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How to select and deselect in photoshop

Adobe Photoshop is the market leader when it comes to photo retouching, image editing, or even creating new images from scratch. However, for most people's uses, it may just be too many features to wade through, too much money to spend, or too complicated to use. Thankfully, there are plenty of powerful alternatives that also have tons of features. Here's a look at five of the best. Earlier this week we asked you which Photoshop alternatives you thought were the best, or which ones you preferred when you needed to do image editing or photo editing. You responded with a ton of great suggestions, but here are your top five, in no particular order. If you need to edit images, touch up photos, remove objects, or just make an image look the way you Read moreThe polls are closed and the votes are counted! To see which of these five great Photoshop alternatives took the top spot, head over to our hive five followup post to read more and discuss the winner! Adobe Photoshop is a powerful tool. It's at the top of the market for a reason. It's also pretty...Read moreGIMP (Win/OS X/Linux)The GNU Image Manipulation Program, aka GIMP, is well-known and well loved for more than a few reasons. It's incredibly powerful, packing as many features as Photoshop itself, the fact that it's cross-platform and supports Windows, OS X, and Linux machines with ease (and with feature parity across all devices), and of course, because it's completely free. It has a completely modular and customizable interface, so you can keep your most oft-used tools front and center. It also features image correction utilities that make photo manipulation and retouching easy. Those of you who nominated GIMP praised it for coming in at the low low price of $0, for many of you also reported issues with its interface and usability. It's true, the interface certainly leaves more than a few things to be desired, and it can be difficult to get used to if you're more accustomed to other image editing tools. Some people love it, some people hate it, but everyone acknowledges that it's difficult to find a comparable feature-packed utility for free. Pixelmator (OS X)Pixelmator is a richly featured image editor for OS X. It'll set you back $30, but it often appears in bundles and app packs along with other useful utilities, so it can be had at a bargain. Pixelmator is remarkably powerful; packing a flexible, customizable interface that's designed for OS X, multiple layer styles and filtering/editing tools, and an adaptive engine that switches to the right tools or features when you need them. It's packed with photo and image editing and retouching features, so if you're looking to clean up photos before posting them to the internet, or getting them printed and framed, this app comes at a fraction of Photoshop's price and offers a ton of useful features. There's a reason that we said that Pixelmator is a seriously good replacement for Photoshop, and while some people will always have a use case that requires Photoshop specifically, (eg, you need non-destructive editing, channel support, or adjustment layers) for the rest of us, Pixelmator is worth a look. Those of you who nominated it praised its RAW file support, and its depth of features, not to mention its price tag. Of course, it's Mac only, so those folks doing image editing on Windows or Linux machines don't have it as an option. OS X: Most Mac users know that Pixelmator is pretty much the best Photoshop alternative you can...Read morePaint.NET (Windows)Paint.NET is one of our favorite image editing tools. Part of it is because the app is feature packed, offering layer editing, a customizable interface with plenty of room to work but also plenty of tools at your disposal, unlimited undo, tons of effects and filters, and a community of passionate users. Part of it is because Paint.NET is completely free, and for the vast majority of people looking to touch up a photo before they post it to the web, resize or crop an image, or do basic image editing, it's more than enough, and it's completely free. It doesn't have the same features as more advanced tools like Photoshop or even GIMP, but not every Photoshop alternative needs to have the same breadth of features—just the ones that matter. Those of you who nominated Paint.NET noted this explicitly. Advanced users may run up against its limitations after a while, but advanced users probably already know the tools that have the features they need. The rest of us though, who just need to open a tool to do some basic work here and there and want a fast, flexible, and free utility to do it, Paint.NET is the way to go. Adobe Photoshop Lightroom (Windows/OS X)Adobe Lightroom stands out from a number of the alternatives here partially because it's designed specifically for photographers, and has the broad variety of tools and features they need to get their photos edited, retouched, updated, and corrected before they're printed, framed, posted online, or even professionally judged. Color correct your images, remove objects or people, straighten images, and more. Lightroom is part of Adobe's Creative Cloud suite, so you have the option of buying access to it alone, or making it part of a larger subscription to Adobe's other utilities as well. The full version is $149, but it's frequently available with discounts. We were initially surprised that another Adobe