



Remove Tool: General Distractions

In this lesson, we will explore the new "General Distractions" feature within Photoshop's Remove tool, focusing on how to effectively utilize its capabilities for image retouching and removing unwanted elements.

Key Concepts

- **General Distractions Category (01:07):** This new category in the Remove tool allows for the automatic detection and removal of 26 different types of unwanted items in an image, saving significant editing time.
- **Sample All Layers (07:58):** Enabling this option ensures that the Remove tool analyzes all visible layers when making selections, which is crucial for complex edits or multi-stage retouching.
- **Create New Layer (09:53):** This setting ensures that all retouching operations are performed on a separate layer, allowing for non-destructive editing and easy modifications or deletions of edits.
- **Find Distractions Button (12:31):** Clicking this button initiates the analysis of the image to identify potential distractions based on the selected categories.
- **Color Overlays (17:07):** The tool uses color overlays to visually represent the different categories of distractions identified in the image, making it easier to identify and manage them.
- **Negative Painting (Option/Alt Key) (28:08):** Holding down the Option (macOS) or Alt (Windows) key while painting allows you to exclude specific areas from the retouching process.
- **Remove After Each Stroke (57:00):** Enabling this option allows for immediate retouching of an area as soon as you finish painting it, facilitating quick touch-ups.
- **Layer Masks (45:31):** Layer masks provide a non-destructive way to control the visibility of edits on a specific layer, allowing you to selectively reveal or hide retouching effects.
- **Inverted Layer Mask (102:06):** Starting with an inverted (black) layer mask and then painting with white to reveal desired areas is a useful technique for precise control, especially when needing to see the original image for reference.
- **Object Selection Tool (161:21):** This tool can be used to quickly select specific objects in an image, which can then be used to create masks or refine retouching efforts.

General Distractions

The latest beta version of Photoshop introduces a powerful new feature within the Remove tool: "General Distractions." Previously, the Remove tool could automatically detect and remove specific items like people or wires & cables. This new enhancement expands its capability to identify and eliminate a broad range of unwanted elements across 26 different categories within an image:

Anomalies	Graffiti	Peripheral areas	Text
Animals	Ground features	Personal belongings	Unrecognized objects
Barriers	Highlights	Poles	Urban elements
Blurry objects	Identified objects	Potholes and puddles	Vegetation
Cables and attachments	Light-diffusing elements	Shadows	Vehicles
Drain elements	Local reflections	Spots and dust	Visual clutter
Fixtures	Misc.		

This feature is currently in beta but is expected to be integrated into the main Photoshop release soon. To take advantage of it, install the beta version.

Setting Up the Remove Tool

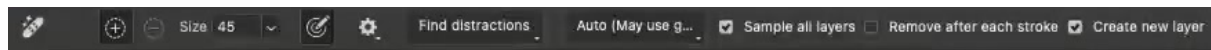
Before utilizing the General Distractions feature, let's configure the Remove tool for optimal results. This involves enabling specific options in the Options bar at the top of the screen.

Step 1: Enable "Sample All Layers"

This option is crucial if you plan to perform multiple retouching steps or if subsequent edits might be affected by the initial removal. It ensures the tool considers all layers when analyzing the image.

Step 2: Enable "Create New Layer"

Activating this setting ensures that all retouching performed with the Remove tool is applied to a new, independent layer. This is a fundamental best practice for non-destructive editing, allowing you to easily modify, mask, or delete your retouching work without affecting the original image.



Utilizing the "Find Distractions" Feature

Click on the "Find Distractions" option in the Options bar. This will reveal the previously available categories (People, Cable & Wires) and the new "General Distractions" option.

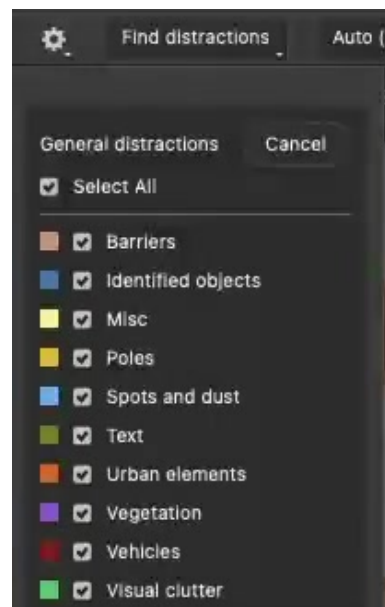
Step 3: Select "General Distractions"

Choose "General Distractions" and Photoshop will then begin analyzing the image to identify various types of distractions based on the selected categories. This process can take some time depending on the image complexity.



Step 4: Review Identified Categories

Examine the list of categories Photoshop has identified. Each category will have a colored overlay on the image corresponding to the items it has detected. If there are categories you do not wish to remove (e.g., vegetation that you want to keep), simply uncheck the box next to that category. The tool might not always perfectly identify every instance of a category, and sometimes items might be misidentified (e.g., metal objects classified as vegetation).



