Photoshop 5.5

New Eraser tools

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The magic eraser and the background eraser and new to Photoshop 5.5. They provide more ways of separating an image from it's background. The magic eraser works similarly to the magic wand tool. It selects pixels of like color, but instead of placing a selection around them, it removes them altogether. The background eraser is more like the magnetic lasso and pen, that were introduced in Photoshop 5. They find the edges of an object but instead of selecting the object, they remove pixels outside of it. Use the background eraser when the background has more than one color. The magic eraser would work better if the background was all one color, or on objects like fur, hair, or foliage. Lets start with the background eraser.

. 1. To locate the background eraser, click the small arrow on the bottom right of the eraser tool in the toolbar. The eraser tools flyout shows all of the erasers. *[fig 1]* The background eraser is the one with the scissors. The one with the * symbol is the magic eraser.

[fig 1]

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2 Click on the background eraser so that it is visible in the toolbar. Then open the image you want to separate from the background. The zebra image I chose is from the sample folder in Photoshop 5.5. Start working right above the head, click in the background next to the image. *[fig 2]*

[fig 2]

3. Continue to move the background eraser around the image until you separate it from the background. *[fig 3]*

[fig 3]

4. It is easy enough to erase the rest of the background from here. This image was done with the background eraser tolerance set to 40. The higher the tolerance, the more of the image it takes away. To get in closer and make a cleaner selection, set the option lower. There are also other things you can do to improve the functionality of this tool. For instance the 'protect foreground color' box. With the settings in *[fig 4]* I was able to make a much cleaner edge.
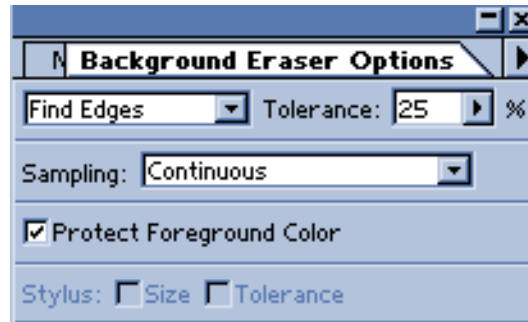
[fig 4]

5. Using the image in *[fig 5]* I set the options for the background eraser to the ones in *[fig 4]*Using the 'find edges' method was best for the pink flower in the mufti-colored background because it provided a fairly easy to define edge. I lowered the tolerance to 25, and used continuous sampling. I checked the 'protect foreground' box, and then using the eye dropper, I picked the color from the very edge of the pink flower and set it as the foreground color.

[fig 5]

6. Here is the result with the background completely erased. *[fig 6]*

[fig 6]

Magic eraser

. Now, lets look at the magic eraser.

We used the background eraser to remove a background with varied colors from an image that was of more solid color. The magic eraser can be used for removing a background that is similar in color from a many colored object, or for removing the background from fine objects like hair, plants, etc. Since the magic eraser works like the magic wand in previous versions, you will be familiar with the options unless you are new to Photoshop. The tolerance setting defines how much the color selected is allowed to vary. 0 tolerance is no variance . A higher tolerance will allow the color to vary some. I used a tolerance of 7. The continuous option, which has been added to the magic wand also and is new to version 5.5, will select pixels that are adjacent to the one clicked on. If you uncheck continuous, all the pixels of that color in the image will be removed. I used the fern image from Photoshop 5.5 samples. The background has many shades of brown in it, and is in between the fine foliage of the fern leaf, so it wouldn't be easy to select it, or erase it. I unchecked continuous, and clicked on different spots of brown, and as I did that, all of that shade of brown disappeared from the image! I continued clicking until no visible pixels of brown remained. *[fig 1]* shows the option settings I used and *[fig 2]* shows the finished image. It would have been difficult to do this in previous versions of Photoshop, because the continuous option didn't exist. It would have been very difficult to select the pixels between the foliage. . These tools take some practice, and adjusting the settings will definitely vary your results, but they are a great addition to Photoshop and will increase your productivity. Have fun with them and experiment.!
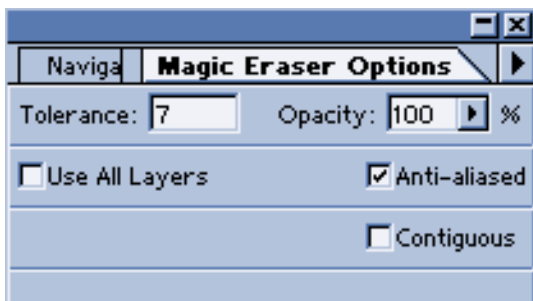
[Fig 1]

image with background

[fig 2] without background

the end