

Excerpted from

# Photoshop Lightroom Adventure

Mastering Adobe's next-generation tool for digital photographers

Available from [www.oreilly.com](http://www.oreilly.com)

**O'REILLY®**

<http://digitalmedia.oreilly.com/lightroom/>

## Basic Tone Controls

Every digital image contains a range of tonal values, distributed over a range of light and dark tonal values. Often, even with properly exposed images, you'll want to redistribute these tonal values to meet aesthetic or quantifiable criteria. There are several ways to do this with Lightroom.

Lightroom's processing tools are organized systematically, providing a rough order to follow as you work on your image. After you have determined the proper Lightroom white balance (as we discussed in the previous section), it's time to start working on the tonal values found under the Basic tone pane or directly in the Histogram itself. *Figure 5-28*

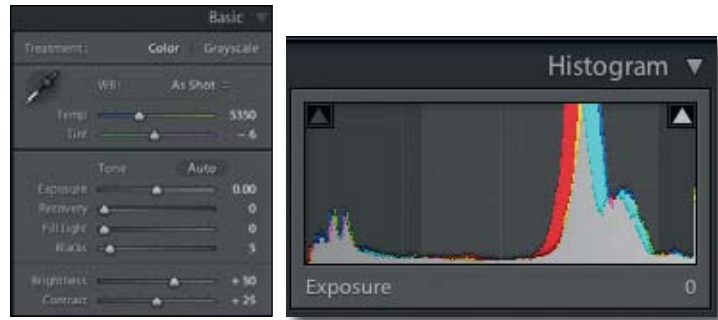


Figure 5-28

### Auto Tone

A good place to start is with Auto. *Figure 5-29* When you click on the Auto button (circled), Lightroom creates a made-to-order tone map based on the individual characteristics of a particular image. It does not affect the Clarity, Saturation, or Vibrance controls. Auto often produces satisfactory results, but not always.

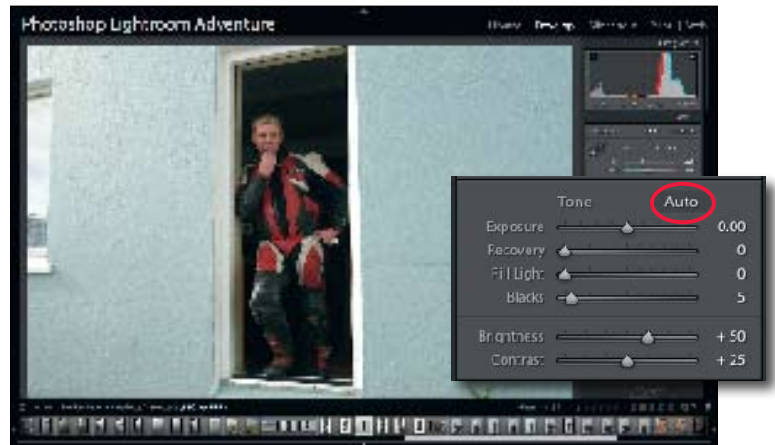


Figure 5-29

For example, in this image, Auto successfully darkened the light blue wall around the subject, but it darkened the subject too much at the same time. *Figure 5-30* I often keep the Auto setting, even if it's not perfect, and fine-tune the results with other tonal controls. For example, shortly, I'll show you how I used Fill Light get this image just right. If Auto is way off, use the keyboard shortcut ⌘+Z (Ctrl+Z) or step backward in the History tab. If you select Reset at the bottom of the Develop right panel, you'll go back to the original camera settings, which may or may not be what you want.



Figure 5-30

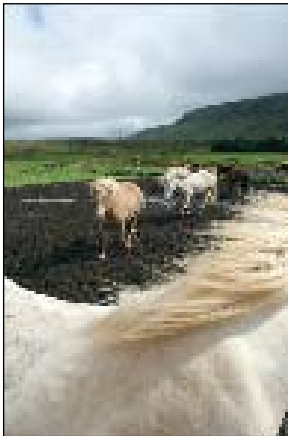


Figure 5-31

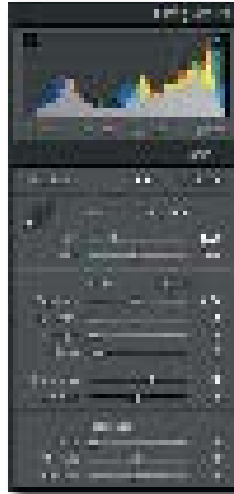


Figure 5-32

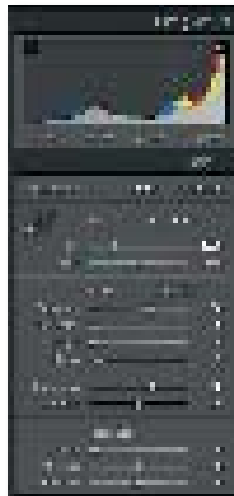
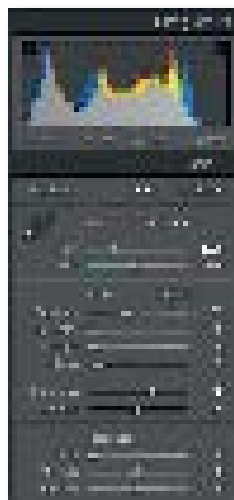


