

A Simple Layers/Masking Technique to Combine 2 or More Images

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The concept of layers and masks in Photoshop can be a confusing issue. **Layers** in photoshop are just images. A **Layer Mask** is a grayscale image that controls the visibility of a layer. It allows you to reveal parts of an image without permanently erasing contents. In other words it is used to hide and show parts of an image to combine 2 or more photos into a composite of one image.

I will demonstrate a method that I use to combine two (or more) images together using a relatively simple technique in photoshop.

The following is my method of blending two images together in Photoshop.

Steps:

1. Launch Photoshop
2. Left click on **File** in the **Control Panel** (top left) then click **Open**
3. With the File open, add images to Photoshop by holding the **Shift key** down and **left click** on the box at the top left of each image you want transferred into Photoshop. When you do so, you will see the files populate at the top of Photoshop as **Tab Document Files** within the Photoshop Workspace. Your first image will be seen in the **Document Window** right in front of you. You can toggle back and forth between images in the Tab Documents Files in the workspace.
4. On the far right side is the **Layers Panel**. If you don't see a Layers Panel on the right side go to **Window** at the top (**Tools Panel**) click on it. A dropdown box will appear. Scroll down to **Layers** and click on it. This will activate the **Layers Panel** on the right.
5. Select the image you want from the **Tab Document Files** as the background (let's call it image 1) then the image you want to transfer to Image 1, call it (image 2). It's best to make the first image your background (Image 1), i.e. the image you want to transfer to. You will see in the right side **Layers Panel** it says Background. It's best to rename your images by double left clicking on the name **Background**. You will see a popup box come up in the **Document Window**.
Change the name to whatever name you want to identify the image by typing in the name and then click on enter. Do the same for the second image, i.e. change the name to identify it.
6. Click on image 1. Resize if necessary (**Ctrl +**) (**Ctrl-**). You can also move the image around by holding down the space bar and moving with your mouse. 

7. Click on Image 2.
8. In the **Tools Panel** on the left, click on the **Selection Tools** (4th Icon down)
9. Click and hold. Select the **Object Selection Tool**. Move the cursor to the left side of the image. When you do so, you will see a cross on the screen. Click and hold on the cross and drag it over the object you want to select. Once selected, let go of the mouse and you will see that the object was selected (marching ants all around). This may take a few seconds to render.
10. On this layer hit **Ctrl C** (to copy the selected part of the image, then move to Image 1 and hit **Ctrl V**. Your image is now transferred but most likely not where you want it to be placed.
11. To relocate your transferred image, click on **Ctrl T (Transform Tool)** and a box will cover your image. There are handles on the ends and sides of the box. These are used for resizing and rotating to fit your needs. By clicking and holding in the middle of the box you can relocate the image anywhere you want. Then hit **Enter** or the **check mark** at the top of the page. This will lock the image in place.
12. Lastly, to transfer your image to a selected file, go to the top of the page (**Tools Panel**) and click on **Layer** then scroll down to **Flatten Image** and click on it. Now your image is ready to transfer to the file of your choice.

Combining 3 Images

Follow steps 1. Through 8.

13. Click on the **Quick Selection Tool**, then hover your cursor over the object you want to select. This tool will automatically begin highlighting the object. Click and hold while you move over the image. You will see 'marching ants' as you move the cursor along. Stop when completed. **Note: It is difficult to explain this procedure. It is best if you [YouTube or Google \(How to use the Object Selection Tool in Photoshop\)](#). This is a learned technique that requires practice and patience.**
14. On this layer hit **Ctrl C** to copy the image that was highlighted, then move to Image 1 and hit **Ctrl V**. Your image is now transferred but again most likely not where you want it to be.
15. Click on Ctrl T and follow instructions in 11.
16. Go to the third image and Click on the **Move Tool** which is the first tool in the **Tools Panel**. Bring your cursor to the center of the image, hold and move up to Image 1. While still holding, drag it down to the image on the **Document Window**.
17. Resize the image by using the transfer tool **CTRL T** and resize to cover the entire image.

18. At the bottom right side you will find a **Layers Mask** Icon. It is the one that looks like the Japanese flag. Click on it. By default a white box pops up, which is what you want to have next to the image.
19. Go over to the left hand side to the **Foreground/Background** tool which is on the bottom left side in the Tools Panel. The foreground box has to be **black**. If it isn't black using the double arrow key to toggle it to black. Go up to the **Brush Tool** and select a soft round brush.
20. At this point start brushing over the **Layers Mask** to reveal the image underneath. **This also takes a bit of practice. There is more detailed explanations on Google (how to use the brush tool).**
21. Lastly, go to **the Layers Panel** on top, scroll down and select **Flatten Image**.
22. Your completed image is now ready to transfer to the file of your choice.

Shortcut Keys:

Ctrl key on Windows = Cmd key on a Mac

Alt Key on Windows is Option Key on Mac

Ctrl + = Increase Image Size

Ctrl - = Decreases Image Size

Ctrl 0 = Fits Image to Screen

Ctrl C = Copy Image

Ctrl V = Paste

Ctrl A = Select All

Ctrl D = Deselect

Ctrl Z = Deletes Previous Edit (my favorite key)