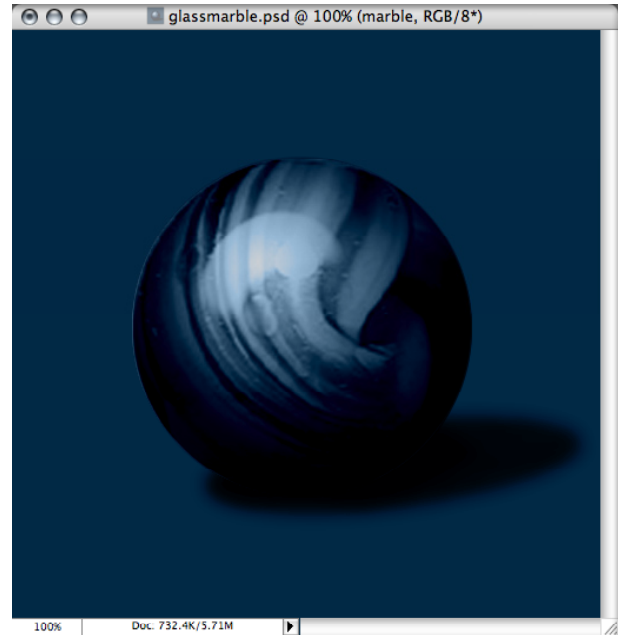


photoshop working methods

image cut out – layermasks – adjustment layers – channels

This tutorial uses the example of a simple marble image to show common working methods.


- 1 basic selection - perfect first time...
- 2 image cut out - cut/copy to new layer
- 3 colour adjustment
 - >> option 1: adjustment layer
 - >> option 2: colour layer
- 4 creating a shadow using channels

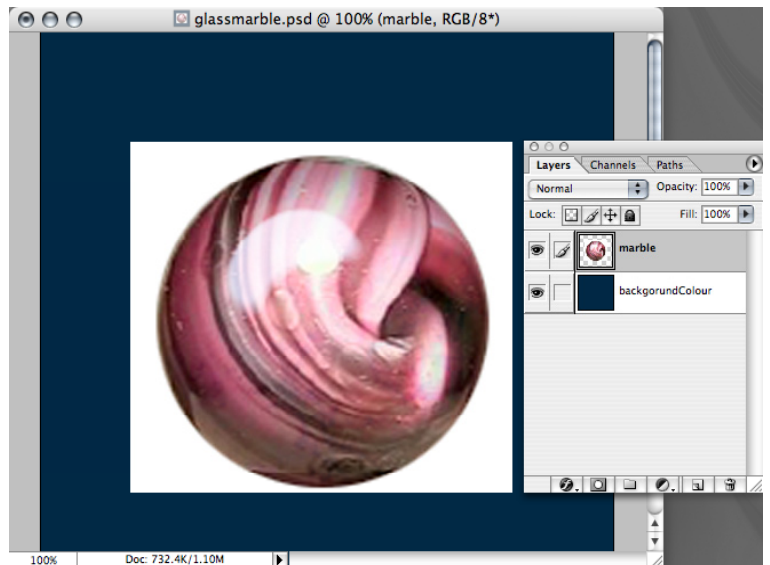


basic selection – perfect first time...

Open any image suitable for a circular selection - or use the sample file provided.

To remove the ugly white background from the marble image we will need to make a perfect selection of the marble itself:

- select the elliptical marquee tool from the toolbar
- place the cursor in the top left corner of the white background - anywhere, no need to worry about precision yet 
- while keeping your mouse button pressed down - experiment with the following keyboard shortcuts to adjust your current selection until you have achieved a matching size and position - only then let go of your mouse (always let go of your mouse before your keys!):