product, much less Lightroom, got the nominations for the top five. However, it makes sense if you're a photographer looking for a great image editing tool that's not quite Photoshop, and it looks like a number of you are doing just that—editing photos specifically, not just images, and not necessarily creating images from scratch. Pixlr Editor (Web)Pixlr Editor is actually part of a suite of Pixlr apps, including the previously mentioned mobile app Pixelr Express, and photo filter and tweaking app, Pixlr-O-Matic. Pixlr Editor on the other hand is a richly featured webapp that offers a healthy dose of features for editing photos and images. It packs adjustments, layers, filters and effects, basic features like rotation, resizing, cropping and editing, area selection, and so on. It's not as feature-packed or as streamlined as a lot of other tools, but the fact that it's free and runs in your browser alone makes it worth your attention, and your use if you're away from a computer with a tool you already know installed. Android/iOS: Made by the same team behind Pixlr-o-Matic, one of your favorite photo filter apps,...Read moreThose of you who nominated Pixlr highlighted that fact as well; it does just about everything the average user needs, and while professionals will likely find it lacking, amateurs and everyday users have a lot to like here. Plus, the fact that it's a webapp means it runs in any browser, on any OS, with the same features. Sign up for an account and you can save images for future work. There you have it, your top five. Now it's time to put them to an all-out vote. Not much in the way of honorable mentions this week, with the exception possibly of Google Picasa, which some of you noted you use to touch up your images, do some light image editing before sharing them or posting them to the web, and also to organize and manage your photo library. Similarly, we should give a nod to SumoPaint, another free, cross-platform tool that's web-based and offers a ton of useful tools and features. Have something to say about one of the contenders? Want to make the case for your personal favorite, even if it wasn't included in the list? Remember, the top five are based on your most popular nominations from the call for contenders thread from earlier in the week. Don't just complain about the top five, let us know what your preferred alternative is—and make your case for it—in the discussions below.The Hive Five is based on reader nominations. As with most Hive Five posts, if your favorite was left out, it didn't get the nominations required in the call for contenders post to make the top five. We understand it's a bit of a popularity contest. Have a suggestion for the Hive Five? Send us an email at tips+hivefive@lifehacker.com!Photos by Robert Freiberger and Blake Patterson. In this example from T3, the background graphics were added in post using various different masking techniques Creating selections and masks in Photoshop is a fundamental part of any professional creative workflow. Whether you're a junior designer, illustrator, animator, or even a creative director, at some point you will have to create a mask and cut something out in Photoshop - even if it's only because you're working late and the repo department has all gone home.There are many varied ways to create selections in Photoshop, ranging from the quick and easy techniques that we're all familiar with - such as using the Magic Wand tool to cut out objects from a high-contrast, flat background, or switching to the Pen tool for greater accuracy - through to more precise, time-consuming techniques that take a while to master.In this workflow guide I'll walk through some more advanced, non-destructive ways of creating masks.01. Non-destructive layer mask tricksAdd a layer mask to any Photoshop layer, and click on the white linked thumbnail to edit it. For fine adjustments, a white or black brush adds or removes areas, toggle using Shift-X - or use the Magic Wand for large areas. Shift-click on the mask background to toggle effects on and off .02. Working with clipping masksClipping masks are another invaluable non-destructive technique. Set up a document with a solid background, add a new layer with a shape in it, and paste in a new, detailed layer above it. In the Layers panel, select Create Clipping Mask to mask out areas based on the layer below.Clipping masks can also be used in conjunction with type. Paste in a texture layer above your word, and go to Create Clipping Path. You can resize and rotate the top image within the bounds of the clipping path, and the type layer will also remain editable.04. Using channels for areas of detailChannels are particularly useful for working with high levels of detail like hair or bike spokes, as seen here. Open the Channels panel, pick the channel with the highest level of contrast and duplicate it by dragging it to the Create New Channel icon.05. Using adjustment layersWith only the duplicated channel selected, go to Image Adjustments Levels and increase the levels to punch up the black and white. Be careful not to go too far and create jagged edges. You can also experiment with the curves to achieve a similar result.As with layer masks, you can use Photoshop's Brush tool to add or subtract detail to the mask. When doing this, work carefully around the channel, brushing on black and white to create your mask. This is where a Wacom tablet really comes into its own.07. Highlighting detail with