

Perfect Stock Images in 5 Steps

(tutorial created using Photoshop CS)

How do you make those ever more demanding stock agencies happy with your digital submissions? Especially Pacific Stock—they are so hard to please!!! Okay, here it is the step by step procedure that will solve all of your problems and answer all of your questions. Here at Pacific Stock we are looking for clean, color corrected images. So here is the quickest and easiest way to give us what we want.

What is the easiest way to color correct images? What is the least time consuming method to produce the best end product? My answer is this—fix the neutrals and the rest will very nearly fall into place. What you will learn in this tutorial is how to optimize your images according to the Pacific Stock guidelines. It is a simple process and once you learn what to do it's a piece of cake.

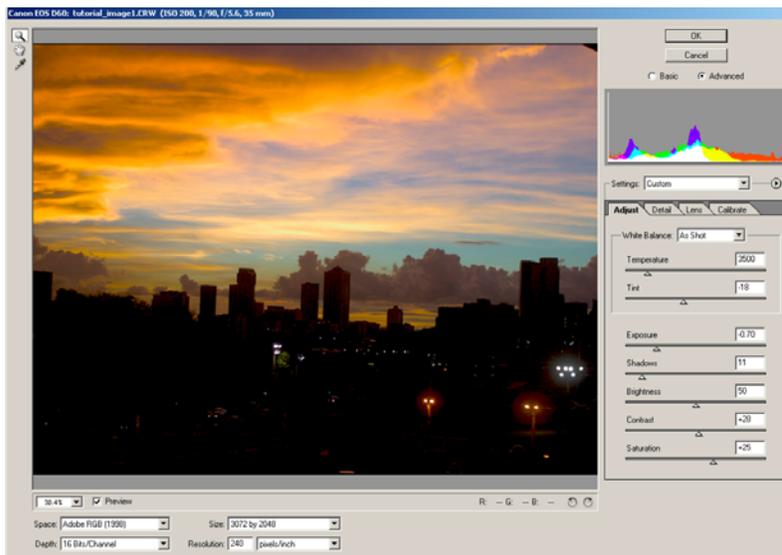
Step One: Open your RAW image and convert it to a 16 Bit tiff

By now you have transferred your RAW images from your camera to your computer using software suitable for your camera. Your RAW images are your digital negatives and should be properly archived for future use. With the ever changing technology of our times you will thank me later for telling you to store those files!

In Photoshop CS go to File<Open and browse to your image file. For this lesson open **tutorial_image1.crw** from the files I have provided for you.

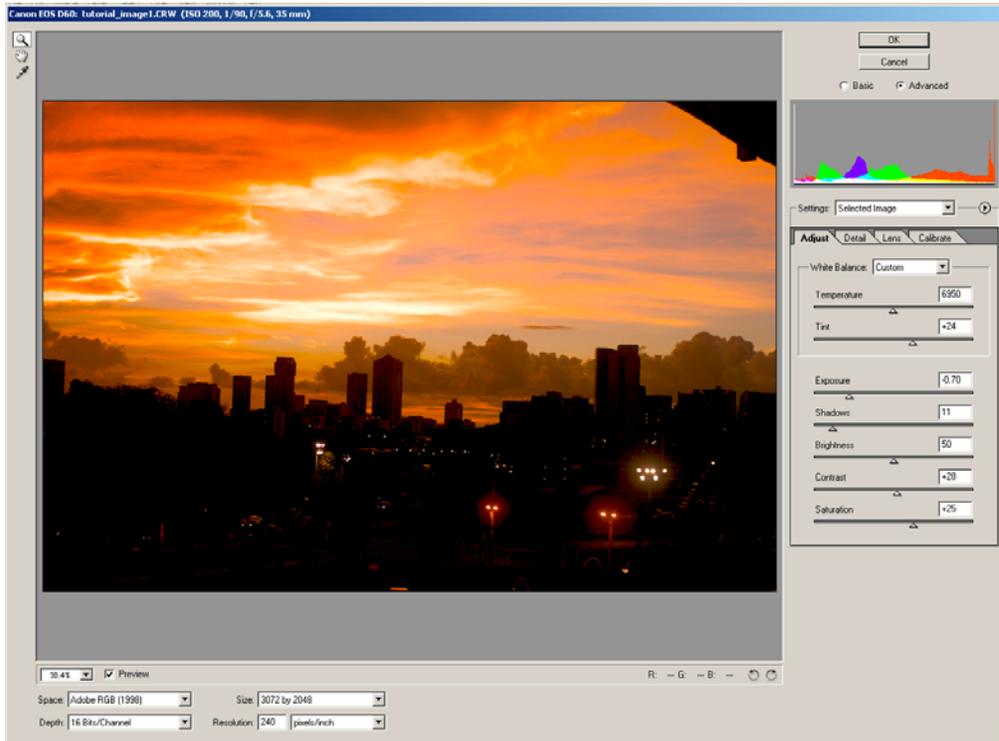


The Camera RAW dialogue box will open displaying the picture.

