

Using Layer Masks

ADDING LAYER MASKS

Layer masks are indispensable to using Photoshop effectively because they allow you to hide or reveal areas within a layer, creating smooth, seamless transitions to the other layers in the stack. There are three ways to add a Layer Mask, through the Layer Palette, through the Layer Menu and in the Mask Palette.

Via the Layers or Masks Palette

Click the Add Layer Mask button at the bottom of the Layers Palette, or in the upper right hand corner of the Masks Palette. Clicking on the Add Layer Mask Icon automatically creates a mask that reveals all the Layer Contents with nothing hidden. **TIP:** Start with a selection of the area you want to mask, then click this button to automatically create a mask revealing the selection contents and masking the rest of the layer contents.

Via the Layer Menu

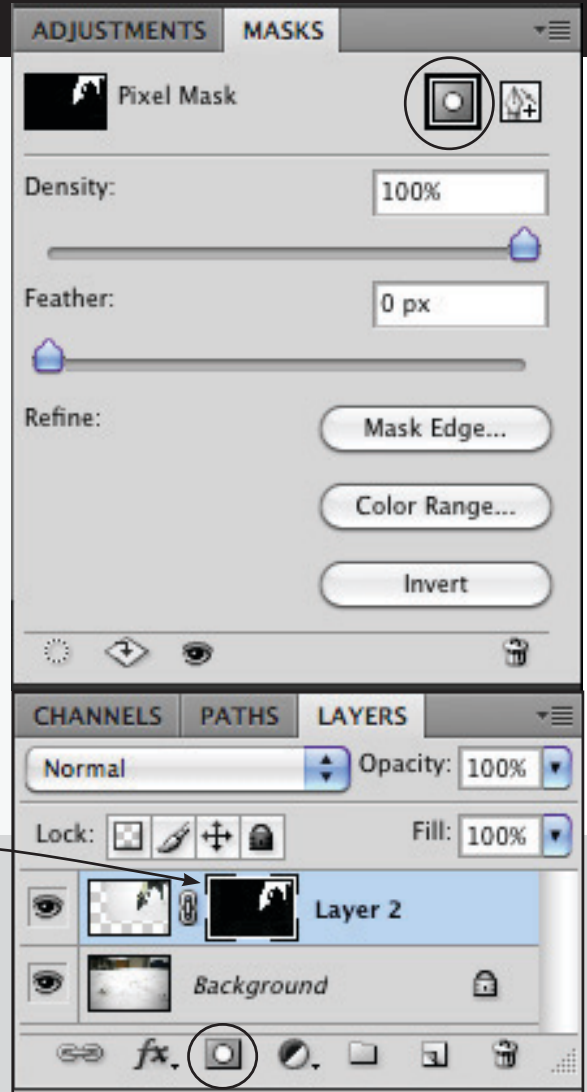
Go to the Layer > Add Layer Mask. Adding a Layer Mask through the Layer Menu leads to you a variety of options: Reveal All, Hide All, Reveal Selection and Hide Selection.

THE MASKS PALETTE

Dedicated to adding and editing Layer Masks. To use it to edit a layer mask, you must first select the layer mask icon in the Layers Palette.

Add a Layer Mask Buttons (circled)

Adds a Layer Mask to the selected Layer. (It is also called a Pixel Mask to distinguish it from Vector Mask.) Using this button on a background layer will convert it to a regular layer and then add a layer mask.



LAYER MASKS EDITING TOOLS

Painting Tools

Use tools such as the Brush Tool (B), Paint Bucket Tool (G), or Gradient Tool (G) to edit a Layer Mask

Painting with White Reveals

the contents of your Layer.

Toggle

Click to toggle between the Foreground and Background colors, or use the shortcut X on your keyboard.

Painting with Black Conceals

the contents of your Layer.

TIP: *The foreground and background colors always default to gray-scale when the mask is active.*

A Selected Layer Mask

A layer mask must be selected in order to edit it with a paintbrush or in the Masks Palette.

TIP: You can also right-click on the layer mask to apply, delete, or disable/enable the visibility of the layer mask.

EDITING LAYER MASKS

To edit a layer mask:

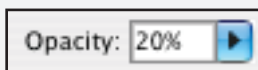
- Select the Mask you want to edit.
- (Option 1) Edit the mask with any of the paint tools. This includes the Brush Tool, Gradient Tool, and Paint Bucket Tool. Paint with white to reveal the layer contents; paint with black to hide the layer contents.
- Use tools such as the Polygonal Lasso to select an area before painting it with the brush for easier precision. Vary the Brush opacity for greater control over how heavy the brush effect is (see the explanation below).

- (Option 2) You can also edit the mask in the Masks Palette with the Color Range adjustment. Or use the Invert command to toggle which areas of the mask are revealed.

TIP: Sometimes it's simpler to select what you don't want, and then Invert the mask.

- Use the Mask Edge command in the Masks Palette to refine the edge of your mask to improve the blending.
- Complete any finishing touches in blending the mask with the Brush Tool until you are satisfied with the result.

Use the Opacity



Instead of painting only in shades of gray, paint with black or white and try varying your brush opacity. This gives you greater creative control when editing, and also a number as a point of reference for the intensity.

TIP: The numbers on the keyboard act as shortcuts to the opacity percentage while the Brush Tool is active. (Ex. 2=20%, 6=60%, etc., except for 0=100%)

The Masks Palette

Add a Pixel Mask

Adds a Layer Mask to the selected Layer. (It is called a Pixel Mask to distinguish it from the Vector Mask button in this palette.)

