

The Rectangular Marquee Tool In Photoshop

Written by Steve Patterson. In a previous tutorial, we looked at [reasons why we need to make selections at all in Photoshop](#), where we learned that Photoshop sees the world very differently from how you and I see it. Where we see independent objects, Photoshop sees only pixels of different colors, so we use Photoshop's various selection tools to select objects or areas in a photo that Photoshop would never be able to identify on its own.

I mentioned in that same tutorial that Photoshop gives us lots of different tools for selecting things in an image, some basic and some more advanced (although it's funny how even so-called "advanced" tools can seem quite basic once you're comfortable with them). In this tutorial, we'll look at one of the most common and easiest selection tools to use, the **Rectangular Marquee Tool**, one of Photoshop's basic selection tools that, along with the Elliptical Marquee Tool and the Polygonal Lasso Tool, is designed for making selections based on simple geometric shapes. As the name implies, the Rectangular Marquee Tool is perfect for times when you need to draw a selection in the shape of a rectangle or a square.

[Download our tutorials as print-ready PDFs!](#) Learning Photoshop has never been easier!

You'll find the Rectangular Marquee Tool sitting at the very top of the Tools panel in Photoshop. It's the tool with the icon that looks like the outline of a square. Click on it to select it:



The Rectangular Marquee Tool is located at the top of the Tools panel.

If you're using Photoshop CS4 as I am here, or Photoshop CS3, and you have your Tools panel set to a single column layout, the Rectangular Marquee Tool will be the second icon from the top:

