# Adobe Photoshop

How to Use the Magic Wand Tool

In Photoshop there are various ways to make a selection and also various reasons why you'd want to make a selection. You may want to remove something from its background, replace a sky or simply apply an edit to one part of a shot but not the other. Some of the selection tools are better suited for certain tasks than others are, however what tool you use can also be down to personal taste. In this series of tutorials we'll give a brief overview of all the selection tools on offer, showing you what they can be used for and how to adjust them.

Magic Wand Tool
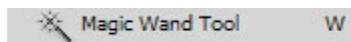
How it works

The Magic Wand tool looks for pixels which are of the same color and tone. This means it's great for selecting large, solid blocks of color but when working on images where the difference between colors and tone isn't as obvious it can seem, to start with, that the Magic Wand tool isn't a great tool. However, by making a few minor adjustments, you'll see it can be a useful tool to know how to use.

How to use it

The tool simply works by you clicking in the area you want selecting. For example, in the example with the selection around the black rectangle, we clicked in the middle of the black part of the shape.
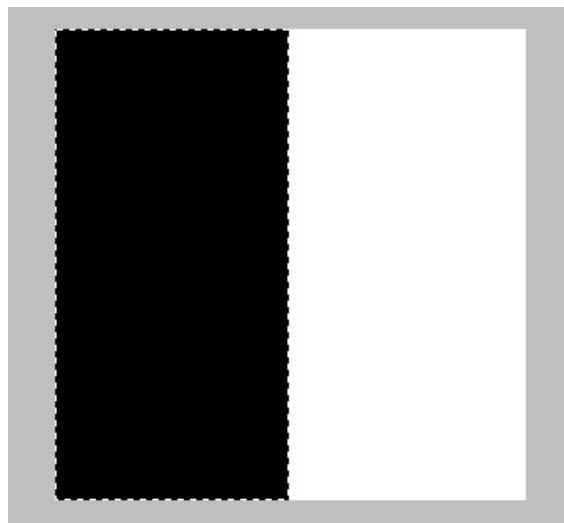
How to adjust it

To make the tool more useful, adjust the Tolerance which you can find in the option bar towards the top of the screen.

The tolerance tells Photoshop how many pixels it needs to select that are the same color as what you have clicked on and the shades which are darker or lighter by whatever number you've typed in the Tolerance box. So if you type 100 Photoshop will select any pixels which are up to 100 shades lighter and down to pixels which are 100 shades darker.

Above: 'Broken' selection before any adjustments made.

Above: The same image with the selection complete. (Tolerance adjusted)

Contiguous is automatically selected by Photoshop but this option stops any pixels that fall into the tolerance range you've chosen getting selected if they have a pixel in between them that doesn't fall in to the range.

To explain this, take a look at our shape. There are two black sections separated by a white line. We want to select both black areas so we select the Magic Wand tool and click on the one on the left but as Contiguous is ticked, Photoshop only selects the shape on the left as the white pixels in the center are stopping the right black shape becoming part of the selection. Untick Contiguous and both shapes now become part of the selection when we click on the left shape.