the Burn toolThe Burn tool is useful for picking out details. Select it, making sure that Shadows is selected in the drop down menu. Brush over the areas you want to pick out, adjusting the exposure as you go. If you want to preview the mask overlaid on the original image, hit the tilde (~) key.08. Inverting the imageOnce you've filled in all the areas of the mask, hit Cmd/Ctrl-I to invert the image. Alpha channels work in much the same way as layer masks so, here, the black area will be masked off. In this case, it's the background that we want to remove from the model and the bicycle.09. Alpha channels in InDesign layoutsThis is where alpha channels really come into their own. When placing an image in InDesign, select Show Import Options and chose the alpha channel from the image menu. The image will be imported with the alpha channel applied, so you can run it over the top of text and images.Words: Luke O'Neill Photography: Richard GrassieCurrently art editor at T3 magazine, graphic designer and illustrator Luke O'Neill launched and designed the original Computer Arts Collection series. This article originally appeared in Computer Arts issue 224. On the hunt for Photoshop alternatives? We've got options for you. There are a whole host of reasons why you may want to find software other than Adobe – including the subscription model that's part of Photoshop. Or perhaps you want to support smaller development houses, or simply don't need the abundance of features Photoshop has to offer.Photoshop is now such a ubiquitous brand that, like Google, it has become a verb. Rather than editing images, you Photoshop them. While Adobe must be enjoying the PR benefits of this, it might steer you away from trying other software apps and photo editing software. Of course, if you do want to download Photoshop, we've got you covered there too. Now, read on for our pick of the best Photoshop alternatives around. Want to stick to Photoshop? Give it a try with the deal below:Download a free Photoshop trial for PC, Mac or iPad now This seven-day trial allows you to try the latest release of Photoshop for free, giving you access to all the latest features and updates. You don't have to buy the software once you're done, but if you like it you can convert to a paid Creative Cloud membership either during the trial or after it's expired. View DealCan this Photoshop alternative topple Adobe from its throne? (Image credit: Affinity)Platform: Mac OS 10.9+, Windows 10+; iPad version sold separately: iOS 12+ | Latest version: 1.9.3 | Free trial: Yes | Free version: NoProfessional tool Low costNo Android version iPad version sold separatelyFully compatible with Photoshop and other file formats, Affinity Photo is one of the Photoshop alternatives that's aimed squarely at professional photographers and designers, and although it is hugely cheaper than Photoshop (with no subscription), its creators argue it's actually better. We think it's perhaps the most serious of the Photoshop alternatives we've seen to date. It comes with a promise of higher speeds, fewer crashes and unlimited undos but in truth, the amount of improved performance you'll get will probably depend what equipment you're using (it's been specifically designed to take advantage of the latest quad core technology). Affinity Photo is available for both Mac and Windows, and there's a separate version for iPad. If you're looking for an alternative to Photoshop, Affinity Photo is definitely worth investigating. A powerful option for sketching, painting and illustration (Image credit: Procreate)Platform: iPad (iOS 13.2+), separate iPhone app (iOS 12+) | Latest version: 5.1.5 | Free trial: No | Free version: NoLow cost Apple Pencil supportiOS onlyLacks some advanced featuresIf it's a painting app for iPad you're after for your choice of Procreate alternatives, you'd be hard pushed to find better performance and value than Procreate. What first started out as a basic drawing app back in 2010, has transformed over the years into a highly professional tool – so much so that it even bagged itself an Apple Design Award back in 2013. With an easy-to-use layout, Procreate is packed with features artists will love, from true-to-life pencils, inks and brushes (see our list of top Procreate brushes), to advanced layer compositing and unique digital tools to help realise your creative visions. Added palm support means you no longer have to worry about accidentally drawing over your canvas, and an ever-growing library of Procreate brushes will help you add flair to your artwork. Procreate has full support for both first- and second-generation Apple Pencils (depending on your iPad model). And last year, users welcomed a long-awaited new Text tool with open arms. In 2019, we saw the release of a dedicated iPhone version of the painting app too, aptly named Procreate Pocket. You won't find all the features you'd expect from Photoshop here, of course, but for digital painting specifically, you'll have at least most of what you need.There's a free handbook on the Procreate website, featuring an overview of all the apps features and tools, to help get you started. Lifetime access to this all for under £10 begs the question, 'why wouldn't you?'Paint with natural watercolors and acrylics (Image credit: Rebelle)Platform: Windows 7, 8 and 10; OS X 10.11+ | Latest version: 4 | Free trial: Demo version | Free version: NoMimics real paintTilt optionNot for mobile devicesIf you're looking