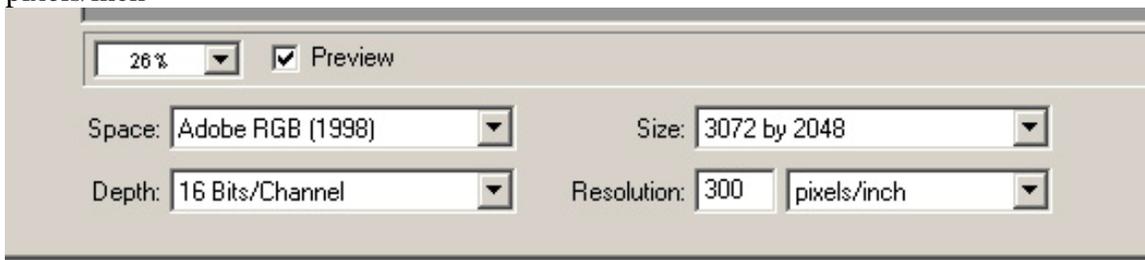


(Note: If you are using your own image here and you get an error message it could be that your camera is not supported by the original CS version. You may have to download compatibility plug-in from Adobe before the camera RAW function will work with your camera. Contact me if you cannot find the download online)

In this dialogue box you can make all sorts of adjustments that will not degrade your image. On the top right choose Advanced. Experiment with the tools on the right side of your screen. Use the sliders on the right side of the screen to adjust the look of the image to your liking.



Located in the bottom left corner of this screen are the Space and Depth selection boxes. Set Space to Adobe RGB(1998). Set Depth to 16 Bits/Channel. Set Resolution to 300 pixels/inch



Click OK on the top right of this window. You have now converted your raw image to a 16 bit Tiff.

Step Two: Spot your image

Now you must go through your image to get rid of dust marks and remove any unwanted artifacts from the image.

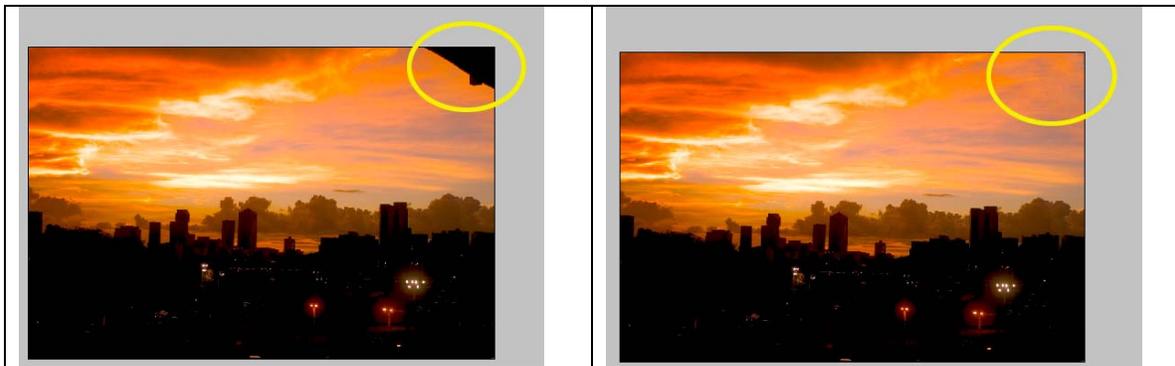
Close all dialogue boxes except for the toolbar.

Using the magnifying glass on your toolbar zoom in to 100%



Using the sliders at the bottom and right side of the image, scroll methodically through the entire image inspecting for dust and artifacts. Use the patch tool or the clone tool to erase unwanted marks created by dust and anything that is not visually appealing.

In this particular image I chose to remove the black corner. First I used the clone tool then I refined the edges using the patch tool.



Any major changes you make to your image must be completely unnoticeable at 100%. If you have questions about how these tools work please feel free to call me and we can discuss how they work in detail.

Return the image to full screen by pressing Ctrl + 0.

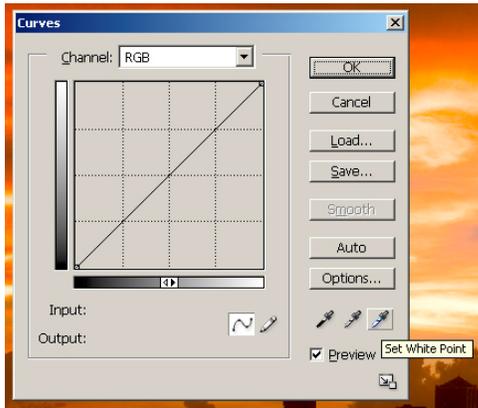
Go to File < Save As. Create a **new folder** on your hard drive called yourname_tutorial. Save this image as a tiff, no compression, IBM PC byte order.

So now the image has been converted to a 16bit tiff and spotted. Close this image and it is time for step three...

