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Black and white photography is never old fashion, actually, it's classic and elegant. A black and white image is also great for using as a poster background. You can simply desaturate the photo or edit it from grayscale color mode. Making an image black and white is such a simple step and there is a lot you can do to manipulate it. In this tutorial, you'll learn three quick ways to make a color photo black and white in Photoshop. Note: All screenshots are taken from Adobe Photoshop CC Mac version. Windows or other versions can look different. Method 1: Adjustments Panel Step 1: Open your image in Photoshop. Step 2: Find the Adjustments panel on the right side of your canvas, usually, it's next to the Properties panel. Step 3: Click on the Black & White icon to add an adjustment layer. Now your photo should be black and white. Is it too dark? Does a certain area need more light? You can move the slider and explore the specific colors to get the perfect black and white effect you want. Or you can always go back to the Adjustments panel and choose another adjustment to edit your image. For example, I did a couple of adjustments to brighten up the photo. Method 2: Desaturate This is a quick method that you can finish in one step. After opening your image in Photoshop, simply use the keyboard shortcut Command + Shift + U to desaturate your image. If you want to adjust the lightness, follow the steps below: Step 1: Go to the overhead menu Image > Adjustments > Hue/Saturation. Step 2: Move the Saturation slider to the end of the left side (-100) to desaturate the photo and you can adjust the lightness accordingly. Tips: Check the Preview box to see the changes as you adjust. Step 3: Click OK once you're satisfied with the look. If not, you can always add an adjustment layer from the Adjustments panel. Method 3: Color Mode Another way to make a color image black and white is by changing the color mode of your Photoshop document by following the steps below. Step 1: Once you have your photo opened, go to the overhead menu Image > Mode > Grayscale. Step 2: Click Discard on the pop-up window. Same as with the other methods, you can add an adjustment layer and manipulate the photo. Conclusion There are certainly more than three ways to convert a color photo into black and white, I've just listed a few that are most commonly used and easy to apply. No matter which method you use, you can always add an adjustment layer to manipulate the image. Hope you find this tutorial helpful. About June Photoshop makes it easy to convert your color photos to black & white, but typically you will also need to make some other adjustments in order to get your black & whites just how you want them. In this tutorial we'll show how you can create a black & white conversion that has sort of a vintage or film-inspired effect. Here is the before version of the photo that we'll be working with for the tutorial: And here is how it will look after the effect: The first step is to add a gradient map adjustment layer, which will handle the black & white conversion. Select the black to white gradient and leave the blend mode set to "normal" and leave the opacity at 100%. Next, add a curves adjustment layer and create a tone curve like the one shown below, which mostly impacts the ends of the tone curve for the light and dark areas of the photo. Now we want to add another curves adjustment layer and apply the curve shown below. Lift up the middle area of the curve, which will lighten the mid tones of the photo to achieve the faded look. The next step is to add a levels adjustment layer and edit the settings as shown below. You'll be changing the midtone input to 0.90 and the highlight output to 245. This will slightly darken the midtones and highlights. Next, add a brightness/contrast adjustment layer. Add some brightness by setting it to 15 and reduce the contrast to -35. Now our photo looks like this: Are you wondering how to make images black and white in Photoshop? Black and white photography is as popular as ever, and with digital software like Adobe Photoshop, it's never been easier to convert your digital images. What You'll Learn In this article we'll run through some of the most popular black and white conversion methods, outlining the pros and cons of each. Instructions are provided for Photoshop CS and, if the technique's available, Photoshop Elements. The techniques we cover: How to convert images to grayscale (destructive) How to use the Hue/Saturation Tool (non-destructive) How to use the Lab Color Method (destructive) How to use the Gradient Map in Photoshop to make an image black and white (non-destructive) How to make an image black and white with the Photoshop Channel Mixer (non-destructive) How to use the Twin Hue/Saturation Method (non-destructive) How to use the Black and White Adjustment Layer Method (non-destructive) How to use the Camera Raw adjustment layer (Smart Objects, non-destructive) How to use Look-Up Tables (non-destructive) Don't want to read through every technique for making an image black and white in Photoshop? We recommend the last two methods for most people: using the Camera Raw filter and LUTs. Using Photoshop to convert an image to black and white digitally has a number of advantages. By starting with a colour photo and converting it to black and white in Photoshop, you have complete control over the conversion. For the best possible conversion, start by shooting in RAW. Then, in your RAW conversion software, output the photo as a 16-bit Tiff file. 16-bit files have a lot more information to work with than 8-bit files, which makes for a better conversion with smoother tonal gradation. Most digital SLRs (and some compacts) have a black and white