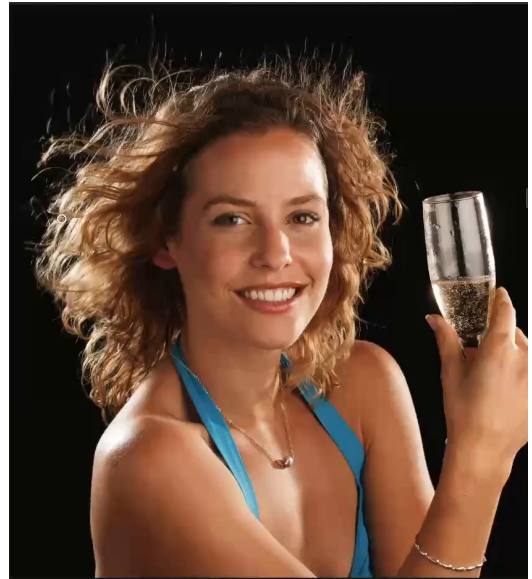




Enhance Edge

In this lesson I'll show you how to get the most out of the Enhance Edge feature that was added to Photoshop in October 2026. It's designed to make hair and other fuzzy edges look better after you remove a background, but you'll only get top-quality results when you combine it with a few old-school Select and Mask skills. I'll use a test image I've relied on for decades: backlit blonde hair on a black background, which is about as tough as edges get.



Key Concepts

1. **Remove Background Isn't Enough (01:12):** Remove Background can't change the color of anything in the layer, so hints of the old background stay in the partially transparent hair.
2. **Enhance Edge (02:20):** Enhance Edge shifts the color of partially transparent edge pixels, but it ignores solid chunks of background that were never made transparent.
3. **Fix the Edge First (03:15):** Use the Refine Edge Brush in Select and Mask on any leftover background, then apply Enhance Edge.
4. **Old School vs. New School (07:50):** Decontaminate Colors makes edge hair look generic, while Enhance Edge keeps more natural variation in color and brightness.
5. **Glass Objects (09:39):** Remove Background largely ignores glass. Refine it manually and use Decontaminate Colors, then combine the results with group masks.
6. **Frizz Over a Busy Background (16:32):** Hide the problem areas first so you can paint them back in with the Refine Edge Brush.

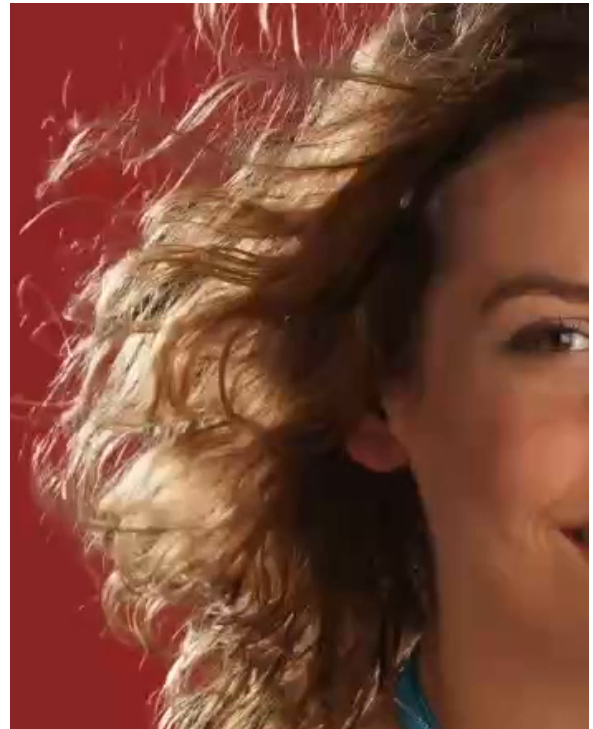
Why Remove Background Isn't Enough (01:12)

Remove Background is a button in the Contextual Task Bar. Once you click it, the task bar changes and gives you an **Enhance edge** button.





