

THE HEAL TOOLS

And the art of fixing minor errors in a photo





HEALING BRUSH TOOLS

Even with modern digital cameras, your photos may have slight imperfections. Maybe it's just a stray hair or an unwelcome skin blemish in a portrait.

Whatever reason, sometimes you need to remove some small features from your images and the best tools for this are the healing brush tools. There are five healing tools in Photoshop, which you can see if you click and hold on the Spot Healing Brush Icon in the Tool Palette.

NOTE: To get the best out of the healing tools, you need to work with care and not overdo the effect. The key to success is to be subtle. There is no reason you can't use several of the healing brushes to make sure you get a perfectly healed image.

DETAILED

THE SPOT HEALING TOOL

The Spot Healing Brush tool quickly removes blemishes and other imperfections in your photos. The Spot Healing Brush works similarly to the Healing Brush: it paints with sampled pixels from an image or pattern and matches the texture, lighting, transparency, and shading of the sampled pixels to the pixels being healed. Unlike the Healing Brush, the Spot Healing Brush doesn't require you to specify a sample spot. The Spot Healing Brush automatically samples from around the retouched area.

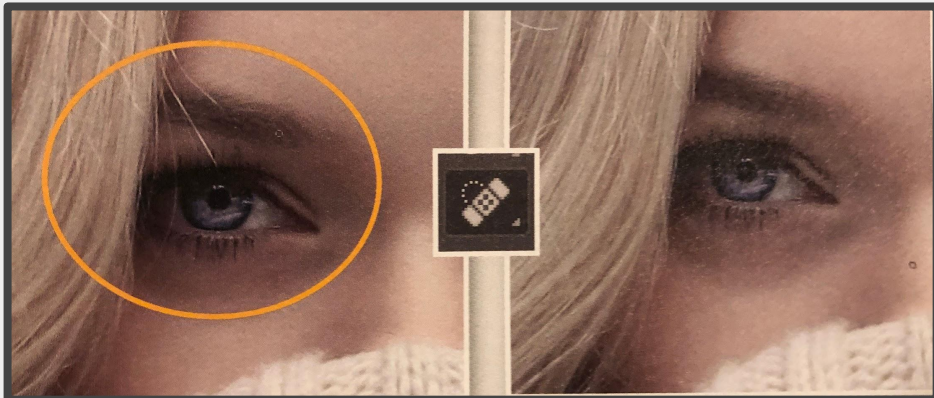


DETAILED

SPOT HEALING BRUSH TOOL

For removing small objects such as dust spots and stray hairs. In some cases, you can even remove larger objects and people. When you use it to paint over an object, the brush samples the area around it and replaces the object with a simulation of the background. The way that it samples can be selected and the most effective option is "Content Aware" sampling. The brush parameters can be adjusted like and other brush.

FOR BEST RESULTS, REMEMBER TO SET YOUR BRUSH'S HARDNESS TO 0%.



USEFUL TIP: As you can see from the example above, you can also remove larger objects as long as you can have an even background behind it, otherwise the effect might look fake.

HEALING BRUSH TOOL

The Healing Brush tool lets you correct imperfections, causing them to disappear into the surrounding image. Like the cloning tools, use the Healing Brush tool to paint with sampled pixels from an image or pattern. However, the Healing Brush tool also matches the texture, lighting, transparency, and shading of the sampled pixels to the pixels being healed. As a result, the repaired pixels blend seamlessly into the rest of the image.

