



Color Grading in Lightroom & ACR

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This lesson is going to focus on a new feature, called Color Grading. It can be found in three areas: Adobe Lightroom's Develop Module, Adobe Camera Raw and within the Camera Raw filter in Photoshop.

The Color Grading feature replaces the old Split Toning feature. We can still get the same functionality that we got out of the old split toning panel. You just need to know how to go about it.

The Color Grading settings will allow us to take the dark tones of an image, the bright tones or the midtones and push them toward a particular color. This can be used in order to create a bunch of different types of effects. For example, let's say that you have a nice sunrise or sunset image and the brightest part of the image isn't as warm (or yellow) as you'd like it to be. You could use the color grading settings to isolate those bright areas and make just those areas more yellow.

A very common use of color grading has to do with black and white images. Once you've converted an image to black and white, you can add a little personality to it by injecting some color.



The new Color Grading Panel can be found in Lightroom (shown here), Camera Raw and within the Camera Raw filter in Photoshop.

How Color Grading Works (Timestamp 1:44)

Let's first look at how the Color Grading feature works by using a simple gradient as an example. In Lightroom, the Color Grading Panel can be found on the right side of the Develop Module. There is a series of icons at the top of the panel and

these will give us different views of the controls that we'll be using. By activating the icon on the far left, it will present you with three color wheels: one for the highlights, one for the shadows and one for the midtones. As an alternative to viewing these three color wheels all at once, you can view them individually by clicking on the next three icons at the top of the panel. Click on the black icon and it will only display the color wheel that controls the shadows in the image. The gray icon will show you the midtones color wheel and the white icon will show you the highlights color wheel.

At the top of the panel, there is one additional icon on the far right and this will give you the Global Toning settings, which will allow you to shift the color of the entire picture. I find that I use this setting more at the end of the process, after I have adjusted the highlights, shadows and midtones individually. I use it as a way of fine-tuning the end result.

The color wheels will allow you to change the colors of each brightness range independently of one another. You could either click on the left-most icon so that you are viewing all three color wheels or you could click on the white, gray or black icon in order to see one large version of the coordinating color wheel.

When you hover the cursor over the central little circle on the color wheel, some HSL numbers appear above the wheel. These stand for hue, saturation and luminance.

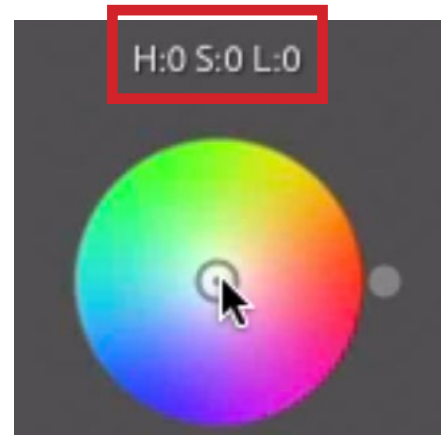


The black icon (circled) was selected and we are viewing the color wheel that controls the shadows.

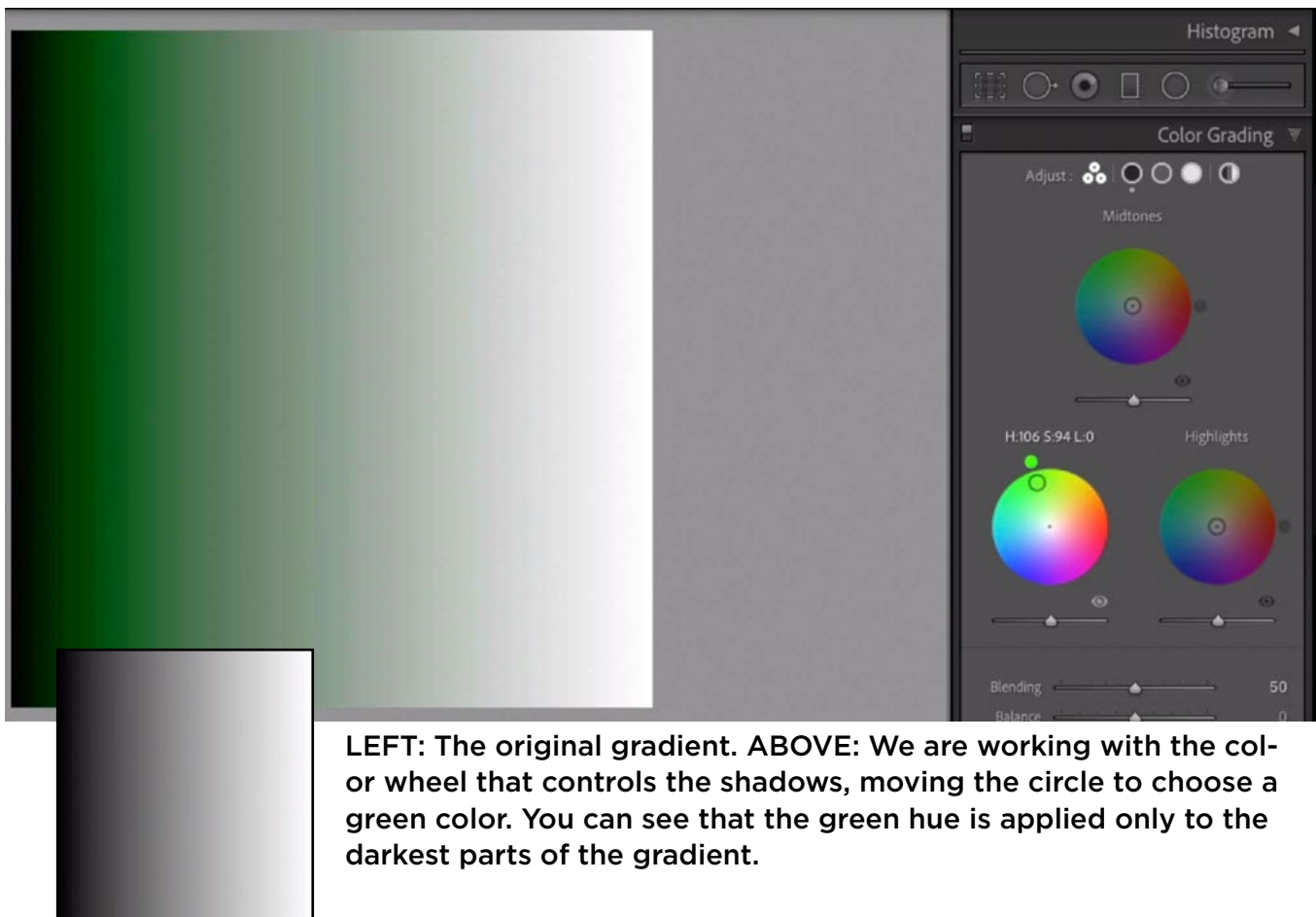
- **Hue:** This refers to the basic color
- **Saturation:** How strong, or colorful, is the color
- **Luminance:** How bright or dark is the color

If you click and drag on that center circle, you can move it around the color wheel. As you move the circle around,

the colors in the image will change. If you use the Shadows color wheel and move around its central circle, the darkest parts of the image will change color. If you use Highlights color wheel, then only the brightest parts of the image will see the color change.

