General Guidelines and Tips
For Selections in Elements
By Jerry Koons

After Global Adjustments have been made to an image, one of the more important steps in perfecting an image is making adjustments to local areas. Accurate and efficient selection is the key to allowing adjustments to those local areas

The following Guidelines and Tips are intended to help you in making your selections.

A thorough explanation of Selections would require at least a half-day of training so this paper will address the basics and include some valuable tips.

To become proficient in making selections, you need to spend some time becoming familiar with the guidelines and tips discussed here. Devoting some practice time, especially on areas of images where you need better selections, will provide rewards in the future.

- Become familiar with the various selection tools and what advantages each of them have

- Zoom IN to make it easier to allow more accurate selecting

- Use more than one Selection Tool to complete your selection. Combining the advantages of several tools will produce faster and more accurate selections.

- Make your selection in increments rather than one continuous action

- Watch the choices in the Options Bar – different tools offer different options

- Use the Shift Key to *add to selections* and the Alt Key to *subtract from selections*

- Consider setting the Selection Mode to *Add to Selection* as your default mode. This allows selections to be added to your existing one without holding any keys down or clicking on icons. You can still *subtract* by holding the Alt Key down.

- Holding the *Control Key* down while pressing the *J Key* will create your selection on a new blank layer directly above the layer where you were working. This step allows more control in adjusting your selected areas.

- Remember that an effective technique can be to make a *somewhat larger and rough* selection around an area, perhaps with the regular Lasso Tool and use the Magic Wand Tool in the *Subtract from Selection* mode to "snap" the selection to what you really want.

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- Consider *saving* a complicated selection to avoid having to do it again. Click on *Select > Save Selection in the Tool Bar to save it. NOTE: You must save the image as a PSD (Photoshop) file format rather than a JPG format to be able to access a saved file at a later date.*

- Use the Refine Edge dialog box (shown below) to fine tune your selections that is available in the new version 6 of Elements. This is a very powerful and useful tool. For additional help with this new feature, just hover the mouse over one of the text of one of the three controls and read the description.

  Open the Refine Edge dialog box from the button on the Options Bar.
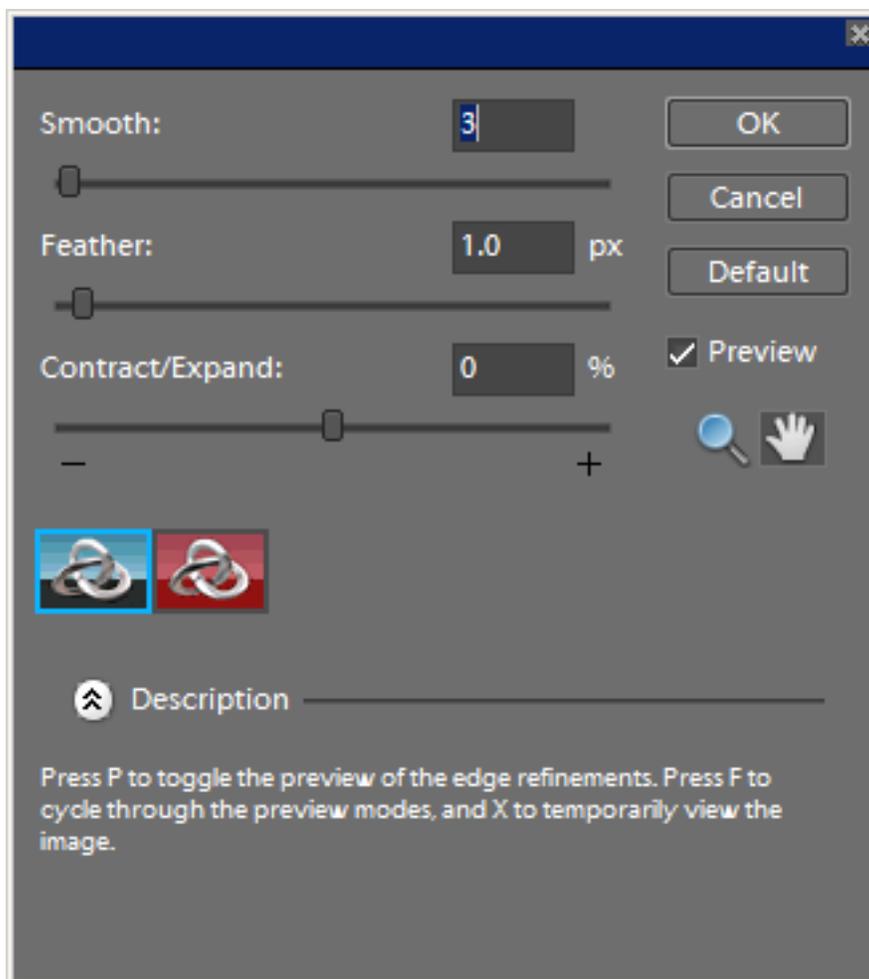
The New *Refine Edge* Dialog Box in Version 6