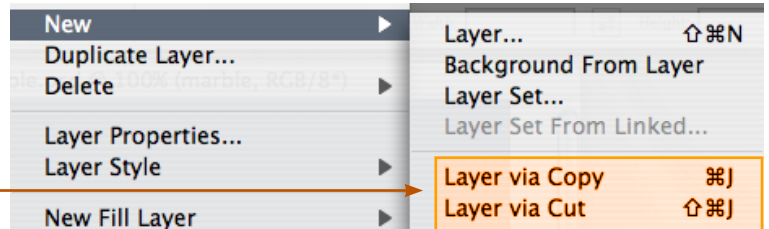
- hold down the SHIFT key to achieve a perfectly even circle
- to move your secection into the correct position - hold down the SPACEBAR as well and move your mouse (still keeping the mouse button pressed down)
- hold down the ALT key to start your selection from the centre

image cut out – cut/copy to new layer

As the white colour of the marble image is not likely to be required later on we can now simply remove it. You can either choose to cut or copy the selection onto a newly created layer. Depending on your normal work methods either is acceptable. It is always a good idea however to keep a spare copy of the original marble image in the document.

with your selection still active - do one of the following:

- top menu > layer > new
- keyboard shortcuts:
 layer via copy **apple (ctrl for PC) + J**
 layer via cut **apple (ctrl for PC) + ALT + J**

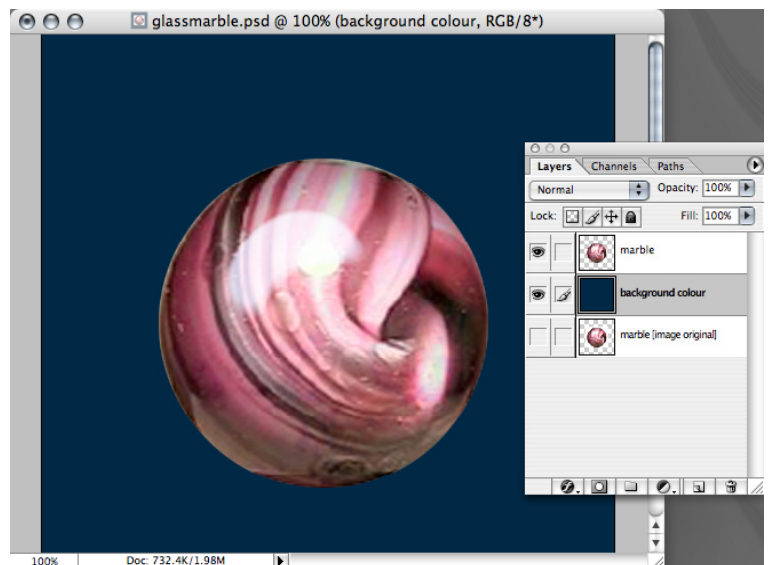


With the cut-out marble on a new layer - move the original image to the very bottom of the layer stack for later use and hide it (rename it to reflect its content).

Give the new layer a meaningful name and your file should now look something like the image shown here.

colour adjustment

To edit the colour of the existing marble to compliment the dark teal feel of the background - we have several options. Choosing one of photoshop's adjustment layers or creating a new colour layer and using layer modes will allow us to change the current pink colour to blue/teal shades.



colour adjustment >> option 1: adjustment layer

You can add any of the given adjustment layers to your document by clicking on the icon the bottom of your layer palette and selecting your chosen type:




Quick note on adjustment layers

Most people are used to making image adjustments within a document globally - by using the settings within the Image commands (top menu > image > adjustments). These adjustments will then change the selected setting for the document overall.

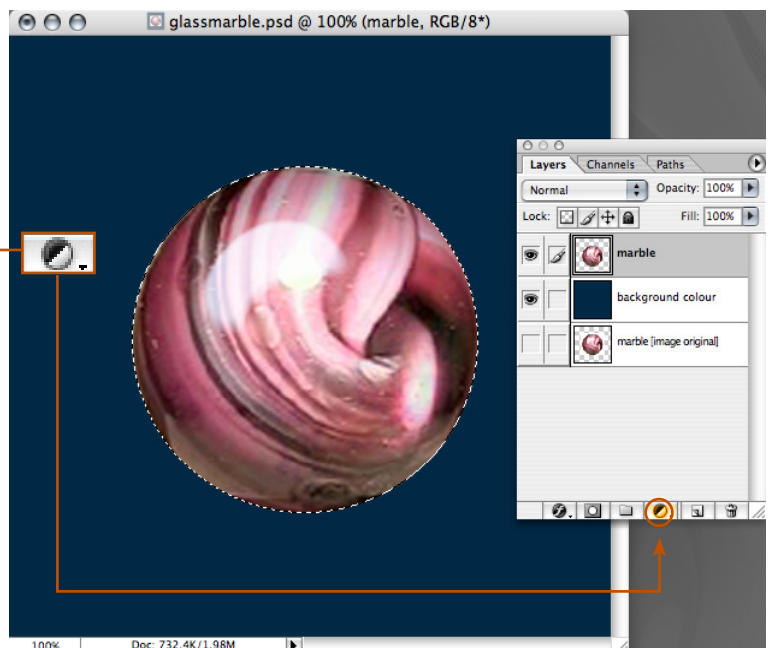
Adjustment layers have the advantage of both remaining editable and using layermasks which allow partial application of set settings. When creating a new adjustment layer it appears always on top of the currently selected layer within the palette and contains the default white layermask - applying the settings to the whole document. With a selection active - the adjustment layer will only be applied to the selected area, this is done through the newly created layermask in shape of the selection.

