

# Make Perfect Selections with the Quick Mask

By Jane Riley

## USING THE QUICK MASK MODE

When I want to make a perfect selection, I make a **Quick Mask** in the Quick Mask Mode. A red mask was originally used in printing to protect pieces. It was a thin piece of red cellophane called a **rubylith**. The Standard Mode and Quick Mask Mode boxes are directly under the background/foreground boxes.

**Double click on the Quick Mask Mode to bring up the options box.** You can change the color and opacity, but **RED is the default color.**

The shortcut key for the Quick Mode is the letter Q to toggle between the standard mode and the quick mask mode.

## PAINTING THE QUICK MASK IN THE QUICK MASK MODE

I first use one of the selection tools to start the selection. When I feel I have done all I can do with the selection tool, I hit Q or click on the quick mask mode box to begin working in the Quick Mask Mode. Whatever I have selected in the standard mode will now be clear, and the rest of the photo will be covered with a red mask.

To begin the painting, activate the brush tool. Select a hard brush if the selection has sharp edges, and a soft brush if you want softer edges. The black/white foreground/background squares determine how you will paint. If you paint with the **black** square active, you will paint in **RED** to cover everything that you want to protect from change with a red mask. Painting in **WHITE** reveals anything you want to “select”. We want to reveal our selected image and conceal the background.

To check your progress, click on Q once in a while. In the Quick Mask Mode you will see the red mask. When you switch to the Standard Mode, you will see your selection with the marching ants.

As you paint the selection, zoom in with the shortcut key Z to get the small details and to look for red areas that were missed. The Alt key and Z will zoom out again.

Use the shortcut keys Q and X often to check your progress. When you click on X, you will switch the black/white squares for the foreground/background. Don't forget that the bracket keys will make the brush smaller and larger.

## FEATHER AND MODIFY THE SELECTION

Click on Select---Feather at about 2-3 pixels to soften the edges.

Click on Select---Modify---Contract: I like to make the selection smaller by 1-2 pixels to make sure the edges of the selection are totally clean.

\*\*\*You may want to wait to sharpen your selection until you have placed it into another image, and then sharpen the entire newly created image.

## **SAVE THE SELECTION**

Click on Select--Save Selection...This will save your selection as an Alpha Channel for use in the future. Click on the Channel Tab to see the Alpha Channel. Note that the selection is shown in WHITE, and the rest of the image that you do not want to change is in BLACK. You can now close your image for another time.

## **MOVE THE SELECTION**

At some future time, open your image with the saved selection. It will look like a normal image.

Click on: Selection: Load Selection: Click on the name of your selection...and the selection with the marching ants will reappear.

Activate the Move key...Make sure you have checked the Auto Select Layer and Auto Select Groups. Hold down the Alt key at the same time and drag and drop the selected image to another part of this image or to another image. When you see the double scissors, you know that you can move a copy of the selection and still keep your original selection.

## **CHANGE THE SIZE AND CONFIGURATION**

Click on Edit--Free Transform or **Control T** to change the size of the selected image.

Grab the handles with the mouse and keep the shift key down to resize your selection.

To skew, rotate, etc., click on Edit—Transform.

In either case, double click on Enter to complete the transformation.

## **MODIFY THE SELECTION**

Once the selection is in another image, a new layer is automatically made. Rename the layer to “orange butterfly” or whatever. You can then modify the selected image in its new layer in various ways...i.e. change the blend mode, resize it, lower the opacity, etc.

**Have fun!**... but Remember...I told you these selections are **PERFECT**...I didn't tell you they were **FAST**.