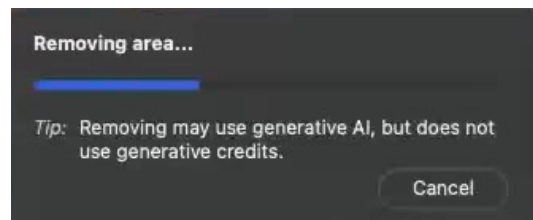
Step 5: Adjusting Selections with Painting

- **Expanding Selections:** If the tool hasn't selected an entire object or area you want to remove, you can use click and drag within the image to paint over the missed areas, instructing the tool to work on them.
- **Excluding Selections:** To prevent the tool from removing specific areas, you can hold down the Option key (macOS) or Alt key (Windows) and paint over those areas. This acts as a negative selection.



Step 6: Initiate Removal

Click the checkbox in the Options bar or press the Return/Enter key. The tool will then process the removal. This initial processing can take a few minutes.



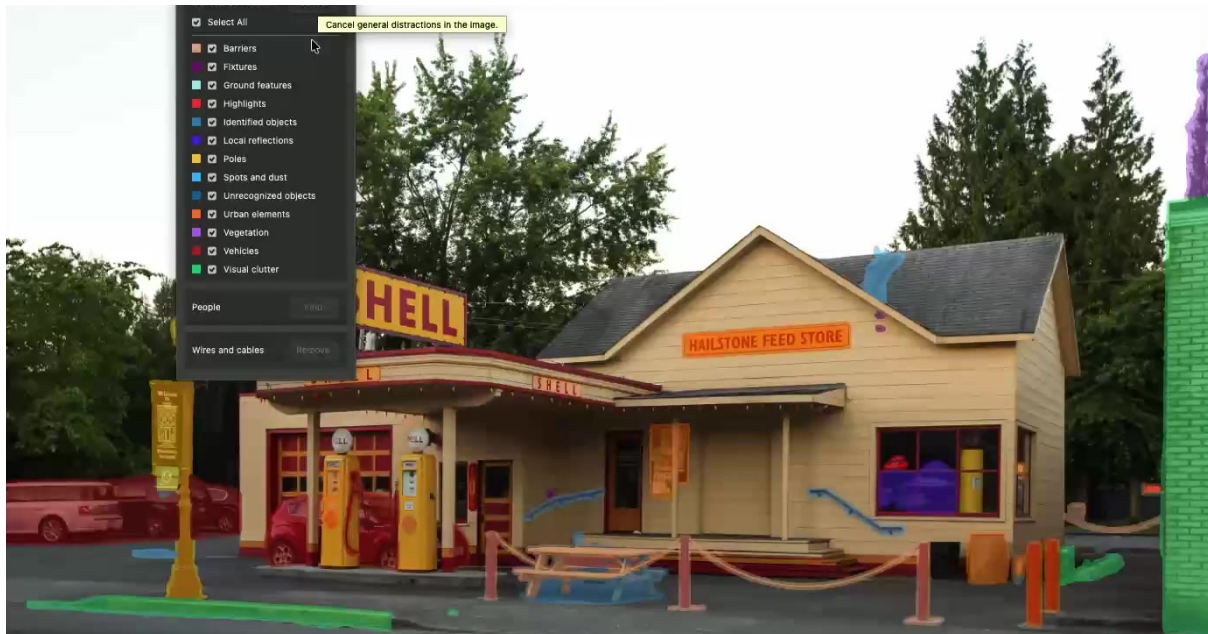
Step 7: Refining Selections with Layer Masks

After the removal is complete, observe the changes in the image. To reintroduce an element, layer masks are invaluable. I often hold Option/Alt when clicking the Layer Mask icon at the bottom of the layers panel which produces a mask that starts out filled with black. That has the effect of hiding the entire contents of the retouching layer. I then paint with white over the object that the retouching removed that I wanted to retain. Then, once the object is completely hidden, I type Command-I (shortcut for Image>Adjustments>Invert) to achieve the desired effect. This is particularly useful for bringing back objects that were inadvertently removed.

- **Object Selection Tool for Specific Objects:** The Object Selection tool can be used to isolate specific items, which can then be used to create masks. This is helpful for bringing back or precisely editing individual elements.

Complex Scenes

In complex scenes with many elements, the General Distractions tool can still offer significant time savings, even if manual touch-ups are required.



Specific Categories like Wires and Cables, and People

While "General Distractions" is powerful, "Wires and Cables" and "People" remain separate categories. This means you might need to run the tool multiple times or use these specific categories in conjunction with general distractions.

Tips for Best Results

- **Iterative Refinement:** Don't expect perfect results on the first pass. Use the tool iteratively, and be prepared to manually refine areas that were missed or incorrectly removed.
- **Utilize Option/Alt Key:** Master the use of the Option/Alt key for excluding areas, as it's crucial for fine-tuning selections.
- **Leverage Layer Masks:** Always consider using layer masks for non-destructive editing and greater control over your retouching.
- **Check for Overlap:** Pay close attention to areas where different elements or categories meet. This is often where the tool might struggle, and manual intervention will be necessary.
- **Change Overlay Colors:** If the default color overlays are difficult to see against your image, you can change them by clicking on the color to access the color picker for better visibility.

Conclusion

The new General Distractions feature in Photoshop's Remove tool is a significant advancement that can dramatically speed up the retouching process. The tool uses generative AI but does not consume AI credits, making it a freely usable enhancement for image editing workflows.