

03 Week

USING SHOOTING MODES

Most dSLRs offer a range of modes that control the technical parameters of a shot. These modes can range from fully automatic to fully manual, and various steps in between, and are controlled by the Mode dial. Typically, the Mode dial is split into three sections: fully Automatic; Scene modes; and Program AE, Aperture Priority, Shutter Priority, and Manual modes, which give you varying degrees of control over your shots.

In this module, you will:

- ▶ **discover what modes are** and how they let you take control of your photography;
- ▶ **learn which modes are best** for certain shooting scenarios;
- ▶ **understand how to use** exposure compensation;
- ▶ **apply your new knowledge** by shooting some fun, mode-based assignments;
- ▶ **review your images** and learn how to spot, and learn from, any mistakes you have made;
- ▶ **improve your results** using basic image-editing techniques;
- ▶ **recap and revise** your understanding of shooting modes.

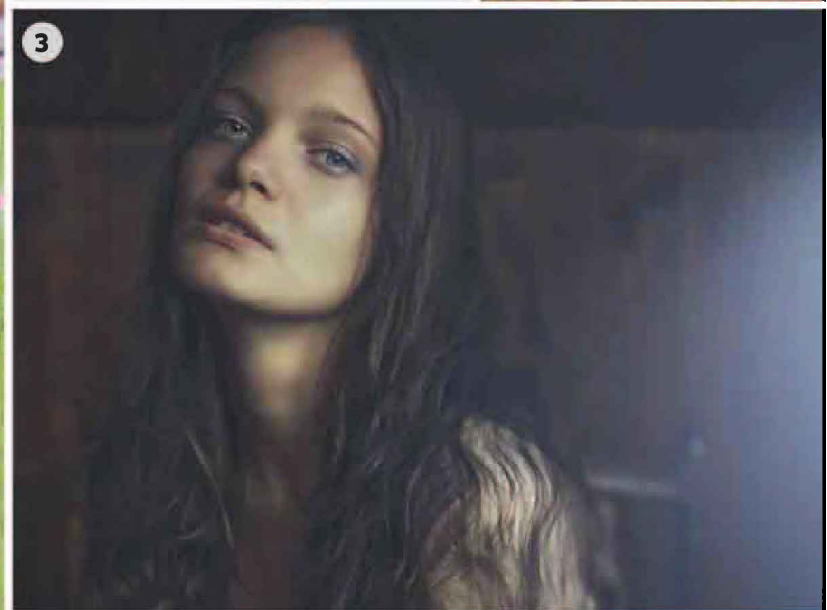
Let's begin...





TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Which mode is right?



Modes are designed to help photographers capture a variety of scenes and conditions as easily as possible. See if you can match the description of the mode with the right picture.

A Aperture Priority mode: Can separate the subject from the background by controlling focus.

B Sports mode: Has a fast shutter speed that will freeze the action of the subject.

C Landscape mode: Enables the camera to capture the maximum amount of depth.

D Negative exposure compensation: Can stop the camera from overexposing flesh tones.

E Program mode: Allows you to set the ISO and shutter speed to capture motion blur.

F Disabled flash: Lets you preserve the mood and intimacy of a special moment.

G Portrait mode: Helps to soften skin tones in portraits.

H Positive exposure compensation: Stops the subject from being underexposed against a bright background.

ANSWERS

E/6: Traffic on a freeway
F/8: Boy looking at his birthday cake
G/7: Bride and groom
H/2: Squirrel in the snow

A/5: Cluster of rose hips
B/1: Boy leaping over hurdles
C/4: Grasmere, Lake District, UK
D/3: Girl in a dark room



NEED TO KNOW

- Getting to grips with exposure, shutter speeds, and aperture combinations can be quite daunting. Using the preset modes will help you to concentrate on capturing the moments that matter as you learn.
- The most powerful tool you have when using the various modes is exposure compensation, as this will allow you to override the camera's suggested settings.

- It is worth studying each mode in turn, since they all have subtle differences and specific uses.
- If you keep an eye on what settings the camera is suggesting, you will soon start to get an understanding of how exposure works. This will help you to make informed decisions about whether the camera suggestions match your vision.



Review these points and see how they relate to the photos shown here



UNDERSTAND THE THEORY

Basic camera modes

Understanding what each mode on your camera does, and how and when to use them, will take some of the complications and technicality out of your photography without compromising your creativity. Being able to switch between modes as you shoot will give you the confidence to experiment and grow as a photographer. By using the different modes, you will resist the safe option of always shooting in Auto and wondering why your pictures aren't quite as good as you'd hoped.



