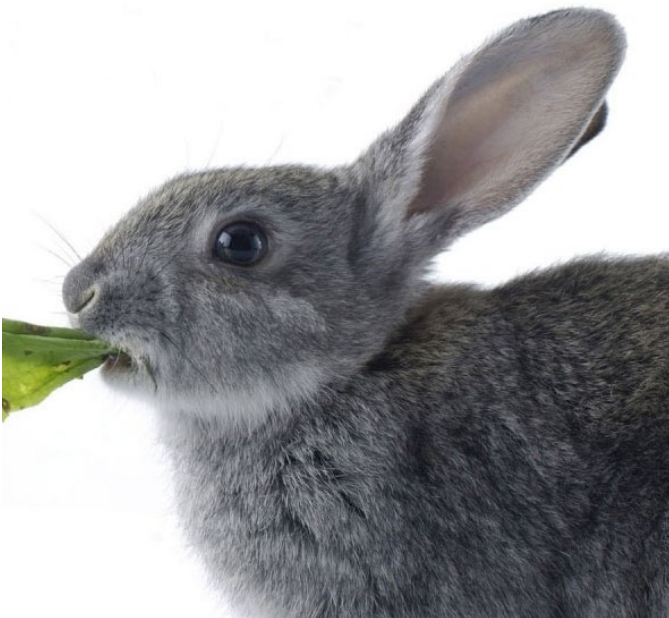# CREATING AN IMPOSSIBLE CREATURE

This lesson is lots of fun and will give you some quick experience with a few of Photoshop's more useful tools. We will all create the same animal during this tutorial, and then you will work independently using the tools and techniques you learn to create a custom image. For this lesson we will be creating a rabbit-headed parrot.

Let's get started by opening up our background image.

1. Open the ic1.jpg file in Photoshop…

2. Open the ic2.jpg file in Photoshop, which is the bunny we using the head from…

Let's take a moment and discuss a few things about our two images:

Keep all of these things in mind when you are choosing your images for your custom animal after completing these instructions as following the suggestions above will make your life much easier.

When we finish these directions we will have a wonderful new creature…

We can call him a Rabrot…or a Parbit…or a Rabparbitrot…or a Parrabrotbit…or just Weird.

Let's get our rabbit head selected so we can move it onto the parrot body.

3. Using the rabbit file, click the Magnetic Lasso Tool…

   Note that if you cannot see the Magnetic Lasso Tool that you likely have the Lasso Tool currently selected – simply right-click on the Lasso Tool to open a pop-up menu…
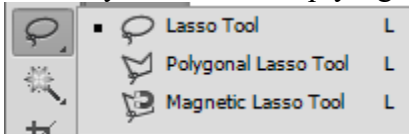
   and click the Magnetic Lasso Tool to select it

4. Start at the tip of the rabbit's ear and click once – notice that Photoshop places a selection box where you clicked…

5. SLOWLY drag down and around the edge of the ear and notice as you do that Photoshop drops selection boxes as you go…


   Don't worry about getting every little piece of it as we will fix any selection error in just a second; also don't worry about his whiskers (we will add them back in later)

6. Continue dragging around the rabbit's entire head – don't worry about being too precise with his neck or mouth…

The Magnetic Lasso Tool works by detecting the contrast between two colors, in this case the light colored background and the dark colored fur, but in the area where there are two dark colors, such as his neck and mouth with the lettuce, Photoshop has difficulty deciding where to place the line. This is not a huge problem as we can easily fix any issues later on.

