

Improving image impact

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Introduction

IMAGES WITH IMPACT



Wow images



More subtle images
you might want to
hang on your wall

- Impact is hard to define and varies between individuals
- Also different types of impact
- But some common themes
- Some impactful images can only be taken with skill and by being in the right place at the right time
- Others can be created by anyone



Iconic images



Emotional
impact

FEATURES OF IMAGES WITH IMPACT

- two views from the web

- See the **light**
- **Compose** images creatively
- Incorporate **visual design**
- Create visual **depth**
- Capture gestures
- Use expressive techniques

- Introduce **depth** into your photos
- **Isolate** elements in the frame
- Use **colour** for better composition
- **Light** is key

- Look on web can see lots of stuff on creating image impact
- These are just two people's thoughts on key features
- With some common themes
- Some of these can only be secured at image capture
- But some can be created or enhanced in post processing

CREATING IMPACT

Composition Notes

Compositional strength

- Think about "rules"
- Visual design
- Create depth
- Isolate subject
- Decisive moment

Tonality Notes

Tonal impact

- Does the subject stand out
- Detail where it needs to be
- Drama or soft pastel
- Blocked shadows/blown highlights (unless deliberate)

Layers and Masks Notes

Creative layers

- Can white or coloured layers help to improve impact
- Getting creative with composites
- Changing colour or colour tone

Some of these can only be got right at image capture stage

But you can also do things in post processing

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SOME USEFUL POST PROCESSING TOOLS TO IMPROVE IMPACT

- Cropping and rotation
 - Better composition to help lead the eye through the picture
 - Improve focus on the main subject
 - Less is more - remove clutter to isolate the main elements
- Creating mood and impact by changing tonal range globally or selectively
- Careful colour changes – colour temp or change colour of subject (red coat !)
- Getting creative through use of layers and layer masks to improve impact – selective blur/colour layers

Remove distractions through cloning or cropping



Top compositional tips
from Rex Darby



TOP TEN TIPS FROM REX DARBY

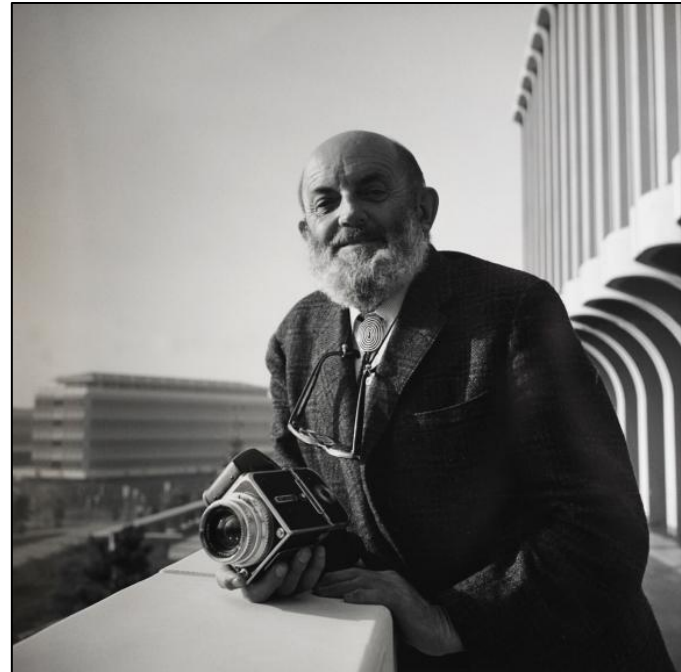
1. Use the thirds
2. Use strong patterns
3. Use texture
4. Use blur creatively
5. Find quiet horizontal pictures
6. Find dynamic vertical pictures
7. Use space lines and space curves to show recession through landscapes
8. Use triangles and diagonals to help construct your pictures
9. Look for pictures in only 2 or 3 tones.
10. Try to use really strong lines of composition throughout your work



Tonal range

ANSEL ADAMS WAS THE MASTER OF TONALITY

- Ansel Adams is well known for spending a whole day in the darkroom, just to produce one print.
- 50% of his creative process occurred in the Dark Room
- He pioneered the zone system, which we loosely know today as burning and dodging. He would paint onto the enlarger the areas of the photo he thought should be darker or lighter than others.



“Dodging and burning are steps to take care of mistakes God made in establishing tonal relationships.”