for a program that provides a true-to-life painting experience, Rebelle could be just what you need. Today's available in versions for Linux, Windows and Mac.GIMP offers a wide toolset, similar to Photoshop in many ways, and is a great option if you're looking excellent, affordable program replicates traditional painting techniques – watercolour in particular – with absolute authenticity – making it a worthy contender on our Photoshop alternatives list.Rebelle mimics the way paint behaves in the real world, enabling the users to simulate a drop of colour being blown and running in different directions. You can specify blow length, drip size and the amount of water you 'use' with your paints. Meanwhile, the Tilt option makes it possible to let your colours run in whichever direction you choose. The latest update (Rebelle 4) solved the previous issue of the limited number of brush presets – there's now more than 170 presets available. There are also new watercolour and oil effects, brush stabilisation and a bunch more brilliant updates. We're impressed.A highly professional painting software package, Escape Motions is keen to keep the focus of Rebelle on traditional media and the best way to present it in the digital realm. And we have to say it's doing a darn fine job. Create amazing natural art (Image credit: ArtRage)Platform: Mac OS X 10+, Windows 7+; separate apps for for iOS and Android | Latest version: 6 | Free trial: Demo version | Free version: NoThick oilsDelicate watercoloursNot the cheapestMobile app sold separatelyArtRage is designed to ensure artists can focus on their creativity. It offers realistic oils, pencils, watercolour, canvas textures and other traditional media painting tools, many of which are fully customisable. The program's minimalistic interface disappears when you start painting near it and returns as soon as you finish. Popular tools are immediately visible, with other less-frequently used features concealed in pods to avoid taking up space. A small workflow issue crops up in the program's multiple ways to resize a brush, but this is by no means a deal breaker. If you're new to digital painting and looking for an affordable, intuitive program, ArtRage is an option seriously worth considering. The software is also available for iOS and Android, priced at just £4.Photopea feels as close as you can get to Photoshop in the browser, and it's free (Image credit: Photopea)Platform: Web | Latest version: N/A | Free trial: No | Free version: YesFree versionCross-platformLacks advanced features Ads with free versionThanks to continual advances in web technology you don't always need a discrete app to do much of what you'd use Photoshop for, and Photopea is a browser-based option from this Photoshop alternatives list, many of which are fully customisable. Designed to be an advanced editor with pro tools, Photopea bears a distinct resemblance to Photoshop and features most of the tools you'll need for everyday image work. It'll open most standard file formats such as JPG, PNG and RAW, and it'll accept Sketch, GIMP and even Photoshop PSD files.Photopea supports layers and layer masks, lets you use blend modes and features a stack of selection tools, from standard marquees through to a magnetic lasso and a quick selection tool. While it doesn't offer the sort of advanced features you'd expect in Photoshop such as content-aware fill, it still has a more than enough going on to keep most designers and artists happy, and it's completely free to use. However if you don't like ads, there's also the option to subscribe to a premium version which gets rid of them and also gives you extra levels of undo: 60 rather than 30.Sketch includes tools similar to that of Photoshop and Illustrator at a fraction of the price Platform: MacOS 10.14.4+ | Latest version: 70.6 | Free trial: Yes | Free version: NoProfessional tool Clear focus on UI designMac onlyNo raster editingSketch is a professional vector graphics app for creatives that has created enormous buzz within the design community, and web designers in particular. The development team behind Sketch has made it as flexible as possible, with it supporting infinite zooming and vector shapes that are perfect for multiple resolutions. You can build a new graphic from primitive shapes or start a new one with the Vector or Pencil tool.It has a pleasingly simple UI and has many features similar to that of Photoshop and Illustrator, including layers, gradients, colour picker and style presets. Its popularity means there are also plenty of community-created Sketch plugins you can use to extend its functionality.GIMP is a popular, free alternative to Photoshop (Image credit: GIMP)Platform: Linux, Windows, Mac | Latest version: 2.10.22 | Free trial: No | Free version: YesFreeOpen sourceLearning curveCan be laggyA free, open-source Photoshop alternatives pick that's been around for donkey's years, GIMP stands for GNU Image Manipulation Program. Today it's available in versions for Linux, Windows and Mac.GIMP offers a wide toolset, similar to Photoshop in many ways, and is a great option if you're looking for a no-cost image editor. The interface differs somewhat from Photoshop, but a version of GIMP is available that mimics Adobe's look and feel, making it easier to migrate over if you're ditching Photoshop. The full suite of tools is available here – everything you're accustomed to is within easy reach, including painting tools, colour