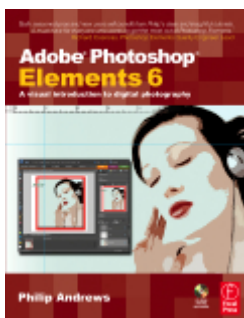




## Understanding brightness and contrast in Elements 6

Adapted from: *Adobe Photoshop Elements 6* By Philip Andrews



A digital picture is made up of a grid of pixels, each with a specific color and brightness. The brightness of each pixel is determined by a numerical value between 0 and 255. The higher the number, the brighter the pixel will appear; the lower the value, the darker it will be. The extremes of the scale, 0 and 255, represent pure black and white, and values around 128 are considered midtones. In a correctly exposed image with good brightness and contrast, the tones will be spread between these two extremes. If an image is underexposed, then the picture will appear dark on screen and most of its pixels will have values between 128 and 0. In contrast, images that have been overexposed appear light on screen and the majority of their pixels lie in the region between 128 and 255.



A well-exposed photograph (2) will have good brightness and contrast, and will display a good spread of tones between black and white or shadow and highlight. An underexposed image (3) appears dark on screen whereas an overexposed image (1) appears light on screen.

The best method for correcting these situations is for you to recapture the picture, changing the settings on your scanner or camera to compensate for the exposure problem. Good exposure not only ensures a good spread of tones, but also gives you the chance to capture the best detail and quality in your photographs. It is a misunderstanding of the digital process to excuse poor exposure control by saying 'it's okay, I'll fix it in Elements later'. You will not get the best quality pictures possible if you use Elements to correct shooting or scanning mistakes as images that are too dark or light are pictures where vital detail has been lost forever. See the image below. Sometimes, though, a reshoot is not possible or a rescan is not practical. In these circumstances,

or in a situation where only slight changes are necessary, Elements has a range of ways to change the brightness and contrast in your photos.

Tutorials on adjusting brightness and contrast can be found in Adobe Photoshop Elements 6.

