

CLASS #4: Color correction

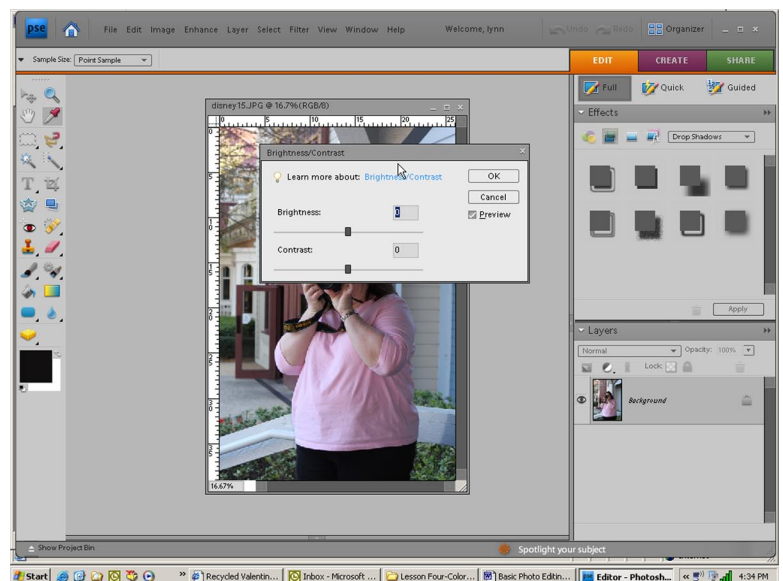
- Quick and easy color brightening
- Making the colors pop
- Auto color
- Color variations
- The Hue/Saturation adjustment
- Removing a color cast
- Conversion from color to black and white
- Homework

One thing I've noticed about Photoshop and Photoshop Elements is that there are often many ways to do something. Color correction is no exception. The topic of Color correction is a big one in Photoshop products. There are many ways to correct the color in photographs. We can't possibly cover all the ways to correct the color in our photographs in one class, but we are going to learn some of the fastest and easiest color fixes.

QUICK AND EASY COLOR BRIGHTENING

This technique isn't for a photo that has major color or lighting problems. It just perks up our photos that already look pretty good. Most photos could use a little brightening right from the camera. There's a simple little two step brightener that I do to almost all my photos before I do anything else. Let's give it a try.

1. Open a photo that looks pretty good to you. Duplicate it.
2. From the top menubar, select >Enhance >Adjust Lighting > Brightness/Contrast.



3. You will see two sliders here—one for brightness and one for contrast.
4. Type "10" in each box and watch your photo as you do. You should see a slight brightening of the photo.
5. If you like what you see, click OK. If not, click CANCEL.
6. It's fun to play with the brightness and contrast sliders just to see what they do, so play around a little. When you are done, close this photo and find another photo that you would like to play with.

Quick and Easy Brightening



The change when using this technique is subtle but effective.

the "undo" button

This is a good time to show you the "undo" button, one of the most useful of all Photoshop tools! It's accessed from the top menubar with >Edit >Undo. Any time you do something you wish you hadn't, you can go here and undo whatever it was you did! So: if you pressed OK and wish you hadn't, you can undo it! AND it gets even easier! If you don't want to go all the way up to the menubar to find >Edit >Undo, you can use the keyboard shortcut CTRL+Z and that will undo your mistake too! Isn't Photoshop wonderful?

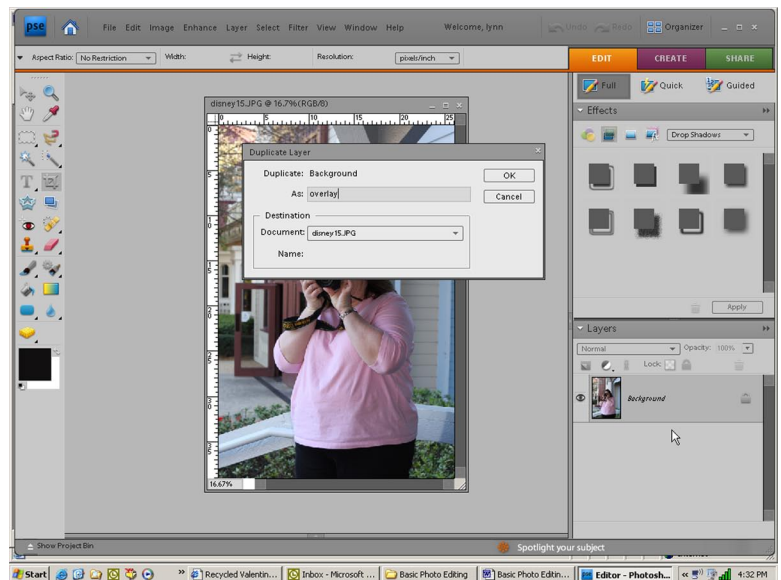
another shortcut

Here's another useful Photoshop shortcut. If you press CTRL+0 at the same time, your photo will enlarge to fill the screen, making it easier to see the changes you make.