Density

Changes the Opacity of the Layer Mask

Feather

Changes the Feather of the Mask edge, softening the transition.

Refine

Offers three dialogs for refining the mask edge.

Mask Edge

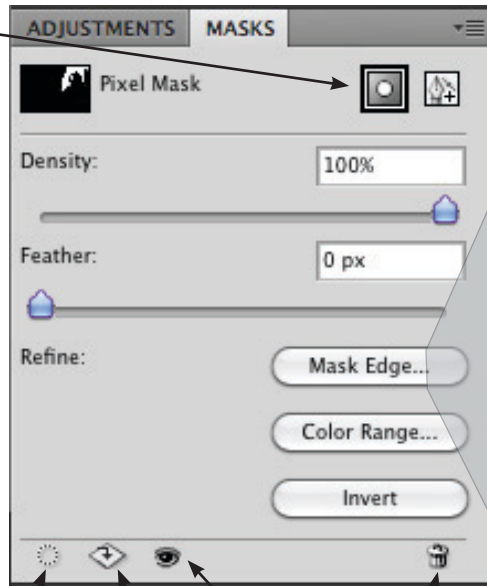
Offers the same dialog as Refine Edge and allows you to preview the mask, change the Feather, Contrast, Radius, and also Smooth the mask edge, or Contract or Expand it.

Color Range

Allows you to edit your mask by selecting colors with an eyedropper.

Invert

Inverts the black and white areas of the mask.



Load as Selection Apply Mask Toggle Mask Visibility Delete Mask

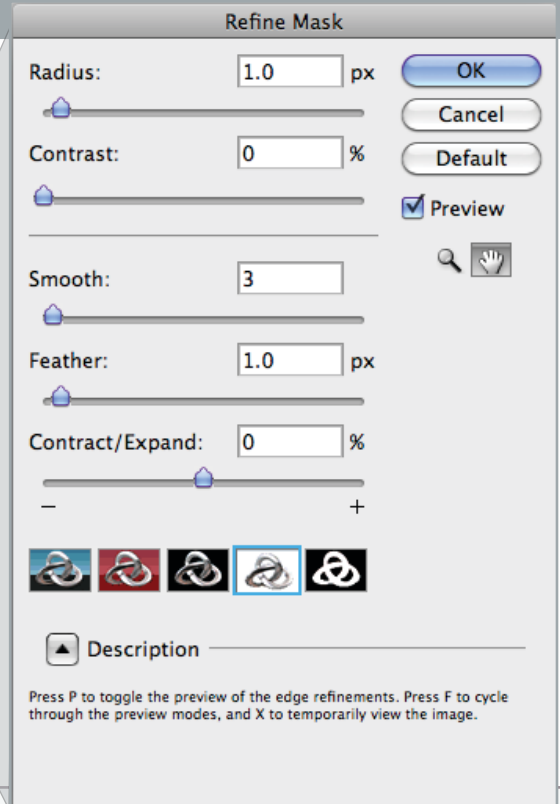
THE REFINE MASK DIALOG

This dialog gives you the same controls over a mask that are also available in the Refine Edge dialog in the Select Menu.

Radius Increase Radius to improve the edge in areas with soft transitions or fine details. Artifacts can be removed with the Contrast slider.

Contrast Increase Contrast to make soft edges crisp, and remove fuzzy artifacts along the selection edge.

Smooth Removes jagged edges along a selection edge. Some fine detail may



be recovered with the Radius slider.

Feather Softens the selection edge with a uniform blur. Use Radius for more refined results.

Contract/Expand Decrease to contract the mask edge. Increase to expand the mask edge.

Preview Modes Previews the mask as: a selection, as a Quick Mask, on Black Matte, on a White Matte, and preview just the mask itself.

TIP: Press P to toggle the preview of the Refine Mask changes, Press F to cycle through the preview modes, and press X to temporarily view the image.

Layer Masks in the Layer Palette

Selected Layer Mask

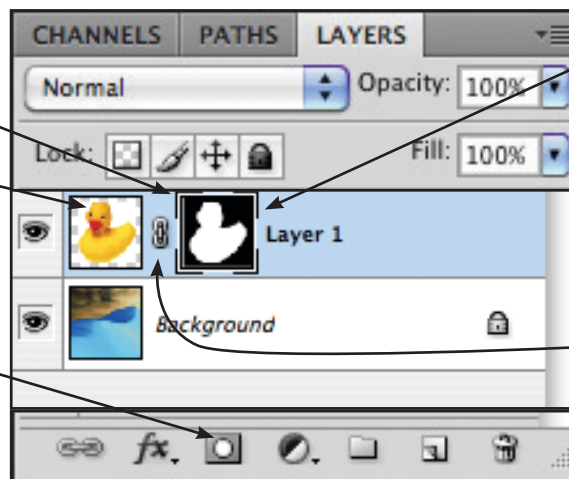
The outline indicates that you are editing the layer mask.

Layer Thumbnail

A thumbnail of the content of the Layer. If this is selected, you will be painting on your layer instead of the mask!

Add Layer Mask Button

Clicking this button adds a Layer Mask to whichever Layer is active. If there is an active selection, it by default makes the selection visible and hides the rest of the Layer Contents.



Layer Mask Thumbnail

A thumbnail of the contents of your Layer Mask. White indicates the areas that are visible. Black indicates the areas that are hidden.

TIP: Command+Click on the Layer Mask thumbnail to load it as a selection (PC: Ctrl+Click).

Link

Indicates that the movement of the Layer Contents and the Layer Mask are linked. If this is not visible, the Layer Contents or Layer Mask may be moved independently.