



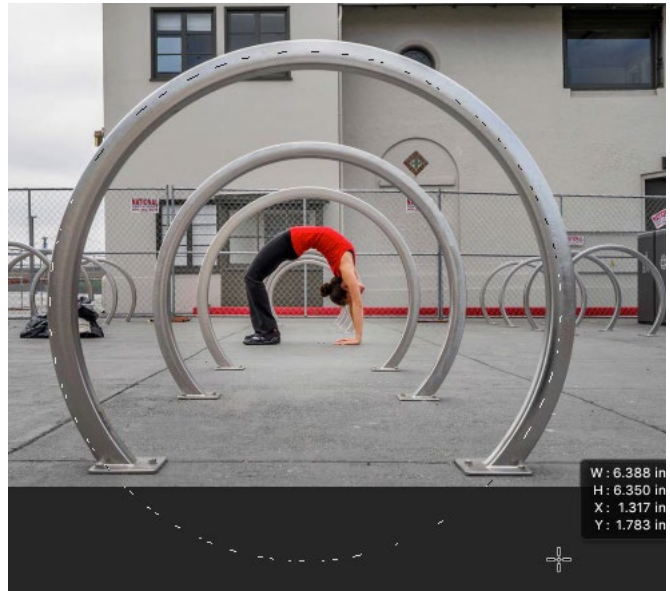
**Wish I Knew: Select & Masking**

# Wish I Knew: Select & Masking

In this lesson, we're going to cover some of the things I wish I knew much earlier when working with selections and masks.

## Selection Tools

**Space Bar to reposition a selection** The Marquee Tool is the second tool from the top of your Toolbar on the left side of the interface. Click and drag within your image to create a selection. If you hold down the Space bar while you are creating the selection, you will be able to reposition the entire selection. This can be extremely useful when working with the Elliptical Marquee Tool, as it can be difficult to perfectly match a round selection to a round object in your image. Having the ability to reposition the entire selection AS you're making it allows you to fine tune the position of the selection.



**Holding down the Space Bar to reposition a selection can be very convenient when selecting round objects.**

**Transform a selection** There is another way to fine-tune a selection after you've created it. With the selection active, go to the Select menu and choose Transform Selection. You will see transform handles appear around the selection and they will look similar to the handles you'd get when using the Free Transform command to resize something in your document. Use these handles to scale and



**Here, we're positioning the transform handles to resize the selection.**

rotate the selection to the exact shape and position that you need. Hit the Return/Enter key to confirm the transformation and the transform handles will disappear.

**Subtract from a selection** After you've created a selection, you can subtract from that selection by holding down the Option key (Alt on Win) while using the selection tool somewhere within your active selection. You will see another selection line appear, showing what part of the original selection will be eliminated. This will work with any of the selection tools available to you. For example, you can create a selection using the Elliptical Marquee Tool and then use the Lasso Tool to subtract from that selection.

**Add to a selection** Add to an active selection by holding down the Shift key while using a selection tool.

**Quickly switch between the Lasso Tool and the Polygonal Lasso Tool** The Lasso Tool is great for making freehand selections and the Polygonal Lasso Tool is great for making freehand selections made up of only straight lines. But what if you need to make a selection around an object that has some straight lines and some curved ones? After you've started to create a selection using the Lasso Tool, you can switch, mid-selection, to the Polygonal Lasso Tool by holding down the Option Key (Alt on Win). The Option Key will subtract from a selection if you hold it down BEFORE you click to create a selection, but it will swap tools if you hold it down AFTER you click. If you have the Lasso Tool active, then holding down the Option Key (Alt on Win) will temporarily activate the Polygonal Lasso Tool. If the Polygonal Lasso Tool is active, then holding down the Option key will temporarily activate the Lasso Tool.

## Quick Mask Mode

Sometimes, the “marching ants” that define a selection make it difficult to see what areas of your document are selected and how precise the selection is. Quick Mask Mode will present you with a different view of the image that allows you to better see exactly what is selected. With a selection active, tap the Q key on your



**After creating a selection around that circular bike rack in the foreground, we hit the Q key to enter Quick Mask Mode. In this mode, anything that is selected appears normal and anything that is not selected has a red overlay.**

keyboard to enter Quick Mask Mode. A red overlay will appear over your image, showing you the areas that are NOT selected. The areas that ARE selected will appear normal. Hit the Q key again to exit Quick Mask Mode.

