

# FIX PHOTOS FAST



with  
ACTIONS



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## Actions: Fix Photos Fast! Color Actions—Photoshop Elements

### Color 01: Color Cast

**Photos used in this lesson:**

color-01-color-cast-1.jpg

color-01-color-cast-2.jpg

Whether you're working with scanned or digital photos, it's inevitable that you'll run into an unwanted color cast at some time or another.



I always try the Auto Color option, which I've set up for you in the action called Color Cast. Click the action play button and see what happens. If it fixes the color cast, you're done. This photo looks pretty good, though it could probably use a little tweaking for other reasons.

With digital photography, it's very easy to get a color cast if you don't adjust your white balance for your location. I took this photo inside a school cafeteria with fluorescent lighting, so there's a slight color cast. When the color looks off, play the Color Cast action.



The Color Cast action doesn't always work with photos because sometimes there's an overbalance of one or more colors. In the next several lessons we'll go over actions that target a particular color.

## Color 02 Reduce Yellow

### Photos used in this lesson:

color-02-reduce-yellow-1.jpg

color-02-reduce-yellow-2.jpg

color-02-reduce-yellow-3.jpg

When you encounter a photo with an unwanted color cast:

- Try the Color Cast action first. If it doesn't do anything or makes the photo worse, delete the Remove Color Cast layer.
- Identify the problem color. In this case it's yellow.
- Run the action Color: Reduce Yellow.
- If it fixes the problem, you're done.
- If it still has too much yellow, run the action again. For this photo I ran the action five times to get rid of the yellow, which was coming mostly from a light on the ceiling.
- If you feel that too much yellow is removed from an area of your photo, you can mask away some of the effect.
- With the top Reduce Yellow action layer active in the Layers panel, Shift click on the first Reduce Yellow action layer to select all the layers in between.
- Press Ctrl E (Mac: Cmd E) to merge them together.
- Click on the Add a Mask icon.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options make sure the Mode is normal. Adjust the Opacity setting to your liking. I used 100% Opacity.
- Open the Brush Picker and choose a soft round brush. If you don't see a soft round brush, choose Default Brushes from the menu at the top or click on the icon in the upper right corner to open the Brush Picker menu and choose Reset Brushes.
- Make sure the Foreground color is black. If it isn't, press the letter D and then the letter X.
- Brush over any area where you want to reveal the original yellow.





This second photo was taken in a dark room with incorrect white balance set on my camera.



- Try the Color Cast action. If it improves the photo, keep it. In this case it did improve the photo slightly.
- Try Color: Reduce Yellow. That helped, but not enough.
- Try Color: Reduce Yellow again. This time it removed the color cast.
- Once the color is decent, you can work on the lighting.
- To fix the lighting, I used the action Lighter: Less Contrast.
- To finish up, I used the action Contrast.

Let's take a look at one more photo. Sometimes the offending color can be tricky. In this photo you might be tempted to guess red as the main color cast, but when I tried reducing the red, nothing happened, and the Color Cast action didn't help either. Here's what fixed the photo:

- Run the Color: Reduce Yellow action twice.

At this point you're down to a lighting issue. Here's how I fixed it:

- Run Lighter: Levels.
- Run Lighter: Shadows/Highlights-mild.
- Run Lighter: SCREEN.
- And finally, run the action Contrast.

Since the photo was so dark to begin with, it will have some noise, which you can see if you zoom in. We'll discuss noise in the next section.



## Color 03 Reduce Red

### Photos used in this lesson:

color-03-reduce-red-1.jpg

color-03-reduce-red-2.jpg

- When there's too much red in a photo, run the action Color: Reduce Red.
- If the photo is still too red, run it again.
- If the effect is now too much, lower the opacity of the second layer. With the Move tool selected, pressed the number 5 to get 50% opacity.



Here's another photo with just a little bit too much red in places—mainly on my mother's face.



- Run the action Color: Reduce Red.
- Run the action Color: Reduce Red again.
- If you want to isolate the red removal, press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click on the Add Layer Mask icon to hide the Reduce Red layer.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options make sure the Mode is normal. Adjust the Opacity setting to your liking. I used 100%.
- Open the Brush Picker and choose a soft round brush. If you don't see a soft brush, open the menu at the top of the Brush Picker and choose Default Brushes.
- Make sure the Foreground color is white. If it isn't, press the letter D.
- Brush over any area where you want to remove red.
- To copy a mask from one layer to another, press Alt (Mac: Opt) and click and drag the mask thumbnail to the new layer.

**Note:** If your version of Photoshop Elements doesn't allow you to copy a layer mask this way, watch the Pre Class video called Copy a Layer Mask for another method to do it.



## Color 04 Reduce Green

### Photo used in this lesson:

color-04-reduce-green-jpg

Photos that are taken outside with a lot of green vegetation surrounding the subject often have a subtle green cast to them.



