



## Movie 8

# Quick Selection tool and Refine Edge

**Adobe Photoshop CS3 for Photographers** by Martin Evening

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### Smoothing with Feather and Contrast

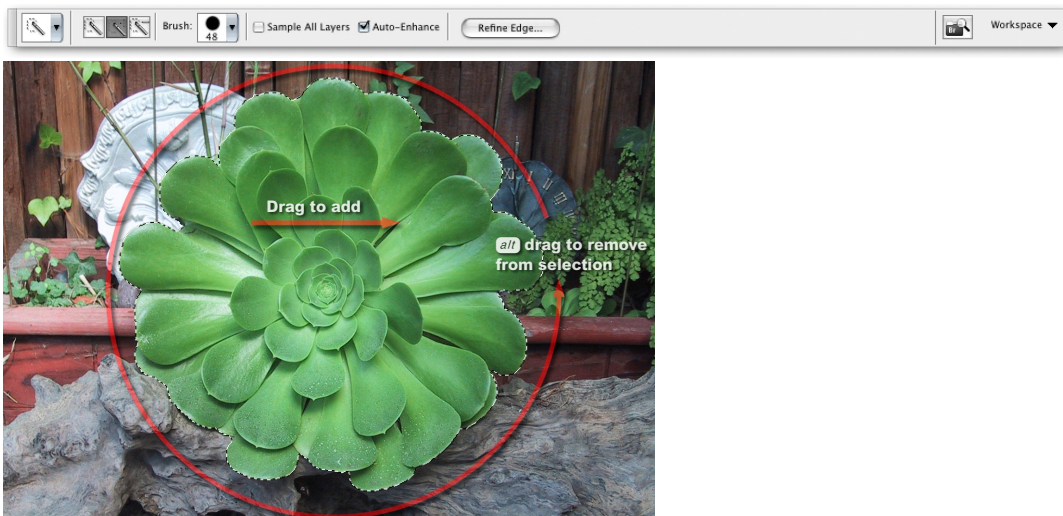
An alternative way to smooth a mask in Refine Edge is to use Feather and Contrast. The Smooth slider in Refine Edge is designed to smooth but without rounding out corners. If you want a more aggressive smoothing you can use Refine Edge's Feather and Contrast sliders. Simply increase Feather to blur the mask and then increase the Contrast to get back to the desired edge sharpness.

### Quick Selections

The quick selection tool is grouped with the magic wand in the Tools palette and takes priority as being the default tool for making magic wand type selections. To make a quick selection you simply drag with the tool to select a sample range of colors from an image, either selecting pixels from a single layer or sampling all layers. From this, Photoshop will calculate a rough selection of pixels that you can further modify by using the refine edge options.

### Working with the quick selection tool

I don't know about it being quick, but quick selection is certainly a more sophisticated kind of selection tool that has smart processing capabilities. You can use the quick selection tool to make a selection based on tone and color by clicking or dragging with the tool to define a portion of the image that you wish to select. You can then keep clicking or dragging to add to the selection without needing to hold down the **Shift** key as you do so. And you can subtract from a quick selection by holding down the  **alt** key as you drag. But what is clever about quick selection is that it remembers all the successive strokes that you make and this will provide stability to the selection as you add more strokes. So as you toggle between adding and subtracting, quick selection is temporarily storing these stroke instructions to help determine which pixels are to be selected and which are not. Sometimes you may find it can help if you make an initial selection and then apply a succession of subtractive strokes to define the areas you don't want to be included. You won't see anything happen as you apply these blocking strokes, but when you go on to select the rest of the object with the quick selection tool, you should find that as you add to a selection, the blocking strokes you applied previously will help prevent leakage outside of the area you wish to select. This aspect of quick selection behavior can help you select objects more successfully than was ever possible before with the magic wand. But as you make successive additive strokes to add to a selection and then erase these areas from the



1 In this example, I selected the quick selection tool, checked the Auto-Enhance edge option and dragged to make an initial selection of the plant interior. Then, with the **alt** key held down, I dragged around the outer perimeter area to indicate the areas that were not to be included in the selection. I then continued clicking and dragging to select more of the plant leaves, while also **alt** dragging outside to fine-tune the selection edge.