correction, cloning, selection, and enhancement. The team that oversees development has worked hard to ensure compatibility too, so you'll be able to work with all the popular file formats without any trouble at all. You'll also find a very capable file manager built in, along similar lines to Adobe's Bridge.Overall, this is a great option whether you've either got a limited budget, or want to find Photoshop alternatives for other reasons.Mac tool Pixelmator Pro promises a faster workflow than using Photoshop Platform: macOS 10.14+ | Latest version: 2.0 | Free trial: Yes | Free version: NoLow costEasy to useMac onlyLimited featuresPixelmator is one of the Photoshop alternatives that has been around for a while now, but more recently the team released the Pixelmator Pro. While the previous tool used floating windows, the Pro version has a more usable single-window UI, and offers non-destructive image editing. The team have pared back the interface, which should make it easy to pick up – and there's a 'hidden interface' option you can activate if you just want to see your image, with no distractions. Pixelmator 2.0 is the biggest update yet, with a more intuitive design, all-new support for M1 Macs and a bunch of new features. This Photoshop alternative is geared especially for use on a Mac, and it supports features like tabs, fullscreen and split view.Pixlr comes with more than 600 effects (Image credit: Pixlr)Platform: Browser | Latest version: X | Free trial: No | Free version: YesSimple to useFreeLimited features Doesn't work with TIFFsPixlr is a free alternative to Photoshop that boasts more than 600 effects, overlays and borders. It also lets you do all the main things you'd expect from a basic photo editor, from cropping and re-sizing to removing red-eye and whitening teeth.If you're used to using Photoshop, then you'll find Pixlr's user interface easy to pick up quickly, as it's very similar. This free app is available in both iOS and Android varieties, or use can use it as a web app.(Image credit: Corel)PHOTO-PAINT is a dedicated photo editor in the CorelDRAW Graphics Suite. The suite was updated for 2020, with a slick app for creating on-the-go, improved collaboration features and all the professional vector illustration, layout, photo editing and typography tools you need.The suite is geared up to work perfectly with Windows 10, offering multi-monitor viewing and support for 4K displays.For photo editing, free Windows tool Paint.net is an excellent alternative to Photoshop Platform: Windows | Latest version: 4.7.2 | Free trial: Yes | Free version: YesSimple to learnFreeWindows onlyLimited featuresPaint.net is a Windows-based alternative to the Paint editor that Microsoft shipped with versions of Windows. Don't let that put you off, though: it's a surprisingly capable and useful tool, available completely free of charge via Getpaint.net (there's also a paid-for version in the Windows store). The software started out life as a Microsoft-sponsored undergraduate project, and has become an open source project maintained by some of the alumni. The focus is on ease of use, and there's a definite tendency towards photo editing rather than artistic creation. That said, there are a range of special effects available, allowing you to easily create fake perspective, blend and push pixels around the canvas, tile and repeat selections, and so on.A good range of selection tools, support for layers, and adjustments such as curves and brightness/contrast mean that Paint.net is a great alternative to Photoshop for photo editing, especially if you can do without some of the more recent additions to Photoshop's toolset.SumoPaint works in the browser, and requires Adobe Flash Platform: Browser | Latest version: N/A | Free trial: No | Free version: YesCross-platformFree versionSome lagUnlimited editing requires paymentSumoPaint is a highly capable, free browser-based image editor, which is a worthy addition to the Photoshop alternatives list. All the standard features you'd expect from a desktop tool are present and correct. It's lightweight and quick to load, and the free version is very usable. There's also a paid-for Pro version. The standard range of tools and adjustments you'd expect are all included. Brushes, pencils, shapes, text, cloning, gradients, etc are all quickly accessed from the Photoshop-esque floating toolbar. It can also open saved documents from your hard drive, making SumoPaint a perfectly viable option for editing and re-editing.Some tools work in different ways to Photoshop, offering possibilities that would be difficult to match in Adobe's offering. There are, however, limitations that will put off some users, especially in the free version.Acorn (Mac)Platform: MacOS 10.11 | Latest version: 6.6.3 | Free trial: Yes | Free version: NoCheapWorks quicklyMac onlyLacks photo organiserImage editing software Acorn debuted back in 2007 and has provided hobbyists and artists on a budget with a great, affordable alternative to Photoshop ever since. Features of the software include layer styles, non-destructive filters, curves and levels, blending modes and much more.The most recent edition – Acorn 8 – includes new Scale and Transform options, the ability to use the Clone tool across layers or images, and the ability to use emoji on a path (if you so wish)Parts of this article were originally published in ImagineFX, the world's best-selling magazine for digital artists. Subscribe to ImagineFX.Related articles: