

Black and white film printing

The essentials for going from negative to print, without forgetting anything.

1 THE BATHS, IN ORDER

1 Developer 60 to 90 s 20 °C Brings out the image	2 Stop bath 10 to 15 s 20 °C Halts development	3 Fixer 2 to 5 min 20 °C Makes the image light-stable	4 Wash 5 min RC paper 30 to 60 min fibre-based paper Running water Removes chemical residues
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2 CONTRAST GRADES

multigrade paper

FILTER	EFFECT
 0 to 1	Soft contrast, for an already very contrasty negative
 2	« Normal » contrast, the reference grade
 3 to 4	Strong contrast, for a flat negative
 5	Maximum contrast, for a very flat negative

3 POSSIBLE TONING

after fixing and washing

TONER	EFFECT	KEY POINTS
Selenium	Deeper blacks, cool cast; purple-brown at stronger dilution	Greatly improves archival life. Watch by eye: the bath is not reversible
Sepia	Warm brown tone	Bleach, then redevelop in a sulphide bath
Gold	Deep blue-black	Very stable, expensive, for exceptional prints
Copper	Brick red	Stable, strong effect, rarer

4 CHECKLIST BEFORE PRINTING

- ☐ Baths prepared in order and at the right temperature
- ☐ Enlarger cleaned, negative dust-free
- ☐ Focus checked wide open
- ☐ Test strip made and developed
- ☐ Contrast filter chosen
- ☐ Timer ready
- ☐ Only the safelight on

5 ORDER OF OPERATIONS

- 01 Exposure test strip
- 02 Choose time and contrast filter
- 03 Expose the full print (+ dodge / burn if needed)
- 04 Develop (agitate every 10 to 15 s)
- 05 Stop bath
- 06 Fixer
- 07 Wash
- 08 Dry flat
- 09 Tone if desired

6 COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

SYMPTOM	LIKELY CAUSE
Print too light	Underexposure or exhausted developer
Print too dark, dull grey	Overexposure or contrast too low
White spots	Dust on the negative or the enlarger glass
Yellowing over time	Insufficient washing or exhausted fixer
Unpredictable contrast	Filter badly positioned or stray light

7 GOOD TO KNOW

« Dry down »

A print always looks slightly darker and more contrasty once dry. Judge the final result when it is dry.

Fixer wears out

After about twenty sheets, check it with test strips.

Write everything down

Time, filter, dilution and any toning for each successful print. The log below is there for that.

8 MY PRINTING LOG

NEGATIVE	TIME	FILTER	DILUTION	TONING	NOTES