- Try Color Cast first. In this case it darkens the photo a little, but I could easily fix that.
- Another possibility, though, is to use the action Color: Reduce Green instead.
- In the Layers panel, click on the visibility icon of the Remove Color Cast layer to hide it temporarily.
- Click on the Background layer.
- Try the Color: Reduce Green action to see how you like it. This removes the greenish color without darkening the photo. It also adds in a little bit of magenta.
- Run Color: Reduce Green again if you want a little more magenta, or a rosier look in the face.

You won't need this action very often, but it's a quick and handy fix when you do need it!

## Color 05 Warmer & Cooler

### Photos used in this lesson:

color-05-warmer-1.jpg

color-05-warmer-2.jpg

color-05-cooler-1.jpg

Sometimes you'll want to make a photo appear warmer. If so, run the action Color: Warmer.



Here's another example. This time I ran the Color: Warmer action twice and finished with the Contrast action.



Other times you'll want the opposite effect. The photo may be too warm and you'll want to cool it down. Here I ran the Color: Cooler action twice to counteract the effect of a gold photo reflector.



## Color 06 Boost & Desaturate

### Photos used in this lesson:

color-06-boost-1.jpg  
color-06-boost-2.jpg  
color-06-desaturate-1.jpg  
color-06-desaturate-2.jpg

Sometimes our photos don't show the vivid colors we remember seeing when we shot the photo. If that's the case, try running the action Color: Boost. The action will stop to let you adjust the amount of Saturation, which is set to +20. For my photo, I increased the Saturation to +30. When you're satisfied, click OK.

Adding the action Contrast emphasizes color even more.





With people, you may need to mask away some of the effect on the skin. • Run the action Color: Boost.

- To remove the Color Boost from one area of your photo, click on the Add Layer Mask icon.
- Get the Brush tool. In Tool Options the Mode should be Normal. Adjust the Opacity as needed. I used 100%. Open the Brush Picker and choose a soft round brush.
- Make sure the Foreground Color is black. If it isn't, click on the double arrow icon to switch Color Chips.
- On your photo, brush to hide the effect of Color Boost.



Other times you'll want to tone down the color. I felt this photo needed a bit a contrast, so I ran the Contrast action. Adding contrast tends to pump up color, so I ran the Color: Desaturate action to tone the color down. The Saturation slider is set by default at -20, but you can adjust it to less or more for your photo.



Here's another example where the late afternoon sun was creating such a golden glow that the photo appears overly peach colored.

- Run Color: Desaturate. Click OK to the default Saturation setting of -20.
- Run Color: Cooler.
- Run Contrast.



## Color 07 Whiter Teeth

### Photos used in this lesson:

color-07-whiter-teeth-1.jpg

color-07-whiter-teeth-2.jpg

In this video we'll zero in on a specific area of the face—our teeth, which tend to get more and more yellow, depending on our age and what we eat. This stock photo is a great example.

- To whiten teeth run the action Color: Whiter Teeth.
- You'll get a dialog box that will tell you to adjust your brush and then brush over the teeth.
- The action automatically chooses white for the Foreground Color Chip, but you will need to check in Tool Options to be sure you have the right brush settings.
- Brush over the teeth to whiten them. No need to be ultra careful, since this only affects yellow.
- Don't make the teeth too white or your edit may appear too obvious. I often change the layer opacity to 70%.
- Even younger people can have some yellowing of the teeth. Again, don't get the teeth too white.





## Color 08 Red Eye

### Photo used in this lesson:

color-08-red-eye.jpg

Photoshop Elements has a wonderful Red Eye Removal tool. Simply click and drag an outline around each eye with red eye, and it removes it. Or, even easier, choose Enhance > Auto Red Eye Fix. There are times, though, that the pupil isn't quite dark enough, which is something you can easily fix with the Color: Red Eye action.

- Run the Color: Red Eye action.
- A dialog box will tell you to brush over the pupil to remove red-eye or to darken pupils. Click CONTINUE.
- The action creates a black mask, selects the Brush tool, and changes the Foreground Color Chip to white. All you need to do is make sure your brush has the appropriate settings.
- In Tool Options make sure the Mode is Normal and the Opacity is set to your liking.
- Press the right or left Bracket key to adjust the size of your brush.
- Click over the pupil to darken it.
- Adjust the layer opacity if the effect is too strong.

Every once in awhile, the Red Eye Removal tool encounters a strangely shaped pupil that it just can't figure out, and no matter how often you click and drag over the eye, the red eye doesn't get removed. It's rare, but it does happen. If you find yourself in that situation, you can use the Color: Red Eye action.

- In the Actions panel, click on Color: Red Eye to select it, and click the action play button.
- The dialog box tells you to adjust the brush and brush on your photo to remove red eye.
- Make sure your Tool Options are as they should be, and you have the brush you want selected.
- Adjust the brush close to the size of the pupil by pressing the left or right Bracket keys.
- Also, if you're using a soft brush, you may want to make your brush slightly harder by pressing Shift right Bracket a couple of times.
- Brush over the pupil to reveal the black pupil color.
- If you accidentally go beyond the edge of the pupil, press the letter X to switch to black for the Foreground color and paint away the effect where you don't want it.
- For faint red areas on the skin around the eye, lower the brush opacity and paint over them to desaturate them slightly.