7. When you have gone all the way around, click back on the spot you started - your rabbit head should now be selected…
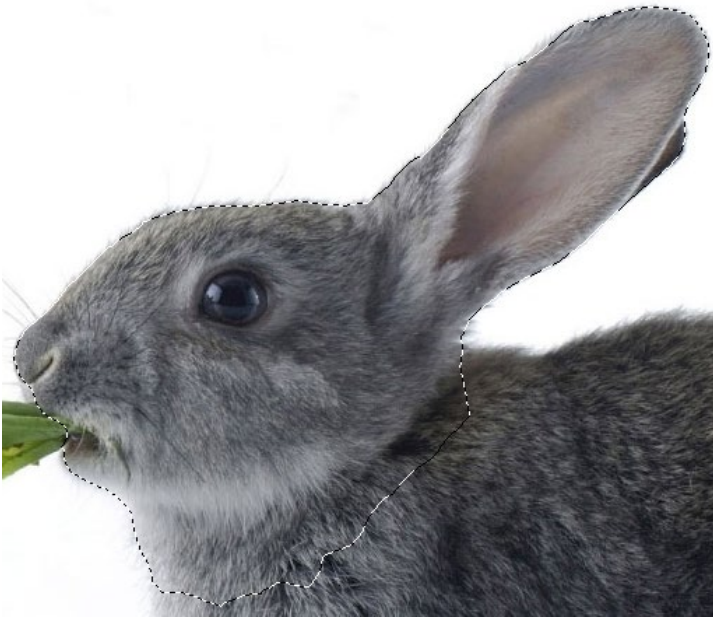
8. Right-click the Magnetic Lasso Tool and select the Lasso Tool…

9. Click the Zoom Tool…

10. Click on the rabbit's nose and drag the mouse to the right to zoom in…

We need to modify our current selection so that it more closely matches our rabbit's head. To add to a selection with the Lasso Tool you need to press and hold the Shift key while clicking and

dragging a line around the area you want to add. To remove pieces from a selection you need to press and hold the Alt key while you click and drag a line around the area you want to remove.

11. Start at his nose and work your way around the outline of the rabbit using the Lasso Tool to either add to or remove from the selection so that you have all of the head selected…


Be as precise as you can with the selection, but be sure to leave some hair around the neck – we will need it to blend in with the parrot's feathers later on

Notice that I did not include the small flap of his back ear that is visible. It really does not matter if you include it or not, I just think it makes for a cleaner selection to leave it out, but if you like it then leave it in.

We need to get our rabbit head onto our parrot.

12. Press Ctrl+C on the keyboard to copy the selected rabbit head onto the computer's clipboard
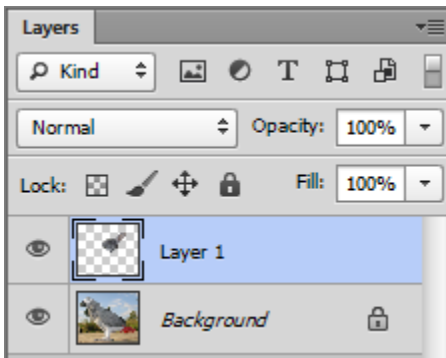13. Click Window on the Menu bar and at the very bottom click ic1.jpg…
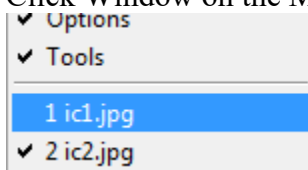
to make the parrot the active image

14. Press Ctrl+V on the keyboard to paste the rabbit head onto the parrot…

notice that Photoshop has inserted a new layer in the Layers panel named Layer 1 and placed the rabbit head on it…

this is helpful as it allows us to make changes to our rabbit head that will not have any impact our the parrot

15. Click the Move Tool…

16. Click on the rabbit head and drag it so that it sits over the parrot's head…

Things are looking pretty good so far. If we compare our rabbit head on our parrot to our original rabbit head we will notice that the rabbit's head is sitting at the wrong angle for the neck. We need to make a quick adjustment to tilt it down just a bit.

