



Making Selections – part 2

Now, having had a look at the principles of making selections, let's look at some of the really useful tools. We'll start with my two favourites, the Magic Wand and the Quick Selection tool. They work in quite different ways and are good for different types of selections.

The image I've used for this demonstration is called 'ivy on orange wall'. This is available on Moodle for you to download so you can try this technique yourself on the same image. The aim here is to be able to select the background and the ivy separately.

In the toolbox The **Magic Wand Tool** looks just like a wand I had when I was five and has the keyboard shortcut of 'w'. It works by selecting pixels of the same or similar colour. The range of pixels it selects can be adjusted in the Options bar using the Tolerance setting. If the number here is low the pixels selected have to be the same or very similar to the pixel you click on. As the number gets bigger the match has to be less and less precise for the pixel to be included.

Watch the tutorial for a demonstration of the use of the Magic Wand.

The other option to look at is Contiguous. If Contiguous is set to On then only pixels of a suitable colour that are next to each other in the image will be selected. You'll see that the first ivy stalk on the left goes right from the top to the bottom of the image. None of the orange pixels on the left of the stalk are next to the pixels on the right of the stalk so only the left hand panel is selected. If Contiguous is set Off then it doesn't matter if the pixels are next to each other or not and pixels of a suitable colour anywhere in the image will be included.

Once we have our selection we can fill it with colour. We'll be covering colour in some depth later on so, for now, I'll just whizz through selecting a colour.

- First click on the foreground block at the bottom of the toolbar – shown in the tutorial in black. This brings up the colour picker.
- Use the central block to choose the rough colour you want
- Then click in the big box on the left to fine tune your choice
- Click on OK.

To fill a selection you hold the Alt key down and press the backspace key. This fills the selection with whichever colour is set as the foreground colour. I've used black for the demo.

Once you've filled your background you may notice that some areas were missed when the selection was made and so are still orange – they often look like little winking lights. If the selection is still active – you can still see the marching ants – then you can carry on adding to it. As these are often quite small areas it's useful to zoom in using Ctrl++ so you can see what you are doing better.

If the edges of your selection look rather ragged then you may want to use 'Refine Edge...' on the Options Bar. Try different amounts in the 'Smooth' box until you're happy with it, then click on OK. Repeat the colour fill – Alt-backspace and Bob's your uncle. Zoom back out – Ctrl-- - and use Ctrl-D to remove the marching ants so you can have a good look at the end result.

Perhaps we want to keep the orange background but have black ivy. To do this we need to have the ivy selected, not the background, so we can use a command in the Select menu – Inverse. This has the keyboard shortcut of Ctrl-Shift-I. This simply reverses the selection – see the tutorial for a demonstration of this. You can see that the marching ants are now round the ivy, not the background. Again, I filled the selection with black using Alt-backspace.

Quick Selection tool

Next, we'll look at the Quick Selection tool. In the toolbar the Quick Selection tool looks like a shiny loop on the end of a handle and has the keyboard shortcut of A. Unlike the Magic Wand that tries to find colours the Quick Selection tool works by trying to find the edges in an image. There's a demonstration of using this tool to cut a lily out of a complex background in the tutorial.

Basically you simply swipe the cursor over the part of the image you want to select, holding the mouse button down. The tool will try and select up to the where it thinks it can find an edge. It's usually easiest to do something like this flower in small chunks. So start out with a petal and then Add to the Selection until you have the whole flower roughly selected.

Then work your way round the edge of the flower, Adding to, or Subtracting from, the selection as necessary. To smooth out the edges of the selection use 'Refine Edge' on the Options bar as we did with the Magic Wand.

Once you have the lily selected, then invert the selection (Select > inverse), to select the background, and press the Delete key on the keyboard.

Tasks:

Please remember the guidelines on preparing images for uploading before you upload any images to Moodle.

- 1)
 - Download the image 'Ivy on an orange wall'.
 - Try and replicate the ivy on a black wall and the black ivy on an orange wall as shown in the tutorial.
 - Upload these two versions for me to have a look at.
- 2)
 - Then download and open the Dandelions image.
 - Use the Magic Wand with suitable tolerance and contiguous settings, to select and delete the background.
 - Upload the final version of the image.
- 3)
 - Use one of your own images that has a central motif(s).
 - Remove the background.
 - Upload the before and after versions of the image.
- 4)
 - Download the lily image
 - Using the Quick Selection tool remove the background leaving only the central lily head.
 - Save and upload the final version.
- 5)
 - Use one of your own images that you think would be suitable for using with the Quick Selection tool.
 - Remove the background.
 - Upload the before and after versions of the image.

Keyboard shortcuts

Select the whole image	Ctrl-A
Cancel the selection (deselect)	Ctrl-D
To add to a selection	Hold the shift key down
To subtract from a selection	Hold the Alt key down
Draw a square	Hold the shift key down while dragging the rectangular marquee tool
Draw a circle	Hold the shift key down while dragging the elliptical marquee tool
Marquee tool	m
Magic wand	w
Quick selection tool	A
Fill a selection with the foreground colour	Alt-backspace

Inverse a selection	Ctrl-Shift-I
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