

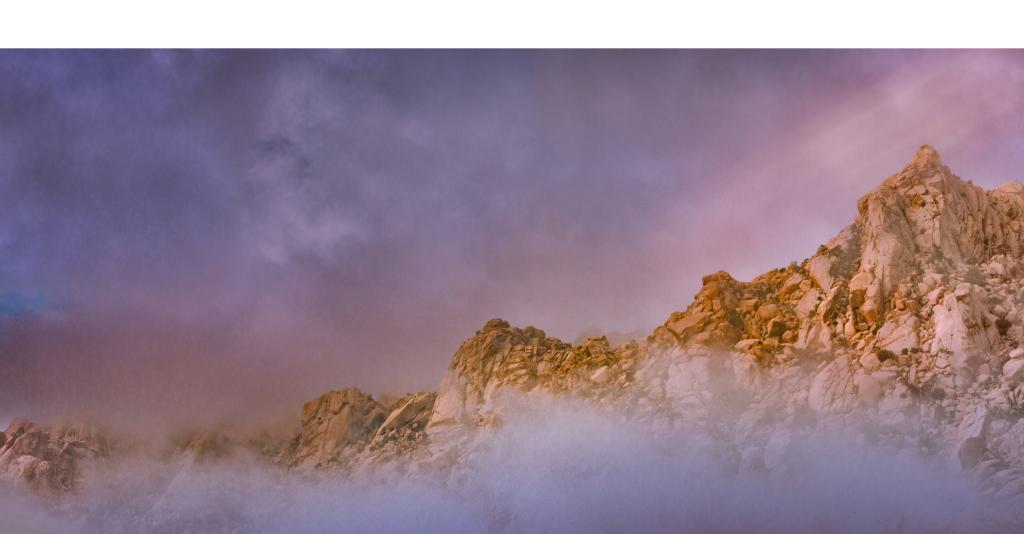


"HOME OF THE LANDSCAPE MASTER CLASSES"

LANDSCAPE WORKFLOW AFOOLPROOF SYSTEM FOR THE LIGHTROOM DEVELOP MODULE

Bite Size Learning E-Books for Landscape Art Photographers By Bob Killen, ACI, ACE





FORWARD



Hi, I'm Bob Killen, Landscape Art
Photographer, Adobe Certified Instructor
and Director of the National Park
Photography Expeditions Master Class
program. I know that you know that there
is nothing as exciting as when the sky
lightens into streaks of pink and orange
and clouds are lit from the bottom with
a fiery glow. You are in position with your
camera and tripod; the sunrise intensifies,
growing brighter and sharper, and visibility
improves as night recedes.

The lake in your foreground absorbs the color of the sky, becoming a mirror of light, and shadows dissolve. You squeeze your shutter release, bracket your shots, carefully compose and recompose, working the light and working the scene to capture and ultimately print a scene that invites your viewers to navigate fine details and feel the emotional range you felt at the time of capture.