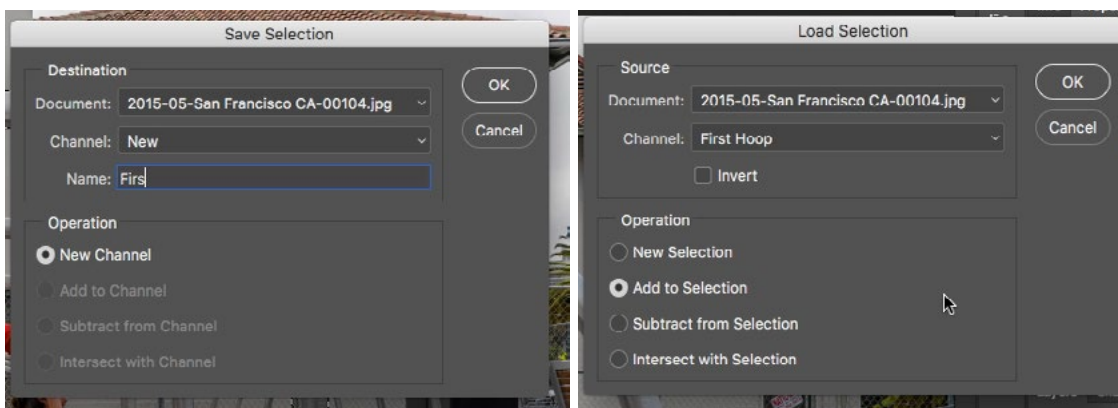
**Refining a selection in Quick Mask Mode** In Quick Mask Mode, you can fine-tune the selection by painting with black or white on your image. Painting with white will add to the selection, eliminating the red overlay. Painting with black will remove from the selection, covering the areas you paint with the red overlay.

While using the Brush Tool, you can paint in a perfectly straight line by clicking in one place, holding down the Shift key and then clicking somewhere else. This will create a perfectly straight stroke between the two points where you clicked. You can also swap the black and white foreground and background colors by hitting the X key.

In Quick Mask Mode, you don't need to use the Brush Tool to add or subtract from a selection. There are several methods you can use, one of which is to create a selection and then fill that selection with black (to take away from the selection) or white (to add to the selection). With black and white set to your foreground and background colors, use the following shortcuts to fill with black or white. To fill with the foreground color, click Option+Delete (Alt+Backspace on Win). To fill with background color, hit Command+Delete (Ctrl+Backspace on Win).

## Save a selection

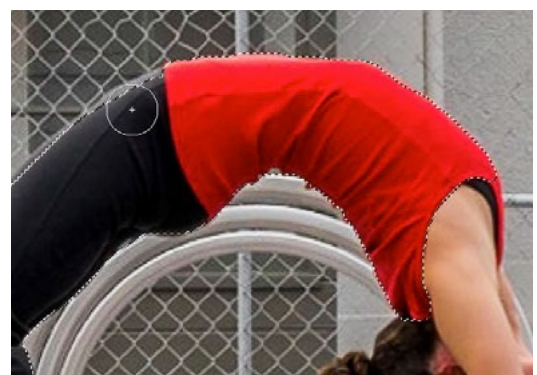
You can save an active selection for layer use by going to the Select menu and choosing Save Selection. A dialog will appear where you can give the selection a custom name and then click OK. To get that selection back at a later time, go to the Select Menu and choose Load Selection. A dialog will appear where you can choose a previously-saved selection from the Channel menu and then use the Operation options to determine whether this should create a new selection, add to an active selection or subtract from an active selection. When you save a selection, it becomes its own channel and will be listed within the Channels panel.



At left are the dialog boxes you will see when you save a selection (far left) and when you load a saved selection (directly left).

## The Quick Selection Tool

The Quick Selection Tool can be found in the Toolbar on the left side of the interface. When you click on a part of your image with this tool, it will select what looks similar to the area under the crosshair in the center of the Quick Selection brush tip. Use the square bracket keys ( [ ] ) to change the size of the brush tip. If you accidentally select an area that should not be selected, hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) and then the tool will work to deselect areas, instead of select them.



The Quick Selection Tool is being used to paint in a selection. The tool is selecting all areas similar to the area under the crosshair.

