The EASIEST way to knock out a background

Okay, on the previous page I showed you lots of ways to select stuff. And there are even more but when I need to go "down and dirty" this is what I do!
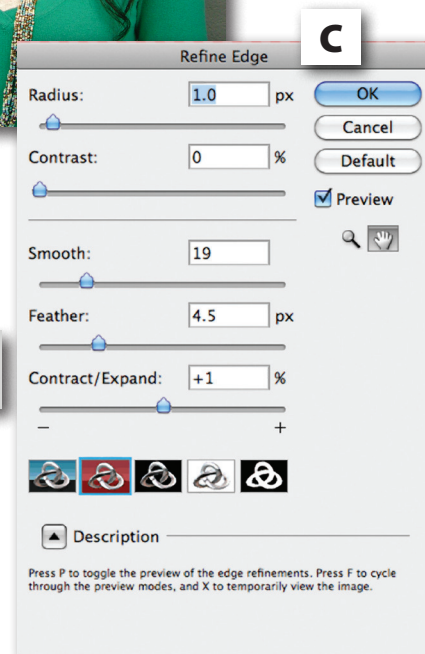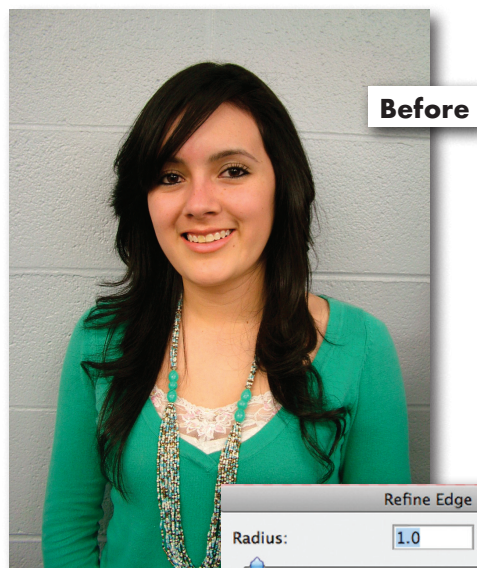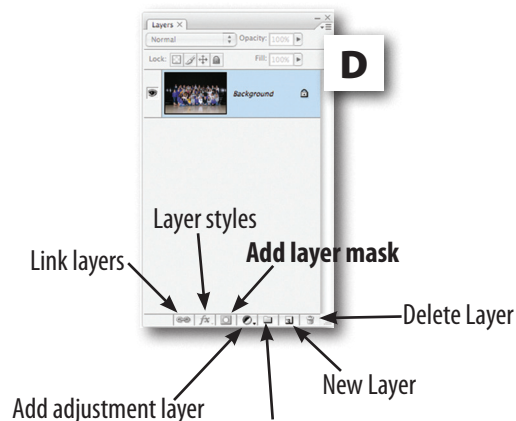
Here is a photo that a fellow rep sent me that she needed to knock out the background and put another one in to replace it so it wouldn't stand out in the senior section. She was having a really hard time getting it to work.

This is going to sound terrible (cause it will sound like I'm bragging—I'm not, really) but I went from the Before photo to the After photo in about three (**that's right 3**) minutes. And the best part is, you can too.

Here's how:

1. Open the photo you want to use.
2. Grab the Quick Selection tool (figure A). If you don't see it, it's under the Magic Wand tool.
3. Start selecting the background area. Don't worry if it picks up too much. We will fix that in a few seconds.
4. Once you have the background selected (don't miss the area under her arms) you may also have some of the girl selected as well. Hold down the Alt (Option on a Mac) key and deselect the areas you don't want.
5. Choose Select>Inverse.
6. Click the Refine Edge button in the Control Bar at the top of the screen. (Figure B)
7. When the Refine Edge dialog box opens, you get to play. I used the settings at right. When I am doing "down and dirty" I like to really smooth and feather. You may want to do less. I will usually do a little contracting to make sure there is no white halo on the subject.
8. Once you have clicked OK in the Refine Edge dialog, you need to make the background layer editable. So hold down the Alt (option on Mac) key and double click the Background Layer in the layers panel. This will automatically change its name to Layer 0.
9. With your selection still selected, apply a layer mask to that layer by clicking the Layer Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers panel. (Figure D).
10. If you still see any area you need to knock out, choose your Brush tool, target the mask and paint with black. It will hide whatever you paint. To reveal something you paint by mistake, paint with white.
11. That's it! Your photo should look like my After shot. If you want to add a background in Photoshop, just open a background photo and using the Move tool, drag it into your portrait. You will then need to drag it below the layer in order to have it become a background.

Before

A

B

Refine Edge...

C

Layers panel parts

D

Layer styles
Link layers
Add layer mask
Delete Layer
Add adjustment layer
New Layer

After w/background

After