

Total time:
8 hours



Difficulty Level: Very
challenging

Skill Points:

- Exposing for a predominance of light tones
- Conveying a message through tonal selection
- Proper post-production

CREATING BEAUTIFULLY EXECUTED HIGH KEY PHOTOGRAPHY



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High key is a stylistic genre, where the subject is reproduced primarily as white or light colors or tones. This style can be discovered, or created through lighting, props, wardrobe, and post-production techniques. A correctly executed high key image will also have a small area of 'black' to create a full contrast artwork.

KEY LESSON: High key photography is often misunderstood. It is **NOT** an overexposed image, or one in which all of the dark areas have been removed, or altered, in post-production. A high key image begins in-camera. It requires proper exposure, and a keen photographer's eye toward light, shadow, and tone.

EQUIPMENT

Camera

Any camera including a smartphone camera

Lens + Lens hood

Any lens

Post-processing software

Necessary

There are no set rules on how to set up your camera. Be cognizant of exposure. If possible, check the histogram to make sure that the vast majority of tones are falling into the upper third of the scale.

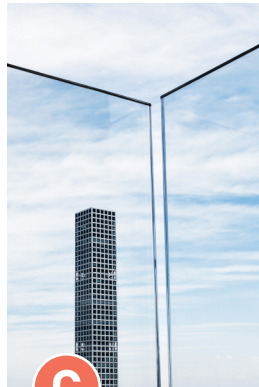
SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



A



B



C



D



E



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

1- Study the sample photographs:

A- Let's start with what high key isn't... This image is simply over-exposed. Over-exposure created in-camera, or in post-production, does not create a true high key effect.

B- This is an exquisitely 'spotted', exposed, and processed high key shot. It consists of primarily white or light tones along with small areas of black to produce a full contrast effect.

C- High key does not mean simply white with some areas of black. It can include various colors. However, they should be light toned and fall into the upper third of the histogram.

D- A properly executed high key image will have at least 75% of the image surface area in the white or light toned area of the histogram.

E- Post-production can be used to enhance the high key effect by increasing the brightness value of some middle tones. Be careful. If you go too far, your high key image will look faked. This is a good example of post-production helping the final effect.

2- Self-assign two high key shots: For the first one you will assemble your subject by choosing the subject, props, clothing, location, etc. Keep all chosen tones in the upper third of the histogram. Use the appropriate lighting to create the high key effect. For the second shot, you must go out on-location and 'find' a high key subject. This may require you returning to your chosen subject to 'get the right light' for the high key effect.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Does your shot have a majority of white or light tones with a small area of black?
- Were you able to primarily create the effect in-camera or did you have to rely heavily on post-production?