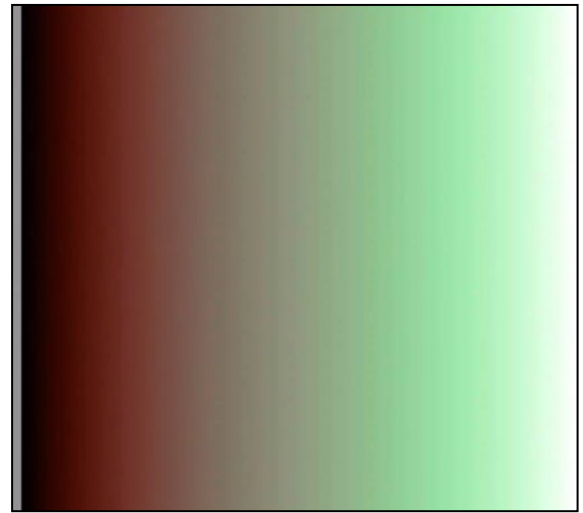


Hover the cursor over the central circle and the HSL values appear above the color wheel.



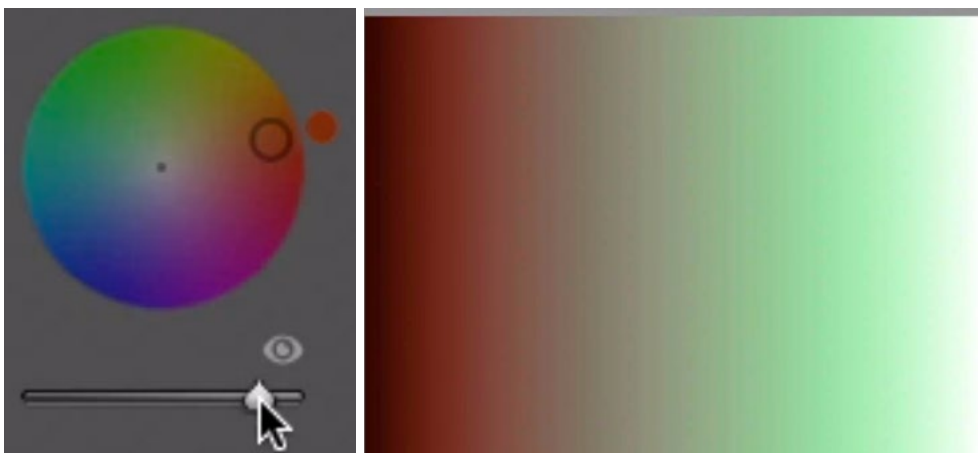
LEFT: The original gradient. ABOVE: We are working with the color wheel that controls the shadows, moving the circle to choose a green color. You can see that the green hue is applied only to the darkest parts of the gradient.

Any time you attempt to change the highlights or the shadows, you will find that there's one area (in each range) that just doesn't change. This is solid black (when working with the shadows) and solid white (when working with the highlights). This happens because the color grading settings are not attempting to change the brightness of your picture. In most images, the darkest part of the picture will be solid black. In order to maintain that same darkness, we can not have any color in that area. We would need to brighten the area in order to introduce any color there. The same goes for the whites. If we wanted to inject a color into a white area, we would first need to darken it.



We applied a red color to the shadows and a green color to the highlights, but you can see that the far left (the blacks) and the far right (the whites) ends of the gradient do not show the colors.

This is where the brightness slider comes in. Below each of the three color wheels, you will see a little slider. This slider will adjust the luminance, or brightness, of the highlights, shadows or midtones. Let's say that you set the Shadows color wheel to a red color. If you'd like the darkest, black areas of your image to have that red color, you can drag the Luminance slider to the right. This lightens those darkest areas, allowing them to take on the specified color.

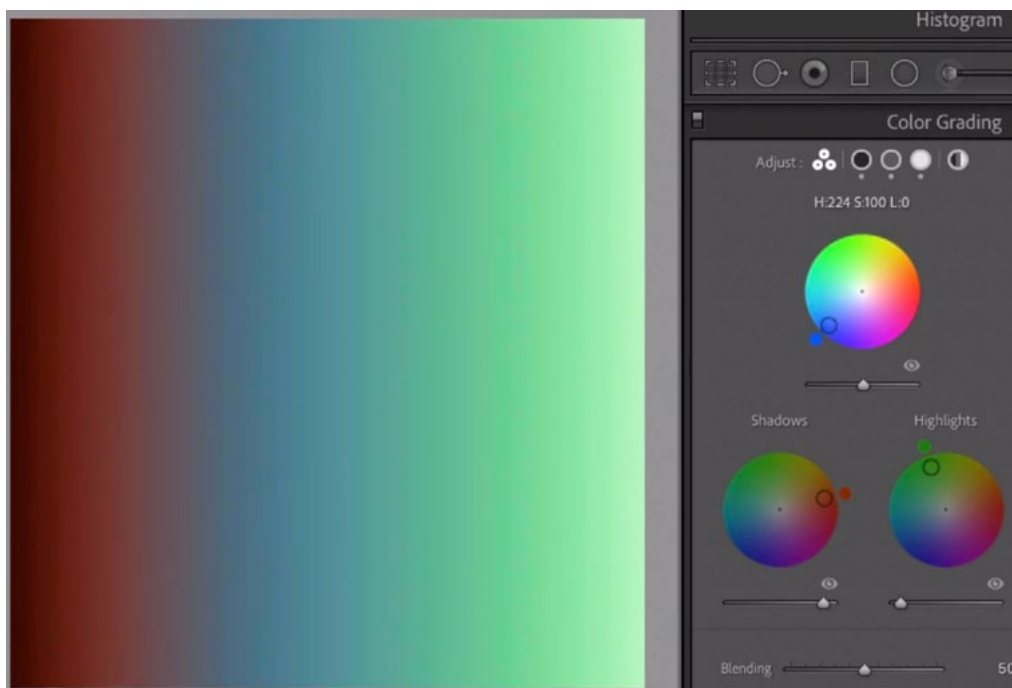


Working on the settings that control the shadows, we moved the brightness, or luminance, slider to the right. This lightens the darkest areas and you can see that the red color is now visible in those areas.

If you were working with the Highlights color wheel and you wanted the brightest part of the image to take on the chosen color, you could move that Luminance slider to the left, therefore darkening the brightest highlights.

Note that most images contain solid black and solid white in very small areas, so it won't be necessary to work with this Luminance slider all the time.

The Midtones color wheel will control the colors in the area between the brights and the darks.



Here, we are using the midtone settings to choose a blue color. We pushed red into the shadows, green into the highlights and blue into the midtones.

Working with the color wheel The closer you move the circle to the outer rim of the color wheel, the larger the change you will be making to your image. That's because the colors closest to the rim of the wheel are the most saturated. As you move the circle more and more toward the middle of the wheel, you will be applying less and less of that color. When the little circle is positioned right in the center of the color wheel, you will be applying no color at all.

After having worked with the color wheels, there are some controls at the very bottom of the Color Grading panel. These settings, the Blending slider and the Balance slider, apply to all three color ranges together.