Once the settings have been applied you can choose to edit the layermask in order for the adjustment layer only to affect a certain area of the overall image. And any current settings can be edited at any given time.

To edit the colour of your current image - in our example here the marble image - follow the steps below:

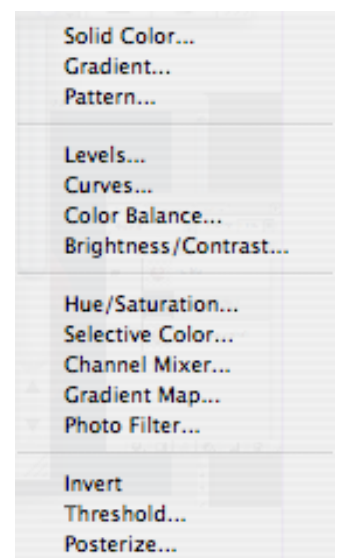
- select the layer containing the cut-out image - here called "marble" - which will allow us to apply the intended colour change only to the actual marble - leaving the background colour as set
- with the selection active - click on the adjustment layer icon  at the bottom of the layer palette and choose from the drop down menu

>> these options are all vital to know - make sure to take some time to familiarise yourself with their effects and required settings - it will make any image editing work a lot easier ;)



To give the marble a matching colour to the background - you can choose between the following options:

- COLOUR BALANCE to adjust shadows, midtones and highlight colouring
- HUE/SATURATION to adjust the hue and saturation values - changing the overall colour
- CHANNEL MIXER to adjust individual colour output affecting each channel to create the overall colour



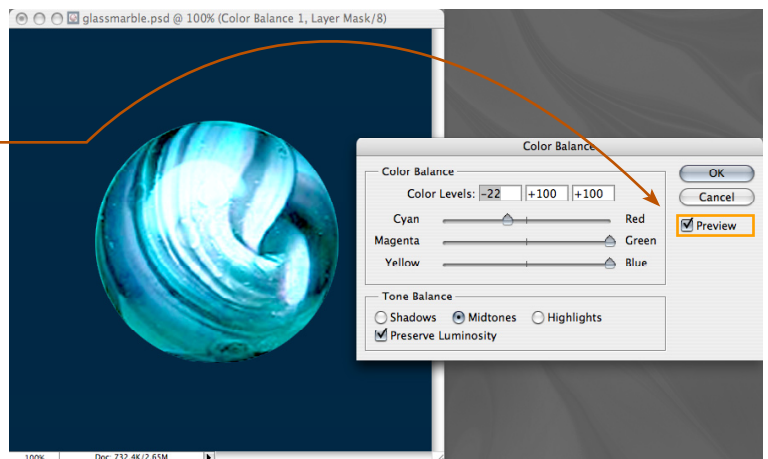
In our example - colour balance is being applied:

- when you have selected a new adjustment layer - its settings window will open as shown here

you can now experiment with the settings and preview them immediately

(at times you might need to check and uncheck this preview box in order to refresh the image)

