

REMOVING OBJECTS WITH CLONE BRUSH – FxFOTO

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Clone Brush

Sometimes the camera sees what we do not see. It records the world accurately but our eye is on capturing the subject and so we often don't see things like telephone poles and trash on the ground. But the camera does and hence we are left with a less than perfect photo. With the magic of a clone brush, you can get rid of distracting objects like telephone wires.

Take a good look at the two photos below. The one on the left is the original photo – complete with all sorts of stuff lying on the carpet which is very distracting. After all the idea was to capture an orphan in the cast of “Annie” and not her water bottle and bags! In the photo on the right you can see we have removed the items. We could even clone brush the dog out of the photo too (but decided not to)!



Here are some other examples of photo correction using the clone brush:



With telephone wires,



Without the wires!



The number is an unwanted focal point



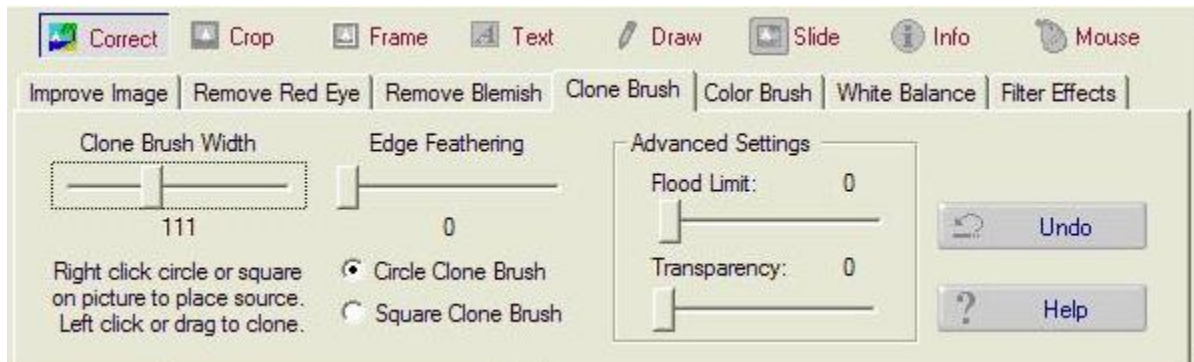
Number erased with clone brush

As you can see, you can use the clone brush to correct large or small areas. It is best to clone before you do anything else to the photo such as crop or frame. In particular, if you have rotated the photo and try to use the clone brush, you will find the brush very slow. So it is better to clone with the photo in its original orientation and before cropping and framing.

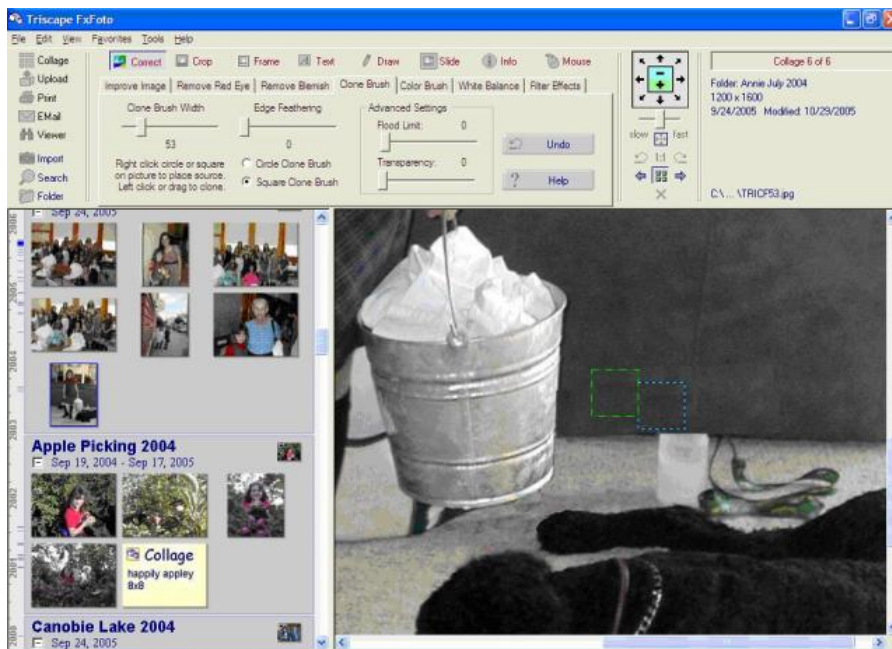
The clone brush works by using one part of the photo to cover unwanted areas - a sort of camouflage. Another analogy is to think of it as a paint brush which you are using to paint over the area. Depending on what you want to remove, it can take some time to do it well.