17. Click Edit and then click Free Transform…
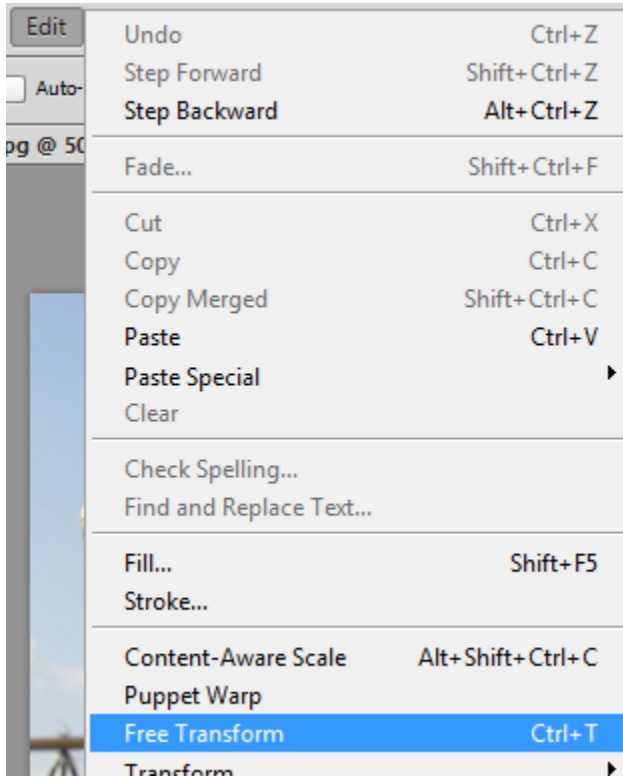
Notice that Photoshop places a box with resize handles around our rabbit's head…
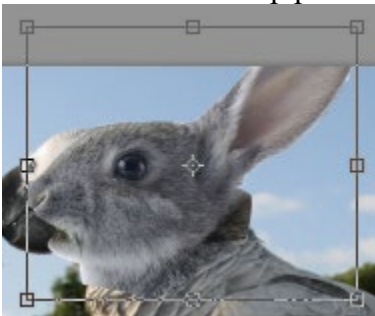
18. Place the cursor just off one of the corner resize handles where the cursor turns to a double-headed arrow…

and drag to the right until the head sits at a better angle…

If you need to reposition the head, simply click inside the box and drag it into place

19. Press Enter to apply the transform
20. The head is a tad bit too small, so click Edit then point at Transform and click Scale…
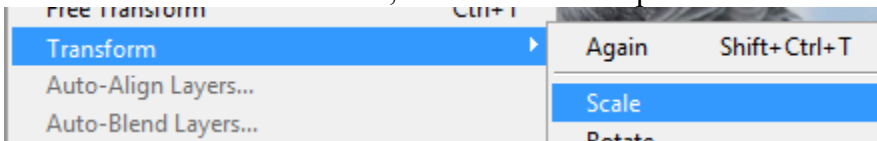
21. Press and hold the Shift key (this will force Photoshop to increase the width and height of the selection at the same time and in the same proportion) while clicking and dragging one of the resize handles to increase the size of the rabbit's head – don't go crazy with this as we only need a slight increase in size
22. Click and drag on the selection to place the head back in the proper place…
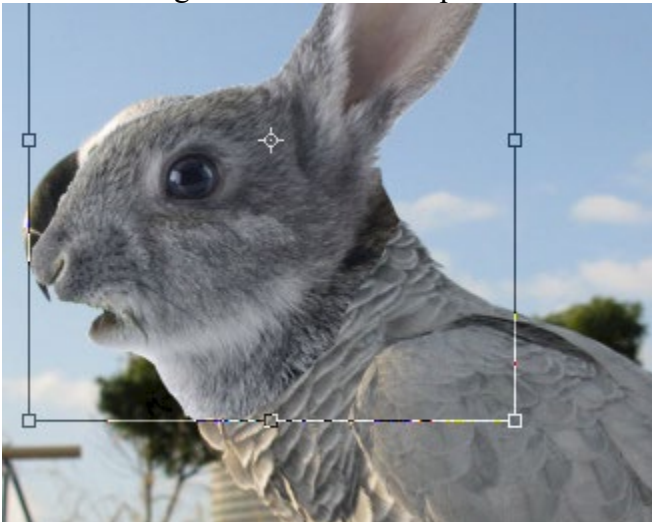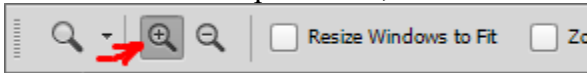

if needed, continue adjusting the size until you get a good result
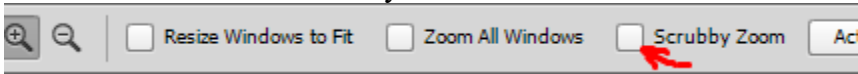23. Press Enter to apply the transform

