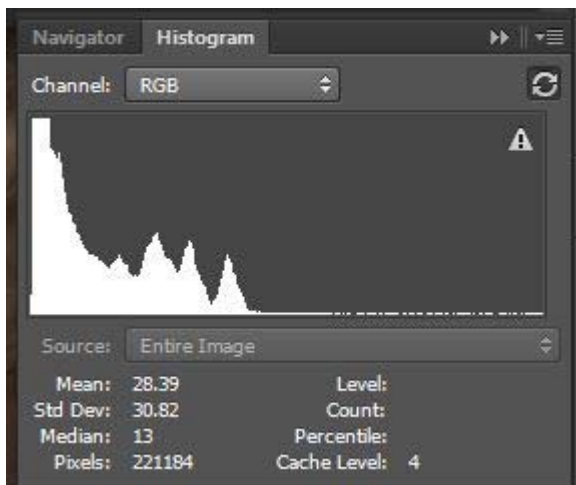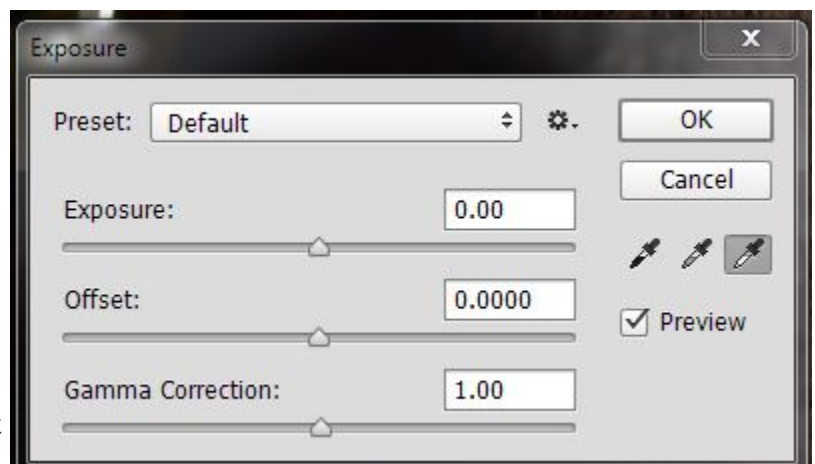# Using the Histogram to Fix Underexposed Pictures in Photoshop
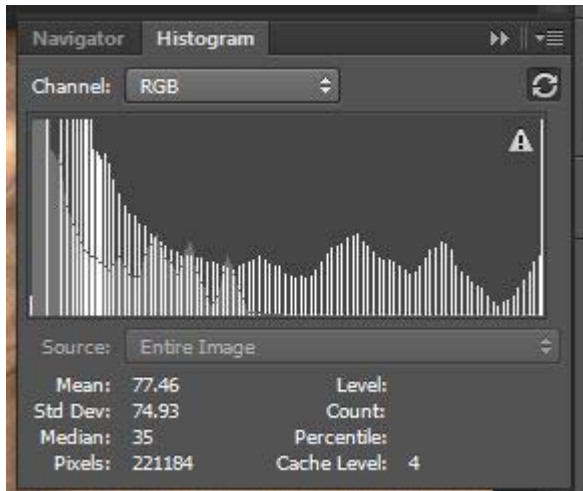

Underexposed pictures, like the one on the right, happen when there's not enough light for the camera settings. The best way to avoid them is to understand your camera and its settings, but sometimes we still wind up with pictures that are too dark. Here's an easy way to correct the problem in Photoshop—and it doesn't even require knowing what exposure is.

First, open the picture in Photoshop. Now, you'll want to see the photo's histogram; do this by going to the Window menu and clicking on "Histogram". This will bring up the histogram window, which you can position anywhere you like in the workspace. Click the dropdown menu in the histogram window and change it to "RGB". Here's what the window for this picture looks like. See how the graph is only on the left side? That tells us (although we already knew) that this picture is too dark.
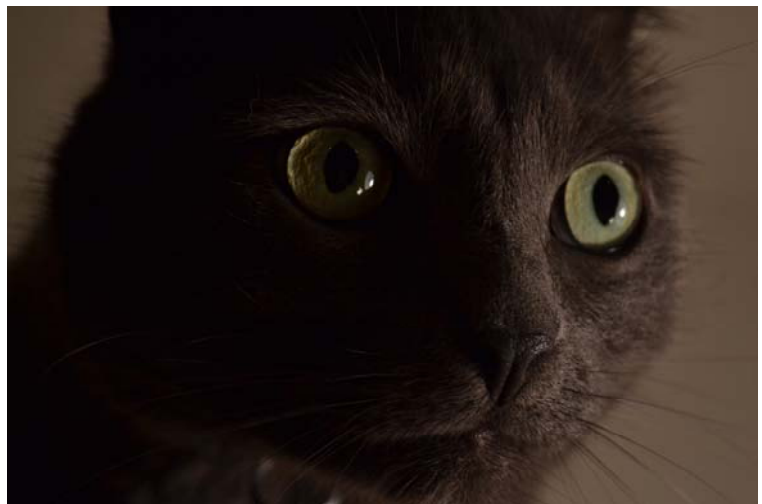
To change the exposure, go to the Image menu, choose Adjustments and then Exposure to bring up the Exposure window. We're going to move the slider to the right to increase the exposure; we're going to use the histogram window to tell us how much to add. The histogram window won't update exactly in time with the Exposure slider, so move it a little and then see what the histogram does.

Navigator Histogram

Channel: RGB

Source: Entire Image

Mean: 77.46	Level:
Std Dev: 74.93	Count:
Median: 35	Percentile:
Pixels: 221184	Cache Level: 4

We want to make the histogram look more like this, with white going all the way across to the white side. Move the Exposure slider back and forth, pausing in between to let the histogram catch up, until it looks right. When it does, click "OK" on the Exposure window and look at your picture. Does it look the way you want it to? If so, save it!

Before

After