MAKING THE COLORS POP

1. Open a photo that you like well enough to spend some time improving. Duplicate it.
2. Remember those layers and blending modes from our last lesson? Well, we're going to be using them again!

3. In the Layers Palette, right-click on your "background" layer, then select "Duplicate Layer." This time when the Duplicate Layer box pops up, as in the screen shot below, change the name of the layer to "Overlay" by typing "Overlay" after the prompt "As:" then click OK.



4. Right click on the "Overlay" layer, choose "Duplicate Layer" and this time rename the layer to "Screen." Click OK.

5. Now you should have three layers that all look the same but have different names. The screen layer is on top, above the opacity layer, and then your original "background" layer is at the bottom of the stack. Here come the blending modes and the magic!
6. Click on the layer named Screen in the Layers Palette. Click on the "Blending Modes" menu (at the top of this palette, where it says Normal--remember?) and choose the blending mode "Screen." The screen blending mode is a brightener.
7. Click on the layer named "Overlay." Click on the "Blending Modes" menu, and choose "Overlay." The overlay blending mode boosts contrast.
8. What you have now is probably a little intense. Remember that "Opacity" slider at the top of the Layers Palette that we used in our last lesson? Play around with that slider on both the "Screen" and "Overlay" layers to see if you can get your photo looking just the way you like it. (Remember to select (or "target") the layer you want to work on.) Every photo is different and will require different settings to get it to look perfect to you.

9. If you like what you have, press SHIFT and highlight all three layers. Right click and choose "Merge." Save your photo. If you don't want to save this photo, you can undo or simply close the photo without saving any changes.

Color Popping Technique



This is an adorable photo of Ethan with his birthday cake.



The photo becomes even better when the bright colors are allowed to pop!

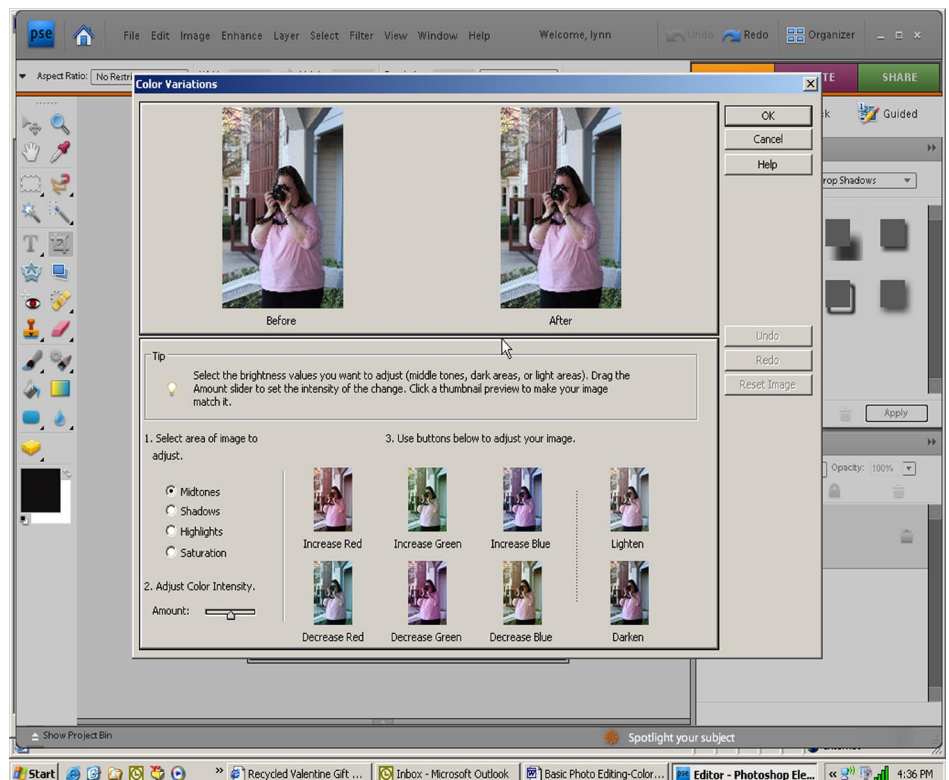
AUTO COLOR CORRECTION

I have hesitated to introduce Auto fixes up to this point, because I wanted you to see what the different tools do and how to use them properly. Now, though, we're going to give "Auto Color" a try.

