

## Deleting Backgrounds in Photoshop Elements for Beginners

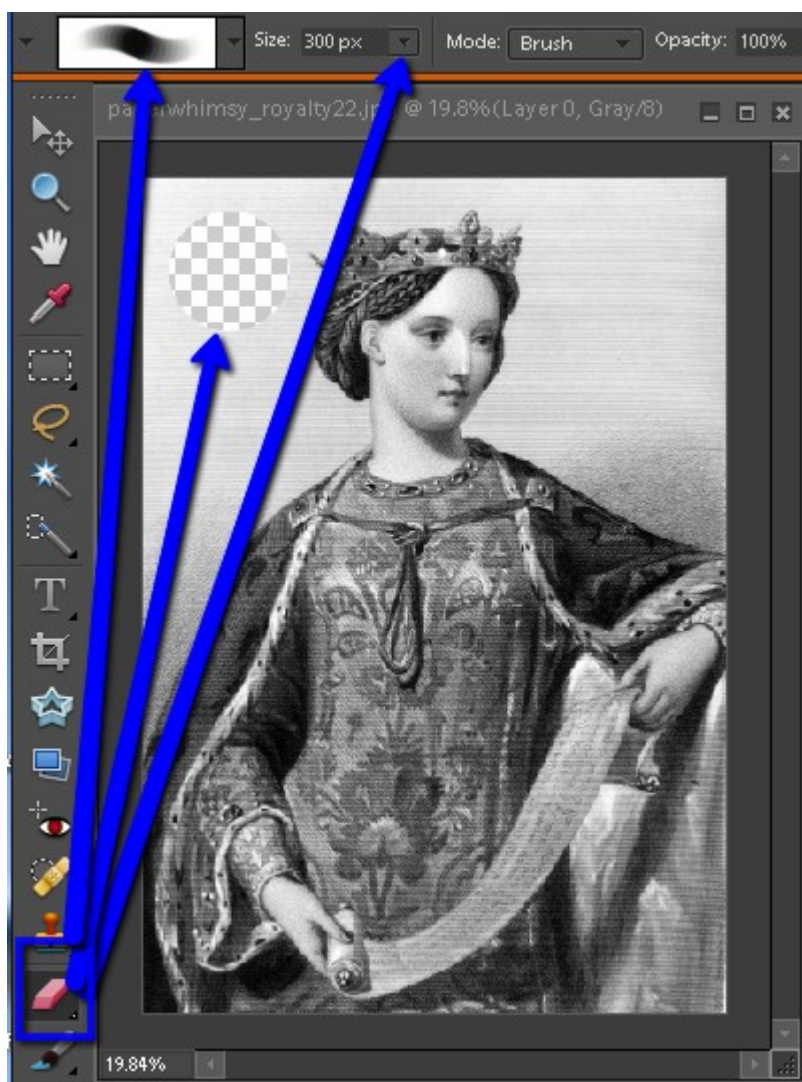
by Rande Hanson

Disclaimer. There are several ways, and several tools to delete a background. As you become more experienced, you will want to try them. For this tutorial, we will cover just one of the ways a beginner can successfully delete a background.

Begin by opening an image that you would like to delete a background from. In the layers palette, double click on the lock tool, to unlock the layer.

Select the eraser tool from the side toolbar. You will need to also select the brush and a size from the top selection bar.

I chose the hard circle from the drop down brush menu, and a size of 300px. Yours may be a little different. I chose a large size that will be comfortable to use to delete the outer edges. You can see what one click of the eraser has deleted in my sample, showing the transparent checkerboard.