Figure 5-33



## Exposure Slider

If Auto doesn't give you the tonal distribution you want, try using the Exposure slider. Take, for example, the image shown here. *Figure 5-31* As you can see from the corresponding histogram, the tonal values are shifted to the right, toward the highlights, and there is clipping (loss of detail) of these values.

If I move the Exposure slider to the right (positive values), the image brightens but there is even more clipping (loss of detail) in the highlights. *Figure 5-32* Even though I can recover some of the highlight detail using the Recovery slider—more on this later—increasing the exposure was obviously the wrong way to go with this image.

**NOTE** Exposure values—which can be typed in directly into the numerical field with a [+] or [-] prefix—are roughly equivalent to f-stops. From an exposure point of view, an adjustment of +1.00 is similar to increasing a camera's aperture one stop. Similarly, an adjustment of -1.00 is similar to reducing the aperture one stop.

If I move the slider to the left (negative values) the image darkens and detail is revealed in the highlights. *Figure 5-33* Now I have a relatively good distribution of tonal values. However, to finish this image, I will use the Brightness slider. As you will see later, the Brightness slider works primarily on the midtones.

## Recovery

This image is a perfect candidate for the Recovery slider, which comes after the Exposure slider. *Figure 5-34* (If you work directly from the Histogram, Recovery is found by moving your cursor to the right side of the Histogram.)

In the image shown here, the sky is lacking detail, as revealed by the red highlight warning on the image and the vertical line on the far right side of the histogram.



Figure 5-34

The intent of the Recovery slider is to recover details in the highlight areas that might otherwise be missing. It does this by looking individually at the Red, Green, and Blue channels, finding data in one channel, and then reconstructing the data across the three channels. It has the effect of darkening the highlights slightly without affecting the darker areas.

As you can see by the diminished clipping, it's particularly effective on the image shown here, bringing out details in the clouds, and leaving the rest of the image alone. *Figure 5-35*



Figure 5-35

## Fill Light

The Fill Light slider opens up the shadow areas without affecting the highlights (to a point). I used Fill Light to finish up the image used in a previous example.

*Figure 5-36* Notice how the biker and the doorway, which were previously too dark after using Auto, are now plainly visible. (Care should be taken when using the Fill Light slider not to push it too far, as shadow noise is often enhanced as well.)

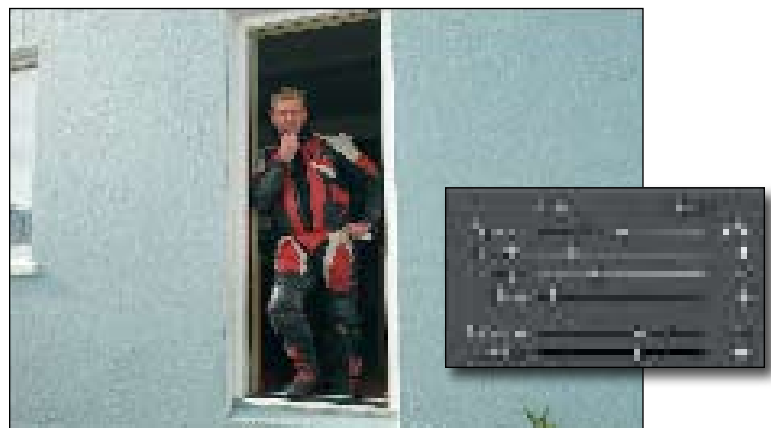


Figure 5-36



Figure 5-37



Figure 5-38



Figure 5-39

## Blacks

I use the Blacks slider a lot. It darkens the darkest parts of an image (setting a black clipping point), while mostly leaving the rest of the image alone. It effectively produces the opposite effect of Recovery. I used the Blacks slider on this image, which, at first glance of the preview and its histogram, looked fine. *Figure 5-37*

But moving the Blacks slider just a little to the right (to 20) gave the image an appearance of more depth. I find many of my images benefit from a slight increase in the Blacks slider. *Figure 5-38*

