

Creating an Elliptical Image in Photoshop

by Phil Russell

Wouldn't it be nice if there was an easy way in Photoshop to make an elliptical image from a rectangular one, like Fig. 1?



Fig. 1. Rectangular image

Just follow along. Open a rectangular image you wish to make an elliptical image from in Photoshop.

Create a new Layer. It appears above the Background Layer (Fig. 2.).



Fig. 2. New Layer

Control-click the Add a mask button second from left at bottom of the Layers palette (Fig. 3.).



Fig. 3. Add a mask

Select the Elliptical Marquee tool. If the Rectangular Marquee tool is showing, click in the bottom right of the tool where the tiny arrow appears and you can select the Elliptical Marquee tool (Fig. 4.).



Fig. 4. Elliptical tool

Click the Add to path area button in the Options bar. It is the far left button, under the Edit menu word. Mine says New selection when I hover over the button, but this is the one to press (Fig. 5.).

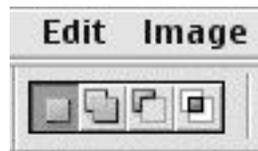


Fig. 5. Add to path area

Draw an ellipse around the head and shoulders. Adjust its placement by placing your cursor within the ellipse and dragging it around (Fig. 6.).



Fig. 6. Draw the ellipse

From the Select menu, pick Inverse. Now go to the Layers palette and double click the Background Layer. Rename it Image (or anything but Background) (Fig. 7).

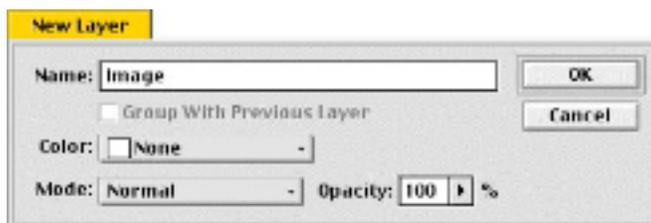


Fig. 7. Rename Background Layer

Click Delete while the Image layer is still active (Fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Deleting background

Click outside of the image area (in the canvas) to remove the marching ants around the ellipse and the entire image. Change the Ellipse Marquee to a Rectangular Marquee and draw a rectangle which will center the ellipse image. Crop. You are done (Fig. 9).

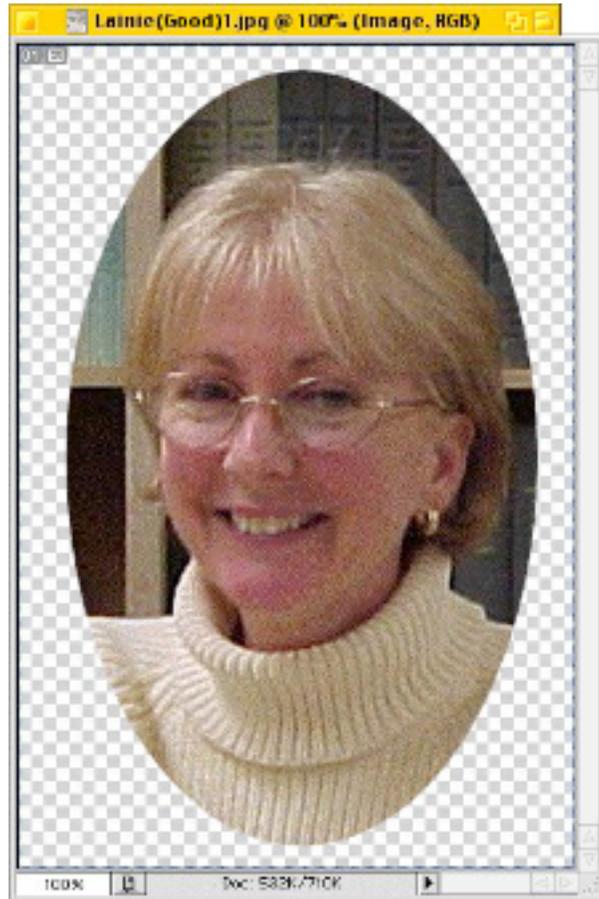


Fig. 9. Finished image

Notice that the image has the checkered pattern indicating that the background around the ellipse is transparent. This means when you drop this image onto any color background on a web page, only the ellipse shows, and not the rest of the rectangle in Fig. 9, above.

Until you have a wonderful understanding of Layers and how they work in Photoshop, a detailed step by step set of instructions is sometimes necessary to achieve a result. I know that I could not make this ellipse with a transparent background without a set of instructions.