

# CONVERTING DIGITAL COLOUR TO BLACK AND WHITE IMAGES

There are many, many ways to convert a colour image to black and white with your digital tools. What is outlined below is only one of them. I chose this one because this dialog is available in just about every editing program.

To do this conversion, we will use the Hue/Saturation dialog box and I will refer to Photoshop Elements as well as Photoshop. I use Adjustment Layers which are available in your Layers Palette or from Layers>New Adjustment Layer>Hue/Saturation.

1. Have your image open in your editing program.
2. Add a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer and slide the Saturation slider as far to the left as possible. This removes all the colour from your image.
3. At the top of the Hue/Saturation dialog box, there is a box that says 'Master'. Click on the down arrow to the right of Master. Experiment by altering the Lightness slider on the various colours. Start with a colour that is dominant in the image, or one that you want to stand out. If there is a blue sky, select blue and drag the Lightness slider left to darken it. Sometimes the Cyan slider will also affect sky. Go through the colour selections and see what effect you get.
4. When satisfied, click OK in the dialog box.
5. To get a bit more contrast in your image, try a Brightness/Contrast Adjustment Layer. I find that just the Contrast often gives me a more dynamic image.
6. Finally, if the blacks are too dark or highlights have become too light, select the background layer again. As the following adjustment is not available as an Adjustment Layer, I recommend duplicating this layer so if you make a mistake, the layer can be dragged to the garbage bin and you are able to return to your original Background layer.
  - a) To make a duplicate copy of your Background layer, press Ctrl and J at the same time. Now, go to the Image>Adjustments>Highlight/Shadow command(Photoshop CS and later). In Photoshop Elements, go to: Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Shadows/Highlights. Adjust the appropriate sliders to bring back the detail you wish. Click OK.

7. To make a toned image, first click on your top layer. Next, select a new Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer. This time at the bottom right, check the colorize and preview boxes.
  - a) Drag the Hue slider to get a colour, and also adjust the Saturation slider to get the intensity you like. I do not adjust the Lightness slider for this effect.
8. Once satisfied with your new black and white image, flatten it and save it. File>Save As. Make a duplicate of this image for output to a printer or to prepare it for an entry to COPS for the 'Monochrome' Theme in December. To get a duplicate of an image go to: Image>Duplicate. When it has been prepared for it's final destination, Save As again.
9. Keep reading, sharing and learning. There is so much more.....and it is fun!

### Recommended reading:

1. Digital Photographer at *Chapters* - issue # 61 has a good write up - some 10 pgs of what to do and look for when taking B& W.
2. "Digital Black and White Photography" by John Beardsworth
3. "Black and White" The definitive guide for serious digital photographers by Michael Freeman.
4. Other Photoshop books such as The Photoshop Books by Scott Kelby have chapters devoted to black and white conversions.
5. Black and White magazines and books with photos so you can see what great images are like.

Prepared by Lynda Miller, November 5, 2007