AN EXAMPLE OF TONAL CORRECTION

(Alan Ross – an assistant to Ansel Adams)



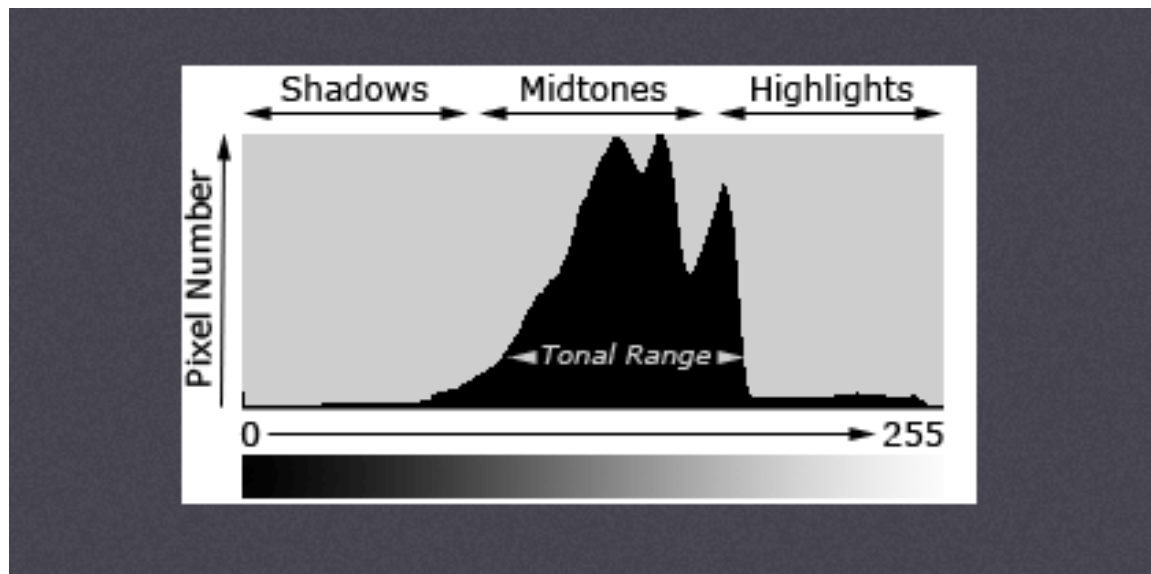
A - Straight Print



B - Final "visualized" Print

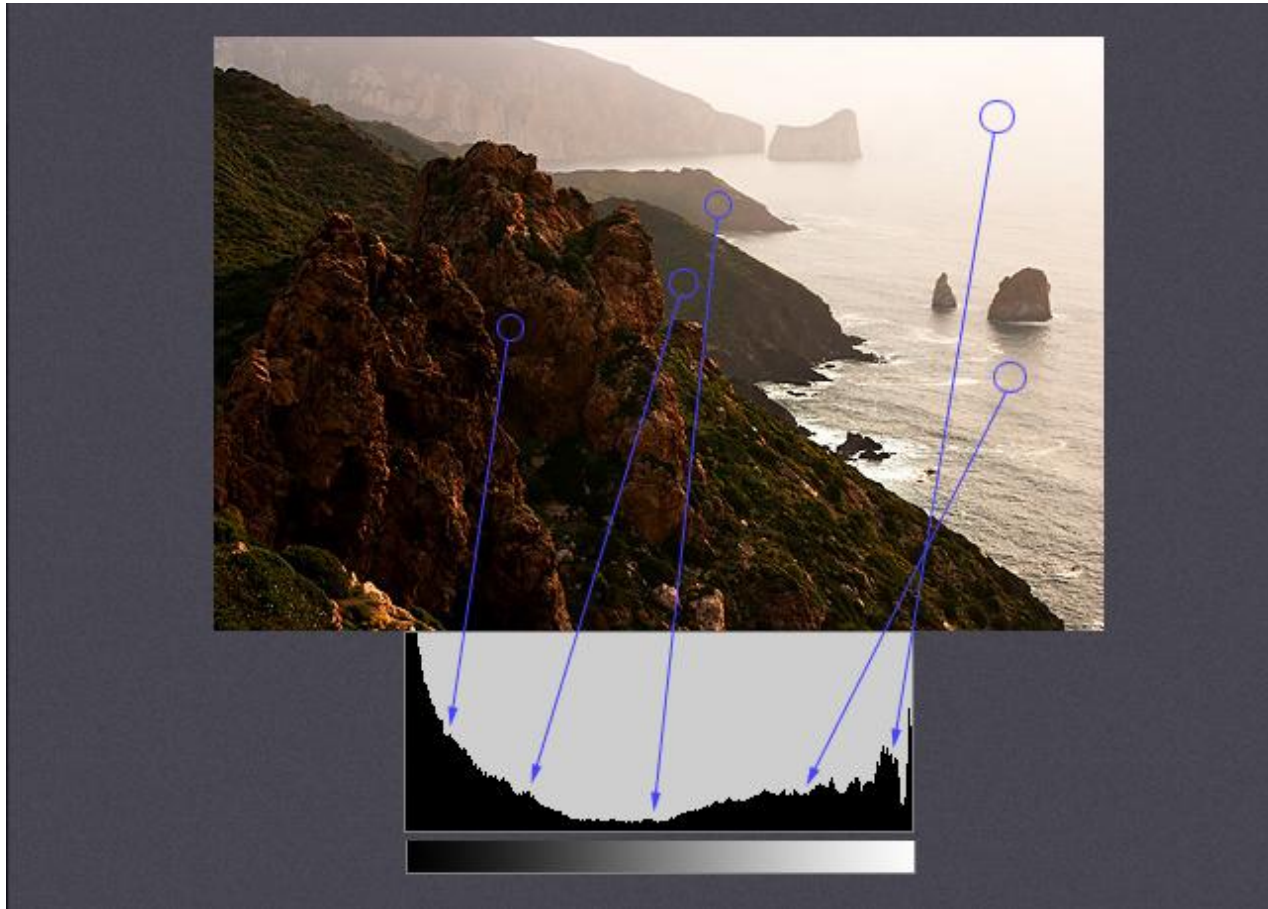
Particularly important for mono but works for colour too

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE HISTOGRAM



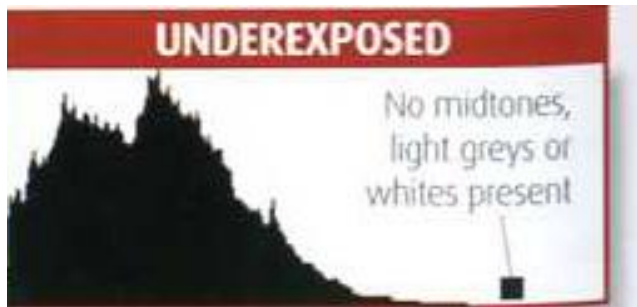
- The histogram helps you understand your image
- Shows distribution of light and dark pixels
- Each pixel has a brightness level from 0 (pure black) to 255 (pure white)
