

PHOTOSHOP 3: SELECTING & COMBINING

These instructions take you through the process of selecting a portion of one image, copying it into another image, and transforming and retouching the new, combined image.

For the purposes of this exercise, we'll be working with a main image (hands.jpg) and additional images (cellphone.jpg, house.jpg, and others). We'll cut out a part of hands.jpg and create two collages with it.

All of the images you'll use are located at <http://sorapure.net/images.html>.

Step 1: Go to <http://sorapure.net/images.html> and download hands.jpg, cellphone.jpg, and house.jpg. Feel free to download other images in the first group as well. Open Photoshop or Photopea, and open hands.jpg.

Step 2: Unlock the background layer of hands.jpg by double-clicking on the layer and then clicking "OK" in the Layer dialog box. Give the layer a name ("hands").

In Photoshop, save the file in Photoshop format as "hands.psd". **Photopea** automatically saves your work.

Selecting

There are many ways to select part of an image. Remember that the selection you make only applies to the active layer, so if you have multiple layers be sure that you know which layer you're working on. It's also important to remember that when part of an image is selected, dotted lines appear defining the edges of the selected area. Any actions that you perform (for instance, filters or effects) will be applied only to the selected area. To deselect an area, use Command-D (Mac) or Control-D (PC), or go to Select > Deselect.

We'll use the selection tools described below to select one of the hands in the image.

Selection tools:

- The **Marquee tool** (keyboard shortcut M) provides you with options for drawing rectangles, ovals, and lines. Under the rectangular Marquee tool are options for the elliptical tool and for single pixel tools.
- The **Lasso tool** (keyboard shortcut L) allows you to draw a selection freehand. Under the Lasso tool are options for the Polygonal Lasso and the Magnetic Lasso tools.
- The **Magic Wand** (keyboard shortcut W) lets you select a consistently colored area without having to trace its outline. Once you've chosen the Magic Wand tool, you can specify the tolerance, or color range, in the option bar across the top of the window. Enter a low value to select colors very similar to the pixel you click on, or enter a higher value to select a broader range of colors. To select only adjacent areas using the same colors, select Contiguous; otherwise, all pixels in the image using the same colors will be selected.
- The **Quick Selection tool** (under the Magic Wand) allows you to select areas of color as you click and drag. Click on Enhance Edge (in the top menu bar) to make a more accurate selection.
- Usually best of all, the **Object Selection tool** (under the Magic Wand) automatically selects an object within a defined region. Click on Enhance Edge (in the top menu bar) to make a more accurate selection.

With all selection tools, you can remove parts of the selection by holding down the Option key and drawing or clicking. For instance, if you draw a selection with the Lasso tool and then decide you want to deselect

part of it, hold down the Option key and draw out the part you want to deselect. You can add to the selection by holding down the Shift key.

Step 3: Use the various selection tools to select one of the hands. You may need to also use the magnifying glass to magnify the image so that you can get a clearer view of the pixels that you are selecting and deleting.

Altering the selection

Once you've made a selection, you can make specific alterations to only this part of the image. You can adjust the color, apply a filter effect, even change the size of the selected area—all without affecting the rest of the image.

Step 4: Make changes to the selected area by using the options under Image > Adjustments (for instance, Color Balance, Brightness/Contrast, Hue/Saturation) and by experimenting with different filters (under the Filters menu). Use the History panel to undo any changes you've made.

Copying the selection

You can copy the selected area to create an other layer or to use in another image, and you can delete the selected area by hitting the Delete key. When you copy a selection, it's placed on the clipboard.

Step 5: Copy the selection (Control-C) and then paste it (Control-V). Notice that a new layer is automatically created with the selected area. Name this new layer ("onehand?"); make the original layer invisible so that you can see the solo hand in the new layer.

Combining Images

Next we'll take the single hand that we cut out of the original "hands" layer and make a couple of collages with it.

