[for primatte chromakey 2.0]
complex masks in minutes
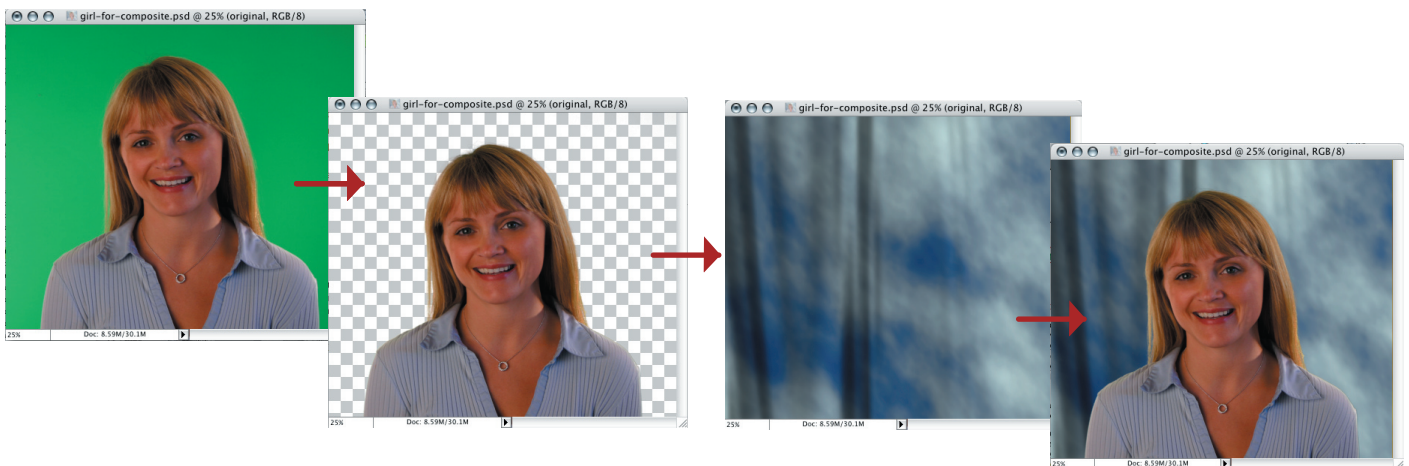
[for backdrop designer 1.0]
make your own background

how to composite a background

**Merge an image masked by Primatte Chromakey
with a background created in Backdrop Designer.**

It's a simple process using layers in Photoshop!

[from: Digital Anarchy]
f/x tools for revolutionaries

add a background behind your subject

A question that we often regarding Primatte Chromakey, Backdrop Designer, or the two products together is this: "Once I've gotten rid of the background behind my model, how do I add a different background behind her?"
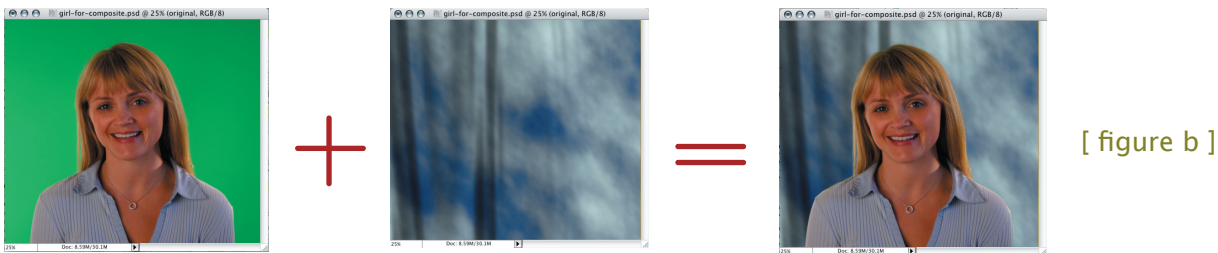
This is really a Photoshop–related question. In order to insert a new background behind the person (or object) in your photo, you will not work inside of Primatte or Backdrop Designer. Instead you will do some basic functions in your Layers palette and with the Copy/Paste commands in Photoshop.

explanation of this tutorial

There are two scenarios that you will encounter in trying to composite two layers together. You may want to place a new background directly into your Photoshop file. We will show you this as Scenario A. [figure a] Or you may have two separate photographs that you want to merge together. We will explain this in Scenario B. [figure b]

[figure a]

[figure b]

Both of our examples assume that you are using Primatte Chromakey to remove your original background, and Backdrop Designer to create the new background.