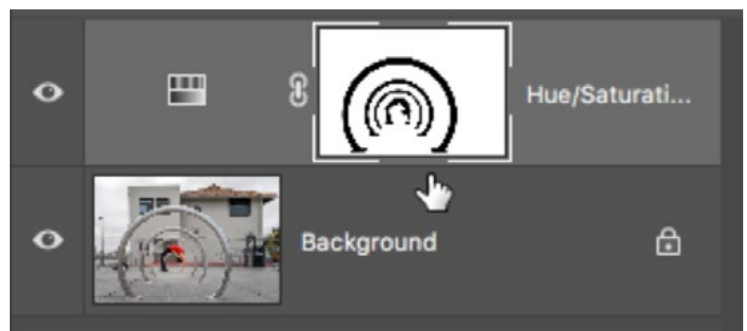
**Invert a selection** After making a selection, you can invert the selection so that the opposite of what you had becomes selected. To do this, go to the main menu and choose **Select > Inverse**. Alternatively, you can use the keyboard shortcut **Shift+Command+I** (**Shift+Ctrl+I** on Win).

## Selections and adjustment layers

If you have a selection active when you go to create an adjustment layer, the selection will automatically be applied to that adjustment layer's mask. When you work with the settings for that adjustment layer, the changes will only be reflected in the areas you previously had selected because that will be the white part of the mask.

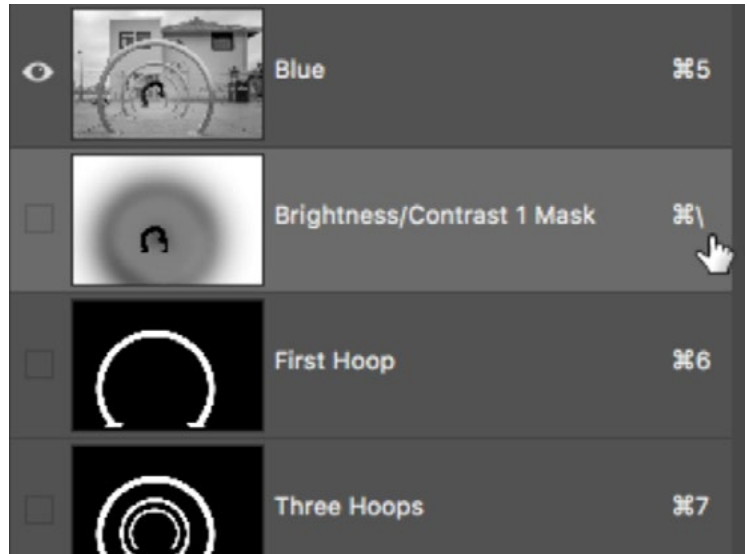


Here, we had everything selected except for the circles and Karen. When we created a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer, that selection was automatically applied to the mask. When we altered the colors using the Hue/Saturation sliders, only the selected background area was affected.



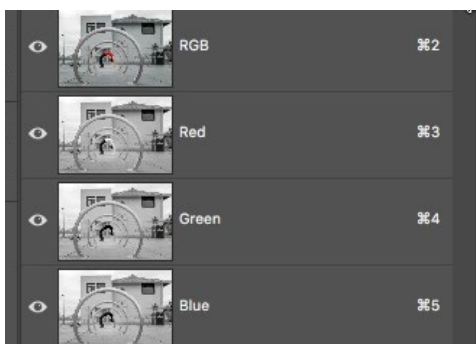
## Selections, Masks and Channels

We mentioned earlier that when you save a selection, that selection will be listed as a channel within the Channels panel. When you're working with Quick Mask Mode, that mask will become a temporary channel, also viewable within the Channels panel. When working with a layer mask, that mask will become its own channel as well. The layer mask will become a channel that is attached to a layer, limiting where that layer will be visible. Note that the layer with the mask must be active in order for the mask to be viewable in the Channels panel.



**In the Channels panel, a layer mask (that's on the active layer) and previously-saved selections will appear below the R, G and B channels. The shortcut listed to the right of each channel will give you a Quick Mask view of that particular channel.**

In the Channels panel, you can turn on the eyeball icon to the left of a layer mask channel in order to get the same view as Quick Mask Mode. When viewing a selection in the Channels panel, you'll notice a keyboard shortcut listed to the right of each channel name. Using that shortcut will give you the Quick Mask view as well.



