# Four Selection Tools Tutorial
(the basics)
By Hummie

It is important to understand how the selection tool works. The selection tool tells PSE what part of the photo or element that you want to work on. For instance, if you select on the nose of a person and then apply the color changing tools to it, only the nose of the face will change colors. (Wouldn't a bright red nose on someone get a good laugh?)

When reading digiscrapping tutorials, selection = "marching ants." Marching ants are useful for copying a selection onto a new layer, re-coloring or applying filters to only a portion of something, cropping, and creating something from nothing.
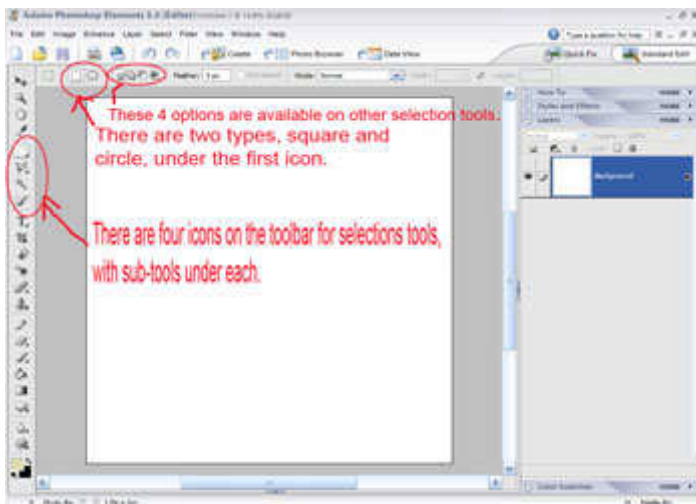

There are four icons on the tool bar for the selection tools. Each of the four icons holds sub-tools within. The four icons are grouped together on the tool bar.

The most used selection tool is on the top of the four and it is set to default to the "rectangular marquee tool." Why it has such an odd name, I do not know. It is often referred to as the "square selection tool." This tool will toggle with the "elliptical marquee tool." It is often referred to as the "circle selection tool." After clicking on this tool in the side tool bar, the top tool bar will appear where the icons for the square and circle can be clicked.

Create a new layer and drag with the mouse to draw the selection. To keep the selection proportionate, hold down the shift key before clicking to drag. If the selection is not wanted, click on the desktop with your mouse to deselect and start over. Another way to deselect (make the marching ants go away) is to hit Control and D on the keyboard.
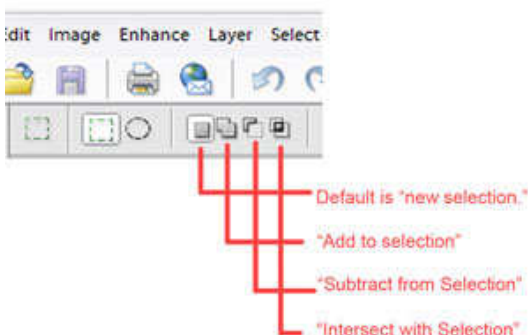
On the top three (of four) icons of selection tools, there are also four options available.

The default option is set to "new selection." Most people never explore outside of this default option. Remember just above in this tutorial that I explained that you could deselect by clicking on the desktop to start over? This only works in the "new selection" option. Why? Because each time you click on the desktop, it begins a new selection.

The next option is to add to a selection. Making selections using this option will increase the area of the marching ants. For example, if you would like to make a snowman shape with three circles on top of each other, partially overlapping, each time you draw the circle selection it will increase the area of the marching ants upwards until you achieve the desired shape.

Here's a tip: In the new selection option, hold down the shift key to also activate the "add to a selection." This is different than the above suggestion for using the shift key to keep a selection proportionate. To keep it proportionate, hold down the shift key before clicking with your mouse. To add to a selection, click on the shift key after making a selection (or continue to hold it down).

The next option is to subtract from a selection. For example, to make a frame, create a selection, then click on the "subtract from selection" option and draw in the middle of your first selection to knock out the center part (and then fill with the paint bucket tool). Of course, since this is by eye, the frame will not have an exact sizing and there is another tool that will be shared later to do the same.

The fourth option is the "intersect with selection." This option will only generate marching ants on the area that is overlapped by both selections.
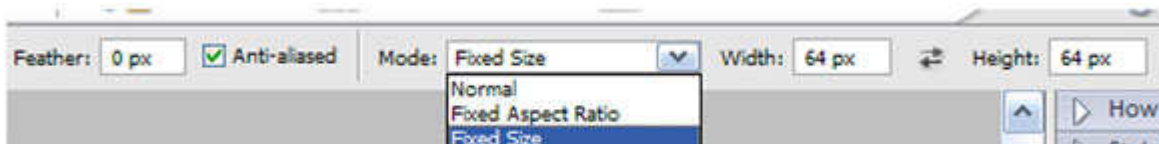

The next section of the upper tool bar contains options for feathering, ainti-aliased, and mode.

The feather option allows for blending or vignette. Read my tutorial at this link to learn more how to use this option:
http://www.hummiesworld.com/tutfeather.html.

The default for anti-aliased is active (checkmark in box). This will keep the edges of your selection from become jagged. There may be rare circumstances where you would like a hard edge and, if so, uncheck the box.

