**Photoshop Techniques**

## How to create a
# MONTAGE OF IMAGES USING LAYER MASKS.

Over the last few years the photographic montage has become very popular. Designers, illustrators and photographers can create involved images made up of several different pictures.
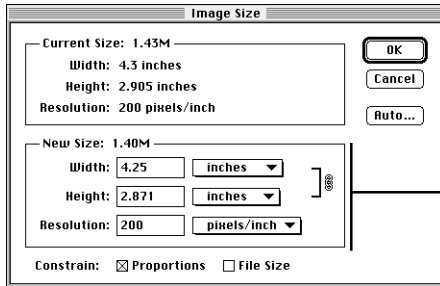
One of the trademarks of this look is that the individual images blend and flow together.

In the past creating an image like the one below took a great deal of work in Photoshop. Today, with Photoshop 3.0's new Layer tools, the job is much easier.

*Note: If you are new to using Layer Masks, refer to issue #022 before using this technique.*
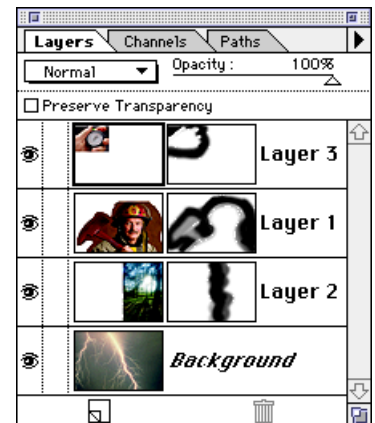
## Step 1

### Prepare your background image.

**A:** **Choose an image to serve as the background canvas.**
This image will be the base. Your montage will be built up from this image.

*Tip: Create an empty Photoshop file if you want your montage to be on top of a white background.*

**B:** **Choose Image Size from the Image menu.**
This is important. This is the point when you should set the final size and resolution for your image. Every other image in your montage will be sized to work on this first photo.

*Note: In the cover example, we set the background image to a width of 4.5 inches and a resolution of 200 pixels per inch.*

## Step 2

### Prepare a photo to add to your montage.

**A:** **Open an image you want to add to your montage.**
In this case we have opened the photo of a fireman.

**B:** **Choose Image Size from the Image menu.**
In Step 1, you decided on the size and resolution for your final image. Now, resize your new image to fit on your montage.

*Tip: You can "eyeball" the size of your new image to see how it will fit. Make sure the zoom ratio are the same in both your images. (Those are the numbers in your picture's title bar.)*

## Step 3

### Drag the new photo onto the montage image.

**A:** **Use the Lasso to create a loose selection.**
*Shortcut: Press L to choose the Lasso tool.*

Leave plenty of room around the edge of your object . Don't worry about being perfect, you will fade the edges later.

**B:** **Drag your selection over to the final image.**
Make sure both Photoshop files are open on your screen. Click-and-drag the selection from one window to the other. See the example at the left.

*Note: Photoshop 3.0 supports dragging selections between open documents. This saves time over the old approach of copying and then pasting your selections.*

**C:** **Position the new graphic on your original image.**
Click-and-drag the floating selection to move the object.

*Note: Do not deselect your object after this step. It must still be selected for the next step.*

## Step 4

### Name the new layer and give it a Layer Mask.

After completing the last step, a temporary layer called "Floating Selection" should be visible in the Layers Palette.

**A:** **Click on the New Layer icon in the Layers Palette.**
Clicking this icon will bring up a dialog box that allows you to name your floating selection. Name it and click OK.

Naming the floating selection makes it a permanent layer.

*Shortcut:* *Hold down Option while clicking on the New Layer icon to automatically name the layer "Layer 1." (PC: Hold down ATL)*

**B:** **Choose Add Layer Mask from the Layers menu.**
The Layer Mask is represented by a white box to the right of the layer's original thumbnail.

A Layer Mask lets you control how your object will blend into the background.
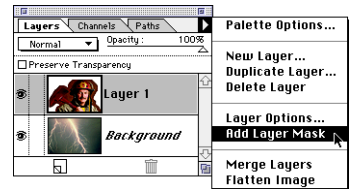
*Note:* *When you create the Layer Mask, it should have a dark box around it. This indicates when the mask is active to be drawn on. You can activate it at any time by clicking on the mask's thumbnail.*

**Step 4A**

**Step 4B**

## Step 5

### Paint on the Layer Mask to blend your object.

**A:** **Choose the Paintbrush and a large, soft brush.**
*Shortcut:* *Press B to choose the Paintbrush tool.*
*Shortcut:* *Press [ and ] to select a larger or smaller brush.*

**B:** **Paint around your object to soften the edges.**
You are now painting on the Layer Mask. The areas you paint will become transparent, allowing the background image to show through your object. By using a large, soft brush, you can slowly fade your object into the background.

*Note:* *This can be confusing at first. Don't worry about completely understanding it right now, go ahead and experiment.*

*Tip:* *If you wish to view the Layer Mask by itself, hold down Option and click on its thumbnail. (PC: Hold down ALT). To switch back to normal mode, Option-click again.*
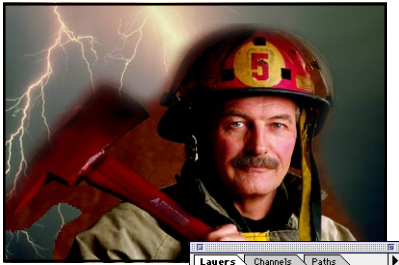
**C:** **Switch between painting with white and black.**
*Shortcut:* *Press X to switch the foreground and background colors.*
When you paint on the Layer Mask, switch between white and black to control how your image blends into the background. Use these two rules of thumb:

■ *Black is the same as painting with your object.*

■ *White is like painting with what is behind your object.*

*Tip:* *For even more control, try varying the pressure of your paintbrush. Press 1 to paint with a 10% pressure, 5 for a 50% pressure and so on. By varying the pressure, you can slowly fade out parts of the image with greater control.*

*Note:* *When you created the Layer Mask, Photoshop automatically changed the foreground and background colors to black and white.*

**Step 5A-B**
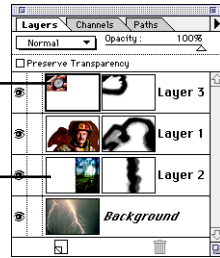
**Step 5C**

# Step 6

### Continue adding new elements as desired.

### Repeat Steps 2-5 as often as you wish.

You can continue adding new elements as long as you wish. You can also work with Photoshop's layering tools to adjust how these objects are positioned on top of each other.

To create the example on the front cover, we added two additional images to our example montage.

Feel free to experiment. Sometimes the most wonderful effects can be found by simply playing without a goal in mind.







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