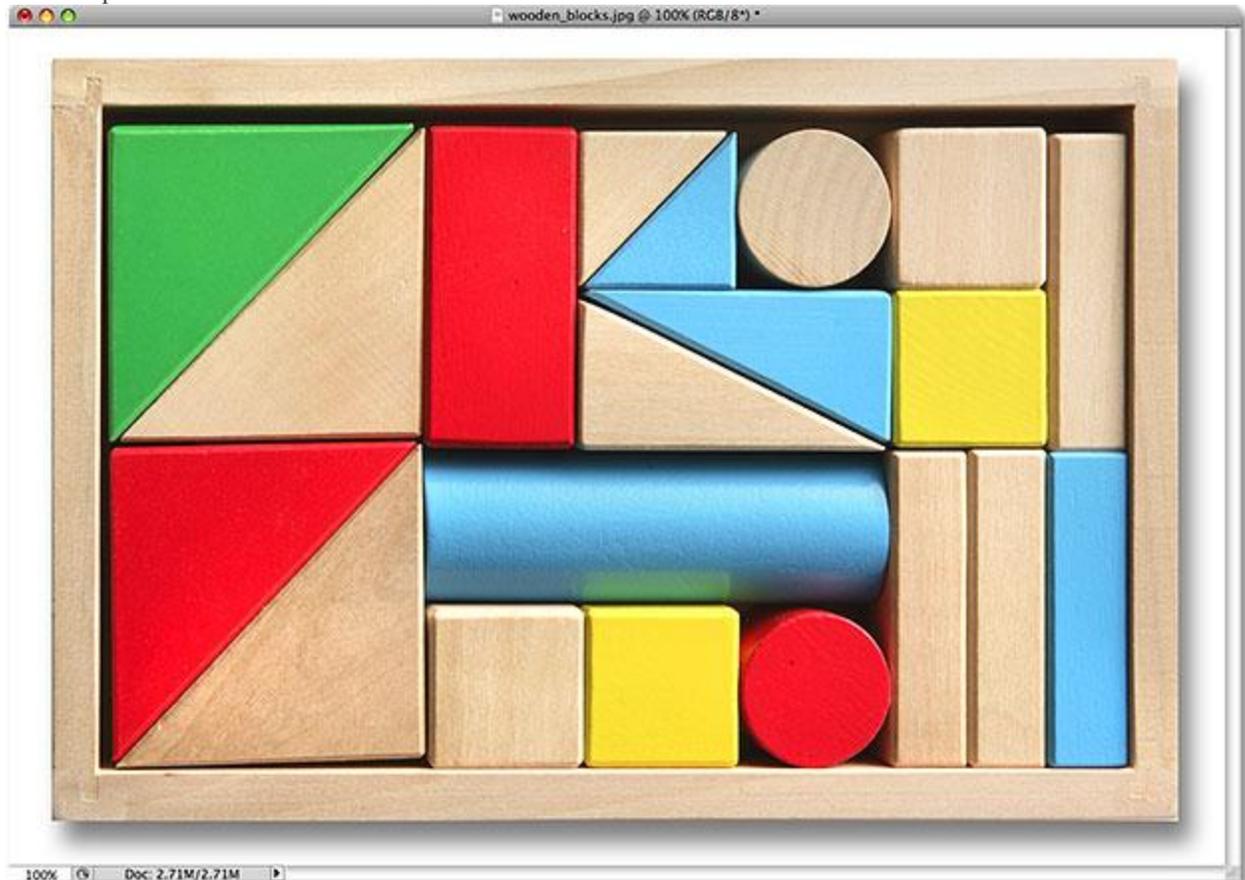


The Tools panel in Photoshop CS3 and higher can be displayed in either a single or double column layout.

Drawing Rectangular Selections

Using the Rectangular Marquee Tool in its most basic form is easy. You simply click with your mouse at the point where you want to begin the selection, which will usually be in the top left corner of the object or area you need to select, then continue holding your mouse button down as you drag towards the bottom right corner of the object or area. When you release your mouse button, the selection is complete!

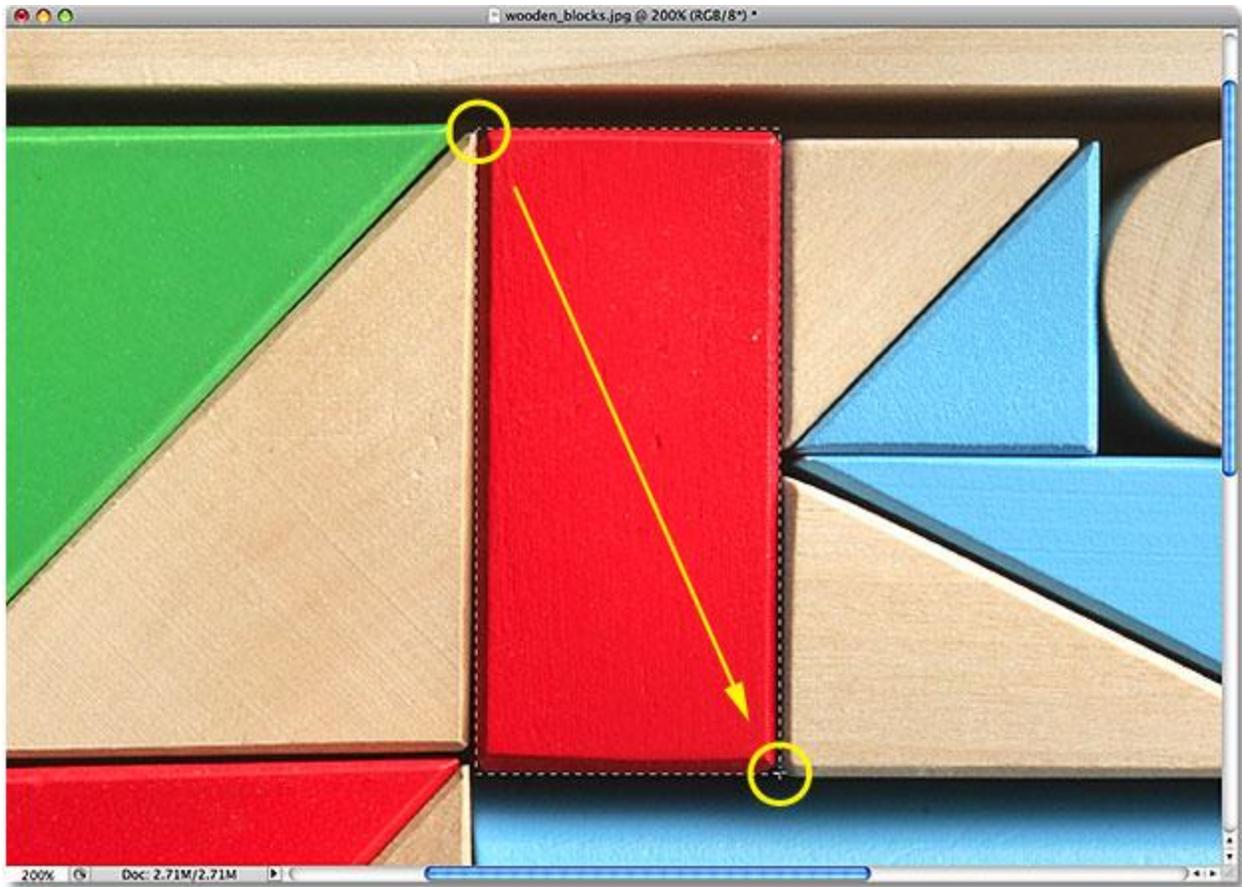
Here's a photo of some wooden blocks:



Colorful wooden blocks.