mode. The camera is making the conversion for you, and the results are usually poor, giving flat, washed-out photos. It's usually best to avoid this mode and use the following techniques instead. Black and White Conversions Photoshop and Photoshop Elements offer both destructive and non-destructive black and white conversion techniques. Destructive methods are ones that can't be readjusted afterwards. Once you've made the conversion, the only way to change it is to undo the conversion and start again. Non-destructive methods use Photoshop's adjustment layers. The changes that you make to your photo are stored in a layer, and the original photo remains unchanged underneath. Then, when you're done, you flatten the image, and it's at this stage that Photoshop makes all the changes to the photo permanent. You can edit the conversion at any time before flattening the image by clicking on the Adjustment Layer icon. Non-destructive photo editing is always better than destructive photo editing! A non-destructive adjustment layer 1. How to Convert an Image to Grayscale (Destructive) The simplest black and white Photoshop conversion method, converting to grayscale, discards all the colour information in the photo. Image > Mode > Grayscale. Click Discard. The method for making an image black and white is the same for both Photoshop and Elements. Pros: Quick and easy. Cons: You have no control over the conversion. 2. How to Use the Hue/Saturation Tool (Non-Destructive) This method gives the same result as converting to grayscale and adding a black and white adjustment layer. The advantage is that it's available as an adjustment layer and can be used as part of a non-destructive editing process. It's a simple way to make your image black and white in Photoshop. Photoshop CS and Photoshop Elements: Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation. Click OK. Move the Saturation slider all the way to the left (-100) and press OK. Pros: Quick and easy and can be applied as an adjustment layer in both Photoshop and Elements. Cons: You have no control over the conversion. Reduce the Saturation to 0.3. How to Use the Lab Color Method (Destructive) This technique converts your photo from RGB colour mode to Lab colour mode. Lab mode records the brightness and colour values separately, meaning in Lab you can discard the colour information to leave a black and white image. It's useful for making an image black and white, but it's not available in Photoshop Elements. Image > Mode > Lab Color. Go to the Channels window if it's already open (if not go to Window > Channel) and select the Lightness channel. Image > Mode > Grayscale. Click OK. Pros: Gives a black and white conversion that is, theoretically, more mathematically accurate. Whether it's a pleasing conversion depends on the picture. Cons: Destructive editing process that doesn't give you much control. 4. How to Use the 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 become white or light grey. Press D to reset the foreground and background colours to black and white. Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Gradient Map. Click OK. Gradient Map technique Pros: Quick and easy non-destructive black and white conversion. Cons: No control over the conversion. 5. How to Use the Channel Mixer (Non-Destructive) The Channel Mixer is the first black and white conversion tool listed here that truly 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 with the channel mixer 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. 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 CS: Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Channel Mixer. Tick the Monochrome box. 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. Click OK when you're done. Channel Mixer method 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. 6. How to Use the Twin Hue/Saturation Method (Non-Destructive) This technique uses two Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layers to make photos black and white in Photoshop. The top layer is a straight monochrome conversion. The bottom layer changes the colours of the original photo, which in turn changes the tones in the black and white conversion. It gives you a fine degree of control. Photoshop CS and Photoshop Elements: Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation and click OK. Move the Saturation slider all the way to the left (-100) and click OK. Activate the background by clicking on it. Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation and click OK. Click OK. Change the blending mode of the bottom Hue/Saturation layer to Color. Double-click the bottom Hue/Saturation layer's icon. Move the Hue slider left or right, and watch the tones change! You can also experiment with the Saturation and Lightness sliders. Click OK when you're done. Twin hue/saturation method Pros: Extremely fine degree of control over the monochrome conversion. Cons: None, but less control than some other methods. 7. How to Use the Black and White Adjustment Layer Method (Non-Destructive) Available in Photoshop CS3 onward, the Black and White Adjustment Layer gives you all the control of the channel mixer and twin hue/saturation techniques via six colour sliders. But the most exciting feature is its Targeted Adjustment Tool. With this tool, you can adjust tones in your photo to make them lighter or darker. It's an intuitive and precise Photoshop technique for converting images to black and white. Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Black and White. Click OK. The Black and White toolbox appears. Move the six colour sliders right or left to brighten or darken the respective tones in the photo. You can also choose from the presets in the dropdown menu at the top. Click OK when you're done. Pros: The most flexible black and white conversion method available. Cons: Only available in Photoshop CS3 and up. Learn more about Photoshop and Photoshop Elements. 