

Basic Tutorials Series:

Define Foreground

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Document #HWPR00005

1 Define Foreground

What is Foreground?

Foreground is any object in your photograph that is obstructing the view of the house, such as foliage, cars, couches, coffee tables or even people. Defining your foreground is an important step in making your picture as realistic and life-like as possible. Any object that appears in front of the product area that you wish to change or add to should be defined as foreground. By doing so, these defined foreground areas will always be visible and in front of the products you apply thereafter.

Some photographs will not require a foreground layer, as there is nothing impeding the view of the

house (see Example 1A below). The entire area that is masked with the Foreground tool is automatically copied to what is called the Foreground Region. This region is always positioned on top of all other regions regardless of the number of regions in a project.

Anything that you mask as foreground cannot have product applied to it! You can however move other layers overtop of the foreground layer, so that items will appear on top of the foreground.

The most common tool used for defining foreground is the Magic Brush Tool seen in Example 1C at right. This is because the shape of the brush



Example 1A: House Without Foreground



Example 1B: House With Foreground

will shift to match the outline of what is being masked. You can adjust the size and sensitivity to make masking easier.

If you have other types of foreground – such as people, cars, or couches try using the paint brush tool, or the outline tool for the best masking result.



Example 1C



Example 1D: Details of the foreground outline



Example 1E: Mask overlapping the area we set as foreground (so the furniture doesn't get painted over)

Masking the Foreground Layer is meant to save time and simplify the work needed to mask a project. However, there are times when the foreground can be very difficult to mask. Here are a few things to consider before jumping straight into the task:

- ◆ You only need to mask the foreground areas that will overlap with the product areas. For example, if there are some tree branches that extend over your roof in your photo, only mask the parts of the branches that overlap with the roof, not the whole branch.
- ◆ Or for an interior, as shown in Examples 1D & 1E above, you only need to mask the outer edges of furniture that may overlap with the wall and flooring product areas.



Example 1F: Photo of house with tree in front.



Examples 1G: Branches in front of house is masked as foreground in red.



Example 1H: A close up view of the masked tree. (The paint brush tool was used in order to get as detailed as possible.)

Trees can be extremely tricky especially if the photo was taken during the winter time and the tree consists mostly of branches.

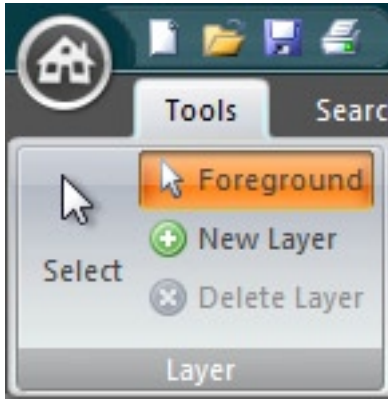
- ◆ The Magic Brush is often a great tool for defining foreground areas such as bushes or leaves. Remember that you can adjust the **Sensitivity** settings as well.
- ◆ If you want more control to get as much detail as the photo above, use the round shape **Paint Brush tool**, and decrease the size of the brush to 1 pixel (the smallest it can go).
- ◆ Make good use of the **Zoom** feature. Zooming in can allow you to see the areas that need to be masked much better, and zooming out can give you a better sense of what you need and what you don't need to mask.
- ◆ It is up to you to decide how detailed you want your photo to look. Sometimes it is easier to cover over small branches or trees, and still retain a relatively high level of realism.
- ◆ To zoom in quickly and easily, use the quick keys function:



Plus Sign = Zoom In

Minus Sign = Zoom Out

How To Define Foreground



Example 1J: House with Foreground Masked

This is the same home as Example 1B, however now the shrubbery and lanterns on the garage have been masked as foreground. Because we masked these areas as foreground, we can apply siding and then the shrubbery and the lanterns will automatically remain visible on top of the applied siding. Even if you delete the siding region and add another, or split the siding region so that you can add masonry, you will only have to mask the tree once. It also means that if you apply an object, like a garage door to the project, the tree will still show above the garage door.

1. Click on the **Tools Tab**
2. Click on **“Foreground”**
3. Click on the **“Magic Brush”**
4. **Define Foreground Areas**
 - a. Using your mouse, left-click over all the areas that covers over parts of the house. Watch how the shape of the brush shifts and changes to match the outline of the area.



NOTE: The more accurate you make your foreground edges, the more realistic your finished project will look. Zoom in and use a small brush with high sensitivity for best results.

5. **Correct Masking Mistakes**
 - a. **Right-click** your cursor over the areas you wish to erase

OR

 - b. Select **“Erase”** on the Masking Tools Menu and **left-click** over the area you wish to erase

6. **Switch to Other Masking Tools**
 - a. If you need to refine some of your masking, you can select a different masking tool, and continue to left-click on all other areas you would like to keep in your photo



NOTE: When you are finished, you will see that all of the areas that are colored red are foreground. This means you will not be able to apply products to these areas! It is also important to note that you cannot delete the foreground layer – you must erase everything on it with the masking tools if you want it cleared.