Let's deal with the fact that we can still see the parrot's head

24. Click the Zoom Tool
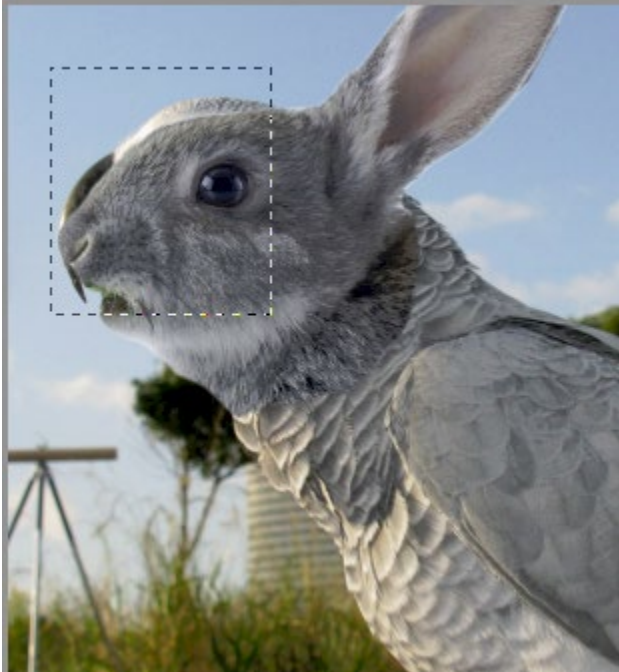
25. In the Zoom Tool options bar, make sure the Zoom In button is selected…

26. Remove the check for Scrubby Zoom…

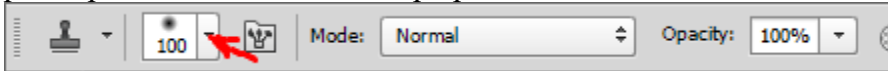27. Click and drag to create a box around the parrot's beak and head…

28. Release the mouse to zoom in on that area…

29. Click the Clone Stamp Tool…

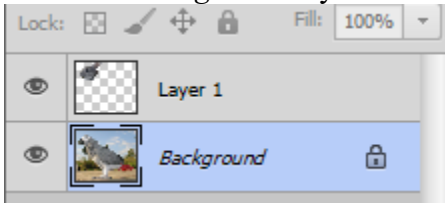30. We need to have a nice, soft edge stamp for this, so click the drop-down arrow on the Brush preset picker on the Clone Stamp options bar…

31. In the Brush preset picker window, click the Soft Round brush and set the size to 40 px…
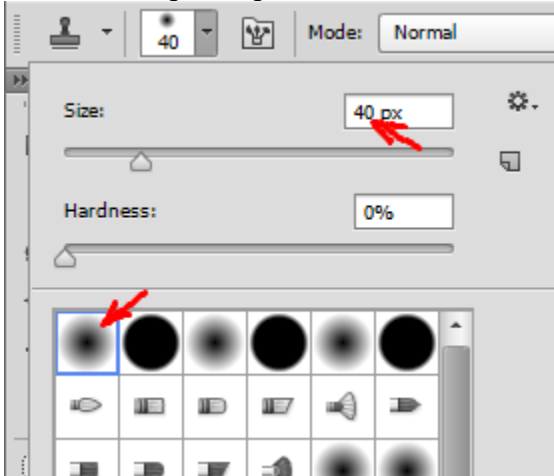
32. Make the *Background* layer the active layer…

33. Press and hold the Alt key then click in the sky just off the parrot's nose then release both buttons, then click on the parrot's beak…

Notice that Photoshop covers up the beak with blue – it is actually pulling colors from where you Alt+clicked and copying them to where you are clicking and dragging

34. Repeat this process until you can no longer see the parrot's beak – you will have to Alt+click multiple times to resample different areas until you have everything removed…

He is already beginning to look like an awesome new animal hybrid, but one glaring problem with the head is that the edge is very sharp. We could have avoided this problem if we had set the Feather option of the Lasso Tool to around 5 pixels when we made the selection originally (we will actually use this setting later in these directions so you can see exactly how they work). If you just said 'Well why didn't we do that? It would have saved a lot of time!' Ummm…actually…no, it wouldn't. The reason is simple: even with a feathered edge there would be small portions of the rabbit's head that we don't want. So we would have to go back and correct the edge any way. This way, we get to learn a few new tools while fixing the edge.