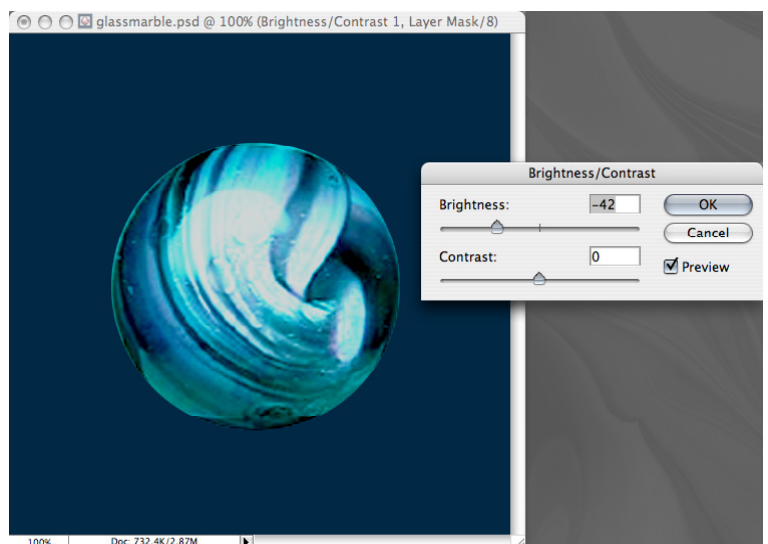
!! remember also that you can return to this window at any time by doubleclicking its layer icon !!



- even though the colour now set is as intended - the last adjustment caused the image to become very bright - an additional adjustment layer can be used to change this by repeating the steps from the last adjustment:

- make a new selection of the marble
- create a new Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer
- edit settings and apply

The adjustment layer techniques might require a little practice and experience and any time experimenting and learning will be well spent. Due to their versatility and flexibility you will find yourself using adjustment layers constantly and you will soon feel more and more confident.



a few tips:


- > if you are still new to adjustment layers allow yourself some time to experiment with the different settings - combine different layer with each other, save different settings in different layers to compare the effects
- > change the name of your adjustment layers to reflect the effect you wanted to achieve
- > make good use of the layermask - in more complex images like photographs a precisely edited layermask can allow for great creative freedom as well as good options for image manipulation and touch up

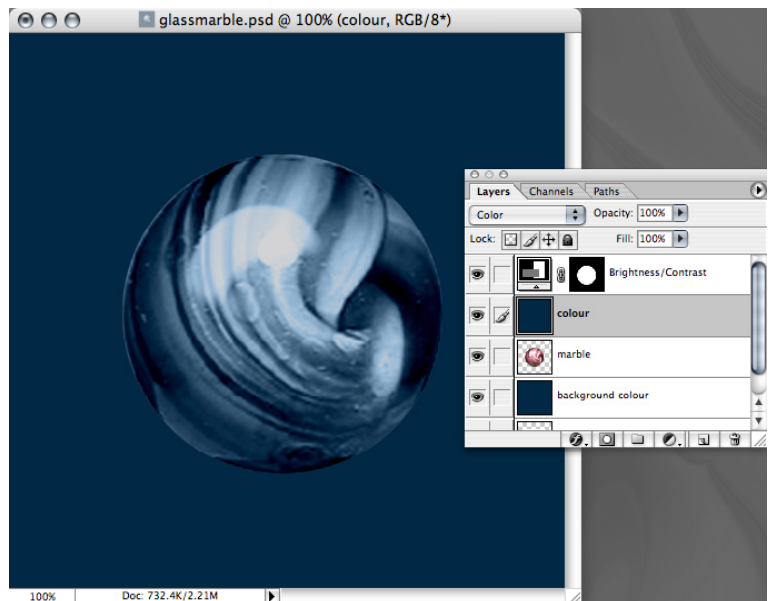
colour adjustment >> option 2: colour layer

While the adjustment layers allow very fine balancing between tones, shades and contrast - overlaying the image with solid colour and blending it with the marble image can result in a more even colouring.

- select the marble layer
- create a new layer on top of this naming it "colour"
- fill the layer with the same colour as the background

