# Adding a Background Blur in Photoshop

1. Open the image in Photoshop.
2. Duplicate the background layer by clicking and dragging the layer to the Create New Layers icon in the bottom of the layers panel or simply press Ctrl J.
3. Rename the new layer to foreground.
4. Now, in the Menu bar across the top, choose Select> Subject. This will use Adobe's AI, Adobe Sensei to make a selection of what it deems to be the subject. Of course like any automation tool, results may vary. Zoom in and inspect the selection. If it is good, go with it; if not, use some of the other, more traditional tools to make a selection.

Duplicate & Rename both layers
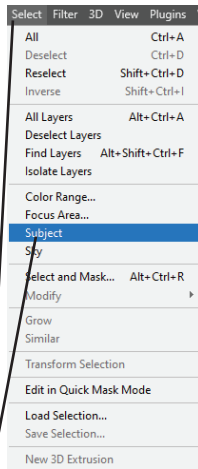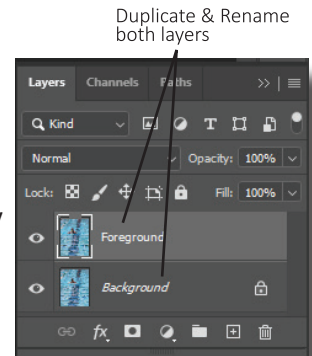
Automatically Selected Subject, some of rope and some of subject mis selected

Adjusted selection made in Quick Mask Mode

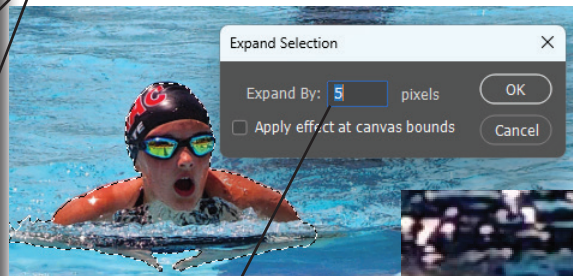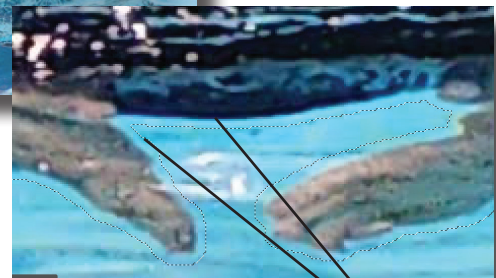Choose Select>Subject

5. Next, to create a little gap between the edge of the subject and the selection, click Select>Modify>Expand. In the new dialogue box that opens, set it to expand by 5 pixels and click ok to close the box. Zoom in and check the select. There should now be a distance between the selection and the subject.
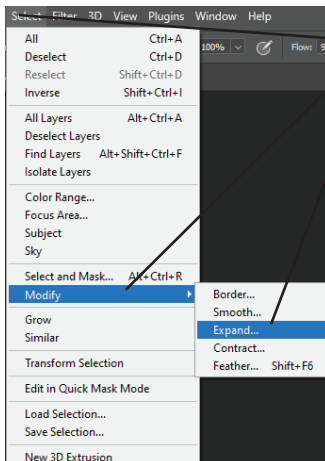
Select>Modify>Expand

Expand by 5 Pixels

Expanded by 5

6. It's now time to remove the subject from the photo. Choose Edit>Content Aware Fill. This tool will remove the subject and attempt to add more of the background in its place. Again, results may vary, but it really doesn't *need* to be perfect anyway since the subject will cover it in most places anyway. In the side panel change the Output to so that it says Duplicate Layer. And then press the ok button at the bottom.