AUTO MODE

Auto mode is completely automatic—it even pops up the flash if it calculates that additional lighting is required. In poor light Auto mode automatically increases the ISO (sensitivity) to cut the risk of camera shake. This mode can be useful if you are in a rush and don't have time to consider the options, or if you hand your camera to a friend for them to take a quick picture.



Auto mode is ideal when photographing fast-moving subjects, such as children or pets.



PROGRAM SHIFT

In Program mode the camera chooses the required shutter speed and aperture. However, you can override this selection by rotating the camera's control dial. This adjusts both the aperture and shutter speed while maintaining the correct exposure. This facility is usually referred to as Program shift or Flexible program.



PROGRAM MODE

Program mode is a step up from Auto mode. Although the camera sets the aperture and shutter speed, you need to set the ISO or activate the flash. You also have more control over camera functions, such as the file type and picture parameter used. If you want to take more control over your photography but still want some level of automation, then Program is the mode to select.

Program mode will always select the fastest shutter speed possible to reduce the risk of camera shake. However, in low light it may not be possible for Program mode to select a fast enough shutter speed. If camera shake is likely, you should increase the ISO. Only when light levels are bright enough will Program mode select a smaller aperture to increase depth of field, allowing more of the image to appear sharp.



Program offers a safety net when shooting, but with far finer control over the exposure setting than Auto.



“Photography is... **visual** and can **transcend language**.”

LISA KRISTINE

03
WEEK



SHUTTER PRIORITY MODE

In Shutter Priority (S or Tv) mode, you choose the shutter speed and the camera chooses the lens aperture that will give the correct exposure. This mode is particularly useful when you want to control the amount of movement blur that appears in your shots. To freeze fast-moving action, for example, you should select a fast shutter speed (see pp.188–189).



If the brightness of a scene is too great, the use of Shutter Priority mode can lead to overexposed images. This is because the camera may be unable to select a small enough aperture to match the selected shutter speed.



APERTURE PRIORITY MODE

Aperture Priority (A) mode enables you to choose the aperture, and your camera then automatically sets the shutter speed that will give the correct exposure. Aperture also affects depth of field: a small aperture offers greater depth; a large aperture, shallower depth.



Large depth of field means everything is sharp, from nearby objects to the far distance. This is useful when you want precise control over depth of field.



Shallow depth of field means only subjects close to your camera are sharp, while more distant objects are out of focus.



MANUAL MODE

In Manual (M) mode, you control both the aperture and the shutter speed. The camera will still measure light levels, but will only recommend an exposure—it won't change any of the settings itself (see Week 4).



Manual mode lets you be more experimental with exposure settings, which is useful in tricky lighting situations.



UNDERSTAND THE THEORY

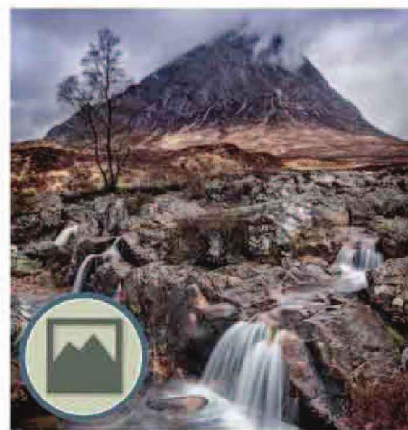
Scene modes

As well as the automatic and semi-automatic modes, most cameras have a range of specific scene modes. Each scene mode optimizes the camera's focusing, aperture, and shutter speed for a given set of conditions, and is programmed to minimize common errors. It also changes how the camera processes the image by altering color saturation and sharpness.



LANDSCAPE MODE

The purpose of this mode is to boost colors, contrast, and outlines. It selects a small aperture setting to give the greatest depth of field. The smaller aperture will also result in slower shutter speeds.



PORTRAIT MODE AND BABY MODE

By setting a large aperture, Portrait mode blurs the background and adjusts the image processing for a softer, more flattering result. Some DSLRs also include Baby (or Child) mode, which warms the tones and makes images even softer.



FLASH OFF MODE

Useful in low-light conditions, Flash Off mode disables the flash so it won't fire. This helps you avoid embarrassment in sensitive locations such as theaters, museums, and churches.



