

# Photoshop Essentials

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## Important Guidelines:

1. Decide who's in charge – you or Photoshop.
2. Decide how to choose controls – the photo's needs or what Photoshop includes.
3. Never use a control because it's there and does cool things. Use it because it helps interpret your photo better.
4. If in doubt, try it.
5. Experiment.
6. You don't have to be perfect – use Undo (Ctrl/Cmd Z) and the History palette.
7. Right-click for menus.
8. Focus on what you need to reach your photo-processing goal – ignore the rest. Remember what Ansel Adams was able to do with a very limited set of controls compared to Photoshop!
9. Have fun!

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## **Four Key Photo Needs** and their controls (this is a basic workflow)

1. **Blacks/whites** – Levels with thresholds
2. **Detail tones/“Midtones”** – more than just the middle grays: light, middle, dark – Curves
3. **Color** – correction and enhancement; Levels with gray eyedropper and Hue/Saturation with individual colors
4. **Emphasis/balance** – adjusting controlled, local areas; selections and layer masks

## Control 1: Blacks and whites – Levels

**Locate:**

**Photoshop:** Image Menu → Adjustments → Levels

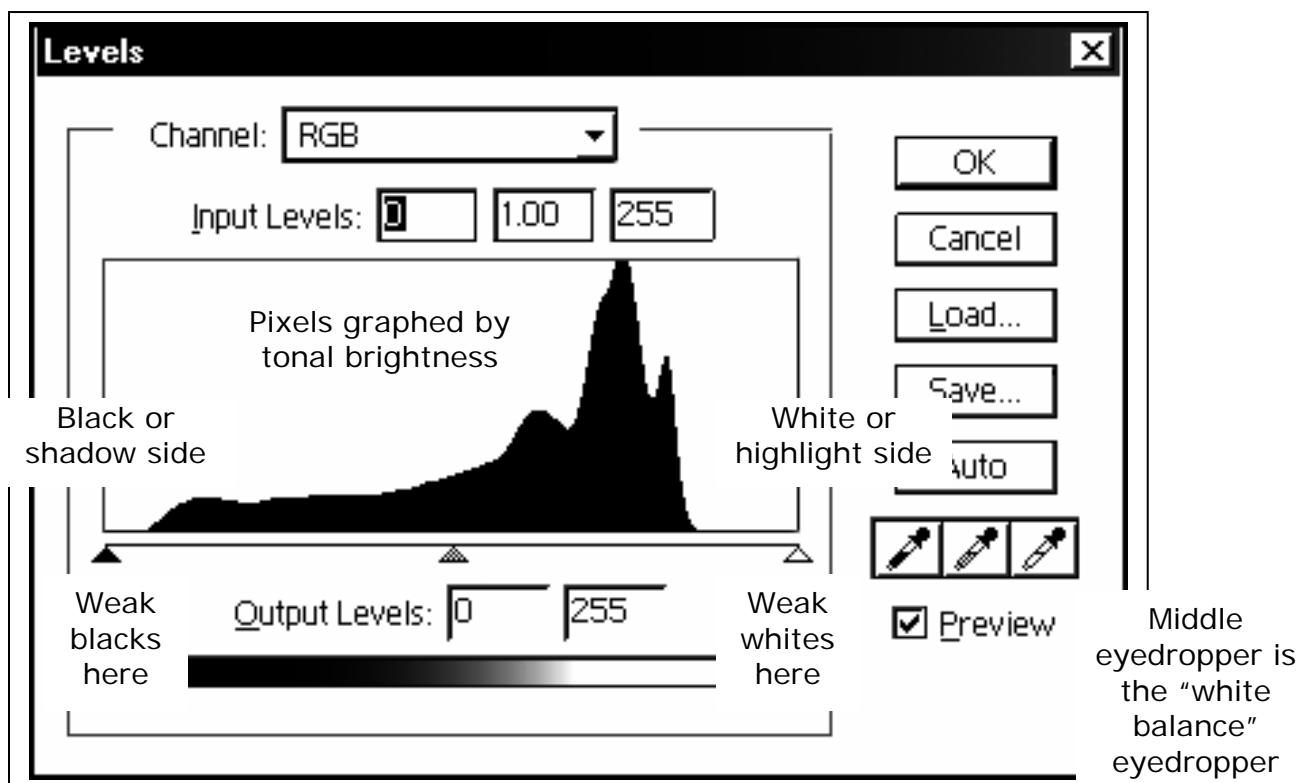
**Camera Raw:** Basic → Blacks and Exposure

