

T h e H i s t o g r a m

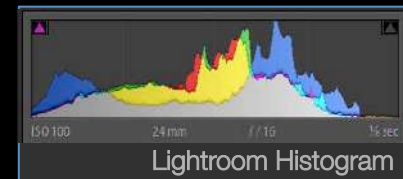
“A good photograph is one that communicates a fact,
touches the heart, and leaves the viewer a changed person
for having seen it”

- Irving Penn

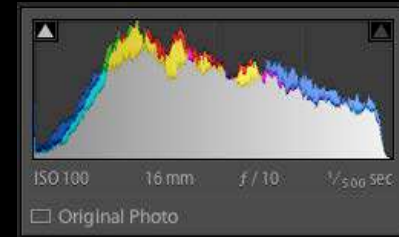
The Histogram



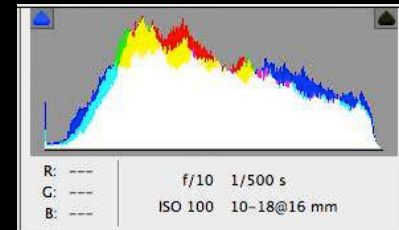
Reading and understanding your image's **histogram** is one of the most important concepts to comprehend when working with digital images.



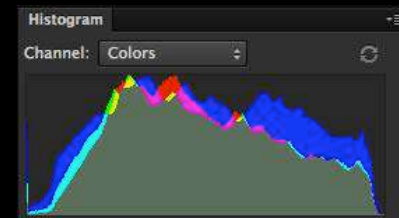
The Histogram



Lightroom Histogram



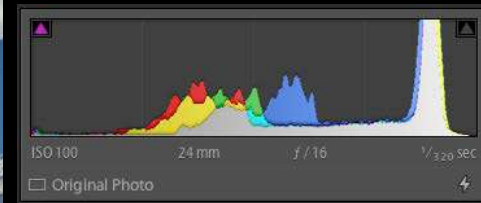
Camera Raw Histogram



Photoshop Histogram

The histogram display is similar in most digital image processing software.

The Histogram



Lightroom Histogram

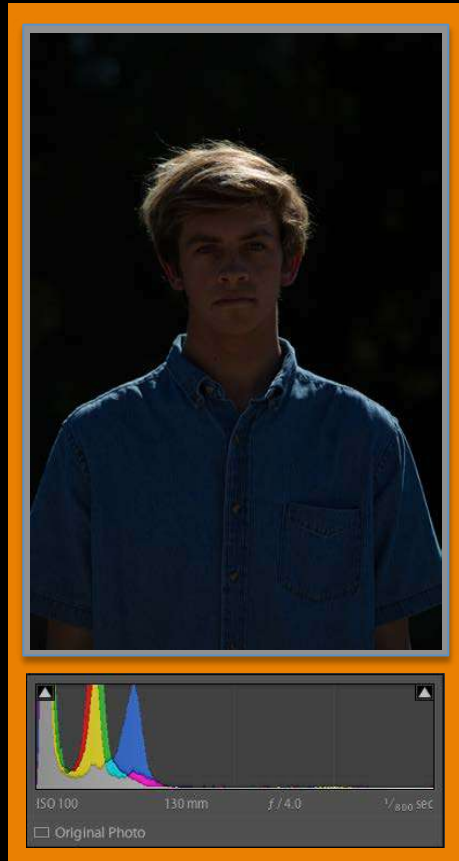
The histogram is a graphical representation of your image's brightness levels and range of tones.

The Histogram



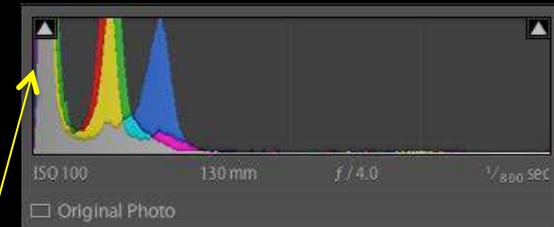
When evaluating your histogram it is important to view it alongside your image.

The Histogram



A histogram with portions of the graph at either end of the scale indicates clipping. Clipping can result in loss of detail. The image on the **left** is underexposed and the histogram illustrates clipped shadow information.