Remove Background only



Remove Background + Enhance Edge

With Remove Background alone, the mask can be perfect and you'll still see dark fringing, because the black from the original background is baked into the color of the partially transparent hair. Enhance Edge fixes most of that. But if you look closely, there are still a few spots where background shows. Those areas weren't partially transparent, so Enhance Edge left them alone. That's what the next technique fixes.

Fix the Edge First with Select and Mask (03:15)

1. **Remove the Background:** With the image layer active, click **Remove background** in the Contextual Task Bar. This gives you the original layer plus a layer mask.
2. **Activate the Layer Mask:** Click the layer mask thumbnail in the Layers panel. If Select and Mask is grayed out, it means the layer mask isn't active.
3. **Open Select and Mask:** Choose **Select > Select and Mask** (Option-Command-R on a Mac).



4. **Set the View:** If your screen doesn't look like mine, check the **View** pop-up menu at the top of the Properties panel. I have it set to **On Layers**, which previews the result over whatever layer is underneath (a solid red fill in my case). Yours might be set to Onion Skin or something else.
5. **Choose the Refine Edge Brush:** It's the second tool from the top on the left side of the screen.
6. **Paint Over Any Leftover Background:** Paint wherever you can still see the old background color (black) in the hair. Each stroke gives Photoshop control over that area. When you release the mouse, it compares what should be kept with what should be discarded and recalculates the edge.
7. **Click OK:** Use Undo and Redo to compare your touched-up version with the original result. The black chunks in the hair should be gone.
8. **Apply Enhance Edge:** Only now click **Enhance edge** in the Contextual Task Bar. It looks at the partially transparent areas on the edge and changes their color.



Old School vs. New School (07:50)

Before Enhance Edge, the only way to shift the color of edge pixels was the **Decontaminate Colors** checkbox near the bottom left of Select and Mask. Both versions here include the manual touch-up. Decontaminate Colors removes the black, but the edge hair becomes generic in color and almost blurry in places. Enhance Edge keeps a wider range of color and brightness, so the hair looks more detailed and more natural.



Old school: Decontaminate Colors

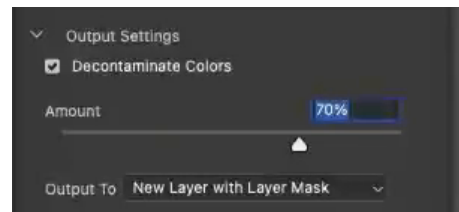
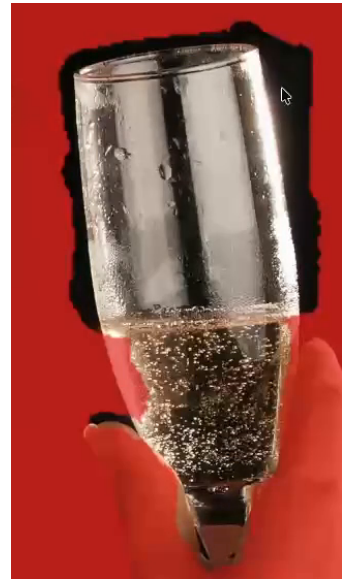


New school: Enhance Edge

Glass and Other Transparent Objects (09:39)

She's holding a champagne flute, and I can still see the black background right through it. Remove Background largely ignores glass objects, so you have to handle them yourself.

1. **Start from the Original:** Click **Remove background**, make sure the layer mask is active, and choose **Select > Select and Mask**.
2. **Touch Up the Hair:** Use the Refine Edge Brush on any background color in the hair, as before.
3. **Paint Over the Glass:** Paint over the glass with the same brush. Overlap your strokes, because Photoshop won't refine a gap between them.
4. **Be Selective in the Liquid:** Where you can't see the background color (black in the original, red in the preview), the area is opaque, so leave it alone. Paint only where it looks mainly black or black fading to red. Use a smaller brush around the fingers, and paint a little beyond the edge of the glass where black extends outward.
5. **Check Your Coverage:** On the left, turn on **Show Edge (J)** and change the View to **Overlay**. The areas you painted stand out, so gaps are easy to spot and fix. Turn Show Edge off when you're done.
6. **Turn on Decontaminate Colors:** You can now see through the glass, but the colors aren't right, and Enhance Edge doesn't always work well on glass. So go to **Output Settings** at the bottom and turn on **Decontaminate Colors**. Output To changes to New Layer with Layer Mask.
7. **Adjust the Amount:** You don't always need it at full strength. Back off the **Amount** slider a bit for more density in the glass, but stop before black starts showing up again. I ended up at about 70%. Click OK.