There are multiple ways we can fix this problem, so let's look at two of the easiest.

35. Zoom in on the rabbit's nose and mouth
36. Click the Eraser Tool…

37. Change the brush to Soft Round and the size to 20 px
38. Click Layer 1 (the layer with the rabbit head) to make it the active layer
39. Notice in the image below that my rabbit has multiple areas where you can see unnecessary color, such as the white that is visible in many areas and the green that is left over from the lettuce that was in the rabbit's mouth (your rabbit will have different areas as your selection was slightly different from mine)…

Use the Eraser Tool to remove these areas of extraneous (if you don't know what that means: dictionary.com) color – don't worry about areas of the rabbit's head that have a hard edge but do not need color removed, we will use a different method to smooth them out in a future step – you should end up with something like this…

Notice that the areas that we worked on now appear much smoother and blend in much better with the background (also notice that the bottom lip still has a rather sharp edge on it, hang on, we are getting to that)

40. Using the Eraser Tool, work around the entire head removing unnecessary color and smoothing out the edge – again, don't worry about areas that do not need to have color removed

41. To fix the hard edge on areas with correct color, click the Blur Tool…

and choose the Soft Round brush with a size of 10 px with Strength set to 100%...
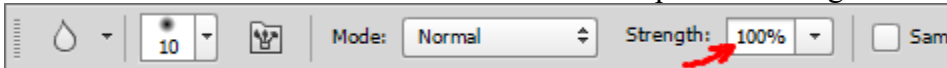
42. Zoom in on your rabbit's head and find an area with a sharp edge (like his bottom lip) then position your brush over the edge and click once to add a slight blur to the edge – be sure you are just clicking and not clicking and dragging as this will create a large area of distortion instead of serving to blend the edge into the background

43. Work your way around your rabbit's head again correcting any remaining hard edges

When finished you should have something similar to the image below…

At this point the rabbit head is a little too dark to look natural against the parrot's breast feathers. This is easily fixed.

44. Click Image then point at Adjustments and click Levels…
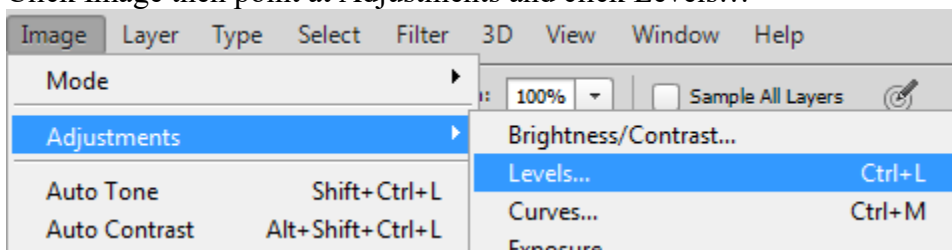

to open the Levels window

45. Click and drag the gray arrow under the Input Levels section to the left; you do not have to move it far – to about 1.20 will work best…
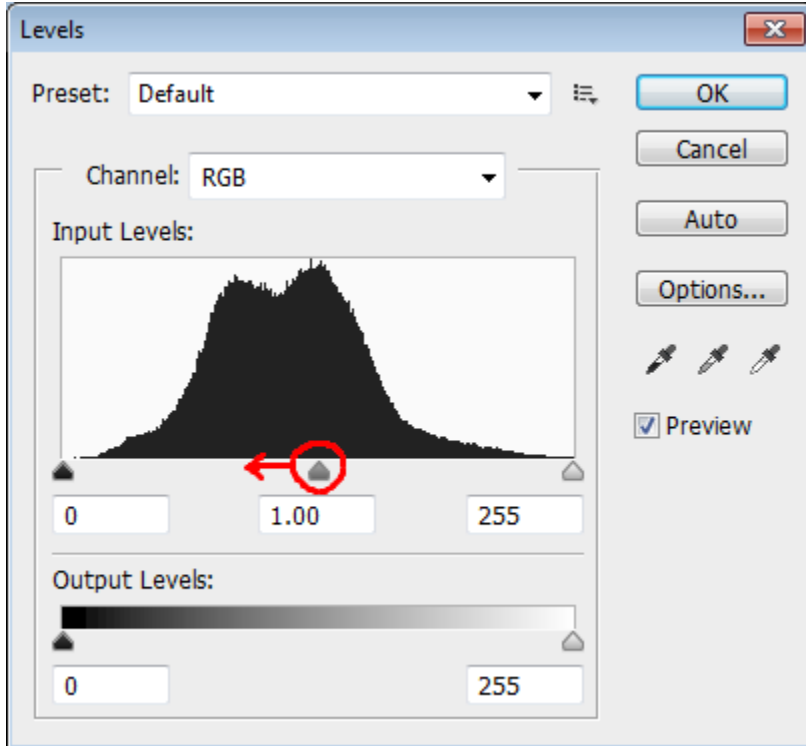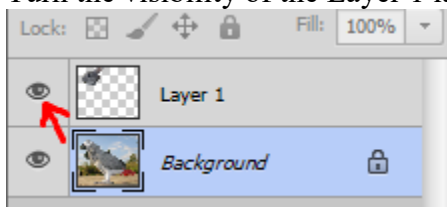

