

Fixing Dark Prints.

Sometimes it seems that no matter how you process an image in Photoshop, Elements, Lightroom, or any other image editing program, you always get a darker print than you had on your computer screen. You calibrate your monitor, double check Photoshop printing options, download specific paper profiles – nothing seems to correct this problem. (A side note: it is absolutely necessary that you calibrate your monitor. If you do not, you do not have a chance in printing a correct photo! For a discussion on Monitor Calibration [click here](#).)

This is one of the most common printing problems, and it is mostly because today's monitors are very bright or you are viewing your images in a room that is too dark. Here is an easy fix in **Photoshop**: duplicate the Background layer by pressing **PC:Ctrl-J (Mac: Command J)**. At the top of the Layers panel, change the **layer blend mode to Screen** which makes everything much brighter. Lower the **Opacity to 25%** and make a test print. When comparing your test print to the image on the monitor make sure to hide the top layer. If the print is still too dark, set the Opacity to 35% and make another test print. It may take a few test prints to get the desired result. This procedure would make a great action.

Here is a solution in **Lightroom**: if your prints are too dark, go to the Develop module and increase the **Brightness setting by about 10-15**. Exposure tends to blow out the highlights pretty quickly, so don't use it as a fix for dark prints. Brightness does a good job of just brightening the entire photo but still keeping the overall color, shadows and highlights intact. Print the photo again. If it's still too dark, increase the **Brightness setting more (maybe 20-25)**. Use it on a few test prints and you'll hone in on what setting works best for your monitor/printing combination and style. You can create a preset for it and you'll have a quick way to simply increase your photos brightness before you print.

Mike Mcknelly shares this tip for Fixing Dark Prints using Lightroom: if your prints are too dark, go to the Develop module and increase the **Brightness setting by about 10-15**. Exposure tends to blow out the highlights pretty quickly, so don't use it as a fix for dark prints. Brightness does a good job of just brightening the entire photo but still keeping the overall color, shadows and highlights intact. Print the photo again. If it's still too dark, increase the **Brightness setting more (maybe 20-25)**. Use it on a few test prints and you'll hone in on what setting works best for your monitor/printing combination and style. You can create a preset for it and you'll have a quick way to simply increase your photos brightness before you print.

Jeff Smith adds this info to the discussion: A suggestion from Charley Cramer's printer training in Sacramento. Set your Photoshop background to white when editing - the print will not look so bright in this context and you'll start out closer to a good final print when you make the first trial print. I've trying this since Saturday's seminar and it really makes a difference.