“ Just **react** to what you see, and take **many, many pictures.** ”

ELLIOTT ERWITT

03
WEEK



SPORTS MODE

The best mode for action is Sports mode. High shutter speeds freeze action, and focusing is usually switched to Continuous mode or Predictive Autofocus where available (see pp.44-45).



MACRO MODE

This mode, also known as Close-up mode, works by changing the focusing distance on your camera's lens to focus at close quarters. It also tends to pick a wide-open aperture, resulting in a shallower depth of field.



OTHER SCENE MODES

Many dSLRs include additional modes optimized for everyday scenarios. Check your dial and camera manual to see which modes your camera offers.



Fireworks mode

This mode is useful for capturing fireworks or car light trails. It slows the shutter speed, increasing exposure time to around four or five seconds for shooting at night without flash. Avoid camera shake by using a tripod or resting your camera on something solid.



Snow mode

This mode allows for a lot of bright light in a scene and sets for deliberate overexposure. It renders snow as white instead of gray and avoids silhouetting people against the background.



Sunset mode

This mode enhances the red and orange colors of sunsets. Some cameras, when set to Sunset mode, also underexpose the image to intensify the effect still further.



NIGHT PORTRAIT MODE

Another flattering mode for portraits, Night Portrait mode uses flash to illuminate your subject, but this is balanced against the background lighting to produce a natural-looking result.





LEARN THE SKILLS

Exposure compensation



Often, if your subject is standing in front of a bright light or in a very dark room, your camera's light meter will try to even out the exposure. However, this can result in a silhouette or a washed-out subject. Exposure compensation allows you to make a picture lighter or darker than the recommended exposure.



1 Position the subject

Stick a sheet of white tracing paper to a window and place your subject in front of it.



2 Use Aperture Priority

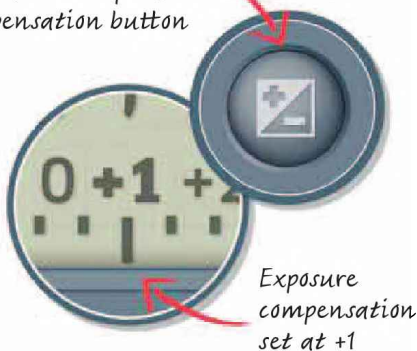
Select Aperture Priority mode (Av or A), and choose an aperture of about f/5.6.



6 Engage exposure compensation

Press the exposure compensation button on your camera (this is usually marked with a "+/-" icon). You can now alter the exposure, either positively or negatively. Dial in +1 for increased exposure to lighten the image.

Look for this symbol to find the exposure compensation button

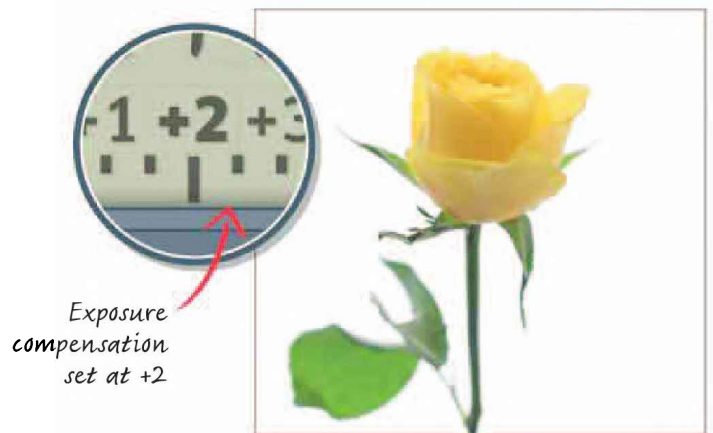


Exposure compensation set at +1



7 Reshoot the picture

Take another shot. The subject should be lighter and the background less gray. If it still looks too dark, dial in a higher number. Exposure compensation is often available in half- or third-stop increments for making fine adjustments.



Exposure compensation set at +2

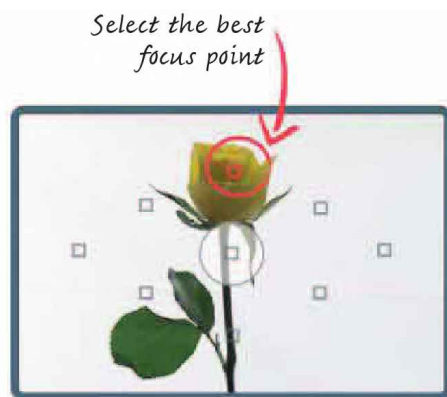
Where to start: Find a brightly lit room with a large window. Gather together a subject to shoot, such as a flower in a vase, a piece of white tracing paper for a background, and some adhesive tape to hold it in position.

