

Make masks in minutes.

Quickstart for Primatte Chromakey 2.0

Get started with Primatte 2.0. This step-by-step guide explains how to quickly create a mask.



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Quickstart Guide for Primatte 2.0

This Quickstart Guide is an overview of the Primatte 2.0 interface and process. Along with our introductory video tutorials, this is a fast way to learn how Primatte works. The plugin is simple to use but its tools are different than Photoshop's and therefore need some explanation. This Quickstart also great for folks who are familiar with chromakey software and just need to find the functions they expect.

About this tutorial

Primatte can extract a foreground from any solid color (though blue or green are typically used). To make things simple, we will refer to the background screen color as 'blue'. For more clarification about specific tools and concepts, please refer to the full Primatte manual and detailed video tutorials available at www.digitalanarchy.com.

To follow along, please download this Zip file: www.anarchyunderground.net/tutes/primatte20_quick.zip. This file contains two Photoshop files; one is a single layer file, the other is a multi-layer file.

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Step 1: Select the subject layer

Open up the Photoshop file of your bluescreen image. Select the layer that contains the subject to be masked.

In the photograph called 'blue girl multiple.psd', there are multiple layers. The two bottom layers are textures that will act as new backgrounds once the subject is surrounded by transparent pixels. You want to click to select the topmost layer of the girl against a blue screen.

In the photograph called 'blue girl single.psd', there is only one layer, that of the girl against a blue screen. Obviously... this is the layer that you'll select. However, first you need to edit that layer to allow your Photoshop file to support transparency. You must do this BEFORE working with Primatte.



The 'blue girl multiple.psd' file.

Step 2: Unlock the Background

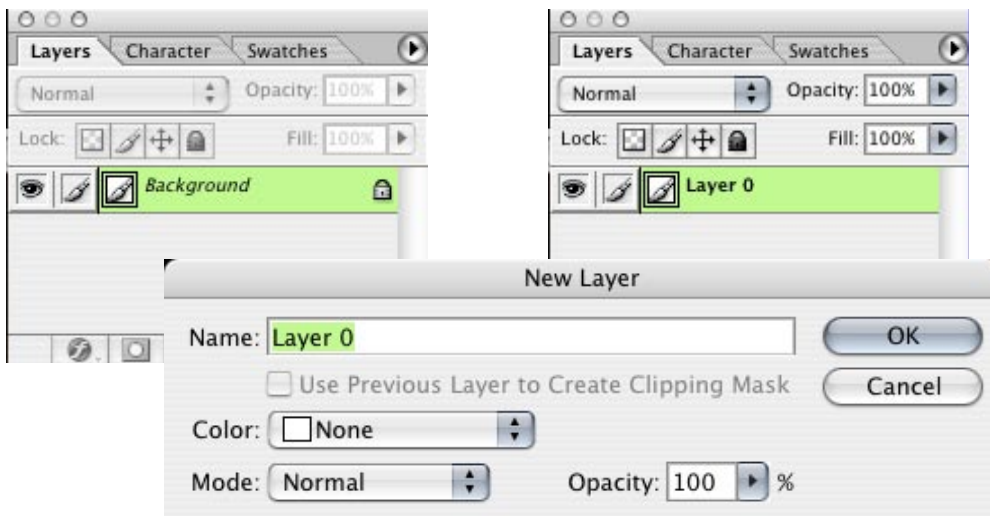
In the single layer file, that 'Background' layer has a Lock icon. This layer is like a piece of paper that's glued down. You need to un-gluce that Background layer for Primatte to work properly.

To do so, in your Photoshop Layers palette, double-click the Background layer. You will get a dialog box; just click 'OK'.

Your layer now reads as 'Layer 0' instead of 'Background' and does not have a Lock icon. Now your Photoshop layer can support the transparency that Primatte needs. NOTE: You do NOT have to go through this process with a Photoshop file if the bluescreen layer is not a Background layer.



The 'blue girl single.psd' file.