A list of hints for using the Clone Brush is at the end of this tutorial.

First, click on **Correct** and click on **Clone Brush**. Here is the Clone Brush box you will see:



Next decide whether you want a circle or square clone brush. In general using the circle gives a more natural and rounded effect while the square is useful if you are cloning out objects with straight edges such as a building or telephone pole. Use the slider to choose the width of your brush. Decide whether you want to feather the edges. A little bit of feathering is helpful to blend the edges. We will skip the advance settings for now. You can learn more about them below.



Using the mouse, the cursor now appears as a blue dotted circle or square with a + in the center. In the example above, we are using a **square brush** and you can see the clone brush in action. **Right click** on the sofa near the water bottle and a green square will appear. This is your "brush" and the part of the photograph within the square is the "paint" you will be using to paint over the water bottle. The cursor will still have a blue square, so move the blue square to the object you want to remove and push down the **left mouse** button at the place you want to start and **hold it down**. Drag the square as you would a paint brush and the background will start to paint over

the person. Letting up on the left button will stop it so that you can move the mouse to a different area.

One thing to keep in mind is that the green circle of "paint" moves with the blue circle on the brush, so you need to keep an eye on it. If the green paint circle overlaps the area that you just painted away while you still have the left button depressed, then the green paint circle will pick up "paint" from the original area that you brushed. So the part of the object that you had brushed away may start to reappear. This will not happen if you keep your paint brush strokes short and do not overlap. Once the left button has been lifted this will not happen. The program and brush will recognize the brushed area and not the original photo. In the paint analogy we have been using, lifting the left mouse button dries the paint and sets it. If it hasn't been dried, it will smudge when the mouse goes over it.

Clicking the left mouse button will give you spots of the background rather than a brush. You can change the "paint" on your clone brush by right clicking on another area to gather "paint" and the green circle will move to that area. Then you can start painting with the new "paint".

Hints for using the Clone Brush

Here are some hints that may help you and that I've garnered by frequent use of the clone brush.

- Use the square clone brush shape when brushing out objects with a straight edge
- Work in small areas by zooming way in on the object and remove small areas at a time.
- The bigger the circle or square, the faster the cloning goes but you lose some subtlety and control. This is particularly true if the photo has some shadows because the subtle changes in color and shadow will look out of place.
- Keep the green "paint" circle right next to the area you are removing. This gives you the best match for variations in light and shadow within the background and hence the most natural effect. You may have to move the green circle frequently to do this.
- The Undo button undoes anything you brushed from the when you depressed the left button until you lifted it up. So to avoid frustration, make your brushing strokes sessions short by lifting up on the left button frequently as if you were using very short strokes with a paint brush.
- Removing lots of objects or working with a pattern like wallpaper or a printed cloth can take a lot of time and patience. Start with removing things like phone wires across the sky before trying something complicated!

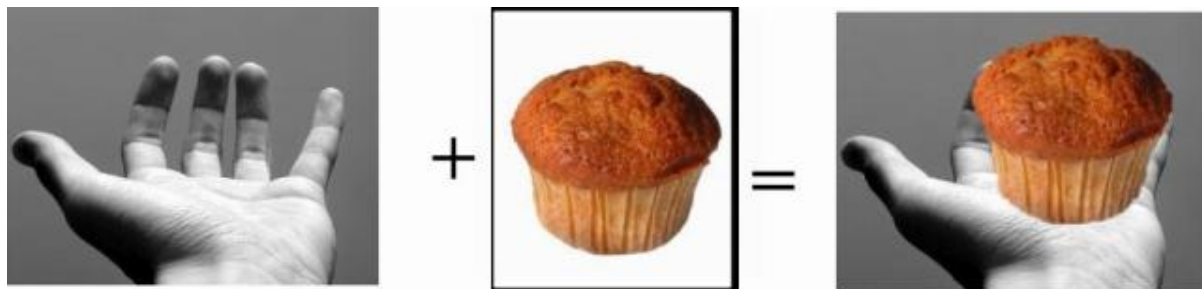
Advanced Clone Brush Settings

There are also two Advanced Settings sliders that are normally zero (or all the way to the left).

