

# Motion Graphics Techniques - Lesson 10 Notes

3D and Photography

## Visual Effects

Motion Design and Visual Effects are two different disciplines with a lot of common overlap. After Effects is a useful, essential tool to know either way, as is Photoshop. Visual Effects (or VFX) is a huge topic and we are only dipping our toes into it over the next two weeks, starting very basic by manipulating 2D photos in 3D space. Next week we will learn how to track video and insert graphics like fake User Interface information.

## Animating Photographs in 3D Space

I hope you're feeling confident in your Adobe skills! The two techniques we're working on this week involve using a lot of Photoshop to cut up and retouch photos, before bringing them into After Effects for animation. This kind of animated faux-3D method dates back to two important sources:



"The Kid Stays In The Picture" (2002)

Directed by Nanette Burstein and Brett Morgan  
Motion Graphics by Edgeworks.



"WWF Parallax Sequence" (2013)

Directed/Animated by Joe Fellows

## Choosing a Good Photo

For this effect to work well you need to choose the right photo. You might need to spend a lot of time finding one that fits all of your requirements. Look for strong foreground/background contrast with clearly defined planes. The foreground elements you want to cut out should be sharp, not blurred. Also, be practical. Think twice before deciding you need to cut a leafy tree out or any other complex organic shapes. When it comes to people, just remember to make sure all of their body parts are completely on screen if you need them. Hair is always difficult.

## How to Cut Stuff Up in Photoshop, pt 1

After trying everything else, I have decided that Layer Masks are the best way to cut up a photo in PS. Mostly because they are non-destructive, which means you can go back and edit them later on.



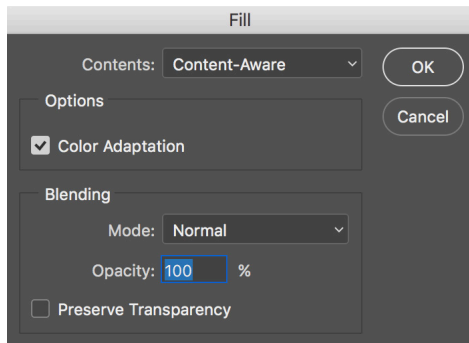
Select your layer and then press this button here to create a blank layer mask. Now choose the mask in the Layers Panel and then use a Brush to erase the image non-destructively.

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## Cutting Stuff Up in Photoshop, pt 2

Remember to select the Layer Mask before brushing. You can see the little white handles lit up, which means that you aren't painting directly on the photo image itself.

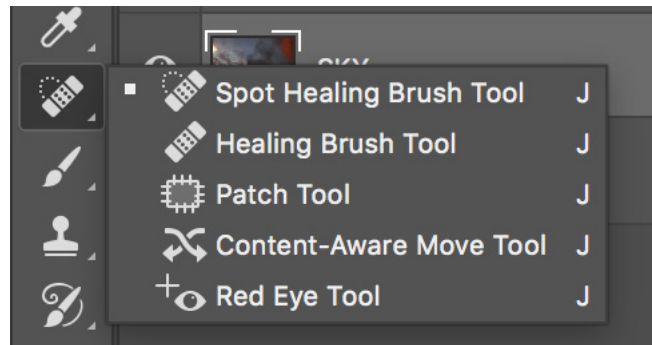


Content-Aware Fill is pretty magical. It certainly doesn't always work perfectly, but when it gets you close it's a major time-saver. And every once in a while (especially when filling in organic patterns like sand on a beach, grass or clouds) it causes the little hairs on the back of my neck to stand up.

Select the part of the layer you want to be filled in, and then go to Edit > Fill, and choose Contents: Content Aware. Easy!

For any little errors, the Spot Healing Brush Tool can be a life-saver. Simply brush this over any seams or accidental cut-out spots in the background layer and it will fill them in as seamlessly as possible.

Yes, it's that easy and amazing. Try it!



## The Puppet Pin Tool

The Puppet Pin Tool in After Effects is used for distorting individual parts of images. I find it to be very useful in some circumstances and a bit tricky to use in others. In the case of my baseball pitcher, I put Pins where all of his joints are (wrists, elbows, shoulders, hips) and in a few other places such as the end of his mitt and throwing hand. AE automatically puts keyframes when you set your Pins. Try not to distort the person too much!

