MASKS
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About masks

Masks let you isolate and protect areas of an image as you apply color changes, filters, or other effects to the rest of the image. These masks reside on the actual layers of the image and can be turn on and off and edited to show or hide portions of the image.

Working non-destructively

Masks hide information on the layer they are created on by covering the content of that layer in black, "masking" that section out. An area of white on a mask lets the underlying image show through.

Masks allow the layer art to stay the same while the mask shows or hide areas of that layer. It gives the same effect as erasing the portions of the image you don't want to use yet masks allow you to cover and uncover those portions at any time.

Masks are also used for Color Correction Layers that allow color correction to be applied to certain portions of the image without actually adjusting the pixels on the native image.

Raster Masks vs. Vector Masks

Raster masks are pixel based, In the last versions of Photoshop, vector masks (shape layers) have been introduced. Raster or pixel based masks appear as black and white (or shades of gray). Vector masks are masks defined by a path rather than by pixels and always create a hard edge. Vector masks appear as gray with a line around the object in the mask. Traditional masks are raster or pixel based masks that can be edited using the traditional image editing tools.

Masks vs. Channels

Masks and channels are essentially the same thing—they are pixel based grayscale images that are user created;
- **Masks** hide or show content on **layers**
- **Channels** are used to save **selections**
Both masks and channels can edited in the same way but using the selection or painting tools to add or remove pixels.

4 ways to create a raster mask

The 4 basic ways to create a raster (pixel based) mask are:

1. Load an Alpha Channel of a saved selection to make a mask.

2. Create a selection using a selection tool or Quick Mask mode and convert the selection to mask.

3. Use your brush tool to paint a mask in or out.

4. Use the pen tool to draw a path and convert that path to a selection and then create a mask.

Creating and editing layer masks

You can obscure an entire layer or layer set, or just a selected part of it, using a layer mask. You can also edit a layer mask to add or subtract from the masked region. The key to a layer mask is **BLACK hides (conceals)** the image, **WHITE shows (reveals)** the image.

To add a Layer Mask by a selection first:
Create a selection on a layer you want to mask.

- Click the Layer Mask button ▣ at the bottom of the Layers panel to create a mask that reveals the selection.

- Choose Layer > Add Layer Mask > Reveal Selection or Hide Selection.

To add a Layer Mask without creating a selection first:
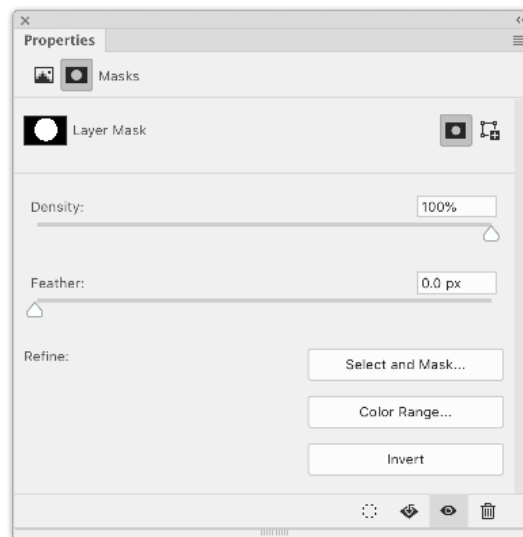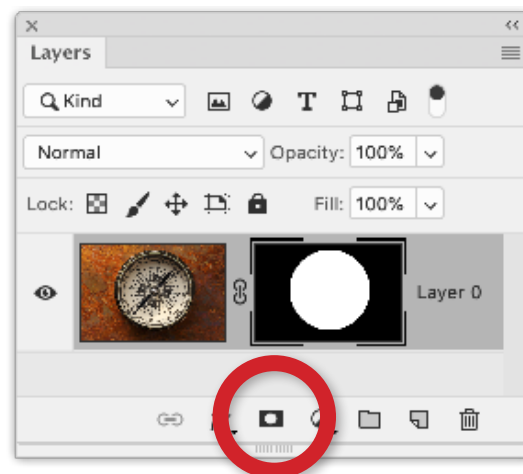Create a selection on a layer you want to mask.

- Click the Layer Mask button ▣ at the bottom of the Layers panel to create a mask. A blank layer mask will appear beside the layer you had selected

- Paint using the paint brush to hide portions of the image by using black, reveal portions of the image by using white.

To edit a layer mask:
1. Click the layer mask thumbnail in to make it active as indicated by the 4 corner lines around the mask icon.