Flood Limit: Flood limit allows you to limit the clone brush to a given colored area on the photo even if the brush outline goes beyond. It works much like a backwards Color Match Tolerance. It can be advanced to limit the clone brush to flooding only areas with colors roughly matching the cursor center point. Try a Flood Limit of 80 or 90 to match a brush over a fairly uniformly colored object in the photo. Slide the Flood Limit further to the right to restrict the flood to more closely matching colors. Slide it further to the left for looser color matching.

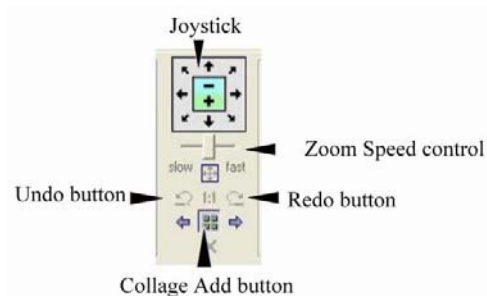
Transparency: This allows you to make the clone brush partially clear. If advanced half way to 128, it blends the source and target 50% so that both appear in the result. So your “paint” will be partially transparent. Slide the Transparency further to the right to make the source more transparent or further to the left to make the source more visible. While this means you won’t be painting over an object, it can be used to give some interesting effects, placing one object over another.

Cloning Between Two Photos



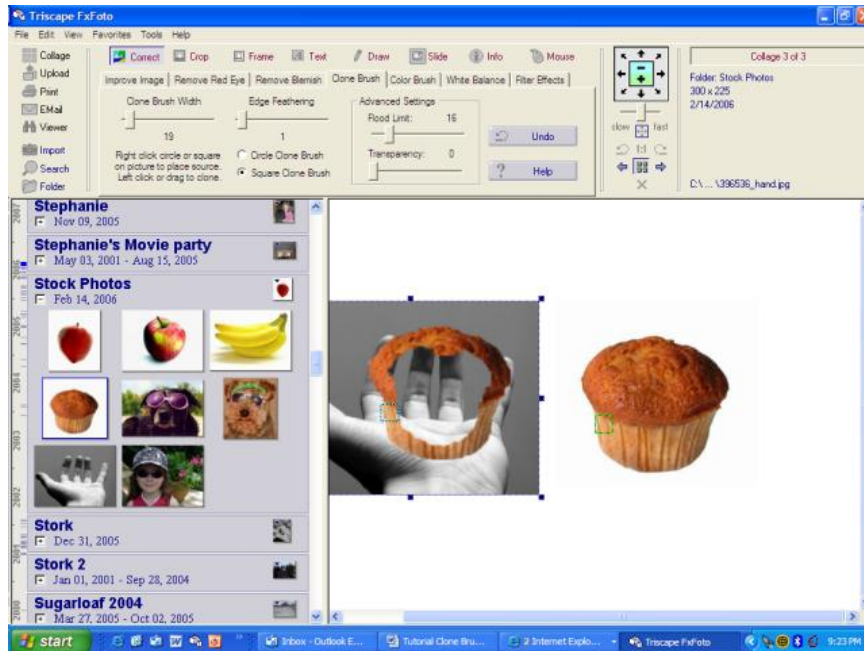
You can clone something from one photo onto another photo. In the example above the hand and the muffin were separate photos and I clone brushed the muffin onto the hand.

First, both photos must be open in the right main pane. To do this you will need to locate the Collage Add button which is below the Joystick as seen below. When this button is depressed, then any photo or elements you click on in the left folder pane will be added to the main pane. This allows you to have several photos or elements open in the main pane.



Click on the first photo (the hand) in the left folder pane to open it in the main pane. Now click on the **Collage Add** button. Click on the second photo (the muffin) and it will open beside the first one in the main pane.

Click on **Correct** and then **Clone Brush**. Select a brush shape and size.



Now adjust the muffin photo so that it is the right size for the hand. When you clone brush it onto the hand, it will then be the correct size.

Right click on the muffin to set your brush on the muffin. Now in the hand photo, find the area where you want the muffin and left click and hold while you move the mouse. The muffin will be brushed on to the hand. In the screenshot above you can see I have completed brushing the outline of the muffin onto the hand. I can then fill in the muffin by continuing to drag the mouse over the muffin.

You can use this technique to add people or objects to a photo. And to have a bit of fun, of course!

Photo credits: hand, muffin, both dogs and girl all from Stock.xchng.com

