

Feathering Selections

When you make a selection, the selection line around the subject is sharp. It's a little like a scrapbooking exercise where the subject is cut out of the page using a craft knife. We often don't want such a sharp line because your editing will become obvious. The answer is to use a feature called **Feathering**. This blurs the selection edge by a certain amount, dictated by the **pixel radius**. How much 'feathering' you need is a hard thing to judge because the fuzziness of the selection line is also influenced by other factors, including the file resolution.

When one is happy with the modifications using any of the **Mask views**, click back into **Selection** mode to view the traditional selection line of marching ants before saving the selection and moving on.

Experience often helps you judge the feathering amount, although it's simple enough to experiment by starting with a 1-pixel radius. If that's not enough, undo the last action and try a different number.

Examples:



TIP:

One way to preview feathering is to swap whatever selection tool you are using for **Selection Brush**. This has two modes: **Selection** and **Mask**. The **Selection** mode looks the same as all the other selection tools. It's **Mask** mode represents everything that's not been selected as a red mask. This is one of the best ways to display the extent of the current selection, but it also works as a technique for modifying it.

Because this red overlay is, in effect, a mask, you can add to it using the Brush tool, or you can remove from it using the eraser tool, much in the same way that we can add to, or take from, a layer mask using a black or white brush. Once happy with the modifications that you have added in the Mask mode, click back into Selection mode to check the accuracy of the selection before saving the selection and moving on



The Refine Selection Brush tool

The **Refine Selection Brush** is not technically a selection tool; rather it's a feature designed to refine an existing selection. In this context, it *sort of* replaces the process of adding/removing from an existing selection by holding the *Shift* or the *Alt/Option* key while moving the cursor over the image.



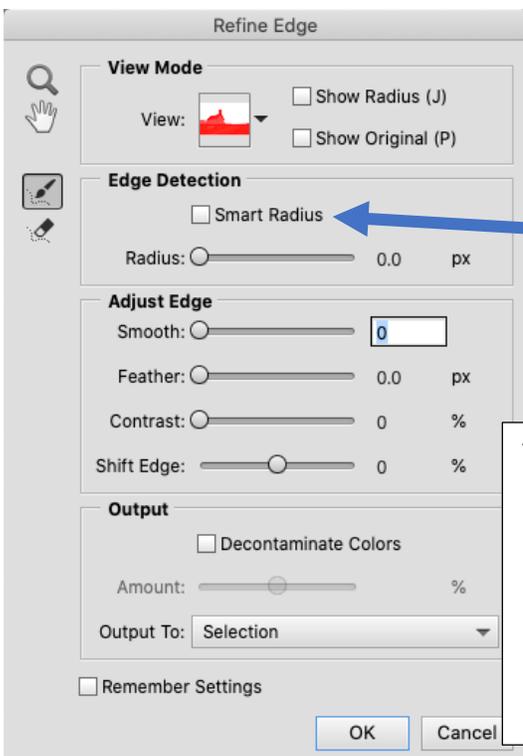
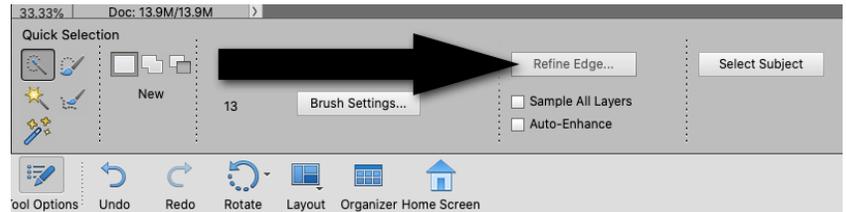
Under **View** the red mask overlay comes up with this brush which can be changed to black or white background.

Also note using the **Opacity** slider changes to a color of your choice

ALSO included is ability to add to or subtract from the selection AND ability to push or move the existing lines in the selection.

The Refine Edge tool

After making the initial selection, click the **Refine Edge** button in the Options panel, the selection view mode changes to a white background. Other options include a red mask background, a black background or several other working looks, depending on how the complex the picture is and how you'd like to view your selection work.

