

Masks

A *mask* works like a rubylith or frisket, covering part of the image and selecting the rest. In Adobe Photoshop, you can create masks using the selection tools or by painting in a mask channel, giving you an easy way to isolate the specific area you want to modify.

In this lesson, you'll first create a mask that isolates and selects the mountains, and then use it to create another mask, that isolates and selects the sky. These masks will let you modify the mountains and the sky separately.



Beginning file



Finished file

1 Open the Masks1.psd file, located in the Tutorial/Artfiles folder.

First you'll select the part of the image you want to isolate with a mask. You'll begin by selecting the sky, because it's easier to select, and then invert the selection to select the mountains.

2 Select the magic wand tool (⌘) in the toolbox. The magic wand tool selects areas based on their similarity in color.

3 Click the sky to select that area. Add to the selection by holding down the Shift key and clicking any main parts of the sky (including the clouds) not yet selected. (Don't worry about leaving some small parts of the sky unselected or selecting some parts of the mountains, you'll touch them up later.)

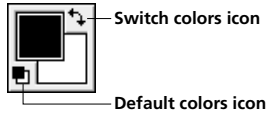
4 Click the Quick Mask Mode button (⌘) in the toolbox to switch to Quick Mask mode. The unselected areas are now masked by a transparent red overlay.



5 Choose Image > Adjust > Invert to mask the sky and select the mountains.

To add to the selected area, you'll now erase from the mask.

6 Click the Default Colors icon on the toolbox to set the colors to black and white.



7 Double-click the eraser tool in the toolbox. In the Eraser Options palette, make sure the Opacity slider is at 100%, Paintbrush is chosen on the Mode menu, and no other options are selected.

8 Click the Brushes tab and click to select a brush. Drag the eraser tool to erase the mask from the mountains as needed.

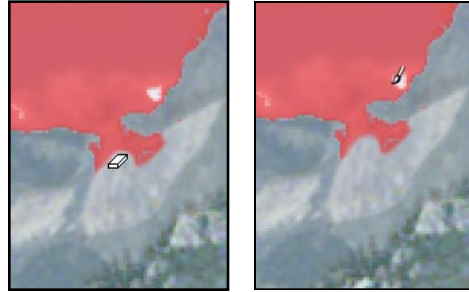
9 Select the zoom tool (⌘); then click the top of the mountains to zoom in on that area.

10 Select the eraser tool again; then select a small brush in the Brushes palette. Continue erasing to remove more of the mask from the edge of the mountain.

In case you removed too much of the mask, you can add to it now by painting with black.

11 Double-click the paintbrush tool in the toolbox. In the Paintbrush Options palette, make sure the Opacity slider is at 100%, Normal is chosen on the mode menu, and no other options are selected. Click the Brushes tab and select a small brush.

12 Drag the paintbrush tool to add to the mask over the sky as needed.



13 Double-click the zoom tool in the toolbox to return to 100%.

If you closed the file now, even if you saved it first, your mask would be lost. To retain the mask, you must first save it to a channel. *Channels* store the individual color information of a file, such as the separate red, green, and blue information, plus any selections and masks you create.

14 Click the Standard Mode button (□) in the toolbox to view the unmasked part of the image as a selection. Then choose **Select > Save Selection** and click OK. Now when you use the Save command, the mask will be saved as well.

15 Choose **Select > None** to deselect the area you just saved as a channel.


Next, you'll work with the mask in its own channel.

16 Choose **Window > Show Channels**.

It's helpful to name the channels you create, especially if you create multiple channels, so that you can find them again easily.

17 To rename the mask channel you just created, double-click channel #4 in the Channels palette, scrolling down if needed to view the channel. Enter Sky in the Name text box and click OK.


The channels containing the photograph are now deselected and hidden, and only the Sky channel containing the mask is selected and can be seen. The mask is black and the selected area is white.

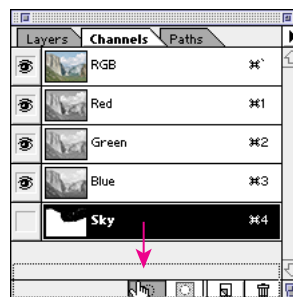
18 Select the eraser tool () and erase over any stray white specks that remain in the black (masked) area. (Remember to use the paintbrush tool if needed to remove part of the mask.)



19 Click in the eye column next to the RGB channel to redisplay the photograph along with the mask.

Now you're ready to apply the mask and adjust the tonal range of the mountain in the image.

20 Drag the Sky channel to the Load Selection button () at the bottom of the Channels palette. Click the eye icon for the Sky channel so that you can see the selection border without the rubyolith mask.



21 Click the name RGB in the Channels palette to select the red, green, and blue image channels. By making these channels active, you can now modify the image.

22 Choose Image > Adjust > Curves. Select the Preview option so that you can see what the adjustment looks like before you apply it.

The Curves dialog box contains options similar to those on high-end color-correction systems. The horizontal axis of the graph represents the original brightness values of the pixels (their input levels). The vertical axis represents their new values (their output levels). To darken the midtones, for example, you would move the pointer to the center of the grid and drag to the right.

23 Click Load, and select the premade curve Curve.acv located in the Tutorial/Artfiles folder. Click Open; then click OK.

24 Choose Select > None.

Now you'll use the existing mask to make a more sophisticated mask that covers the mountains and isolates the sky. Once the sky is selected, you'll make it a deeper blue.

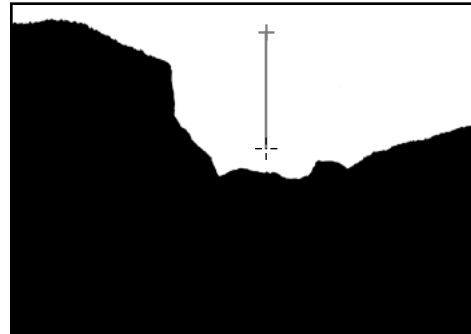
25 Drag the Sky channel to the New Channel button (☐) at the bottom of the Channels palette. Double-click the new channel and name it Mountains. Click OK.

26 Choose Image > Adjust > Invert. This masks all areas that were previously selected, and selects all areas that were previously masked.

Gray areas in a channel mask are semi-selected. You'll now create a gradient across the white part of the mask, so that the change you apply to the sky will occur gradually across the selection.

27 Double-click the gradient tool (▬) in the toolbox. In the Gradient Tool Options palette, make sure the Opacity slider is at 100%, the gradient is Transparent to Foreground, and the type is Linear. Then choose Multiply from the mode menu.

28 Drag from the top to the center of the image.



Sky mask before adding gradient



Sky mask after adding gradient

29 In the Channels palette, click in the eye column for the RGB channel to view the image along with the mask.

Now you're ready to apply the mask. You can then adjust the color of the sky, to make it stand out more clearly.

30 As you did with the Sky channel earlier, drag the Mountains channel to the Load Selection button (☒) in the Channels palette. Click the eye icon next to the Mountains channel to hide the mask, while leaving it applied as a selection.

31 Click the RGB channel in the palette to select the red, green, and blue image channels and make them active.

Finally, now that the sky is selected, you'll make it a deeper blue.

32 Choose Image > Adjust > Hue/Saturation. Select the Preview option; then drag the sliders to increase the hue (we used +13) and saturation (we used +60). Click OK.

33 Choose Select > None to deselect the sky.



® Adobe, the Adobe logo, and Adobe Photoshop are registered trademarks of Adobe Systems Incorporated.
© 1996 Adobe Systems Incorporated. All rights reserved.