How to Levitate in Photoshop

Level: Beginner
Class: Graphics or Photography
Time: 1-2 hours
Materials: blank wall or backdrop, chair or stool, digital camera, tripod

This lesson is great for getting students to understand **MASKING** in Photoshop. Students in my Graphics class and Photography class enjoy doing this lesson every year. The lesson will work best if you can take your photos against a blank wall or backdrop if you are a rookie. The editing will be much easier. Using a tripod will help keep all of your images aligned and makes editing much easier. Try to avoid any changes in the environment like lighting. Take several photographs and use the two that will match the best.
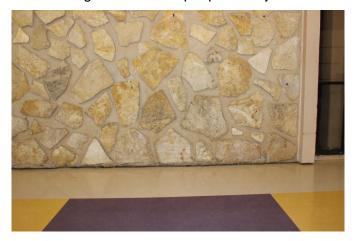
Step One: Setup

Take two photos for each project:

photo of a person or object sitting on a stool or chair

Tip: Using a tripod is very helpful during this step so that your images match up as close as possible. If you do not have a tripod, try to rest your camera on an object.

photo of the background without people or objects
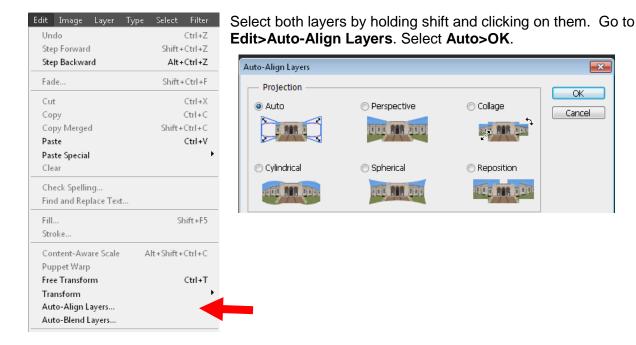

Step Two: Combining Images

Open both images in Photoshop by selecting File>Open or Ctrl + O. Fit the images onto the screen by selecting View>Fit on Screen or Ctrl + 0

Select the **Move** tool.

Use the **Move** tool to drag the picture of the person or object onto the background image. There are numerous ways to do this. You can also select the first image and copy/paste into the Background image. You'll end up with this image of yourself copied as a new layer above the Background Layer.

You must unlock the Background Layer. The easiest way to do this is by double clicking on the layer. You can rename it if you would like and then press **OK**.
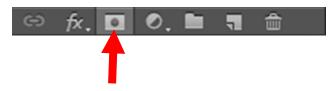
Select both layers by holding shift and clicking on them. Go to **Edit>Auto-Align Layers**. Select **Auto>OK**.

Step Three: Removing Objects

Now select the layer with the subject or object on it and add a **Layer Mask.** The mask option can be found at the bottom of the Layers Panel. Mask do not remove images like an eraser. Instead, the pixels are hidden.

The **Layer Mask** will appear in the Layers Panel as a white box. Press **D** on your keyboard to bring up the Default Colors. Select Brushes from the toolbar or Press **B** on your keyboard to bring up your Paint Brush. Select a soft, round brush. Paint over the stool/chair and watch it disappear. If you remove too much of an object, Press X on your keyboard and paint with white to reveal your object.

Tip: When using a mask remember this.
"White REVEALS"
"Black CONCEALS"

If you notice that your lighting or color is slightly off, select the background layer and add an Adjustment Level. This can be found on the bottom of the Layers Panel next to the Mask option or Press **Ctrl + L**. Drag the sliders until your achieve the correct colors.

Step Four: Finishing Touches

Select the **Crop Tool** and crop out any unwanted background area that distracts from your image.