- Useful in making post production changes

HISTOGRAM ILLUSTRATION



Example showing how the tonal values of each part of the image match to the histogram

USING THE HISTOGRAM



Note that sometimes you may wish to have low key image with pure blacks for drama or silhouette effects



The normal "ideal" exposure

Note that sometimes you may wish to have high key image with pure white for soft effect

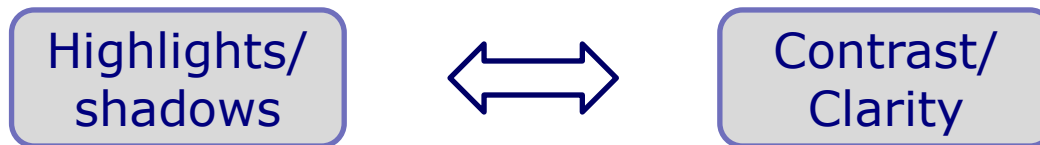
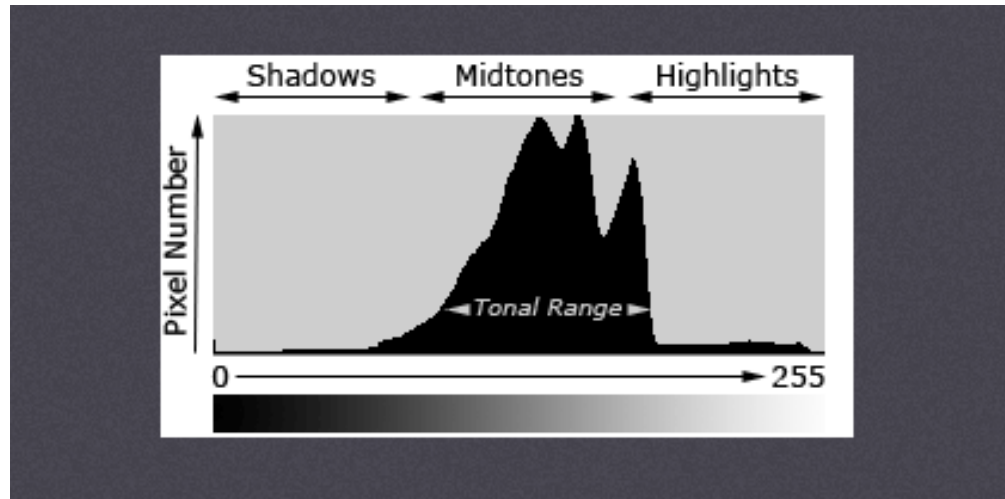