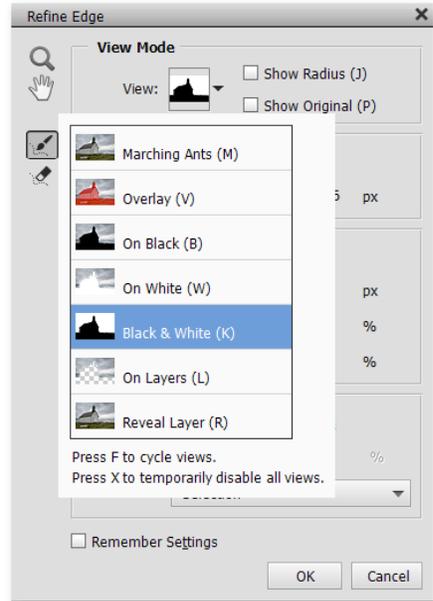
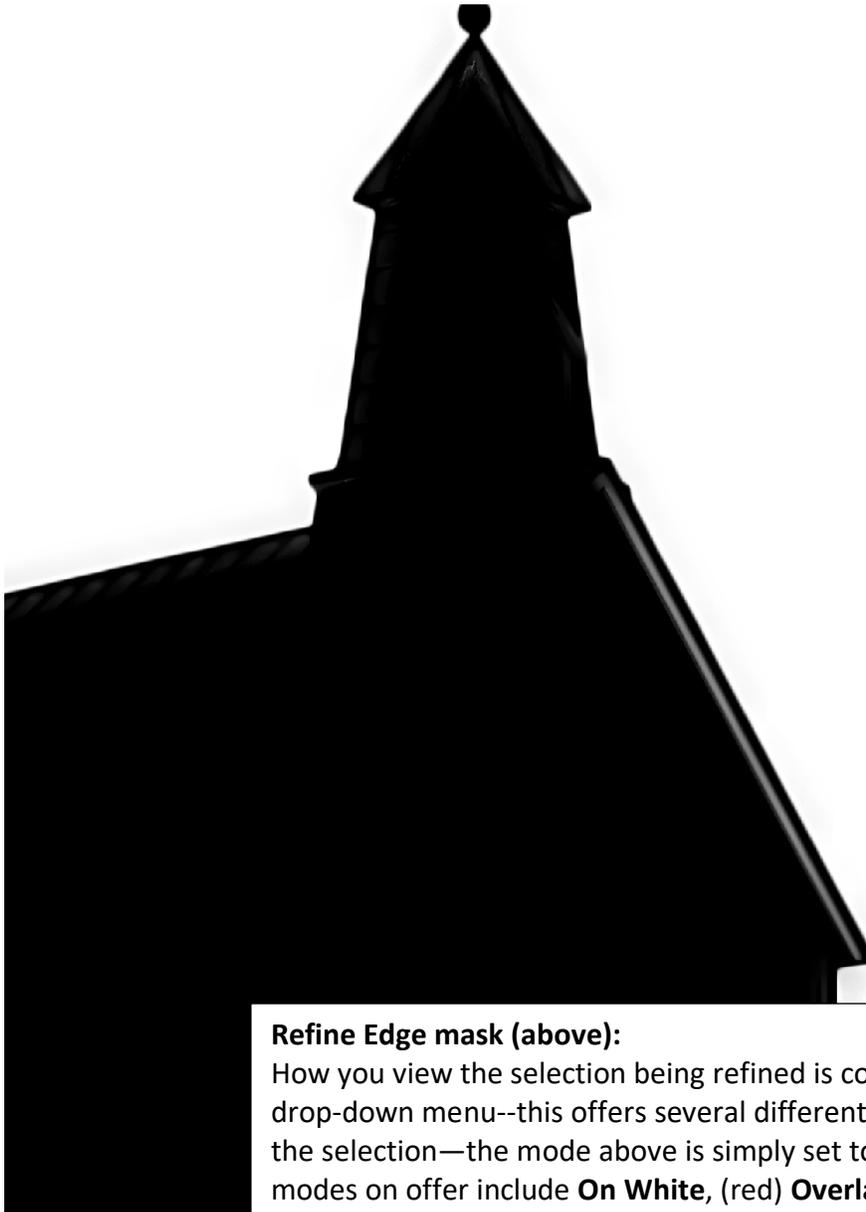


Select options here for how much of the edge is detected in terms of being refined. Select **Smart Radius** or enter a manual value for the radius

To use the **Refine Edge Panel** (on the left):

Move the sliders to see if it makes the selection around your subject more or less accurate, as shown.

Note this is another way to view feathering effectiveness. Once this is done, click **OK**, and output the selection. Choices of output locations include **Selection, Layer Mask, New Layer, New Layer with Mask, New Document** or **New Documents with Layer Mask**.



Refine Edge mask (above):

How you view the selection being refined is controlled using the **View Mode** drop-down menu--this offers several different ways to see what you doing to the selection—the mode above is simply set to black and white. Others view modes on offer include **On White**, (red) **Overlay**, **On Layers** and the traditional “marching ants” selection line.

Hot TIP

Zoom in on the selection for the greatest accuracy in refining it

Remember **Radius** Indicates how detailed any refinements are. The smaller the radius, the finer the adjustments.