

PHOTOSHOP

Basic editing of digital photographs

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This handout covers typical adjustments to a photograph that are often required to make it ready for presentation, printing or display.

What does it involve?

Adjusting colour cast

Adjusting tonal balance/contrast

Cropping

Saving as a Photoshop file (*PSD*)

Saving as a *JPEG* file

Tonal balance and contrast will be achieved by using Adjustment Layers. These are special layers that, when placed in the Layers palette, affect the look of layers in the layer stack beneath them.

The advantage of using Adjustment Layers is that they do not physically alter the image. Affects applied with Adjustment Layers are completely editable and removable. This form of editing is referred to as 'non-destructive editing'.

What does tonal balance/contrast, colour cast and cropping mean?

Colour cast

Digital photos, whether they come from a camera or scanner, can often have a colour cast. Colour cast means that the colours of an image are dominated by a particular colour in the colour spectrum. For instance, photos taken in daylight often look slightly blue and photos taken indoors with ordinary electric light can look yellow. By adjusting the colour cast it is possible to make the colours look more natural.

Tonal balance/contrast

This is the balance of light in an image and is different from changing the colour of an image. Changing the tonal balance enables you to make the shadows and highlights lighter or darker. Photos direct from camera or scanner can look tonally 'flat'. Adding extra contrast can make the photograph have more presence.

Cropping

Cropping is cutting away the outer edge of an image. This removes unwanted visual elements and brings more attention to the main subject of the photo.

There are two parts to the Colour Balance adjustment – Tonal range and the Colour sliders.



The colour sliders part has three sliders, which are labelled by colour names. The pair of colours on each slider are at opposite ends of the colour spectrum. By moving the pointer on each slider it is possible to introduce more or less of each colour into your image.

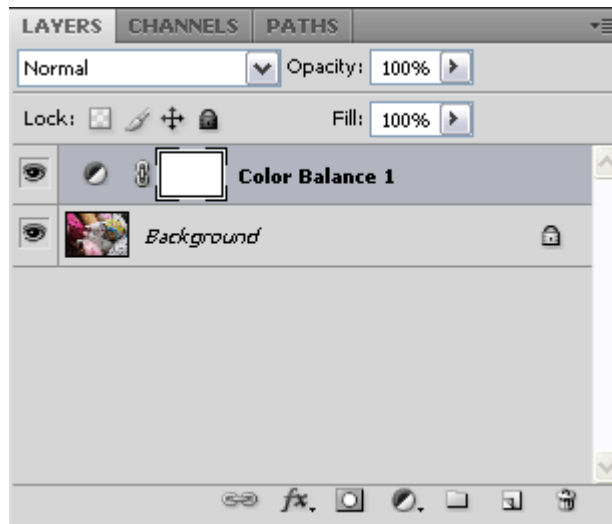
The tonal range part is divided into Shadows, Midtones and Highlights. By choosing one of these options it is possible then to change the colour for that tonal range by moving the colour sliders. For instance, by choosing Shadows, it is possible to make the darker areas of your photo look more red or blue by use of the colour sliders.

Start with the Midtones option and move the colour sliders to adjust the colour of your image. Then try the other tone options in turn. Sometimes, satisfactory results can be achieved by just using the Midtones option. Adjustments that are made can be seen in your document window.

Note: to maintain a natural look to the colours only slight adjustments are necessary.

How is the adjustment working?

In the Layers palette, there will now be an extra layer labelled Colour Balance. This is the Adjustment Layer. It works as if it were a filter through which you are viewing the image. Any image elements in layers beneath the Adjustment Layer will be affected.



The visibility of the Adjustment Layer can be turned off like any other layer.