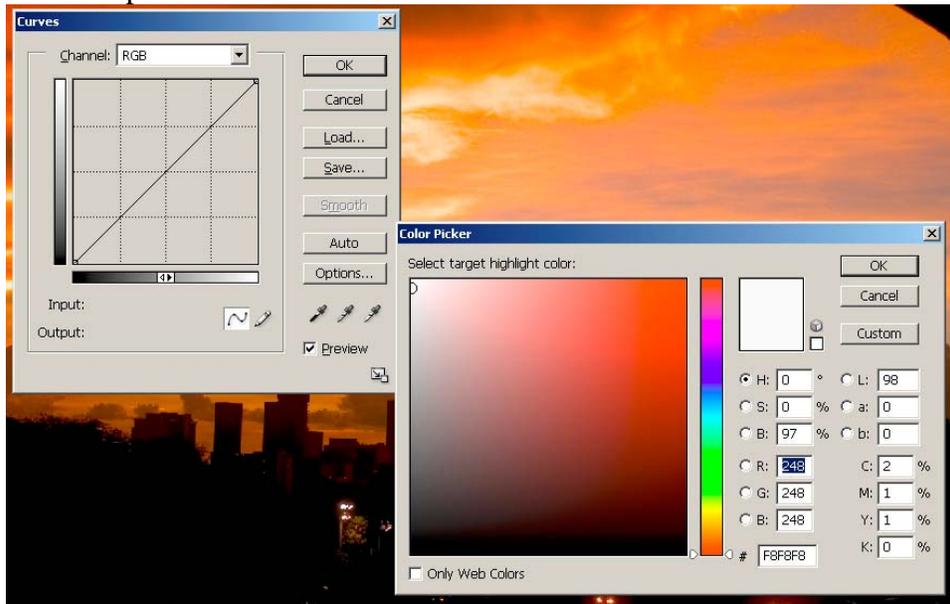
Step Three: Set your black and white point numbers as defaults—this will only have to be done once.

In Photoshop go to Image<Adjustments<Curves

The Curves Dialogue box will open



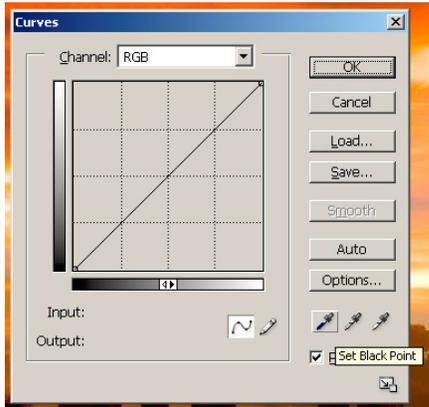
Double click on the set white point eyedropper in the lower right corner. This will open the color picker.



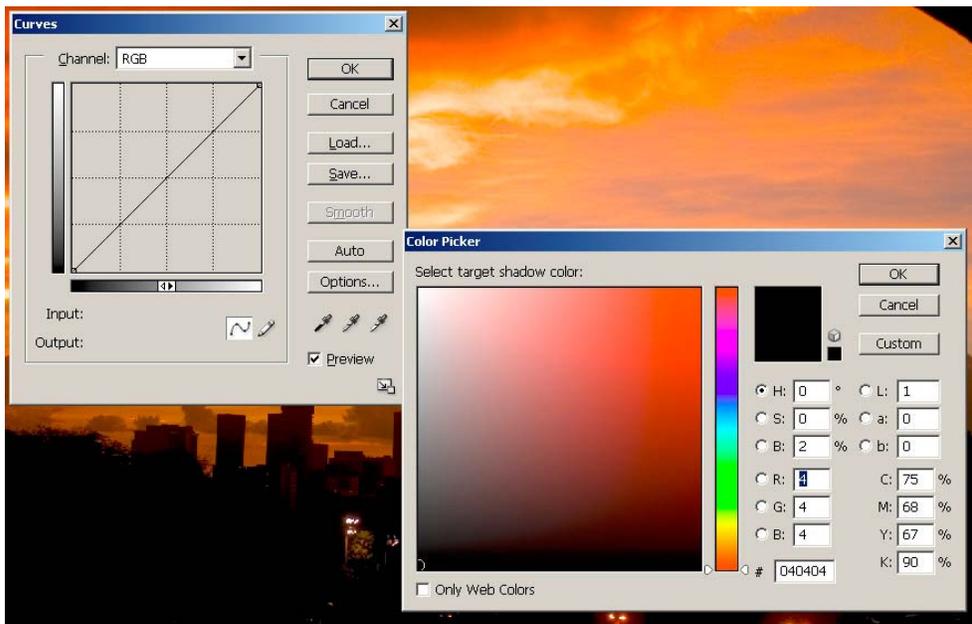
Make sure that the Only Web Colors box in the lower left corner of the color picker is NOT check-marked.

In the color picker change all of the numeric values of R, G and B to 248, 248 and 248 and click okay.

Now **double click** on the set black point eyedropper on the curves palette. This is the first eyedropper on the left



This will open the color picker once again.



This time set the values of R, G and B to 4, 4 and 4. Click OK on the color picker.

You have set your target white point and your target black point. Click OK on the curves palette. It will ask you if you would like to save new target colors as defaults. Click yes. This step only needs to be performed once. This information has been saved as a default setting.

Close tutorial_image1.tif

Step Four:

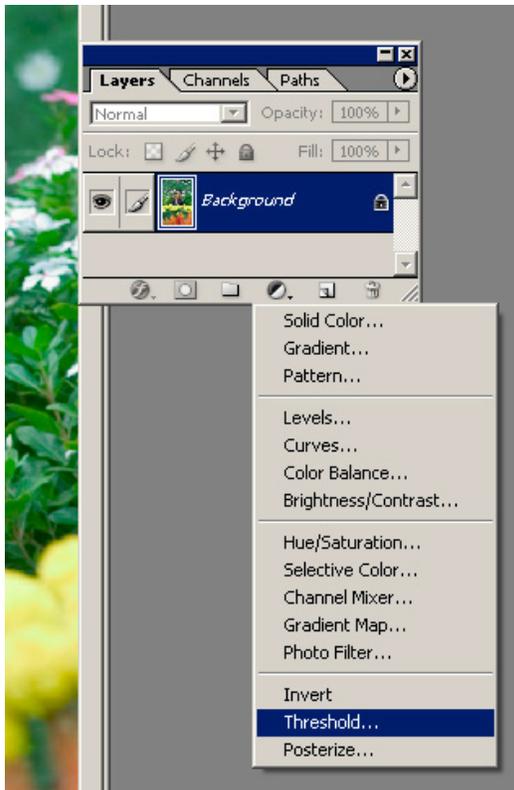
Set your black and white points and correct color cast
(For the remainder of the lesson I will be using an image by Bill Brennan)

Open tutorial_image2.tif from the files provided with this tutorial.

