

Total time:
5-7 hours



Skill Points:

- Learning to handle tone contrast technically and aesthetically
- Using tone contrast to direct a composition
- Using tone contrast to set up a mood

UNDERSTANDING TONE CONTRAST



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Tone defines the lightness or darkness of a color. In B&W photography the color is gray. In color imaging it can be any color. White and black are the extreme ends that define tone. **Tone contrast** is the difference between the lightest and darkest tone in an image. Tone contrast is completely different than color contrast.

KEY LESSON: The human eye is attracted to areas of contrast (where light and dark tones meet). The greater this contrast, the more likely that the eye will go there first. Control over tone contrast is an essential skill for a photographer. Tone contrast can be used to set a mood.



Chair on Black: When tone contrast is set to the extreme, it becomes visually graphic. This can help you to create memorable photographs, especially in the areas of still life, portrait, and abstract.

Spinning Tower: High tone contrast color imaging is also effective. Why is this a high tone contrast image? It has a very bright tone, a very dark tone, and very few tones in-between. Tone contrast is a separate deal than image brightness or color contrast. These 3 are often confused.

Girl & Glasses: In the example of the chair, tone contrast created the subject. In this example, tone contrast between the woman's skin and her sunglasses form a frame that is used to push the viewer toward her eye - the subject. What's the cup and straw? They are a leading line!

Pink Girl: Low tone contrast can also be used to set a mood. What does low tone contrast mean? There is very little difference between the lightest tone and the darkest tone.

Girl in Shadows: This is a 'lower' tone contrast photograph. It's not as low as the 'Pink Girl'. The blacks aren't complete black and the whites aren't complete white. The tone contrast scale has been minimized. Take notice that this example falls more into the dark tone end of the full tone scale. Low tone contrast can occur anywhere on the scale of tones.

Man & Staircase: This is a 'high' tone contrast image. It's high, because it displays an extreme from the light end to the dark end with little tones in-between. What if there were a full range of tones displayed between light and dark? That is referred to as a 'full' tone contrast image.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Organize a photo shoot where you use high tone contrast to create an abstract image in color and B&W. (Think of chair on black & spinning tower.)
- 2- Organize a photo shoot where you use tone contrast to direct a viewer's eyes toward the subject. Complete this Action Assignment in color and B&W. Do one version in high tone contrast and the other in low tone contrast. (Think of pink girl and girl & glasses.)
- 3- Organize a photo shoot where your objective is to use tone contrast to set a mood.
- 4- Remember. Most photos require at least 3 tools of composition to be effective. Don't get bogged down and only use one.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you capture low tone contrast and high tone contrast images? Verify those results with a Histogram. (See Histogram Action Card.)
- How well does your use of tone contrast properly direct a viewer's eyes from Action Assignment #2?
- Did you effectively create a mood with tone contrast? Did you use tone contrast in conjunction with at least 2 other composition tools?



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