ICL Digital Photography

Full Body Makeovers with Photoshop Elements

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Very few of our photographic subjects are too corpulent, they are just not tall enough.

To give someone a few inches of extra height. In the "Expert" or "Full Edit" mode follow the pathway Image > Transform > Free Transform. The use of this tool automatically converts your file to the psd format, so you will have to turn it back into a jpeg when you save the edited version. Give your subjects more apparent height in relation to their width by pulling up on the top center button, or down on the bottom center button.

Two different filters are especially useful in slimming (or enlarging) various body parts: the **pinch filter** (great name!) and the **liquefy filter**. Find them with the pathway Filter > Distort.

To use the **pinch filter** first broadly select an area, using the elliptical selection tool. Then with the pinch tool push it inward (with a positive value), or pull it outward (with a negative value).

The **liquefy filter**, with the proper sized brush, can reshape any part of your photo. Carefully used, the results can be quite flattering, even to an already attractive model. Overdone, the distortions can be comical or even grotesque.

An example of a Photoshop body makeover

A dancer, as originally photographed in Siem Reap, Cambodia.	The same dancer, now with an hour-glass figure.

The above result was achieved by selecting the waist area with the elliptical marquee tool, then following the pathway Filter > Distort > Pinch. I selected a value of +67%, and the dancer's waist took a new shape. The upper-body enhancement could have been achieved with the same tools, choosing a minus value (say -50%), but I preferred a hands-on approach (bad joke!) and used the liquefy tool (follow the pathway Filter > Distort > Liquefy, then choose a brush width to match the desired cup size.

Other useful tools for "beauty shop" makeovers

The clone tool can shave off unwanted "love handles." Use a small brush, probably with hard edges. Choose an area of the background that matches the color and texture next to the part of your subject that you want to erase. Set the pick-up spot by holding the Alt key while clicking once, then brush over your target, replacing it with the new background.

The blur tool is useful for removing wrinkles from an older person's face. Set the "Strength" at about 50%, then paint over the affected area repeatedly until you see the desired result. Do not overdo this. Alternatively, you can use the healing brush (not the spot healing brush) to achieve even more dramatic results. This tool functions similarly to the clone tool. Set the pick-up spot by holding the cursor over an area of unwrinkled skin; hold the Alt key and click once; then paint over the wrinkled area. "Proximity Match" is the best option for most purposes, but also experiment with the "Create Texture" and "Content Aware" types.

The spot healing brush tool (shaped like a Band-Aid) is extremely useful for removing small skin blemishes. Use the "Spot Healing Brush," not the "Healing Brush." Choose a brush size slightly larger than the blemish, click once over the spot, and it magically disappears.

The sponge tool and the dodge tool can whiten teeth. Use the magnifier to get a full view of your subject's teeth.

- Begin with the sponge tool to remove unwanted color. Set the mode to "Desaturate," then brush the teeth with the sponge until most of the color is gone.
- To lighten the teeth use the dodge tool (it is shaped like a small paddle." Set the dodge tool to a small brush size, and a small exposure value (about 10%), and the range to "Midtones," then go over the teeth repeatedly (lifting the mouse button occasionally), until you reach a brightness that looks right.

Correcting your work. It is easy to overdo any of the procedures described above. If in doubt, do less. Remember that you can reverse your editing step by step by pressing Ctrl-Z repeatedly. In most instances each step takes you back to the point where you last clicked the mouse button.

Saving your work. At the conclusion of your editing session choose "Save As…" from the "File" menu. PSE automatically chooses a new name for you, such as *Myphoto_edited-1.jpg*. Press "Save," and a new window will appear, asking you to select a "Quality" number between 0 and 12. The number 8 is sufficient for most purposes. If you used the free transform tool described above, the program will try to save your photo as in the psd format, which will be too large to email. Instead, choose the jpeg format from the list of options.