Tonal Balance

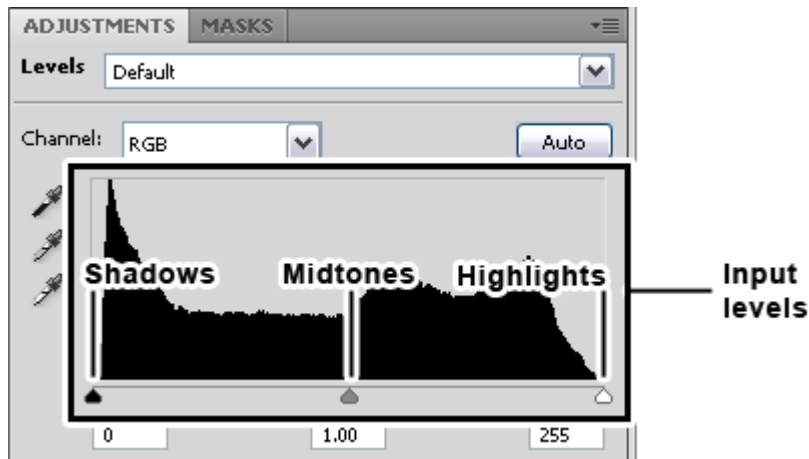
Tonal adjustments can be achieved by use of the Levels Adjustment.

To access the Levels, use one of the methods below:

- In the Layers palette click on the Adjustment Layer icon and choose Levels from the drop down list.
- In the Adjustments panel, click on the icon for Levels.

The Levels window is more complex than the Colour Balance window but in order to keep things simple we will concentrate on the Input Levels section, using the Channel set to RGB. Often this is the only feature required from Levels.

If you feel the colour balance of an image is to your liking then making an adjustment may be the only thing you need to do..

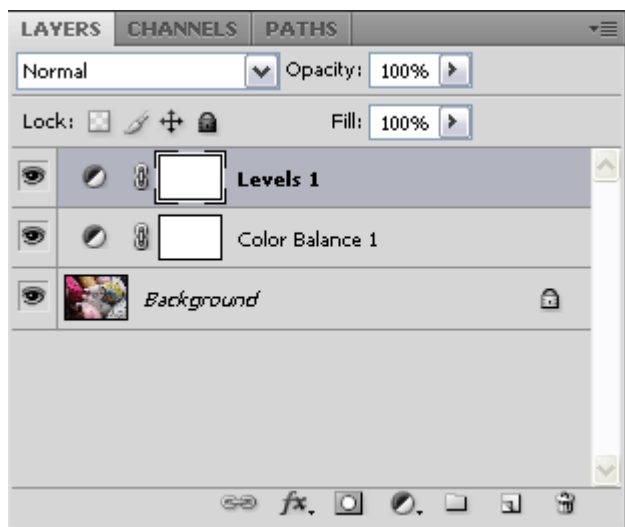


The main part of the Levels window contains a graph or histogram that represents the amount of tones from black to white in your image; shadows are to the left and highlights to the right. Beneath the histogram are three pointers on a slider. The left one adjusts shadows, the middle adjusts midtones and the right adjusts highlights. Moving them to the right increases dark tones and moving to the left increases light tones.

You can increase the overall tonal contrast by moving the shadow and highlight sliders slightly towards each other. Further adjustment can be made by then moving the midtone slider, if required.

What is happening in the Layers palette?

Your Layers palette should now look something like this:



Two extra layers are now present in the Layers palette, one for Colour Balance and one for Levels. You can see the difference made to the image by turning the visibility of these layers off and back on again. Do this by clicking on the Layer Visibility icons next to each layer in the Layers palette.

To readjust settings made by the adjustments

Select the Adjustment Layer in the Layers palette and make changes from the Adjustments panel.

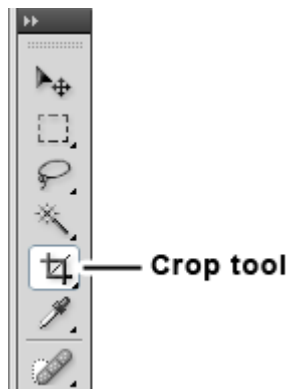
3. Save your document as a *PSD* file.