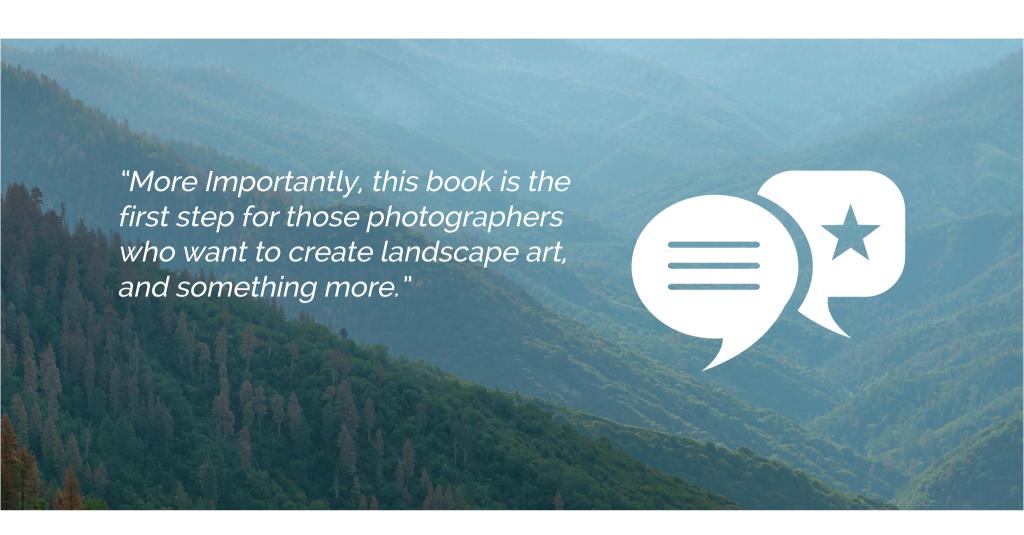




"Wow," you say as you review your images on the back of your camera. "These are great!" Then you download your work, open them on your computer for further review and suddenly they don't seem so great. Why? Well you are not the first person to experience this nor will you be the last, and there are several reasons for this disappointment. First, you are seeing a small-scale image displayed as a Jpeq on the back of your camera. Scale matters and your camera has chosen how your image will appear, not you. **Second**, Digital Landscape Photography is an art form that legends like Ansel Adams and his contemporaries Edward Weston, Paul Caponigro, Eliot Porter and others pioneered. For their work, they developed systems for light, composition, and dark room tasks, which we call postproduction today. They learned that creativity is a process and that stunning landscapes are the result of planning and patience, not luck. Third, these Masters created work that exceeded a vision beyond documentation. In other words, their images, while filled with details and exquisite compositions, also provided narration; thus, as viewers we feel and comprehend a story beyond words. We feel what they felt at the time of capture and at the time of post-production in the chemical darkroom.







Fourth, Adams and his contemporaries, as well as today's successful artists, mastered their technology and craft. They were in control of their camera's capabilities, understood and lived with its limitations, and managed their darkroom processes to achieve predictable results. This then is a book—one in a series— about building a foolproof system for creating landscape photographs filled with an extended emotional range. We begin with the Develop Module (and the develop module only) for this is where we process our digital negatives and what we do here is just as

important as what the landscape legends of the past did in the chemical darkroom. More importantly, this book is the first step for those photographers who want to create landscape art, and something more; it is the first step about pledging your future to your own hands, creating images through choice, not chance. It is about finding your own work and developing a visual voice—your own.



SOME BEFORE YOU READ THIS BOOK, AND PRACTICE WITH YOUR OWN IMAGES THERE ARE SIX THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW. IMPORTANT STUFF

DON'T SKIP THIS SECTION.... REALLY, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO YOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC SUCCESS.

- This book is for Lightroom CC or Lightroom 6 users. However, we strongly recommend that you use Lightroom CC and join the Adobe Cloud (http://www.adobe.com/creativecloud.html) and add Photoshop to your account because subsequent Landscape Master Class e-books teach Photoshop workflows for your landscape post-production work (and they are easy to learn... guaranteed).
- This e-book is not a Lightroom Book; there are plenty of great, full coverage, Lightroom Books. This e-book teaches Lightroom Workflow for art photographers who are creating landscape images and themes. However, it is not against the law to use this workflow for other genres.
- As discussed in item two, I assume you know your way around Lightroom, but that you have never used a task specific system for your work.

4

We assume that you are shooting in the RAW mode and not capturing JPEGS.

5

This e-book is about workflow in the Adobe Lightroom Basic Module for Landscape Art and does **not** cover the adjustment brush, filters, black and white conversions and other tools. We will examine those tools in subsequent NPPE Master Class e-books.



This process is only the beginning. We expect that your work will require further attention in Lightroom and or Photoshop to achieve your visual goals.



OK, NOW THAT WE HAVE THAT OUT OF THE WAY LET'S ROCK ON!



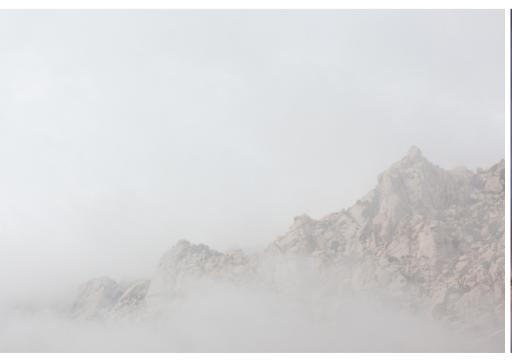
BACKGROUND

Numerous video and print tutorials teach various techniques for enhancing images in the Lightroom Develop Module. Some are good— others not so much— and of course, you can develop your own workflow which may achieve good results, because there are no rules about how to accomplish your goals for any given photograph. While there is no 'correct way,' there are best practices that professionals follow to attain consistent, duplicable results every time.

WHY DO YOU NEED A SYSTEM?

When you capture an image, awareness of the exposure as well as the composition is critical to creating a strong, finished piece of work. You may intentionally underexpose or overexpose an image for effect, capture a balanced image of lights and darks or some combination therein. Regardless of the capture, the image will have a black point wherein anything less than this point will have no shadow detail and appear black. The same is true for the white point. Your photographic goal is to deliver as much detail in the highlights and shadows as possible unless the elimination of this detail adds an artistic dimension that further informs or moves the viewer with an extended emotional range.

"Consistency and creative predictability are two traits that separate professionals from amateurs."