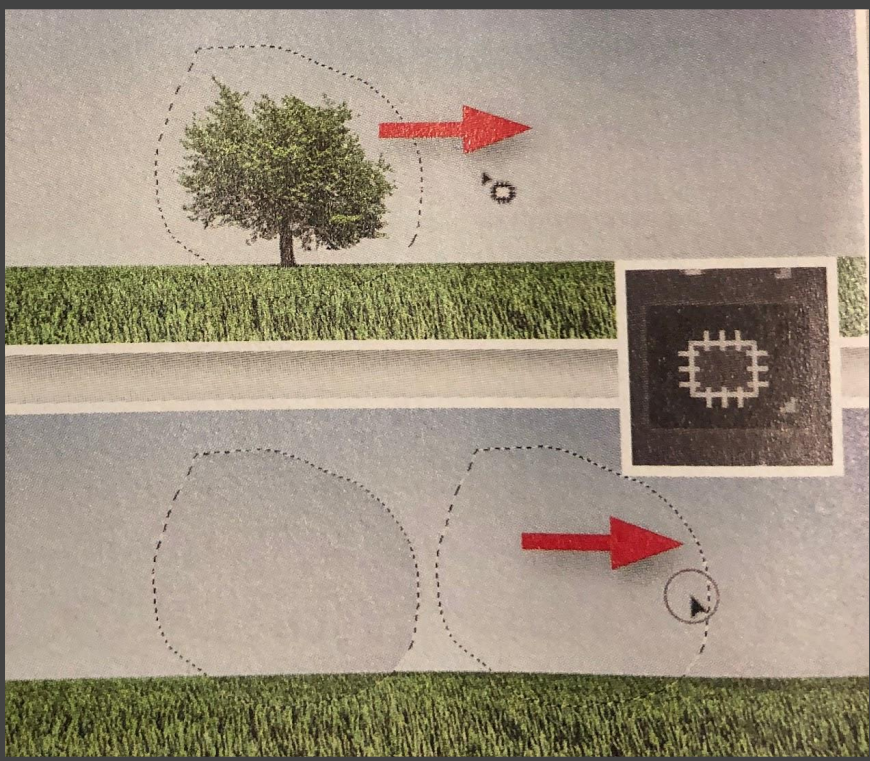
Once selected, the Healing Brush Tool requires you to set a source point from which to heal the affected area (that is the easiest way to think about the healing action, in my opinion). Set the right size of the brush (use the [] keys to increase or decrease brush size), then select the edge of the line closest in texture to the source area. Holding the cursor down (holding down the mouse button), drag the cursor from start to finish over the object to be removed.



HEALING BRUSH TOOL

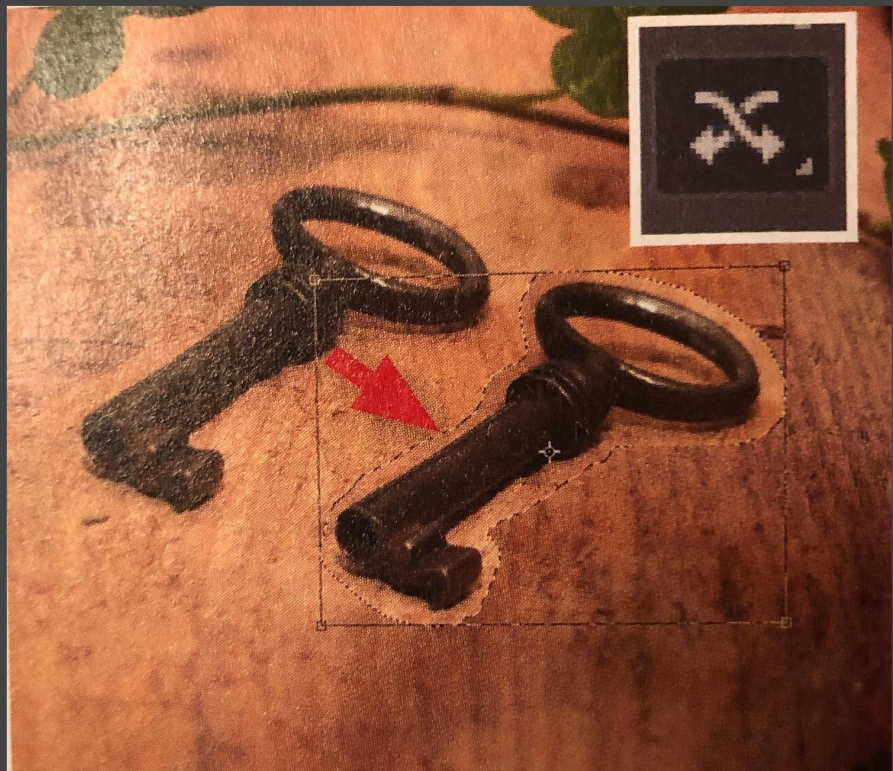
To heal a blemish, set a sample point by clicking on an area of similar texture while holding down the Alt/Option key, then paint the sample over the blemish. As ever, when it comes to healing and cloning techniques, subtlety is the key. You may find that it might take several attempts to get a good texture that doesn't stand out as being cloned in.