You can use the information in this tutorial if you are working with your own replacement background (let's say, a photo of the Grand Canyon), or if you're removing the original background with Photoshop tools (like the Eraser). Just substitute what we are saying about either plugin with your own media.
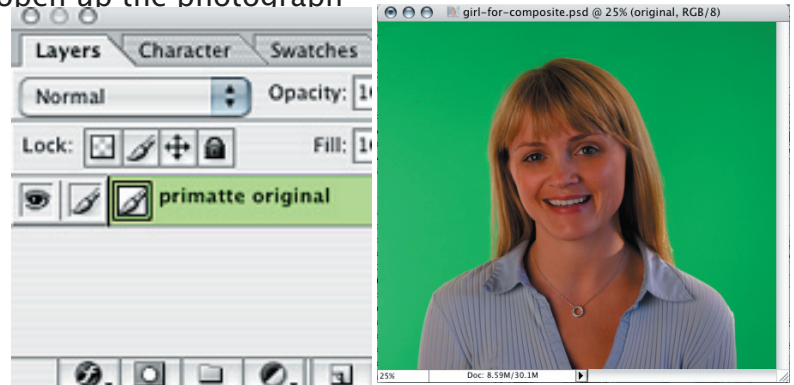
scenario A: add a background to your photo

In our first example, we will add a new background to a photograph.

step 01: set up file

First, you need to set up your file. In Photoshop, open up the photograph that you want to use. If you are working with Primatte, this will be a person (or object) shot against a blue or green background.

We will use a blonde model against a greenscreen as our demo image. Your Photoshop file will have one layer showing in the Layers palette (open through the Windows> Layers menu). [figure 1]
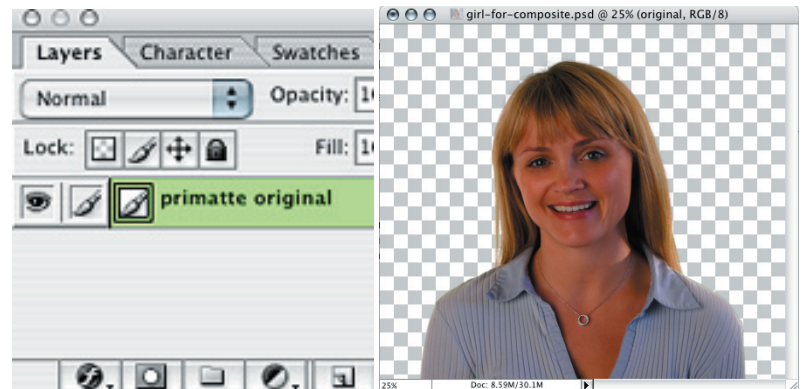
Your layer may read as 'Layer 0'. We have renamed ours by clicking down on the text row and typing a custom name.

[figure 1]

step 02: delete background

Use Primatte to remove the green/blue from your image. NOTE: Before you use Primatte, make sure that file layer is a regular non-Background layer. (Do this by double-clicking the layer row, then hitting the OK button.)

If you are not using Primatte, then remove the original background using Photoshop's Eraser tool or the method you've chosen.