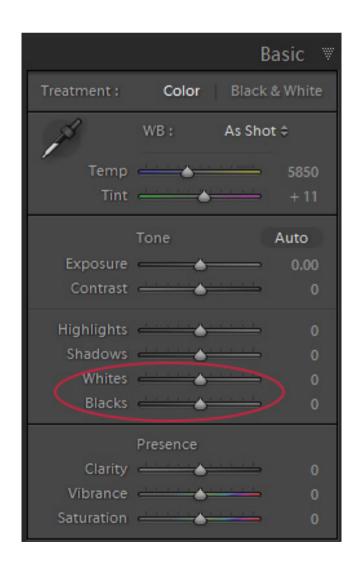
Before After



THE FOOL PROOF SYSTEM



Fool Proof is a powerful term, one that indicates without error and or incapable of error. The concept behind this system is to create a foolproof workflow to establish black and white points that reveal as much shadow and highlight detail as possible from the image file, carefully position the midtones, and determine the intensity of colors and color hues. It does not mean that you have a foolproof composition or the world's most exciting subject.



THE BENEFITS OF THIS SYSTEM ARE:

- 1. Defining the black and white point defines how much detail we can reveal or hide for our viewing audience.
- 2. Establishing black and white points in the image often eliminates or reduces colorcasts.
- 3. Once we have created a strong baseline image, we are free then to explore other creative possibilities by tweaking and or making significant adjustments to any one of our adjustment sliders.
- 4. A solid baseline image allows us to use Lightroom's other tools for further enhancement.
- 5. A solid baseline image allows us to place the image in Photoshop for additional work that may extend the emotional range of the image or alter reality to further other artistic metaphors or messages.

So, let's get started and put these concepts to work.



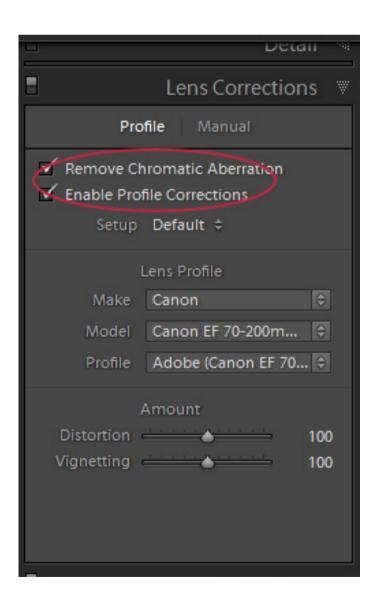
THE PROCESS

OPEN ANY OF YOUR OWN IMAGES AND FOLLOW THESE STEPS OR DOWNLOAD THE PRACTICE IMAGES HERE.









LENS CORRECTION— We start here because we need to correct for any lens issues. Click on the Lens Corrections panel and tick the Remove Chromatic Aberration and Enable Profile Corrections boxes.

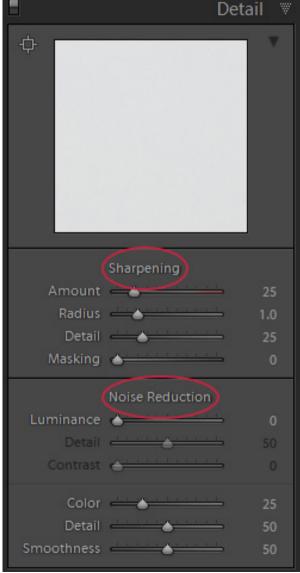
You really need to do this because Adobe has spent a ton of money on testing nearly every lens on the planet and developing software that corrects inherent flaws such as pin cushioning and barrel distortion in each. Chromatic Aberration is common in landscape photography and creates green and magenta color fringes on some edges. You may not notice this until you zoom into 2:1 or so and then you think, "Hey this is not a big deal; who is going to see it?" Believe me, when you print this image at 13x19 inches or better you will notice it immediately and you're not going to like it at all. So, let's knock this out now!



TRANSFORM— Next, go to the Transform panel, Click on Constrain Crop and then click the Auto button to straighten and align the image. Notice that in this image the Auto button corrected for a slight horizontal distortion. If needed, use the manual transform tools to straighten the image further. This panel has many other uses, particularly for architectural shots, cityscapes and other images where geometry is critical. However, for landscapes a straight horizon is what you need and for the most part you should have captured that correctly in camera, but hey sometimes stuff happens (too much wine the night before, failure to check your tripod level, getting to old to hold the camera level, etc.)

DETAIL— The detail panel houses two subpanels, Sharpening and Noise Reduction, and I could write several chapters on each of these panels but I'm not. I'm going to keep this simple and cover detail without to many details (OK pun intended).





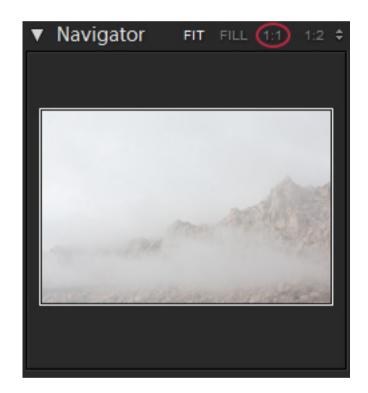


THE PROCESS- SHARPENING

SHARPENING— You have no doubt noticed that RAW photos are soft and flat when we import them into Lightroom. Landscape Photographers shoot in RAW so that we can control the final image outcome whereas when we shoot JPEGS, the camera controls the image appearance. (There are many other differences between the two but that's for another day.)