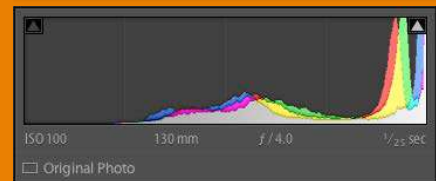
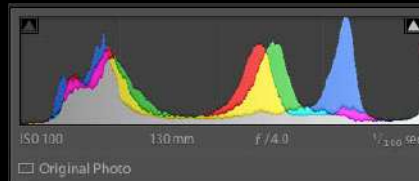
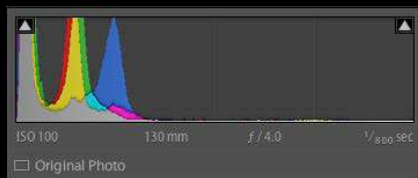
The Histogram



Clipped Shadows = Black

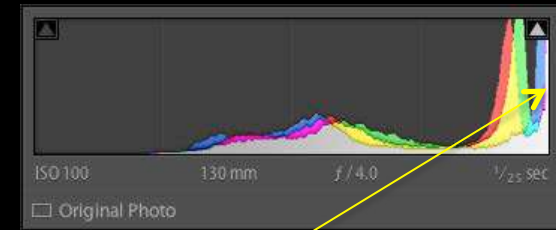
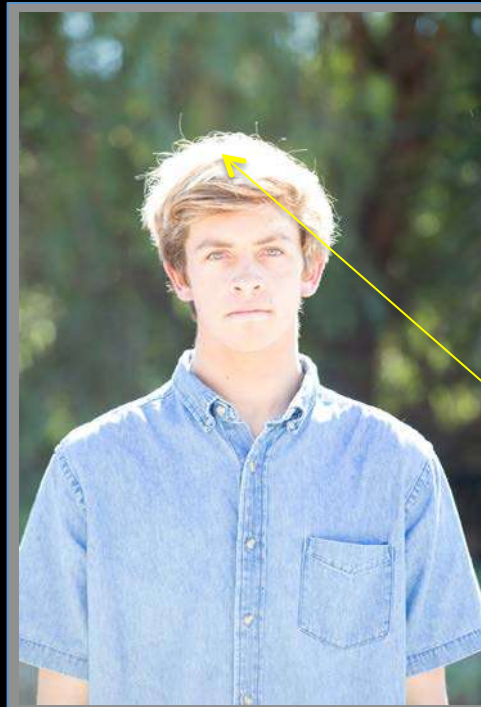
A histogram with a spike at the far left indicates shadow clipping. This will render as pure black.

The Histogram



The image on the **right** is overexposed and the histogram illustrates clipped highlight information.

The Histogram



Clipped Highlights = White

A histogram with a spike at the far right indicates highlight clipping. This will render as pure white.