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Lets look at some of the Selection Tools and their attributes:

The Magic Wand Tool

Selects colored areas that are similar in *luminosity*, or brightness, depending upon the tolerance set on the Options Bar.   Higher tolerances means more surrounding pixels are included in the selection.   A Contiguous check box permits either contiguous pixels or non-contiguous pixels are selected, depending if it is checked or unchecked, respectively.   I use 11, 22, 33 or 55 as my tolerance depending upon the desired level of including surrounding pixels.

I highly recommend keeping the tolerance fairly low and make clicks with the mouse in multiple areas to create your desired selection.   You can also change the tolerance level between incremental clicks to help avoid selecting unwanted pixels.

The Three Lasso Tools

The **Regular Lasso Tool** most common (and multi-purpose) tool and permits continuous free hand drawing to create a selection.   You need to "close the loop" so to speak to create the initial selection by bringing the ending point to the beginning point.   Double-clicking will create the selection if you have difficulty closing the loop.

If you are in the *Add to Selection* mode, you can continue to add areas to the original selection.   Of course, you can subtract from the selection in the *Subtract from Selection* mode.

Using this tool in increments while zoomed in can be a very effective tool

The **Polygonal Lasso Tool** connects each mouse click in a straight line and is very effective for selecting straight or angled objects such as roofs and buildings or even individual windows, etc.

The **Magic Lasso Tool** allows you follow along the edges of an object to create a selection.   This works best when higher levels of contrast exist between the two areas.   I recommend using a tolerance level of 10 for most selections.

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The Two Marquee Tools

The **Rectangular Marquee Tool** creates a rectangular selection when you click and drag on the image. If you hold the *Shift Key* down while dragging, the selection will be constrained to a square instead of a rectangle.

The selection can be moved around *whenever* the *Normal Mode* is active. You will not be able to easily move a selection if the *Add or Subtract* modes are active.

The **Oval Marquee Tool** creates an oval shaped selection when you click and drag. If you hold the *Shift Key* down while dragging, the selection will be constrained to a perfect circle instead of an oval.

The same rules as above for the rectangular marquee apply for moving an oval or circular selection.

The Two Selection Brush Tools

The **Quick Selection Brush Tool** will create a selection automatically as you click and drag over the image. It selects colors with similar luminosity or texture and can be a very effective tool.

The **Selection Brush Tool** select or deselect areas the area you paint, depending on whether you are in the Selection or Mask mode. Using an appropriate brush size (smaller is better than too large) will make this task easier.

Reference Sheet

Refer to the Selection Tool information sheet on the next page. This is a copy of the Selection Tool sheet found in the *Help Section* of the Elements 6 program.
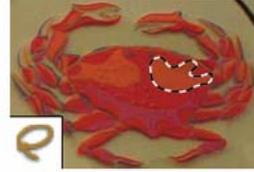
Selection Tools

Rectangular Marquee tool Draws square or rectangular selection borders.

Elliptical Marquee tool Draws round or elliptical selection borders.

Lasso tool Draws freehand selection borders. This tool is great for making very precise selections.

Polygonal Lasso tool Draws multiple straight-edged segments of a selection border.

Magnetic Lasso tool Draws a selection border that automatically snaps to edges you drag over in the photo.

Magic Wand tool Selects pixels of similar color with one click.

Quick Selection Brush tool Quickly and automatically makes selection based on color and texture when you click or click-drag an area.

Selection Brush tool Automatically selects or deselects the area you paint, depending on whether you're in Selection or Mask mode.