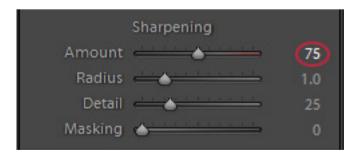
It is important to understand that when we use the sharpening controls we are performing Capture Sharpening, sometimes known as RAW pre-sharpening, which is far different then print sharpening. Capture sharpening removes some of the low contrast issues native to a RAW file.

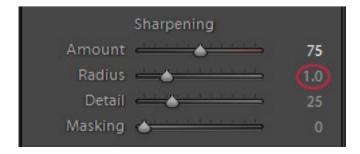
By default, all RAW photos have sharpening applied in Lightroom with a default setting of Amount 25, Radius 1.0, and Detail of 25. Eight times out of ten, these settings are all you need for landscape photography but if you need or want more you can adjust these sliders and here is what they do and how to use them.



ONE: Zoom your image to 1:1 in main Preview area.

TWO: Start the process with the Amount slider, which is like a volume control. The more you apply, the more you sharpen the image. While holding down the Alt Key (OPT) which renders the image as black and white, move the Amount slider to the right to increase the amount of sharpening, or to the left to decrease the amount. For most of my landscape work, I will push this to 50-100 but I do this by viewing the image. As you increase the Amount to 100, you can see how the image looks a lot crisper, with an increase in detail definition. In this case, 100 is a bit over the top so I backed this down to 75. By itself, the Amount slider is a sledgehammer tool when all we need is a soft mallet. Luckily Lightroom lets us correct this shortcoming with the detail slider.

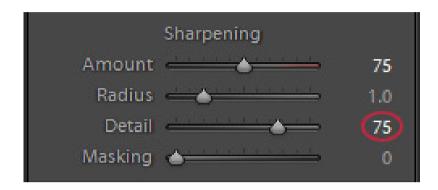




THREE: Next, we can improve our sharpening with an increase or, in some cases, a decrease in the Radius slider. Once again, hold down the Alt (OPT) key while moving the radius slider, which controls the contrast difference between pixel edges. A small change in the Radius setting has a greater effect on the narrow edge detail, such as rocks and hard-edged brush lines and has very little effect on the soft edge detail, such as grasses. Thus, for high-frequency landscapes 1.0 is usually more than enough and on occasion something less than 1.0.

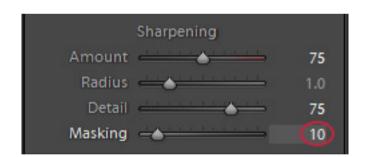


THE PROCESS-CONTINUED



FOUR: Hold down the ALT (OPT) key again, increase the Detail slider which has the effect at its default setting of 25 of suppressing halos, a by-product of increasing the amount and or radius. However, landscape images, particularly a grand scenic, can benefit from a lot of sharpening; we could raise the Detail slider to around 75, as shown here and you will get sharpening that is punchy. I recommend that you experiment with the Detail Slider and watch your image react.

FIVE: Hold down Alt (OPT) key again and gradually move the Masking slider to the right and you will witness Adobe genius engineering at work. The black areas indicate that we have 'masked out' the sharpening effect while the white areas indicate the sharpening effect is in force. Gray areas are somewhere in between.



For landscapes, I mask out the sky, as there is no need to sharpen the sky. If we need to sharpen a cloud for some reason, we can do that later in the workflow. I want my sky mask to turn a light charcoal color a

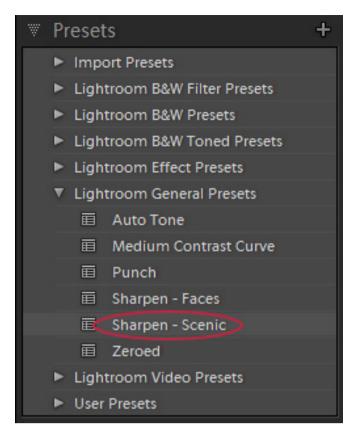
workflow. I want my sky mask to turn a light charcoal color and the rest of the image will have excellent edge and detail sharpening.

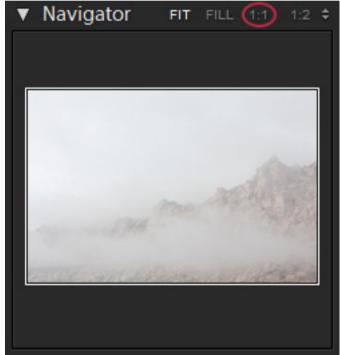


Landscape Workflow E-BOOK

TIP: Click on the presets tab and scroll down to the Lightroom General Presets and select Sharpen-Scenic. This preset works well for most grand and intimate scenic images. However, I consider this to be a starting point and often increase the radius for much of my work.