**Elements:** Enhance Menu → Adjust Brightness/Contrast → Levels

**Lightroom:** Develop → Basic → Blacks and Exposure

- Set blacks and whites for photograph
- Use Alt/Option key with shadows (Blacks) to see where black thresholds are
- Blacks are very subjective and can be “right” with a wide range of adjustment
- Use Alt/Option key with highlights (Exposure) to see where white thresholds are
- Whites are very sensitive and typically have a narrow range of adjustment

### The Histogram:



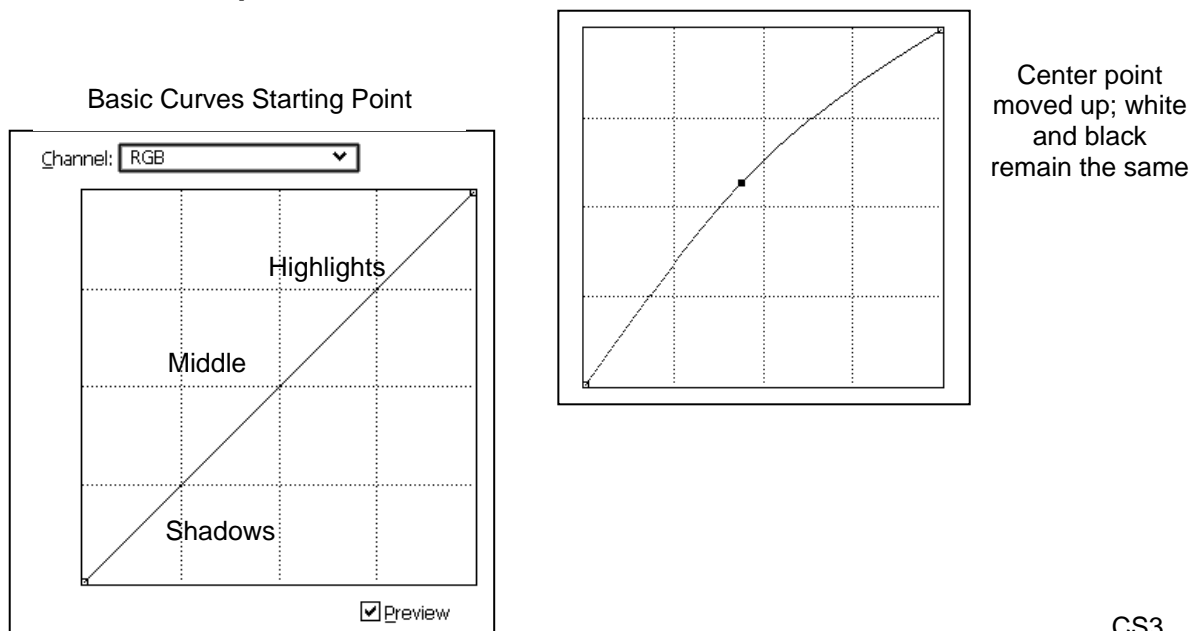
*Note: There is a great advantage to doing these adjustments as adjustment layers which are included later. However, the actual adjustments are no different whether done directly to the photo or in an adjustment layer. The advantage is flexibility and non-destructive adjustments.*

## Control 2: Detail and midtone adjustment – Curves and more

<b>Locate:</b>
<b>Photoshop:</b> Image Menu → Adjustments → Curves
<b>Camera Raw:</b> Tone Curve
<b>Elements:</b> Enhance Menu → Adjust Color → Adjust Color Curves
<b>Lightroom:</b> Develop → Tone Curve

- a. In Camera Raw and Lightroom, first check darkest and lightest tones with Recovery and Fill Light
- b. Curves – tonal adjustment that blends adjustments over the curve
- c. Start by clicking in the middle and lifting the curve up to lighten, pulling it down to darken
- d. Use parametric adjustments to do the same thing
- e. Adjust different tones with some individual control
- f. Click on the part of the curve related to the tones you want to change, then move that up or down to adjust (top of curve is light, bottom is dark)
- g. Use parametric adjustments to do the same thing
- h. Curves increase contrast with a steeper midsection

### The Curves Graph:



### Control 3: Color Correction

- Back to Levels, middle eyedropper – “white balance eyedropper”
- Camera Raw and Lightroom – white balance eyedropper
- Click on something that should be neutral
- Keep clicking as needed