46. Click OK

Now let's deal with the neck area. The easiest solution to get the two animals to blend together is to set it so that both are visible at the same time. We can easily accomplish this by modifying the opacity of a layer.

47. Click the Lasso Tool
48. Set the Feather option to 5px…
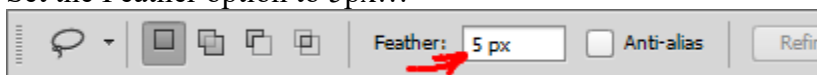
49. Turn the visibility of the Layer 1 layer off by clicking the layer visibility icon…

Note that turning off the layer's visibility only makes the layer invisible and does not actually get rid of it – you can make the layer visible again by clicking back on the layer visibility icon
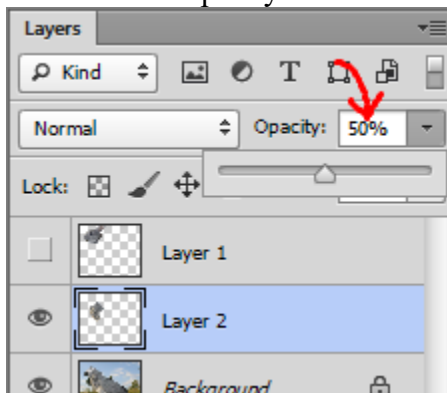50. Make the *Background* layer the active layer

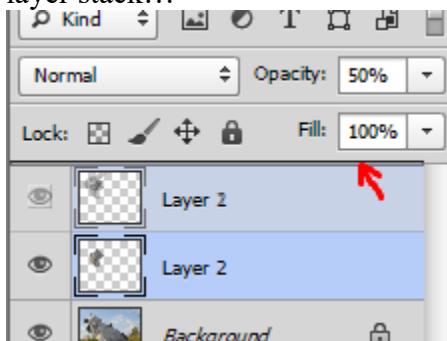51. Use the Lasso Tool to select the parrot's neck…

52. Press Ctrl+C to copy the selection
53. Press Ctrl+V to paste the selection – notice that Photoshop places it on a new layer named Layer 2
54. Decrease the Opacity of this new layer to 50%...

55. Click on Layer 2 and drag it up in the layer stack until you see a black line at the top of the layer stack…

this line indicates the new location of the currently selected layer when you release the mouse button
56. Release the mouse button to place Layer 2 at the top of the layer stack
57. Turn the visibility of Layer 1 back on – keep Layer 2 the active layer

58. Zoom in on the neck and notice that the parrot's feathers do not extend all the way to the edge of the rabbit's neck…

59. Use the Clone Stamp Tool to extend the neck feathers to the edge of the rabbit's neck…

60. Zoom out and use the Eraser Tool with a soft round brush to remove any extra feathers over your rabbit's face or any solid edges that may be visible…
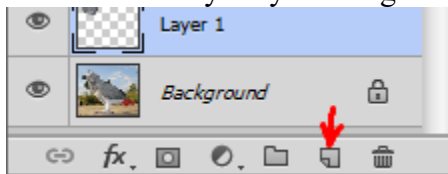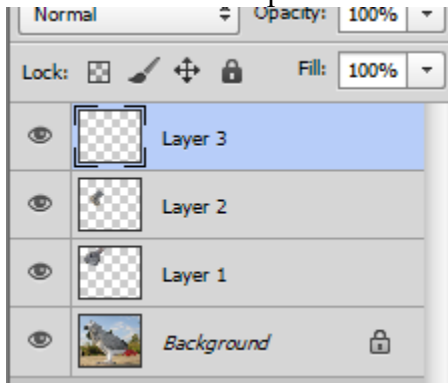
so that you have something like this…

Our final task is to give or hybrid beast back his whiskers.

