

Split Filter Printing in the Darkroom

To control the density of the shadows separately from the highlights in your image, you can use the split-filtering technique described below when making enlargements.

This is a summary of the technique practiced in class.

Finding the Highlights:

1. Start by loading your negative into the enlarger as normal and otherwise preparing to print.
2. Begin your first test strip with a #00 filter, using 2 second increments
3. Process the test through all the chemistry to view under bright lights. This is your test for highlights.
4. Choose the exposure time that best represents how bright the lightest objects in your image should be. This exposure time will be the base exposure for the next test strip so note the exposure time.



#00 Filter, 2 sec increments

Finding the Shadows:

5. Use the exposure time from step 3 and expose the a new test strip for that amount of time as a base exposure. Then without moving anything else, change the filter to a #5, and make 2 second increment exposures right on top of that base exposure.
6. Process the test through all the chemistry to view under bright lights. This is your test for shadows.

7. Choose the exposure time that best represents how dark the darkest objects in your image should be. Note the exposure time as this will be the second exposure during the final split filter print.



#5 Filter, 2 sec increments on top of your base highlight exposure.

The Final Split Exposure Combination:

8. Choose to print either on a final test strip or full enlargement for the next step. You can either use one last test strip or go straight to the final enlargement if you feel confident in your selected times for each filter.
9. For the final test/enlargement, begin with the #00 filter and expose for the base time from step 4. Then without moving the paper, change to a #5 filter and expose for the chosen time from step 7.
10. Process the final test/enlargement through all the chemistry to view under bright lights. If you need to make adjustments to the highlights or shadows, you can do so by varying the time of the exposure for the #00 or #5 filters respectively.



Final Split-Filter test strip