

CS 5 Refine Edge

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Ref: Martin Evening, "Adobe Photoshop CS 5 for Photographers"; pages 471-484

The "refine edge" command window is available as a select menu item, ctrl+alt+R, or by clicking the "Mask Edge" button in the "Masks" panel when working on an active layer mask.

Important to note: The refine edge process is irreversible after you click OK. It may be advantageous to first save an un-refined edge version of your selection to maintain the original selection should you need to go back to it in the future. I have found that having a "sharp edge" selection and a "refined edge" selection useful to bring out certain features that the automated refine edge process blends, particularly when you use the "refine radius brush". The refine radius brush allows you to extend the radius along a narrow hard to follow edge that extends beyond the radius selected. Hard to find edges are blended and you may not want to do that.

Tools:

This window has three tools that are used to zoom (the magnify glass), to move (the hand), and a special "refine radius" (brush tool).

View Mode

Show Radius:

This check box allows you to view just the edge radius. Of course you need to have some radius to see the radius edge selected. This can be useful to see how much of the fine detail may be missing from your selection, and may allow you to use the "refine radius brush" to extend the edge to areas not covered by increasing the radius.

Show Original:

This check box switches the display to the original for comparison.

View:

View modes are available by clicking the drop down arrow in the right edge of the "view icon". These are:

- 1- Marching Ants (M)
- 2- Overlay (V)
- 3- On Black (B)
- 4- On White (W)
- 5- Black & White (K)
- 6- On Layers (L)
- 7- Reveal Layer (R)

You can cycle through these views by pressing the "F" key.

Each of the views offers you the ability to see the selection on a different background to best present the resulting selection details to you. Feel free to examine the

selection carefully and view it the best way it makes sense to you for your particular image and intended use of the selection.

Edge Detection

This section provides some control over how the algorithm that does the smart selection is used. This algorithm analyzes the edge and decides upon the proper opacities to use along the edge, primarily based upon the “Radius” setting you have selected. What you want to do is set the radius to the most appropriate value for the image. Fine sharp edges should use a low radius (perhaps a radius of 1 pixel), while soft and fuzzy edges would do better with a wider radius setting (aim here would be to set the widest you can get away with).

Refine radius Brush:

Since most selections contain sharp and soft edges, the “refine radius brush” tool can be used to extend the areas of the edge to be defined. This brush can be changed in size using the left and right hard bracket keys. You draw over the areas to add to the edge. After each stroke the algorithm requires time to recalculate the edge.

Holding the “alt” key while painting with the “refine radius” brush will subtract from the edge. This feature is also accessible by selecting the “erase refine radius” brush by toggling between brushes using the Shift+E keyboard command, or selecting the “erase refine radius” brush tool (available by selection using the drop down menu arrow at the right lower edge of the “refine radius brush” icon).

Smart Radius:

The “Smart Radius” check box will select an option that allows the software to analyze the edge and choose a wider or narrower edge radius as it estimates the required edge.

Adjust Edge Section

This section has four sliders:

Smooth:

Designed to smooth out jagged selection edges but without rounding off corners.

Feather:

This slider uniformly softens the edges of a selection as this feature has done in the past for all other selections.

Contrast:

This slider can make soft edges more crisp and remove artifacts along the edges of a selection, which are typically caused by using a high radius selection.

Shift Edge:

This slider will shift the resulting selection to include more or less of the selected area.

The feather and contrast sliders can be used together to soften an edge and then sharpen it slightly to refine edges carefully. The Shift Edge slider will help to allow you to fit a mask precisely to fit your image.

Refine Edge Output Section

This section allows you to choose how to apply the selection to your layer/image. This could be crucial to placing a selection onto a new background. By viewing the selection on the desired background you can check the “Decontaminate Colors” option and adjust the slider to remove any edge background colors that were in the original image. Advice; only dial-in as much “decontamination” as necessary to achieve the most detailed and smoothest blend.

Output To:

This, allows you to output the selection in a number of ways. I like to use the “as a selection” choice. I can then use the selection as I want (save it, copy the selected area to a new layer, etc.).