

Digital Techniques for the Shooting and Post Production of B&W Images

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Advantages of B&W images

- Emphasize shapes, negative spaces and textures
- Increase impact of image by simplifying composition
- Eliminate distracting colors
- Unify a composition since all the elements within share gray tones rather than many different colors.
- Lack of color can enable the different design elements of your image to relate to each other more effectively (ex: repeated shapes and textures, direction lines to guide the viewer)
- Place more emphasis on clouds
- Evoke mood or emotion. This can sometimes be further enhanced by adding overall subtle warm or cool tone in post-production.
- Quality of light becomes more noticeable to viewer
- Great for smoothing skin tones in portraits
- Tends to make an image look timeless

B&W Shooting Technique

- Best results will be from shooting original color RAW images since they will have the most tonal range to work with later.
- During the shoot, keep in mind the things you can do with the grayscale tonal range of the colors later in post-production to accomplish things like increase contrast, and/or emphasize a particular area
 - Even though you're shooting color RAW images, most cameras have the ability to show you a monochrome view of the image to give you a better idea of what it looks like in B&W. This can be helpful, but with experience isn't really necessary.
- Check your histogram to make sure you don't lose detail in your highlights (especially important when shooting landscapes with clouds).
 - Activate clipping warning if desired

Creating a B&W image from color using Adobe RAW controls

- 1) Open image in Adobe Camera RAW
- 2) Treatment: Check B&W
- 3) Adjust image using B&W Mix Sliders
- 4) Make other adjustments as needed
- 5) If desired, use Split Toning controls to give a tint of color

Creating a B&W image from color using Photoshop

- 1) Open RAW image in 16 bit depth in Photoshop
 - Note: make sure the text at the bottom of the Adobe RAW window indicates it will open it as a 16 bit document
- 2) In Photoshop, click the adjustment layer button at the bottom of the layers palette, choose Black & White
 - Use the sliders (or B&W hand tool) to control how light or dark the colors will appear in grayscale
 - Check the tint box if an overall tint of color is desired
 - If desired, choose a preset from the dropdown menu
- 3) You can also use a Gradient Map adjustment layer to:
 - Increase contrast (control the location with layer mask)
 - Create a color tint
- 4) To reduce the colors instead of going completely B&W, reduce the opacity of the Black & White adjustment layer