Step 3: Launch Primatte plugin

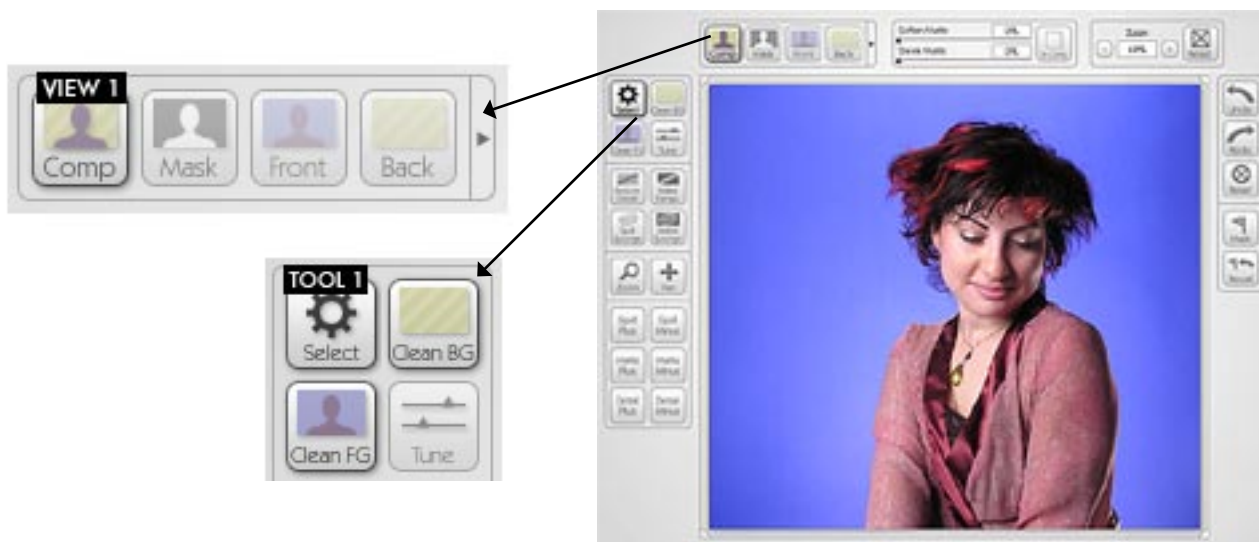
Ok, now we're ready to use Primatte! From Photoshop's Filter menu, select Digital Anarchy > Primatte 2.0. Primatte opens up and covers the Photoshop interface.

Masking in Primatte is very easy. It's essentially a three-step process using the Select tool, Clean BG tool and Clean FG tool. Afterwards, depending upon how much color spill is in your original photo, you will use some of the Spill Removal tools to clean up the masked image.

Step 4: Choose blue with Select tool

By default, the Select tool is active and Comp (Composite) View is turned on. To generate your initial mask in Primatte, click in the blue background. It's best to click a medium tone blue if possible. This is Step 1 of 3 in creating a Primatte mask.

You will immediately see a color shift. That's because Primatte now recognizes blue as the color range to delete. Primatte probably hasn't designated all of the pixels correctly on the first pass. We can easily fix that.

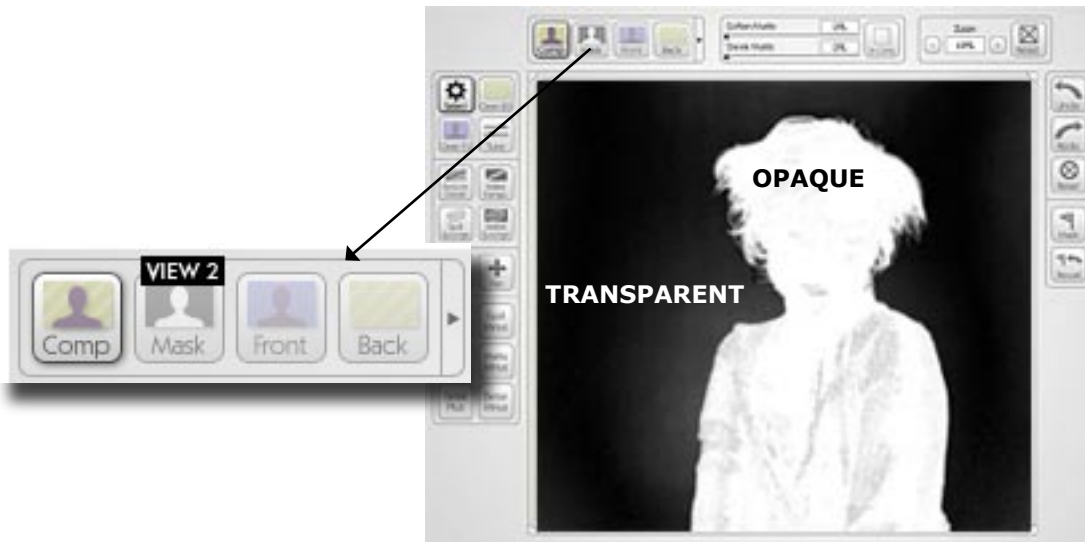


Step 5: Look in Mask View

First, let's look at how our mask is building itself. At top left of the Primatte interface, click on the Mask View button. This shows a grayscale representation of the mask.