Edit>Content-Aware Fill…

Area that is being filled

Output set to Duplicate Layer
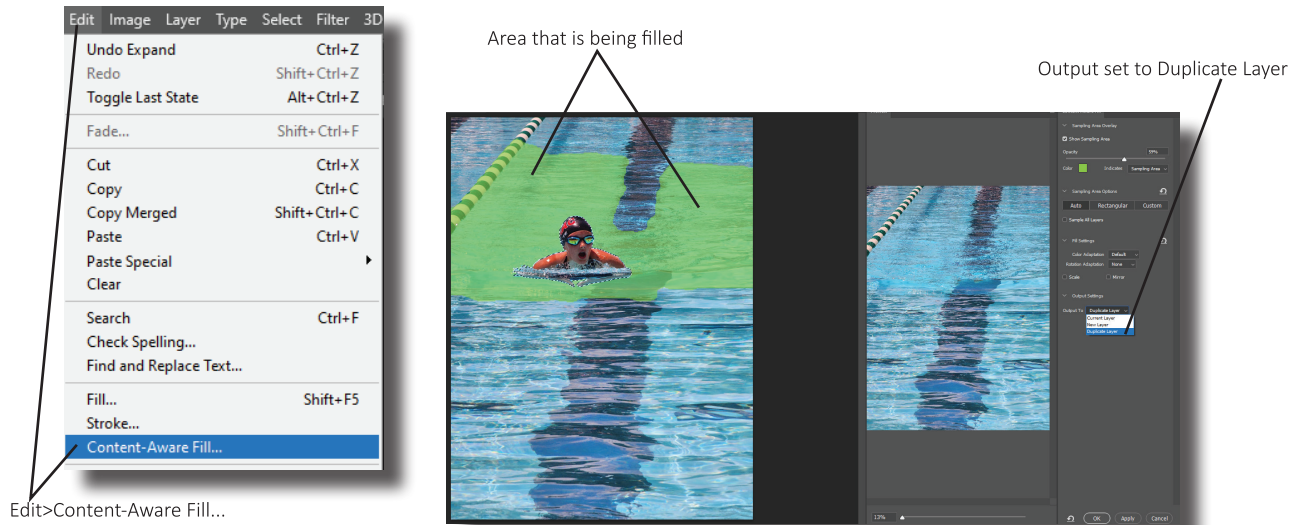
7. Now there should be three layers: Background on bottom, Background copy in the middle, and Foreground on top. There should also still be an active selection… **don't get rid of that!**
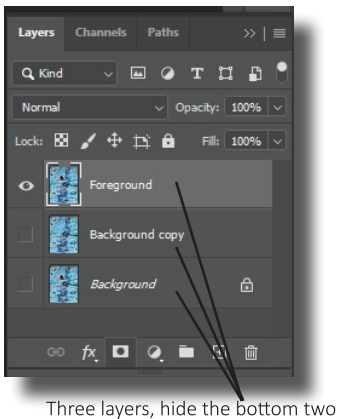
8. Hide both versions of Background, leaving just Foreground visible. Create a new layer mask by clicking on the Layer Mask icon in the bottom of the layers panel (it looks like a camera icon). This will use the active selection as a mask. A black and white layer mask thumbnail should show up on the Foreground layer.

Three layers, hide the bottom two

Now there are three layers
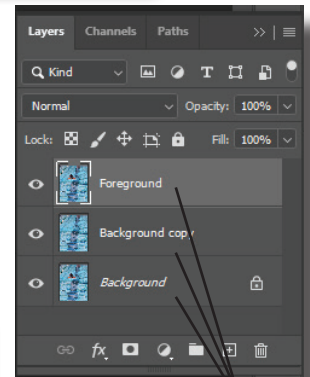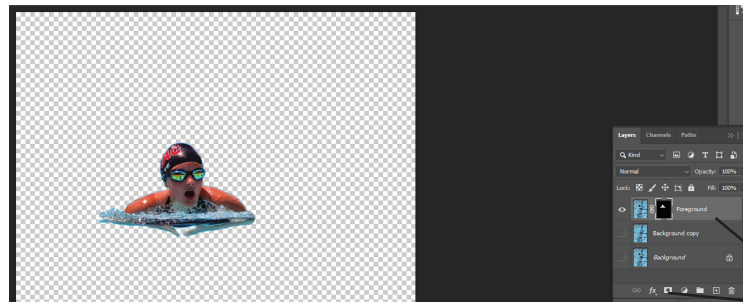
Create a layer mask using the selection & clicking on the Layer Mask icon

