

COVERS
PHOTOSHOP

3.0

009

Photoshop Techniques

How to

CUT OUT AN OBJECT FROM IT'S BACKGROUND.

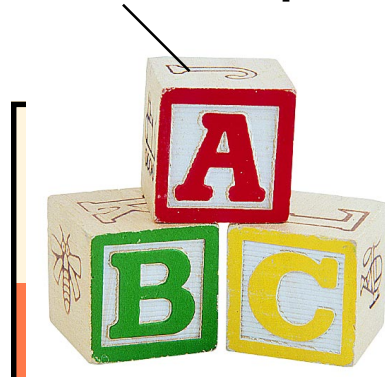
If you have ever placed images from Photoshop into a page layout, you have probably run into the frustrating “white box.”

Take a typical scenario: You’ve scanned in a picture for a brochure. In Photoshop, you carefully erase the background, leaving only the object you want. Then you place it into your layout. Suddenly, your clean cut out object has a large white box obscuring the background color!

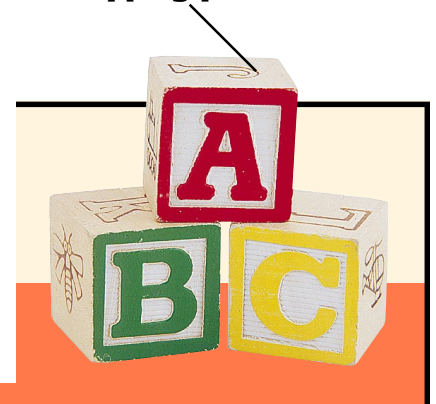
The problem: When you erased the background of your image in Photoshop, you did not *remove* the background, you simply made it *white*. When you placed this image into your page layout, it still had a white background that showed up as a “white box” around your object.

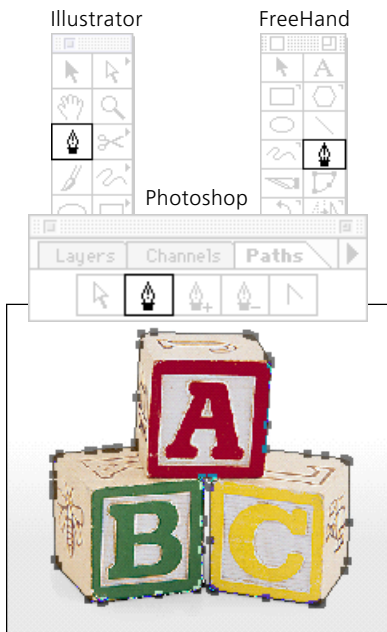
To cut out a photo’s background and avoid this annoying problem, use the following technique to create a “clipping path” for your object in Photoshop.

**Background deleted to
white in Photoshop...**



**Object cut out with
a clipping path...**





Step 1

Using a clipping path (the basics)

Step 1

Outline the object using Photoshop's pen tool.

The pen tool in Photoshop works similarly to the pen tools in either Adobe Illustrator or Aldus FreeHand.

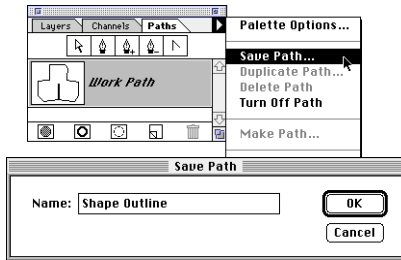
A: Make sure the Paths palette is visible.

Note: If the Paths palette is not already visible, choose Palettes > Show Paths from the Window menu.

B: Outline your object with the pen tool.

Carefully draw a path around the edges of your object. You can draw paths using straight lines or smooth curves.

Note: If you are not yet comfortable using the pen tool, you can convert a standard selection outline into a path (see opposite page).



Step 2

Step 2

Save your path.

Choose Save Path from the Paths sub-menu.

The Save Path dialog box should come up. Name the path (we've named our example "Shape Outline"). Click OK.

Step 3

Make your path a clipping path.

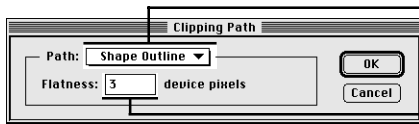
A: Choose Clipping Path from the Paths sub-menu.

You will be presented with the Clipping Path dialog box.

B: Choose your saved path from the Path pop-up menu.

C: Enter a flatness value.

Flatness reduces a path's complexity on the printer. Usually a setting of 3 to 6 is good. Too high a flatness setting may result in distorted edges around your object when printed.



Step 4

Save your object as an EPS file.

A: Choose Save Copy from the File menu.

B: Choose EPS from the Format pop-up menu.

Note: The clipping path will only work with an EPS format.

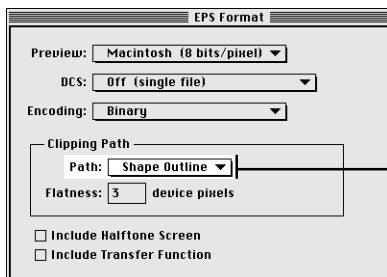
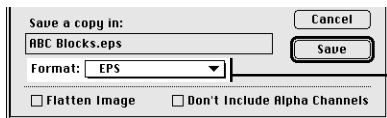
C: Name your file and click Save.

