

Useful Keystrokes:

ctrl-L > Levels | ctrl-M > Curves | Hold down the ALT key to change "save" to "reset"

About histograms

A *histogram* illustrates how pixels in an image are distributed by graphing the number of pixels at each color intensity level. The histogram shows whether the image contains enough detail in the shadows (shown in the left part of the histogram), mid tones (shown in the middle), and highlights (shown in the right part) to make a good correction.

The histogram also gives a quick picture of the tonal range of the image, or the image *key type*. A low-key image has detail concentrated in the shadows; a high-key image has detail concentrated in the highlights; and an average-key image has detail concentrated in the mid tones. An image with full tonal range has a number of pixels in all areas. Identifying the tonal range helps determine appropriate tonal corrections.

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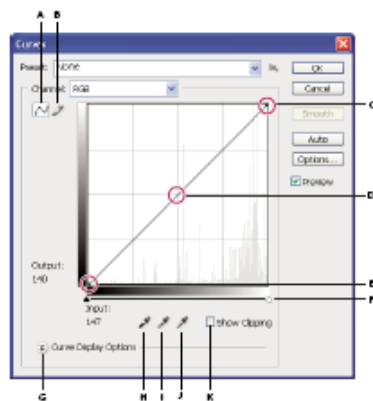
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Tonal corrections

Begin tonal corrections by adjusting the values of the extreme highlight and shadow pixels in the image, setting an overall tonal range for the image. This process is known as *setting the highlights and shadows* or *setting the white and black points*. Setting the highlights and shadows typically redistributes the midtone pixels appropriately. However, you may need to adjust your midtones manually.

Curves overview

You can use the Curves dialog box or Levels dialog box to adjust the entire tonal range of an image. The Curves dialog box lets you adjust up to 14 different points throughout an image's tonal range (from shadows to highlights). The Levels dialog box has only three adjustments (white point, black point, gamma). You can also use the Curves dialog box to make precise adjustments to individual color channels in an image. You can save Curves dialog box settings as presets.



Curves dialog box

A. Adjust curve by adding points. **B.** Draw a curve with the pencil. **C.** Highlights **D.** Midtones **E.** Shadows **F.** Black and white point sliders. **G.** Curve display options **H.** Set black point. **I.** Set gray point. **J.** Set white point. **K.** Show Clipping

In the Curves dialog box, the tonal range is represented as a straight diagonal baseline, because the input levels (the original intensity values of the pixels) and output levels (new color values) are identical.

The horizontal axis of the graph represents the input levels; the vertical axis represents the output levels.