

"Paths/Pen Tool and the Wacom Tablet"

The Wacom Graphics Tablet serves as a work area used with either a pen or a cordless mouse. It comes in various sizes (4 x 5 to 12 x 18), the smaller being ideal for photographic work and larger tablets being ideal for artists (in my opinion). It can permanently replace your existing mouse or be used for special editing. The advantage of the Wacom Graphics Tablet in photography is most notable the area of fine touch-up work using the pressure sensitive pen and in selecting paths. It supports all the tools in Photoshop and is programmable to suit the user. If you feel the standard mouse is a clumsy tool for fine details or to create art, you will be delighted with the ease of use of the Wacom pen. Prices start in the area of \$100, the one I am demonstrating today is the Intuos2, 4 x 5 USB, and retails for approximately \$200.

PATHS

Paths: One or more connected segments, generally created with a drawing tool, within a vector object. The path itself is invisible unless it has visible fill ink, or pen ink and stroke, applied to it.

The Pen tool and Freedom Pen tool (using the Path Component Selection tool and the Direct Selection tool) are used to draw vector shapes/graphics using paths (similar to the Adobe Illustration program) along with the Shape tool, Shape palette and fill layers (all unfamiliar to this writer). Paths (shapes) can be converted to selections. All vector drawings use Bezier paths. This lesson will include practicing drawing paths and making adjustments using control points. Some terms are:

Bezier (pronounced BEH-zee-ay) path: A mathematical way of representing graphics, developed by Pierre Bezier (it was originally created to put designs of aircraft on a computer, and then later for designing cars). All vector objects are made up of Bezier path segments. Bezier paths are either lines or curves.

Open Path: A Bezier path with two open (unconnected) endpoints.

Closed Path: A Bezier path that is fully enclosed; it has no beginning and no end.

Anchor Point: A defined point on a Bezier path.

Control Point: A defined point that is part on an anchor point, used to control the curve of a path.

Smooth Point. An anchor point in which its control points are tangent to the anchor point.

Corner Point: An anchor point with no control points; for defining straight lines.

Combination Point: An anchor point that shares the attributes of both a smooth point and a corner point.

Compound Paths: A path made up of two or more paths.

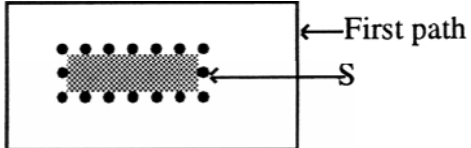
Layered Clipping Paths: A path that excludes anything not in its borders giving a precise edge when printed (versus rough edged using a mask).

USING PATHS IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Although Photoshop offers many tools to make selections, certain photos may require precise selections with smooth edges. The Photoshop 6 manual uses a teapot as an example of this type of selection (page 173). By learning basic Bezier curves and understanding how to move and adjust (or add and delete) anchor points, we should be able to make precise selections for adjustments, copying, or for moving. To change a path to a selection for further manipulation, click on the `PATHS' palette, follow the arrow to the right and select: "Make selection"

Your selection can be altered, filled or manipulated in the usual way including being made into a new adjustment layer (the safest choice).

If you have created a path within a path and it is highlighted (using the white arrow or Selection (A) tool), in the Paths palette Photoshop will ask if you wish to alter the "sub-selection".



second path (sub selection) selected.

In the same example, if neither path is selected, Photoshop will subtract the sub-selection from the changes. When choosing adjustment selections in the Paths palette or in Layers palette by adding an adjustment layer, the sub-selection in the middle is untouched. (It can be altered by selecting it.)

Paths can be named and saved by choosing "New Path". Several items may be selected on one path palette. A path can be made without naming it by clicking on the New Path button at the bottom of the Paths palette and can be saved by dragging it into same palette. (See page 179 in the manual.) It also seems Photoshop automatically makes a Paths palette when you click on a document or photo with the pen tool (For your original pen tool selections, make sure you have the "plain pen").

Tip: Check "Rubber Band" when making Bezier paths and you can see where the paths will be drawn. Still much more to learn: Such as shape layers, clipping paths..... and on and on.

FOR PRACTICE:

1. Learn to draw basic shapes using the pen tool.
2. Select a photo containing an irregular roundish shape, such as eyeglasses or fruit. Create a path around the object. Use the Direct Selection Tool (A) to adjust the path to fit perfectly around the object. Use the Add and Delete anchor point (pens tools) as needed.
3. Save the Path.
4. Change the Path to a Selection.
5. Change the Selection to an adjustment layer or alter in some way.
6. Sign your name using the Freehand Pen Tool!