

# Framing with Masks

**Overview** Inside your image make a rectangular selection of the area that you want to frame; make a layer mask from the selection; blur the mask; experiment with black and white backgrounds behind the image; for variations apply filters to the layer mask.



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IT'S EASY TO CREATE CUSTOM EDGE TREATMENTS for photos by making a layer mask to define the area you want to frame, then blurring the black-and-white mask to create soft edges that blend into the page. As shown above, you can also create a well-defined, “dark-haloed” edge for the image within the soft vignetting.

**1 Creating the layer mask.** Open an image **1a** and open the Layers palette (Window, Show Layers). If your image consists of a single *Background* layer, you'll need to turn it into a layer with the capacity for transparency so that it can have a layer mask: Double-click the *Background* label in the Layers palette; in the New Layer dialog box, rename the layer if you'd like and click OK.

To add a layer mask, first choose the Rectangular Marquee tool (the keyboard shortcut is “M”) and dragging to select the part of the image you want to frame; make sure your selection is far enough inside your image so that any soft vignetting will not hit the edge of the file. Then turn the selection into a layer mask by clicking the Add A Mask button at the bottom of the Layers palette **1b**.

(Before you modify the mask in the next step, store the frame shape for safekeeping: Open the Channels palette [Window, Show Channels] and drag the *Layer Mask* name to the Create New Channel button at the bottom of the palette.)

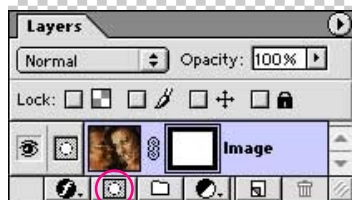
**2 Softening the edges.** Adding a white-filled layer below the image layer will give you a better look at the frame edges as you develop them: Alt/Option click the Create A New Layer button at the

## AVOIDING HARD EDGES

Any time you create soft vignetting at the edge of an image, you risk having the soft edges cut off abruptly by running into the actual edge of the image. To avoid this, make sure the area of the image that you select to frame doesn't extend too close to the edges — a good rule of thumb is to allow a buffer of at least 1.5 times the Gaussian Blur setting you plan to use to soften the edge.

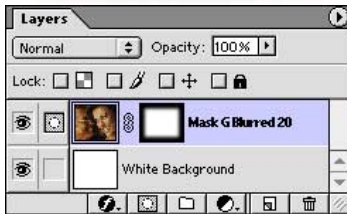


Original image



A layer mask was made from a rectangular selection used to frame the image.

2



A white background layer was added and the mask was blurred to soften its edges. We used a Radius setting of 20 pixels for our approximately 1000-pixel-wide image.

3



A layer was added with a black-filled rectangle the same size as the original frame selection. This clearly defines the frame without eliminating the soft edges.


bottom of the Layers palette to create and name the layer. Then fill it with white (choosing Edit, Fill, Use: White is one way to do it). In the Layers palette, drag the layer down below the image-and-mask layer.

Now soften the edges of the mask: With the image layer targeted in the Layers palette and the layer mask active (click on the mask thumbnail to make the mask icon appear next to the eye), choose Filter, Blur, Gaussian Blur. Experiment with Radius setting until you see the soft-edged fade-to-white effect you want.

At this point you may want to rename your image layer to include information about the Gaussian Blur setting. If so, right-click on the layer's name in the Layers palette (Control-click on a Mac with a one-button mouse), choose Layer Properties from the context-sensitive menu, and type a new name **2**.

**3 Adding black to define the frame.** For a well-defined frame in combination with the soft edge treatment **3**, add a black backing layer that will show through the softened edge of the masked image, creating "a dark halo": With the white background layer targeted, click the Create A New Layer button. Then activate the same selection you used to make the mask (if you haven't made a selection since creating the mask, choose Select, Reselect, or use the shortcut Ctrl/⌘-Shift-D; if reselecting doesn't work, in the Channels palette Ctrl/⌘-click the alpha channel you made in step 1). Fill the selection (Edit, Fill, Use: Black).

To soften the transition between sharp frame and soft edge, you can blur the black layer slightly. We used a Gaussian Blur with a Radius of 2 pixels for the result at the top of page 84.

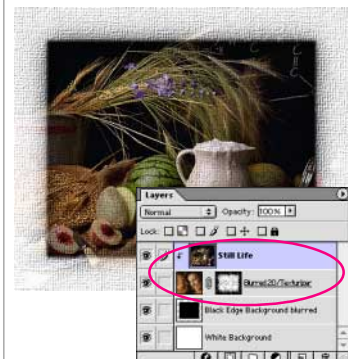
**Fancy framing.** Experiment on the layer mask with filters to stylize either the edge area or the entire mask, as shown below. See pages 150–151 for examples of filtered edge treatments. 



The layer mask was targeted and the Texturizer filter was applied. The filter settings you need to create this and other "filtered edges" are on pages 150–151.

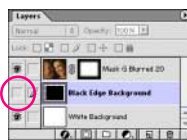
### IMAGE SWAPPING

Once you have a framing file set up, it's easy to experiment with the same frame and another image of similar size: Start by targeting the image-and-mask layer and then drag-and-drop your new image into the file. Then press Ctrl/⌘-G to make a clipping group of the new image layer and the masked layer below.

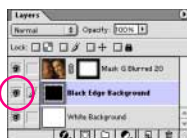


# Filtered Frames

Each of the examples shown on these two pages was made by running a filter on a layer mask in a 560-pixel-wide file built in the same way as the one in the “Framing with Masks” technique on pages 84–85. The layer mask was Gaussian-blurred with a Radius of 20 pixels; the black backing layer was blurred with a Radius of 2 pixels. Some filters, such as the Texturizer, create their texture even in the white areas of the mask, which affects the image as well as the edges.



The four single examples at the top of this page were made with the visibility of the black backing layer turned off.



Where there are two examples, visibility of the black layer was off for the upper one, but on for the lower.

## ADDING A LAYER STYLE

If you add a Layer Style to the image-and-mask layer, the effects in the Style will be built using the edge of the layer mask.



*Artistic: Rough Pastels (Stroke Length, 10; Stroke Detail, 10; Texture, Canvas; Scaling, 100%; Relief: 20; Light Dir., Top Left)*



*Sketch: Graphic Pen (Stroke Length, 15; Light/Dark Balance, 30; Stroke Dir., Right Diagonal)*



*Distort: Twirl (Angle, 400°)*



*Distort: Twirl (Angle, 999°)*



*Pixelate: Color Halftone (Max. Radius, 5; all Screen Angles, 45)*



*Brush Strokes: Sprayed Strokes (Stroke Length, 12; Spray Radius, 20; Stroke Dir., Right Diagonal)*



*Distort: Ocean Ripple (Ripple Size, 1; Ripple Magnitude, 12)*



*Brush Strokes: Spatter (Spray Radius, 15; Smoothness, 5)*



*Sketch: Halftone Pattern (Pattern Type, Line; Size, 1; Contrast, 25)*



*Sketch: Water Paper (Fiber Length, 50; Brightness, 50; Contrast, 75)*



*Texture: Grain (Grain Type, Horizontal; Intensity, 65; Contrast, 75)*



*Texture: Texturizer (Texture, Canvas; Scaling, 125%; Relief, 10%; Light Dir., Top)*