## Brightness

The Brightness slider is similar to the Exposure slider, but it redistributes the tonal values in an adjustment weighted toward the midtone values. While a positive Exposure setting may clip the highlights—moving the Brightness slider to the right doesn't result in highlight clipping—it compresses the highlights and opens up the midtone and shadow areas. Conversely, moving the slider to the left darkens an image by compressing the shadow areas and opening up the highlights. I used the Brightness slider here to give a final touch to the image I had previously adjusted using the Exposure slider. *Figure 5-39*

## Contrast

This slider results in either increased or decreased contrast, while leaving the extremes alone. (You can easily observe this by watching the histogram as you move the Contrast slider.) In *Figures 5-40 through 5-42*, the first image has no contrast adjustment. The second shows the effect of sliding the Contrast setting to the left, and the third shows the image when the Contrast setting is set to the extreme right.

## Resetting Tones

If you want to reset only the tonal changes to their original settings, go to the Basic pane and double-click on the word **Tone**, found to the left of the **Auto** button. This won't affect any changes made to the Presence sliders, which include Clarity, Vibrance, and Saturation.

## Presence Sliders

The final Basic pane controls are grouped under the name "Presence" and they include Clarity, Vibrance, and Saturation. Since these sliders generally relate to color issues, I will go into detail on when and how to use them in the next chapter, *Color Tuned Photos*.

***TIP** Use Lightroom's Compare mode to view before and after versions of your image. Select the Compare icon in the toolbar or select View→Before/After from the menu bar. Pressing the Y key cycles you between the Loupe and Compare view modes.*