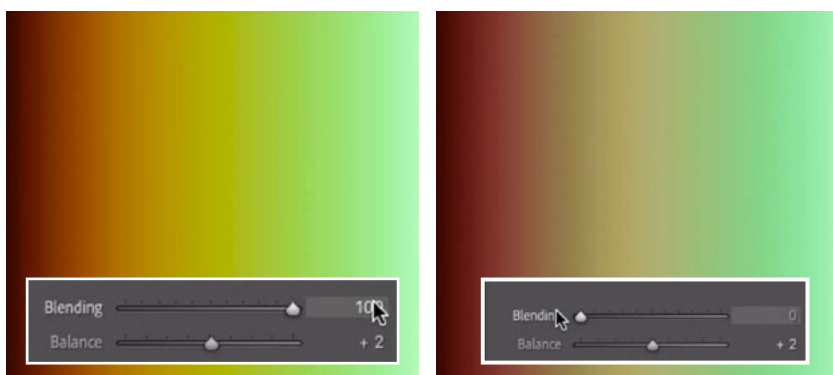
The Balance slider will determine which brightness range should become more dominant. When the slider handle is perfectly centered, the highlights and the shadows will be perfectly balanced. This means they should take up approximately the same amount of space in the image. If this slider is moved to the left, the shadows will become more prominent in the image. Whatever color you're pushing into the shadows will extend farther and farther into the midtones. If the slider is moved to the right, then the highlights will become more prominent and therefore the highlight color will extend farther into the midtones.

Note that the farther you move the Balance slider in one direction or the other, the midtone settings will become less and less effective. That's because you're extending either the highlights or the shadows INTO the midtones.

The Blending slider will control how much overlap there is between the colors. When the slider is moved to the left, the colors will blend less. When the slider is moved to the right, the colors will blend more. The higher you move this slider, the less effective the Midtone settings will likely be.



We pushed red into the shadows and green into the highlights. Here, the Balance slider is being moved to the right, shifting more of the image to shadows. You can see that the greens now take up more of the gradient.

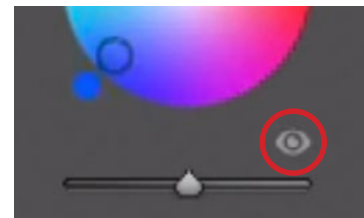


FAR LEFT: The Blending slider is pushed all the way to the right, causing the colors to blend more.

DIRECTLY LEFT: The Blending slider is pushed all the way to the left, causing the colors to blend less.

Adjustment Indicators After you have adjusted a color wheel, a little eyeball icon will be lit up beneath the wheel. If you click and hold on this icon, it will disable the settings attached to that particular color wheel. You could also temporarily disable ALL of the settings within this panel by clicking the little light switch icon that appears to the left of the panel name (at the very top of the panel).

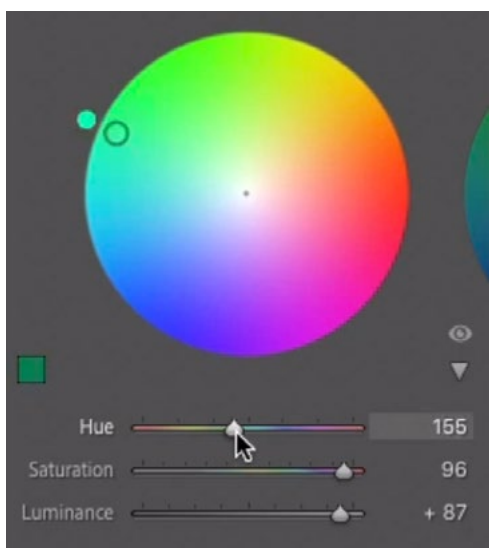
At the top of the Color Grading Panel, you may notice little dots appear beneath the little icons representing the shadows, highlights and/or midtones. The dots indicate that settings have been applied to these tonal ranges.



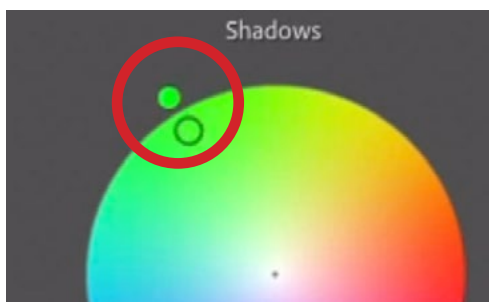
Click and hold on the eyeball to temporarily disable the settings.



The little dots indicate that adjustments have been made.



The Hue and Saturation sliders can be used to specify a color.



You can also drag the little color dot around to specify the hue.

Additional settings in individual color wheel views

When you are viewing one color wheel by itself (as opposed to the view where you see all three at once), there will be some additional setting beneath the wheel. These include the Hue, Saturation and Luminance sliders, and they can be used to set the desired color. Using the sliders provides a more precise method of color selection than dragging the little circle inside the color wheel.

The Hue slider will move the little circle around the color wheel, allowing you to choose the basic color. Alternatively, you can click and drag on the little color dot that appears just outside the edge of the color wheel. The Saturation slider will move the little circle in and out, making that chosen color more or less saturated.

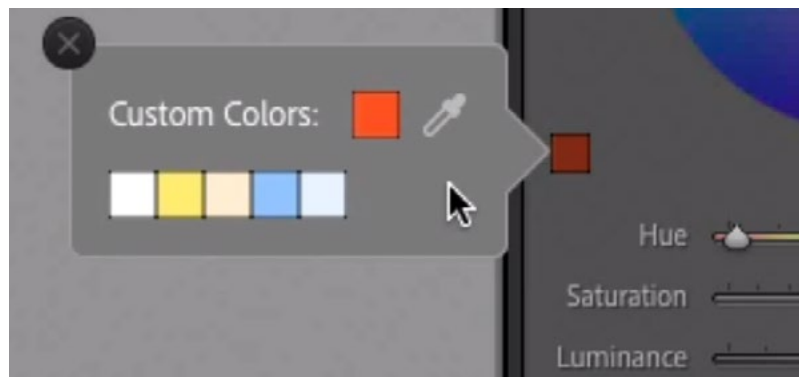
Note that you can toggle the visibility of the Hue and Saturation sliders by clicking the little disclosure triangle that appears above the HSL sliders.

The Luminance slider will control the overall brightness of the chosen color.

The Blending and Balance sliders also appear in this single color wheel-view as well, but it's important to remember that these apply to the entire image (the highlights, midtones and shadows) while the HSL sliders only apply to the tonal range you're working on.

At the top of the Color Grading Panel, the far-right icon will give you the Global color wheel. The settings here will affect the color across the entire image, applying equally to the highlights, shadows and midtones.

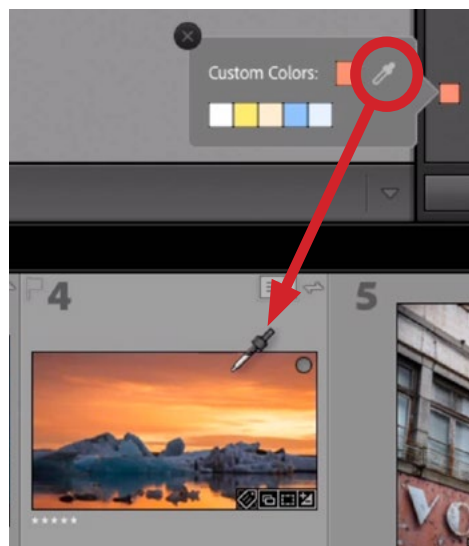
Custom Colors There is a little color swatch that appears above the HSL sliders and it reflects the color that is currently chosen. If you click on this swatch, a little box will appear, containing some preset colors. Clicking on one of these preset swatches will change the hue and saturation settings to apply that color.