See that large red block in the top row? Let's say I wanted to change its color, a very simple thing to do. Now, if this was Star Trek, I could simply say "Computer, select red block, top row", followed by "Change color to purple", or whatever color we wanted. Unfortunately, reality hasn't quite caught up to science fiction just yet, but that doesn't mean life in this day and age is unbearably difficult. Far from it! Photoshop may not be able to identify the wooden block, since all it sees are pixels, but not only can you and I see it, we can see that it's very clearly in the shape of a rectangle, which means that the task of selecting it is perfectly suited for the Rectangular Marquee Tool.

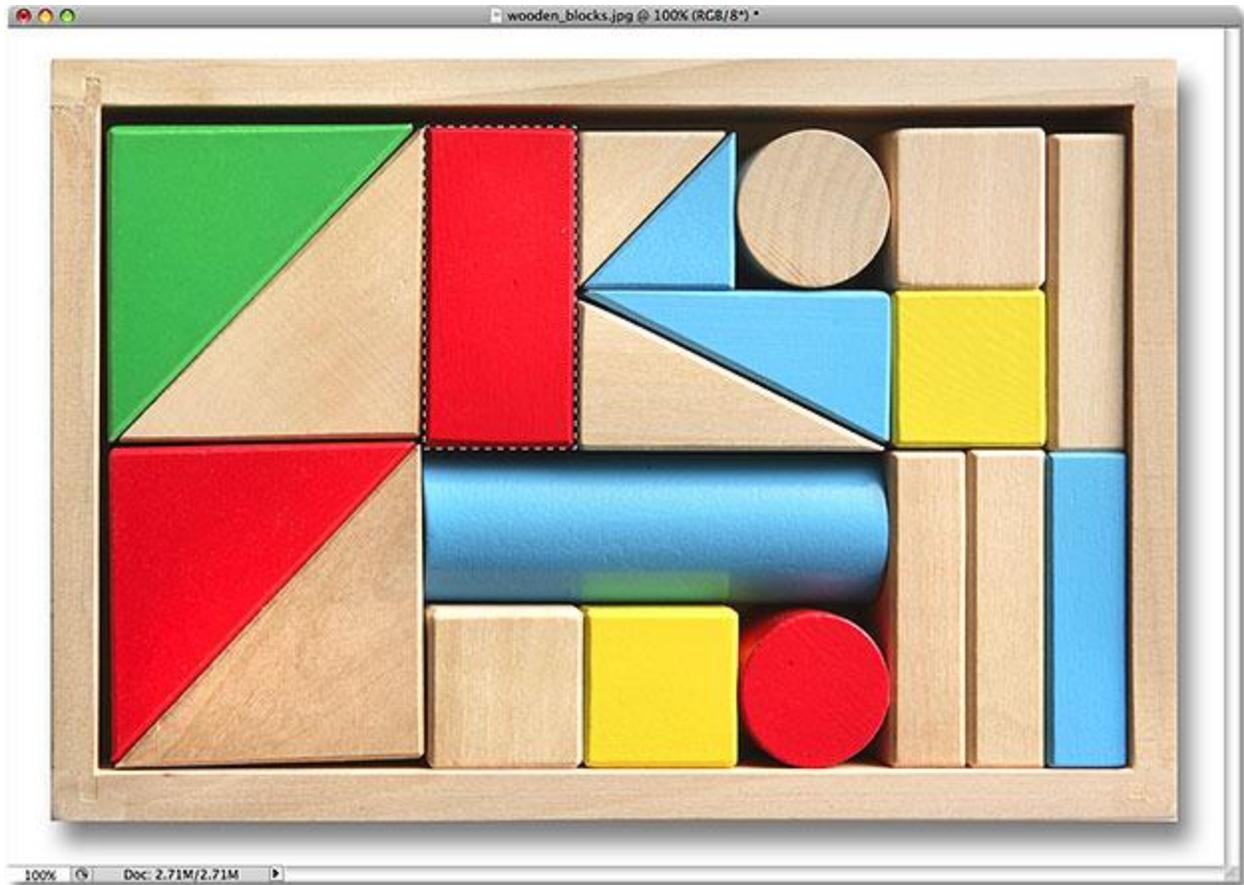
First, I'll select the Rectangular Marquee Tool from the Tools panel as we saw a moment ago. You can also select tools using their keyboard shortcuts. Pressing the letter **M** on your keyboard will instantly select the Rectangular Marquee Tool. Then, to begin the selection, I'll click in the top left corner of the block. While still holding down my mouse button, I'll drag towards the bottom right corner of the block:



Click in the top left corner to begin a selection, then drag down to the bottom right corner. Release your mouse button to complete it.