[figure 2]

step 03: apply primatte

When you are finished working in Primatte, click the Apply button. Back in Photoshop, you will see your original image against gray and white squares. This checkerboard represents where there is transparency in your file; that is, what part of the Photoshop image is see-through. [figure 2]
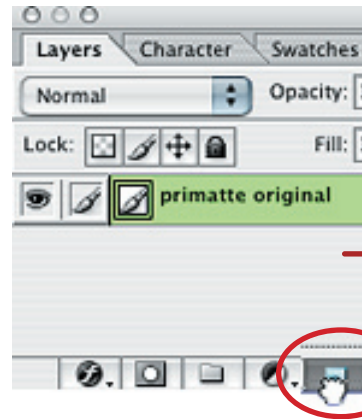
If you don't know how to use Primatte, please listen to our introductory video tutorials at http://www.digitalanarchy.com/primatte/primatte_tutes.html
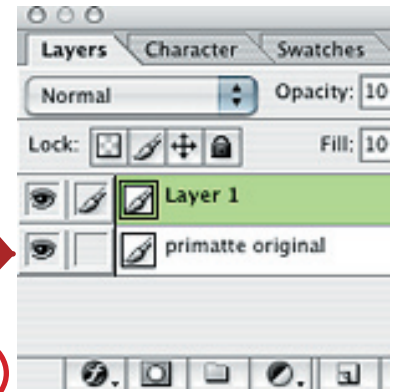
step 04: add new layer

Now that our subject is isolated, let's add a new background behind her. In the Photoshop Layers palette, create a second layer in your Photoshop file. To do so, click on the 'New Layer' icon at the bottom right of your Layers palette. [figure 3a]

This will create a new layer. A layer is like a transparent piece of digital paper that lays over other transparent papers.

Nothing will visually change in your Photoshop file. However you will see a new row in your Layers palette, most likely named 'Layer 1'. [figure 3b]
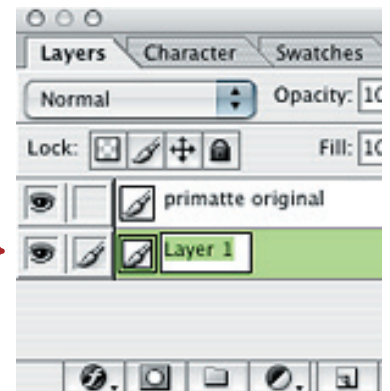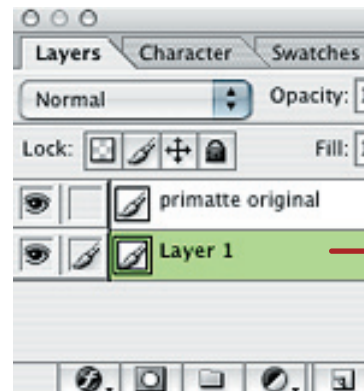

[figure 3a]

[figure 3b]

step 05: move layer below

You need to place that new layer behind (or, below) the Primatte-treated layer. This will allow our new backdrop to show through.

In your Layers palette, click down on 'Layer 1' and physically drag the layer row to the bottom of the stack. [figure 4] Don't double-click; this will open a dialog box that you don't need. Just single-click and drag downwards.
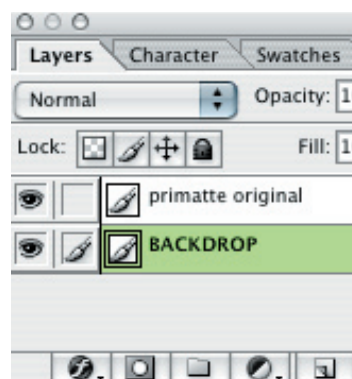
If you like, you can rename the new layer. We've renamed ours 'BACKDROP'.
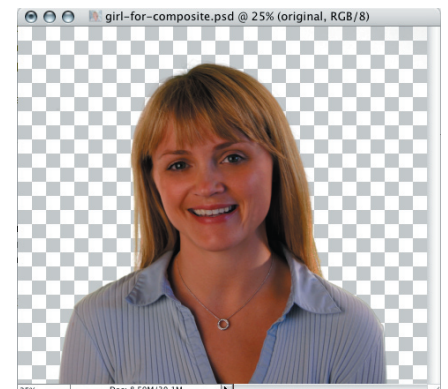

[figure 4]

step 06: create background

Let's add the image that will be your new background. Make sure that your BACKDROP layer is selected (it will appear highlighted). [figure 5a]