2. With any of the editing or painting tools you can…

   - Paint the mask with white to reveal the image underneath

   - Paint the mask with gray to partially reveal the image underneath

   - Paint the mask with black to hide the image underneath

   Once you enter a mask to edit it, the foreground and background colors in the tool bar default to grayscale. If they are still in color, you have not clicked on your layer mask thumbnail.
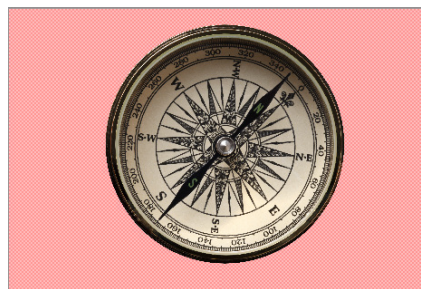
3. Double click on the layer mask and it will open the Properties Panel where you can:

   - Edit the mask density

   - Feather the edge of the mask

   - Refine the mask using Select and Mask and Color Range

See your mask while you are editing

Press the **** key to show or hide the red mask channel while you are actively editing the mask.

To edit the color overlay of the mask, double click on the mask thumbnail in the layers panel to access the Layer Mask Options.

Manipulating Masks

Most of the time, editing a mask consists of using a hard or soft brush or eraser and painting in or out areas of the mask to revel or hide the image.

But editing masks goes WAY beyond that!

Blur/Sharpen a Mask

· Use a blur or sharpen filter on a mask, or any filter for that matter. Masks are just grayscale images and sometimes running a filter on a mask works better than any brush you could use.

· Use the Blur or Sharpen tool on the mask edges. There are times when parts of the mask need to be softened and repainting or erasing parts of the masks just don't work well.

Use Levels/Curves on a mask or channel

· Using an adjustment on a layer or channel will help increase/decrease contrast or transparency on a mask or channel

· Creating gradient masks can be hard to get just right but if you use an adjustment it may help with getting it right!

Creating a Gradient Mask

A Gradient Mask is a mask that fades from showing to hiding.

These type of masks are used to make image fade from one image into another.

- Create a mask on a layer and choose the Gradient Tool from the Tool bar

- Click on the Gradient drop down bar in the Control bar and choose the swatch showing a fade from black to white. Also click on the Linear gradient icon to the right of the Gradient Bar.

- Use the Gradient tool to draw on the layer mask to hide and show the portions of the image. This fades the mask from visible to not visible and creates a smooth fade.

Turn a mask on and off

To turn a mask on or off (a red X will appear over the mask icon), click on the mask thumbnail and do one of the following:

· **SHIFT+ CLICK** on the mask

· Right click (Control Click) on the mask and choose Disable Layer Mask

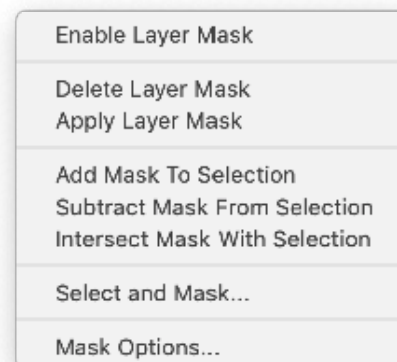· Under the Menu choose Layers>Layer Masks>Disable

Applying and deleting layer masks

When you have finished creating a layer mask, you can either apply the mask and make the changes permanent or discard the mask without applying changes. Because layer masks are stored as alpha channels, applying and discarding layer masks can help reduce file size.

To remove a mask:
Select the mask thumbnail and then:

· Click the trash icon at the bottom of the layers panel.

  - You have two options here, Apply or Discard

  · **Discard** will throw the mask away leaving the image untouched

  · **Apply** will permanently apply the mask to the image and remove all the masked image from the file. This reduces file size but also prevents you

from going back to fully edit that layer.

· Right click on the mask and choose Delete or Apply Layer Mask

· Under the Menu choose Layers>Layer Masks>Delete

Inverting a mask

Sometimes you create a mask that is the inverse of what you want; what you thought you wanted masked out is showing or vice versa.

- To invert the mask (make what is masked out not masked out), select the mask thumbnail and choose **COMMAND+I**

- Choose Image>Adjustments>Invert

Unlinking layers and masks

By default, a layer or layer set is linked to its layer mask or vector mask, as indicated by the link icon between the thumbnails in the Layers palette. The layer and its mask move together in the image when you move either one with the Move tool. Unlinking them lets you move them independently and shift the mask's boundaries separately from the layer.

To unlink a layer from its mask:
Click the link icon in the Layers palette.

To reestablish the link between a layer and its mask:
Click between the layer and mask path thumbnails in the Layers palette.

