

Using Layer Masks (CS6)

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

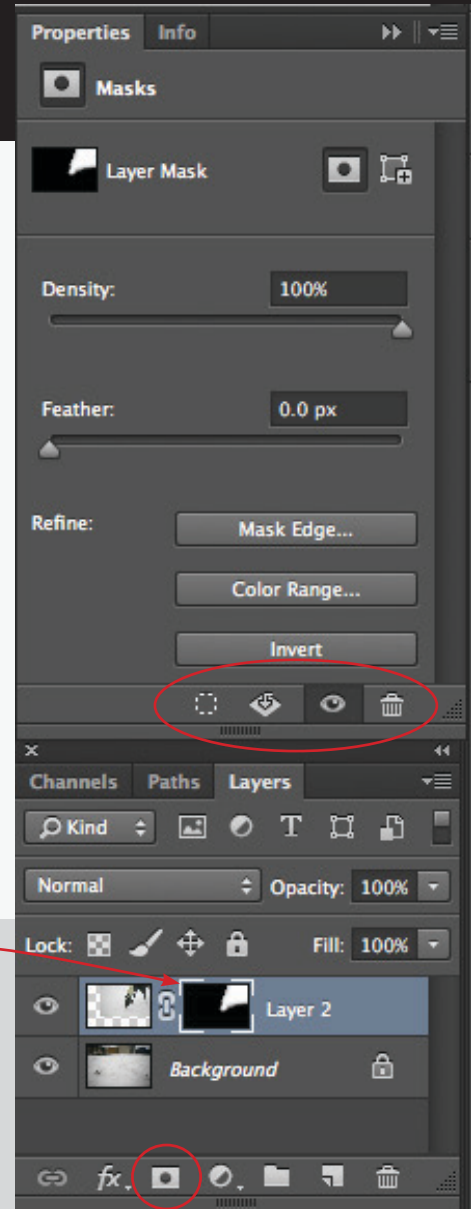
Go to the Layer > Add Layer Mask. Adding a Layer Mask through the Layer Menu leads to you a variety of options: Reveal All, Hide All, Reveal Selection and Hide Selection.

Properties Palette

Dedicated to editing the properties of masks and adjustment layers.

Layer Mask Buttons (circled)

From left to right, loads the layer mask as a selection, makes the selected layer clipped to the layer below, toggles the visibility of the layer mask, deletes the layer mask.



Layer Mask 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 Black Conceals 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 White Reveals the contents of your Layer.

TIP: The foreground and background colors always default to grayscale 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 Properties 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

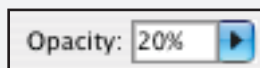
To edit a layer mask:

- 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.



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%)

Mask Icon

Indicates that you are editing a layer mask.

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

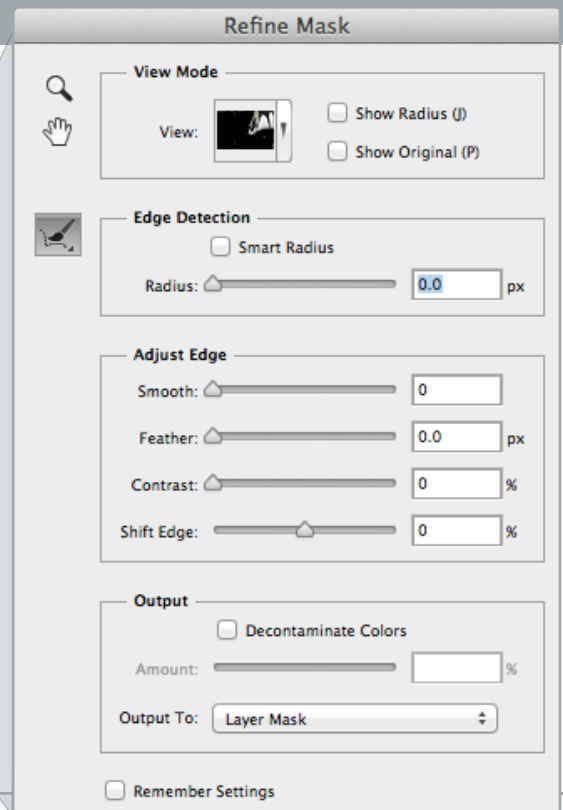
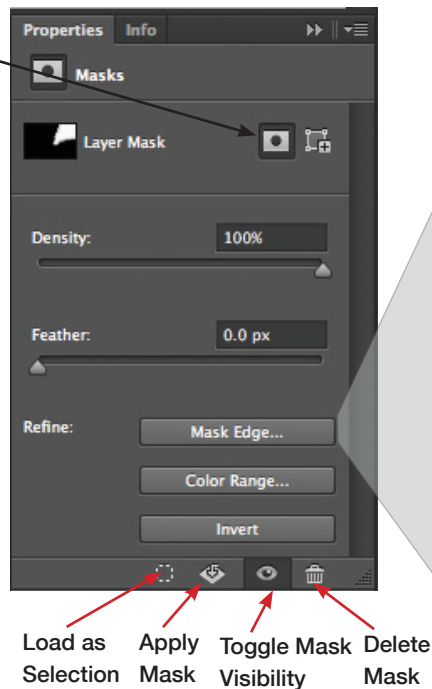
Offers the same dialog as Refine Edge and allows you to preview the mask, change the Feather, Contrast, Radius, and also Smooth the mask edge, or Contract or Expand it.

Color Range

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

Invert

Inverts the black and white areas of the mask.



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.

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

Smart Radius automatically adapts radius to image edges

Radius the size of the refinement area

Smooth Removes jagged edges along a selection edge.

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

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

Shift Edge Decrease to contract the mask edge. Increase to expand the mask edge.

Decontaminate Colors remove color fringe from the image

Output to: applies the refinements to the selected output

Layer Masks in the Layer Palette

Selected Layer Mask

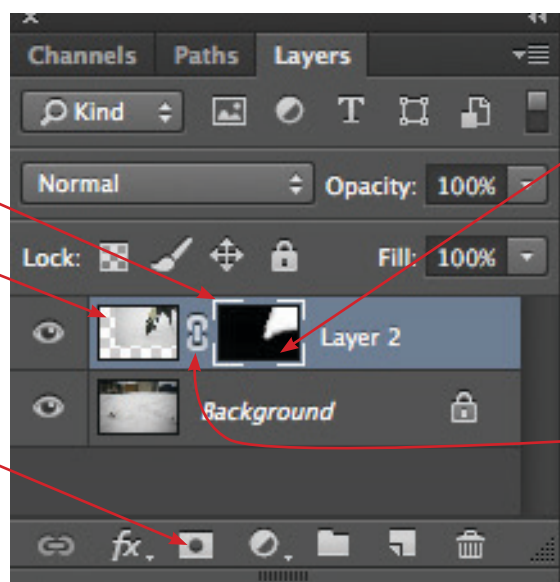
The outline indicates that you are editing the layer mask.

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.