Levels and Curves

There are a number of ways to adjust the brightness, contrast and colour balance of your images.

Perhaps the most obvious for brightness and contrast is to select **Image > Adjustments > Brightness and Contrast.**

And for colour balance you can select **Image > Adjustments > Colour Balance.**

Both of these will work, but in a very basic way where you won't have the control required for accurate adjustments.

At this stage you should be thinking about how you want your images to look and how you are going to achieve this. There are two tools within Photoshop that will allow you to do this accurately, which are: **Levels and Curves.**

Levels

Using Levels will allow you to adjust brightness and colour balance.

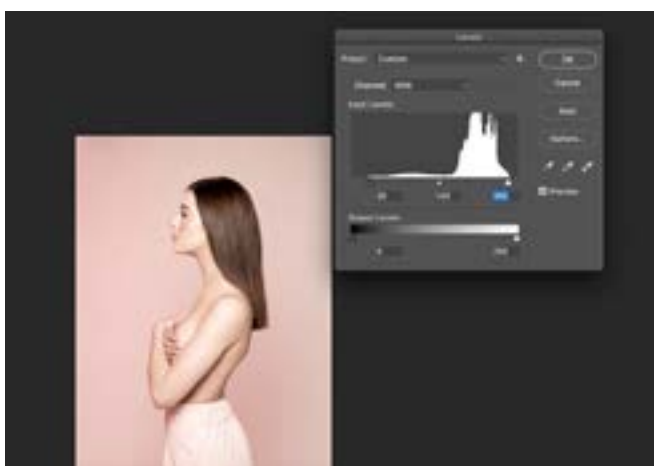Go to **Image > Adjustments > Levels**
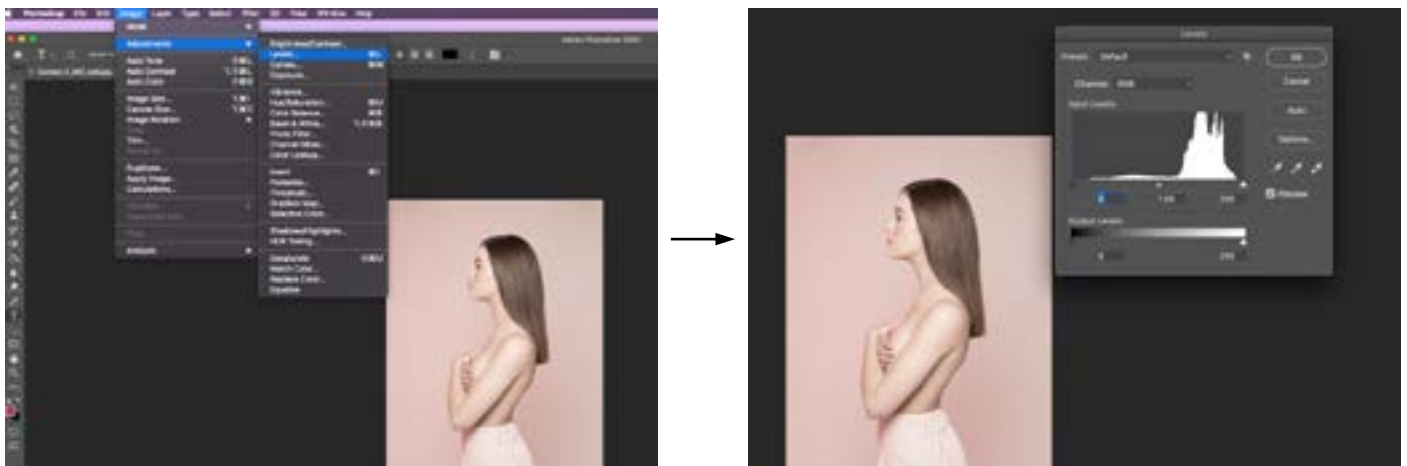
Once the dialogue box is open you will see a visual representation of the tones within your image (known as a histogram), with the shadows on the left and the highlights on the right.