NOISE REDUCTION— Here is the thing; if you are a creative landscape photographer you should be shooting at a low ISO and on a tripod so that you can use a low or long shutter speed. If you are using a quality DSLR camera you will rarely see noise until the ISO is increased significantly (like a whole bunch) and then the noise is amplified and appears to the naked eye. Another cause of noise is the length of the exposure. Long exposures can generate frequency chatter, which may appear as color or luminance noise (fine white speckles). But the true determinate is the camera and even with great cameras noise varies with ISO and time.

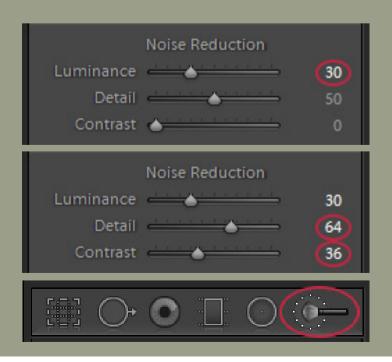




REMOVING NOISE— TO REMOVE GLOBAL NOISE:

- **1.** Make sure the image has been enlarged to 1:1.
- **2.** Move the luminance slider to the right to clear the noise. However, note that you will see some or perhaps a lot of softness in the image as you reduce noise due to the smoothing effect of the program.
- **3.** Compensate for the smoothness by advancing the Detail slider to the right to recover some of the sharpness and advance the contrast slider to restore contrast. You will have to move these sliders back and forth to achieve optimum results between reduced noise and sharpness.

REMOVING NOISE— A BETTER WAY: Noise is generally not present in equal amounts in a photograph. Usually we will see it in the skies of a landscape image or the shadows. In this case, I would use the adjustment brush, select noise and paint over the noisy areas.

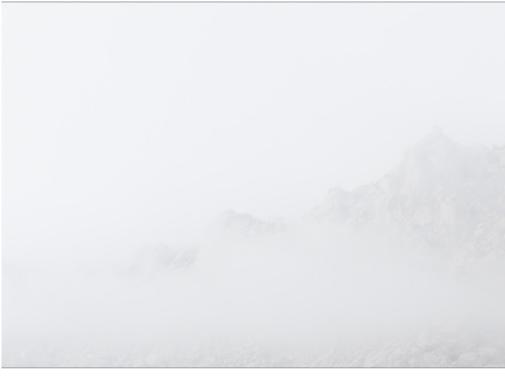




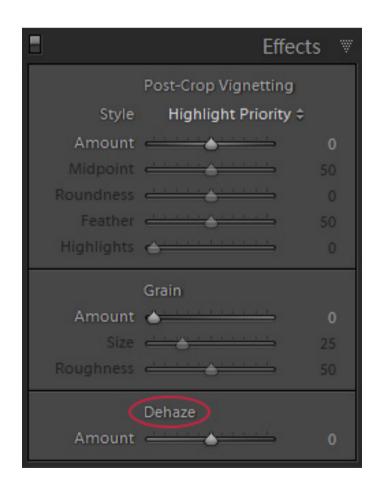
THE PROCESS-DEHAZE







Dehaze slider set at-50.



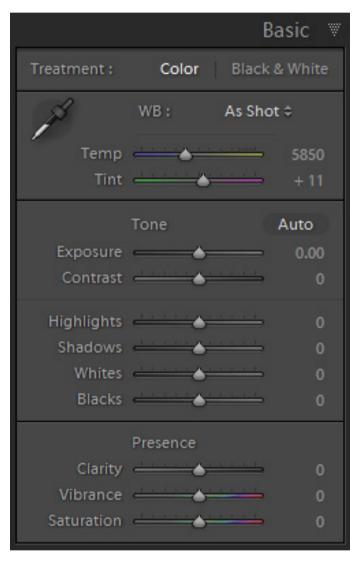
DEHAZE— This is a relatively new addition to Lightroom and a welcomed tool for landscape photographers. We adjust the Dehaze slider visually. Pushing the slider to the right reduces image haze, and to the left, we soften or increase the effect of haze. We apply Dehaze first because it will affect shadows and blacks in subsequent steps and sometimes we need to return to this slider and make further tweaks after performing tasks in the Basic panel.

