

Lightroom Tips and Tricks

Develop Module - Using the White Balance Tools

By Chuck Palmer

Note to Photoshop users. . . Adobe Camera Raw has the same tools and functions as Adobe Lightroom. You can use these tips and tricks in Camera Raw too!

In order to correctly display the full range of color information in an image, it is important to correct the “white balance” in the displayed photo. The White Balance sliders in the Basic Panel shifts the white point around which the colors in the image are distributed. You can shift White Balance on two axis. “Temperature” from blue to red, and “Tint” from green to magenta. White Balance is one of those settings that is certainly subject to artistic impression by the photographer. However, here are three ways of choosing an appropriate White Balance setting for your image:

Method 1 – Select from your Camera Options - From the pull down menu in the White Balance panel, you can select from your camera settings of Daylight, Cloudy, Shade, Tungsten, Florescent, and Flash according to the light conditions at capture time. Select each of the options and choose your favorite. You will only see all of your camera options in the pull down if you shoot in raw format.

Method 2 – Use the White Balance Selector Tool – Pick up the White Balance Selector Tool in the upper left corner of the White Balance panel by clicking on it (or shortcut W). Click on an area in your photo that you know should appear as a light neutral gray or at least pick a neutral color. As you move the White Balance Selector Tool around your image you will see a magnified view of the pixels under the eyedropper, and the RGB numerical values for the central target pixel. For best results, click on a pixel area that is uniform in color and tones in the magnified view and try to find an area where the red, green, and blue values are nearly identical. Do not use pure white or a very light color value as a neutral target. Hit W or reseat the picker tool in the holder to deselect the tool. Tip: The whites of people’s eyes make an excellent target for the White Balance Selector Tool.

Method 3 – Make use of Auto White Balance in Lightroom – Again under the pull down at the top of the WB panel, you can select Auto from the list of options. You will find an Auto selection when shooting in raw or jpg. Select Auto and see what Lightroom’s algorithm thinks should be the appropriate setting. I have found that I rarely like the Auto Setting alone. However, I often use the guidance of the Auto setting for some basic direction (warmer or cooler) then manually adjust the temperature and tint sliders to what looks good. Keep an eye on what should be white or neutral gray in the image while making your manual adjustments.