By moving the black, grey and white triangles underneath the histogram, you can adjust the black point, mid-tone grey and white point within your image.

In the image above and right, there is no black and no white - you can see this as there is no information above the black or white triangles.

Have a look at the image below - by moving the black triangle and white triangle inwards so that they sit underneath the information shown in the histogram alters the image so that there is a black and a white. There is more contrast within the image now.

Levels

You can also use levels to colour balance your images by changing the Channel to Red, Green or Blue and moving the sliders.
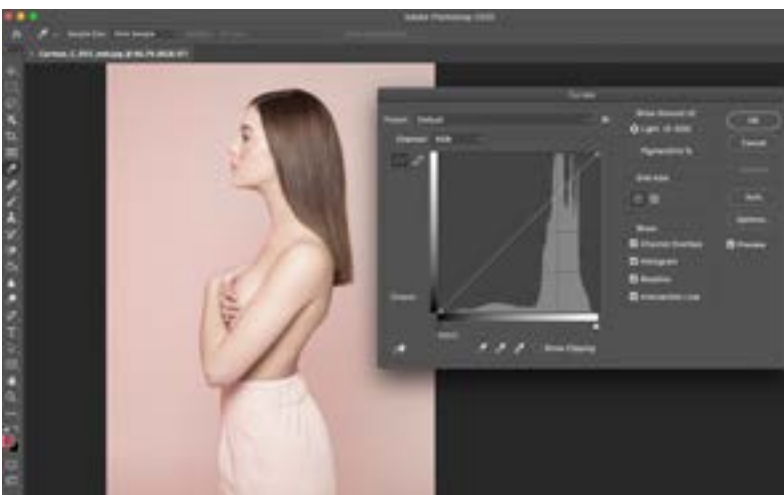
In the image below, the black point slider has been moved inwards in the Green and Blue channels so the shadows shift to red.
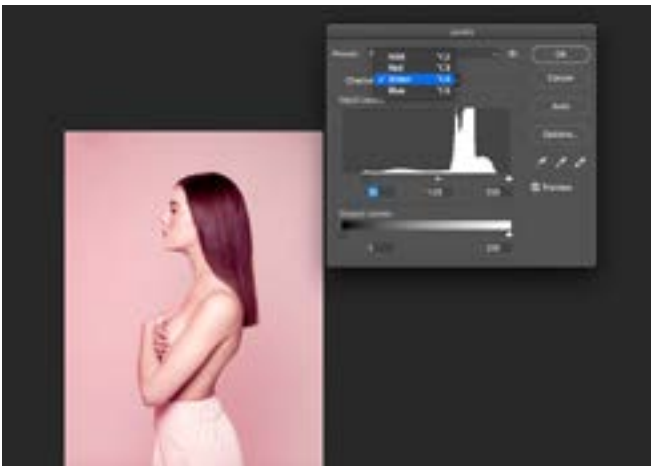
Curves

Using Curves will also allow you to adjust brightness and colour balance.
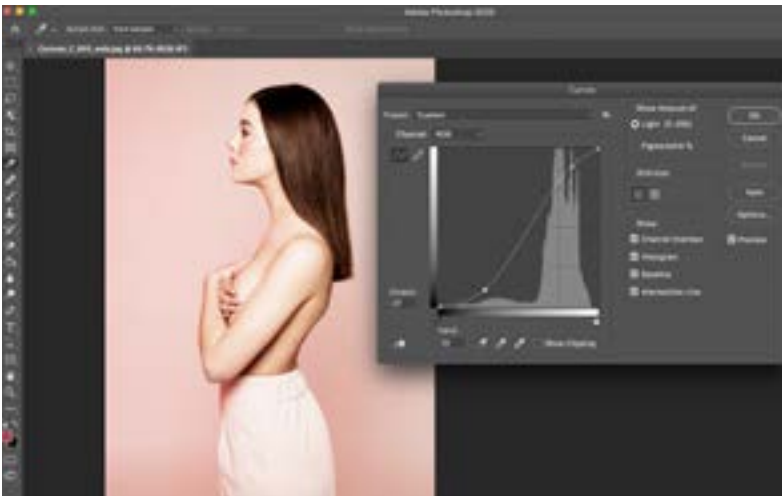
Go to **Image > Adjustments > Curves**

Curves

Once the dialogue box is open you will see a visual representation of the tones within your image (shown as a histogram), with the shadows on the left and the highlights on the right.