Note: Dehaze is applied globally, and thus it applies the effect to the entire image, and it can at times make the sky look HDR'd (in a bad way), exaggerates the edge vignetting, and can overdo the foreground (that was not hazy). If you experience any of these issues, then apply Dehaze with your Lightroom adjustment brush, which we will cover in our next lesson bite, or do this in Photoshop by accessing the Camera RAW filter. Personally, I prefer to apply Dehaze locally through a Photoshop workflow, but it is useful as a global tool in limited amounts



THE PROCESS-ANALYZE YOUR IMAGE





OK, you have optimized your image's structure in the previous steps and now you are ready to create some awesome work with the Basic Panel but before you move any sliders:

TAKE A DEEP BREATH....and study your image!

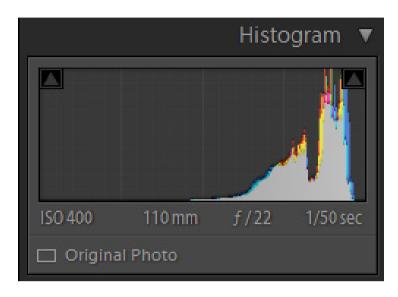
image and determine your goals. Is your visual story one of mood (high or low key), or are you creating a landscape image with detail and documentation? Are your goals the same now as when you captured the image, or do you see a new purpose or story? Do you see issues that will need attention such as overexposure, under exposure, colorcasts or shadows that are too dark? For this ebook, we assumed that we have a full range of detail from black to white, the image color is accurate, and that we are creating a base line narrative image.



"It is about finding your own work and developing a visual voice—your own."



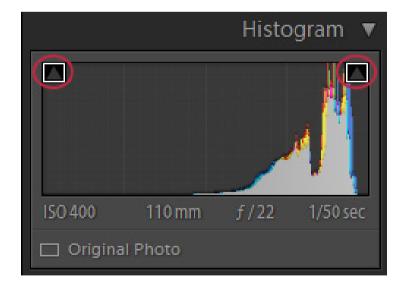
THE PROCESS-HISTOGRAM



HISTOGRAM AND CLIPPING WARNINGS

1—Make sure your Histogram panel is open. This will display the distribution of the pixels in your image and this is not a technical holy grail; it is a reference display.

2—Press J to turn on your clipping warnings. This warning device will indicate if you are clipping or cutting off black and or white detail. If you move a slider that generates a blue overlay that means you are losing blacks and shadow detail. If you see red overlays, you are losing bright or white details. In most cases, we want to retain these details but for artistic reasons we may want to lose some of this detail.. You may also hold down ALT (OPT) and drag your sliders so that you can see individual clipping data by channel.

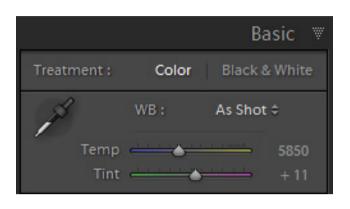






THE PROCESS-WHITE BALANCE





(Color Temperature) I examine and adjust the white balance first, because when we nail the right white balance, color correction issues will generally disappear. Having said that, color issues in landscape photography are, while not rare, unusual if you have a qualified Auto White Balance in camera engaged or you have color profile for your camera established for Photoshop. Both subjects are beyond the scope of this bite sized learning module and frankly for landscape work are not really necessary. I usually accept my out of camera white balance because down the road I will make changes in the HSL panel or artistic color adjustments in Photoshop. However, you may want to tweak your color temperature at this point. For example, you may want to warm the image

if it was captured under heavy overcast, or perhaps you want to cool an image captured at high noon (what are you doing shooting at high noon anyway).

step one, the black point and just barely clip the shadows. Here is how: Drag the black slider to the left until you see the colors that indicate clipping in one or more channels. Then drag the slider back to the right until those colors just disappear. (Ok you can leave a few flecks of color).

Alternatively, you can do this by looking at the blue overlay, which indicates black or shadow clipping. NOTE: Most of the time setting the black point slider at zero is the optimum point but clipping the blacks, a bit (moving left) will increase the contrast in the image. However, just the opposite happens when we move it to the right, which will decrease the contrast. With seriously underexposed images, increasing the blacks will recover some of details tucked away in the shadows.



STEP TWO, THE WHITE POINT— Set the

White Point and adjust the white slider in the tone section. You will find that backing away from the optimum white point will add more texture to a landscape image especially in the sky. Use your eyes for this step as the white point governs the emotional range in many landscape images. **NOTE**: Adjusting the white point also sets the contrast range in the image. With landscape images, you will often find that your whites or bright areas are often too bright and this is a function of digital dynamic range.

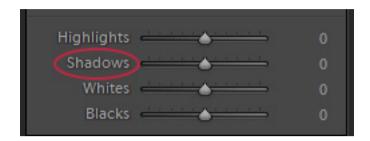


With the black and white sliders adjusted you now have a base line for the rest of the work.



Landscape Workflow E-BOOK

step three, shadows— Adjust your shadows to determine if you need to add detail. Adjusting shadows and highlights effects image contrast so examine your work carefully as you proceed.



step four, HighLights— Depending upon the level of brightness in the highlight areas, you may need to lower or move your highlights to the left to reduce highlight brightness. Conversely, you may



have to add highlight luminosity by moving them to the right.