WHOLE IMAGE OR SELECTIVE MODIFICATION

- All software allows you to make tonal corrections on the whole image – provides a good first start
- But usually better to make selective adjustments to only part of the image
- In some software this can be done on the raw file in others it has to be done on a Jpeg file (raw file much better)
- The way to do this varies between software but typically
 - Using masks/brushes to highlight certain areas and then applying the tonal adjustment just to this part of the image
 - In PS creating a new layer to which the correction is made and then using a mask to selectively change which bits of the image the adjustment applies to
- The available tools will vary between software and the names may be different but essentially do the same thing
- Check what is available in your software and understand what each does

Remember Ansel Adams

THE TONAL TOOLS ALL INTERACT



See appendix for more information on each tool



Using layers and layer masks to create impact

USING A WHITE LAYER



SOFT PASTEL IMAGES

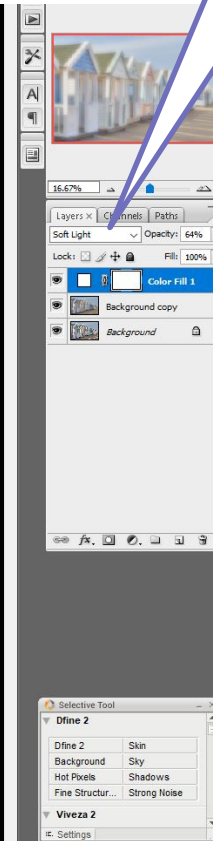
- Duplicate the background layer
- Apply 'Gaussian Blur' to copy layer
- Reduce opacity, or use 'Multiply' blend mode and adjustment layer to lighten overall tones
- Create top empty layer and fill with white. Use 'Soft Light' blend mode. Adjust opacity to suit.