9. At this point there is a fringe of 5 pixels around the subject that is no longer needed. To remove it, choose Filter>Other>Minimum. A new dialogue box will appear. Change the Radius to 5 pixels and persevere Roundness. Click OK to close the dialogue box. That fringe will go away.

Filter>Other>Minimum

Set the Radius to 5 or 6 & Preserve to Roundness
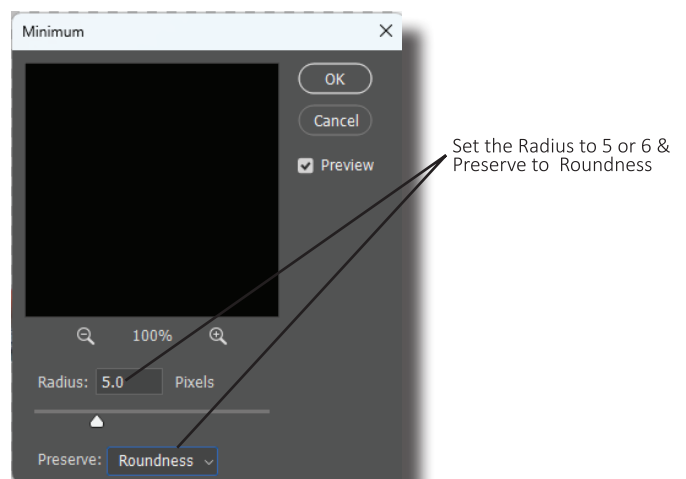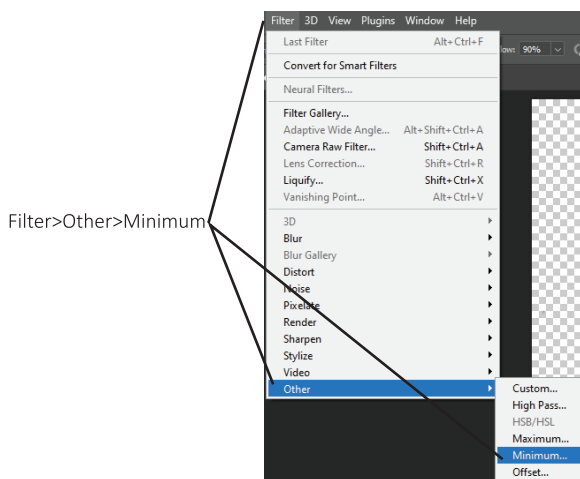
10. Now to select the background copy layer, right click on it and choose Convert to Smart Object.
11. With the background layer still selected, choose Filter>Blur Gallery>Tilt-Shift. This filter will blur both top and bottom of the image but not the center. Dragging the blur slider to the right will make the effect more aggressive. Some more details about the filter… there is a dashed line at the top and the bottom. This line marks the start of the fade to no blur. The solid line marks the start of zero blur. These lines are fully repositionable.

