

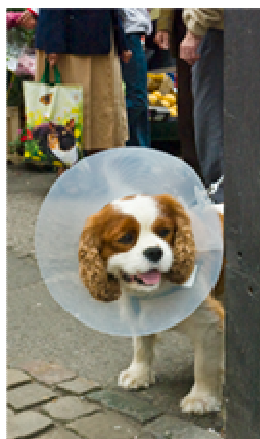
Handling selections and layer masks

(Barry Pearson, 2 March 2010. Version 1).

These are notes about how I save selections as layer masks, and then manipulate selections and layer masks. (The normal way of saving selections is to use alpha-channels. I don't do that). The terminology here is based on Windows.

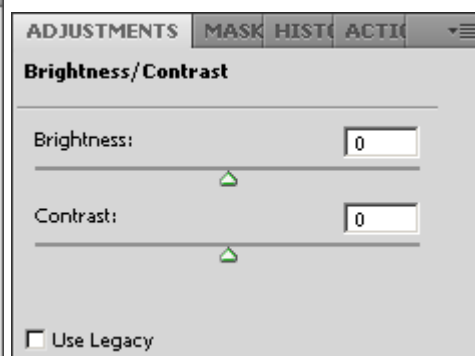
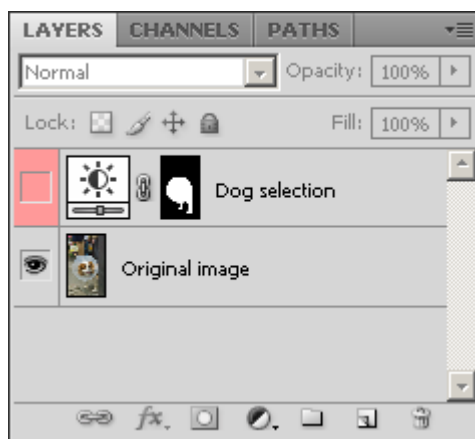
Saving selections

Consider this image of a dog with a collar. Initially there is just one layer. I've called it "Original image".



Select round the dog and its collar. This selection is to be saved so that it can be re-used when the file is opened in future.

Create an adjustment layer. I use "Brightness/contrast". The selection becomes a layer mask, shown by the white-on-black icon in the "Dog selection" layer. This layer doesn't have any effect on the image, because by default the sliders are "0".



I set the "visibility box" of that adjustment layer to "Red", to show that it is only there to hold a layer mask.

Saving the file preserves adjustment layers, so the Layers palette will look exactly the same when the file is next opened.

Control + click on layer mask icon

The selection becomes active. (If another selection was already active, the new one replaces it).

Alt + click on layer mask icon

The layer mask (the grey-scale image corresponding to the selection) is seen instead of the image, or vice-versa (this effect toggles).

Shift + click on layer mask icon

Disables the layer mask (makes the layer effective), or vice-versa (this effect toggles).

Combining selections

Select the bag carried by the woman in the background. See the image above.

Save it as a layer mask in a similar, called "Bag selection".



How can these 2 selections, "Dog selection" and "Bag selection", be combined into a single selection?

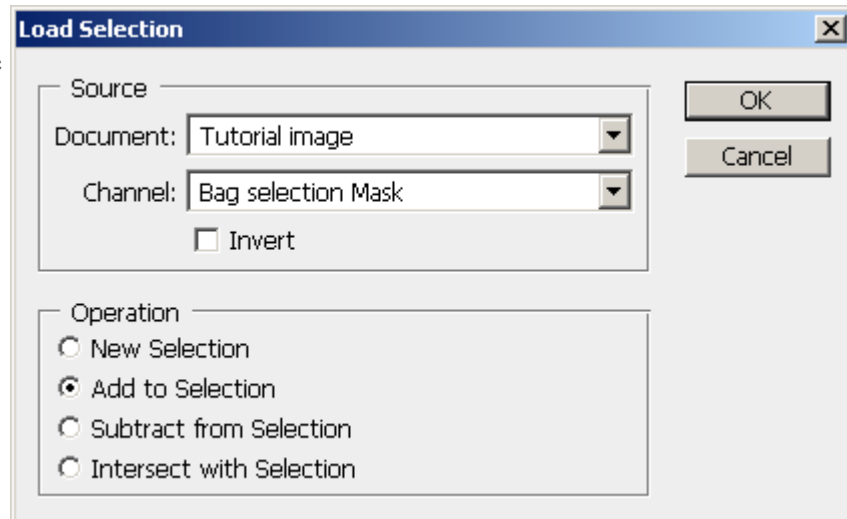
Note that this new layer itself is selected for the task below - it is dark blue.

Re-make the selection around the dog by "Control + click on layer mask icon" of the "Dog selection" layer.

Then use the menu:
Select > Load selection ...

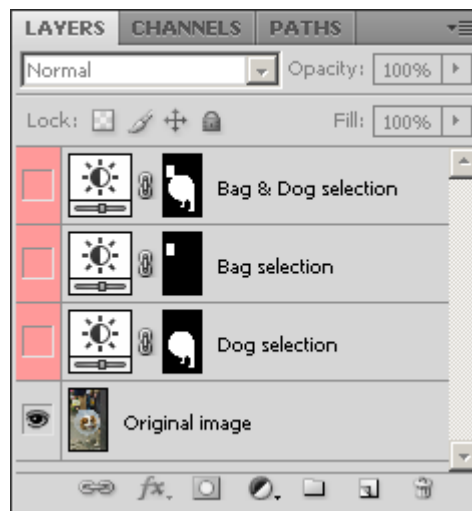
In the resulting dialogue box, set "Add to selection".

Click OK.



This new selection can also be saved, of course.

Or you may decide to remake the combined selection each time you need it, in case you change either "Dog selection" or "Bag selection" and don't want to remake "Bag & Dog selection" each time.



The same combined selection could have been achieved in different ways, for example:

"Control + A" to select the whole image.

Select > Load selection ... "Subtract from Selection" to subtract "Dog selection" &

Select > Load selection ... "Subtract from Selection" to subtract "Bag selection".

Use **Select > Inverse**

This technique enables complicated selections to be built from a number of simple ones.

Editing layer masks directly

A layer mask is simply a greyscale image attached to the layer. It can be edited by all the Photoshop tools that can edit grey-scale images, which is just about anything. After editing, the selection that results from "Control + click on layer mask icon" is based on the edited layer mask.

To be extended!