

How To Transfer Part of One Picture into Another

Have both your images ready, preferably the same size.

CUT OUT your object from picture ONE.

Select COPY AS LAYER (Right mouse button - layer via copy) or just press CONTROL-J to make your cut-out a separate layer.

The layer you have just made should now be ACTIVE (appear blue), you can check this by looking at your LAYERS PALETTE.

Now SELECT>All the layer. Go to EDIT>COPY. You have now copied the layer with the cut-out in. (You can use CONTROL-C if you like).

OPEN your background image (TWO). Go to EDIT>PASTE and your whole LAYER from Image ONE will be placed in image TWO. You can do all this on the key board - Control-A - select all, Control-C - copy, Control-V - paste. You can also drag and drop but I prefer to keep a copy of my selection as a layer with the original image.

You can now MOVE the OBJECT using the MOVE TOOL (top right in tools palette) and/or RESIZE it using EDIT>TRANSFORM (remember to hold down the shift key when you resize to ensure the proportions are the same).

If you prefer you may CROP the picture ONE down to be just a little bigger than your SELECTED OBJECT to make it more manageable BEFORE copying and pasting.

To CUT OUT in the first place you can use a whole battery of techniques but always make sure your selection is FEATHERED (SELECT>FEATHER) by at least 0.5px (more often 1 or 2px) before you finish, otherwise the edge of the cut-out looks unnaturally sharp and will show in the final image.

CUTTING OUT is done using:-

The POLYGONAL LASSO TOOL (the easiest cut-out tool), FREE-DRAW LASSO TOOL (perhaps OK if you have a graphics pad) or MAGNETIC LASSO TOOL (OK if the object edge is clear). (Second down on left of TOOLS PALETTE)

OR, use the MAGIC WAND (watch the settings). (Second down on RIGHT of TOOLS PALETTE. Set tolerances on this to 20 or 30.

OR, use the QUICK MASK (bottom of tools palette) and PAINT IN your object. Use black and white.

OR, use SELECT>COLOUR. (SELECTION menu).

OR, EXTRACT your object using FILTER>EXTRACT.

OR, PEN-TOOL - I have never used this!

OR, any combination of the above.

The all-important EDGE of your object can be cleaned up using the ERASER or CLONE-TOOL or BLUR TOOL or COLOUR SELECT before finally FEATHERING. Remember that you can GROW a selection or make it BIGGER or SMALLER by one or more pixels - this is handy when you have a halo of chromatic aberration to bite off.

The SPONGE TOOL is handy for blending in your cut-out.

Any of these cut-out methods can be used in COMBINATION and don't forget that you can HIDE your selection using CONTROL-H so that the "marching ants" don't get in the way. But, don't forget to UNDO this by pressing CONTROL-H again otherwise you will wonder why you are stuck inside the selection!!

Shift keys ADDS, Alt-key SUBTRACTS.

CONTROL "+" magnifies, CONTROL "-" shrinks your image on the screen.

While you have your OBJECT selected inside your new image you should take the chance to modify it in all the usual ways to get it to blend in. (Levels, Curves, Colour adjust etc). You can also BLUR the background to imitate depth of field effects - always use GAUSSIAN BLUR for this and make sure you do not overdo it (a GOLDEN RULE for ALL PHOTOSHOP EFFECTS!).

A common error in cutting and pasting is to get the DIRECTION OF LIGHTING wrong. If your OBJECT and LIT from a different direction than your BACKGROUND you will have trouble and choosing image parts taken in diffuse light is easiest. HOWEVER you can FLIP the cut-out if the lighting is wrong, you can also CREATE SHADOWS quite easily using a new black cut-out and distorting it and blurring it to fit in. It might be possible also to use the LIGHTING effects.

Another error is getting the SCALE of the object wrong. I don't just mean the RELATIVE SIZE but the RESOLUTION. This is why I say you should get the sizes right before you begin. If you use the TRANSFORM TOOL too much it WILL SHOW; too small and your object stands out because it is TOO DETAILED, too big and your object looks blurred.

Warning: Photoshop is a massively powerful programme and we are all learners. This account is just what I do at present. You only really learn by using the tools and you need practice to perfect the techniques. In a year's time I would no doubt write a different version of this account.

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