INTRODUCTION TO QUICK MASK MODE:

Quick Mask Mode, as the name implies, is used to create and/or edit masked areas quickly. Edits are made by using the painting tools, set to black and white, in the image window. It could more accurately be defined as a selection tool because, when you exit Quick Mask Mode, the painted areas become a selection. The resulting selection can then be applied as a mask, if desired.

*Note:* A soft brush (low edge hardness) produces a feathered/gradient edge. Painting with shades of gray also produces a feathered/gradient edge. When a feathered area is converted to a selection, the boundary line (“marching ants”) is halfway between the black pixels and the white pixels of the gradient. The selection boundary indicates the transition between pixels that are less than 50% black and those that are more than 50% black. Pixels less than 50% black are still part of the masked (or selected) area, even though they are not within the “marching ants” boundary.

*Note:* A temporary Quick Mask channel appears in the Channels panel while using Quick Mask Mode. By default, the eye icon for this temporary channel is activated (turned on) and edits made appear as a color overlay in the full color (composite RGB) image window.

Activate Quick Mask Mode

Quick Mask Mode can be activated by clicking the Quick Mask Mode icon near the bottom of the Tool Bar, or by typing the letter Q. Clicking the Quick Mask Mode icon a second time, or typing the letter Q a second time, returns to Standard Mode (exits Quick Mask Mode).

The icon, when clicked, toggles between Quick Mask Mode and Standard Mode (the default mode). If the icon displays a dotted line circle, or a dark circle in a light field, it indicates that Standard Mode is active. When the icon displays a white circle in a dark field, it indicates that Quick Mask Mode is active.
The icon in the Tool Bar – the *dark circle* indicates that *Quick Mask Mode* is active.

**Using Quick Mask Mode**

*Quick Mask Mode* is used to define and/or refine areas of a *Mask* or a *Selection* by using the *painting* tools. Painting with black and/or white defines how the resulting areas will be *masked* or *selected*.

This is like making an Alpha Channel active and painting in that channel. However, in Quick Mask Mode the painting is done in the full color (composite RGB) image window, not in the channel. Painted areas appear as a color overlay (default color is red). The color overlay will indicate either *Masked* areas or *Selected* areas, depending on the settings in the *Quick Mask Options Menu* (see below).

**Quick Mask Mode Options Menu**

The *Quick Mask Options Menu* is accessed by double-clicking the *Quick Mask Mode button* in the tool bar. Choose from the following options:

- **Masked Areas**
  
  Choose this option if the Quick Mask Mode will be used to create or refine a *layer mask*.

  When the *Masked Areas* option is active, areas painted with black are displayed with a color overlay, indicating that the areas will be *masked* (hidden) when applied as a layer mask. Painting with white acts as an eraser, removing the color overlay. The *Eraser Tool removes* the color overlay.

  When Quick Mask Mode is exited, the areas of the image that do not display the color overlay (areas not painted black) will become a *selection*. At this point, with the layer to be masked active, the selection can be applied as a layer mask (see the document titled “Selections and Channels”).

  In short, painting with black increases the resulting *masked* area and painting with white (or the *Eraser Tool*) decreases the resulting *masked* area. When this option is active, the Quick Mask button in the tool bar becomes a light circle on a dark background 🗼.
Selected Areas
Choose this option if the Quick Mask Mode will be used to create or refine a selection.

When the Selected Areas option is active areas painted with black are displayed with a color overlay, indicating that the areas will become a selection. Painting with white acts as an eraser, removing the color overlay. The Eraser Tool adds to the color overlay.

When Quick Mask Mode is exited, the areas of the image that display the color overlay (areas painted black) will become a selection, displayed with “marching ants” outline. At this point, if desired, the selection can be saved as a new alpha channel or appended to an existing saved selection alpha channel (see the document titled “Selections and Channels”).

In short, painting with black (or the Eraser Tool) increases the resulting selected area; painting with white decreases the resulting selected area. When this option is active, the Quick Mask button in the tool bar becomes a dark circle on a light background.

**Note:** To toggle between the Masked Areas and Selected Areas options, Alt-click (Win) or Option-click (Mac) the Quick Mask Mode button in the Tool Bar.

Color
Choose this option to define a new color, or change the opacity, for the Color Overlay displayed Quick Mask Mode is active.

Clicking in the color field opens a Color Picker where a new color can be applied. Changing the Opacity percentage lowers or raises the opacity of the applied color.

**Note:** These color and opacity settings affect only the appearance of the overlay and have no effect on how underlying areas are masked or selected. Changing these settings can be used to make the Quick Mask Mode data more easily visible against the colors in the image.

**Example: Using Quick Mask Mode to define a Layer Mask**

Quick Mask Mode is an easy way to define a Layer Mask (or a Selection) using the painting tools while viewing the image as a guideline. For this example, Quick Mask Mode will be used to define a Layer Mask to be applied to an image of a statue.
Make an Initial Selection
The process of defining masked (or selected) areas with Quick Mask Mode is sometimes easier by starting with a selection. Doing so initiates the relationship between the intended masked (or selected) areas and the rest of the image. Using any of the selection tools, select the general area you want to define. Here, the Magic Wand tool was used to select a portion of the statue's back. The selected area displays the “marching ants” outline.
Selected area with “marching ants” outline.

Activate the Quick Mask Options Menu

Double click on the Quick Mask Mode icon in the tool bar to open the Quick Mask Options Menu. Then choose how the color overlay will be displayed (see Note below):

Choose the Masked Areas option (if not already active) to display masked areas covered with the overlay. The image will display the color overlay above the unselected areas while the areas that were selected in the step above remain fully visible (no overlay). The color overlay indicates areas that will be hidden (masked) when applied as a mask. If desired, change the color or opacity of the overlay to make the masked areas more easily visible.

Choose the Selected Areas option (if not already active) to display masked areas without the overlay (fully visible). The image will display the color overlay above the areas selected in the step above while the areas that were unselected remain fully visible (no overlay). The color overlay indicates areas that will not be hidden (remain visible) when applied as a mask. If desired, change the color or opacity of the overlay to make the masked areas more easily visible.
Note: Choosing either the Masked Areas option or the Selected Areas option changes only the appearance of the Quick Mask Mode data. The choice made will depend on the user’s preference of which areas are fully visible, and which are partially obscured by the overlay, while edits are being made. It is possible to toggle between the two options while editing, making it easier to see details of the masked (or selected) areas. To toggle between the Masked Areas and Selected Areas options, Alt-click (Win) or Option-click (Mac) on the Quick Mask Mode button in the Tool Bar.

Close the Quick Mask Options Menu when the preferred options have been chosen.

Quick Mask Options Menu activated, with the Selected Areas option chosen. The color overlay indicates areas of the image that will not be hidden (will remain visible) if applied as a mask.

Refine the Masked (or Selected) Areas
Use the painting tools, as described above, to fine-tune the masked (or selected) areas. Change the brush size, hardness, and so forth, as desired, and zoom in to see edge details while following the lines or shapes in the image.
Fine-tuning the masked (or selected) areas of the image.

Exit Quick Mask
When the masked (or selected) areas have been defined, exit *Quick Mask Mode* by clicking the *Quick Mask Mode icon* in the Tool Bar. The Quick Mask Mode data will be converted to a *selection*. At this point, with the layer to be masked active, the selection can be applied as a layer mask (see the document titled “Selections and Channels”).