By adjusting the diagonal line that goes through the histogram you can adjust the tones within your image.

Clicking on the diagonal line will add anchor points which you can then move to adjust the shadows, mid-tones and highlights.

In the image above, the line has been adjusted into an 'S' curve which increases contrast and starts to replicate the characteristics of traditional silver-based images.

Curves can also be used to colour balance your images, by changing the Channel to Red, Green or Blue:
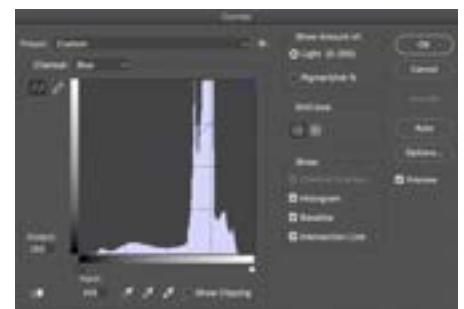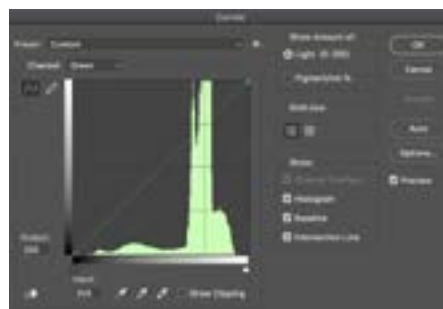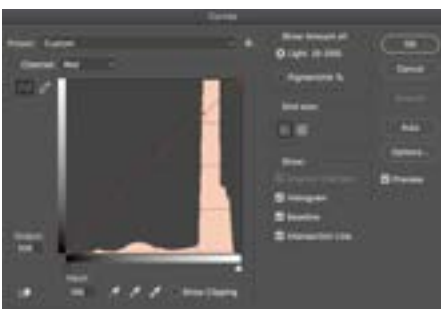
Curves

In the image below, a central point has been added to the diagonal line and lifted - increasing the amount of red, particularly in the mid-tones.
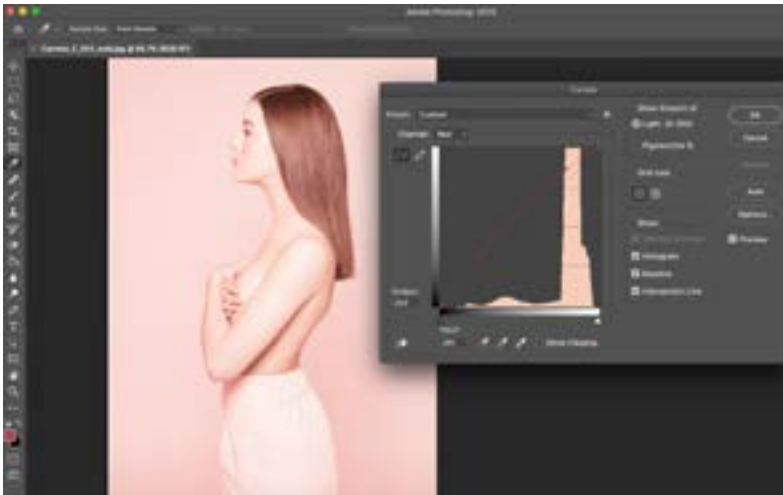
In the next image an 'S' curve has been added in the Red channel - this has increased the red in the highlight areas and decreased it in the shadow areas which increases the level of Cyan.