Your Primatte/subject layer is still on a transparent layer. Nothing has changed yet visually in your image. [figure 5b]

[figure 5a]

[figure 5b]

If you are using Backdrop Designer to create a new image, apply that plugin to the bottom layer with Filter> Digital Anarchy> Backdrop Designer.
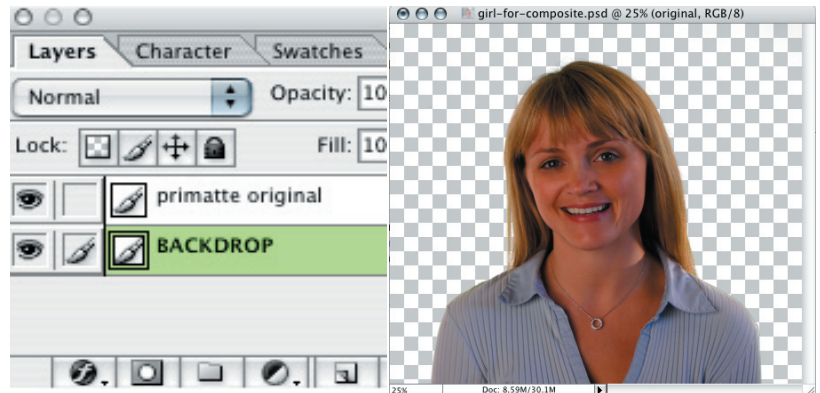
step 07: apply backdrop

When you are finished working in Backdrop, click the Apply button. Back in Photoshop, you'll see your subject against the backdrop graphic you have chosen. [figure 6]

That BACKDROP layer is viewable through the transparent areas of the Primatte-treated layer. You will no longer see a checkerboard grid since the transparency (or unfilled pixels) in your photograph no longer exist.

If you click the Layer palette's Eye icons on/ off, you will see what is on each layer. You're finished. Wow, that was easy!
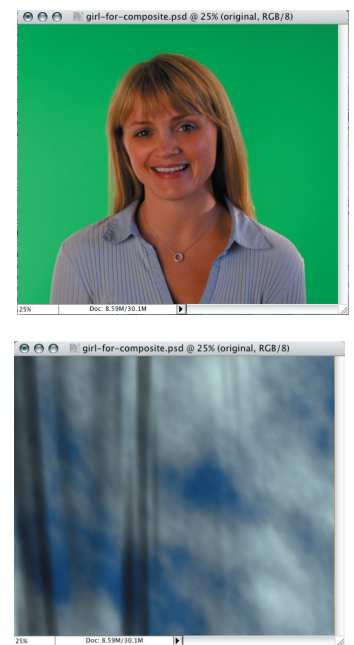
[figure 6]

scenario B: merge two photos together

Now let's look at this scenario in a different way. We will merge two existing photos using similar processes as in Scenario A, but with different steps.

step 01: set up files

First, let's set up our files. In Photoshop, open up the two photographs that you want to merge. If you are working with Primatte, this will be a person (or object) shot against a blue or green background. You will also open a photo that you want to use as the new background.

In our demo, we are working two Photoshop files. One shows a blonde model against a green screen. The other is blue drapery that we already created in Backdrop Designer. [figure 1]

[figure 1]