Open the Info palette (Window<Info or F8)
Open the Layers Palette (Window<Layers or F7)

Create a threshold adjustment layer

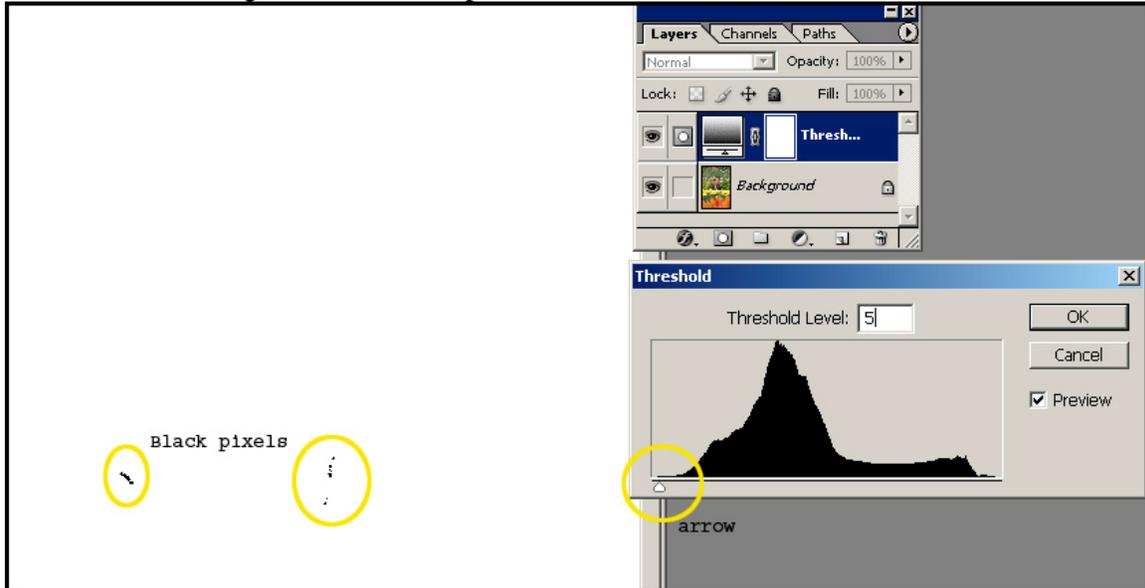
Click on the black and white circle at the bottom of the layers palette and choose Threshold



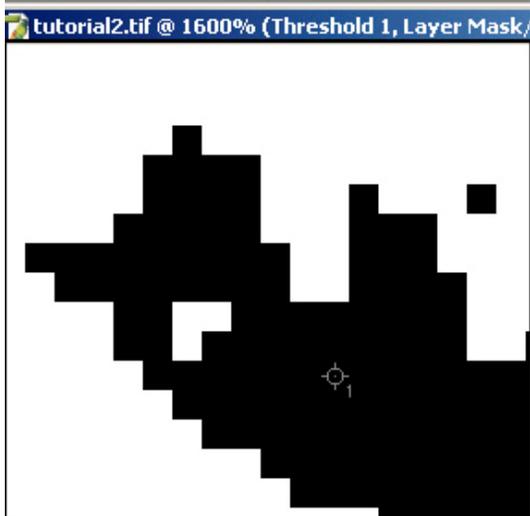
The image will turn black and white.

Move the Threshold palette so that you can still see your entire image.

Drag the arrow below the histogram in the pop up window to the **left** until all that remains of the image is a few black pixels.



Zoom in as close as you can to those black pixels (Hold Space + Ctrl + Mouse-click)

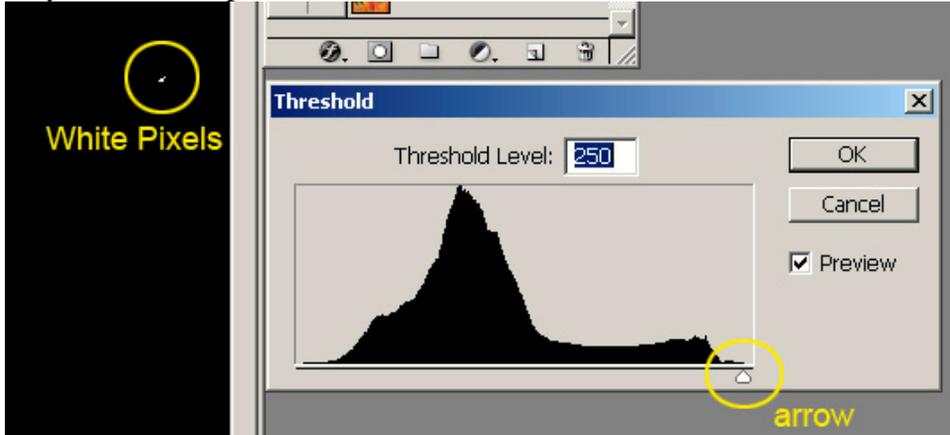


Hit Shift + left mouse click to leave a marker on the remaining black pixels (1).