You will learn: How to use the exposure compensation facility on your camera to turn a high-contrast image into one with a more standard level of contrast.



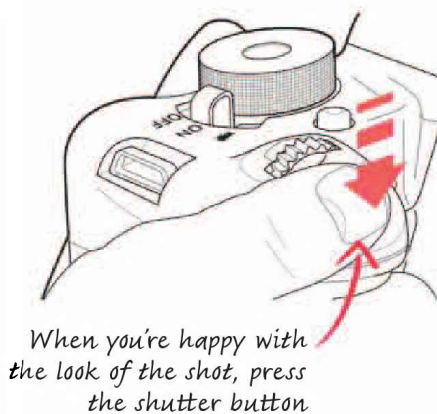
3 Focus on the subject

Get close to your subject and focus tightly on it so the background is completely made up of tracing paper.



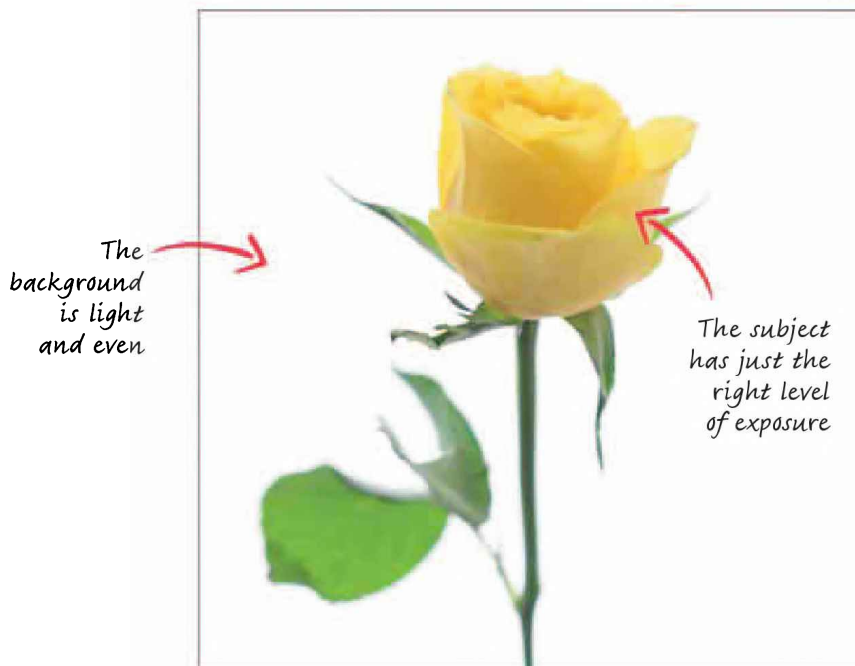
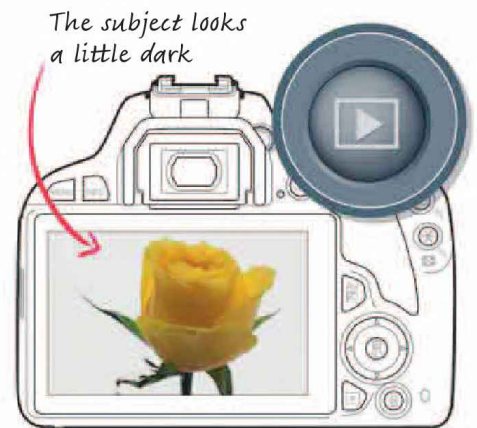
4 Shoot the picture

Once you've got everything lined up, take a shot using the settings provided by your camera's light meter.



5 Review the picture

Look closely at your image. The subject will probably be a bit dark because of the light coming from behind it.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- Exposure compensation gives you great leverage as a photographer to fine-tune your exposure, allowing you to take pictures in low-light or high-contrast conditions.
- Exposure compensation can be used in all the automatic and semi-automatic modes on your camera.



PRACTICE AND EXPERIMENT

Exploring camera modes

Camera modes help take the hassle out of photography. However, by taking control and choosing which mode to use—and learning to understand how each one works—your images will improve dramatically.



