

create an alpha channel

How to create an alpha channel or grayscale mask with Primatte's mask settings.

a tutorial for : [primatte chromakey](#)



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PRIMATE
chromakey

primatte : create an alpha channel/grayscale mask

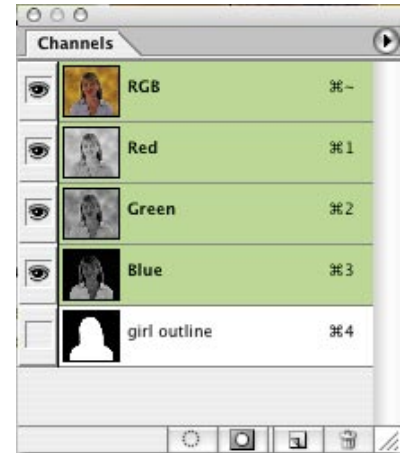


A question asked frequently by advanced Photoshop users is how to save the mask created by Primatte. Another way to phrase this is asking how to create an 'alpha channel' with Primatte.

Either way, you save out a grayscale (black and white) representation of the color definition that Primatte creates. This is exactly the preview image that you see in Primatte's interface when you click on the 'Mask View' mode button.

Why would you want to do this? Well, creating a mask selection or alpha channel will allow you to keep the photo segregated for more editing. Let's say you want to balance the color of the background. Or isolate some facial tonal shifts after Primatte has rendered.

The way to create your alpha channel is this: Render out a Primatte mask as you would normally. Then re-render the mask on a duplicate Photoshop layer as a grayscale image. Copy/paste that grayscale image into a Layer Mask on the original layer. Then load in the Layer Mask as selection, and save as an alpha channel. Following are step-by-step instructions to do this.



Our goal: An editable channel saved out from Primatte.

NOTE: For this lesson, we refer to the chromakey color as green. Of course, it can actually be blue or any other solid color that contrasts properly with your subject.

This lesson also assumes that you have an intermediate understanding of Photoshop and Primatte. For instance, we do not explain how to duplicate a layer in Photoshop or what the Channel palette is for. We also don't explain Primatte's basic masking steps or tools.

step 01 - duplicate your layer

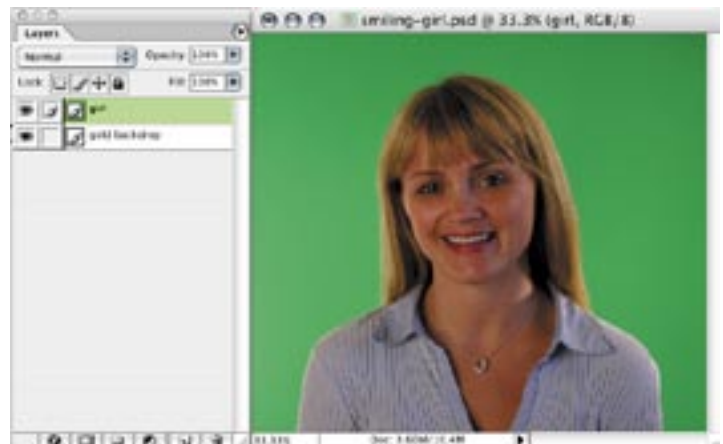
Before using Primatte, you will do a little work in Photoshop's Layers palette. Duplicate the layer that you're going to run Primatte on. (I'll call this the 'girl' layer.)

step 02 - hide the duplicate

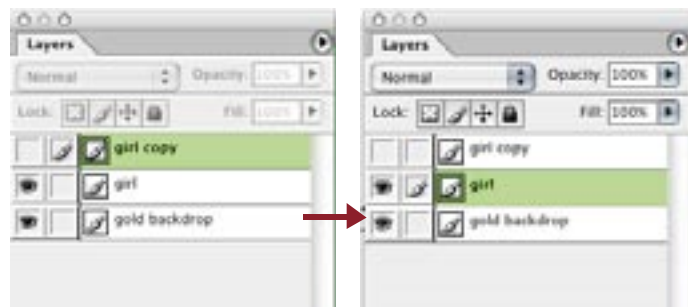
Turn off the Eye icon for the duplicated 'girl' layer so it is visually hidden. (I'll call this the 'girl-copy' layer.)

step 03 - open primatte

With the original 'girl' layer selected, choose Primatte from the Filters menu. The Primatte interface opens.



step 01 - Duplicate the green screen layer.



step 02 - Turn off visibility of the duplicated layer. Then reselect the original green screen layer.

