

If you need to select wispy hair and keep the detail, the normal selection tools don't really fit the bill.

There are many ways to address this issue but this tutorial concentrates on two methods that will often do a good job.

1. Use Photoshop's Extract Filter.

This is found under the Filter Menu:

Filter > Extract.

NB if you use CS4, this tool is not include by default but you can add it. Details here:

<http://www.adobe.com/support/downloads/detail.jsp?ftpID=4048>

It's a good idea to copy your background before you start (Ctrl J will do this).

When you choose the Extract filter, a new window opens, with tools on the left and options on the right.

- Draw around the outline of your image, using the highlighter pen at the top of the tools. make sure to overlap the image very slightly as you do this. Where you come to fine hairs, use a smaller pen.
- Once you have the figure outlined, pick the paint bucket tool (second down) and use it to fill the inside of the area you have traced.
- Click on the Preview button to see what the extraction looks like. You can fine-tune it using the other tools where necessary.

Movie tutorial

It's much easier to do this than to describe in words!
Here's a good movie tutorial:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPpNlcGbRjM&feature=related>

2. Make a mask manually.

This method relies on using a copy of one of the channels (Red, Green or Blue) to create a mask. It's a versatile method but quite involved and needs a lot of practice.

- Open the Channels Palette: Window > Channels.
- Find the Channel with most contrast and duplicate it.
- From Photoshop's menu, choose Image > Apply Image - to darken. Multiply Mode often works well.



Selecting hair or fur

- If necessary, repeat this to darken still further.
- Choose the Paintbrush tool.
- Set the Foreground colour to Black, the Mode to Overlay and the Opacity to 100 %.
- Paint around the edge of the hair, but not the wispy hairs.
- Reduce the opacity to 10% and paint over the wisps, building-up density bit by bit.
- Change the Foreground colour to white, opacity 100% and paint out any unwanted tone in the background.
- Use a Levels adjustment to further darken the hair, but watch the wisps!
- Paint in any light areas remaining in the mask - Black Brush, Normal mode.
- Return to the RGB image.
- Duplicate the background layer.
- Load the copied channel as a selection.
- Add a mask to the copied layer.
- Turn off the background layer to see the selected part of the image.

Movie tutorial

This is very similar to the technique described above, but with a few subtle differences:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tj-SjDE1ldg>

Using Elements?

Movie tutorial:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tX3xojIjiQ>

It's easier with CS5!

Watch Martin Evening do an expert job:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssJRkbbkHAa4>

