

Lesson 2: Blurring the background of a picture to create focal point



Maybe you have taken a **picture** of a group of people, and now you want to highlight one individual? Or perhaps you thought you've taken the **perfect picture**, except something in the background is distracting from the photo?


Learn how to enhance your digital photos by blurring the background with Adobe Photoshop.

Place bold text here== Steps ==

1. **Use a graphic editing application** such as Photoshop
2. **Open the image file.** Choose an image with a good resolution to blur the background.
3. **Determine which areas** you want to stay in focus (the foreground), and what areas you want to have blurred (the background). Set the zoom to see the entire image on your **monitor**. This will help you get an idea of where to make your selections. To zoom in and out, use the Ctrl- and Ctrl+ keyboard shortcut in Photoshop.
4. **Click and hold on the Lasso tool** (it looks like a rope lasso), then select the Polygonal Lasso tool in Photoshop. Other graphic editing applications may have this option accessible as a "point to point" feature in a "Tool Options" toolbar.
 - If the Lasso tool is not visible in Photoshop, click on the "Window" menu and select "Tools".
5. **Zoom in on the image** until it appears pixelated. This will give you finer control over your selection, but you may have to scroll around the image while using the tool.



6.

 selected foreground

Select the foreground.


1. Click once with the Lasso tool to set a point.
2. Move your cursor to the next point to make a line, then click again.
3. Repeat until you have a somewhat accurate selection of the foreground.
4. Make sure the shape you create ends where you started so that the entire foreground is selected. If so desired, make multiple selected areas using the Lasso tool.

Use the studio quality method to create a professional result. A faster method is described later in this article.

0. Copy the foreground selection by pressing Ctrl-C.



1.

 duplicated foreground


Paste the foreground selection over top of the existing image.

2. Select the Move tool which looks like a cursor arrow, then drag the newly pasted foreground to line it up over top of the existing image so that they match. The newly pasted foreground and the original image should match. Create a new layer so that the pasted foreground is on a new layer.

3. Select the Background layer that contains the original image. This is available from the Layers toolbar. If this "Layers" toolbar is not visible in Photoshop, select it from the "Window" menu.
4. Select the entire image by pressing the Ctrl A keyboard shortcut, or using the "Select" menu and "All" command in Photoshop.



5.

 slightly blurred background

Apply a "Blur More" filter to the selection. In Photoshop, select the "Filter" menu and choose "Blur" -> "Blur More".


6. Repeat this Blur More command until you achieve the desired effect. In Photoshop, the Ctrl F keyboard shortcut will repeat the last filter command.
7. Alternatively, use the "Gaussian Blur" effect instead and try different pixel radius values. This will give you a deeper control over the blur effect.
8. Flatten your image's layers by selecting "Layer" from the menu, and "Flatten Image". If your foreground appears too sharp, you may either undo some of your Blur More commands (from the "History" toolbar) and try again, or change how the two layers combine. To do this:



■  50% foreground layer opacity

Try changing the newly copied foreground layer's "Opacity". This is visible in the Layers toolbar. A good opacity level to start at is 50%, then move up a little at a time until you find a good blend.



■  "Darken" layer combine property

Try changing how the layer combines with other layers by changing its property, also available in the Layers toolbar. For example, try "Darken" instead of "Normal" for an artistic sketch effect.



9.

 "Gaussian" blurred background with 5.3 pixel radius, 70% layer opacity,

and 33% blurred foreground edges


Blur the edges of your in-focus foreground using the "Blur Tool", which should be on the same toolbar as the "Lasso Tool" in Photoshop.

1. Set the blur tool's strength to somewhere around 33%.
2. Set your brush size to a comfortable level such as a radius of 5 to 15 pixels. If you don't see a brush size option, select "Brushes" from the "Window" menu in Photoshop.
3. Use the blur tool to touch up the outside edge of your foreground, especially where the image seems pixelated. This will help to create a sense of transition between your foreground and background that is easy on the eyes.

Use the "Quick & Dirty" method if you're looking for something faster and easier:




0.

 inversed selection

Inverse the selection by pressing the Ctrl Shift I keyboard shortcut in Photoshop, or by selecting "Inverse" from the "Select" menu. For **Paint Shop Pro**, this may be the "Invert" command from the "Selections" menu.



1.


 slightly blurred background

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3.

 "Gaussian" blurred background with 5.3 pixel radius

Alternatively, use the "Gaussian Blur" effect instead and try different pixel radius values. This will give you a deeper control over the blur effect.

Save your image under a different name (to keep your **original separate**) by using the "Save As..." option in the "File" menu. In your YWIP folder