2 I then clicked on the Refine Edge button and selected the 'on black' mask option to display the cutout selection against a black background color. I contracted the selection slightly and applied a Smooth amount of 30 to smooth out the jagged edges. I found that by raising the Feather to 3 pixels and increasing the Contrast this was the right combination to get the selection outline I was after.





**Refining layer masks**

You can build up a quick selection by repeatedly dragging across the image areas you wish to include in the selection (there is no need to hold down the **Shift** key), but hold down the **alt** key to subtract from a quick selection.

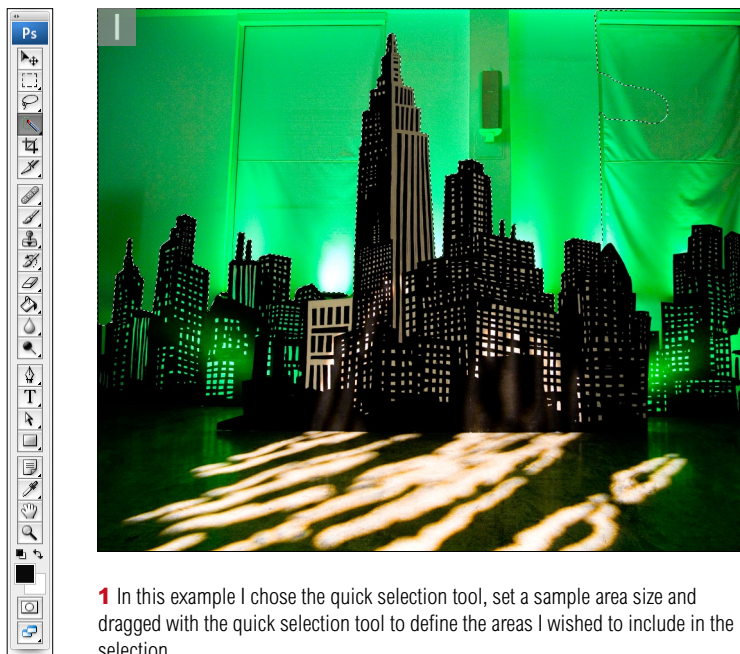
selection, you will have to work a lot harder going back and forth between adding and subtracting with the quick selection tool. In these situations it can be a good idea to clear the quick selection memory by using the ‘double Q trick’. If you press the **Q** key twice, this will go to Quick Select mode and back to selection mode again. The stroke constraints will be gone and you can then add to or subtract from the selection more easily since you have now cleared the quick selection memory.



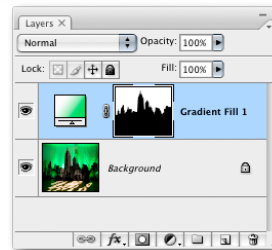
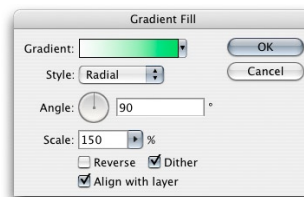
**Figure 1** The quick selection tool options.

