Selection techniques

Basic selections

THE MOST BASIC SELECTION TOOLS in Elements are the Rectangular and Elliptical Marquee tools. With them we can quickly select objects or areas in an image by simply clicking and dragging out the tools’ boundaries on the image.

In this lesson we’ll use the Marquee tools to select some objects on a wall. We’ll see how we can create selections using the tools’ unconstrained drawing modes and also their constrained modes, for drawing perfect squares and circles.

WHAT YOU’LL LEARN

- Creating basic selections with the Marquee tools
- Using modifier keys to alter the tools’ drawing mode

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Basic selections.jpg

We’ll begin by selecting the rectangular picture on the left of the image. Select the Rectangular Marquee tool. Place the cursor on the top-left corner of the frame. Now click and drag down to the bottom-right corner, keeping the mouse button held down. When the whole frame is selected, we can release the mouse button to make the selection.

Next, we’ll make a selection around the square picture. Press to deselect the first frame. Position the cursor at the top-left and drag down. Keeping the mouse held down, press and hold the key. The outline will snap to a square shape; usually referred to as constraining the proportions. Release the mouse first, then release . If we don’t do it in that order, the selection area will snap back to its original freeform shape.

Deselect again. Switch to the Elliptical Marquee tool; we can do this by pressing again, or by selecting its icon in the Tool Options panel. When we start to draw the selection from the edge of the clock face, however, we have a problem. Rather than keeping to the edge of the clock, the boundary begins to shift inside. This is because it’s still based on a rectangular guide, so we would have to start from an imaginary corner, which is not at all easy to do!

Press to deselect. Now position the cursor in the very center of the clock face; we can use the pin of the clock’s hands as a guide.

We’ll begin to draw out the selection. We want a perfect circle, of course, so we’ll hold down the key to constrain the proportions. Now, as well as , we’ll also hold down the keys. This forces the selection to draw out from the center, around the original cursor position. We can now select the clock perfectly. Remember to release the mouse first, then release the keys.

HOT TIP

You don’t need to use the Deselect command when you’re drawing individual selections; by default, the drawing mode is set to new, which will automatically clear the previous selection. It is worth getting into the habit, however, as it can prevent unwanted mishaps when using different tools.