Photography Darkroom Q&A

- What happens if I leave my print in the developer longer than 2 minutes? Less than 2 minutes?

The longer a print remains in the developer solution, the greater the resulting contrast in the print. Less time would result in less contrast.

- How should I 'read' my test strip?

You should have a range of about five exposures; some may be light and some dark. If all five exposures are either too light or too dark, make another test strip. The ideal strip is dark on one end and light on the other.

Factors to Consider (In this order!):	
1. Brightness	Print exposure determines overall brightness. Too much exposure results in both shadows & highlights being dark; too little exposure leaves shadows & highlights too light.
2. Contrast	Contrast is the difference between shadows & highlights. While some prints may be best when they have either high or low contrast, most prints should have both dark and light areas and a lot of grays in between. Increase contrast by using a higher filter#. **Note:** A #4 filter is darker than a #1 filter, so holds back more light, & requires a longer exposure time. Make a new test strip when a different contrast filter is used.
3. Burning & Dodging	*Burning* is a technique used to selectively add exposure to darken an area of a print. *Dodging* is holding back exposure to lighten an area of a print. This should only be done after exposure & contrast have been determined. When evaluating your test strip, take into account that select areas may be burned or dodged later.

- I noticed that prints need to be in the fixer for 2 minutes to be light-safe and 4 minutes to be 'archival'. What does 'archival' mean?

Fixer removes the light sensitive silver from the print, making it safe to take out into the light. It usually takes about 4 minutes to fully remove the residual silver. If you are making a final print, fixing for the full 4 minutes will ensure long-term durability (this is *archival*) If you are working with a test strip, you only need to fix the print for 2 minutes. It will not be safe for long-term storage, but it will be safe for you to examine the strip in daylight.

- My test strip is too light [or too dark]—what should I do next?

If the entire strip is too dark, cut back the exposure. Either close down the lens – try f16 instead of f11 – or shorten the amount of exposure time – use 2-second intervals instead of 3.

If the test strip is too light, increase the exposure. Open up the lens – say to f8 instead of f11 – or extend the exposure time – perhaps using 5-second increments instead of 3.

Problem:	**Probable Cause:**	**Remedy:**
Light Print	Not enough exposure	Reprint, increasing exposure time or opening up enlarging lens aperture
Dark Print	Too much exposure	Reprint, reducing exposure time or closing down enlarging lens aperture

- My test strip is kind of 'gray'--no real highlights—what should I do next?

Re-examine your negatives. Is the negative you are printing overly dense or overly thin? This will affect the value range you have available to work with. Next, adjust your print exposure to bring out your important highlights –what areas *should* be bright? Increase or decrease exposure to achieve this.

- How do I use the fine grain focuser?

The fine grain focuser allows you to ensure that your enlarged image is in focus. Use a stand-in blank piece of paper (ideally the same thickness of printing paper) and widen your enlarger lens aperture to increase visibility. Place the focuser on top of the projected image. Close one eye and move your open eye slowly towards the viewer until you are looking through the bright circle of light—don't get too close! You will need to adjust the focus on the enlarger slightly while looking through the focuser until the grain appears sharp.

- My print has little white spots on it where there shouldn't be any—what can I do?

Dust! Dust! Dust! It is most likely on your negatives. Use a blower brush to clean off your negatives and then reinsert into negative carrier.

- How should I evaluate my final print? Is it the best it can be?

Follow this rule: **Expose for the highlights; adjust contrast for the shadows.**

How do I do that? Consider only the important highlight and shadow areas of a print. Middle-gray areas tend to "fall into place" and look right if the lights and darks are rendered well on the print.

Expose for the highlights. Print exposure affects the overall print: highlight, middle-gray, and shadow areas. The longer the exposure, the darker the entire print. Consider a print well exposed only if the highlights (such as light clothes or light skin) look right. Ignore middle gray and shadow areas for judging exposure. If the highlights look good, the exposure is correct; if they seem light, add exposure; if they seem dark, cut back on exposure.

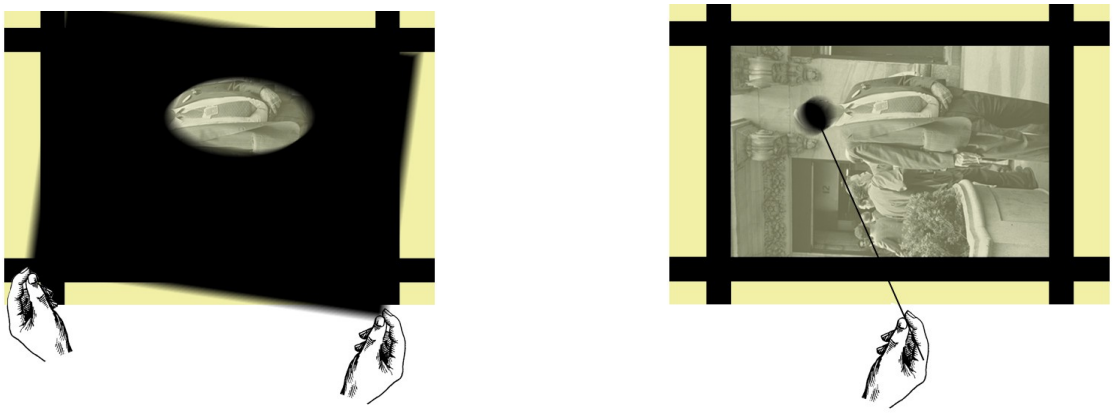
Note Ignore extreme highlight areas, such as particularly bright snow or sky when judging exposure. Consider the entire print. Unusually bright areas need burning in after the exposure and contrast have been determined.

What constitutes good highlight exposure is somewhat subjective. For most prints, highlights should be light gray, containing clearly defined detail. Compare the highlights to the white border of the printing paper. They should be darker than that white. If highlights are too light, detail will be lost; if too dark, highlights are no longer light areas, but rather middle grays or shadows.

Adjust contrast for the shadows. Once the proper highlight exposure has been determined, examine the important shadow areas, such as dark hair and dark clothes. Ignore extremely dark areas. These can be dodged out during the print exposure. In most prints, good shadow areas should be dark, but still retain detail. Shadows that are too dark become solid black; shadows that are too light look gray and "muddy".

The key to evaluating print exposure is in the highlights. If the light areas look good, the print is well exposed. Then, the key to evaluating contrast is in the darkness or lightness of the shadow areas.

Flat Normal Contrasty



BURNING **DODGING**