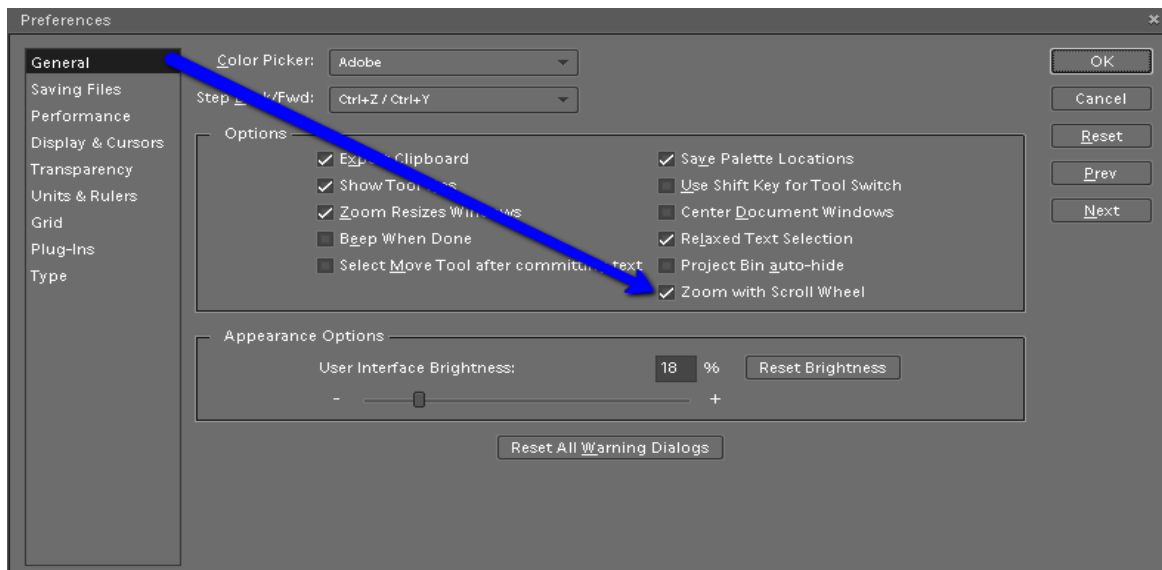


Now drag the eraser around the outer edges that you want to delete.



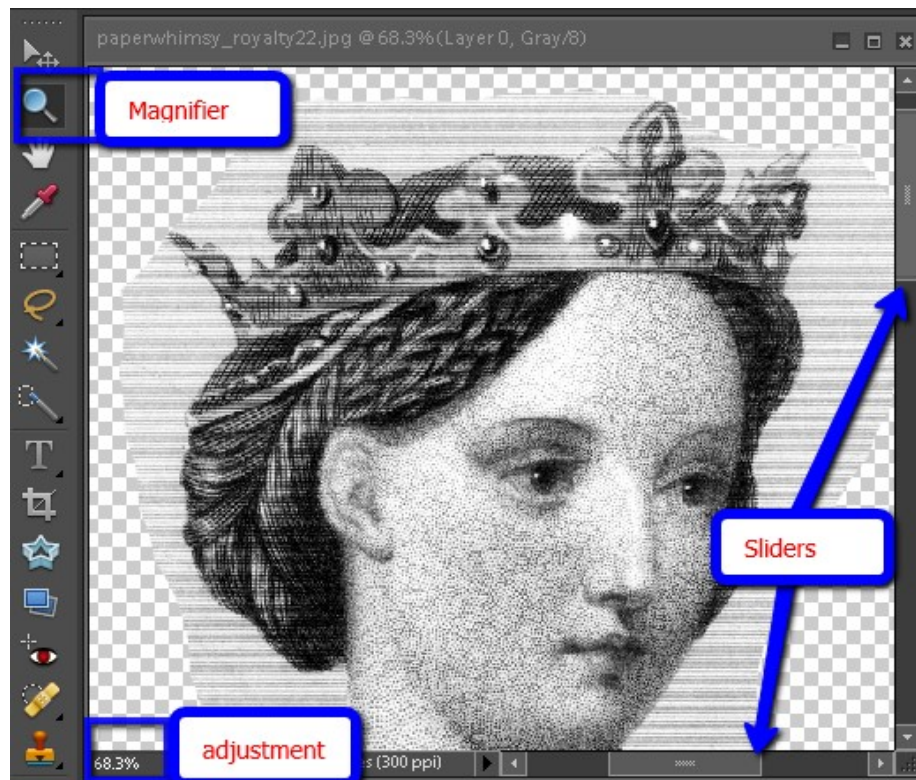
Note: This is an extra step I personally use, but does not have to be done at this time. I choose to zoom my image in close for the next steps, so this leaves just a small area of background to deal with.

Next you will zoom into an area of your image that has the background you want to work on. You can use the scroll wheel on your mouse to zoom in. If this does not work for you, check your General Settings. Go to the top menu, select Edit, then Preferences, then General. You will want to make sure the Zoom with scroll wheel is checked then click OK.



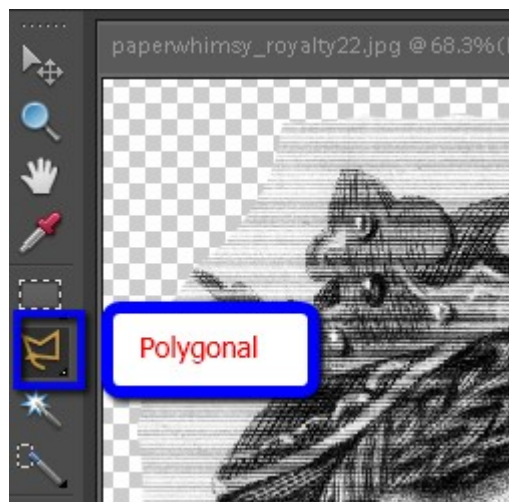
If this still does not work, you can use the magnifier tool to draw a box around the area you want enlarged, or change the size percent in the lower left corner. You won't need to do both.

Note: To move around the image while zoomed in, just use the window slider bars.



Next we will use another tool from the side toolbar bar. The Lasso tool. There are three variations of this tool that you will see if you right click on the tiny little arrow in the lower right corner of the tool. You will want to select the Polygonal lasso tool to make it active.

Also, you will want to play with the others, just to see how they work. But for a beginner, the tool I have chosen will give you a little more control of the selection you make. Especially when there is not much contrast in the image and background.





Now you have the polygonal lasso tool selected. You will click for a starting point. I usually start somewhere in the transparent area, but this is just my personal preference.

