

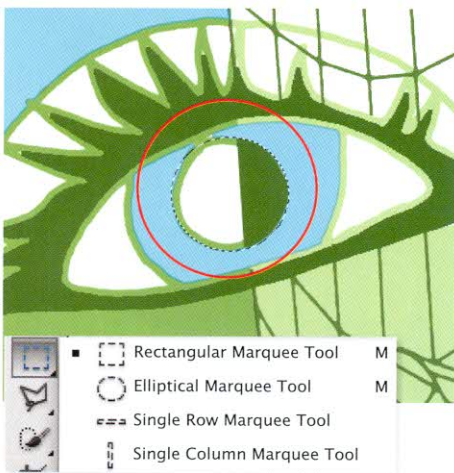
# 28 cutout techniques

Photoshop offers numerous ways to select and cut out specific areas from an image layer, allowing you to isolate key aspects of your subject from background clutter or other unwanted elements. The principal reason for using these tools is that they allow you to quickly and efficiently separate an object or area of your image. However, sometimes one tool just won't be enough, so you should make use of multiple tools to get the job done. Getting to know and understand how these tools work is a primary consideration of digital-image making.

These two pages offer an overview of cutout techniques, and pages 82–91 describe some of the ways in which to use these tools individually. However, you should also practice using a combination of the tools in order to master cutouts effectively.

## The Rectangular and Elliptical Marquee tools

provide an effective way of cutting out squares, rectangles, and circles. Although these tools are good for mechanical shapes and objects, or perfectly circular selections, they become less effective for more organic shapes, and are often best used in combination with other tools.



The Marquee selection tools allow for quick selection and editing, and are often best combined with others for refinement.

**The Lasso, Polygonal Lasso, and Magnetic Lasso** are probably the most versatile of the cutout tools. They allow you to select a variety of shapes effectively, including organic shapes.

Although the Lasso tool can be difficult to master if you do not have good mouse control, you can add to or remove from your selection to refine it, using either the Lasso, Polygonal Lasso, or Magnetic Lasso.

**The Polygonal Lasso** creates straight lines between points every time you click, and is therefore an effective method for selecting objects such as buildings, cars, and furniture. However, it can also be an effective way of quickly selecting more organic shapes that can then be refined using the Lasso tool.

**The Magnetic Lasso** is particularly effective for cutting out objects from contrasting backgrounds. It makes use of contrasting colors and tones to identify the selection, although it is used in a similar way to the Lasso, allowing you to define the area you want with the cursor.

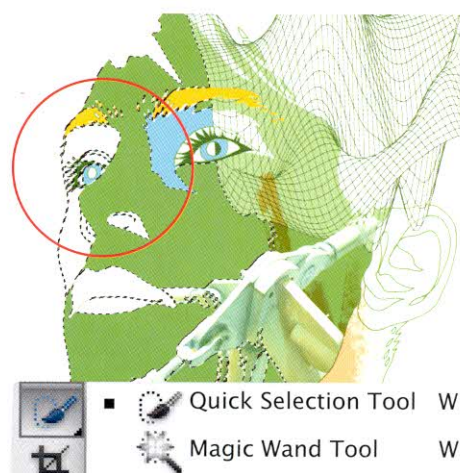
**The Quick Selection tool** uses a user-defined brush size to create an initial selection area. As you start to move the cursor over the object, the selection area will expand automatically, creating selection boundaries based upon tonal and color differences between your chosen object and



These tools form the backbone of selection and refining for many digital artists.

surrounding areas of the image—much in the same way as the Magnetic Lasso tool. Once an initial selection is defined, the tool will recognize the boundaries of your selected image and rapidly expand the selection area. This tool can be very effective for clearly defined objects, but tends to become less effective where there is little contrast between your chosen selection area and the parts of the image.

**The Magic Wand** tool selects areas of the image based on color and tone. The Tolerance setting—found in the Tool Options bar—determines the variation between the pixel color you select and other similar colors, effectively limiting or expanding the selected areas of color within your image. This tool is good at selecting areas of generally flat color, such as skies, but is less effective where tolerances have to be set high—for example, where large contrasts in tone created by shadows or highlights are found. The Magic Wand tool is often best used in combination with the Lasso tools, as a way of quickly selecting areas that can be later refined.