Click on the color swatch beneath the color wheel in order to access the Custom Colors settings.

Note that you can save and store your own colors in this box. To do this, set the color wheel to a color you want to save and then right-click on one of the swatches in order to access a pop-up menu. From this menu, choose "Set this Swatch to Current Color."

There is a little eyedropper icon on the right side of the pop-up box and it can be used to sample any color on your screen. Click and hold the mouse button while dragging the eyedropper to the color you want to sample. It doesn't even need to be within the Lightroom interface. When you release the mouse button, it will sample the color that was under the cursor.



The little Custom Color eyedropper is being used to sample a color from an image in the Filmstrip.

NOTE: This custom colors dialog box is only available in Lightroom. It is not available in Camera Raw or Photoshop's Camera Raw filter.

Make Color Grading Panel Act Like Old Split Toning Panel (20:00)

Before the Split Toning Panel was swapped for the Color Grading Panel, the most common use for it was for tinting black and white images. We can still do that, and we can even get the exact same look that the old split toning feature used to offer. Let's look at how to do that.

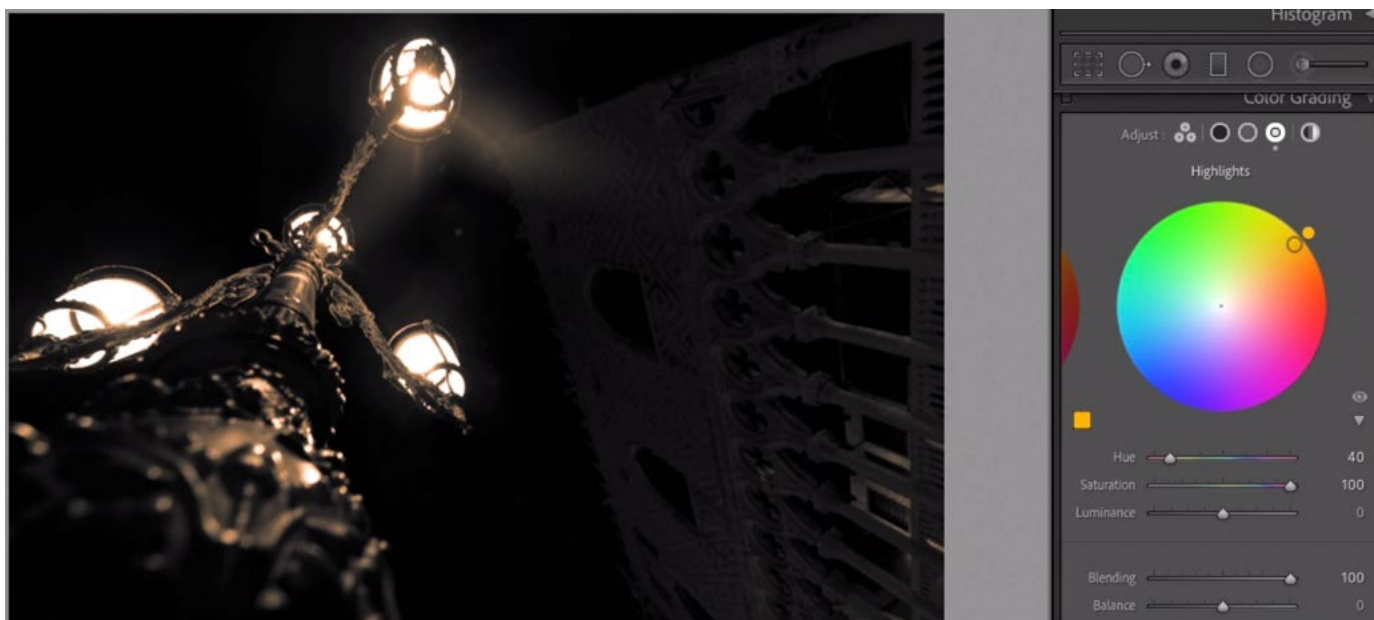
In the Color Grading Panel, drag the Blending slider all the way to the right, so it's set to 100. Then, when you're adjusting the picture, only focus on the settings for the Shadows and the Highlights. Don't touch the Midtone settings, the Global settings, or the brightness sliders that appear beneath each color wheel.



Use the settings shown at left if you would like the Color Grading Panel to work like the old Split Toning Panel.

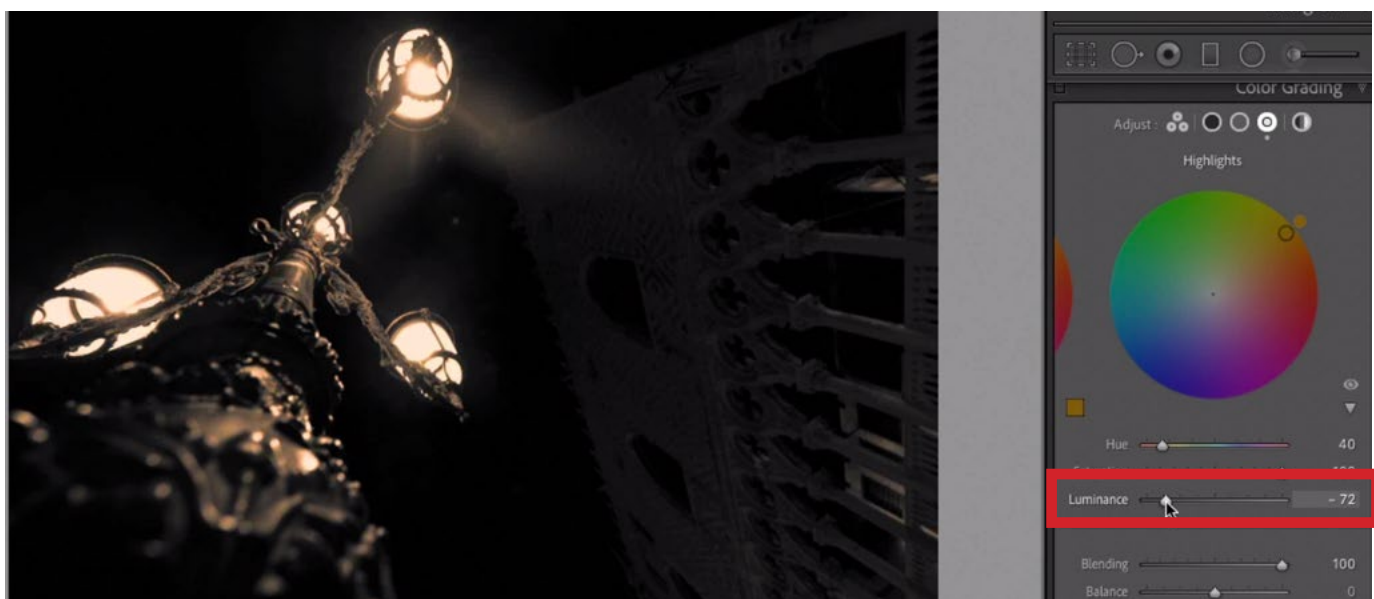
Tinting a Black and White Image (22.21)

To tint a black and white photo, click on the white icon at the top of the Color Grading Panel so that you're viewing just the settings for the highlights. Specify the color that you'd like to appear in the highlights by either moving the little circle within the color wheel or by using the Hue and Saturation sliders. In the video example, we have an image of a lamp post at night and we want to inject a warm color into the highlights so we chose a yellow/orange hue.