Before painting the glass

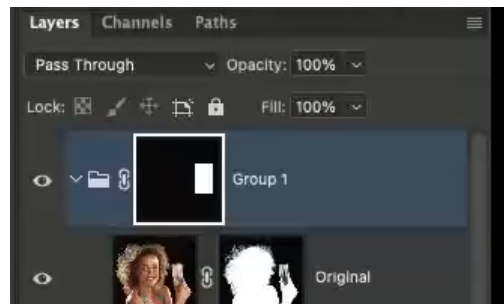


Painted + Decontaminate Colors

Combining Two Versions with Group Masks (14:40)

Decontaminate Colors also changes the hair, and the hair looks better with Enhance Edge. I tried applying Enhance Edge on top, but it didn't improve the hair, so I undid it. Instead, I use one layer for the glass and another for the hair.

1. **Select the Glass Area:** On the glass version, use the Rectangular Marquee tool to select just the area where the glass is.
2. **Add a Second Mask with a Group:** The layer already has a mask, so put it in a group (drag the layer into the group), make the *group* active, and click the Add Layer Mask icon. Now that layer only contributes where the glass is.
3. **Protect the Glass on the Hair Layer (if needed):** Use your Remove Background + touch-up + Enhance Edge layer for the hair. If it affects the glass, put it in a group too, add a mask, and paint with black where you don't want it to apply.

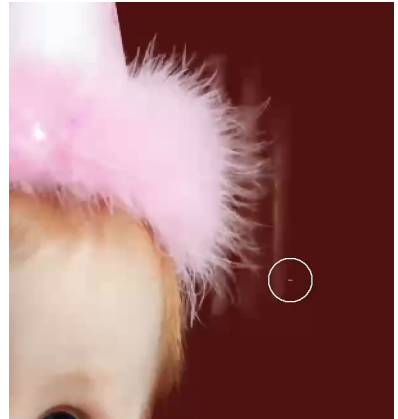


Now Enhance Edge handles the hair color, the old-school Decontaminate Colors handles the glass, and the manual touch-up got rid of the black chunks. Knowing the old-school way of doing things is what gets you a truly high-quality result.

Frizz Over a Busy Background (16:32)

In this image, the fuzzy trim on the party hat overlaps the curtains, which often causes trouble. With only Remove Background and Enhance Edge, you get vertical pieces of the curtain in the frizz that don't look right.

1. **Remove the Background:** With the original image layer active, click **Remove background**.
2. **Hide the Problem Areas:** Grab the Brush tool and paint with black on the layer mask (black hides) over any areas that look odd.
3. **Refine Those Areas:** With the layer mask active, choose **Select > Select and Mask**, then use the **Refine Edge Brush** to paint over the areas you just hid. That gives Photoshop control over them.
4. **Take Away Where It Goes Wrong:** If you go out too far, the curtain streaks come back. Hold **Option** (Alt in Windows) and paint over anything that doesn't look like the fuzzy trim. This returns those spots to what the mask looked like before you entered **Select and Mask**. That's why you hid those areas first.
5. **Work Small and Undo Freely:** Use a smaller brush between the fuzzy bits. If a stroke makes things worse, choose **Undo** (Command-Z). It takes some finesse.
6. **Apply Enhance Edge Last:** Click **OK**, and only then click **Enhance edge** to shift the color of everything on the edge.



Tips

1. **Fix First, Enhance Last:** Enhance Edge only recolors partially transparent edge pixels. Clean up solid chunks of background in **Select and Mask** before you click it.
2. **Save Layer Comps:** When you're testing different approaches, save each version as a layer comp so you can switch between them and compare.
3. **Glass Needs the Old Tools:** For glass and other see-through objects, use the **Refine Edge Brush** and **Decontaminate Colors**, then mask that version in with a group.