The document began as a *JPEG* file but, by making changes to it by adding extra layers, Photoshop will want to save it as a Photoshop file (*PSD*). By saving it as a Photoshop file all current layers and settings will be preserved. If you were to save the file as a *JPEG* at this point, then the changes would be applied but the layers will not be preserved. *JPEG* documents cannot have more than one layer.

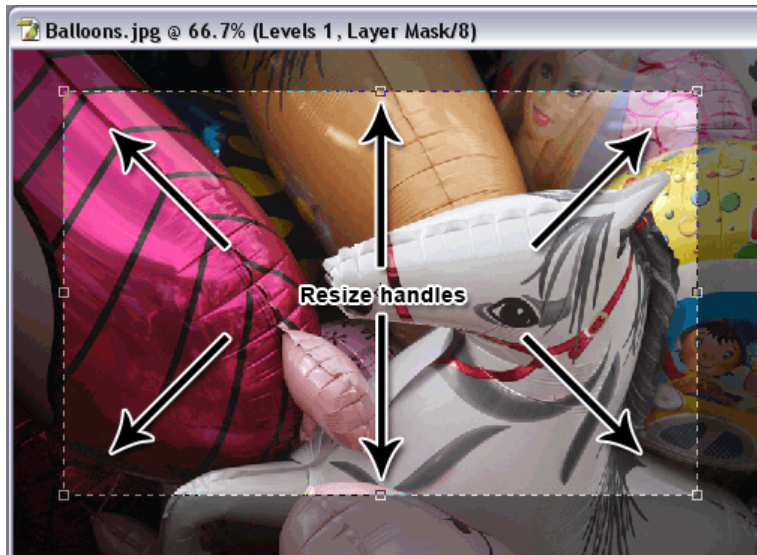
*It is important to preserve the original photo and not overwrite it. If you wish to create a *JPEG* file from the Photoshop file then use the Save As option and give it a different name from the original jpeg.*

4. Cropping

This can be done as required. Select the Crop tool from the Toolbox and click and drag over the document window. This will draw a marquee that can be resized by moving the resize handles. Click and drag inside the marquee to reposition it if necessary.



The Cropping marquee can also be rotated. This is useful if you need to straighten an image as well as cropping it. To rotate the crop marquee, move the cursor outside of the marquee. The cursor now turns into a bent double headed arrow. Click and drag and the marquee will rotate around its centre.



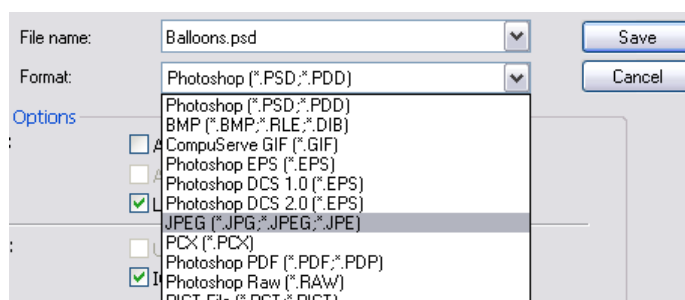
Apply the crop by pressing the Return/Enter key or by double clicking inside the box.

5. Save the document.

6. Save as a *JPEG* file if required

You may wish to save your Photoshop file as a *JPEG*. Why would you need to do this? To email it, insert it into a web page, view it on a computer that does not have Photoshop installed or to view it in another programme that cannot open Photoshop files.

Go to File > Save As. You will need to change the format that the file is saved in. Do this by selecting *JPEG/JPG* from the file Format drop down list in the Save As window. Remember: *do not to overwrite the original JPG file*. This can be avoided by giving it a different file name from the original.



If you have done this last option, *you will now have three separate files of your image*: the original *JPEG* photo file, a Photoshop file and a final *JPEG* file from the changes that you made in Photoshop.

If you need to make changes in future to your image, you can either open up the original photo and begin the process described above or open the Photoshop file and make changes from there.