The secret of successful selecting…

The ability to make accurate selections with ease is a skill you will develop with experience. Meanwhile, there are five things you must remember…

1. Specify tool options.

Let's look at the magic wand for example. This tool will select areas based on colour. The tolerance you specify will determine its sensitivity.

From Photoshop V.6, the tool options appear conveniently under the menu bar. If you are using an older version, simply double click on the tool in the toolbox to display the options palette.

Tolerance: 25   ☑ Anti-aliased   ☑ Contiguous   ☐ Use All Layers

When an object is on a solid background, it's easiest to select the background first and then use the inverse command on the selection menu, to swap the selection over to the flower.
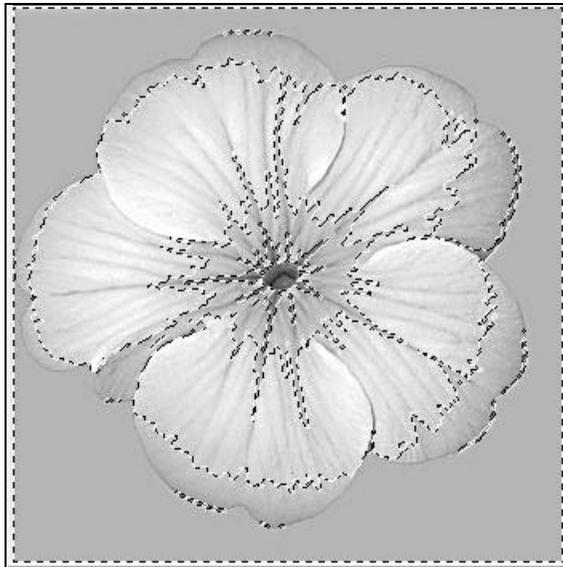
Using the magic wand set at its default tolerance of 25 produces an unsatisfactory selection of the background when clicked outside the flower. Part of the petals have been included in the selection.
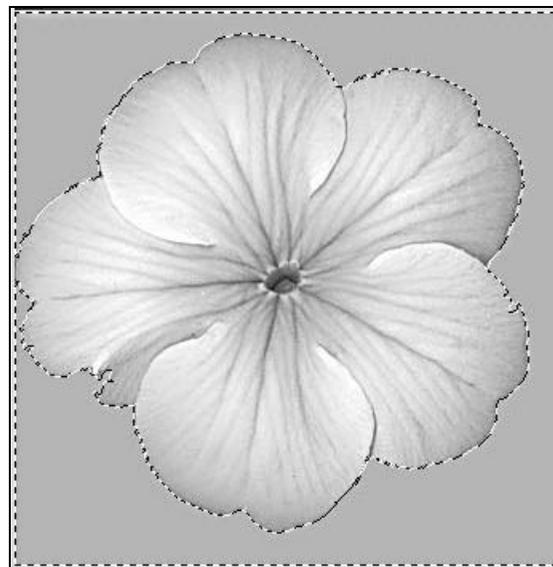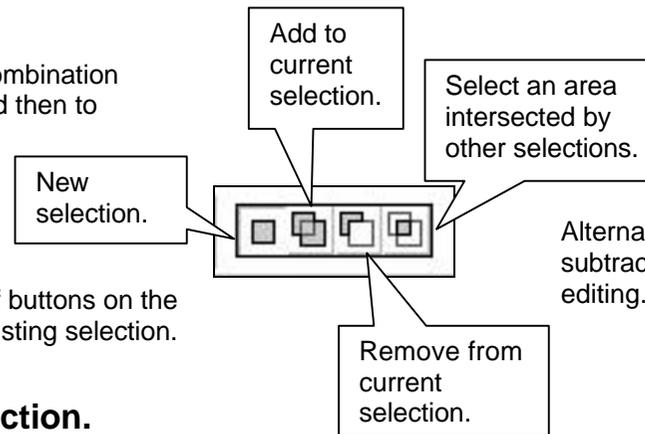
Reducing the tolerance to 5 captures the background perfectly. Having the contiguous option selected means only adjacent pixels are included.
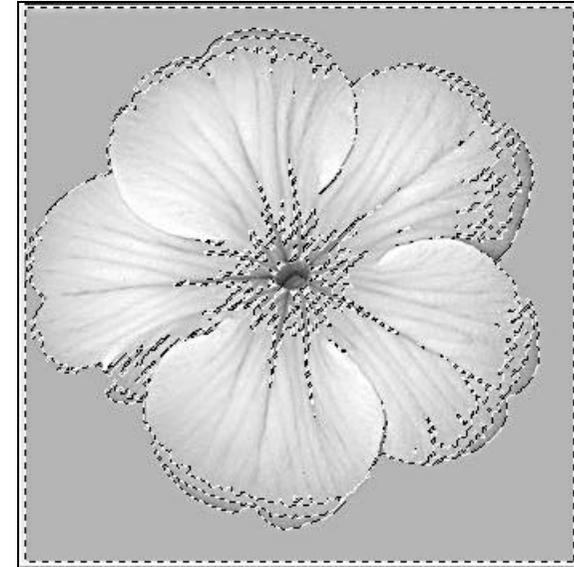
Using the magic wand without contiguous checked means the tool will seek out all pixels using colours similar to that you clicked on.
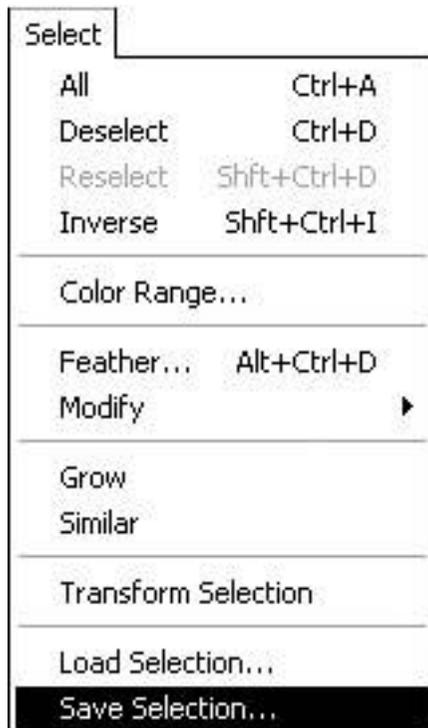
2. Combine tools.