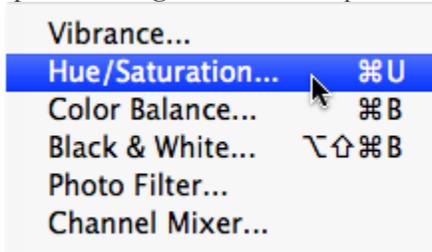
If you find that you didn't begin your selection in exactly the right spot, there's no need to start over. Just hold down your **spacebar**, then drag your mouse to move the selection where you need it. When you're done, release your spacebar and continue dragging out the selection.

To complete the selection, all I need to do is release my mouse button. The wooden block is now selected (or at least, the pixels that make up what we see as the block are selected), and a selection outline appears around the block in the document window. Any edits I make at this point will affect that specific block and no others:



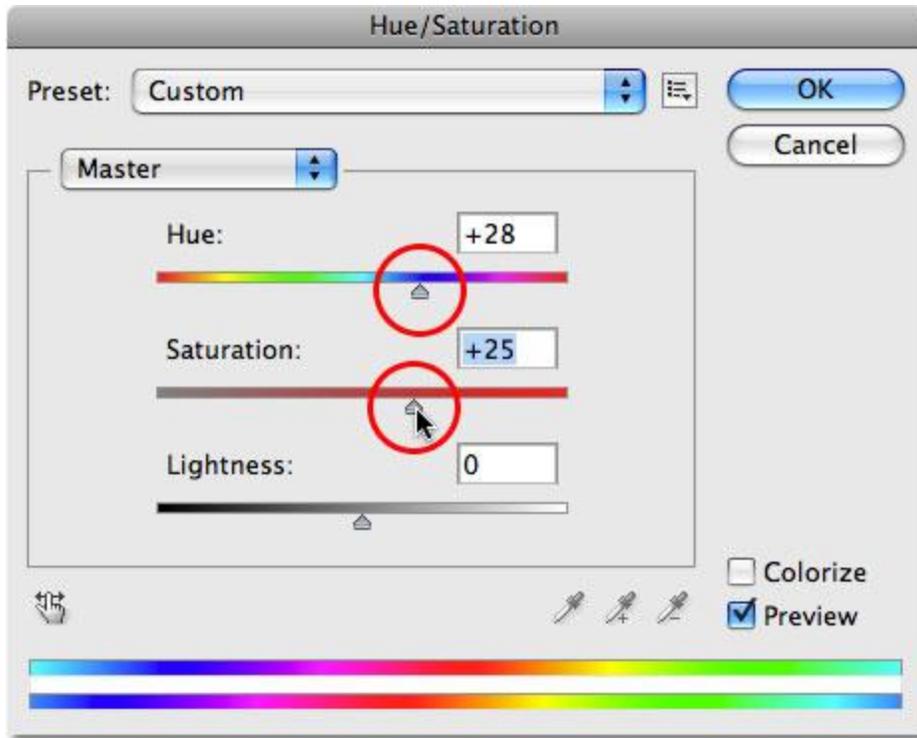
Selection outlines appear as a series of moving dashed lines, also known as “marching ants”.

To change the color of the block, we’ll use Photoshop’s **Hue/Saturation** image adjustment. To select it, I’ll go up to the **Image** menu at the top of the screen where I’ll choose **Adjustments** and then **Hue/Saturation**:



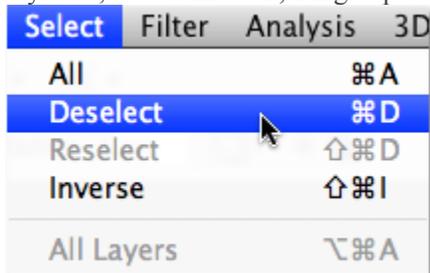
The Hue/Saturation image adjustment is great for changing the color of objects in an image.

