

onOne Software MASK PRO 4.1

By Pete Padilla

Many of us find that when we take a picture only part of what we take is what we want to keep. There may be something in the background of the photo that we wish was not there. Masking is removing a background, isolating an object or making precise selections that are used to enhance your photo.

Mask Pro 4.1 is a plugin for Adobe Photoshop CS 2, CS 3 or Adobe Elements 4 or later. It gives you the ability to take out the unwanted parts (masking) of your photograph that could make your photo a winner. Mask Pro has a very complex way of letting you mask parts of your photograph, like hair, tree limbs/leaves, smog, fog and clear objects like a glass. Using the paint brush in Mask Pro allows you to paint away the colors you do not wish and save the colors you have selected to keep.

Mask Pro 4.1 does it one way by erasing colors and keeping colors to create a better photo. Another way is by using a magic pen tool similar to the Pen tool that is used in Photoshop and Elements. I find that the Pen tool in Mask Pro was much easier to use to separate and erase the parts you wish to extract from a photo than the one used by Adobe programs.

I did not receive a CD and whatever else may come with the program when purchased, like an instruction booklet. Instead, I downloaded the program and did a lot of watching of tutorials that onOne Software Inc. offered. I did have a problem the first two download tries, but the third time it was successfully put into my Photoshop CS 3 menu bar.

Mask Pro comes with a help menu, but I was not able to activate it from the menu bar. There was a help window that pops up when you select a tool giving you an option to read the functionality of that tool. There are video tutorials on-line through the onOne support site. They are very helpful, but they take a very long time to download before you are able to see them. I found that after viewing them it was hard to remember the steps taken to implement them.

I feel that Mask Pro 4.1 may be difficult to learn for a beginner to Adobe Photoshop or Elements. I cannot recommend it for a beginner, but it is a great program for the more experienced editor. It is a major time saver when using the program to mask out the small or thin objects such as hair, leaves etc. as I mentioned previously. I have added a few pictures to give you an idea of what the program can do. The first picture is the original. The second picture is after masking out the background, and the third picture is an example of putting the Indian Headdress in a different background.



These are examples of some of the things that can be done. If you are trying to separate hair or feathers as I did, I highly recommend using Mask Pro. It is much faster and easier than trying to do it manually in Photoshop or in Elements.

The two photos below are after masking and putting in a different background.



I think the program is a very useful tool and recommend it for those who do a lot of editing. It is an advanced tool that may be more than a snapshot photographer would require.

OnOne Software Inc. does have a free 30 day trail that you can download to try out before you purchase. They do have tech support and a forum that you can join for discussion with others that have the program. I found that reading comments and questions from others is a great help in learning how to use Mask Pro.

Street Price: Amazon \$ 146.99
Academic price (students and teachers) \$ 76.00
onOne Software Inc. <http://www.ononesoftware.com/>

Operating System Requirements:

Windows

Current Version: 5.0

Windows XP SP2 or Vista

Photoshop CS2 (v9.0.2), CS3, and Elements 4 or later

512MB of RAM

60MB of disk space

Mac OS X

Current Version: 5.0

Mac OS X 10.4.4 or later

Photoshop CS2(v9.0.2), CS3, and Elements 4 or later

512MB of RAM

60MB of disk space