Step 6: Drag cellphone.jpg into your Photoshop file, or **in Photopea** go to File > Open & Place, and select cellphone.jpg. Rasterize the smart object by right-clicking on the layer and choosing Rasterize in Photoshop, or by going to Layer > Rasterize **in Photopea**. Give the layer a name ("phone").

Step 7: Delete the white background in the cellphone layer (probably by using the Magic Wand with a very low tolerance).

Using the Transform commands

You can transform a selection or a layer by using the Transform command (Edit > Transform) There are options to change the scale, rotate, skew, distort, flip, and adjust the perspective of the selection or layer. The Free Transform command [Edit > Free Transform, or Command-T (Mac) or Control-T (PC)] provides you with the scale and rotate options; rotate the selection by moving the cursor over one of the edges of the selection or layer, until the cursor turns into a rounded arc with arrows. **In Photopea**, select the Move tool and then check the box next to Transform controls in the top menu bar.

Once you've started using the transform command, you cannot perform any other actions until you've finished with the transformation. You finish the transformation by hitting the Return key or by selecting the Move tool (or another tool in the Toolbox). If you want to undo the transformation, use Command-Z (Mac) or Control-Z (PC) to undo this step, or use the History panel to undo the step.

You can adjust the size and placement of the individual layers that you now have in "hands.psd". For instance, you can make the hand smaller and fit it in the screen of the cellphone, or you can make the hand much larger, reduce the size of the phone, and put it in the palm of the hand. You can also adjust each layer using color adjustments or filters.

Step 8: Experiment with the possibilities of transforming each layer. Save the file.

Compositing

Compositing refers to the process of making two images blend together so that their combination looks realistic. It is also sometimes called photomontage. In Photoshop and Photopea, you can create composites by applying filters, effects, and color adjustments to the images you're blending together. Make sure that you're working on the proper layer as you apply effects and make adjustments.

Step 9: Drag house.jpg into your Photoshop file, or **in Photopea** go to File > Open & Place, and select cellphone.jpg. Rasterize the smart object by right-clicking on the layer and choosing Rasterize in Photoshop, or by going to Layer > Rasterize **in Photopea**. Give the layer a name ("house").

Because the arm of the hand ends in a straight edge, it would be easy to position the hand from one of the edges of the picture or to have it emerge from one of the windows of the house. But if you want the hand to appear to grow out of the ground or emerge from the mountains or the clouds, you'll have to blend the image in a bit.

You can use several tools in Photoshop and Photopea to make the edges of color on a layer blend better with the background colors. The raindrop icon directly under the Eraser tool in the Toolbox holds a set of tools—the Blur tool, the Sharpen tool, and the Smudge tool—that can help with compositing. The Blur softens hard edges or areas in an image to reduce detail. The Sharpen tool focuses soft edges to increase clarity or focus. The Smudge tool simulates the actions of dragging a finger through wet paint.

Step 10: Experiment with blurring, sharpening, and smudging the edges of the arm.

You can take advantage of layer stacking in order to put a new layer on top of the "hand" layer. In this new layer, you can copy elements from the main "house" layer using the Clone Stamp, the Lasso tool, or other tools. For instance, you can copy some clouds from the sky or some weeds from ground in the "house" layer and put them on the new layer above the hand.

Step 14: Create a new layer in the Layers panel and call it “top”; make sure that it’s stacked above both the “hand” layer and the “house” layer.

Click back on the “house” layer and use the Clone Stamp or Lasso tool (or another tool) to grab a section of the “house” layer. For instance, if you want to put some weeds on top of the hand, hold down the Alt key and click in the weed area.

Click on the “top” layer and drag (or paste) this selection into the “top” layer. Experiment until you get a realistic looking result.

Save the file.

Now your turn...

Go to <http://sorapure.net/image.html> and download some other images (coffee cup, plastic bottle, man, woman, hammer, seagull, four cows). Bring those images into your file, select items out of their backgrounds, copy the selections into new layers, experiment with resizing, moving, and compositing so as to create new and fun images.