



Advanced Graphics

in Serif DrawPlus X5

Cutout Studio

By the end of this task I should know how to...

- 1) remove the background colour from a cartoon graphic
- 2) export (save) a graphic using a transparent file type
- 3) remove the background from a photograph.

Introduction

When using cartoon style graphics on top of coloured backgrounds you may have found that a white square often appears around the graphic. This makes the graphic look out of place as you can tell it has been copied and pasted from another source like the Internet.

To create a graphic with a transparent background requires two stages...



Stage 1 - Remove the white pixels from the background of the original graphic.

Stage 2 - Re-save the graphic using a type of file that supports "transparency", for example *.gif* or *.png*

If all goes well, the graphic can then be used in another document without the white background..

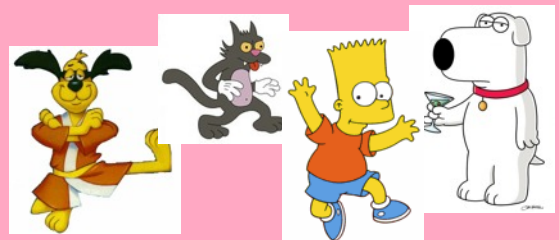
Preparation

Before you can start this worksheet you must find a graphic to experiment with.

Look on the Internet (Google images is a good source) for a graphic of a single cartoon character. The graphic should have a nice plain background, as this is easier to work with.



Bad Examples




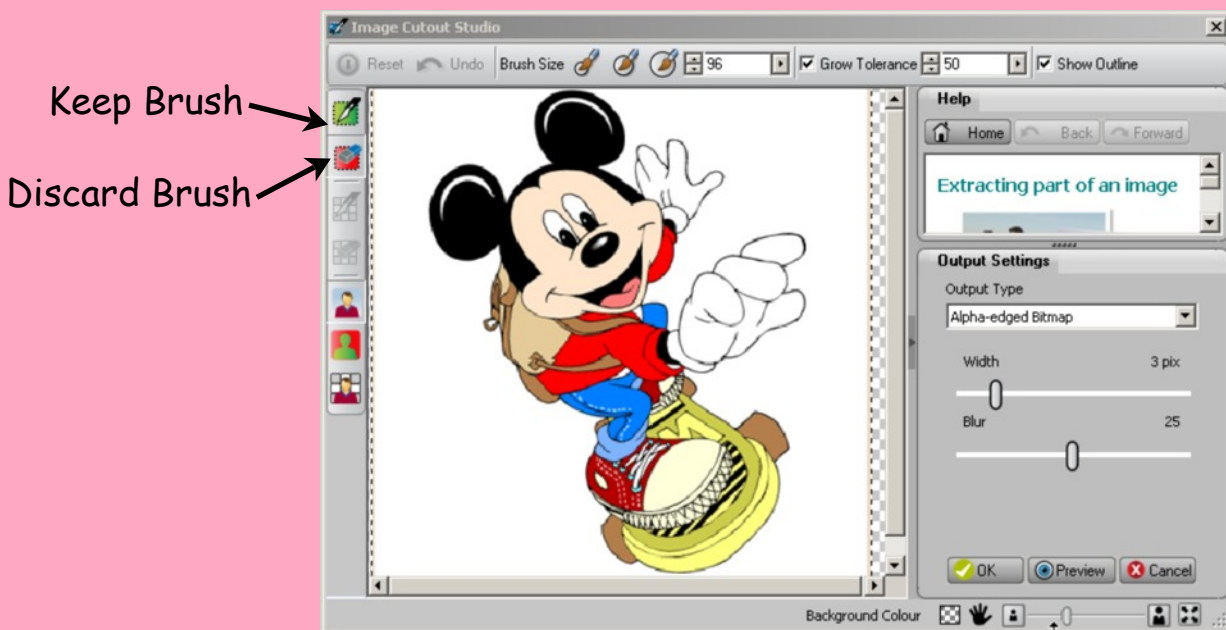
Good Examples

Removing the Background from a Simple Cartoon

Open a new A4, landscape drawing page.

Copy and Paste your cartoon graphic from the Internet browser into Serif DrawPlus.

Cutout Studio is a DrawPlus facility that allows users to remove part of a graphic. In our case this will be the background. To use Cutout Studio, first click on your graphic and then click on the  icon.



To remove the background, select the discard brush tool. Click on the white background and drag the mouse slightly. This selects all the white pixels.

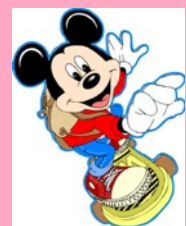
Note - by changing brushes and brush sizes, users can accurately select which parts of the image to keep and which to discard.

When the background has been removed you will see a shimmering line round the cartoon, showing the area you want to keep.



Finally, select the  button.

If successful, you should now see a blue line round your cartoon showing where the new edge of the image is.

