

Photoshop Elements SIG - November 11, 2006

by John Durrett

Using Selections

Selection tools are used for many basic reasons:

1. To isolate a part of the picture to copy that selection.
2. To delete that selection.
3. To replace that selection with another image or part of a picture.
4. To apply an adjustment to only that part of the picture.
5. To restrict the paint from a brush to only that selection.

The selection tools are contained in the upper part of the Tool Bar. The Rectangular and Elliptical Marquee tools are in the first tool group. In the second group we have the Lasso tool, the Magnetic Lasso tool, and the Polygonal Lasso tool. The next selection tool is the Magic Wand tool, which has its own icon. The last selection tool is the Magic Selection Brush tool. The Tool Bar choices for these selection tools are shown on the right.



Replacing People (or Faces) in Pictures

One of the most common requests is to replace people in pictures. How do you cut someone out of one photo and put them into another photo? We are going to work a variation on that theme today. Ever take a group picture of the family and there is always someone who is not smiling, or twitching, or looking away? If you have taken multiple pictures, then this approach can help. We will work on a picture of two people. Look at Photo #1 and Photo #2.

Let's assume that we like the Shelia's smiling face from Photo #1, but we don't want to see that photo she is holding. And we prefer the full view of Jerry's tee shirt in Photo#2. What we need to do is select Shelia's head from the first picture and move it onto the second picture. This is a good example, because to pull this off we need to select, copy and paste, resize, and recolor/recontrast.

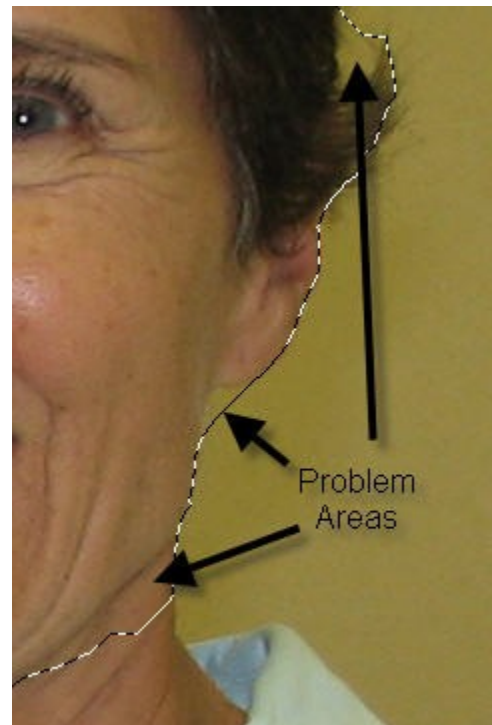


Photo 1



Photo 2

We want to get a selection of her smiling head from Photo #1. So use the **Zoom tool** and zoom in until her head takes up most of the screen. Then get the **Magnetic Lasso tool**. Click on the border of her face and slowly drag the tool around the outside of her head. Complete the selection of her head. Since there is such a great contrast between her head and the wall in the background, everything works well, except for a couple of areas. We can adjust the selection by changing to the **Polygonal Selection tool** and choosing Subtract from selection as the icon in the Options bar. When we do that, we can click and drag the Polygonal tool to remove those problem areas from the main selection. (in your photo, you might also have to use the Add to selection)



Once the final selection is made, we do an **Edit > Copy (or Ctrl +C)** to put a copy of her head on the computer clipboard. Then go to Photo #2 and add a New Layer in the layers palette. With the new layer active, do an **Edit > Paste (or Ctrl + V)** and you will see a copy of Shelia's head on the new layer. Be sure to **Save your file as a PSD** at this point.

Resizing the Moved Head

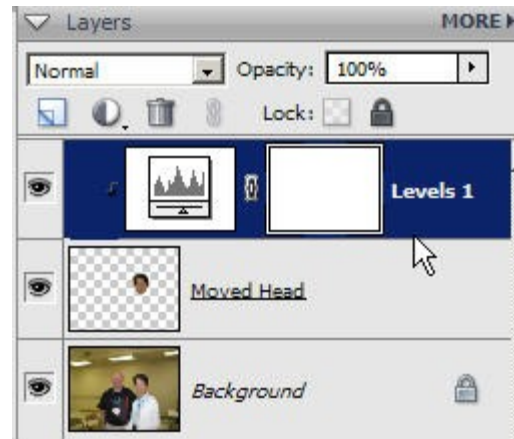
We still have two steps to go: resize her head, and adjust the color/contrast. Now, on Photo #2, **select the Move Tool** from the tool bar (at the top). Then click on the head and move it over the correct area. **DO NOT RESIZE JUST YET**. While you can resize with the Move tool, I like to use the **Free Transform tool** to do this. **Select Image > Transform > Free Transform**.

This puts a nice solid black rectangle around the head. Now, grab the upper right corner of the Transform box, and move the corner in (or out) to resize the head while maintaining proportions. You can always use the side circles to change the proportion of the head to fit the new photo. Once this looks right, then **set the transform by clicking on the Green Check Mark**. (In Photoshop 3 and 4, this is a black check mark at the top on the Options bar.) If you don't like what you see with the transform, then click the No Transform (looks like a circle with a line through it).

Adjusting the Color/Contrast

In most cases, the color/contrast of the selection that you just moved will be off from the color/contrast of the new photo. To correct this, we need to add a Levels layer just above the new layer with the head. You can use the **Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Levels** and accept the defaults to get the new levels layer, or you can choose from the **Create Adjustment Layer icon > Levels** at top of the Layers palette. Accept the default of the Levels layer for now. Now, and most importantly, we need to isolate the Levels layer to affect only the layer with the head. To do that, **hold down your Alt key and move your mouse between the head layer and the levels layer in the palette until the mouse**

turns into two circles (an empty circle over a black circle). **When you see these circles, click your mouse.** The upper Levels layer will appear to shift to the right. That's what you want.



Now, any changes to the Levels layer will affect the moved head only. **Double click on the histogram icon** in the Levels layer and **make your adjustments to match the color and contrast of the Photo #2**. When you are done, **click Ok to set the Levels layer**. Here is the cropped final version of the photo.

Now you can have fun with your own photos.



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