Open the Layers palette in Photoshop (through the Windows> Layers menu). Click on one photograph, then the other. In the Layers palette, you will notice that each Photoshop file has one layer. [figure 2]
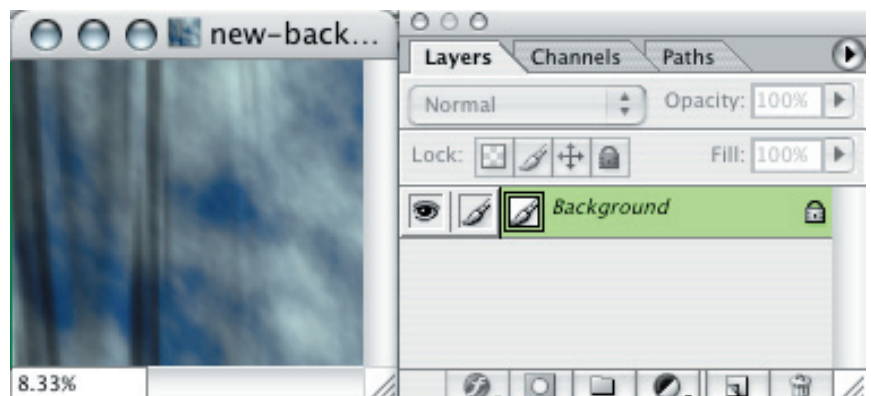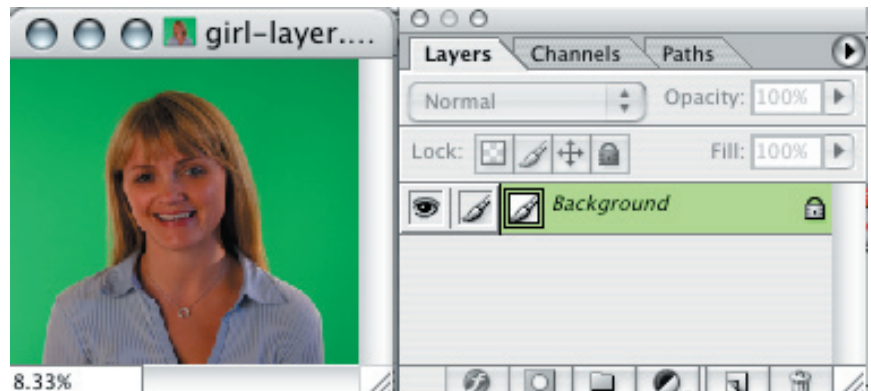
step 02: delete background

Select your green/bluescreen photo (for us, the Girl file). Use Primatte to remove the green/blue from your image.

NOTE: Before you use Primatte, make sure that file layer is a regular non-Background layer. (Do this by double-clicking the layer row, then hitting the OK button.)

If you are not using Primatte, then remove the original background using Photoshop's Eraser tool or the method you've chosen.
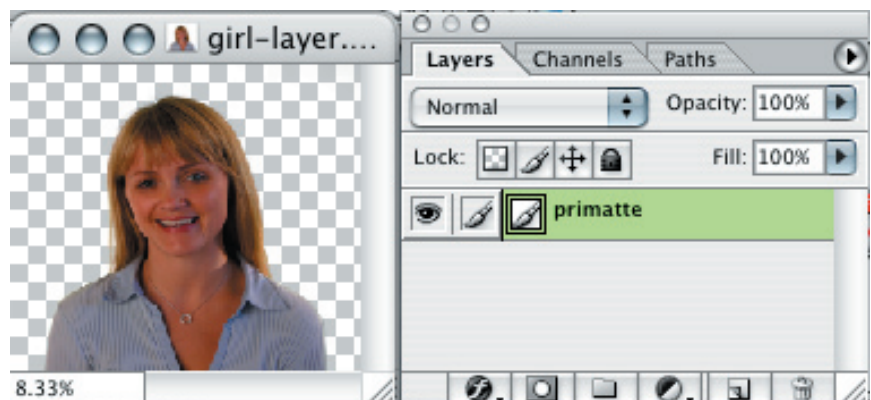
[figure 2]

step 03: apply primatte

When you are finished working in Primatte, click the Apply button. Back in Photoshop, you will see your original image against gray and white squares. We have also renamed our

This checkerboard represents where there is transparency in your file. That is, what part of the Photoshop image is see-through. [figure 3]

You layer may read as 'Layer 0'. We have renamed ours by clicking down on the text row and typing a custom name.
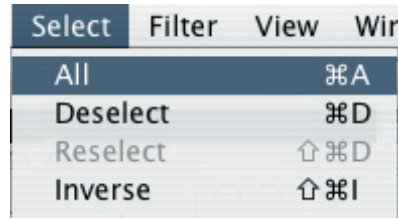
If you don't know how to use Primatte or Backdrop, please listen to our introductory video tutorials. Primatte is at http://www.digitalanarchy.com/primatte/primatte_tutes.html. Backdrop is at http://www.digitalanarchy.com/backdrop/backdrop_tutes.html.

