

Selecting a single colour as a mask

Overview

This is for Photoshop CC 2015, although I believe there have been no changes since CS5 – To be confirmed.

Isolating a single colour and using it as a mask is a good way of removing a distraction, or making a background grey-scale whilst leaving the main object its original colour. In this example a yellow teddy Bear. So we will go from this:



We do that by duplicating the picture as a new layer, turning the background layer into greyscale (Black & White) and keeping the colour from the top layer by using a mask.

Mac/Windows keyboard shortcuts

I use a Mac, so I will, for example use Cmd+j to create a layer. For Windows, it's Ctrl+j

Workflow

Setup:

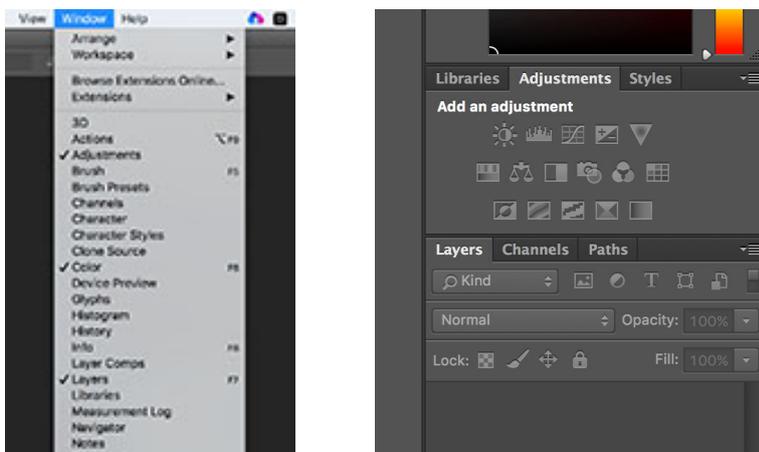
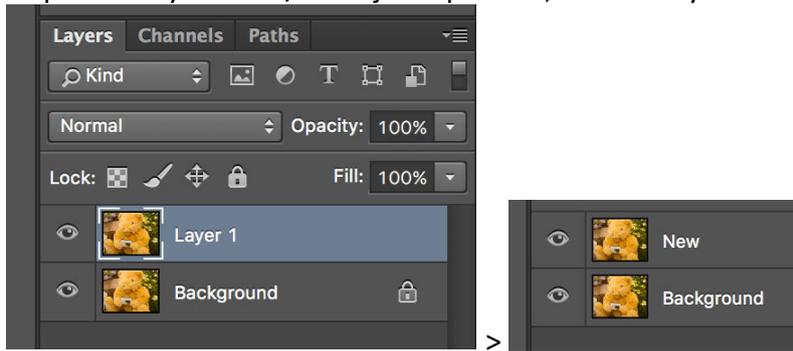


Figure 1 We will be using "Layer", "Channels" and "Adjustment" panels. If they are not visible, select them from the Windows menu.

Open image – <http://hallsworth.eu/scc/teddy-original.jpg> - Save it - Resize if necessary*
 Duplicate Layer – Ctrl/Cmd+j – Important, as both layers are used.



Rename new layer: Double click “Layer1” text and change to e.g.” New”.

Work in Channels:

Select the Channels Panel



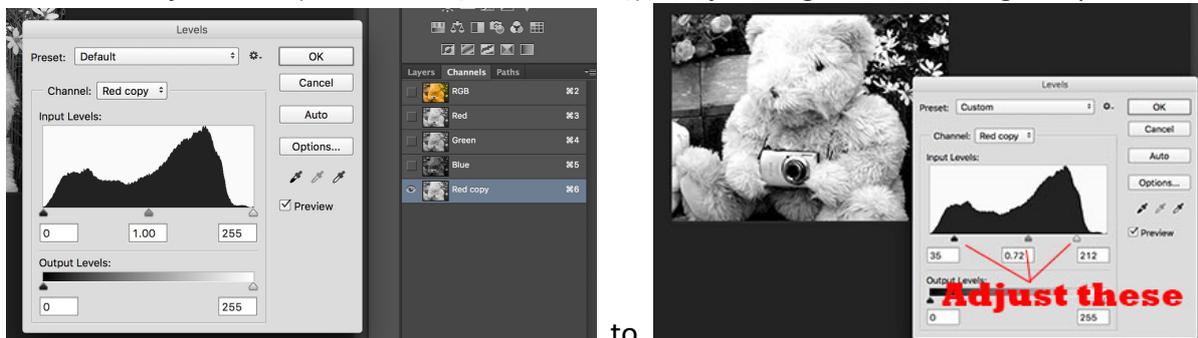
Click on each channel – Red/Green/Blue, looking for best contrast between your main object and the background – In this case, Red

Select the high contrast Channel only, as shown above.

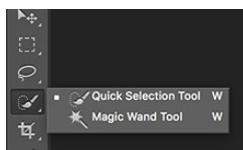
Right click on Red channel and select “Duplicate Channel”: Leave as “Red copy”

Select the new (Red Copy) channel, deselecting the original – Click on the eye if necessary.

Do Levels adjustment (Ctrl/Cmd+L {lower case L}) – Adjust to get best dark/light separation



Click on OK



Still with the copy channel selected, choose the “Quick Select” tool – select the teddy bear (Lighter colour)

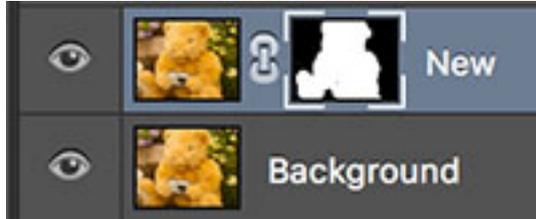
Tidy up if required, using e.g. Lasso tool. Shift+click & drag to add to selection, Alt+click & drag to remove from selection.

Work in Layers

Switch to Layers panel & Select the “New” Layer

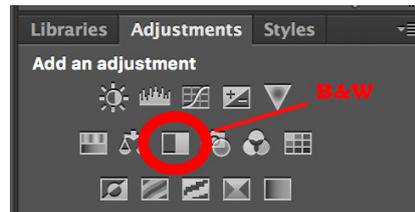


Add layer Mask (Click on “Add a Mask” button at bottom of layers panel)



Mask will be added, based on the selection in channels.

Select Background Layer



Click on Black & White adjustment layer

Job's done

I hope it worked for you 😊. Save as a jpg for sharing.

(If the mask is the wrong way round after all, click on the mask and Cmd+i to invert).

* Resizing

There is no point in having an image bigger, or with greater depth than necessary. Images for screen need to be much less detailed than for large prints, for example:

For screen: With an image open, click on Image > Image Size.

Change Resolution to 72, then change units to Pixels. Width=1024 (Landscape) OR height=768 (Portrait). Other dimension will follow to keep aspect ratio.

My Final version looks like this: <http://hallsworth.eu/scc/teddy-final.jpg>