

Adobe Photoshop

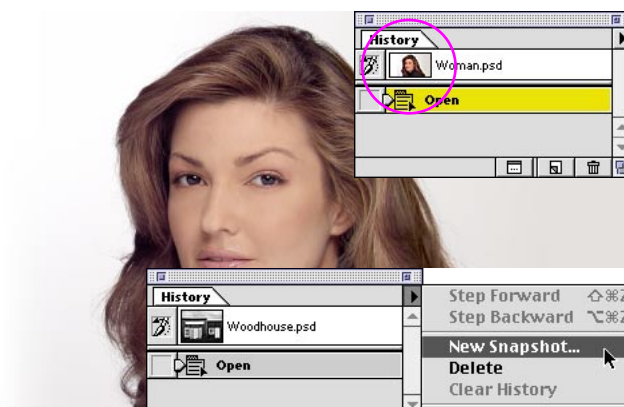
Using the Extract feature in Photoshop with Julieanne Kost

Software needed Adobe Photoshop 5.5 or later.

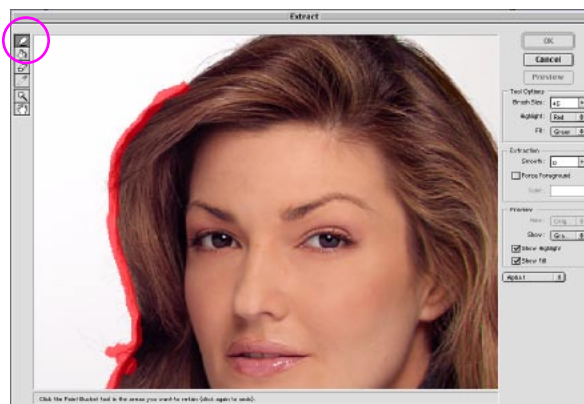


The Extract command provides a sophisticated way to isolate a foreground object from its background. Previously, this was best handled by complex channel operations or tool combinations. Now, even objects with wispy, intricate, or undefinable edges can be removed from their surroundings with a minimum of manual effort or technical know-how. While objects that differ in color from their surroundings are the easiest to extract, even the most challenging extraction can always be finessed with the help of the History Brush and the Eraser.

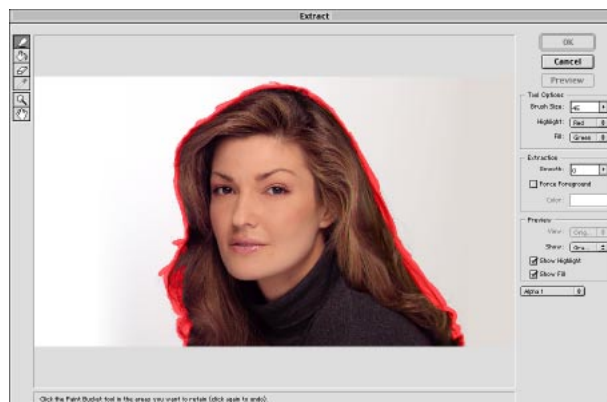
Open the file. Open the image containing the subject that needs to be isolated from its surroundings. By default, when a file is opened, Photoshop creates a Snapshot. Look at the History Palette. If you don't have a Snapshot, click on the black arrow and select New Snapshot. Accept the defaults and click OK. *Note: The snapshot will enable you to finesse the extraction with the History Brush in areas where there might be small imperfections in the Extraction.*



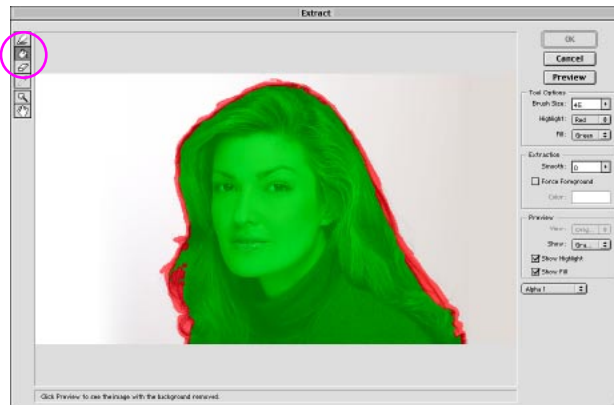
Extract the subject. In the Extract dialog box, select the Edge Highlighter tool. Define the transitional areas by painting over the areas that contain both foreground and background information. In this example, the transition area is made up of both the woman's hair and of the white drop cloth background. For the best results, use a smaller brush size when the edge is sharper and a larger brush size for less defined areas. Use the zoom tool as needed.



Finish painting the transition. Continue outlining until the highlight "paint" fully encloses the transitional areas of the subject. *Note: the resulting outline must be a closed region. In this example, the edge of the document window is serving as the border for the bottom of the outline. Also, the more precise the outline, the more exact the extraction will be.*



Fill the subject area. After outlining the transitional areas, select the Fill tool and click in the subject area. If you want to keep the foreground, click inside the outline. To keep the surroundings, click outside the outlined area. *Note: If you accidentally fill the wrong area, click again with the Fill tool to undo the fill. If the paint fills the whole image, there is probably a gap in your outline.*



Preview the extraction. Click the preview button. If the extraction isn't perfect, modify the outline using the Eraser and Edge Highlighter tools. Then re-preview the extraction to view the improved results. When finished with adjustments, click OK. *Note: you can use the different preview options to simulate your image on a variety of different colored backgrounds.*



Composite the extracted image. Use the Move tool and drag and drop the image into the new background file. *Note: composite images work well when both of the images are taken under the same lighting conditions and have the same color temperature. It also helps to have the background fall slightly out of focus to separate the subject from the background.*



Retouching areas. Depending on the color similarity between your subject and surroundings, it might be necessary to use the History Brush or the Eraser to clean up some small imperfections. From the Tool palette, select the History Brush. In the History palette, set the brush to sample from the snapshot and paint in the missing areas. To delete stray pixels from the image, from the Tool palette select the Eraser and erase the extra data.