PATCH TOOL

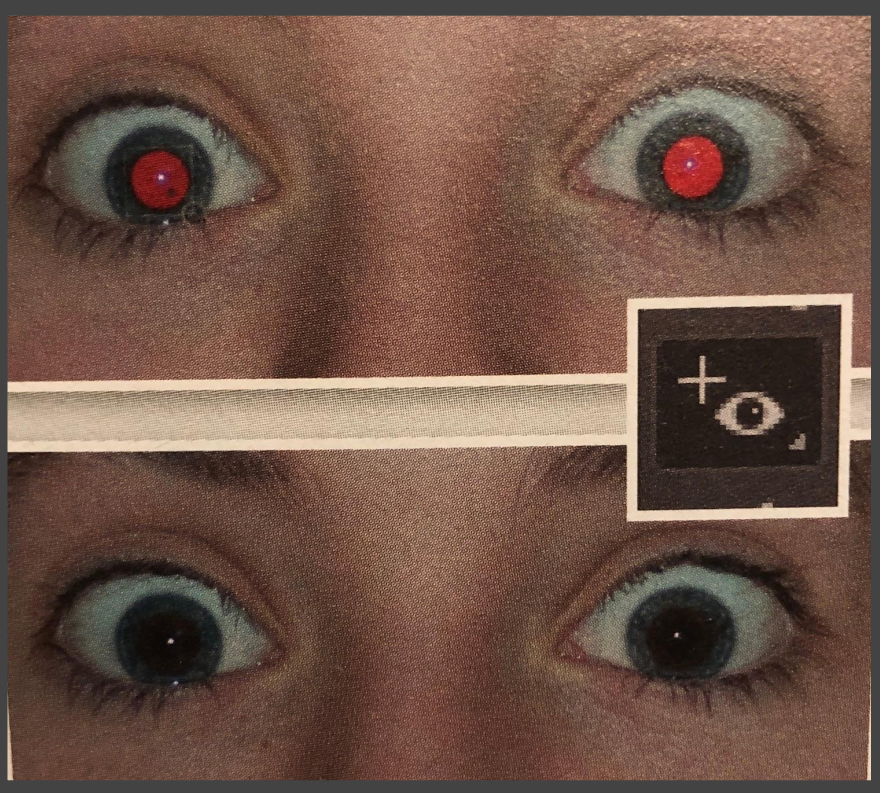
The Patch Tool is used for repairing large areas. It can be used in one of two ways; either draw around the area you want to replace and then drag the sample to an area of matching clean texture, or sample an area of clean texture and then drag it over the part you want to replace. Here, a patch of wooden floor can be used to remove some bread crumbs from the shot. As you drag the patch, it will show you a real-time overlay over your target area so you can align it as best you can to ensure a good patch.



CONTENT AWARE MOVE

This tool allows you to simply draw a selection around an object and then drag it to another place. The program analyzes the surrounding area and fills in the source with a matching texture. In practice the content aware move tool is only useful in very specific circumstances, when the object you want to move is surrounded by a uniform texture. You will find that the more even the texture, the better the final result. Backgrounds such as grass and blue sky are much more successful candidates for this

TIP: Select the object and then modify the selection (Select>Modify>expand> 10 px) and then use the Content Aware Move Tool



