



# Editing Skin Tones in Lightroom

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## Getting It Right In-Camera

### **Good Exposure:**

A properly exposed image will almost always result in better skin tones than an under-exposed one fixed later in post processing.

- Shoot in manual or aperture priority
- Spot metering

### **Lighting:**

If you do not have good light, find it or make it. Light is VERY important for skin tones.

- Look at your subject and if you do not have nice light, change your location a bit.
- Use a reflector to help reflect light onto the face.

### **White Balance:**

White Balance (WB) is the color temperature of the light in your image.

- Usually Auto works well, especially on newer model cameras, but it is not always perfect. Often it will be a little cool.
- Sometimes, however, you may need to custom WB or use a camera preset to prevent terrible color casts on the skin, which can be hard to fix in post processing.

### **Lenses:**

Some lenses create creamier, more even skin tones than others. The longer the focal length the creamier the skin tones.

- 85mm f.1.8 or 1.4
- 105mm f2.8 or 2.0
- 70-200mm f2.8

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## Global Editing

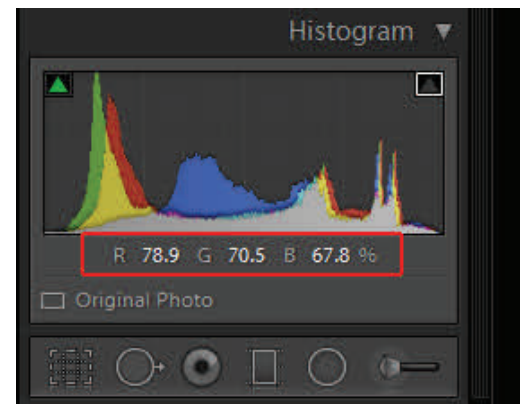
**Adjust exposure to the left or right to brighten or darken the image.**

- Make sure clipping warnings is active (triangle in top right corner of histogram)
- If there is clipping (red patches), move the highlights slider to the left to reclaim those clipped areas.
- If the image has to be brightened a good bit, there will be noise (digital grain), so also increase the Noise Reduction slider in the Detail panel.

## **Tweak the WB:**

- Click on the eyedropper in the tool bar and slowly roam around the picture looking for a neutral gray area. The RGB numbers will be very close, if not the same.
- After clicking on it, if the image doesn't look just right, move the temp and tint sliders to suit the image/skin tones.
- You can also try the WB presets in the drop down menu, then tweak to suit.
- Move your cursor into the skin area to see how the WB affected the skin area (look at numbers under the histogram). Move sliders to modify for better skin tone numbers.

- Reds should be the highest value
- Greens should be higher than blues



## **Lower clarity slider to suit image**

- This slider is a tad like sharpening in that it helps define edges.
- I often reduce clarity a bit when editing newborns and females. It softens the skin without softening the eyes too much. You can use a clarity brush later if you wish to offset the overall clarity reduction.

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## More About RGB Values

**In Lightroom the RGB numbers are much smaller values than in Photoshop because LR shows a percentage of the values.**

To see the regular RGB values, click the Soft Proofing option at the bottom of the image.



If you  
have  
edited

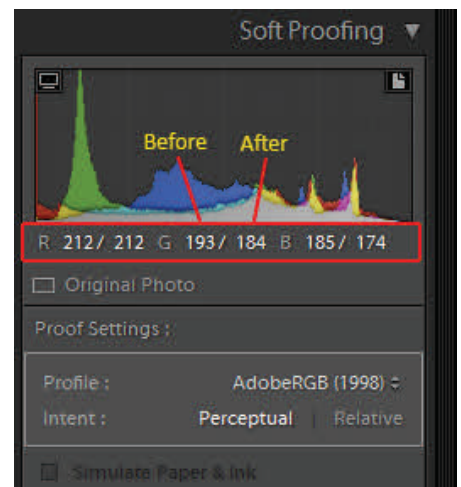
the image any, there will be double values for each color. The first value is the “before,” and the second value is the “after.”

Average RGB numbers for skin tones:

- Reds: in the 200’s
- Greens and Blues: between 100—200
- Blues: 10 to 20 points lower than Greens.

**African American will values will be lower because numbers decrease as colors darken.**

**Do NOT get too tied up with the RGB values.** What is more important is that the subject looks like they do in person. Some people are cooler skinned than others. Some are warmer. Let the subject look like themselves.





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## Localized Editing

### Local Adjustment Brushes

- Use the Add Light brush to brighten the face. Often just brightening up the skin can greatly help with overall tone.
- Use the Fix Red Casts or Fix Yellow Casts brushes to reduce areas that are red or yellow.
- Use the Under Eye Circle brush to minimize under eye circles. This may need to be done twice.
- Use the Tone and Even Skin brush. This brush has a slight effect because all skin tones are different. If you like, you can use it twice to intensify effect.
- Use the Smooth Skin brush to smooth out the skin texture.

**After correcting exposure and color, tackle any small blemishes on the skin with the Spot Removal tool.**

- Try both clone and heal options. Sometimes one works better than the other.
- Reduce the opacity if the correction is too apparent.