1. Open a photo. Duplicate it.
2. From the top menubar, select >Enhance >Auto Color Correction. Voila! The color is changed! It's that easy. Sometimes, though, the auto color correction looks great and sometimes it doesn't. It's just a machine after all, and it doesn't have our eye for what looks good. The program relies on formulas and, while they are usually quite good, sometimes they just don't work! Anyway, if you like what you see, you can just save the photo and you are done! If you don't like what you see or want to try something else, click UNDO (or CTRL+Z) and let's move on.

COLOR VARIATIONS

1. Open a photo. Duplicate it.
2. From the top menubar, select >Enhance >Adjust Color >Color Variations. A box will appear that looks like this:
3. At the top of the screen you will see two copies of your photo. The one on the left is your original. The one on the right will show the variations as you apply them. On the lower left portion of the screen, you will see two settings. One is set for midtones. Under this setting is



the color intensity, with the default setting right in the middle. These are the usual settings for these two areas and you will probably want them to remain right where they are.

4. Depending on your photo, you may want to try the different image adjustments to decrease or increase colors in your photo. You can also lighten and darken your photo in this screen. After each adjustment you choose, the photo on the top right will show your photo as it currently looks. After each adjustment, you can click "Undo" on the right of the screen or leave the adjustment as applied. You can layer these adjustments by applying several on top of each other. At any time you can also click "Reset Image" to set the image back to its original color.
5. Play around with these adjustments until you get your photo to look a way that pleases you. Then you can click OK. The window will close and you can save your photo.

Different Looks Using Color Variations



This is the photo just the way I took it. It has good color and lighting and looks natural.



In this variation, I added more green and increased the saturation. I also made it darker. It's a different but interesting look.

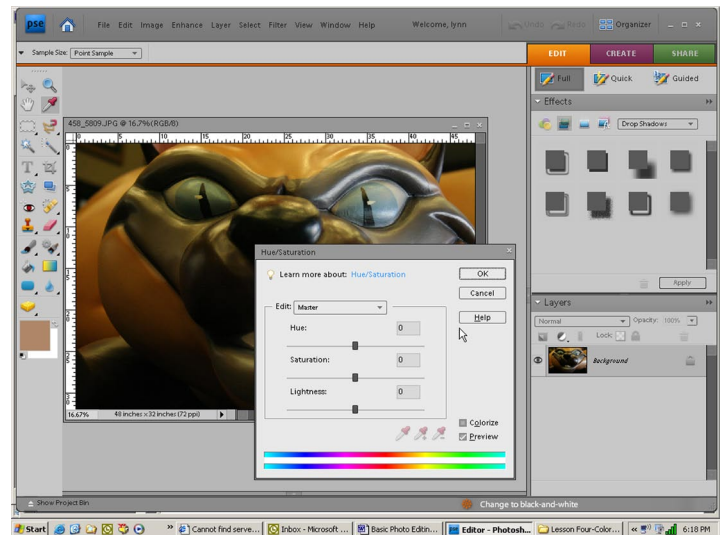


This variation has a much cooler look. I added blue to the photo, decreased the saturation and lightened the photo.

THE HUE/SATURATION ADJUSTMENT

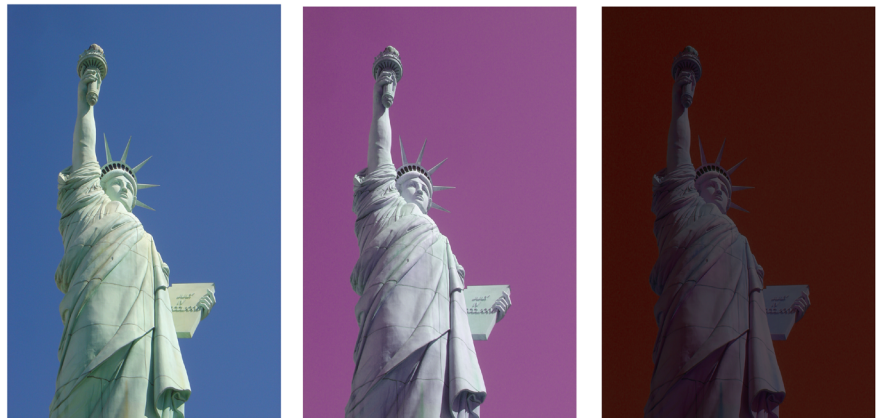
I told you Photoshop products had a lot of ways to play with color! Let's try another one!