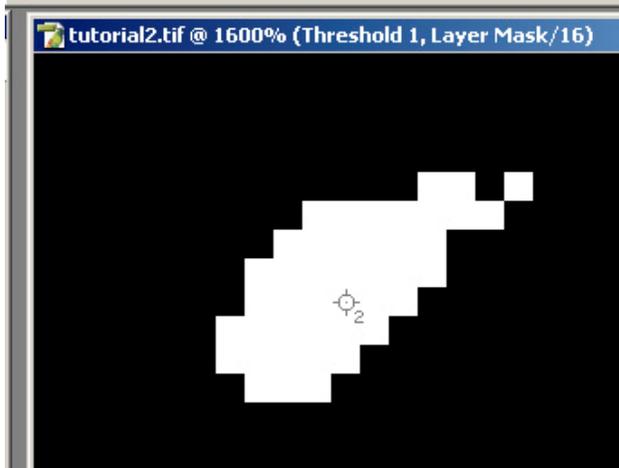
(Note: If you miss your target and need to move it shift + click and drag the marker onto the black pixels. Press Shift + Alt + right Mouse Click on the marker to remove it.)

Press Ctrl + 0 to return to full screen.

Now go back to the Threshold palette and drag the arrow all the way to the **right** until only a few white pixels are visible.



Zoom in as close as you can to those white pixels (Hold Space + Ctrl + Mouse-click)



Hit shift+ left mouse click to leave a marker (2). Shift + Click and drag the marker onto the white pixels if you miss.

Click okay on the Threshold Palette

Drag the Threshold adjustment layer and mask to the trashcan on the bottom right of the layers palette. This will discard the entire layer. All that should remain is the background layer.

Set Black and White Point

Return the image to full screen (View<fit on screen or Ctrl + 0)

Open the Curves palette (Image<Adjustments<Curves or Ctrl + M)

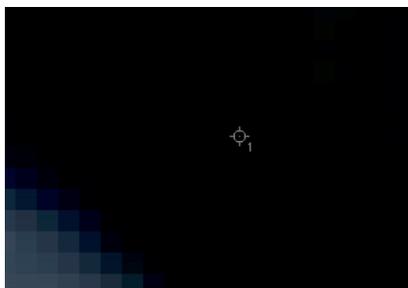
You will see the markers 1 and 2 on the image. These are the markers you just placed using the threshold layer.



Click on the set black point eyedropper on the curves palette (the one on the far left)

Hold Space + Ctrl + Mouse-click* to zoom in as close as you can to marker number 1. This is the darkest place in the image.

Left mouse click on marker 1



*Note: This hotkey is tricky. If you click the space bar and release it the curves palette will close. Reopen curves (Ctrl+M) and try again. Make sure to hold the space bar down, while still holding the space bar press and hold the control/apple key, now click your mouse and you will zoom. Continue where you left off

With the cursor still on marker 1, have a look at the info palette. R, G and B should look like this:



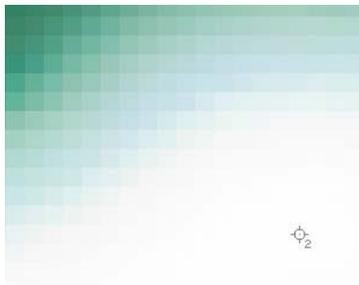
The first numbers (0, 0, 0) represent the numeric value of the original black point.
The second number (4, 4, 4) represents the numeric value of the adjusted black point.

Return to full screen (Ctrl + 0)

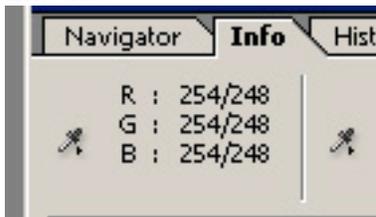
Click the set white point eyedropper on the curves palette (the one farthest to the right).

Zoom in as close as you can to marker number 2. This is the brightest point in the image.

Left mouse click on marker 2



With the cursor still on marker 1, have a look at the info palette. R, G and B should look like this:



The first numbers (254, 254, 254) represent the numeric value of the original white point.
The second number (248, 248, 248) represents the numeric value of the adjusted white point.

Return to full screen (Ctrl + 0). Your black and white points are set correctly for Pacific Stock standards. This process also sets the contrast of your image and makes it possible to produce a high quality print.

Time to make some color adjustments. Leave the curves palette open.

