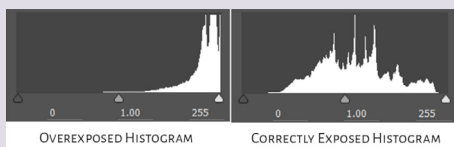


AVOIDING CLIPPING

BLUEPRINT

All photographs have shadows and highlights and that is what adds depth to an image. Clipping can occur in both shadow and highlight areas. Shadows are areas with blacks and highlights are areas with whites. The black and white areas can lack details and that can in turn lead to clipping.



We will focus on ways to avoid clipping the highlights in photos. Clipping the highlights occurs when there are varying intensities of light in a scene and the camera's sensor struggles to cope with the huge dynamic range or the huge variation in light and tones.

To put it simply, clipping the highlights means that your photo has overexposed regions. These areas then have little or no digital information and the area then appears as pure white in the image. The problem with this pure white is that it appears in areas where one would normally like to see details.



Examples of properly exposed images with high dynamic range

1 RAW FORMAT AND CORRECT METERING

Whatever lighting conditions you may be working with, it doesn't hurt to shoot in raw, because it records the maximum amount of details and light information available for an image.



Blown out highlights that are impossible to recover from a jpeg file may be recoverable from a raw file. Also, make sure to use the correct metering mode. When you use the adequate metering mode, your camera knows how to calculate exposure values for a given scene.

TIP:

For landscapes, using matrix metering can be helpful, and for backlit portraits, using center-weighted metering can work great.

2 GOLDEN HOUR OR OVERCAST DAYS

Shooting during the golden hour is not going to completely eliminate the problem of clipping highlights, but compared to midday, the intensity of sun will be lesser.



Overcast days are also a great option if you want to avoid clipping highlights. Alternatively, if you are shooting portraits on a bright day, it is best to choose a uniformly shady area with the light from the right direction to get correctly exposed images without any clipping.

TIP:

If you still have the sun in the frame, you will need to get the help of graduated ND filters or use other methods like exposure bracketing or HDR.

THE 3 ESSENTIALS

3 HDR & POST-PRODUCTION

For scenes that have a huge dynamic range, you can shoot a series of three (one correctly exposed, one over exposed and one underexposed) images and combine them while post-processing.



If you still have highlight clipping in your images even after applying these techniques, you can recover the details in editing. Most of the time, bringing down the highlights slider in Lightroom should do the trick.

TIP:

Sometimes you'll need to adjust three parameters to fix blown-out highlights - highlights slider, whites slider and tone curve.