1. Open a photo. Duplicate it.
2. From the top menubar, select >Enhance >Adjust Color >Adjust Hue/Saturation
3. Photoshop adjusts colors within six color channels. If you want to try to adjust all six channels at once, leave the "Edit" box in this window set to the default which is "Master." The box at the bottom right is set to "Preview." With this setting, slide each of the three sliders back and forth to see what changes they cause. The names of the sliders are pretty self explanatory. When you are finished playing, set the sliders back to the center.



Hue/Saturation Adjustments

4. If you want to see what else the Hue/Colorize command can do, change the edit box by clicking on the dropdown menu and setting it to one of the color channels. Again, move the sliders back and forth and you can see that Photoshop is adjusting the settings of just this one color channel. These changes are usually more subtle than the ones made using the "Master" setting.



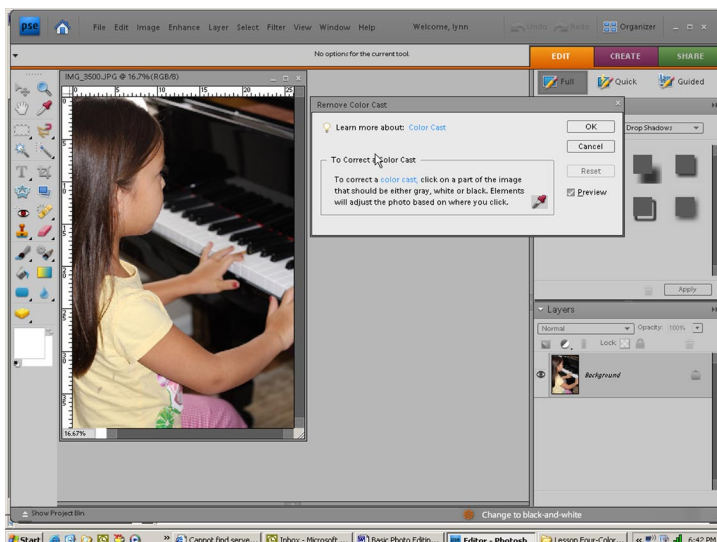
Different looks, either dramatic or subtle can be achieved by having fun with the Hue/Saturation sliders.

5. Click CANCEL and you will exit the Hue/Saturation adjustment window.

REMOVING A COLOR CAST

Sometimes a photo will have a color cast that we don't find pleasing. One example is the yellowish cast often seen in photos taken inside without enough light. There is an easy fix for this problem.

1. Open a photo and duplicate it.
2. From the top menubar, select >Enhance >Adjust Color >Remove Color Cast. Your cursor will become an eyedropper.



Removing a Color Cast



Photos taken inside often have a yellow cast because of poor lighting.

The harsh yellow cast is neutralized here and the colors are truer.

3. The Color Cast box will stay on the screen while you use the eyedropper to click on a place in your photo that you are sure is either white, black or gray. You should see a change in the overall cast of the photo. Click OK.
4. Click on Undo or CTRL+Z to return your photo to its original state.

cursor tip—common problem

Here is another chance to address an issue that frequently frustrates Photoshop users. Occasionally, your cursor will mysteriously change from its normal wonderful shape and become a little circle or x with crosshairs. Usually it happens when we are sure we didn't do anything to make it happen! If your cursor looks strange, press the caps lock key and it should change back to its rightful shape! I hope this tip saves you some frustration!

CONVERSION FROM COLOR TO BLACK AND WHITE

Before we close this lesson, I have one more little technique (or two) to share. We're going to turn our color photos to black and white. This is a huge Photoshop topic as people use 1,001 techniques to get their black and white photos to look just the way they want them to. I'll show you two quick and easy ways to make your color photos black and white. Then you can play with the color changing techniques we have learned to enhance your black and white photos too!