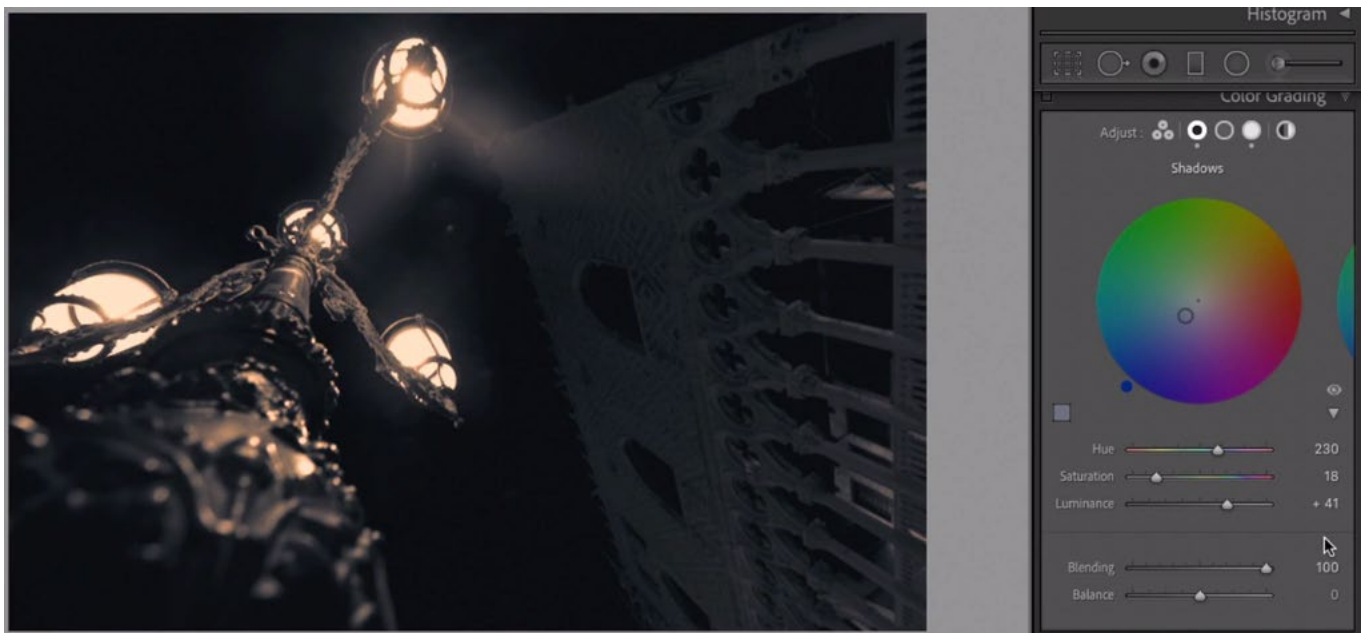
A yellow tone is being chosen for the highlights in this image. You can see that the lights are so bright that they do not hold as much of the yellow color.

I found that the actual lights in the image did not receive as much of the warm tint and that's because they're either perfectly white or close to it. Remember, you can't have color when you're at those extremes of brightness. I would like the lights to have more of the tint, so we'll move the Luminance slider to the left, darkening the highlights a bit so that they can retain the color.



The Luminance slider (for the highlights) is being moved to the left. This darkens the brightest highlights, allowing them to take on more of the chosen color.

After setting a color for the highlights, click on the black icon at the top of the Color Grading Panel in order to view the settings for the Shadows. Again, choose the desired color by either working directly in the color wheel or by using the Hue and Saturation sliders. In the video example, we chose a blue color for the shadows. The sky in the example image is either black or close to it, so again, it is not receiving much of the color tint. If we wanted more of the blue to show up in this area, we could drag the Luminance slider to the right a bit, lightening those shadows so that they can receive the blue tint.



A blue hue was chosen for the shadows and we moved the Luminance slider up, which lightened the darkest parts of those shadows. This allows those dark areas to receive more of the blue color.

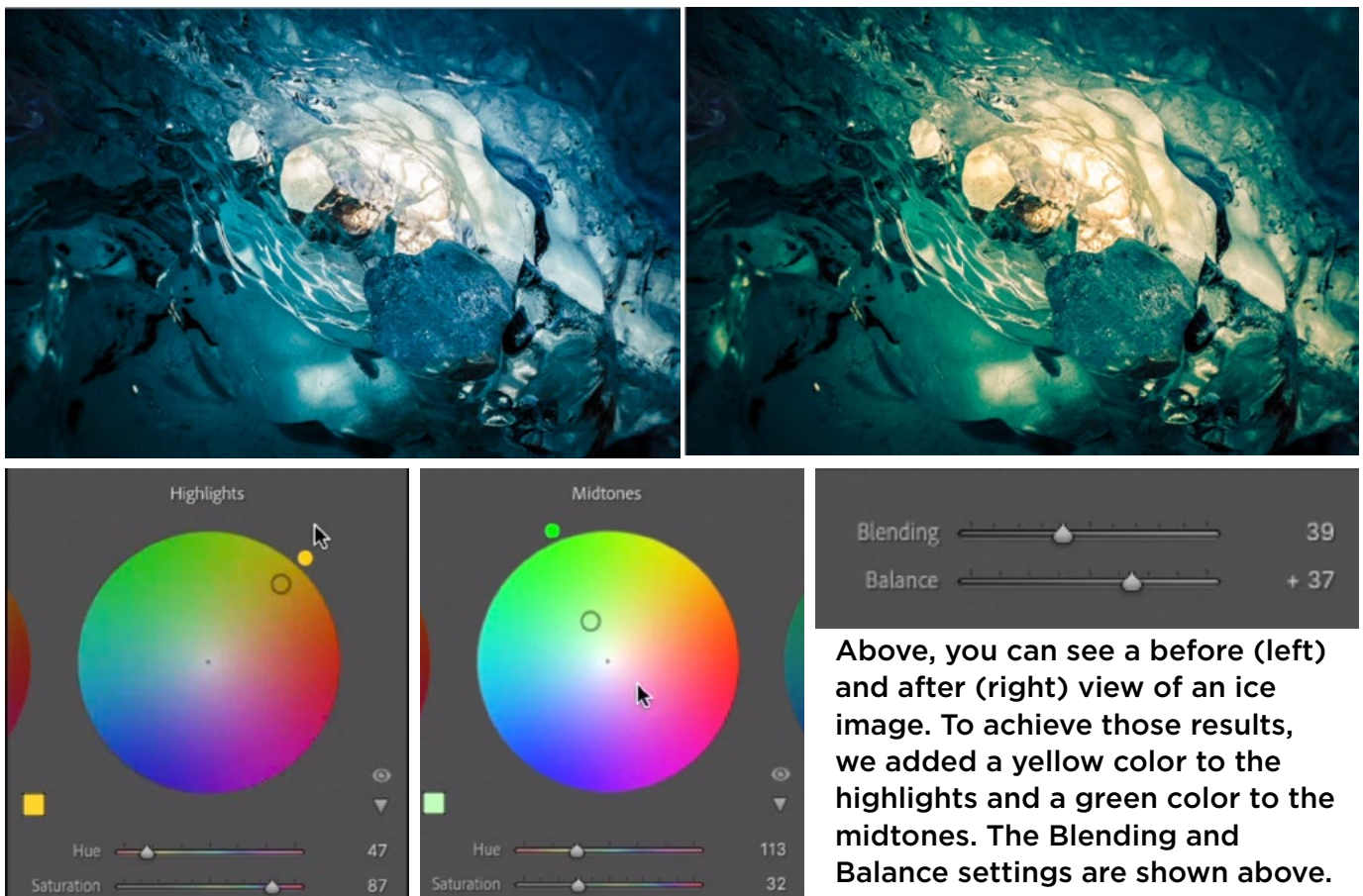
The colors for the shadows and highlights have been set. Now, you can choose to use the Balance slider to determine which color is going to be more dominant. Move the slider to the right if you'd like the color in the highlights to be more dominant. Move it to the left if you'd like the color that's in the shadows to be more dominant.

