

CANVAS PHOTOS EMBELLISHMENTS TITLE JOURNALING

The Challenge (#6): when the photo background must go

While there are times when the background of your photo includes useful context, other times, it's just a distraction.

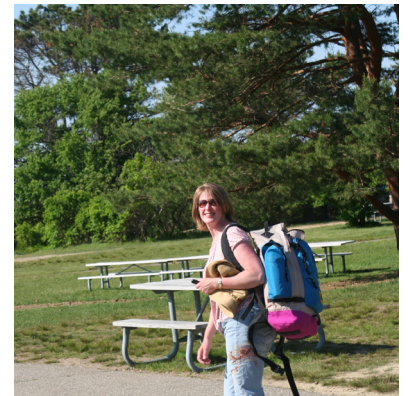
alter or remove the photo background when

- it's not relevant to your story
- the place and details do not matter
- it's busy and distracting

ways to handle a less-than-stellar background

- cut your subject completely out

"I came 2" is a layout from a field trip I recently chaperoned. My son took a couple of photos of me afterward--as we walked to the parking lot. You can see picnic tables in the background--not really exciting material, and yet, I wanted to record that I was along for the two-day endeavor. I cut "me" out and "stickerized" myself then layered that sticker over a photo of a typical scene from the trip. Notice I wasn't precise with my cutout. Keeping it edgy was quicker and gave it a fun look.



If you have a photo-editing software like Photoshop you can use tools (Magnetic Lasso, Magic Wand, and Quick Select) to select your subject. Then select the inverse and delete it. To create the sticker effect, you could 1) print it to white paper and then cut it out with a narrow white edge or 2) select the cutout area again, expand your selection, add a layer beneath the cut out and fill with white.

If you're working with paper and scissors -- cut your subject out, mount on white paper, and cut a narrow mat with similar angles. Note that you don't need a precise cut -- cutting it out with some angles gives it a fun look.

- *distress or alter the background*

Consider changing up the background with: sanding, bleach, rub-ons, paint or any other medium you want to experiment with. The photo of my brother's children in "Today" doesn't have a particularly egregious background, but I really wanted the focus on my nieces and nephew for a pretty gift page. I used a sponge and yellow acrylic paint to cover the area around them -- as well as some of the clothing at the bottom which is bright and distracting.



- edit the background with photo-editing software

To set your subject off from the background try:

- ◇ lightening
- ◇ blurring
- ◇ cloning
- ◇ adding an artistic effect

The series of photos are right are from a Labor Day picnic. I wanted to emphasize the kids in the foreground getting food and yakking. I selected the kids and the table. I then FEATHERED my selection. Feathering is important for ensuring that you don't have a visible line between your subjects and your altered background. I copied this selection to a new upper layer, and then I went to work on the background.

The second photo shows the background lightened and blurred, and in the third version, the whole background has been turned into a sketch.

YOUR CHALLENGE: Scrap a photo in which you've done something to lessen, remove, alter the background.