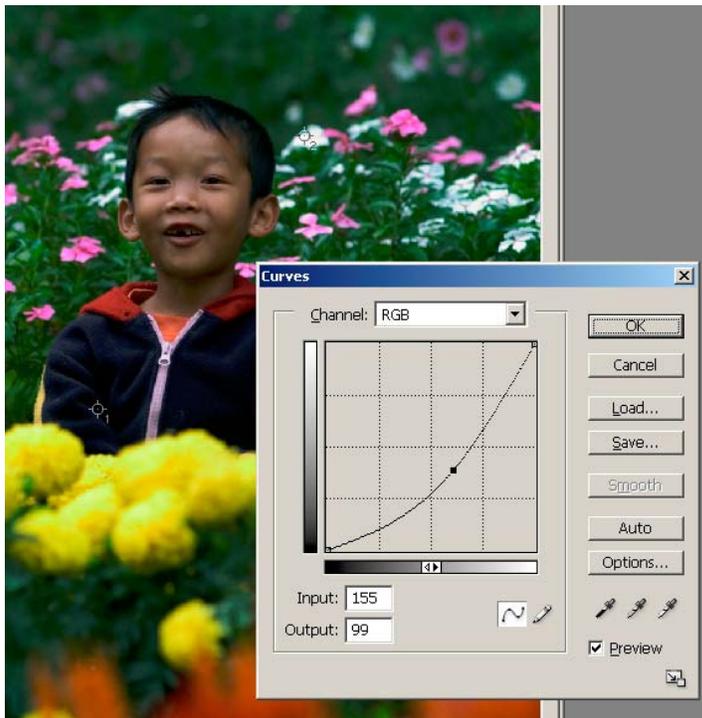
Color Adjustments

When you set your black and white points you may find that this causes your image to have a color cast. This can be easily corrected by making an adjustment in the midtones.

At the top of the curves palette it says Channel: RGB. This means that any adjustments you make in this channel will affect the entire image.

Go to the center of the diagonal line in the curves box. Click and drag the line slightly up. This will make the entire image brighter.

Now click and drag the line a little bit down. This will make the entire image darker.



Click Backspace or Delete on your keyboard to reset.

Now click the RGB box and select Red from the pull down menu that appears. Swing the diagonal line slightly up and slightly down to see what happens. Press Backspace or Delete to reset.

Repeat this with Green and with Blue

With slight adjustments of each channel you can make a big difference in this image.

In this Image I added a little bit of Red and removed Blue (adding yellow) to result in a more vibrant image.



Try these adjustments yourself. When you are finished click the preview check box in the bottom right of the curves palette to see the difference your work has made.

Click okay on the curves palette.

Save the image as a tiff, no compression, IBM PC byte order to the tutorial folder you created earlier.

And now for the final step!!

Step Five: Write IPTC information into your metadata using the file browser

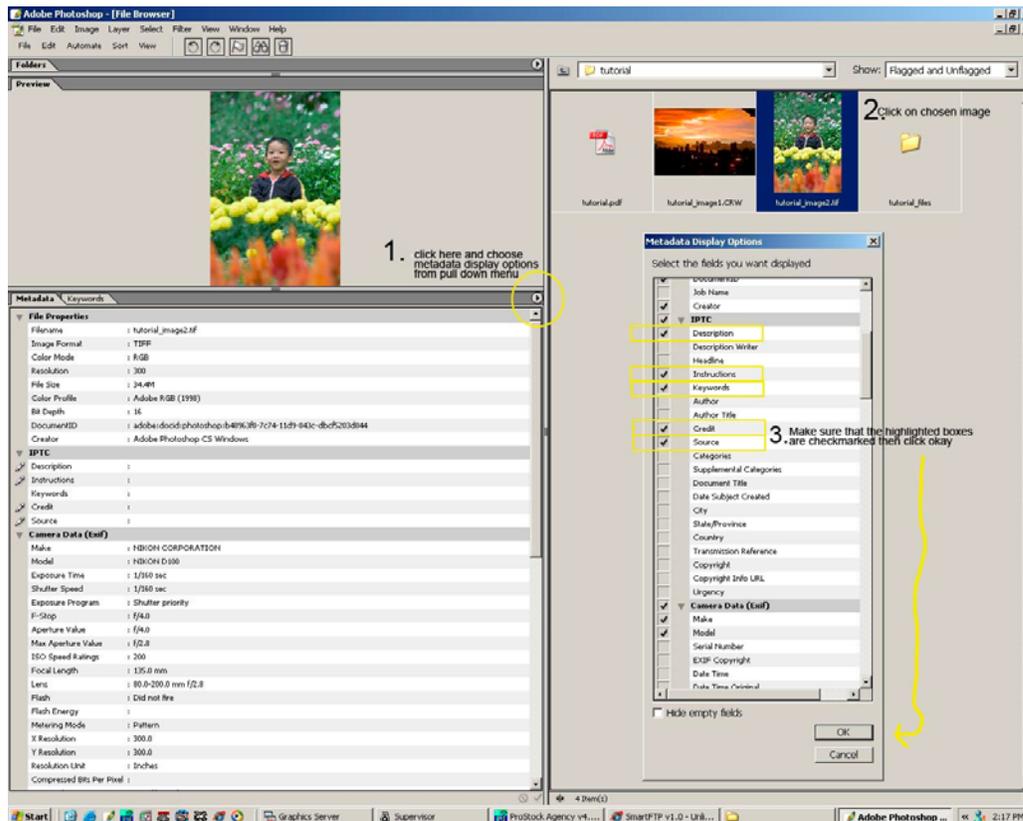
On the top bar got to Window and select File Browser from the pull down menu.