This brings up the Hue/Saturation dialog box. I think I’ll change the block’s color to orange. I know I said purple earlier, but now that I’ve had a few more minutes to think about it, a nice bright orange would probably be a better choice. Changing the color is as easy as dragging the **Hue** slider left or right until you find the color you want. I’m going to drag mine towards the right to a value of 28 to select orange. Then, to bump up the color saturation a bit, I’ll drag the **Saturation** slider towards the right to a value of around +25:



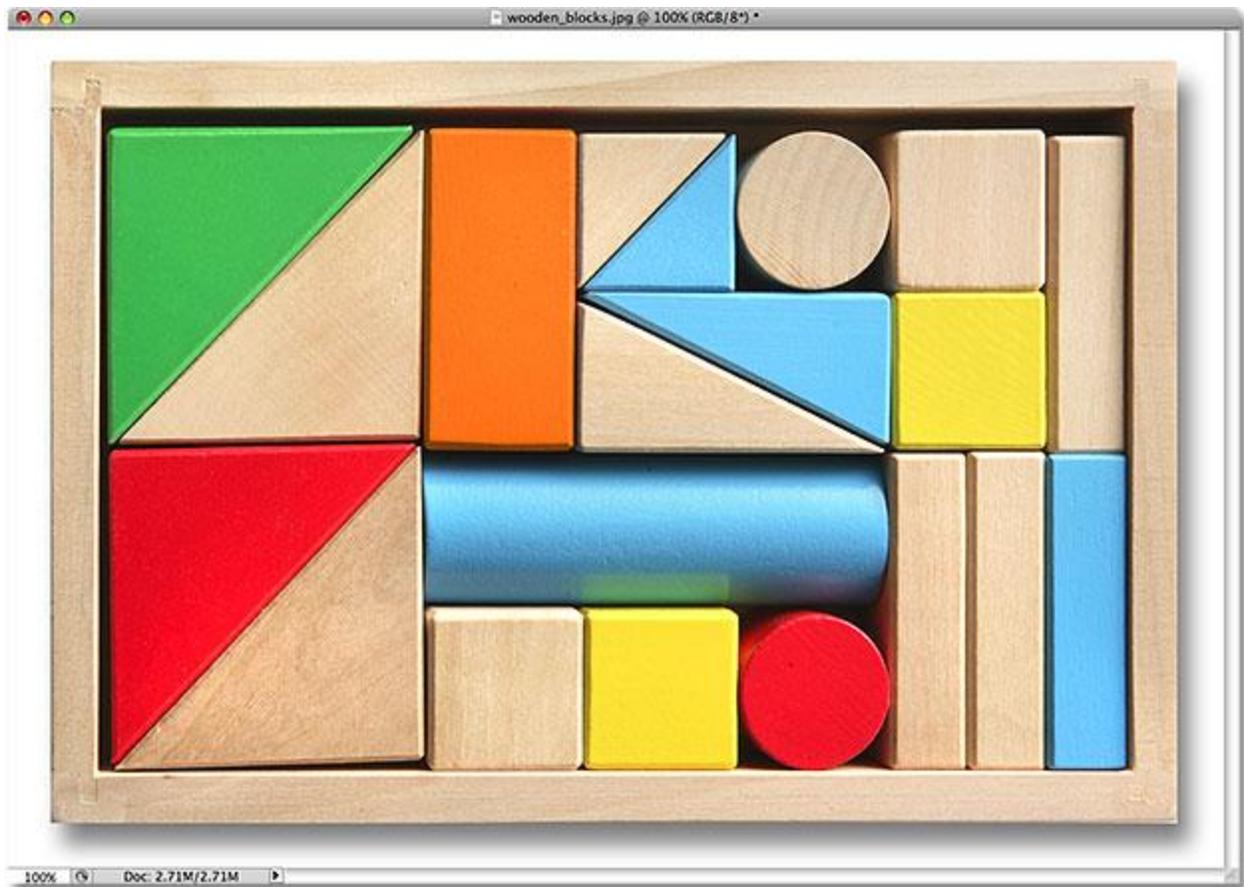
Change an object's color by dragging the Hue slider. Increase or decrease color saturation with the Saturation slider.

When I'm happy with the new color, I'll click OK to exit out of the dialog box. I don't need my selection anymore, so to remove it, I'll go up to the **Select** menu at the top of the screen and choose **Deselect**:



Remove selections by choosing Deselect from under the Select menu.

A faster way to remove a selection is with the keyboard shortcut, **Ctrl+D** (Win) / **Command+D** (Mac), but either way will work. With the selection outline now gone, we can see that only the area that was inside the rectangular selection outline was affected by the Hue/Saturation adjustment. The formerly red block is now an orange block, while the rest of the photo remains unchanged:



Only the area inside the rectangular selection was affected by the Hue/Saturation adjustment.