The mode defaults to "normal" which allows manual control. Fixed aspect ratio allows particular proportions to be maintained when drawing the selection. Fixed

size is useful in digital scrapbook designing and works more like a stamp (of the mouse) as you do not draw with the mouse. This option is useful in making frames to the exact size of popular photo sizes or in using the same size selection several times.
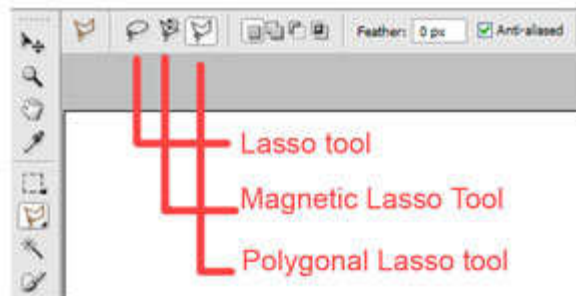
The second selection tool on the tool bar is the lasso tool. Basically, this tool allows you to freeform draw a selection using your mouse. This is not my favorite tool, but it does have its uses. For instance, it is an important tool is creating torn paper (a separate tutorial).

The magnetic lasso tool works similarly to the lasso tool in that it allows you to freeform draw a selection with your mouse; however, the selection will insert anchor points as it detects the edge line of the object you are trying to select. It is not always accurate, but the selection can be cleaned up afterwards with the brush selection tool (by adding and subtracting from the selection). This tool works best when the contrast between areas is high. This tool has additional options not on other tools. The "width" will set the distance away the tool will magnetically seek to insert points. A high number makes for a wild tool. The "edge contrast" will set the contrast difference the tool will magnetically seek to insert points. For instance, a black background with a white object is a sharp contrast and, therefore, a higher number works well. However, a face blended in with a busy background is a softer contrast and, therefore, a lower number works better. The "frequency" will set how often the tool inserts points. For instance, selecting around hair would require a higher frequency than selection around a box. The "pen pressure" only works with a graphics tablet. This tool works better if you move slower. If the magnetism does not insert a point where you want it to, click with the mouse to manually insert a point.

I actually tend to use the polygonal lasso tool the most. This tool also allows you to freeform draw a selection with your mouse; however, like the magnetic lasso, anchor points are utilized, but are inserted manually by a click of the mouse. This tool is great for making a selection of straight lines from point to point in an unusual shape. I love the look of diagonal lines in scrapbooking which is only one great use for this tool.
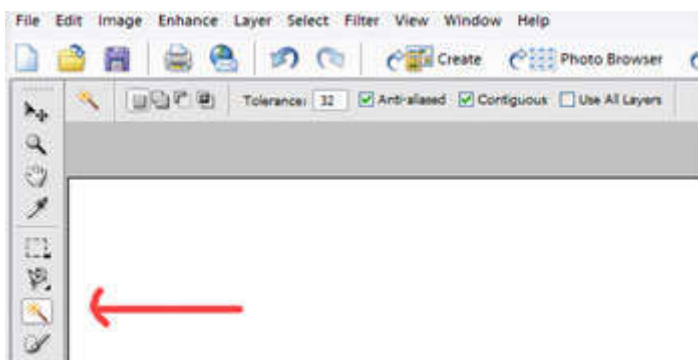
The third selection tool on the tool bar is the magic wand. This tool will make a selection

of every area of a particular color at the point where you click the mouse. This task is easy if the area you want selected is in solid color, but otherwise, the tool can be tricky to utilize. To select more than one color, use the "add to selection" option (or hold down the shift key). Another alternative is to raise the tolerance number to enable the selection of more shades of a particular color. If the magic wand is selecting too many areas, try lowering the tolerance. The contiguous option is useful in selecting a color in a certain area, but not the entire layer (or photo). If this box is checked, the magic wand will only select the areas of color that are touching each other. If this box is unchecked, the magic wand will select all areas of color on the entire layer, even if randomly separated. If the "use all layers" box is checked, the magic wand will find the color on all visible layers. If this box is unchecked, then the magic wand will only find the color on the active layer in the layer's palette.

> Tip: Sometimes an error is given as "cannot complete the request because the target area is hidden." This error is due to the wrong layer in the layers palette being the active layer. If the wrong layer is active and you attempt to make a selection of a transparent area, this error will pop up.
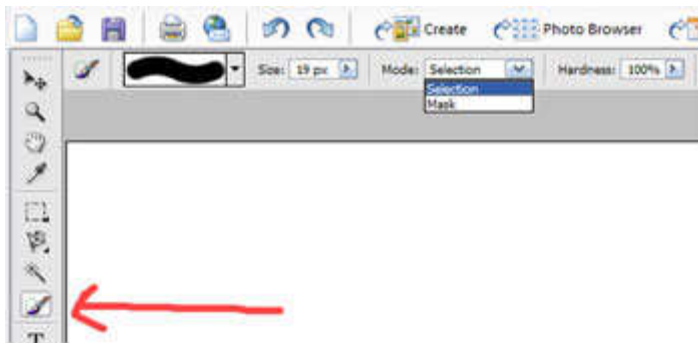
The last of the four selection tools is the brush. I will not go into great detail with regard to this tool in this tutorial as it is getting quite long. There is an advanced tutorial in Course 2 for selections that covers this tool more thoroughly.

The basics of the brush selection tool are easy to understand. With this tool active, draw with the mouse to make a selection. There is no option to "add to selection" as this tool always adds to the selection. Also, there is no option to "subtract from a selection." However, this can still be done by holding down the alt key while drawing with the mouse. Choose a hard brush to make crisp selections or a soft brush to create blended, fuzzy-edged selections. The hardness slider works similarly to utilizing soft or hard brushes. The modes will be covered in the advanced tutorial, along with other ways to achieve this technique as well as uses.