speed it up

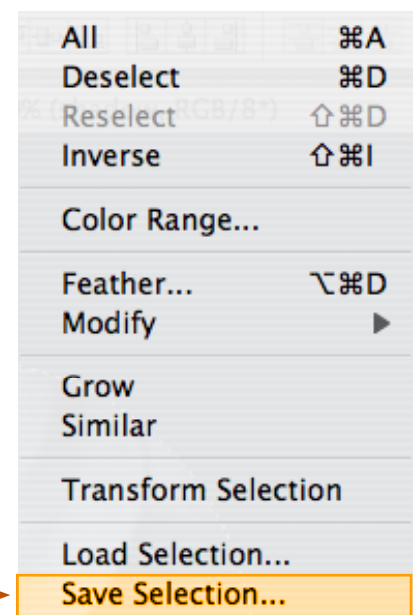
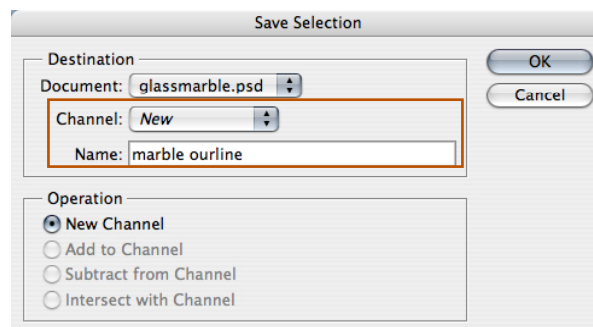
- press the "i" key to select the eyedropper tool 
- click on the background colour to pick this as foreground swatch
- press ALT + delete to fill the layer with the picked colour
- adjust the layer mode to "colour" and set your chosen opacity
- this might result in an almost dull image - add a new adjustment layer, again with the circular layermask created as done in the previous adjustment
In the example shown above - a Brightness/Contrast layer has been added as final edit



creating a shadow using channels

At the moment our marble seems to be floating in the air - though ready to be used for any further edits requiring its current look. To give the image some 'grounding' we will now create a shadow set up in channels.

- create a new layer - naming it 'shadow'
- select the marble shape by apple (ctrl for PC) - clicking its layer
- save this selection: top menu > select
- give this selection a meaningful name - it will be given to the newly created channel

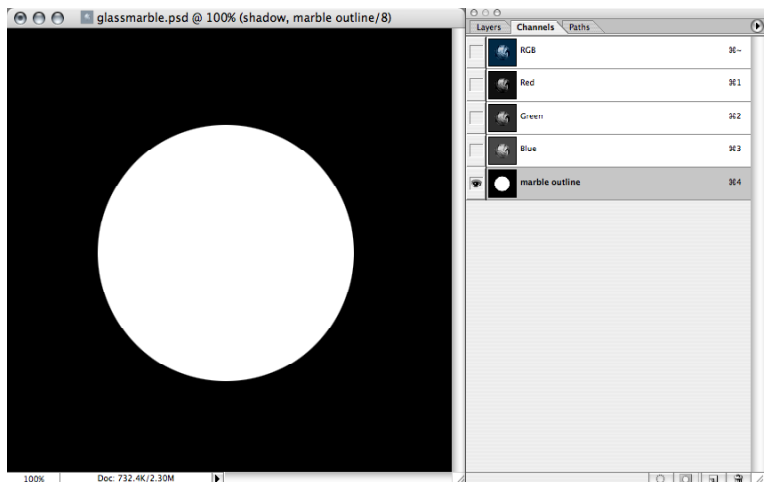


- with your selection now saved as a channel - open the channel palette and select your newly created channel

you will notice that the regular RGB channels are now hidden showing you the channel only - the circular selection drawn out as white shape on black background

in our example here:
the white represents the saved selection and therefore the content area of the channel

the black shows the deselected and therefore transparent area of the channel



To create a dropshadow for the marble you can use this original outline, distort it and blur it for use as shadow selection

- to duplicate the current channel drag its icon onto the 'create new channel' icon at the very bottom of the channel palette > and make sure to rename the new channel according to its new content ! it is always a good working practice to keep copies of original selections !