**Refine selection edges**

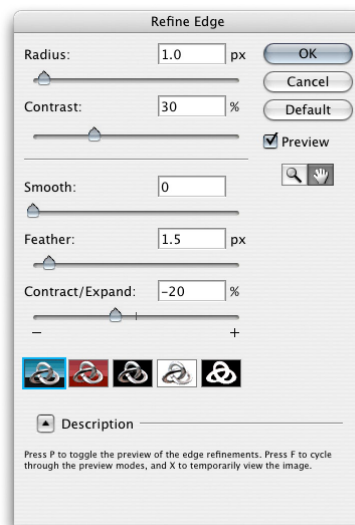
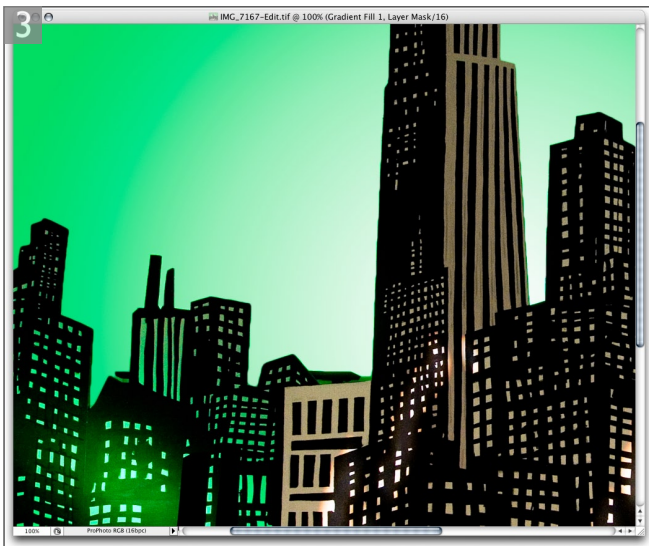
If you click on the Refine Edge button, you can refine the selection edges using the dialog slider controls. A much better way to use Refine Edge is to convert a selection to a layer mask first and then select Refine Edge... from the Select menu.



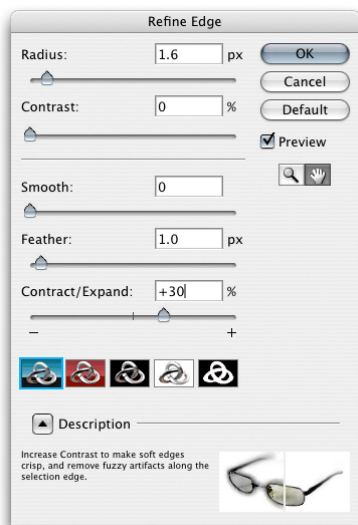
**1** In this example I chose the quick selection tool, set a sample area size and dragged with the quick selection tool to define the areas I wished to include in the selection.



2 I then moused-down on the adjustment layer menu to add a radial gradient fill layer using the colors shown here. This single step automatically converted the quick selection into a layer mask.



3 As long as the layer mask is selected, you can fine-tune the mask by going to the Select menu and choosing Refine Edge... In the example shown here, I used **⌘ H** **ctrl/H** to hide the marching ants and was able to preview the Refine Edge adjustments on a layer mask that was actively masking the Gradient Fill layer.



**Figure 2** The Refine Edge dialog. Note there is a Description section at the bottom of the Refine Edge dialog that helps explain what each of the controls do (summarized below).

## Refine Edge command

I am told that the Refine Edge command was actually based on my mask editing technique described in the Spirit of St Louis mask tutorial. In my opinion, the controls in Refine Edges now include everything you need to modify a layer mask edge. You can of course use Refine Edge via the Select menu or the Options palette (when a selection tool is active), but if you are preparing a selection in order to create a mask, it makes much more sense to use Refine Edge the way I have described on pages 4-5, because this will allow you to preview the effects that the slider adjustments are having on the mask while it is active. As I mentioned earlier, when you use this method, the initial preview may confuse you because after you click on the Standard mask view mode, all you see is a white fill, but if you wait a few seconds, a transparent view will appear with marching ants active and you should use the **⌘ H** **ctrl H** shortcut to hide the ants so that you can preview the mask properly. You may sometimes find it helps to click on one of the other mode buttons and then go back to the standard mode, in order to get the document window view to update.

### Radius

Increasing the Radius will improve the edges in areas of soft transitions.

### Contrast

This will make soft edges crisper and remove artifacts along the edges of a selection.

### Smooth

This will help smooth out jagged selection edges (use Radius to help restore some of the detail).

### Feather

This will uniformly soften the edge of the selection and help produce a soft edged mask.

### Contract/Expand

This is the choke control and works like the Maximum and Minimum filters by shrinking or expanding a selection.