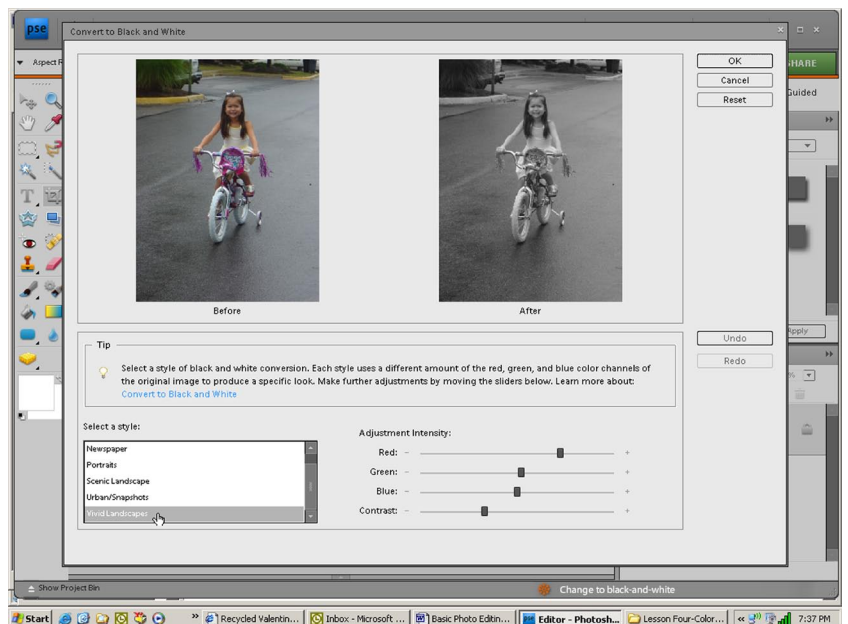
Black-and-white conversion technique #1

1. Open your photo and duplicate it.
2. From the top menubar, select >Enhance >AdjustColor >Remove Color. Poof! Your color is black and white. This gives a pretty flat looking black and white photo but you may like to try this and then play with this photo using some of the techniques that we have learned in this lesson.

Black-and-white conversion technique #2

(this is not available in all versions of Photoshop and Photoshop Elements)

1. Open your photo and duplicate it.
2. From the top menubar, select >Enhance >Convert to Black and White. You will get a screen that looks like this.
3. On the lower left portion of the screen are some different styles of black and white photos. These are lots of fun to play with! When you combine the styles with the color and contrast sliders, you can get many different black and white looks. Have fun!



SELECTIVE COLORING

***and now, a little bonus just because you asked for it:
a quick selective coloring technique!***

1. Open a photo that you want to transform into a black and white photo with selected areas in color. Do all of your editing to this photo.

2. When you are finished with your editing, go to the Layers Palette and right-click on your photo layer. Choose "duplicate layer."

3. With the background copy selected (highlighted), go to >Enhance >Adjust Color >Remove Color. You now have a black and white photo with a color photo hiding underneath! Make this photo a little larger on the page (by using the Zoom Tool or pressing CTRL and +) so that you will be able to better see the detail of the area that you want to be in color.



4. On the left toolbar, about halfway down, you will see a pink eraser. Right click on the eraser and make sure that the top tool is chosen in the flyout menu. The brush menu will appear at the top, because the eraser tool is basically a brush.

5. The size and softness of the area that you want to have appear in color will determine the hardness/softness and size of the brush you choose. But for now, click on the arrow in the brush stroke box (the first box) and choose the soft round 100 pixel brush.

6. Now comes the big TA-DA! With your duplicated (and now black and white) layer selected, hold down the mouse button and drag the eraser tool across the area that you want to appear in color. It will erase that area of the black and white photo and enable the colored area of the photo underneath to show through! It's that amazing! And so simple!

7. When the photo looks just the way you'd envisioned it, merge the layers by right clicking the top layer and choosing "Merge Down" and save your photo.

IN CLOSING

I've shown you six different ways to correct the colors in your photos as well as two techniques for converting to black and white. These are not by any stretch all the color correction techniques that Photoshop and Photoshop Elements offer. You can see that each of these techniques gives a little different look to your photo by adjusting the color in a different way. I hope this gives you enough to play with for a while and helps you make your photos look the way you want them to. In the long run, it will be up to you to decide which way you want to adjust color for a particular photo.

HOMEWORK

If you would like to share some of the photos you have color enhanced in some way, we would love to see them! Just prepare them for posting according to the directions in Class #1 and Class #3. Please share!