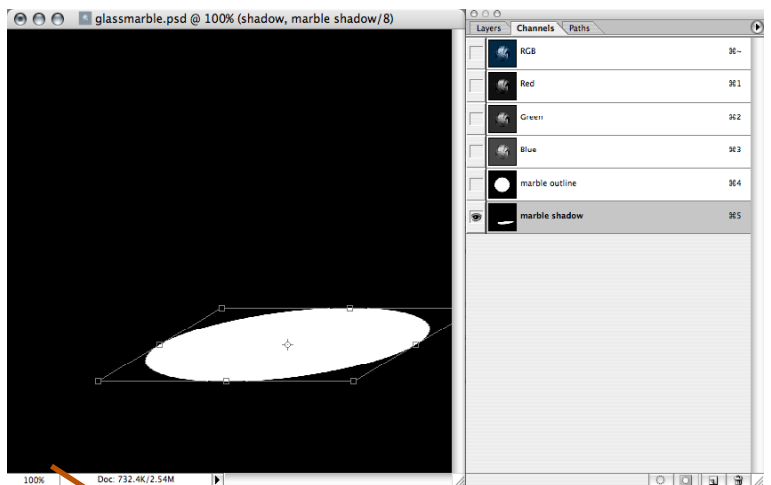


- drop the selection: **apple (ctrl for PC) + "D"**
- with the new channel selected call up the transform box: **apple (ctrl for PC) + "T"**

transform the white circle to represent your desired shadow angle and hit the return key to apply the transformation

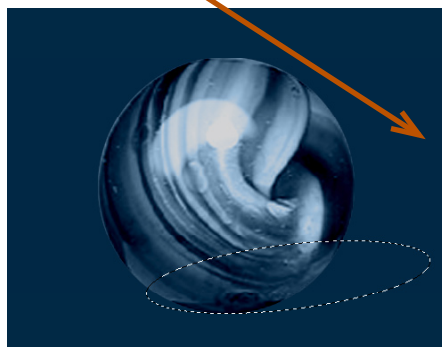
tip:

to check the shadow's size and position - make the selection active and view it with the image visible:



- apple- (ctrl for PC) -clicking the channel
- click on the RGB channel to view both active selection and image together

direction of light



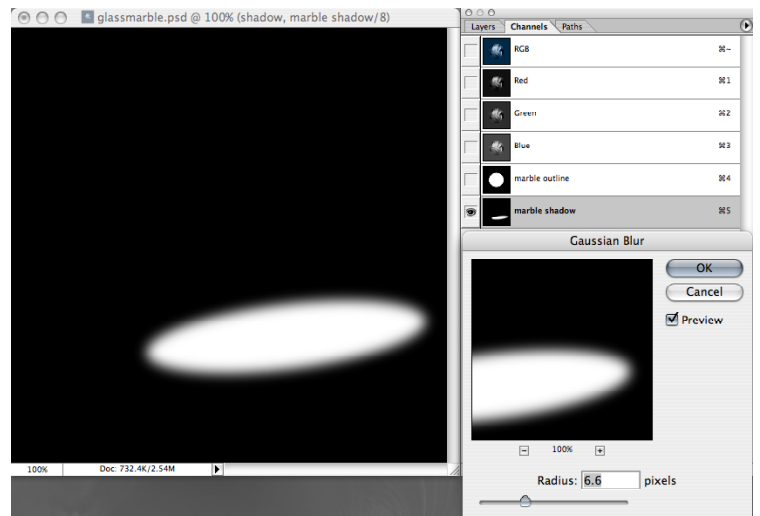
from the front, top left

! always pay close attention to any light direction given within your current image !

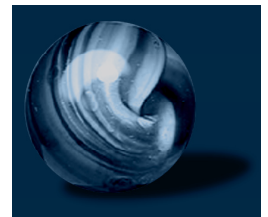
- use a blur filter to create a soft edge for the shadow - this will result in a feathered selection which when filled shows a blurred edge
- drop any active selection
- select the channel containing your shadow
- choose your preferred blur filter, here 'gaussian blur' is being applied

tip:

create several copies of this channel and vary the blur strength - this will give you several options for your shadow which are easy to access and use - as well as remaining available within the document



- make a selection of your shadow by apple (ctrl for PC) - clicking its channel, click on the RGB channel and return to your shadow layer
the swatches on the toolbar should still show the background colour as foreground
> press ALT + delete to fill the layer with this background colour
- to make your shadow visible - set the layer mode to 'multiply' and adjust the opacity settings to suit and your image should now look as shown here



As you can see the shadow does give the marble some weight - the brightness in its lower half however still spoils the illusion.

To enhance the weight of the marble and make the shadow look more convincing - add additional layers with shadow effects.

The layer palette for the final image here shows an additional layer - darkening the lower half of the marble. A duplicate of the main shadow has also been added - its layer mask focusing the shadow to the area directly below the marble giving the shadow more depth and variation.