You can also experiment with the Blending slider, which controls how much overlap there is between colors. Remember, if you'd like the Color Grading settings to act like the old Split Toning settings, set this Blending slider to 100.

If you would like a third color to be injected into the Midtones, you can click on the gray icon at the top of the Color Grading Panel in order to view the settings for the midtones. Use the same method for choosing a color for this brightness range.

Finally, use the Global settings (the far right icon at the top of the panel) in order to tweak the final result. The Global settings will affect the image as a whole. It will not target a particular tonal range.

Balance & Blending tip When working with the Balance and Blending sliders, it can be hard to see how they're affecting the image if the colors being injected are more on the subtle side. If you hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) while dragging these sliders, the image will display the colors as if they were set to the highest saturation level. This can make it easier to see where one color ends and another begins. When you release the Option key, the image will return to reflecting the actual color settings you have dialed in.



Above, you can see a before (left) and after (right) view of an ice image. To achieve those results, we added a yellow color to the highlights and a green color to the midtones. The Blending and Balance settings are shown above.

Useful Keyboard Shortcuts (31:46)

There are a few keyboard shortcuts that will make your Color Grading workflow more efficient. Let's look at those here.

When using the view that shows all three color wheels at once, you don't have access to the Hue or Saturation sliders. You are limited to choosing the color by moving around the little circle within the color wheel.

Change saturation without changing hue Let's say that you have chosen the specific hue and now want to set the saturation. Moving the circle toward the edge of the wheel will make things more saturated and moving it to the center of the wheel will make the color less saturated. Using the mouse, it will be easy to accidentally change the hue as well, by allowing the circle to slightly shift in one direction around the wheel.

If you hover your cursor over one of the color wheels and hold down the Shift key, a line will appear, running from the center of the wheel to the edge of the wheel, pointing to the selected color. Now, you can move the little circle in and out and it will be constrained to moving on that line. This ensures that you will be changing the saturation but not the hue.

Change hue without changing saturation If you hold down the Command key (Ctrl on Win), a dark ring will appear inside the color wheel. This will allow you to move the little circle around the ring, without allowing the circle to move in and out. It will be constrained to the same saturation setting.



Hold the Shift key down and your color selection will be constrained to only affect the saturation.



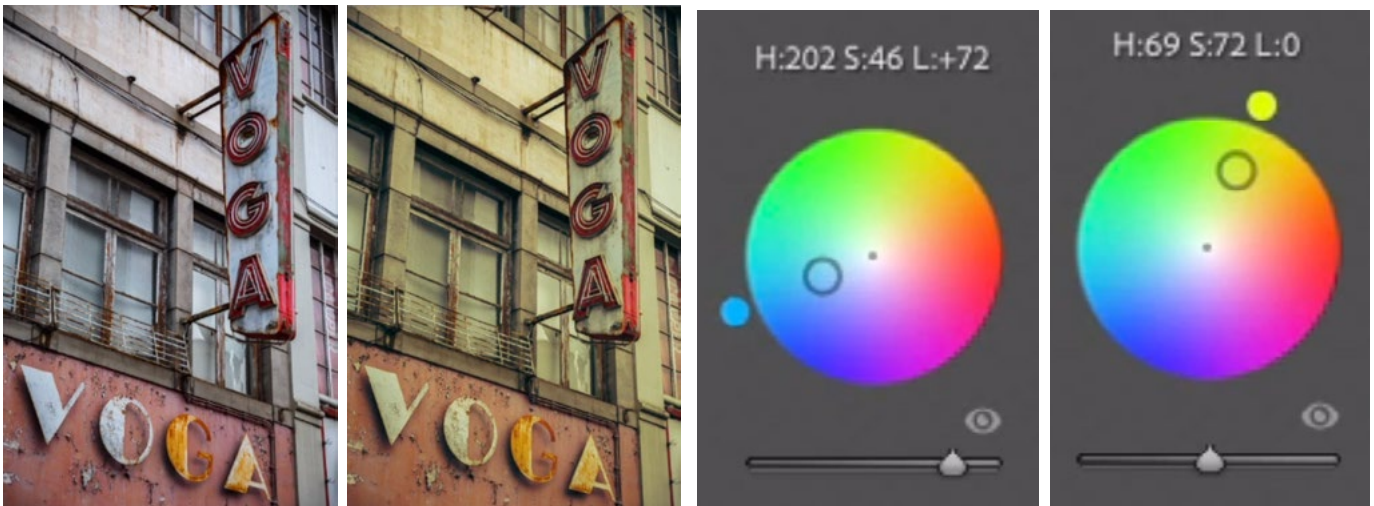
Hold the Command key down (Ctrl on Win) and your color selection will be constrained to only affect the hue.

More precise adjustments When dragging that little circle around one of the color wheels, it's very easy to accidentally make a radical change, so there is a keyboard shortcut that will enable you to make things more precise. If you hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) while dragging the little circle around the color wheel, it will slow the circle down so that you can be more precise. In other words, moving your mouse the same distance will make a smaller change.

Styling an Image using Color Grading (36:37)

Create a Vintage Style The Color Grading settings can be used to create all sorts of stylized effects. We'll start with a vintage style. Old, vintage photos usually don't have the full density of the colors and tones. We can create that look by working with the Shadows settings and moving the Luminosity slider up a bit. This will lighten the shadows, making them appear more faded. By lightening the shadows, we can push more color into them. In the video example, we set the hue for the shadows to a blue color.

Next, we'll work with the Highlights settings and choose a color to be pushed into those bright areas. In the video example, we chose a yellow hue.

