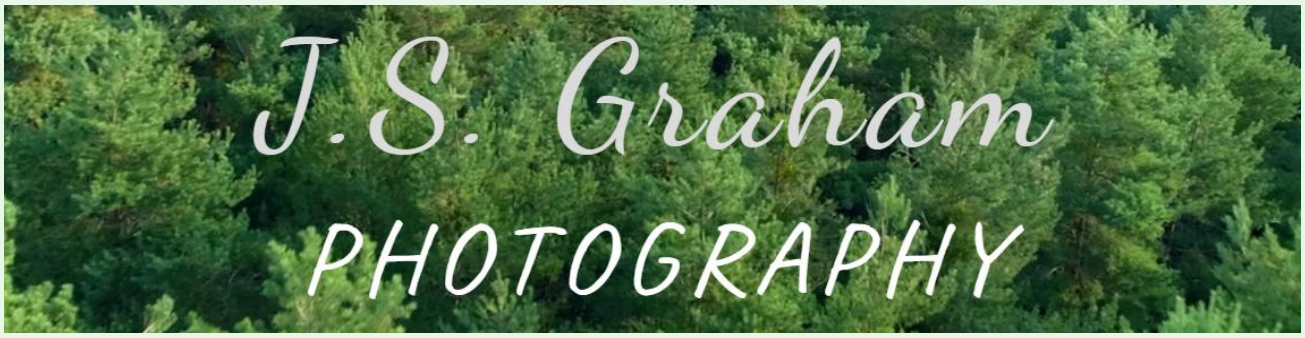


# LIGHTROOM EDITING

## PRE-SETS TONE CURVE – Here is a streamlined guide

The **Tone Curve** is the most powerful tool in Lightroom for controlling contrast and colour. While the "Light" sliders (Exposure, Highlights, etc.) are like blunt instruments, the Tone Curve is a **surgical blade** that allows you to target specific brightness levels with total precision.

It is represented by a square graph with a diagonal line running from the bottom-left to the top-right.

### 1. How to Read the Graph

- **The Bottom-Left (Blacks):** Controls the absolute darkest parts of your photo.
- **The Top-Right (Whites):** Controls the absolute brightest parts.
- **The Middle (Midtones):** Controls everything in between (skin tones, wood, grass).
- **The X-Axis (Horizontal):** Represents the original tones in your photo.
- **The Y-Axis (Vertical):** Represents the "output" or how much you are changing those tones.

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### 2. The Point Curve (The Main Line)

In this mode, you click on the line to create **anchor points**.

If a photographer builds contrast using only the **Basic Contrast slider**, they leave no room for the user to adjust it further without breaking the look. Instead, pros often bake a specific **S-Curve** into the Tone Curve panel.

- **The Benefit:** This allows the user to still use the "Basic" Contrast slider to fine-tune the photo for specific lighting without losing the preset's core punch.

- **Adding Contrast (The "S-Curve"):** This is the most common move. You pull the top half of the line **up** (brightening highlights) and the bottom half **down** (deepening shadows). This creates a "pop" that looks more natural than the basic Contrast slider.
- **The Faded/Matte Look:** If you grab the very bottom-left point (the blacks) and pull it **upward**, this "crushes" the blacks, turning them into a soft grey that mimics old film stock - something the basic sliders cannot do as cleanly. you turn the true blacks into. This is the secret to that "vintage" or "filmic" aesthetic.

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## 3. The Parametric Curve (The Sliders)

If the Point Curve feels too chaotic, the Parametric Curve gives you four sliders: **Highlights, Lights, Darks,** and **Shadows**.

- This is "training wheels" for the curve. Moving these sliders adjusts the line for you in a controlled way, ensuring you don't accidentally "break" the image by making it look radioactive.

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## 4. The RGB Curves (Colour Control)

This is where the magic happens. Above the graph, you'll see **Red, Green, and Blue** circles. Clicking these allows you to edit the colours within specific brightness ranges.

**Why?** It offers more "surgical" control. For example, a photographer might add blue only to the deepest shadows while keeping the mid-range shadows neutral, creating a very specific and polished atmosphere.

- **Red Curve:** Pulling the top up adds Red to the highlights; pulling it down adds **Cyan**.
- **Green Curve:** Pulling it up adds Green; pulling it down adds **Magenta**.
- **Blue Curve:** Pulling the top up adds Blue; pulling the bottom down adds **Yellow**.
- **Pro Move:** A popular "cinematic" trick is to go to the **Blue Curve**, pull the shadows up slightly (adding blue to the darks), and pull the highlights down slightly (adding yellow to the brights).

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## 5. Protecting "Local" Detail

The Basic sliders (like Highlights and Shadows) use internal "masks" to try and protect your image from looking weird. The Tone Curve doesn't do this—it is a direct "input/output" tool. Pros love this because it allows for **intentional** clipping or flattening of tones that can give a photo a more artistic, less "digital" feel.

## SUMMARY: Why use it?

The Tone Curve allows you to keep your highlights bright while simultaneously making your shadows "faded" and blue-tinted. You simply cannot achieve that level of specific styling with the basic sliders alone.

For many professional photographers, the **Tone Curve** is the secret sauce behind their presets. While the "Basic" sliders are great for fixing exposure on a photo-by-photo basis, the Tone Curve is often where the "look" of a preset is permanently stored.

**In short:** If you open a professional preset and the "Basic" sliders are all set to zero, but the photo looks amazing, it's almost certainly because all the work is happening inside the **Tone Curve**.

## Tone Curve is the "engine" of almost every professional preset

While the basic sliders (Exposure, Highlights, Contrast) are great for fixing a photo, the Tone Curve is where a photographer actually **designs a style.** Here is why they rely on it:

### 1. It "Bakes In" the Mood

If a photographer uses the regular **Contrast slider** in a preset, it's easily messed up when you try to tweak the photo later. By using the **Tone Curve** to create contrast, they "lock" that specific look into the graph. This leaves the basic sliders free for you to use for minor fixes without ruining the overall "vibe."

### 2. It's the "Film Look" Secret

You know that trendy, soft, "faded" look where the blacks aren't pitch black but more of a dark grey? You **cannot** do that with basic sliders. Photographers use the Tone Curve to "lift" the bottom-left point of the graph. This is the hallmark of almost every popular preset pack sold today.

### 3. Surgical Colour Styling

The Tone Curve has hidden **Red, Green, and Blue** channels. A photographer can use these to "inject" a specific colour (like a vintage teal or a warm gold) into *only* the darkest shadows or *only* the brightest highlights. This creates a much more sophisticated and expensive-looking colour grade than just moving the "Temperature" slider.

### 4. Consistency

When a photographer creates a "pack" of 10 presets, they usually keep the **Tone Curve exactly the same** across all of them. This ensures that even if one preset is "Dark" and another is "Bright," they both have the same "DNA" or artistic signature.

**Think of it like this:** The basic sliders are for **tuning** the engine, but the Tone Curve is the **blueprint** for the car itself.