Drag the Blur Slider to the right

Filter>Blur Gallery>Tilt Shift

Dashed lines- start of fade

Solid lines- zero blur point
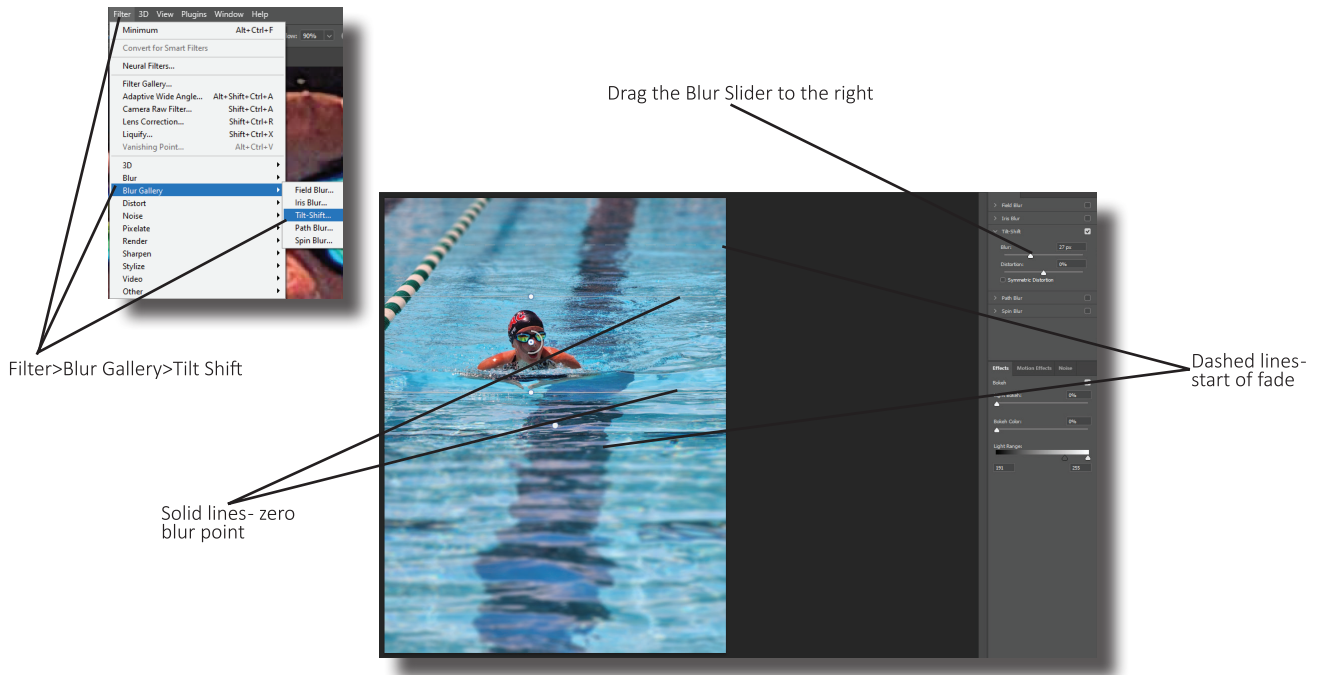
12. In a real photo shot with a shallow depth of field there would be a blur in the very shallow foreground, it would fade to focus around the subject and then fade out as the distance gets further from the subject. The task here is to emulate that in this photo. Pull the lines down so the two solid lines are around the subject. See the example for clarification. Keep in mind that as long as there is blur in the shallow foreground, focus around the subject and then blur after the subject, its good so press OK to close the dialogue box.
13. The final step is to tweak the mask to ensure there are no areas that aren't soft and should be. Zoom in and check the edges. Select the black and white layer mask in the layers panel. Set the foreground/background to default (the small black and white icon just above and to the left of the foreground background in the tool bar) and choose the brush tool. Paint in blur on the mask or erase the blur with the eraser tool.
14. That's really it for the effect. The color could be boosted a little though by creating a smart layer with all of the layers *except the background*. First convert the Background Copy layer to a Smart Object. Then choose Filter>Camera Raw Filter. Highlights and shadows are always good to adjust to add more detail. The temperature is an easy adjustment too that really effects the feel of the image. Vibrance is one that is often useful too. Scroll down to the Effects area of the panel. To make the effect look a little more real and less processed, add a little grain to the photo and perhaps a vignette to pull the viewer into the subject a bit. That's it!

Filter>Camera Raw Filter

Temperature Slider

Effects Panel

Grain Slider

Vignette Slider

Background Copy to Smart Object

Vibrance Slider