The File browser will open

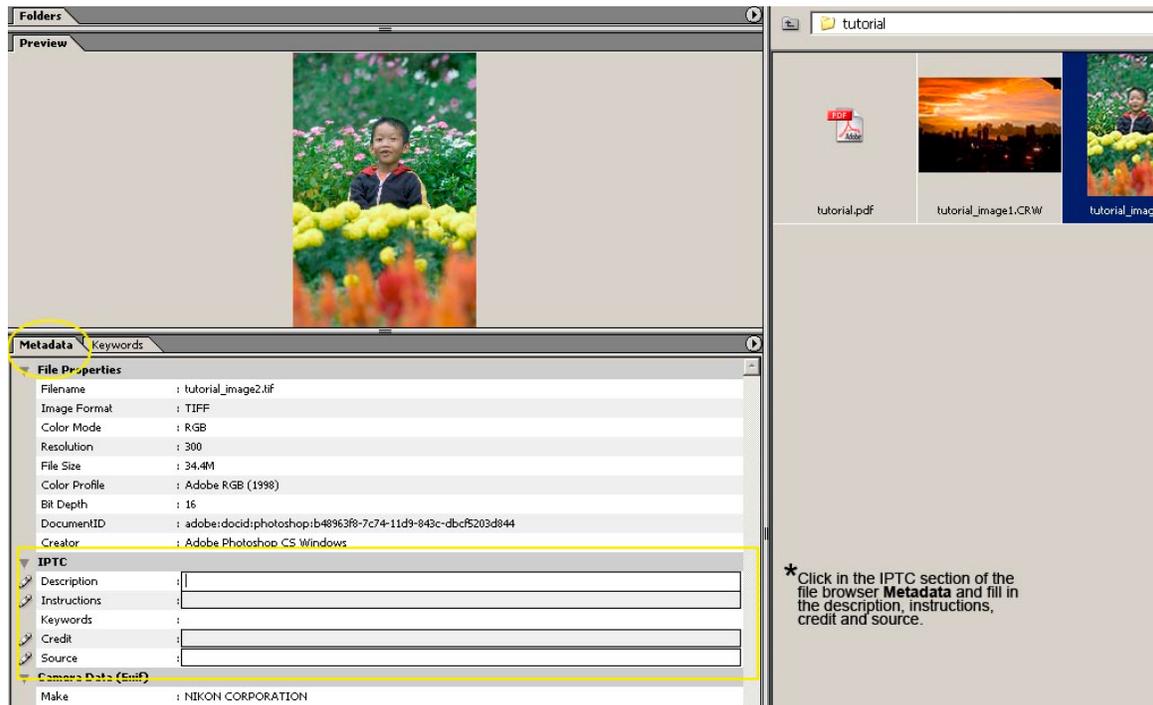
The file browser is a very useful tool. Play around with the different functions in this window in the future as it is a great time saving tool. For now we will be focusing on the **Metadata** specifically the **IPTC**.

First, click on the arrow on the right of the metadata box and choose **Metadata Display Options**. In this dialogue box scroll to IPTC.

Checkmark **Description, Instructions, Keywords, Credit and Source**. These are the only boxes that should be marked in the IPTC section. Click okay.



Next, select the image that you wish to add IPTC information to. Scroll to the IPTC section in the metadata click on the empty boxes and enter the following information:



Description: A short caption for the image. This must include a description of the image and the exact location (be detailed).

Keywords: The first word here should be your source code. The source code is the name that you refer to this image by, the file name. Next, if this image is model released please type in MR. Finally; add as many words as you can come up with that would describe the image. These are the words that will be used by our clients to search for images on our website. The more descriptive you can be here the better.

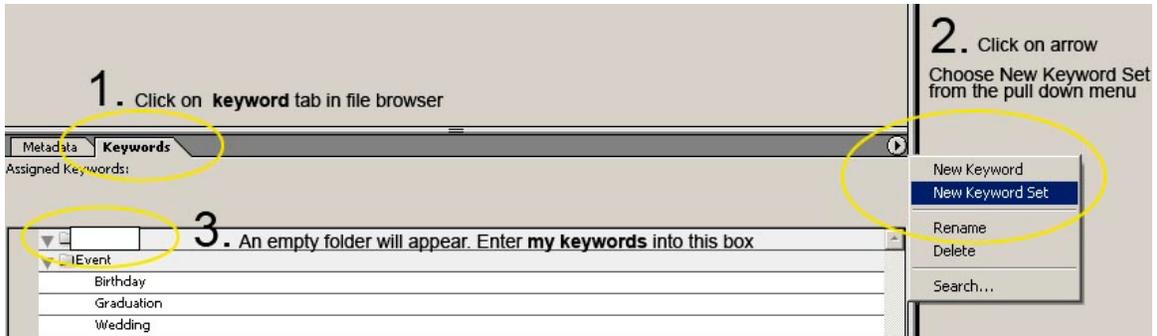
Credit: The photographers name goes into this field

Source: You must enter your file name again here so that in the future we can reference this image with you.