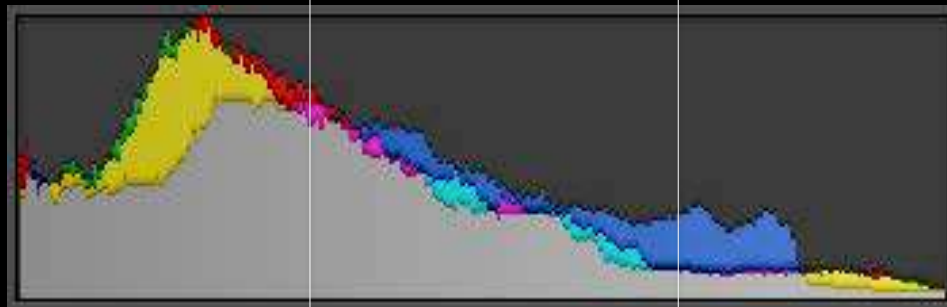
The Histogram



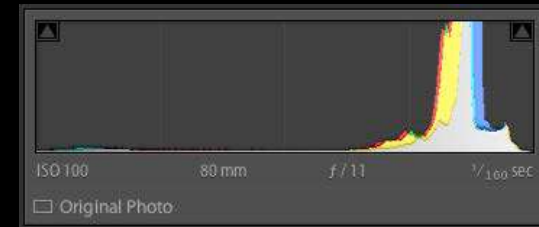
Shadows

Midtones

Highlights



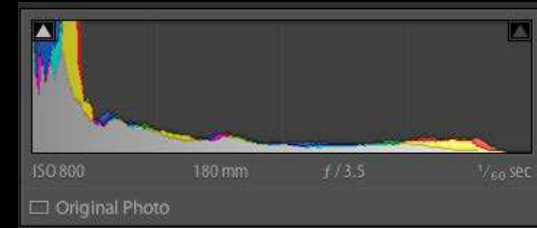
The Histogram



Lightroom Histogram

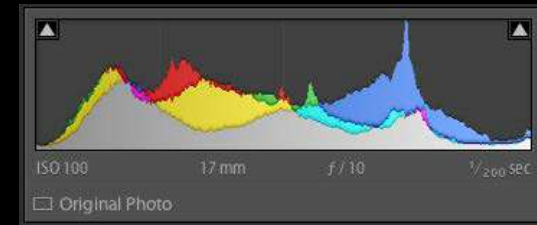
High key images contain a predominate amount of lighter tones. High key images when exposed correctly will have a histogram that is very biased to the right side.

The Histogram



Low key images contain a predominate amount of darker tones. Low key images when exposed correctly will have a histogram that is very biased to the left side.

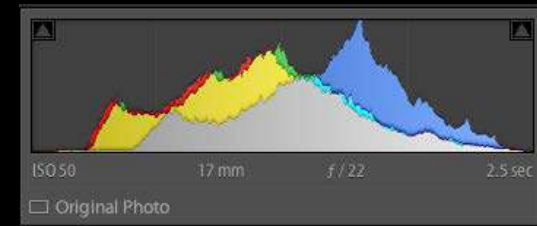
The Histogram



Lightroom Histogram

Image tonal range can be evaluated with the histogram. The histogram above indicates a very broad range of tones.

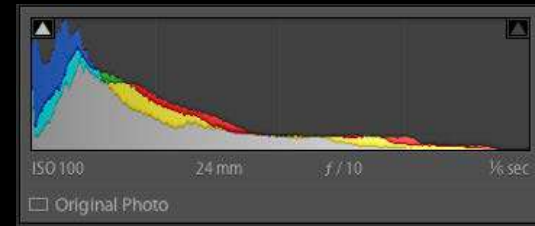
The Histogram



Lightroom Histogram

Image contrast can be evaluated with the histogram. The histogram above indicates a lower contrast image with no pure blacks or pure whites.

The Histogram

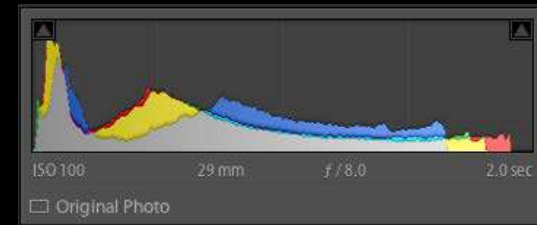


Lightroom Histogram

1/15 sec

There is no “right or wrong” histogram because every image can contain different tonal variations and contrast.

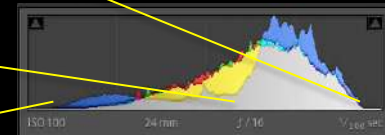
The Histogram



Lightroom Histogram

Understanding your subject's tonality as it relates to your histogram is paramount when evaluating your image.

The Histogram



Lightroom Histogram

The histogram is a very useful for both evaluating and improving your image quality.

T h e H i s t o g r a m

Review – Histogram

Histogram is a graphical representation of your image's brightness levels and range of tones.

Highlight clipping areas that will not contain detail and be pure white.

Shadow clipping areas that will not contain detail and be pure black.

High Key scenes contain a predominant amount of light tones.

Low Key scenes contain a predominant amount of dark tones.

T h e H i s t o g r a m

Vocabulary Study Words

Histogram

Contrast

Clipping

Tonal range

High key

Low key

The Histogram



Content created by Christopher Broughton

Christopher is a faculty member at Brooks Institute teaching courses in both the MFA and BFA Professional Photography program specializing in the History of Photography, Optics in Fine Art, Digital Photography and the Zone System. More of his work can be viewed at www.christopherbroughton.com

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