RED EYE TOOL

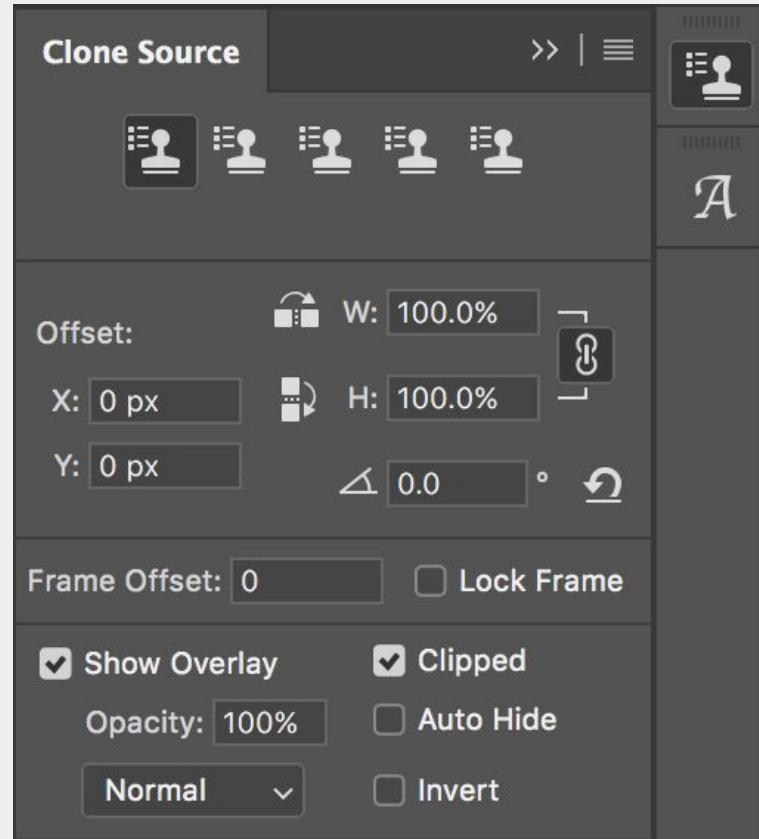
Red Eye is caused by light from a camera flash reflecting off the blood vessels at the back of the eye when the pupil is wide open. It's possible to avoid it by proper camera technique, but if you find it in one of your portraits, Photoshop has a quick and easy tool to help remove it. Simply click on the offending redness and the tool will automatically analyse how much redness there is in the subjects eyes and removes it and replaces it with a more natural-looking tone which is usually black or a very dark tone.

CLONE STAMP TOOL

The Clone Stamp tool is very powerful. But this can sometimes cause more problems than it solves. You don't need to use a chainsaw to cut a slice of bread, and the Clone Stamp isn't always the best choice for more subtle retouching work.

It excels at completely removing or replicating particular aspects of an image, and comes with a whole suite of options relating to how the cloned data appears. You can set the brush to flip the source data, to scale it, or rotate it up to 180 degrees in either direction.

To set a source point, hold the Alt key and click on the area you want to replicate. From then on, anywhere you paint with the Clone Stamp tool will copy the pixels from your source point to the painted area. You can set multiple source points using the Clone Source palette, allowing you to rapidly switch between as many as five different source points.



TO OPEN THE CLONE STAMP PANEL GO TO: Window > Clone Source



CLONE STAMP



ORIGINAL



HEALING BRUSH

As you can see in the image above, the Clone Stamp (middle version) allows for easy removal of some of the more distracting background elements. Attempting to do the same thing with the Healing Brush (right version) creates blurred artifacts when used near the bird's wings and claws.

It does a decent job of removing the blurred area in the upper right corner, however, much more simply than the Clone Stamp.

CLONE STAMP VS. HEALING BRUSH

Note: whenever you're working with the Clone Stamp tool or the Healing Brush tool, you should always be doing all your retouching work on a new layer so as to preserve the original image data. Set the Sample source to 'Current and Below' or 'Below' to sample all layers beneath your new layer, as you can see in the layer structure above.

CLONE STAMP VS. HEALING BRUSH



ORIGINAL



CLONE STAMP



HEALING BRUSH

In some cases, it can also be used for larger objects, as you can see in the example above. In order to remove a few of the clouds from the original (left image), we could use the Clone Stamp (middle image), but because the sky luminosity changes throughout the background, the edit becomes visible quite quickly. Meanwhile with the Healing Brush (right image), the two clouds can be removed in only a couple of clicks.

CONTENT AWARE SCALE (Edit > Content-Aware Scale)

Content-Aware Scale resizes an image without changing important visual content such as people, buildings, animals, and so forth. While normal scaling affects all pixels uniformly when resizing an image, content-aware scaling mostly affects pixels in areas that don't have important visual content. Content-Aware Scale lets you upscale or downscale images to improve a composition, fit a layout, or change the orientation. If you want to use some normal scaling when resizing your image, there is an option for specifying a ratio of content-aware scaling to normal scaling.



A. ORIGINAL IMAGE B. SCALED NARROWER C. SCALED NARROWER, USING CONTENT-AWARE SCALING