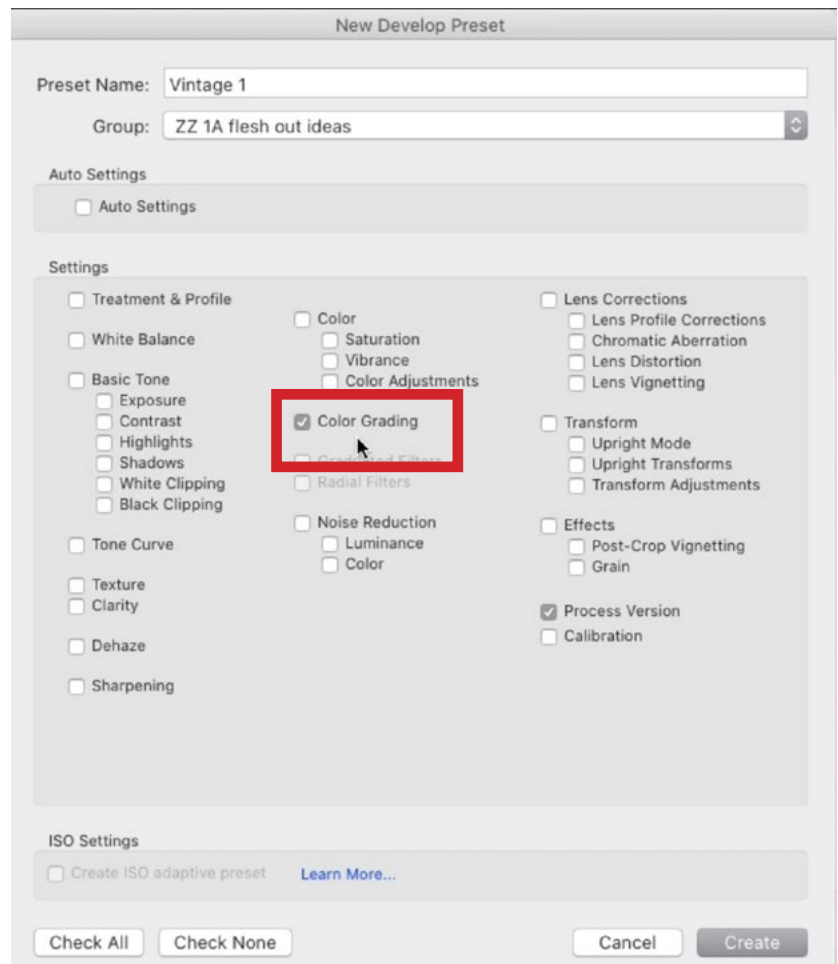


This vintage effect was created by lightening the shadows and adding a blue hue to those areas. Then we added a yellow hue to the highlights and tweaked the Balance slider.

Different colors have been chosen for the highlights and the shadows, so at this point, the Balance slider can be used to determine whether one of these should be more prominent. As an optional step, we could lastly use the Global settings to see if the entire image should be shifted toward a particular color.

Create a preset After creating a particular style, you can save it as a preset by clicking on the little plus icon at the top of the Presents Panel, which can be found on the left side of the Develop Module in Lightroom. A drop-down menu will appear, from which you will choose to Create Preset. A dialog will appear, prompting you to name the preset and choose which settings the preset should use when being applied to an image. Click the “Check None” button at the bottom of the dialog in order to uncheck all the settings boxes. Then turn on just the Color Grading check box and click Create. Now, the new preset will appear in the list of presets in the Presets Panel.

Extra tips You can right-click on one of the color wheels to access some additional options. In the menu that appears, you have the option to reset the current color wheel settings, reset the setting for all three color wheels, copy the settings and paste copied settings.



In the New Develop Preset dialog, we named the preset and then only turned on the check box for the Color Grading settings.

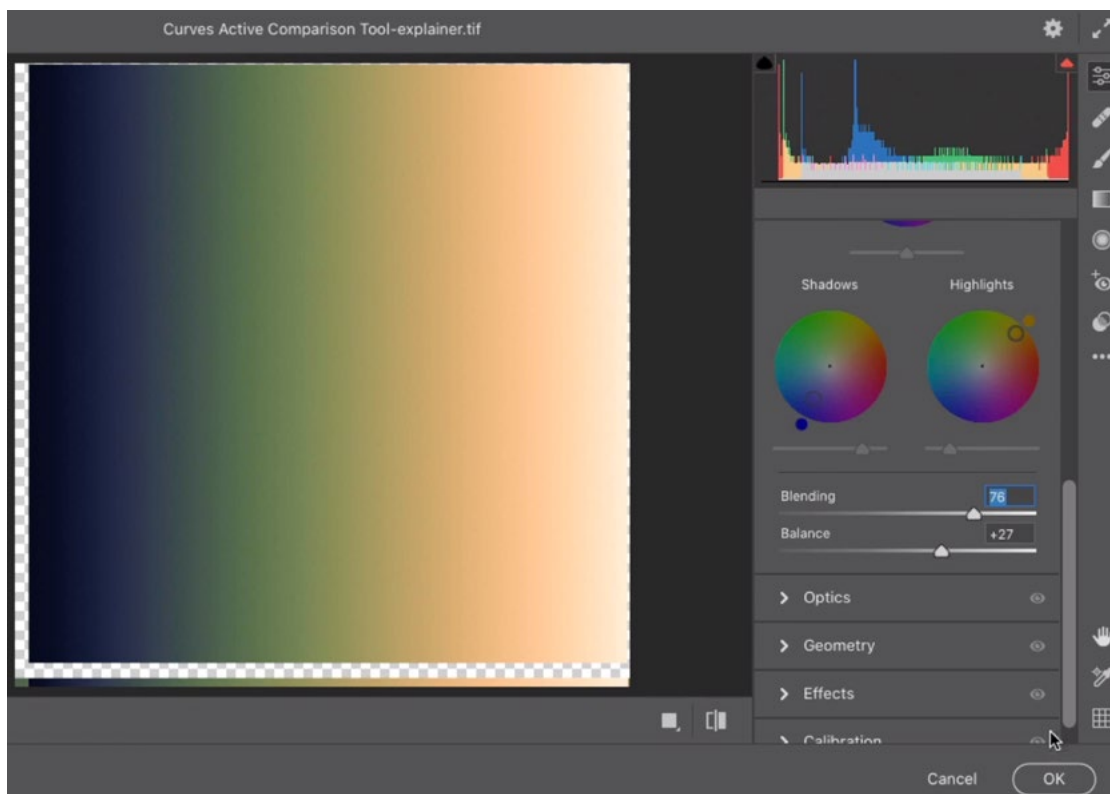
Apply Color Grading using Photoshop Adjustment Layers (44:00)

The one area where you will not find the Color Grading settings is within the main interface of Photoshop. There IS a way of applying these color grading adjustments in Photoshop, but they will require you to use some techniques that can be found in an earlier Masters Academy lesson. It involves the Curves Active Comparison Tool. This tool will allow you to take any adjustment in Photoshop and show you how to create the same effect using Curves. You can download the tool document from the lesson page.

Click the following link to view the lesson on the Curves Comparison Tool:

<https://mastersacademy.com/course/curves-comparison-tool/>

With the Curves Comparison Tool document open, make sure that the “Adjust with Camera Raw Filter” layer is turned on and then choose the Camera Raw Filter from the Filter menu. In the Camera Raw Filter, use the Color Grading settings to create the effect you want. If you have a preset, you could simply apply it at this stage. Click OK to exit the Camera Raw filter.

