

Adobe Photoshop CS

# Selective Color: a color cure-all

The power of the Selective Color feature in Adobe® Photoshop® is its ability to target individual colors, making it perfect for many common digital image adjustments. The controls of Selective Color may seem intimidating, but the concept of controlling color by adjusting specific hues becomes second nature once you get the hang of it. When automatic fixes like Auto Curves aren't producing the results you want, it's time to get your hands dirty and do some color correction of your own.

In this article, we'll look at a few common image problems and show you how we used Selective Color to correct them. First, we'll tackle an image with a color cast and show you how Selective Color is the perfect tool for removing specific hue ranges. Next, we'll use it to color correct several colors in an image and explain how one small change can influence other colors. Then, we'll show you how to use Selective Colors to neutralize the neutral tones in your image, giving you brighter whites and improved contrast. After that, we'll show you how you can create some interesting special effects by drastically adjusting your colors.

## Removing a color cast

Poor white balance, mixed light sources, and less-than-perfect exposure settings are just a few of the reasons your digital image might develop a color cast. Selective Color is perfect for removing this cast, as you can easily diminish the dominant color. For example, the image shown below was overwhelmed with a bluish color cast from the mixed light sources of the incandescent indoor lights and the ambient natural light. To correct the colors, we selected Neutrals from the Colors dropdown menu and increased the percentage of Yellow in the image. We also selected the Whites and slightly reduced the Cyan to balance out the colors in the highlights. Often, you'll have to adjust more than one color and set of sliders to get your image perfect, but use the preview image and your color wheel to figure out what needs to be done.



*This image suffered from a blue color cast, so we used Selective Color to remove some Cyan from the Blues to balance it out.*

## Basic color correction

While Selective Color excels in dealing with individual colors, you can also use it to adjust all of the colors in your image. For example, the image below has three problems. The neutrals in the pavement are too red, the reds are undersaturated, and something's up with the yellows in our bananas. To fix it, we first reduced the percentage of Magenta in the Neutrals, which actually made our saturation problem with the Greens worse. However, adding some Magenta and removing some Yellow from the Greens easily fixed it. The reduced Yellow in the Greens helped out our odd-looking Yellows, but we made a slight addition of Magenta to the Yellows to finish the job. As you can see, one change can have a dramatic effect on your overall image, but by using the Preview function you can adjust the other colors to achieve the balance you're looking for.



*We used Selective Color to fix the Yellows, Greens, and Neutral tones in this image.*

## Neutralize your images

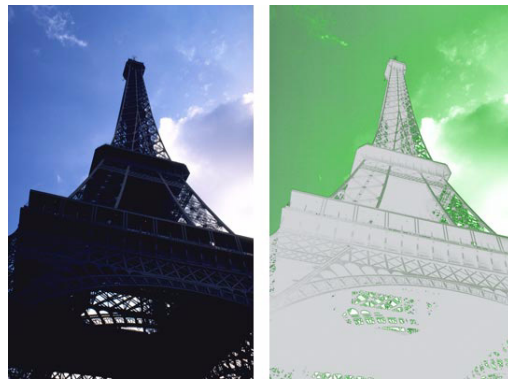
Sometimes, your whites just aren't white enough. Using the Whites and Neutrals sliders in the Selective Color dialog box is a good way to control your white hues and increase the contrast in your image. This differs from correcting for a color cast, as you aren't trying to remove a specific color, but improve the dynamic range of your colors to make it more interesting to look at. The image below shows a simple macro shot of a white tulip taken on a fairly overcast day, so the whites look grayish and the small details, like the water drops, are lost in the midtones. To correct this, we removed a ton of black (-75%) from the Whites and a small amount (-10%) of Cyan from the Neutrals to make the whites pop right out.



*When your whites look dingy, try removing some black from the Whites or Neutrals.*

## Special effects

Selective Colors can also produce some interesting special effects, as shown below. To change the color of the sky to green, we simply added 100% Cyan and Yellow to the Neutral hues. Then, to change the color of the tower to White, we removed all of the black in the Blacks and Neutrals. This type of effect is usually pretty dramatic, but it can be fun to experiment and see what you can come up with.



*You can produce some interesting visuals by making large adjustments to individual colors.*

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