Black shows the pixels that are now transparent. White shows the pixels that are opaque and fully retained.

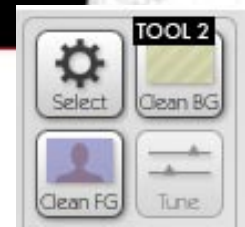
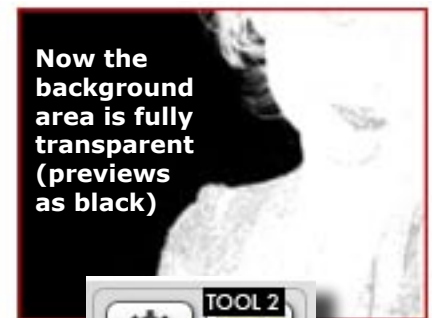
Gray tones show the pixels that will be retained to some degree. Dark gray means the pixels are more transparent (closer to black) and the underlying imagery will be kept to a lesser degree. Light gray means the pixels are less transparent (closer to white) and will be kept to a greater degree.



Step 6: Clean up Background

To improve your mask, click on the Clean BG (Background) button. This button cleans up any pixels in the bluescreen that should have been designated as transparent, but simply weren't on the first pass.

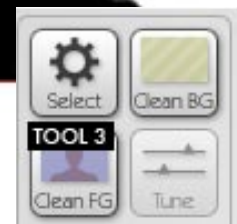
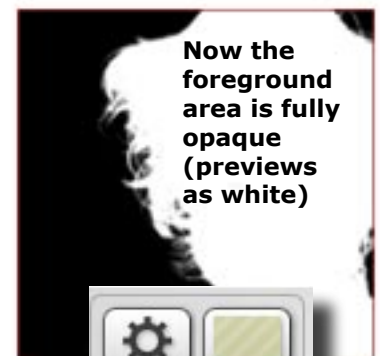
Stay in Mask View. Click and drag along the areas in the bluescreen that are not completely black. This tells Primatte to make those pixels transparent. You want all of the blue background pixels to be transparent. This is Step 2 of 3 in creating a Primatte mask.



Step 6: Clean up Foreground

Still in Mask View, let's do a similar pass on the foreground subject, our female model. Choose the Clean FG (Foreground) button. Now click and drag along any areas of the foreground object that are not completely white. This is Step 3 of 3 in creating a Primatte mask.

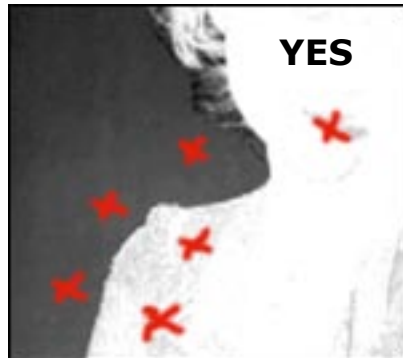
You want the subject to preview as white in Mask View with one important exception. Any areas that are meant to be transparent or partially transparent (like hair, shadows, glass) should remain gray.



Use BG/FG in Solid Areas

To retain gray, you should always click/drag the Clean FG and Clean BG tools in solid areas of your photograph. Do NOT sample along the edges of your subject.

It is likely that the edges of your subject contain some transparency value. Sampling a transparent area for Primatte to use in building its mask will throw off the color model it is using (which is blue vs. all other colors in the image).



Similarly, your photograph may contain interior imagery that is semi-transparent. For instance, your model is wearing a sheer blouse or holding a clear object. (In our example at right, the model is holding a see-through plastic umbrella.)

In situations where the bluescreen shows through the subject, you should not let the Clean FG or Clean BG tools touch the areas that contain transparency.



Step 7: Look in Comp View

Your mask is almost complete! Click on the Comp View button to view a preview of the composite of your masked subject.

- If your Photoshop file contains other layers, your subject may preview against the bottommost layer. For this to happen, the Composite Against Background Layer popup option needs to be turned on (next to the Back View button).
- * If your Photoshop file only contains that bluescreen layer, your subject may preview against a solid color. For this to happen, the Composite Against Color popup option needs to be turned on (next to the Back View button). By default, this is neutral gray. You can change the color of that preview through the popup menu's color swatch.
- * If your Photoshop file only contains that bluescreen layer, your subject may preview against a gray-and-white checkerboard. This checkerboard shows transparency and can be turned on/off in Photoshop's Preferences > Transparency & Gamut settings.



