Black and White Photo Series – Hue/Saturation

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by Jenifer Juris

Use a Hue/Saturation Adjustment layer to create a quick black and white photo.

There are many ways to convert a photo to black and white using Photoshop Elements and Adobe Photoshop. In this new Black and White Photo Series we'll look at:

- What kinds of photos make good black and white photos
- The pros and cons of several black and white methods
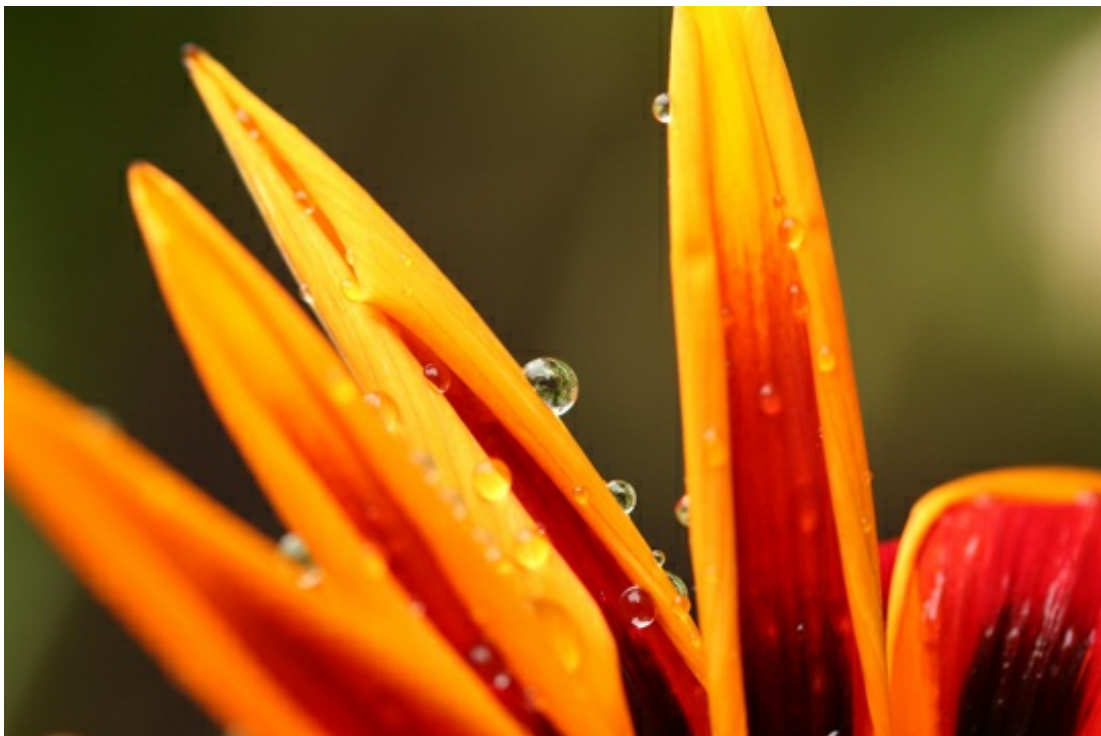- What makes good black and white contrast and how to obtain it

Step One: Open a Photo

- Open a photo (File > Open) that you wish to use.

Why did I choose this photo?
This flower photo makes a nice black and white photo without much effort because:

- It has a single focus.
- It has highly contrasting colors.

The Hue/Saturation Method

Pros
The Hue/Saturation method is a fast, easy, and simple way to convert to black and white.
This is a good option if you are in a hurry.

Cons
The Hue/Saturation method gives you very little control over how the colors convert to black and white.
This can add slight grain or noise to the photo.

Step Two: Add a Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer

- In the Layers panel, click on the Create a New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon and choose Hue/Saturation.
- In the Hue/Saturation (Properties) panel, click and drag the Saturation slider all the way to the left.

Stop Here If
The photo has high contrast where the dark areas are black (or almost black) and the light areas are white (or almost white).

Keep Going If
The photo only contains varying shades of gray without black and/or white.

For this photo, removing the saturation wasn't enough. As you can see, it's very gray without much contrast.

## Step Three: Add a Brightness/Contrast Adjustment Layer

Complete this step if the photo needs more contrast.

- In the Layers panel, click on the Create a New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon and choose Brightness/Contrast.
- In the Brightness/Contrast (Properties) panel, adjust the Brightness and Contrast sliders until the photo has better contrast. For this photo, I adjusted the Brightness to 50 and the Contrast to 55.

Note: The Brightness and Contrast settings will vary greatly depending on the photo. The goal is to get the light areas white (or almost white) and the dark areas black (or almost black).

Here's a side-by-side of the photo before and after the Brightness/Contrast adjustment:
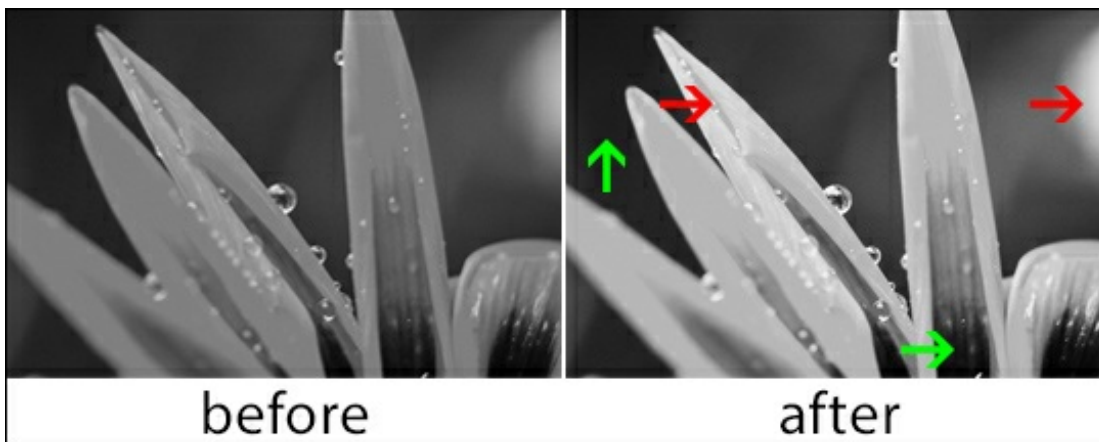
The red arrows indicate where the gray areas became almost white and the green arrows indicate where areas became black or almost black.

Step Four: Save Photo

- Save the photo (File > Save As) as a high quality JPEG file with a unique name.
- Close the working copy without saving.

Here's a page I made using a photo I converted to black and white using the Hue/Saturation Method.

Why did I convert this photo to black and white?

The kit I used (above) has very cool tones, but the original photo has a very warm temperature to it. (See the photo below.)

I converted the photo to black and white so that it would blend with the colors of the kit instead of clash against them.

Here's what the photo looked like after reducing the saturation:

And here's what my photo looked like after adjusting the Brightness/Contrast:

Whether this technique is new to you or you found this to be a good reminder, take a few minutes to practice this method with a few different photos. If you do, you'll quickly start to develop an eye for what makes a good black and white photo.

Credits:
Page & Photo: Jenifer Juris, Flower Photo – Stock Photo by Michael Podger
Tutorial: Black & White Photos – Hue/Saturation by Jenifer Juris
Kit: Farm House Style by Melissa Renfro
Extras: Framed FotoBlendz No. 1 by Anna Aspnes
Fonts: BetterFly Narrow, Veteran Typewriter

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