

B&W PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

CHEAT SHEET



APERTURE



f/2.8 f/4 f/5.6 f/8 f/11 f/14 f/22

Wide Aperture (more light)

Narrow Aperture (less light)

When shooting b&w portraits, it's best to set a wide aperture (f/2.8-5.6) to capture a shallow depth of field.

ISO

100 ··· 200 ··· 400 ··· 640 ··· 800 ··· 1600 ··· 3200

Lower

LIGHT SENSITIVITY

Higher

Choose the lowest ISO setting for the available light unless you want some grain on purpose.

SHUTTER SPEED

30" 15" 10" 2" 1" 1/25" 1/30" 1/50" 1/100" 1/125" 1/250" 1/320" 1/500" 1/1000"

Blur Motion

Tripod Recommended

Handheld Ok

Freeze Motion

Try to keep it around 1/100th of a second or faster to avoid motion blur.

1 HIGHLIGHTS & SHADOWS

In b&w photography every color is converted to a shade of gray and this method can make the separation between subjects and background less obvious. You should avoid this issue!



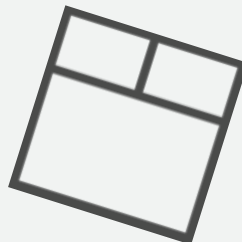
Think about the lightest and the darkest parts of your photo as the most important areas and learn to quickly identify areas of light, shadow and strong contrast while you're looking through the viewfinder.

TIP:

Subjects that rely on contrasting colors don't work well in black and white because the two colors will end up looking similar in tone when converted.

2 SIMPLICITY

Black and white photography is already by itself a form of simplification and because of this it makes sense to introduce the theme of simplicity to your black and white portraits.



You can do this by simplifying compositions and lighting and trying to keep backgrounds of your b&w portraits as uncluttered as possible.

TIP:

You can always use a wide aperture such as f/1.8 to throw the background out of focus and make it less busy.

3 THE ESSENTIALS

3 B&W CONVERSION

Black and white images often need higher contrast than color ones, so you have to edit them in a slightly different way.



You shouldn't be afraid to push the Lightroom sliders around (contrast, clarity, shadows, highlights) to see what works best for you.

TIP:

In case you're not happy with the results, you can move beyond Lightroom by using plug-ins specialized for b&w conversions.