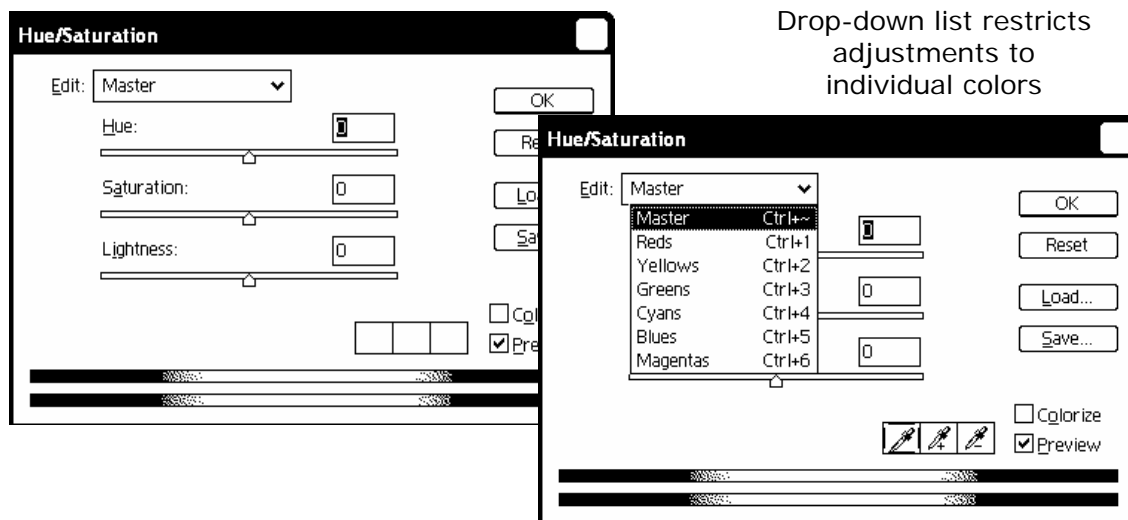
### Control 3: Color Enhancement – Hue/Saturation

**Locate:**

**Photoshop:** Image Menu → Adjustments → Hue/Saturation  
**Camera Raw:** HSL  
**Elements:** Enhance Menu → Adjust Color → Adjust Hue/Saturation  
**Lightroom:** Develop → HSL

- Be wary of overall adjustments to Saturation
- Saturation has Master control and individual colors (click arrow right of Master); rely on individual colors – same for Camera Raw and Lightroom
- Vibrance is worth a try in Camera Raw and Lightroom, but with care
- Define color range for individual colors by selecting color from drop-down menu then using cursor to select color in the image
- Adjust Hue in small amounts to correct color
- Use Lightness in Photoshop sparingly (OK in Lightroom and Camera Raw)

### The Dialogue Box:



## **Control 4: Emphasis/Balance – Selections and Layer Masks**

### **Adjusting controlled, local areas**

#### **Key Tools:**

##### **1. Selections**

- Selections are like a fence to limit actions to an area
- Use automated tools (Magic Wand, Magnetic Lasso, Selection Brush) when you can
- Magic Wand: contiguous means pixels touch each other; tolerance affects how much you see being selected
- Polygonal lasso is essential; click, drag, click; Backspace (Mac: Delete) backs up; double-click to complete
- Brush selection tool
- Add to selection while pressing Shift key; delete from selection with Alt/Option key
- Make selection before adding any Layer Mask and the mask is created for you based on that selection
- Feather selections to soften their edges (Select>Feather)
- Soften edges in Layer Mask with Gaussian Blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur)

##### **2. Adjustment layers**

- Understanding layers
- Adjustment layers are layers of instruction
- Like a filter
- Non-destructive processing
- No change to pixels
- Can be readjusted at any time
- Can be saved with file (use .psd format)
- Allow you to work problem areas separately (isolated by layer and layer mask)

## Layers

**Locate:  
Layers Menu and Layers Palette**

- a. Like a stack of photographs
- b. Each piece of the stack is a layer
- c. Layers allow for individual control of specific parts of photo
- d. Layers affect everything underneath them; base image on bottom (background layer) is affected by layers above it
- e. Key parts of layers: eye icon (on/off), thumbnail icon, masks, layer label, modes, opacity, bottom icons
- f. Layers can be moved, renamed and opacity changed