BASIC PANEL ADJUSTMENTS—
Landscape Photography means
working with a wide dynamic range.

Often skies are bright and the rest of the
image could be as much as 4 to 10 stops
darker. Fortunately, Lightroom allows us to
expand or contract the tonal range with the
black and white point controls. Simply put,
we increase the whites as far as we can
without clipping the highlights, and decrease
the blacks as far as we can without clipping
the deepest shadows (for landscape work I
generally clip the shadows a bit).

BELOW: Here's the original RAW image and you can see that it looks flat with a wide dynamic range between the sky and foreground. Using a previsualization program, which I teach at NPPE, I chose this exposure as a balance between whites and darks recognizing or previsualizing my completed image.





Landscape Workflow E-BOOK

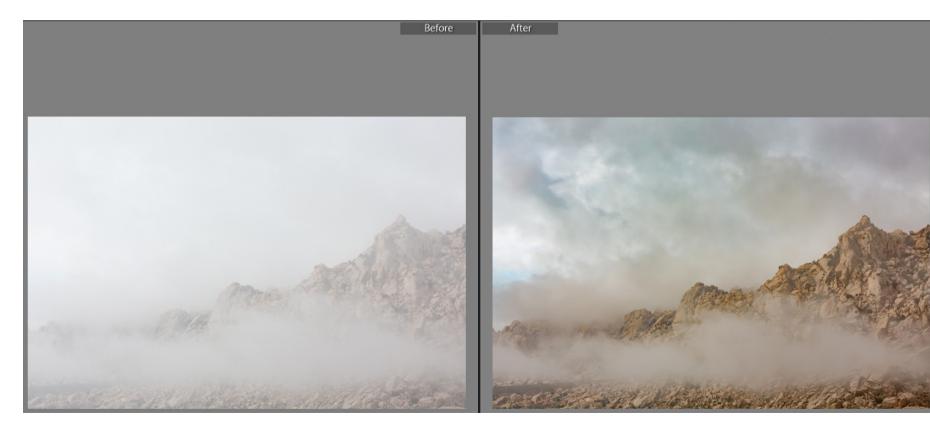
STEP FIVE, EXPOSURE— This is where most photographers start their workflow, but if you are an art photographer in the landscape genre then I assume you have a reasonably well-exposed landscape image, so adjusting exposure beyond a tweak or two is not necessary and should be done at the end of the workflow. If you need to make significant exposure adjustments remember that the exposure slider shifts all the pixel data towards highlights and whites when you move to the right and towards the blacks and the shadows when you move to the left. In cases that require critical exposure adjustment, <u>vou need to alter this workflow</u> and perform the exposure adjustment as a first step.



TIP— You may also want to overexpose or underexpose an image for effect or for multiple image blending purposes and we examine these interpretative and artistic possibilities in future ebooks.

STEP SIX, TWEAK— Now review your settings and Tweak the sliders to arrive at an image that has the best detail possible in the shadows, highlights, and whites. However, consider the image mood and ambiance. You may or may not want shadow detail and you may wish to reduce the highlights to get more sky detail or to compensate for some specula highlights. There are other basic panel adjustments, in the Presence Group: clarity, vibrance, and saturation, which we will examine later.

Click the letter Y on your keyboard— On screen you will see a split screen with your original image on the left and your adjusted image on the right. With just a few adjustments, you will see a notable improvement in the image that you developed with predictable workflow practices. Ok we are doing great and time to move down to the Hue, Saturation, and Luminance Panel.



THE PROCESS-HUE & SATURATION

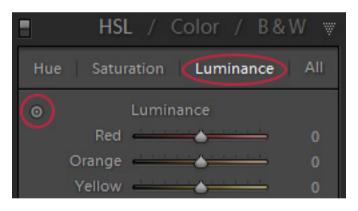
I remember when Lightroom added this miracle panel. For the first time, we could separate the components of color, Hue, Saturation, and Luminosity (often known as brightness). We can adjust a single color or a range of colors in one place. And for color precision there is a handy Target Adjustment Tool, (TAT) that lets us find the exact color(s). While you can simply push any of the sliders around I recommend that you use this system (fool proof remember) to achieve optimum results.

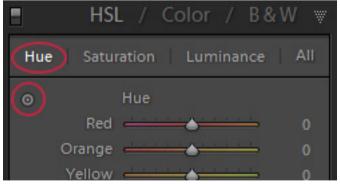


step one, adjust Luminance—Begin with the Luminance panel and adjust the sliders as necessary for the various color ranges. We begin with luminance because it is important to adjust the measurement of brightness in our colors to set the emotional range or key. Use the targeted adjustment tool to find the colors in the image.

of any colors that you wish to alter. We do this second because this adjustment affects the emotional range of the image, and Hues describe the full range of a given color and thus, they affect the image's expression and our perceptions. Again, you can use the TAT tool for precision and control.