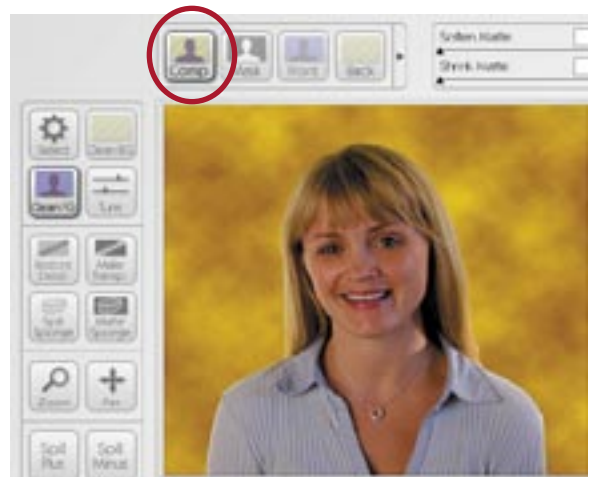


step 04 - create and render mask

Create your mask using the standard three tool process ('Select', 'Clean FG', 'Clean BG'). Do any color spill correction that is necessary.

If you select the 'Mask View' while doing your work, you will see a black-and-white representation of your mask. The black represents areas that Primatte will delete. White is the area that will be retained.

Now render out your mask with the 'Comp View' mode button selected.



step 04 - 'Comp View' is the mode you typically render.

step 05 - return to photoshop

Back in Photoshop, your green screen image has been treated by Primatte. All of the green has been deleted, and the subject is surrounded by transparent pixels. You can see the layer behind it, if you have another layer in the file (like our 'gold backdrop' layer).

step 06 - select duplicate layer

Now we are going to generate the imagery for the alpha channel. In your Layers palette, select the 'girl copy' layer. Click the Eye icon to turn on its visibility. Select Primatte again from the Filters menu.

step 07 - render 'mask view'

When Primatte opens, the settings of the last mask are recognized. Click on the 'Mask View' mode button to see a grayscale preview of this mask.

If you apply Primatte with this mode displayed, then Primatte will not operate as it typically does. Instead of deleting the black areas and retaining the white areas, Primatte will simply render out that grayscale image. So let's do that.

With 'Mask View' still displaying, click the 'checkmark' button to apply Primatte a second time. We're now finished using Primatte; the rest of this tutorial happens in Photoshop.



step 05 - In Photoshop, your subject is against transparency.



step 06 - Render 'Mask View' for an alpha channel.



step 08 - return to photoshop

Back in Photoshop, you will see that a grayscale image has replaced your green screen image. To load this grayscale image as a mask, do the following steps.

step 09 - copy the grayscale image

Select the 'girl copy' layer. In your Photoshop menu, Select> Select All the entire grayscale image. Then Edit> Copy. You can now hide the 'girl copy' layer again or throw it away.

step 10 - add a layer mask

In your Layers palette, select the 'girl' layer. Then click the 'Add Layer Mask' button at the bottom-left of the palette.

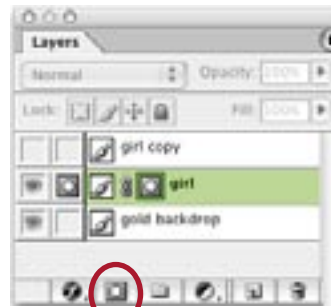
step 11 - paste into layer mask

Option-click (Mac) or alt-click (Win) on the newly created Layer Mask icon on your 'girl' layer. A blank white canvas shows on the layer. This means the Layer Mask area is active and ready for you to do something.

Now Edit> Paste the grayscale image into the Layer Mask. Then click on the regular layer icon to get back to your normal view.



step 08 - The 'Mask View' grayscale image is rendered in your Photoshop file.



step 10 - Click the 'Add Layer Mask' button to add a layer mask.



the regular layer icon the Layer Mask icon



step 11a - Before the paste.



step 11b - After the paste.



step 12 - load mask as selection

To load in the mask as an alpha channel, just apple-click (Mac) or control-click (Win) the regular layer icon. That loads in the grayscale mask as a selection outline. You'll see the familiar dotted lines around your subject.



step 12 - The 'Mask View' grayscale image is rendered in your Photoshop file.

step 13 - save selection as channel

From here, of course, you can save an alpha channel through the Select > Save Channel menu item. The mask will appear as a grayscale icon in your Channels palette.



step 13 - The Save Selection window allows you to save your 'girl' selection as a channel.



in conclusion

With a channel, a layer mask, or a selection in your Photoshop file, you now have the ability to do additional editing and compositing with your (formerly) chromakey photograph. If you have any questions about this tutorial, feel free to contact us at info@digitalanarchy.com.