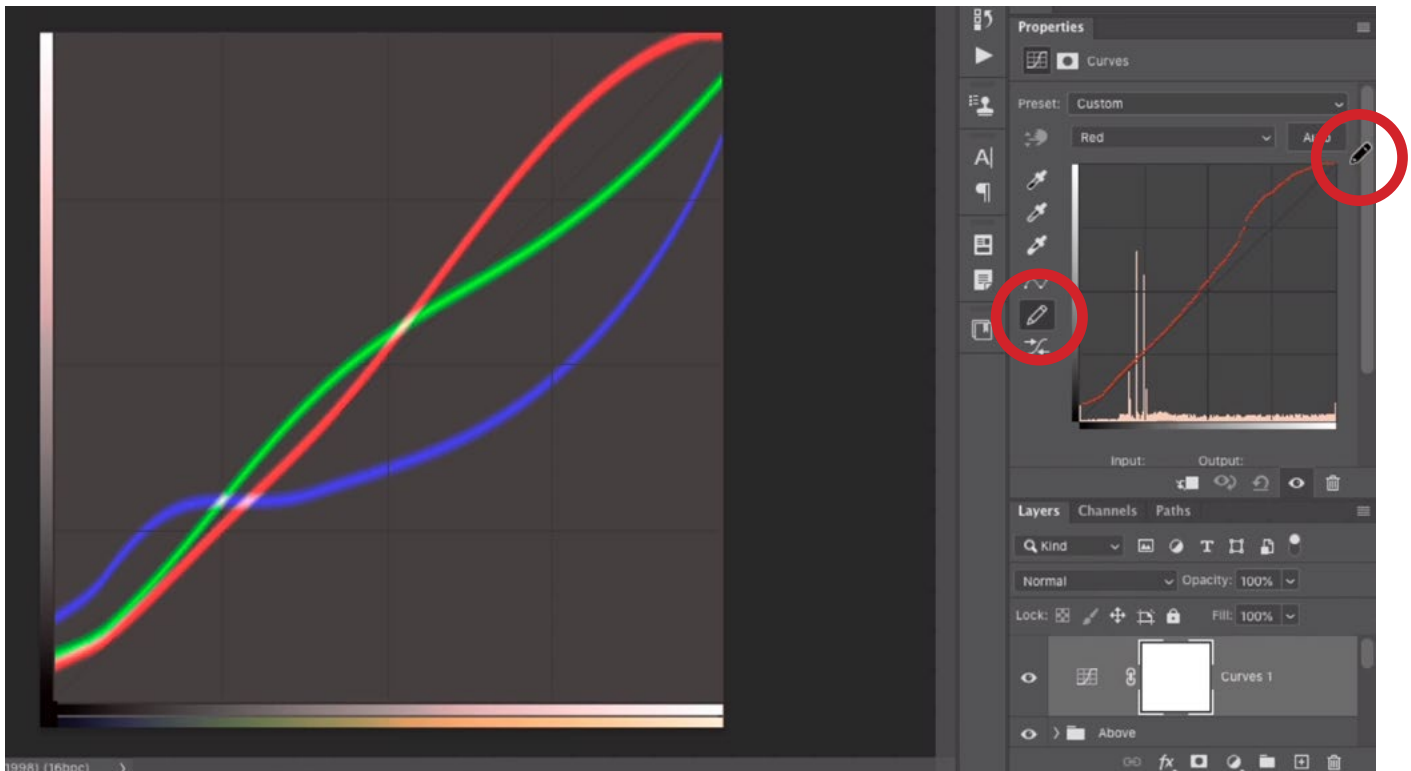


The Color Grading settings in the Camera Raw filter are being used to create the desired effect.

In the Curve Comparison Document, the active layer will show you exactly what kind of curve you would need in order to create that same effect.

You could now create a Curves adjustment layer and use the image layer as a reference for how you will need to move the individual curves lines in order to create the effect. You can switch between the three color curves by using the menu that appears above the curve in the Curves Properties Panel.

When working with a particular curve, you can activate the pencil icon (to the left of the curves chart) and manually draw in the curve that you see in the image window. The icon below the pencil icon is the “smooth” command, and you can click on it to smooth out the curve line that you just drew.



The Camera Raw filter caused the Comparison Tool document to display a diagram of what the Curves should look like in order to create the effect. Here, we created a Curves adjustment layer and are using the Pencil tool (circled) to draw the red curve, mimicking the one we see in the image window.

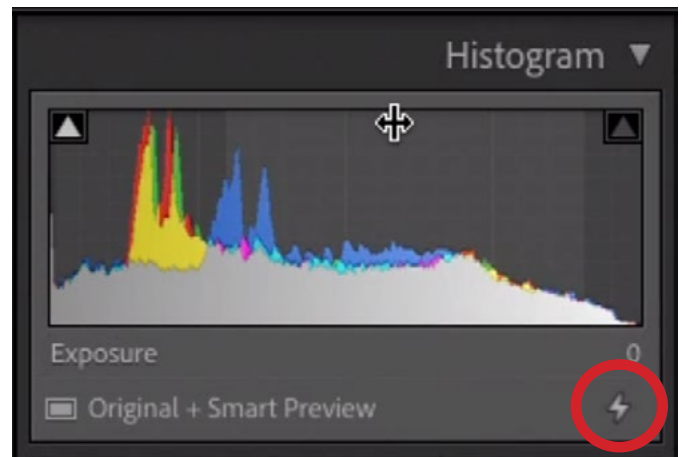
After recreating all three of the color curves, you can save these Curves settings as a preset by clicking the little menu in the top right corner of the Properties Panel and choosing Save Curves Preset.

Now, you can open an image, create a Curves adjustment layer and use the Preset menu in the Properties Panel to choose the preset you just created.

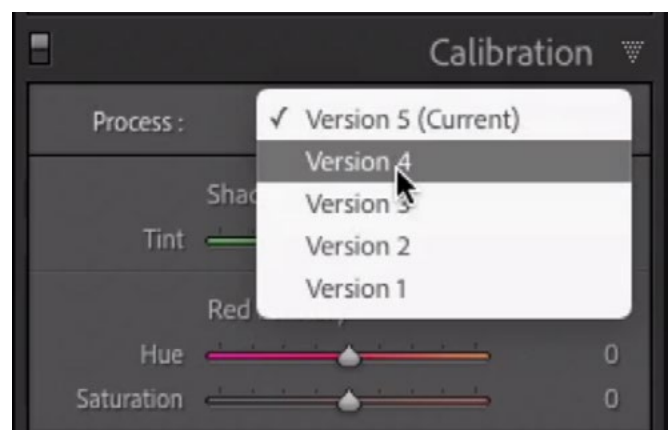
Troubleshooting (51:45)

If you open an older image in Lightroom, you may find that the Color Grading Panel does not appear. Instead, it is replaced by the old Split Toning Panel. This can happen because the older image was last adjusted using an older process version of Lightroom. You can tell that an image is using an older process version because a little lightning bolt icon will appear beneath the histogram in the Develop Module. It does this because it wants to retain the look from those older settings. You can manually tell it to update the image to using the newest process version by clicking on that little lightning icon.

If you would like to adjust an image using an old process version that contains the Split Toning Panel, you can expand the Calibration Panel and use the Process menu to choose an older version of Lightroom. This will bring back the old settings, including the Split Toning Panel.



You can tell that an image was last processed using an old version of Lightroom because a lightning bolt icon will appear below the histogram.



If you'd like to revert an image to using the settings in an old version of Lightroom, use the Process menu within the Calibration Panel.