

Photoshop Tip: Make Selections Like the Pros

Simple trick makes creating and editing selections easier than ever.

By Alex Lindsay

Most people use the Lasso (and lasso shapes such as the polygon) to make selections in digital pictures. The problem is that most selections are hard to create and edit cleanly and mistakes are hard to correct. As I'll demonstrate on today's "Call for Help," Paths let you draw editable curves that are more precise and easier to tweak in a variety of ways.

For example, it's difficult to cleanly create long smooth lines with a few curves. Here's how to use the Curves tool to do it:

1. Select the Pen tool. (Click here to see what it looks like.)
2. Start at the beginning with a single click. Don't drag.
3. Click the first corner to create a straight line.
4. Hold down the Option (Mac) or Alt (PC) key, click the point you created, and drag out a Bezier control handle. The handle lets you create a curve on one side without affecting the other side.
5. Click the next corner and drag out a handle to describe the curve. Don't worry if it matches perfectly, you can come back to it!
6. Hold down the Option (Mac) or Alt (PC) key and drag the handle back into the anchor so you can make the next line a straight one.
7. Continue like this all the way around.
8. When you're finished, click the line to add new points, click points to delete them, or press Cmd (Mac) or Ctrl (PC) and click the points to move or adjust them.
9. When you're satisfied, drag the path to the dotted line button at the bottom of the Path Palette and it'll turn into a selection.
10. Press Cmd (Mac) or Ctrl (PC) + J to create a new layer with the selection.