### The Layers Palette:

The screenshot shows the Photoshop Layers palette with the following components and annotations:

- Modes →**: Points to the 'Normal' dropdown menu.
- ← Opacity (translucence)**: Points to the 'Opacity: 100%' dropdown.
- Eye icon turns layer on and off →**: Points to the eye icon on the left of the 'Color Balance 1' layer.
- ← Layer Masks**: Points to the white layer mask thumbnail on the right of the 'Hue/Saturation 1' layer.
- Adjustment Layers →**: Points to the 'Levels 2' layer, which is highlighted with a dark background.
- In order from left: →**: Points to the bottom icons: Layer Styles, Layer Mask, Layer Sets (groups).
- ← In order from right:**: Points to the bottom icons: Trash, Duplicate layer, Adjustment layer.

### 3. Layer Masks

- *Control the effect of the layer*
  - *White – “clear”; allows the effect*
  - *Black – “blocks” the effect*
  - *Important – layer masks have no direct control over photograph; they only affect what can be changed by an adjustment layers*
  - Always comes with adjustment layers
  - Fill layer mask with black or white (Edit>Fill>Black or White)
    - o use black if you are only adjusting a small area (i.e., most of the layer is not needed)
    - o use white if you are mainly adjusting the whole image and only need to restrict a small area
    - o if area is easily selected with selection tools, do that
  - Selections create layer masks
  - Paint black or white over areas that need to be blocked or allowed; do this as needed to refine the specific area of the effect
  - Use Gaussian blur to smooth edges
  - \*\* Use Gradient tool to create a blend from black to white (with black and white on foreground/background colors)
  - \*\* Copy from one layer to another by holding down Alt/Option and clicking and dragging
  - \*\* Can be added to other layers (Photoshop)
- (\*\* good to know, but not essential)

### 4. Brush Tools

- Use Option Bar to control attributes
- Size is key
- Softness is important
- Reset brush by right-clicking brush icon at left on bar and choosing Reset Brush
- \*\* Opacity changes density

## Useful Keyboard Shortcuts

*(Control/Ctrl is the same in Windows as Command/Cmd/Apple key for Mac;  
Alt for Windows is the same as Option for Mac)*

### **General computer commands:**

<b>Undo</b> .....	<b>Ctrl + Z</b>
<b>Save</b> .....	<b>Ctrl + S</b>
<b>Print</b> .....	<b>Ctrl + P</b>
<b>Toggle among applications</b> .....	<b>Alt + Tab</b>
<b>Help</b> .....	<b>F1</b>
Select All .....	Ctrl + A
Copy.....	Ctrl + C
Cut.....	Ctrl + X
Paste.....	Ctrl + V
Open New <u>document</u> .....	Ctrl + N
Open .....	Ctrl + O
Open Windows Explorer .....	Windows + E
Minimize all open windows .....	Windows + M

### **Photoshop Keyboard Commands:**

<b>Fit on Screen</b> .....	<b>Ctrl + 0</b>
<b>Deselect</b> .....	<b>Ctrl + D</b>
<b>Hide Edges</b> .....	<b>Ctrl + H</b>
<b>Show/Hide All Palettes</b> .....	<b>Tab</b>
Save As.....	Ctrl + Shift + S
Exit/Quit.....	Ctrl + Q
Close.....	Ctrl + W
Close All.....	Ctrl + Shift + W
Zoom In.....	Ctrl + +
Zoom Out .....	Ctrl + -
Step Back in History.....	Ctrl + Alt + Z
Step Forward in History.....	Ctrl + Shift + Z
Reselect .....	Ctrl + Shift + D
Inverse .....	Ctrl + Shift + I

Feather.....	Ctrl + Alt + D
Paste Into.....	Ctrl + Shift + V
Adjust Levels.....	Ctrl + L
Adjust Curves.....	Ctrl + M
Adjust Color Balance.....	Ctrl + B
Adjust Hue/Saturation .....	Ctrl + U
Layer via Copy .....	Ctrl + J
Merge Layers .....	Ctrl + E
Merge Visible .....	Ctrl + Shift + E
Free Transform .....	Ctrl + T
Last Filter .....	Ctrl + F
Show/Hide Rulers .....	Ctrl + R
Fill with Foreground Color.....	Alt + Backspace
Fill with Background Color .....	Shift + Backspace

***Finally, create your own shortcuts in Photoshop under  
Edit>Keyboard Shortcuts***