Masks and Layer Groups

Creating a Layer Group (Layer Set) to put several layers into a folder is helpful to organize your Layers Panel.
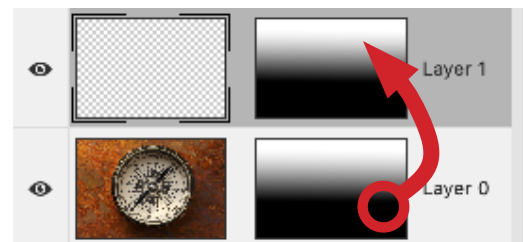
If you want to mask out portions of those layers in the Layer Group you can do each layer individually OR simply create a mask for the entire group.

- Put all the layers you want into a group

- Select the Folder in the Group and click on the Layer Mask icon in the Layer Panel. This will allow you to mask out the contents of the folder without masking each layer individually.

Copying a Mask to another Layer

While you don't "copy" a mask, you can transform a mask into a selection that can be used to create another identical mask.

- With the Move tool selected, **COMMAND+CLICK** on the layer thumbnail to selected all the items on that layer.

- Keep that selection active, click on another layer and create another mask on that new layer
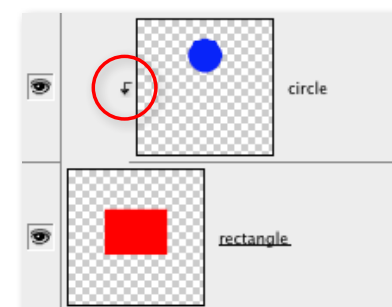
Creating Clipping Masks

A clipping mask lets you use the content of a layer to mask the layers **ABOVE** it. How this works is determined by the content of the layer beneath. The non-transparent portions of the layer beneath clips (reveals), the content of the layers above it in the clipping mask. All other content in the clipped layers is masked out.

In this example, the circle ONLY shows where it is clipped to the rectangle.

A Clipping mask is indicated by a down arrow and an indented Layer Thumbnail

To create a clipping mask:
- Select the TOP layer and choose Layer>Create Clipping Mask (**OPTION + COMMAND + G**)
- OR hold **OPTION** and click between the two layers you want to clip together.

To release a clipping mask:
- Select the TOP layer and choose Layer>Release Clipping Mask (**OPTION + COMMAND + G**)
- OR hold **OPTION** and click between the two layers you want to unclip.

Masks and Adjustment Layers

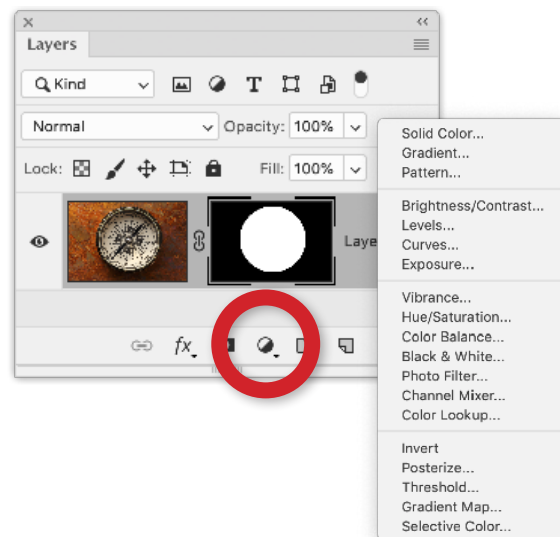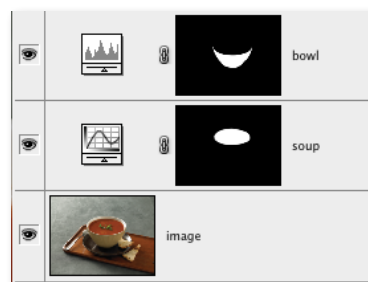Adjustment Layers are layers that allow for non-destructive color correction.

- To create a mask for a color correction layer, choose Layers> Adjustment Layer. . .
By default, any selection made when a layer adjustment is selected will automatically be made into a mask.

By creating an Adjustment Layer with a Mask, you can create individually adjustment layers to target areas of an image with out performing color adjustments to the actual base image.

Adjustment Layers can be created and Clipped to the image layer so that this adjustment layer ONLY affects the image when it is clipped to NONE of the other layers.

To clip this adjustment layer to the image layer, click the check box "Use Previous Layer to Create Clipping Mask"

These Layers can be turned on and off, be edited by double-clicking and be scaled back or copied to another image.

Shape Layers

Shape Layers are layers that are fill with solid color and are masked by a VECTOR mask. Shape layers are vector and can be scaled without any degradation in quality. All the shape tools as well as the pen tool can create these vector Shape Layers.

Create a Vector Layer Mask

To create a Vector Mask, you can:

• Create a Shape layer by using any of the drawing tools shown above which
  will automatically masks the layer in the shape you draw.

• Create a Path using the pen tool and apply it to Raster based image layers.

  - Select a layer and Choose Layer>Vector Mask> Current Path

Vector masks can be applied to a layer that also has a raster mask applied to it.