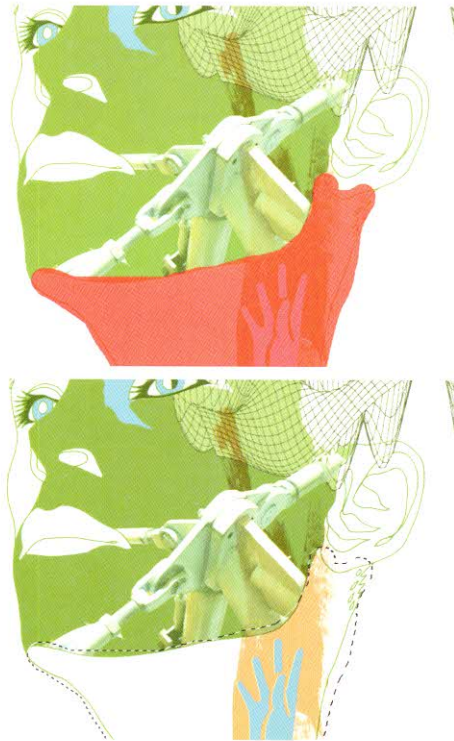
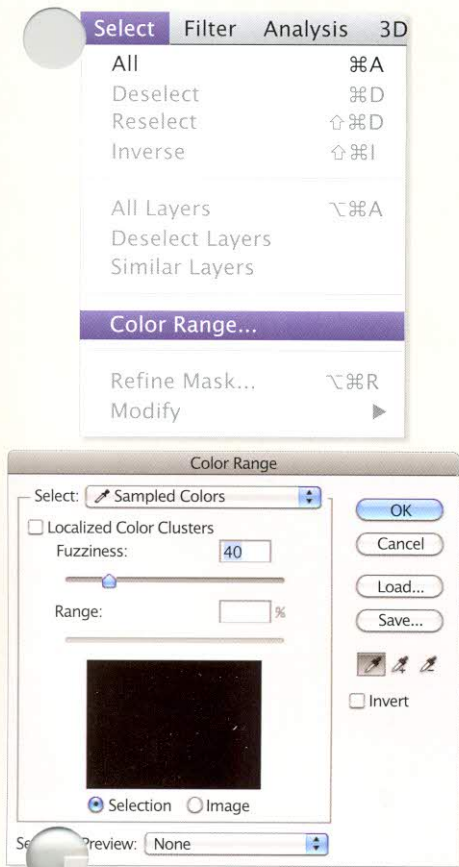


The Quick Selection and Magic Wand tools are effective for rapid selection of large areas of an image.

**The Color Range** command (Select > Color Range) makes a selection based upon a specific color or set of colors. While similar to the Magic Wand tool, it is less localized and samples the entire image. It also provides a selection preview that can be useful for adjusting and refining the selection. This tool is highly effective when used to separate sketches and drawings from their backgrounds, or selecting large areas of color from an entire image.

**The Quick Mask** lets you switch between the standard tools and the mask-painting mode. In this mode, you can paint a mask using the Brush, Pencil, and Fill tools, with the mask appearing as a red overlay on the selected image area. When you switch back to the normal mode (press the Quick Mask button again), areas that are not painted will be selected, and painted areas will be deselected. This tool is a powerful way of creating highly refined selections, although it relies to some extent on good mouse control. The ability to create selections that have different opacities, as well as use the variety of brush shapes and sizes to build your selection area, makes this a highly effective method of selection for complex cutouts.

**The Layer Mask** allows you to add a mask to a layer in order to reveal or hide parts of that layer. Although not strictly a cutout method, with a Layer Mask you can use similar techniques as the Quick Mask mode in application, and it is therefore an effective way of separating parts of a layer from unwanted elements. The advantage of a Layer Mask is that it is a non-destructive form of image editing—by simply hiding rather than deleting areas of your image, mistakes can be easily rectified later. This option, however, is not so effective when moving one part of a layer to a separate document, but is useful when compositing layers in a single document. Use other selection tools to define an area before creating the Layer Mask, and build a mask based upon that selection rather than a blank mask that needs editing.



Use the Quick Mask mode (bottom of the Toolbar) in combination with the Brush, Pencil, and Fill tools to "paint in" areas for masking and selection.