MAKING PASTEL IMAGES



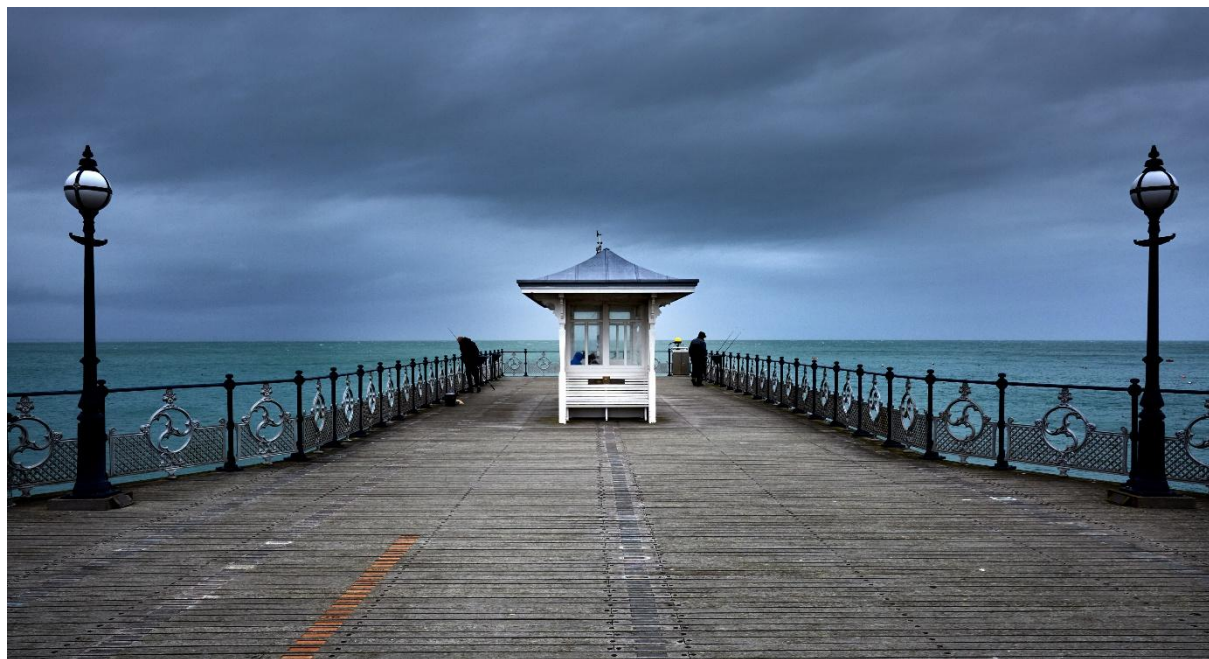
BLENDING MODES



Drop down
box for
blending
mode

BLACK LAYERS AS WELL

Masked
black layer
with soft
light





Some examples

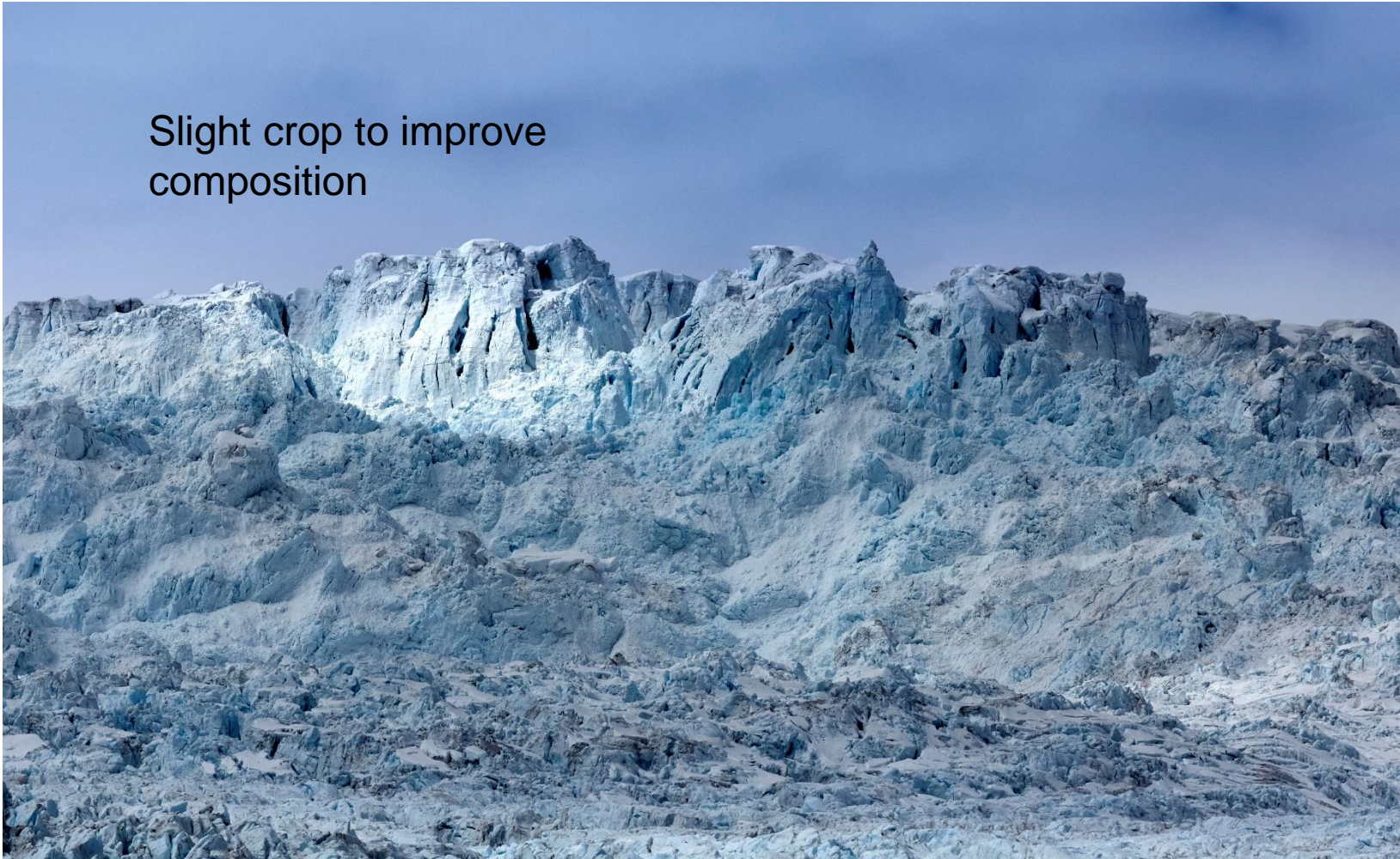
BY WAY OF SIMPLE EXAMPLE 1



Raw file

BY WAY OF SIMPLE EXAMPLE 1

Slight crop to improve composition



Levels/highlights/shadows/clarity

Plus mask to sky for further tonal adjustments

BY WAY OF SIMPLE EXAMPLE 2



BY WAY OF SIMPLE EXAMPLE 3



Raw file



Crop and straighten

BY WAY OF SIMPLE EXAMPLE 3





Now its your turn!

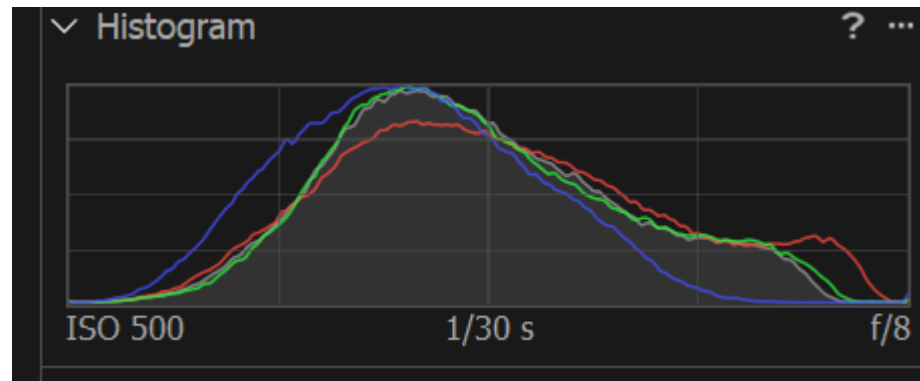
1. **Either**
 1. Look critically at images you have brought to see how you can increase impact
 2. Try with the examples provided to see what can be done
2. **Think about**
 1. Cropping and rotation to improve composition
 2. Cloning out obvious distractions
 3. Trying tonal adjustments to focus more on main subject
 4. Trying a masked white/black colour layer to see what it does
3. **Discuss and share tips with colleagues**



Appendix 1- Reminder of
the tools for tonal
adjustment

EXPOSURE/BRIGHTNESS ADJUSTMENT

- Exposure slider essentially mimics what happens in camera. It scales the settings up and down by a constant factor
- Brightness adjusts mainly the midtones but preserves the highlights better than simply changing the exposure. It tends to improve the midtones better compared to just changing the exposure
- If image taken in bright sunlight reducing “brightness” allows better overall tonal adjustments



