

Masking for Beginners

With Altered Reality/Creative set subject coming up, here's a simple and effective example of beginner-level masking for creative effect, from local artist/photographer **Hayley Roberts**.

Roberts generously publishes creative photography tutorials ranging from beginners to advanced at hayleyrobertsphoto.com/exposingillusions/tutorials

other simple ideas include:
[use opacity to create a ghost photograph](#) and [edit a miniature person levitation photograph](#)

Words and Images by **Hayley Roberts**

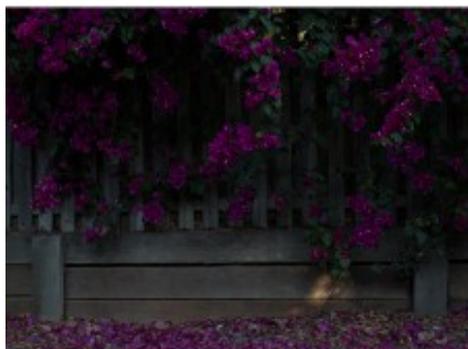
If there's one lesson I want you to learn from this... it's if you're doing experimental photography, always, always, ALWAYS take a photo of your **scene without your subject** in it. This is useful for so many reasons, all of which I cover throughout my tutorials.

Shots

I took a photo of me standing in front of the bush holding a frame I bought at my local op shop.



Then, without moving my camera or changing any of my settings, I stepped out of frame and took a photo of JUST the bush.



Processing

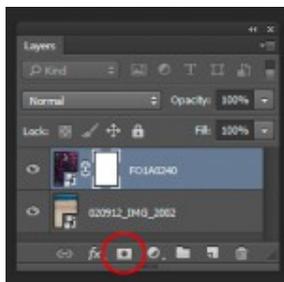
In Photoshop I opened the background photo in a layer, then placed the photo of me on top in another layer.



Add Mask Layer

I added a white filled layer mask to the layer of **me**. (So the underlying layer would not show through.)

When you add a layer mask it is automatically filled with white. And white means the layer it's applied to = 100% visible. Black = 0% visible. The little saying goes "black conceals, white reveals." Write this down.



Paint A Mask

Then I painted black on the layer mask within the frame so my current layer disappeared and I could see through to the background layer below, making my head disappear and the area behind where I was standing became visible. MAGIC.

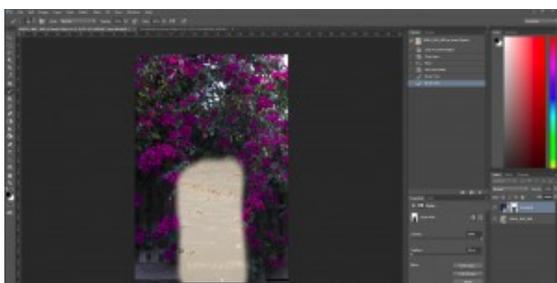


Grab a brush loaded with black (B to bring up your brush tool then check the two colours at the bottom of the tools panel, press D to make it the default colours which is white on black then X to bring black to the front.)

Make sure your mask is active (check you have the correct layer highlighted and click on its mask – you can tell it's selected by the little selection marks around it).



Then paint black on your image so you're no longer seeing that part of the layer, which now shows whatever lies under that layer – *in this case, a sandy beach so it's easier to see what's happening.*



Finishing Touches

To finish, I got a little trickier with my editing by copying another portion of flowers into the frame because I didn't think the fence was interesting enough. And then I put a bird on it. ■

Further Reading:

Beginner

<http://hayleyrobertsphoto.com/how-to-use-layers-and-masking/>
<http://hayleyrobertsphoto.com/exposingillusions/tutorials/>
<http://hayleyrobertsphoto.com/introduction-to-compositing/>
<http://hayleyrobertsphoto.com/use-opacity-to-create-a-ghost/>
<http://hayleyrobertsphoto.com/miniature/>

Advanced

<http://hayleyrobertsphoto.com/underwater/>
underwater scene <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1XHrqudWPA>

Advanced Exercise

For those who have developed Altered Reality skills and are looking for more advanced techniques, try Roberts' underwater exercise.

This is quite complex, involving clouds, textures, radial blur, blend modes, bubble brush, and much more.



There is a lot of work here, but it is clearly explained and the result is stunning.