Click once for a start point, then move your mouse to the edge of the image. When you are happy with your position, click once again. That will leave a small box, and now you can change the direction you move the tool. So every time you want to change the direction you are outlining, you will do a single click. You will outline a small portion of the image, and then move the tool out and back toward your starting point.

When you get to a location where the tool would draw a straight line, you can double click to complete the selection. You should see the “marching ants”. At this point you can apply the next action, in this case, just press your delete key to get rid of the unwanted background. The “marching ants” will remain. They will go away when you start selecting a new area. They will also go away if you press Esc key.

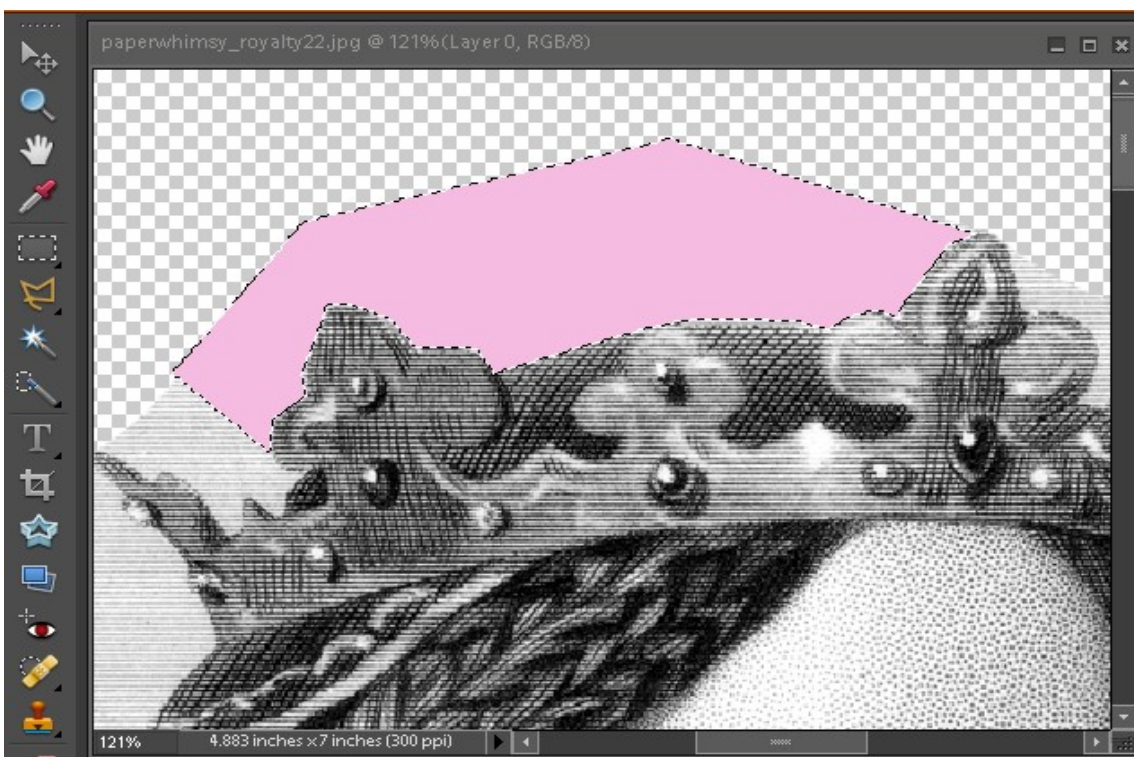
Keep going around the image until the background is completely gone.

Note: Don't worry if you leave places of background, especially around detailed and/or curved areas. You can always go back later with a small size eraser and clean them up.

You can also do the entire selection around the image if you want. I chose the zoomed smaller areas to work with since I can see the detail areas better. Also if I happen to accidentally double click, I won't lose so much of my work. And if you are not happy with the selected area, just press Esc key and start over. You will find the method that is best for you.

Try playing with this tool. You will find it is a handy tool, not just for erasing, but copying, changing lightness or color to an area, and many more functions. Just think of it as a selection tool.

For the sample, I have shown the area I selected, deleted and then filled with a pink color using the paint bucket tool. Of course, the “marching ants” are not moving. :-)



When you have all of the background deleted, you may want to go back and use a smaller size eraser to do any cleanup.

So now you have the background removed. You may want to save this so it can be use again in different projects. Be sure the file extension shows .psd or png(or both). **You won't want to overwrite your .jpg original file.**

For this project, open a background or texture file you want to use.

Now you have the files open in the PSE window.

Next, I would create a new file, from the file drop down menu at the top. Select 5 x 7, 300dpi. Now click on the background image to make it active, and drag it to the new file, resize and/or reposition. Next click on the image file to make it active, and drag it to the new file, resize and reposition.

Sometimes when you place an image onto a background, you will see little areas that you may want to clean up. Just select the image layer and use a small eraser to delete any unwanted areas.

Now you can add more elements, try blending modes, overlays, etc. Just play around. Save as a psd file if you want to be able to do more techniques with the file.