LEVELS ADJUSTMENT

Using the Levels Tool

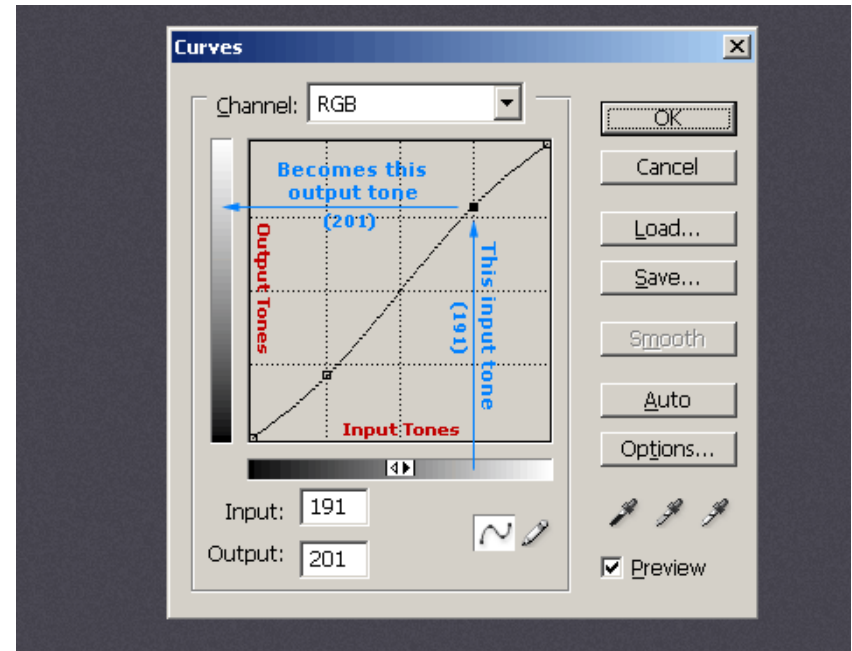


The left image is straight out of the camera and shows both lens flare and some degree of underexposure. The right image is after correction in the Levels Tool.

- The levels tool allows you to “stretch” the histogram thus gaining a whole range of tones from pure black to pure white
- Can also change the midtones
- Creates a more dynamic/contrasty image
- In some software called simply “white/black” tools

CURVES ADJUSTMENT

- The levels tool only allows changes to:
 - Black point
 - White point
 - Mid tone (grey)
- The curves tool allows you to selectively brighten or darken any particular pixel brightness value
- Can adjust tonality of all colours (RGB) or selective colour channels
- An S shaped curve can give added contrast to the image
- Or can brighten/darken mid tones

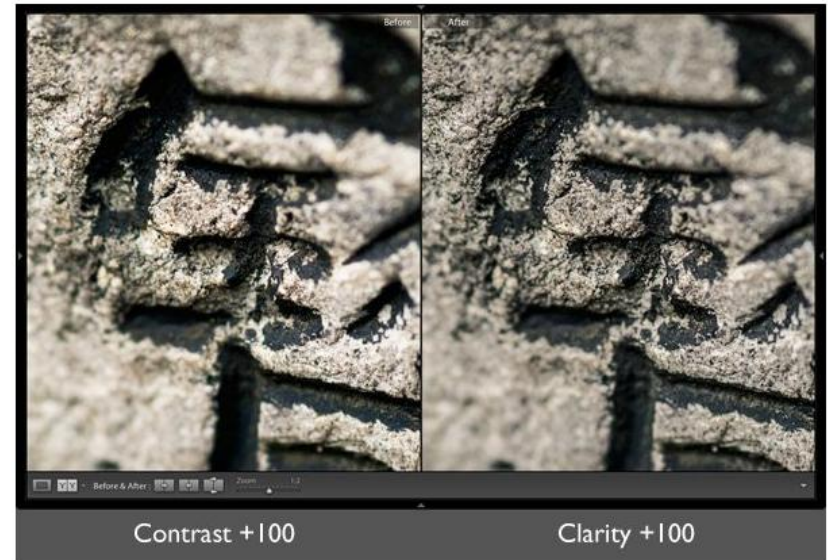


HIGHLIGHTS AND SHADOWS

- Often has different names in different software e.g. fill light/recovery
- Tool only works for RAW but allows you recover details in
 - Burnt out highlights
 - Deep shadows
- Most software has option which allows you to show burnt out areas of image (e.g. red)
- Benefits for image
 - Completely burnt out areas rarely work well (unless intentional e.g. high key pictures)
 - Bright areas which take the eye away from the main subject, particularly at the edge are generally not a good thing
 - Improves blocked out shadow areas (i.e. solid black) again unless intentional silhouette effect

CONTRAST AND CLARITY

- Contrast
 - Contrast darkens the shadow areas and brightens the highlights
 - Images taken in bright conditions often benefit from reducing contrast
- Clarity
 - Clarity is a more subtle increase in micro-contrast by working more on mid tonal values
 - Different names in other software e.g. vibrance
- If +ve both can increase drama and mood or if -ve can be used to “soften” an image



Use contrast with care

Clarity tool can often bring out texture better than contrast