[figure 3]

step 04: copy layer

Now that your subject is isolated, let's place her against our new background. In the Photoshop menu, choose Select> Select All. [figure 3] A dotted selection outline appears around the photo. [figure 4]

Then choose Edit> Copy. [figure 5] This will remember the imagery that you've selected.
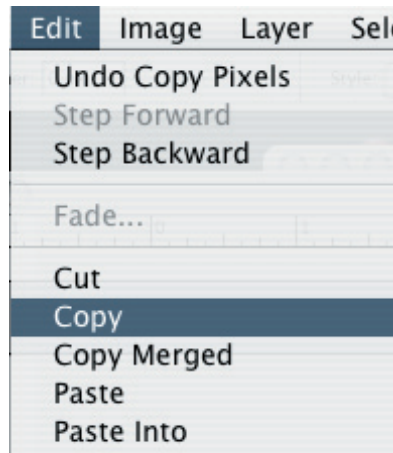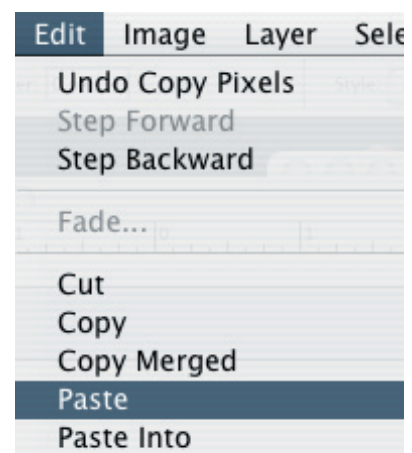
[figure 3]

[figure 4]

step 05: paste layer

Now click on your other photograph, the one that contains your replacement background. (Ours is blue Backdrop Designer material.) Then choose Edit> Paste from the Photoshop menu. [figure 6]

This will create a new layer in the Backdrop photo. A layer is like a transparent piece of digital paper that lays over other transparent papers. In your Layers palette, you will see a second row with the name of your copied layer. [figure 7]
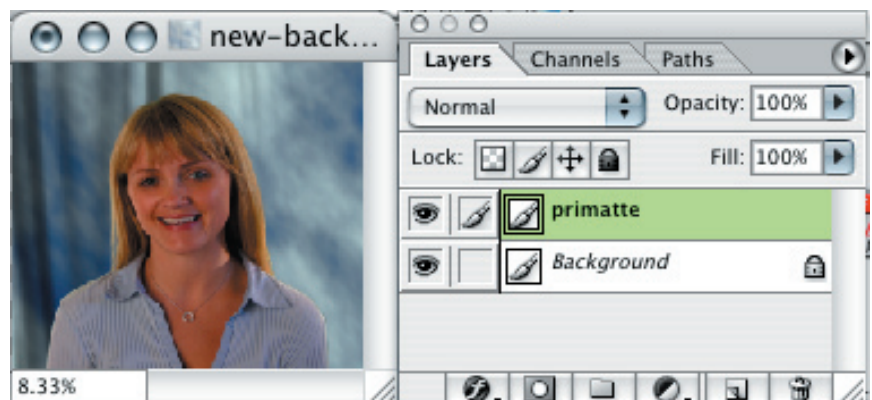
[figure 5]

[figure 6]

step 06: examine file

In your file, you will see your subject against the new background graphic. This is because that Backdrop Designer layer is viewable through the transparent areas of the Primatte-treated layer. [figure 7]

You will no longer see a checkerboard grid since the transparency (or unfilled pixels) in your photograph no longer exist. If you click the Layer palette's Eye icons on/off, you will see what is on each layer.

[figure 7]

Once again… a simple process, and now your work is complete! If you have any questions about this tutorial, please email Debbie at info@digitalanarchy.com.