61. Zoom in on the rabbit's face so that you can see about what you see in the above image

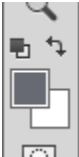62. Create a new layer by clicking the Create a new layer icon on the Layers palette…

notice that Photoshop inserts a new layer at the top of the layer stack and names it Layer 3…
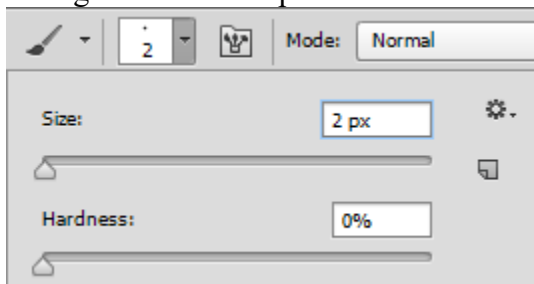

63. Click the Eyedropper Tool…

then point at the rabbit's cheek and click – notice that your Foreground color now matches the color in the spot you clicked…
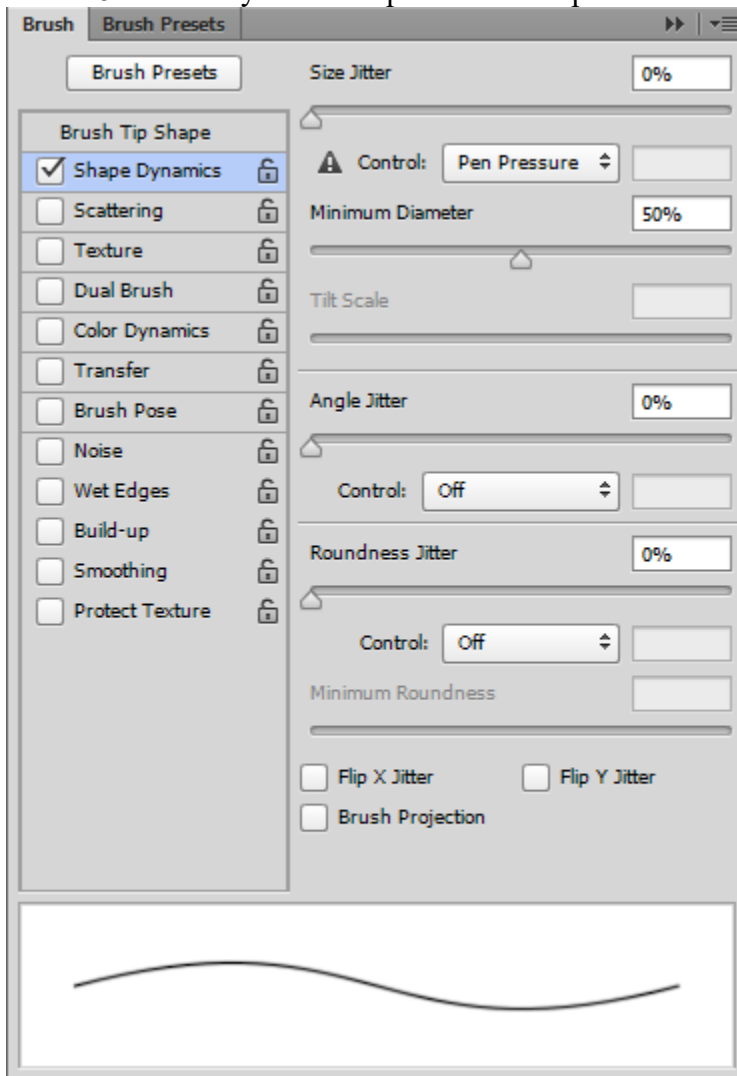

