


Figure 5

5. To remove the surplus pixels we can use a Layer mask. No image pixels are damaged during the masking stage; this is the main benefit. Make sure **Layer 1** is selected (fig 5). To create the mask simply click the layer mask icon (a). A blank Layer mask thumbnail will appear (b). Note it is important that the 'Indicates painting on the layer mask icon (c) appears in the layer palette. This means you are working on the mask and not the image you are working on (denoted by a paintbrush symbol).
6. Ensure that the Foreground colour is set to **Black** (a) (*Toolbox graphic opposite fig 6*), painting with Black removes the mask to reveal underlying layer pixels. To paint back the mask, hiding underlying pixels, switch the Foreground colour to **White**.
7. Select a suitable sized paintbrush (b) (*Toolbox graphic opposite fig 6*)



Figure 6

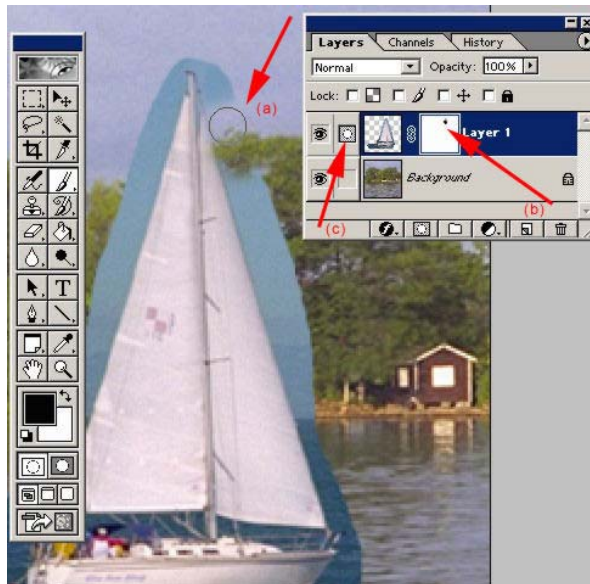


Figure 7

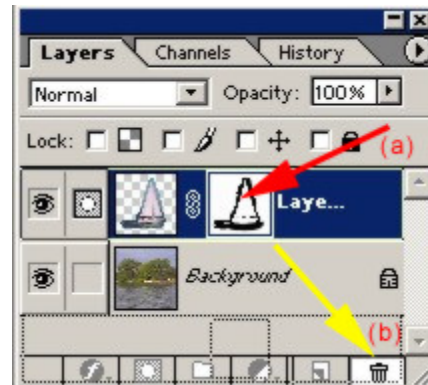


Figure 8

8. Adjust the brush size; use the square brackets on the keyboard (a) (fig 7). Double check **Black** is set as the Foreground colour and the Layer mask icon (c) is selected. Start to paint away the surplus pixels. Note the area you paint over will appear as a dark mark in the Layer mask thumbnail (b).
9. If you make a mistake switch the Foreground colour to **White** and paint back the mask. Switch back to **Black** to continue. Once you have finished the Layer mask it will be necessary to 'Apply' the mask to permanently remove the 'surplus' pixels. To do so click the Mask Thumbnail (a) (fig 8), drag to the trashcan (b).

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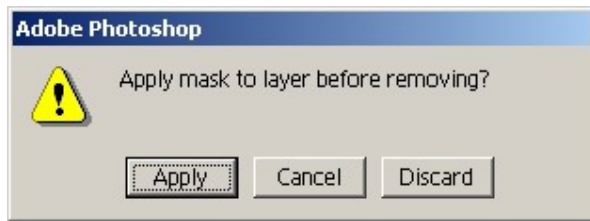


Figure 9

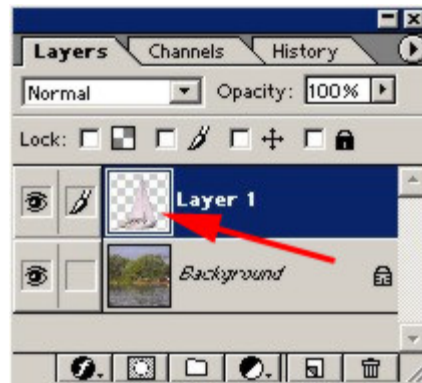


Figure 10

10. The above dialog box will appear. To complete the process click Apply (this will remove the surplus pixels based on the Layer mask). To back off, click Discard (this means you dump the mask and leave the layer pixels untouched). Click Cancel if you wish to return to the Layer palette to make further adjustments.

11. Once the **Apply** button (fig 9) is clicked the Layer 1 image (sailboat in this case) will be on a transparent background. This will allow any underlying Layer detail (from the Lake scene) to show through where there is transparency.



Figure 11

12. The sailboat image on Layer 1 can now be independently moved to any position. First check that the Sailboat **Layer 1** is selected, then choose the **Move** tool from the Toolbox, either move the cursor into the document window and click on the sailboat and drag to re-position or click the sailboat and then use the keyboard cursor movement arrow keys.

13. Remember a single press of the arrow key will move the layer element one pixel. To move the layer element by 10 pixels at a time hold down the Shift key and press the arrow key.

14. The finished composite (fig 11).

15. The use of Layers and Layer masks is at the very heart of creativity in PhotoShop. Spend time perfecting the technique, have fun!