STEP THREE, ADJUST SATURATION— Adjust the saturation if necessary. Increase saturation and we affect the boldness of the hue, or a desaturated hue may bring quiet and a subdued emotional range.









THE PROCESS-CONTINUED



Remember that when you make HUE, SATURATION, AND LUMINANCE adjustments that they are **GLOBAL**. Therefore, a yellow adjustment to a sandy beach may also affect the skin tone of someone standing on the beach. In many cases, you may want to skip a certain adjustment here and do it locally with the adjustment brush or complete the process in Photoshop





HSL TWEAKS— Review your HSL adjustments. Are your hues and saturation levels supportive of your visual story? Are they extending the emotional range of your image? Review and adjust as necessary to achieve the visual narration desired.

RETURN TO THE BASIC PANEL:

TWEAKING— Now revisit the Basic panel and tweak the tone sliders as needed. This is because changes in hue, saturation, and luminance may affect the tones in the image that require a further adjustment. Usually, these changes occur in the blacks and highlights. But there is another reason to revisit the basic panel because you need to ask yourself is this image an adjusted representative of the direction and the emotional range of your story. In this case, it is.

PRESENCE- At the bottom of the Basic panel is a group of sliders under the header Presence, a term that describes a set of components that make up a style or look for an image. I'm going to teach you how to use them but honestly, I only use these if I am going to complete the image in Lightroom. If I continue to process the image in Photoshop, I leave them alone.

CLARITY— The clarity slider adds midtone contrast to your photo when moved to the right, and reduces midtone contrast when we move to the left. It's great for bringing out detail and texture, and you can crank it up, bringing in detail galore, but how much detail you want to glorify depends on the image and the visual story. In our training image, I added about 14 points, which provided enough contrast punch to enhance the story. **TIP:** It is easy to over-do Clarity, because it really adds a lot of punch and for a few minutes can make a bad photograph look good. If I use clarity, I usually apply this with the adjustment brush to areas of the image that need detail clarification.



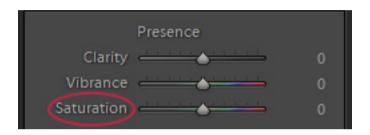
THE PROCESS-CONTINUED

VIBRANCE (AND SATURATION SOMETIMES) —

Rich, Vibrant Photos are often quite appealing and many landscape photographers prefer this look, but art photographers working in this genre are not saturation crazy which is why the Vibrance Slider can be helpful.



HERE IS WHY. Lightroom has a Saturation slider for increasing your photo's color saturation, the problem is it increases all the colors in your photo equally—the dull colors are more saturated, but the colors that are already saturated get even more so, and well...things get nuclear looking pretty fast. I avoid the Saturation slider unless I'm desaturating color and I often desaturate while adding vibrance.



HERE IS HOW: STEP ONE: Vibrance boosts the dull colors in the image but if there are already saturated colors in the image, it tries not to boost them very much, so things don't go completely over the top. Also note that if you have people in your image Vibrance uses a special mathematical algorithm to avoid affecting flesh tones, so the skin on your people doesn't start to look too colorful (of course, this is generally not an image for the landscape photographer). Thus, Vibrance gives a much more realistic-looking color boost than you'd ever get from Saturation and for most landscape workflows I will use something in the range of 10-25 if the image needs help. However, I usually use none as this is a global adjustment and I prefer to apply color adjustments locally in Photoshop, which brings us to the next step, choosing the fork in the road.



THE FORK IN THE ROAD: Well we have just completed creating a base line image and if we select Y on our keyboard we can see a side by side comparison of where we came from and where we are now. Good work I'd say, but what's next. Well maybe nothing. The image may work perfectly for you at this point or maybe we have a deeper more creative story to tell. If that is the case, (and it usually is) we have come to a Fork in the creative workflow road.

1

DIRECTION

When we travel down the Photoshop Road, we have infinite controls that allow us to make precise selections to vary contrast, tone and color in very small areas of the image. But the Photoshop road also offers us tools and techniques to advance our art, alter reality and if we want, create our own. My art photography demands that we take this path and I'm happy to say that many of our NPPE students have learned the Photoshop Workflow for interpreting their landscape images and advancing their work to true navigation as opposed to narration.

2

DIRECTION

When we travel down the Lightroom Road, the Adjustment brush and other tools also offer many new creative opportunities for our image. The difference is the ability to separate components through selections, and the use of layers for refined expressions.

In our next e-book we will explore how to refine this image with the adjustment brush and other tools to create an image with an extended emotional range.

SUMMARY: You now have a strong baseline image, and we can extend the creative range of this image with our local brush, gradients, and other tools. Want to learn more about Lightroom and its power to make your images stunning?