64. Click the Brush Tool…

65. Change the Size to 2 px…

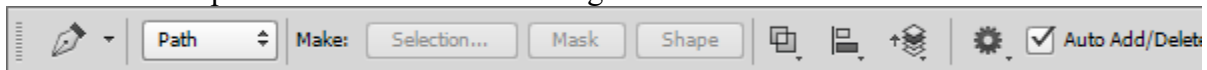66. Press F5 on the keyboard to open the Brush panel…

67. Activate Shape Dynamics – click the checkbox like in the image above – and make the rest of the settings match those in the image above
68. Click the Pen Tool…

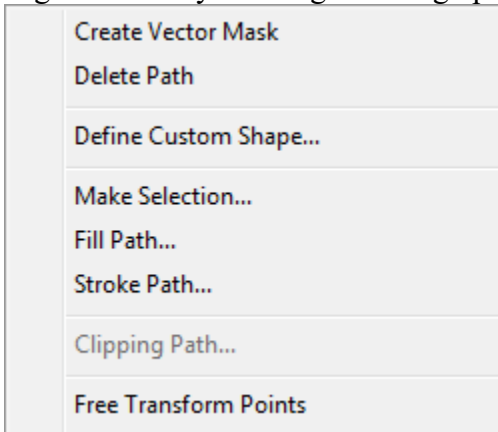69. Make sure the options match those in the image below…

70. Click at the end of one of the whiskers to drop an anchor point, then click and drag to place another point and create a curved whisker between the two points…

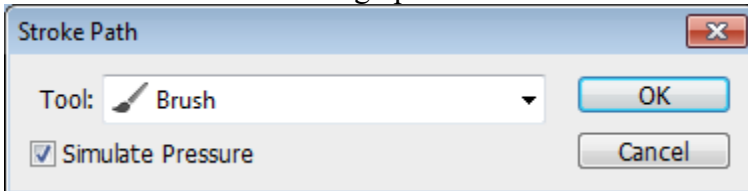You should now have a line similar to the image above

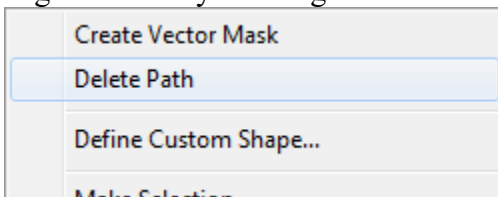71. Right-click on your image to bring up the following menu…

72. Click Stroke Path… to bring up the Stroke Path window…

73. Click the drop-down arrow and choose Brush (if it is not already selected) and make sure the Simulate Pressure box is checked (as in the image above)
74. Click OK
75. Right-click on your image and click Delete Path…

which should leave you with just your image and a nice new whisker…

76. Repeat the above process until you have given him a nice set of replacement whiskers…

You can open the original rabbit image and try to reproduce the whiskers if you wish, or you can just add them in wherever you like

77. Reduce the Opacity of the whisker layer to 40% to thin them out a little

Our impossible creature is complete…

78. Add the file to you portfolio!

A few reminders for your custom impossible creature:
- Try to choose two animals close in color; it will make your life much easier.
- If you insist on two animals that are not close in color, keep in mind that you can use Hue/Saturation (Image > Adjustments > Hue/Saturation) or Color Balance (Image > Adjustments > Color Balance) to modify the tint of your animal's skin/hair/fur/feathers (if you are going to do this it is best to do it on the head instead of on the body).
- Be careful of feathers and fur – if the head has too many individual feathers or individual strands of hair/fur you will spend forever trying to get a good selection.
- Watch out for whiskers – you don't want to spend hours having to replace tons of whiskers.
- Once you have chosen and saved your two animals to your student folder, let the teacher know you are ready to have them approved (to make sure that what you are trying to pull off is not impossible or will take too long). Do not start building your impossible creature until I have approved your choices.
- Be sure to resize the head so that it is in proportion with the body.
- Remember that what you are going for here is realism – you want viewers to concentrate on the oddity of the creature and not instantly be able to spot how you brought them together or see flaws.

- Always be sure you are working with the correct layer (whatever layer you are editing will be highlighted in blue).