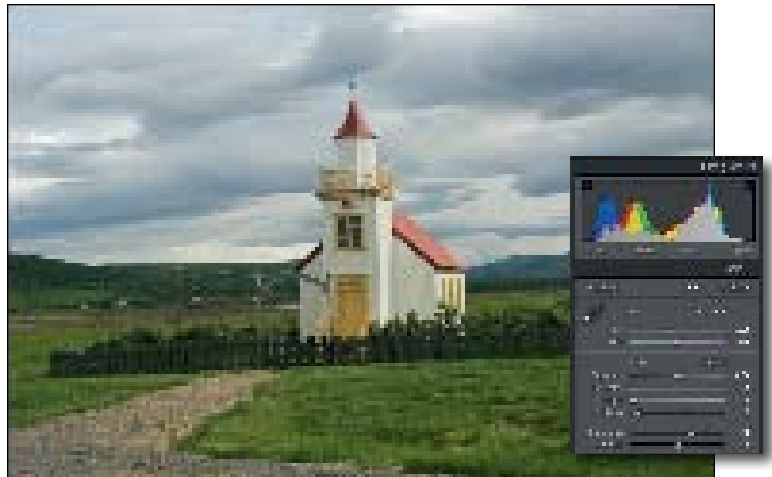


Figure 5-40

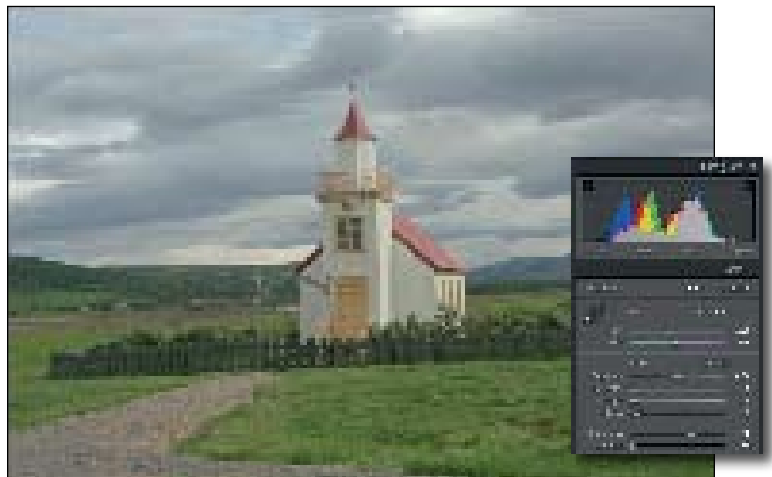


Figure 5-41

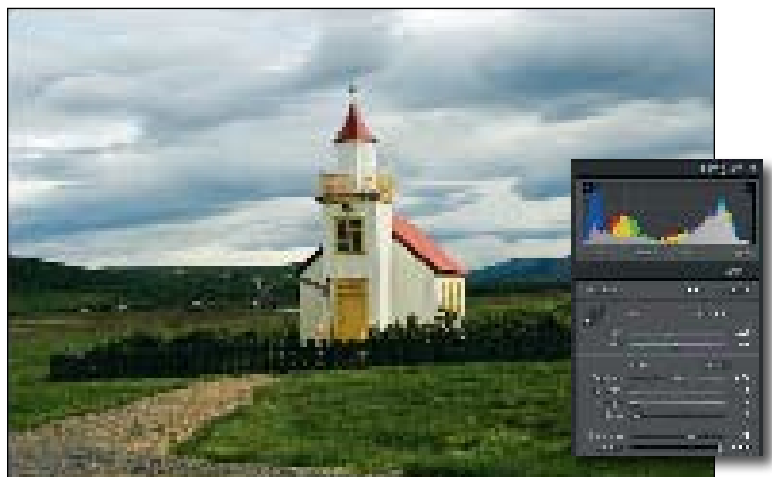


Figure 5-42

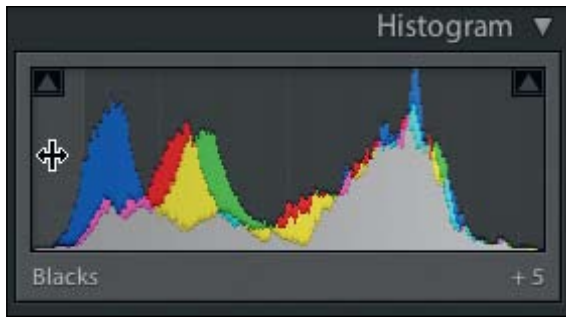


Figure 5-43

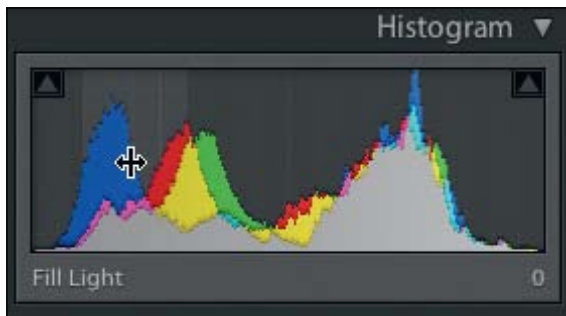


Figure 5-44

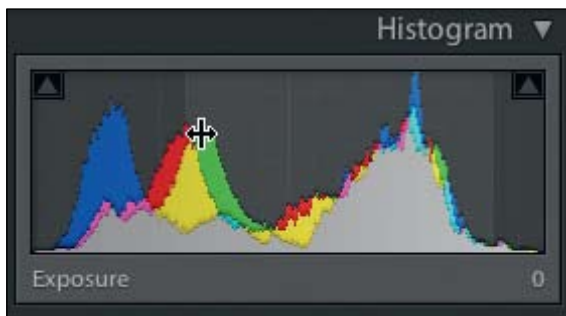


Figure 5-45

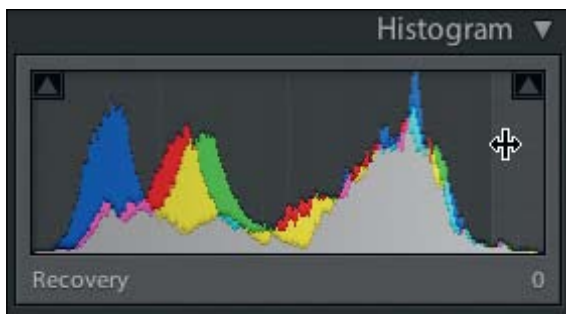


Figure 5-46

## Adjusting Tone Directly from the Histogram

If you prefer, you can make your Basic tone settings directly from the Histogram. Place your cursor over the Histogram and drag to the left or right. Where you initially place the cursor will determine which tone setting is affected.

Moving from the left side of the histogram to the right, you access these controls:

- Figure 5-43 Blacks
- Figure 5-44 Fill Light
- Figure 5-45 Exposure
- Figure 5-46 Recovery

As you move your cursor, you will see the relevant Tone slider move as well.

I often work directly from the Histogram when I'm working outside of the Basic tone pane, for example, when I'm in the Split Toning pane. It saves me from having to scroll up the right panel, because I always keep the Histogram pane visible.

## Basic Tone Step-by-Step Summary

Start by using Auto. Then, if necessary, fine-tune the Auto effect with any of the other tonal sliders. If Auto is completely off, start with the Exposure slider. Then, if necessary, the Recovery and/or Fill Light sliders, then the Blacks slider. Finish off with the Brightness and/or Contrast sliders. (Further fine-tuning can be done using the Tone Curve, detailed in the following section.)

Be sure not to rely only on the preview window. Use the Histogram or under/over warnings to evaluate the effects of your tonal changes.