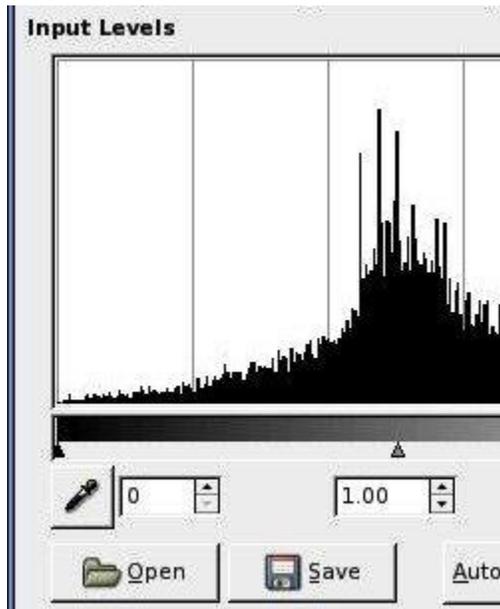


Tips to Make Website Photos Look Their Best



Good looking photos are an important part of a good looking website. A few easy adjustments can make a big difference. These are a few [standard](#) adjustments I try to make to all the photos I use, both on the web and for printing.

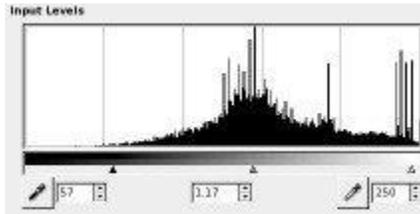
Crop Photos Before Adjusting Color



The photo to the right is what I started with. My subject is the cat, so the base of the chair and the tables isn't needed.

I'll crop the photo before I start editing the color so I don't have [to deal](#) with the large areas of white and tan colors. The photo on the left is what I end up with after cropping.

Use Levels To Adjust Photograph Color



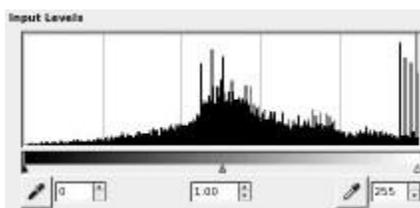
This is the "levels" color adjustment dialog box from "The GIMP", a popular free image manipulation software package. Levels is also available in [Photoshop](#) and many other software packages.

Short Version: Adjust the left and right pointers so they are at the edges of the lines on the graph. Then adjust the center pointer to darken or lighten the photo. Flip the "[Preview](#)" checkbox on and off to compare how your photo looks before and after your edits.

Longer Version: Available color values to use in an image range from 0 as the darkest to 255 as the lightest. The histogram graph shows that the darkest color value is around 60 instead of 0. By adjusting the photo to take advantage of the full range of color values, it increases the contrast between the lightest and darkest parts of the photo, and makes the details stand out more.

The left pointer has been adjusted to discard all color values between 0 and 57 (remember, they weren't being used anyway) and stretch out the color values between 57 and 255 to use the full range of 0 to 255. This adjustment causes the entire photo to look darker, so the center pointer has been moved slightly to the left to lighten the mid-tones of the photo.

After Levels Adjustment



This is the histogram graph after the level adjustments have been applied. You can see the mid-tones in the center and the shadows to the left have been slightly shifted to the left. It also shows that the color range between 0 to 57 is now used.

Apply Unsharp Mask for a Crisper Photo



Use the unsharp mask filter to create a crisper definition between light and dark areas. The settings to use for unsharp mask varies based on the size of your image. Website photos are usually pretty small, so I use an "Amount" of 0.50 in The GIMP and 50 in Photoshop, with a "Radius" of 1. Leave "Threshold" at 0.

Compare the Differences



Before

After Levels

After Unsharp Mask

After applying levels, the stripes in the cat are more pronounced, and the chair is a richer blue. After applying the unsharp mask, there is more definition in the cat's stripes. Unsharp mask is good for removing some of the blurring effect caused by resizing images.