Rarely is one tool adequate for the job. Usually a combination of tools is necessary to make the initial selection and then to perfect it.

Add to current selection.

Select an area intersected by other selections.

New selection.

Remove from current selection.

Alternatively hold down SHIFT or ALT to add and subtract from current selections when they need editing.

Photoshop V.6 introduced a convenient set of buttons on the options bar which allow you to alter an existing selection.

3. Save your selection.

| Select	
All	Ctrl+A
Deselect	Ctrl+D
Reselect	Shft+Ctrl+D
Inverse	Shft+Ctrl+I
Color Range...	
Feather...	Alt+Ctrl+D
Modify	▶
Grow	
Similar	
Transform Selection	
Load Selection...	
Save Selection...	

Selections can be easily saved, not only for future use but also to retrieve should any mishaps occur while you are working on them.

Name your selection in the dialog box that pops up and it will be there when you return to load it.

Be aware that your selection will be stored in an alpha channel. This will increase the size of your file. For this reason it can be preferable to use paths.

4. Magnify your view.

To be accurate you need to be able to zoom in and out to scrutinise your work.

Navigator | Info

200%
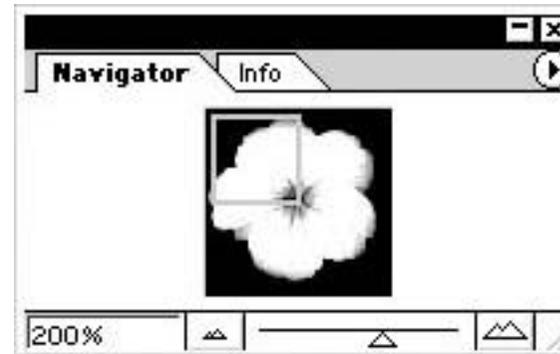
The navigator allows you to magnify and scroll around your image. The red box on the thumbnail indicates the area of the image you can currently see inside the image window.