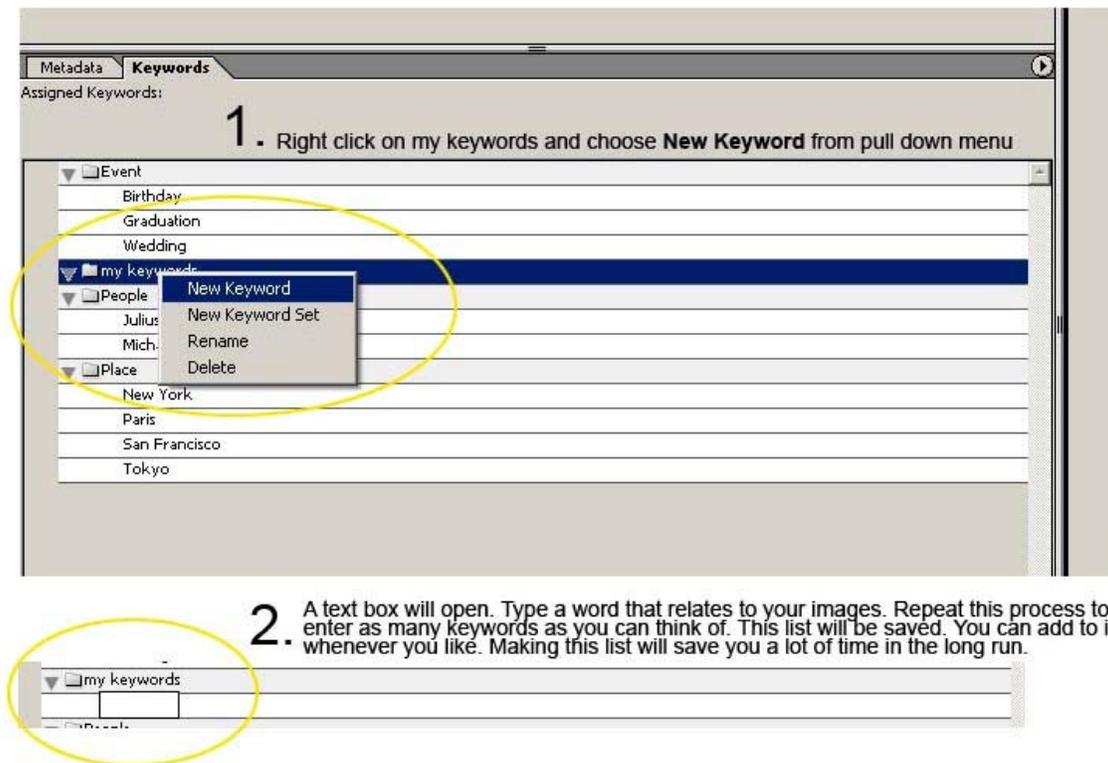
Instructions: In this field you should put an MR if the image is model released along with any other technical information about this image that you think we need to know.

When you have finished press enter or click on the image and choose apply.

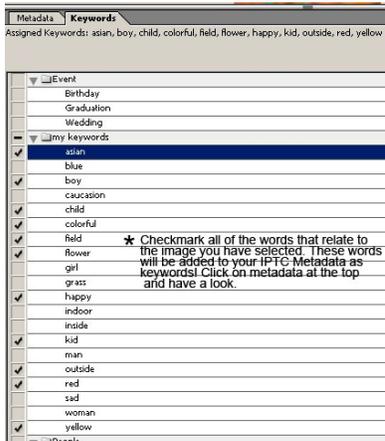
Now it is time to start your Keyword List! Click on the **Keywords** tab. Click on the arrow on the right side of the panel and choose **New Keyword Set** from the pull down menu. An empty folder will appear in the keyword list. Enter “my keywords” into this blank.



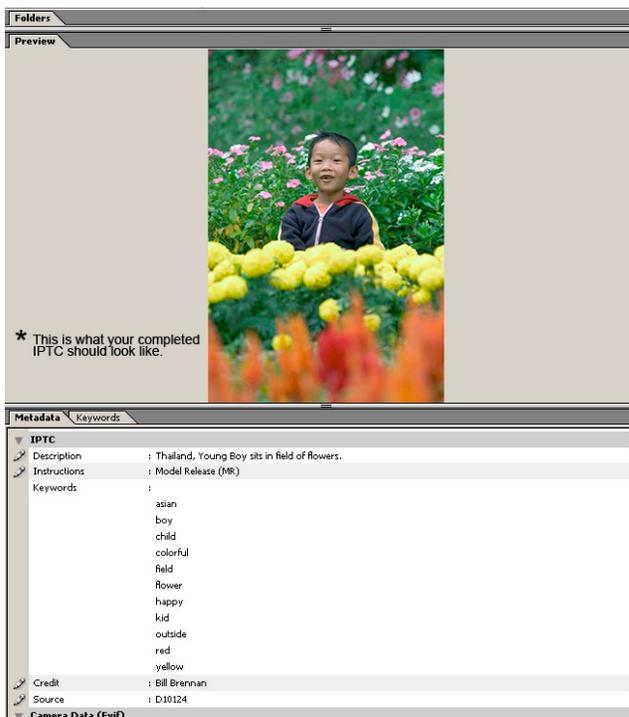
Now right click on **my keywords** and enter a keyword. This is the beginning of your list. Repeat these steps and make this list as long as you can. These words can be used for all of your images from now on, so the more words the better.



Now that you have a nice long list of words to choose from you can select the image you would like to keyword and checkmark the words that apply to that image.



These words will now show up in the keyword section of your Metadata IPTC. Your IPTC is now complete.



You have completed a perfect Pacific Stock image!

I have included 4 more raw files for you to practice with in this tutorial folder. Complete the previous five steps for each one. Save them to the tutorial folder you created. (Raw images provided by Tomas Del Amo)

Burn your tutorial folder to a DVD or CD and send it to me for review!