GETTING IT RIGHT AT NIGHT



EASY



30 MINUTES



BASIC + flash



OUTDOORS



NIGHT SCENE WITH
A BRIGHTLY LIT BACKGROUND

Using Night Portrait mode is an effective way of illuminating both your subject and their environment. This assignment works best somewhere with nighttime lighting, such as a fairground.

- **Position** your subject so that they're standing directly in front of some lights.
- **Turn** your camera on. The flash should automatically pop up (if you have to plug your flash in, turn it on).



Exposure of subject and background is balanced

- **Set** the camera to Night Scene mode. The camera will automatically sort out the setting, and will fire the flash to balance the exposure so that your subject is perfectly exposed.



NOTING DIFFERENCES



EASY



15 MINUTES



BASIC



INDOORS OR OUTDOORS



A MODEL

Program mode is a great setting to learn about modes, since it automatically sets the shutter speed and aperture but lets you alter them to get the effect you want.

- **Set** your camera to Program (P) mode and position your model about 8–10 ft (2.5–3 m) from the background.
- **Focus** on the model's face and then lightly press the shutter button. The camera will set the exposure for the scene. Note the shutter speed and aperture.
- **Use** the control dial to change the aperture and shutter speed. Take a photo with each change you make and note the effect—for instance, how a wider aperture makes the background more blurry.



Blurred background



Sharp background

Pro tip: Your photographs will improve the more you take control. Set yourself assignments that take you around the Mode dial, tackling each of the modes in turn until you know exactly what they do, almost instinctively.



PERFECTING THE EXPOSURE



MEDIUM



1 HOUR



BASIC + tripod



INDOORS



A MODEL AND A BRIGHT LIGHT SOURCE, SUCH AS A SUNNY SKY



With the camera setting the exposure, the subject is too dark

This simple but challenging exercise will help you practice controlling your exposure using the exposure compensation dial.

■ **Position** your model between your camera and the bright light source, and set the camera so you're shooting slightly upward.

■ **Select** Aperture Priority mode (Av or A), and choose an aperture of about f/5.6.

■ **Take** a shot and review your image. It will probably appear slightly dark and the subject may be silhouetted.

■ **Set** the exposure compensation to +1. Keep everything else exactly the same and reshoot the picture. Review the image again. This time your subject should be lighter than before.

■ **Change** the exposure compensation to +2 if it's still too dark and try again. By now you should be achieving the balance you're looking for.



With +1 exposure compensation dialed in, the subject is a bit brighter



At +2 exposure compensation, the image is correctly exposed

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- You don't have to let the camera do all the work. By using semi-automatic modes you can control the exposure and mood of your images.
- Exposure compensation is a powerful tool and can be used to great effect in automatic and semi-automatic modes.



ASSESS YOUR RESULTS

Reviewing your shots

Once you've gotten to grips with the basics of using modes and completed the assignments, choose the images you are most pleased with. Now ask yourself these questions to see if any improvements could be made.



Have you used the appropriate mode?

Through practice, you'll come to know which modes are best for particular conditions. In this image, Night Scene mode has been used to give a long exposure, bringing out the detail as the light begins to fade.



Does the mode match the subject?

This image has been taken using Portrait mode. The shallow depth of field has thrown the background out of focus, helping to draw attention to the subject's features.



Is your image correctly exposed?

The bright background light has underexposed the subject. Exposure compensation would have revealed the detail on the fish's body.



Do you have enough depth in your image?

Landscape mode has been used here to enhance the color saturation and produce a deep depth of field.



“A good snapshot **keeps a moment**
from **running away**.”

EUDORA WELTY

03
WEEK



⏸ Have you used the right mode to freeze the action?

Taken using Sports mode and a telephoto lens, this image has captured the motion of the riders, filling the frame and creating a dramatic effect.



⏸ Did you experiment with the settings?

This image was shot using Landscape mode to give it depth, but with a fast shutter speed to freeze the cyclist in mid-pedal.



⏸ Is your image unintentionally blurred?
Using Sports mode would have captured these people in sharp focus. Instead they appear blurred because a mode that doesn't freeze the movement has been used.



⏸ Have you successfully captured the mood of the scene?

Engaging the No-Flash mode and regulating the negative exposure compensation has resulted in an intimate portrait.