Handy hint: hold down the space bar and the tool you are currently using will temporarily swap to the hand tool enabling you to move your magnified view of the image to a new area to work on.

5. Refine your selection.

Often the freehand lasso is very useful for adding or remove areas from a selection.

You can swap quickly between selection mode and quick mask mode simply by using the two buttons in the toolbox.
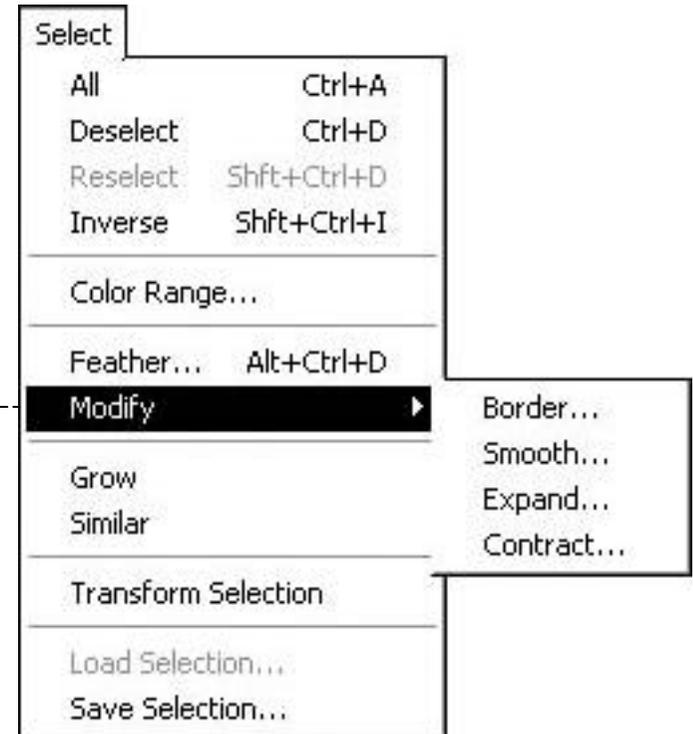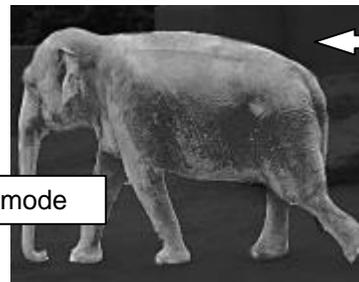
You can specify whether you want the selection masked off in red or the reverse, just double click on the quick mask button for various options.
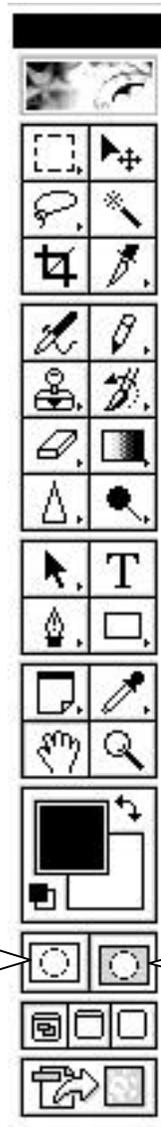
Magnifying your selection will reveal any inaccuracies you need to correct. You may decide to continue using the selection tools to refine your selection or you might –

- edit in **quick mask mode**

- or use the commands on the **selection menu**.

When you are in selection mode the selection is represented by 'marching ants'. Once you swap to quick mask mode the selection or the masked area is represented by a ruby coloured overlay.

Select	
All	Ctrl+A
Deselect	Ctrl+D
Reselect	Shft+Ctrl+D
Inverse	Shft+Ctrl+I
Color Range...	
Feather...	Alt+Ctrl+D
Modify	▶
Grow	
Similar	
Transform Selection	
Load Selection...	
Save Selection...	

Border...
Smooth...
Expand...
Contract...

Selection mode

Quick mask mode

The red mask can be edited using any of the painting and editing tools available in the toolbox.

To begin with paint in black to apply the mask and use the eraser to remove it where necessary.

Be sure to swap back to selection mode occasionally to view the changes you have made.