You will be presented with the EPS Format dialog box.

D: Confirm your path is set as the clipping path.

Click OK to save the file.

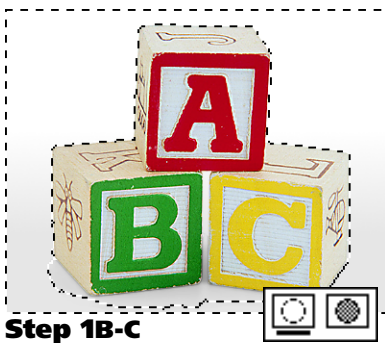
You can place the resulting EPS into any standard page layout. The object will be cut out without any background to get in your way (see cover example).



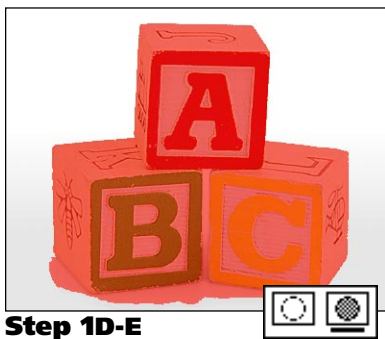
Option: Making a path from a selection



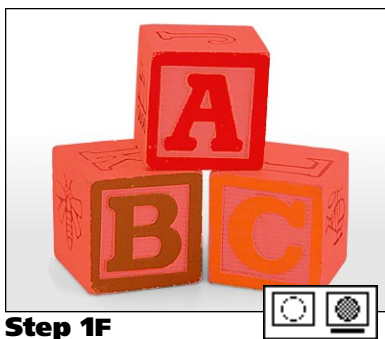
Step 1A



Step 1B-C



Step 1D-E



Step 1F



Step 1G

You can also use Photoshop's other selection tools to outline your shape. Replace Step 1 in the previous technique with the following two steps.

Step 1

Outline the object with Photoshop's selection tools.

There are dozens of ways to use Photoshop's selection tools. The following example shows one approach to selecting an object photographed on a flat background. For your image, use whatever approach is most comfortable for you.

A: Select several areas of the background color.

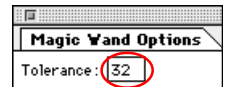
- Use the Lasso tool to outline parts of the background. Don't worry about getting too close to the image, we will take care of that in the next step.

Note: Hold down the Shift key to select more than one area.

B: Choose Grow from the Select menu.

Photoshop automatically expands the selection to outline all the nearby areas that are close to those colors you have already selected.

Note: You can control the Grow command's sensitivity by double-clicking on the Magic Wand in the toolbox and changing the tolerance setting.



C: Examine the resulting selection outline.

The grow command will rarely create a perfect selection. Repeat steps A & B with different Magic Wand settings to get the cleanest selection you can.

D: Choose Inverse from the Select menu.

In the previous steps, you have selected your object's background. The Inverse command switches that—selecting the object itself.

E: Click on the Quick Mask mode icon in the tool palette.

When you click the Quick Mask icon, Photoshop automatically replaces your selected area with a red overlay.

Note: If your screen does not look like the example to the left, double-click on the Quick Mask icon and choose "Selected Areas."



F: Clean up the Mask over your object.

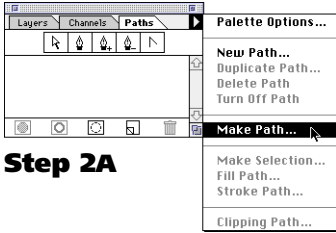
By using a combination of Photoshop's drawing and erasing tools, you can clean up your selection mask.

Note: Photoshop 3.0's Eraser tool is more flexible for this type of work. You can control and change the eraser's size and shape.

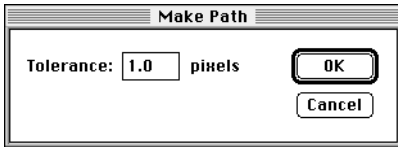
G: Click on the Standard mode icon in the tool palette.

The mask you cleaned up in the previous step is changed back into a selection outline. If you have done everything correctly, you should see a moving dotted line outlining your object.

Step 2



Step 2A



Step 2B



Step 2C

Convert the selection outline to a saved path.

Once you have created a selection outline for your shape, Photoshop can automatically convert that selection to a path.

A: Choose Make Path from the Paths sub-menu.

You will be presented with the Tolerance dialog box. This controls how tightly your path will conform to the original selection.

B: Enter a tolerance amount and click OK.

The tolerance setting controls how tight Photoshop will try to be when turning your selection outline into a path. The larger the tolerance setting, the looser your path will be. Try 1 or 2 pixels to start with.

C: Inspect the path.

Look at the quality of your path. How well did it keep the shape of your original selection? How many points does it have? A path with too many points may cause printing errors later. If your path has more points than necessary, return to Step A and use a larger tolerance setting.

Note: You want to use as few points in your path as possible.

Excessive points can cause longer printing times and printer errors.

To complete your clipping path EPS, continue with Steps 2-4 back on Page 2.



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