

Removing the Background

Photoshop Pen Tool, page 1

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Because of the curved shape of the butterfly in this image, the ideal selection tool is Photoshop's pen tool. The background makes it very difficult to use the other selection tools, but it's a fairly simple shape for drawing a path. The entire selection process for this image took approximately fifteen minutes using the technique below.



 The pen tool allows you to draw a path around your image consisting of bezier curves. If you're not familiar with pen tool or working with bezier curves, you'll want to familiarize yourself with pages 153 - 160 in the *Photoshop 5.0 User's Guide*. You'll also find an excellent [pen tool tutorial and tracing templates](#) at Mike's Sketchpad.

Personally, I find it easier to place the points of my path around the image initially, and then go back and edit the curves later. If you're comfortable drawing with the pen tool, you may prefer to draw the curves as you create your path, or you may prefer the magnetic pen tool. If you're just placing the points for editing later, you'll need to place a point between each curved line segment where the line changes direction, as shown below.



Here's a zoomed in view so you can get a better view of how the points were placed.



Once the points are in place, you can switch to the Convert Anchor Point tool to shape the curve. Click on a point and drag away from it to create the curve, then use the control handles to edit the shape of the curve. If you need to select and move a point, hold down the control key (command on Mac) to temporarily switch to the direct selection tool. If you need to add or delete points, you can do that without leaving the convert anchor point tool by right clicking (click-hold on Mac) on the path.

Below is a zoomed in view of the edited path, where you can see the control points for the nodes along the edge of the wing.





Below is the butterfly with the completed path.



And here is a closer view of part of the path.



On the [next page](#) you'll learn how to convert the path to selection and add the butterfly's antennae back in before dropping out the background.

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