

# **Black and White Conversion Techniques for Elements and Photoshop**

## **Convert to Greyscale (Destructive)**

The simplest black and white conversion method, converting to greyscale discards all the colour information in the photo.

### ***Photoshop CC:***

1. Image > Mode > Grayscale
2. Click 'Discard'

### ***Photoshop Elements:***

1. Image > Mode > Grayscale
2. Click 'OK'

Pros: Quick and easy.

Cons: You have no control over the conversion.

## **Use the Hue/Saturation Tool (Non-Destructive)**

This method gives exactly the same result as converting to grayscale. The only advantage is that it's available as an adjustment layer and can be used as part of a non-destructive editing process.

### ***Photoshop CC and Photoshop Elements:***

1. Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation
2. Click 'OK'
3. Move the saturation slider all the way to the left (-100)

Pros: Quick and easy and can be applied as an adjustment layer in both Photoshop CC and Elements

Cons: You have no control over the conversion.

## **LAB ColorMethod (Destructive)**

Converts your photo from RGB mode to Lab mode, which records the brightness and colour values separately, then discards the colour information leaving a black and white image.

NOT available in Photoshop Elements.

### ***Photoshop CC:***

1. Image > Mode > Lab Color
2. Go to the Channels window if it's already open (if not go to Window > Channel) and select the Lightness channel
3. Image > Mode > Grayscale
4. Click 'OK'

Pros: Gives a better black and white conversion than the convert to grayscale and hue/saturation methods.

Cons: Destructive editing process that doesn't give you much control.

## **Gradient Map (Non-Destructive)**

The Gradient Map tool maps a black and white gradient to the brightness values of your photo. Dark areas become black or dark grey and highlights white or light grey.

### ***Photoshop CC and Photoshop Elements***

1. Press 'D' to reset the foreground and background colours to black and white.
2. Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Gradient Map
3. Click 'OK'

Pros: Quick and easy non-destructive black and white conversion

Cons: No control over the conversion

## **Channel Mixer (Non-Destructive)**

The Channel mixer is the first black and white conversion tool listed here that begins to use the full potential of the information contained in the colour photo. Colour photos have three colour channels; red, green and blue. These primary colours combine to make the millions of colours in your photo.

The Channel mixer conversion method lets you adjust the ratios between the red, green and blue channels. Lightening the value of a channel lightens colours close to it on the colour wheel and darkens the colours that are opposite it. Increase the value of the red channel for

instance, and you'll make the red tones in your photo lighter, and the blue ones darker. This has the effect of lightening skin tones and darkening blue skies.

The Channel mixer is the digital equivalent of black and white photographers using colour filters. Setting the brightness of the red channel to 100% gives the same effect as using a red filter on the lens with black and white film. It's not available in Photoshop Elements.

### ***Photoshop CC:***

1. Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Channel Mixer
2. Tick the monochrome box.
3. Move the Red, Green and Blue sliders to the left and right to lighten and darken different tones in the photo. The total of the three sliders should be 100% at all times.

Pros: Gives you a high degree of control over the black and white conversion.

Cons: Not as flexible as the next two techniques. Not available in Photoshop Elements.

## **Twin Hue/Saturation Method (Non-Destructive)**

Uses two Hue/Saturation adjustment layers. Top layer -straight monochrome conversion. Bottom layer -changes the colours of original photo, this changes the tones in the B&W conversion. Gives you a very fine degree of control.

### ***Photoshop CC and Photoshop Elements:***

1. Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation and click 'OK'
2. Move the Saturation slider all the way to the left (-100) and click 'OK'
3. Activate the background by clicking on it
4. Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation and click 'OK'
5. Change the blending mode of the bottom Hue/Saturation layer to 'Color' (circled below)
6. Double click the bottom Hue/Saturation layer's icon (circled below)
7. Move the Hue slider left or right and watch the tones change! You can also experiment with the Saturation and Lightness sliders.

Pros: Extremely fine degree of control over the monochrome conversion.

Cons: None, except that it doesn't give you the same amount of control as the next technique.

## **Black/White Adjustment Layer Method (Non-Destructive)**

Available in Photoshop CS 3 onwards, the black and white adjustment layer gives you all the control of the channel mixer and twin hue/saturation techniques via six colour sliders. Targeted adjustment tool'. You can stroke tones in your photo to make them lighter or darker. Intuitive and precise.

### ***Photoshop CC:***

8. Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Black and White
9. Click 'OK'. The Black and White toolbox appears:
10. Move the six colour sliders right or left to brighten or darken the respective tones in the photo. You can also choose from the pre-sets in the drop-down menu at the top.
11. Move the cursor over the photo and hold the left mouse button down. The cursor changes, indicating that the targeted adjustment tool is activated. With the mouse button held down, move the mouse to the right to lighten the tones under the cursor, or left to darken them.

Pros: The most flexible black and white conversion method available.

Cons: Only available in Photoshop CS 3 onwards

## **Convert to Black and White Tool (Destructive)**

This method is a simplified version of Photoshop's Channel Mixer adjustment layer. Only available in Photoshop Elements and NOT available as an adjustment layer, Very flexible black and white conversion technique.

### ***Photoshop Elements:***

1. Enhance > Convert to Black and White
2. Move the colour sliders to the left and right to lighten and darken the corresponding tones. Use the Contrast slider to compensate for changes in contrast. You can also select a pre-set style from the menu on the left. Click 'OK' when you're done.

Pros: Flexible black and white conversion using the colour channels.

Cons: Destructive editing method and small image previews make it hard to assess the changes.