8. How to Use a Camera Raw Adjustment Layer (Non-Destructive) Here's how: Adobe Camera Raw has several ways to convert to black and white, and you might already be comfortable with them. Why not use the same tools in Photoshop, too? Select the layer (or layers) in Photoshop to which you want to apply the black and white filter. Right-click on the layer name and choose Convert to Smart Object from the context menu. This conversion will turn your Photoshop layer into a Smart Object and allow you to readjust the black and white filter settings later. Click on the Filter menu again and choose Camera Raw Filter. This action will bring up the Camera Raw interface. 9. How to Apply a Look-Up Table (Non-Destructive) Here's a twist on the Camera Raw method that uses presets, or Look-Up Tables, to make the process quick and instantly repeatable. Install the LUTs as we cover in our tutorial. If you don't have any, check out the selection below. Your profiles should be visible under Browse Profiles. Hover over each thumbnail to see a preview, and select one. Use the slider to adjust the strength of the effect. Your other sliders are still at 0. Make other edits based on your chosen colour profile, including further changes to the colours in the Colour Mixer. 5+ Cool Black and White LUTs and Actions From Envato Elements The above techniques work when using Photoshop to convert your photos to black and white. If you want a quicker way to get these results, then check out these black and white add-ons from Envato Elements: 1. Black and White Action Kit (ATN) If you're looking for some great Photoshop actions to make an image black and white for you, then there's plenty of choice over at Envato Elements where you can download unlimited resources for a monthly subscription. You could start with this set of 31 Professional Black & White Photoshop Actions, which gives you a wide range of options for creating different black and white effects depending on the look you're going for. 2. 50 Nostalgia Black and White LUTs Pack (LRTEMPLATE) If you like a classic look, try out this bundle. It features 50 unique Photoshop black and white LUTs with a nostalgic style. This cinematic LUT pack can help you transform your photos in a matter of clicks. 3. 50 Black and White Wedding LUTs Pack (LRTEMPLATE) Are you editing photos from your big day? Then try out this LUT download. It was created with weddings in mind and makes it easy to create black and white images in Photoshop. Use it to add a touch of elegance to shots of the happy couple. 4. 50 Black and White Mystery LUTs Pack (LRTEMPLATE) For a bit of mystery, try out this cool black and white LUTs pack. The Photoshop effect is easy to apply and works for both Mac and Windows devices. 5. 20 Black&White LUTs (Look Up Tables) (LRTEMPLATE) This bundle of 20 LUTs takes a unique approach to colour correction. It applies the black and white effect, but also comes with options that allow a little colour to seep through. Try it out in Photoshop to make captivating black and white images. 6. 10 Black and White Lightroom Presets (LRTEMPLATE) We round out our list with these ten Lightroom presets. The results of the colour correction make your photos look as if they were shot in black and white originally, without the use of Photoshop. Speaking of presets, you can find 40 awesome free Lightroom downloads to make black and white photos in Photoshop here: 40 Free B&W Presets for Lightroom — Convert Photos to Monochrome Explore More Photoshop Tutorials and Resources It's worth taking the time to experiment with these different methods when deciding how to approach using Photoshop to make an image black and white. Some may work better for you than others, but always remember to keep an original copy of the image if using a destructive method, and ultimately it's always better to work non-destructively, so you will have the option to change your mind. There are a number of ways to convert an image to black & white in Photoshop; this post explains how to do it using an adjustment, which can be applied via either a smart filter or an adjustment layer. Both smart filters and adjustment layers apply changes to the color and/or tone of your image, but they're layered on top of your image – not made to the image itself. This means you can modify them, or turn them on or off, without changing the original image. Smart filters apply to a single image, whereas an adjustment layer applies to all layers that come after it (not just image layers). Here's an example showing an image before and after the black & white adjustment was applied. In this case, the adjustment was only applied to the background image. Prerequisites You have an existing .psd file. The image you are working with is a smart object. Convert a single image to black and white using a smart filter Select the image in the Layers panel. Click Image > Adjustments > Black & White. The Black and White adjustment presets will be displayed. You can adjust the color values if the defaults aren't exactly what you want. Click OK. A new smart filter will appear underneath your image in the Layers panel. Create an adjustment layer to change all subsequent layers to black and white In the Layers panel, select the image you want to convert to black and white. In the Adjustments panel, click the Black & White icon. The Black and White adjustment presets will be displayed. You can adjust the color values if the defaults aren't exactly what you want. References Photoshop version The version of Photoshop used for this post was the 2017.1.1 Release of Adobe Photoshop CC, 20170425.r.252 a64, on OS X 10.13.1.