**In the Channels panel, the top item (RGB) is not a channel. It shows you a combined view of all three channels.**

Looking at the Channels panel, the top-most channel (named RGB) does not contain anything at all. It's just a view of the three color channels (Red, Green & Blue) together. When the eyeball icon for this item is on, it means that you are viewing all three color channels. Click on the Red, Green or Blue channel individually to view JUST that channel in your image window.

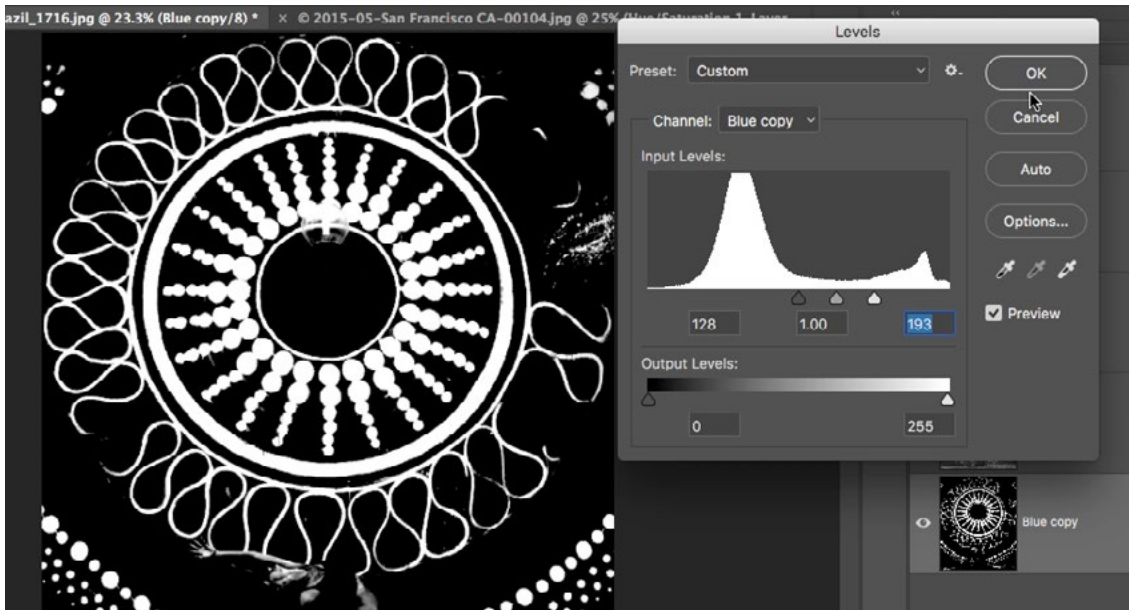
**Use channels to create a selection** You can use channels to help you isolate areas in your document. Click through the different channels to see which channel provides the most contrast between the area you'd like to isolate and the rest of the image. In the video example, we want to isolate the white pattern on the wall and the Blue channel provides much more contrast than the other channels. We want to make a selection based on a copy of this Blue channel, so we'll drag the channel thumbnail to the New Channel icon at the bottom of the Channels panel. This created a new channel (an exact copy of the Blue channel) at the bottom of the Channel list.



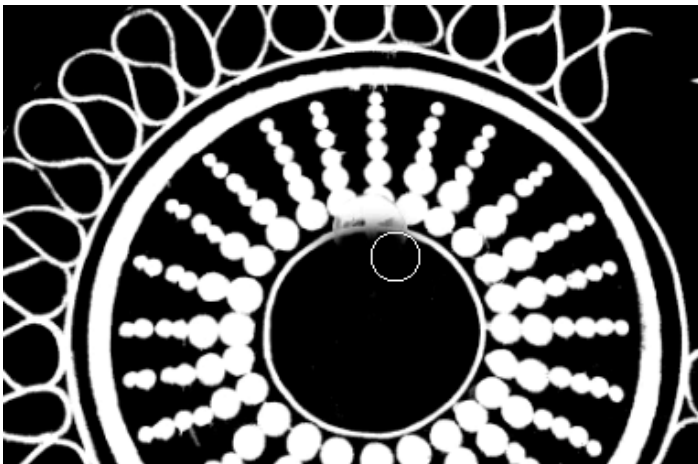
**We want to isolate the white pattern on the wall so we looked for the channel with the most separation. In this case, it was the blue channel (right).**

Working on this copy, we want to select only the white pattern on the wall. With channels, the white areas indicate what is selected and the black areas represent what is not selected. We want all areas that are not part of that white pattern to be black. To achieve this, we'll start by creating a Levels adjustment (Image > Adjustments>Levels). In the Levels dialog, we'll drag the black slider to the right, forcing more and more areas to black. We'll also adjust the white slider to ensure as much of the pattern is as perfectly white as possible. Then we'll click OK.