ENHANCE YOUR IMAGES

Adjusting brightness



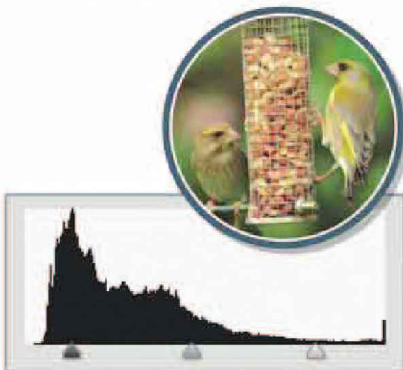
Despite your best efforts, you may occasionally produce a flat or dull-looking image. This is usually due to your camera incorrectly interpreting difficult lighting or contrast conditions. Don't worry—the image can easily be brightened up on your computer.

This image looks flat and gray



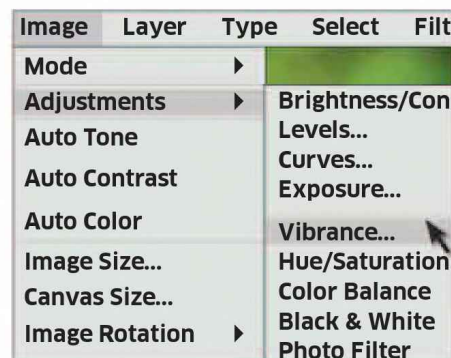
4 Brighten the highlights

To brighten the highlights, select the white slider and drag it to the left. Move it back and forth until you get the exact level of brightness you want, then click OK.



5 Select Vibrance

If you also want to enhance the intensity of the colors, but don't want to end up with an oversaturated image, use the Vibrance tool. Go to the menu bar and choose *Image*, then *Adjustments*, then *Vibrance*.



6 Brighten the colors

Move the Vibrance slider to get the effect you want. This tool subtly increases the saturation so that the tones still look natural.

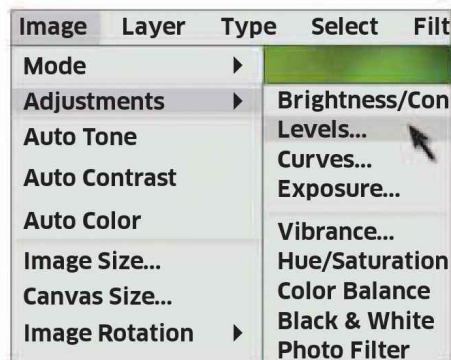


Pro tip: Always try to get your images right in-camera. The less work you have to do on them, the more time you can spend taking pictures. If you do opt for some computer fixes, don't overwork your images, as they'll quickly lose their charm.



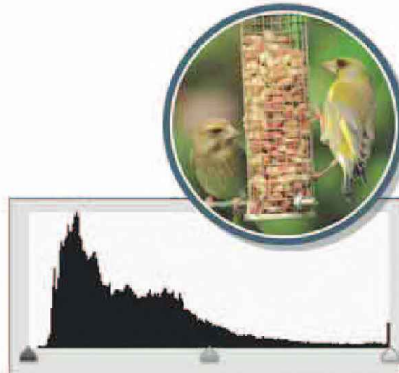
1 Select Levels

Select the image you want to work on, make a copy, and open it in Photoshop. Go to the top menu bar and choose Image, then Adjustments, and then Levels.



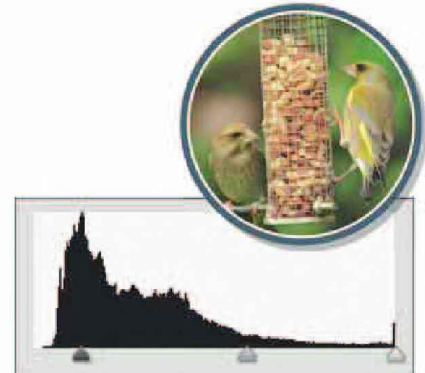
2 Look at the histogram

The histogram that pops up shows the brightness of your image. The left peaks are shadows; the right ones are highlights. A flat image, such as this one, has all the tones squashed in the middle.



3 Darken the shadows

To darken the shadows in your picture, click on the Black slider and move it to the right. As you do, you'll notice the dark areas in your image getting darker.



FIXING CONTRAST

There are other ways to improve the contrast in post-production. One of the most straightforward options is to use the Brightness/Contrast sliders (see pp.102-103). Alternatively, you could try the slightly more complicated Curves tool (see pp.278-279). Remember that a little is often enough to add a little punch to your pictures. If you overdo the adjustment, your pictures may begin to look artificial.