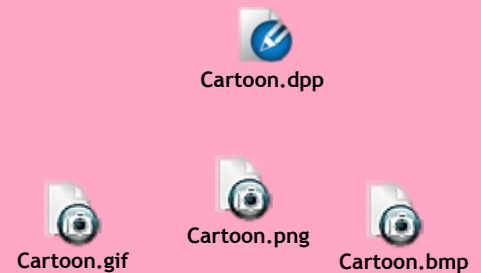


Try - Draw a coloured rectangle and place it behind the cartoon to check if the cartoon graphic has a transparent background

Exporting a Transparent Graphic

Before completing the next task, it helps to understand the difference between saving and exporting a file. Read the information below. If you don't understand them get your teacher to explain it.

- **Saving** a file in DrawPlus creates a Serif DrawPlus file (dpp). This would be useless if you want to use your graphic another application (Word, Powerpoint etc).
- **Exporting** a file allows you to create a standard file format (jpeg, gif, bmp, png) that can then be used in other applications.



Note that we nearly always do both. We save the file so that it can be opened again in DrawPlus if it needs to be edited and we also export the file to use it in other applications and documents.

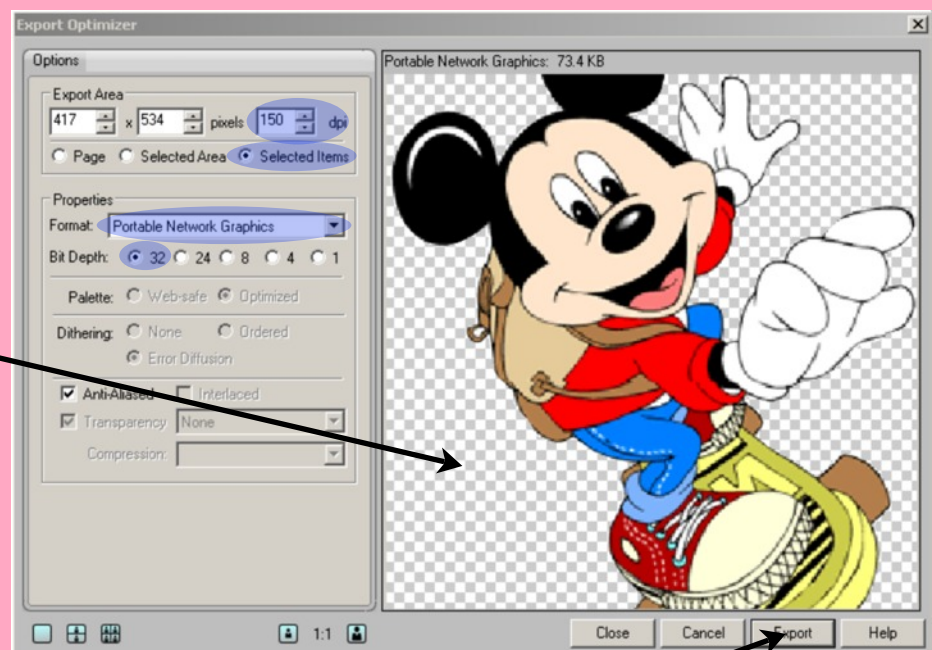
Firstly, save your cartoon graphic as you normally would.

Secondly, click on the File menu, go down to "Export" and select "Export as Image".

Make the changes that have been highlighted in the window below.

When you select Portable Network Graphic (png) you will see that the background of the preview image becomes transparent.

The *bit depth* and *dpi* alter the quality of the graphic. Note that better quality also means larger file sizes.



When you have finished, click "Export" to save the file as a png.

Removing the Background from a Photograph

To do this task we use exactly the same technique you used with the cartoon. However as photographs can contain millions of pixels (dots), all of which are usually slightly different colours, this can be much trickier than it was with the cartoon example.

Insert the picture of Edinburgh Castle into a new drawing document by selecting "Insert" - "Picture" - "From File" from the menus. Your teacher will tell you where it is saved.

Click on the picture and open Cutout Studio.

Start by removing the blue sky. Set the *Grow Tolerance* to 15 and then drag the *Discard Brush Tool* over the blue sky as shown below.



Unlike the cartoon, with its nice plain background, you will see that only some of the sky is removed. To remove the clouds and the rest of the blue, continue to click and drag the mouse over small areas.

When you have removed the sky you should have a nice neat, dotted line running along the top of the castle.



Next we will remove the grass, cliff face and trees from below the castle wall.

When you look closely at the area below the castle wall you will see that there are no blocks of the same colour. Each pixel is different from the pixel next to it. This means that it becomes impossible to select whole areas of the picture.

Try dragging the mouse over a section of the cliff to see what happens.



To remove this area, zoom in close to the bottom of the castle wall and make lots of single mouse clicks along the bottom of the castle wall.

Use the scroll bars to work your way from one side of the graphic to the other.



When you have finished, zoom back out and check that you have selected the correct area right across the picture.



To complete the cutout, zoom right out again and use a large brush to remove the remaining bottom part of the picture. When you have finished click OK to cutout the castle.

Remember if you want to use your finished, cutout photograph in another document you should export it as a transparent file.



Try - This is a skill that takes a lot of practice. Search the Internet for a photo of an animal. Try using Cutout Studio to remove the animal from the photo.