A Levels adjustment is being used to force more areas to black and to make the pattern on the wall more white. White represents the selection so we only want the pattern to be white.

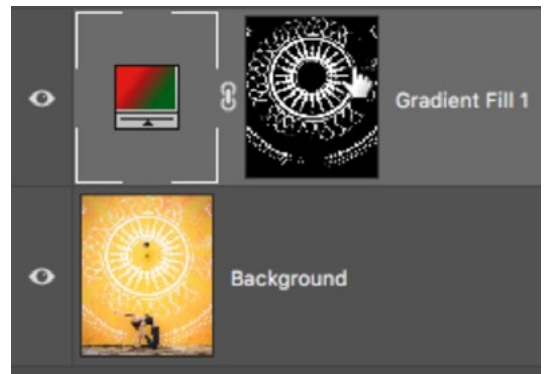
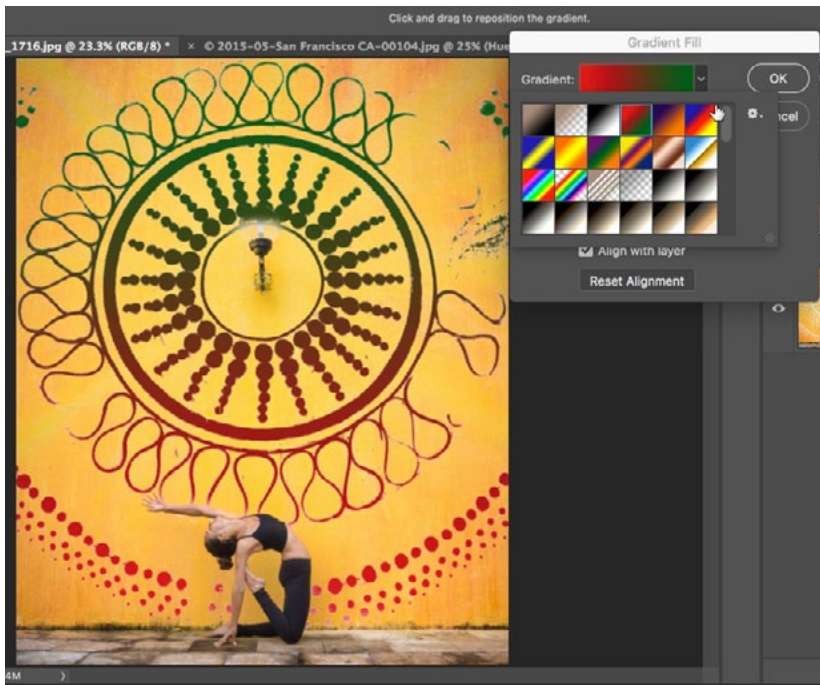


The Brush Tool is being used to clean up the selection/channel. We're painting with black in any remaining areas we don't want to be selected.

Next, we'll use the Brush Tool to paint with black in all other areas that should not be selected, leaving only the pattern on the wall white. We'll then click back on the RGB option at the top of the Channels panel to get the normal view of our picture again. We'll drag the copy of the blue layer that we just worked on to the Select icon at the bottom of the Channels panel and this will give us a selection based on that channel, with the white pattern on the wall selected.

With this area of the image now selected, we can do all kinds of things to that isolated area. In the video example, we created a Gradient Fill adjustment layer. Because a selection was active when we created the adjustment layer, the selection was applied to the layer's mask. We then chose a gradient to fill that isolated pattern area.

The above technique works especially well when the area you want to select is radically different from the rest of the image in either brightness or color.



**With the selection active, we created a Gradient Fill adjustment layer and the selection was automatically applied to the mask, as shown above. Then, we used the Gradient Fill settings to fill the targeted area with color.**