Step 8: Evaluate color spill

Now that the subject is masked, you may see some 'color spill' along her edges. Spill typically shows up in semi-transparent areas like hair, or shiny areas like patent leather shoes, or along other parts of your subject if the lighting was set up incorrectly.

This is because during your photoshoot, light from the blue background screen bounced off the screen onto the model. (In our example, the model's dark hair has a purplish tinge from the blue screen.) That spill is easily fixed with one or more of Primatte's Spill Removal tools.



Variety of Spill tools

There are many Spill Removal tools to choose from in Primatte. Each tool works a little differently and the correct tool (or tools) for a particular photograph depends upon how much spill is present and where it appears.

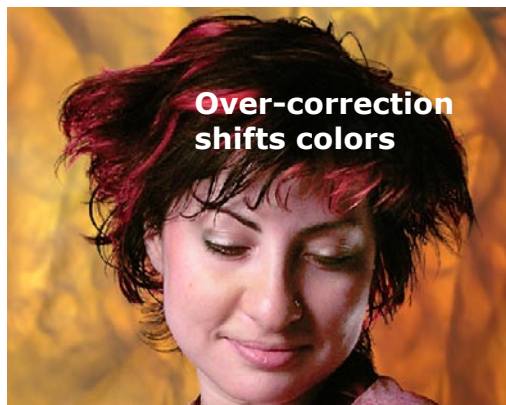
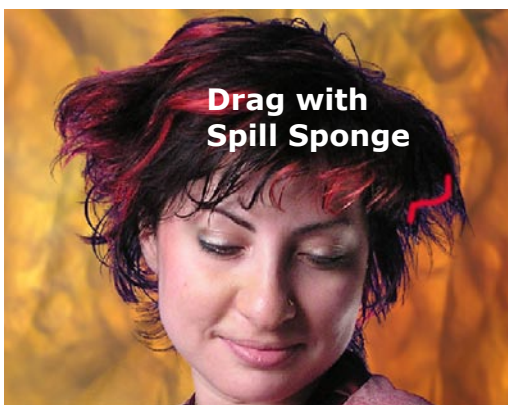
We will briefly cover two of these tools in this Quickstart Guide. For more information about using Spill Removal tools, please watch our Spill Removal tutorial movies at www.digitalanarchy.com/primatte/primatte_tutes.html. You can read detailed information about each tool in the Primatte product manual, also available from that web page.

Step 9: Try the Spill Sponge

To remove the extra blue in our model's hair, let's try out the Spill Sponge tool. This is typically the Spill Removal tool that we try first. The Spill Sponge is very powerful because it has a high threshold; that is, it looks for a wide range of blue tones to remove. Select the tool, then click on the primary area tinged with blue.

By clicking once or twice with the Spill Sponge, the blue spill should be removed. However, if you only have a slight amount of spill, then the Spill Sponge may remove TOO MUCH color. It's possible that the Sponge will overcorrect for blue and remove other tones from the rest of your photo.

If too much color is removed, hit the Undo button to go back to your original image. Then try another tool with a lower threshold, like the Spill Minus button.



Step 10: Use the Spill Minus

Let's try out the Spill Minus tool for this blue spill. This tool will remove a smaller range of the blue than the Spill Sponge. In fact, the way to use the Spill Minus tool is to click/drag multiple times along an area until you see a noticeable shift.

If you go too far with Spill Minus, you can undo in one of two ways. Either click the Undo button or click the Spill Plus button. Both methods will back up as many steps as needed.



Step 11: Render your mask

Your mask is finished! Just click the Apply button (which looks like a checkmark) at top right of the Primatte screen. This will render the mask into your Photoshop file, deleting the blue and leaving your subject surrounded by transparent pixels. Now you can add new layers and composite in a new custom image.

Primatte will remember the last mask that you created. When you reopen Primatte to work on your next photograph, the settings for the previous mask will apply. Either this will be a convenient, fast fix for your next photograph, OR the settings will be completely wrong. That's easy to fix. Just click the Reset button to forget those mask settings and start from scratch.



Have questions?

Have questions? Just email sales@digitalanarchy.com or call us during standard business hours at (415) 586-8434.