

Creating vector people for infographics

A school asked me how to create some vector-looking people for an infographic they were doing. They wanted to use photos they had but not have them be actual photos when they were done. They especially did not want anyone to know who the pictured person was.

With the help of a video tutorial from the AMAZING DAVE CROSS (Photoshop guru extraordinaire at www.dcross.com), I came up with this written tutorial.

It will help if you start with a photo that has no background. Either take it in front of white or knock out the background before you start this process. (Before)

- Step 1: Choose the Quick Selection tool by pressing W.
- Step 2: Select one part of the photo that is pretty much the same color. I started with his pants. Note the selection marching ants. (Figure A-look closely at his pants.)
- Step 3: Choose Refine Edge from the control bar. When the dialog box opens (Figure B), make sure that Smooth is at least 10 and Feather is between 1 and 2. Click OK.
- Step 4: Next press an I to choose the eyedropper tool. Click the pants (or the part of the person you have selected) and to change the foreground color to that color.
- Step 5: At the bottom of the Layers panel, create a new layer. With the pants area still selected, press Option/Alt + Delete to fill the selection with the new foreground color. Your photo should look like this. (Figure C)
- Step 6: You may need to touch up the layer you just created. To do so, select the layer. Using the Brush tool (press B), paint in the layer (not on the background).
- Step 7: When you are done with that layer, click the background layer and repeat steps 2 through 6 for each color you want. In this case, I used his pants, shirt, skin, hair and shoes as separate layers.
- Step 8: Save as a Photoshop document in case you want to come back and edit it or change colors (see below). You can File>Place this into InDesign if you use that software to create your book. Or, if you use YTO and don't want any white background, save a copy as a PNG with no background and upload to YTO.

You might notice that in the After vector-like illustration, the shoes are green. That's the great part of this. Because every part is on a different layer, you can always double-click the layer and choose Color Overlay to change the color on that layer. So you could easily make the shirt pink, the pants green or pretty much any color. □

