

Spice Up Your Photography

WEB VS. PRINT

Using poorly shot photography within your web and print layouts may be worse than no photo imagery. Interesting images and design is what will hook your audience initially. You have to hook a viewer (with good views) before you can expect to hook them as a reader. If you want visitors to read your content, they have to like the look.

This paper is for those who are not professional photographers but who wish to take their own photos or use photos from their current collection. These tips will help you enhance and optimize your photographic imagery.

TAKING THE SHOT

Lighting is the most important part of your photo shoot.

If your shots are located outside, morning and late afternoon/evening light is best. Harsh, noon sunlight is very difficult to work with, as well as spotted sunlight (under trees, for example). However, noon on an overcast day produces soft and diffused lighting which is very nice to work with.

If you are working indoors, overhead light is best - remember that if you are using artificial light, you want to try and manipulate it to act as the sun would.

Remove the clutter because less is more.

Your subjects are the most important part of your photos, so do not distract the viewer with clutter and poorly planned sets. If unrelated items in the foreground or background do not enhance the shot, find a way to avoid or hide them.

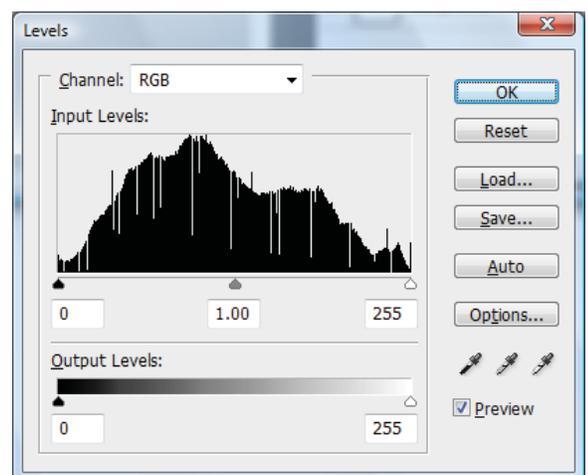
EDITING YOUR PHOTOS

When hosting a photo shoot, you usually take multiple shots of each composition. You want to capture various angles, looks and emotions. This means you have a lot of photos to go through. This process is called editing. Editing is selecting the final photos that you want to use. This is often confused with retouching or enhancing, the next stage.

RETOUCHING & ENHANCING PHOTOGRAPHS

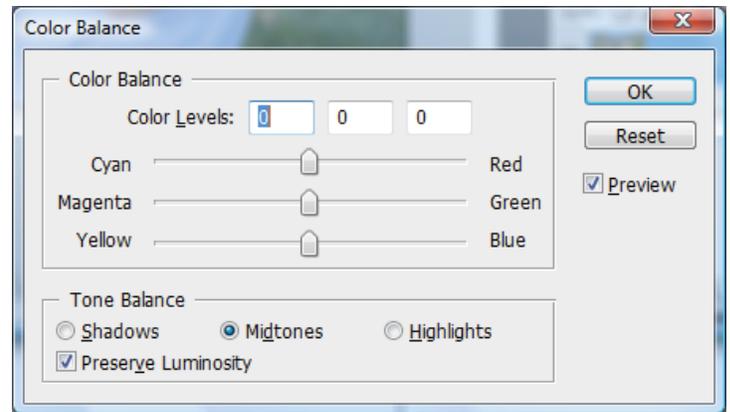
Before delving in, remember that the better your photo is to begin with, the more you will get out of it. Put effort into creating a well shot photograph and do not rely on photo editing programs to fix your mistakes.

Photo editing programs like Adobe Photoshop and Microsoft Paint.NET are great for adding an extra kick to your images. Here are some features you should know about: **Levels** (right) adjusts your exposure. This chart is commonly called a histogram. It allows you to read your image's exposure. Your exposure should have a little pure black and a little pure white, which is indicated



by the Input Levels touching the left and right sides of the histogram. There are two ways to adjust the Levels. First, slide the pointers/arrows along the histogram. Second, select one of the three eye droppers on the bottom right corner and click within your image; the grey eye dropper works like a digital grey card - select an area in your image that should be pure grey with no hue and your image will color balance! It's really cool; play with it as well as the black and white droppers (which will make the selected area pure black or pure white and you will get all sorts of dramatic results.

Color Balance (right) adjusts your overall hue to look natural. The human eye automatically adjusts for hue changes when moving into different lighting like tungsten, fluorescent, candle-light and sunlight, but the camera can't. If you find the Levels Grey Eyedropper (discussed in Levels) difficult to use, this is an alternative. Use the sliders to adjust an image's hue. If it is too cyan, move the Cyan-Red slider towards Red to level out the hue. You can also pinpoint areas of your image by selecting Shadows, Midtones or Highlights.



The **Healing** and **Stamp** tools are invaluable tools that you will love. Are there spots in your images from dust on your camera lens? Was there a piece of trash in the background that you didn't notice? Does your subject have blemishes or acne? These tools will come to your rescue! The Healing Brush (left, left) resembles a band aid. It is handy when you want to remove a blemish from your image and need to copy the surrounding pixel pattern to make the area of interest fit in smoothly. You select an area by holding down the Alt key and clicking the area of the image you would like to mimic. Release the Alt key and click with the mouse over the blemished area you would like to remove.

The Healing Brush not only copies the pixel pattern, but it adjusts the pattern to fit the colors! See the tree trunk sample to the (left, top); I have selected the tree trunk pattern and painted it over the softly focused backdrop where you now see a green-hued trunk texture. The Stamp Tool (left, right), on the other hand, copies an area exactly as it looks. The blemished skin sample below is a good example. These tools also allow you to adjust their hardness/softness, allowing for a gradated edge or a very sharp edge.



This blemished example is what you can achieve with the Healing Brush and Stamp Tool. In a matter of seconds, I removed all serious blemishes from this patch of skin. Play with these and adjust the transparency too. You can use this to dull wrinkles and lines under the eyes, reduce glare on the "T" area of the face and much more.

CROPPING vs. RESIZING

Cropping your images is not the same as resizing. Cropping an image cuts out part of the image for a more flattering composition. Resizing an image adjusts the size of the image both in height/width and file size. Print and Web graphics require different pixel ratios, so images need to be resized based on their intended use.

DPI or Dots Per Inch is referenced when printing. Images in prints should be between 240 and 300 DPI. When you are resizing an image, you need to set the PPI or Pixels Per Inch somewhere between 240 and 300 PPI.

PPI or Pixels Per Inch is referenced when used in web or digital presentations. Computer monitors display at a resolution of 72 PPI. This is especially important to remember when placing images and photographs in your website. You should always make it a habit of resizing your images to 72 DPI at the exact height and width you need them when applied to digital media. For example, adjusting the width and height in web-code produces a visually smaller image, but it does not actually reduce your image size. If you don't resize your images for web, your site will load super slow and nobody will stick around to see what your website is all about.

Good luck and have a great time with your digital photography!