

Color Correction Basics Using Adobe Premiere

Did you forget to change your camera's white balance? Is your footage three stops underexposed? Are you trying to add a unique tint à la David Fincher to your video? Have no fear, some quick and basic color-correction techniques are here!

The color-correction process is a combination of technical adjustments and creativity. "Color correction" is the process by which you fix footage that is improperly exposed or balanced, while the "color grading" process involves enhancing the look of your footage to achieve a certain style. This process is usually done *after* you've color corrected.

Below is an overview of some of the basic color-correction tools available in Adobe Premiere, along with a video demonstrating how to use these tools to color correct your footage.

Setting Up Your Studio

Before you start, it's wise to create a color-correction-friendly working environment. Color correcting your footage on a laptop on a fluorescent-lit airplane will achieve vastly different results from color correcting on an in-home editing suite on a cinema display. Your footage is going to look different on virtually every screen, but this is about how your audience is going to see it.



Color correcting in Premiere by [vadymvrobot](#)

Choose a room without windows so that you have no light affecting the color temperatures on your screen; there should be no ambient light leaking or glares on the screen whatsoever.

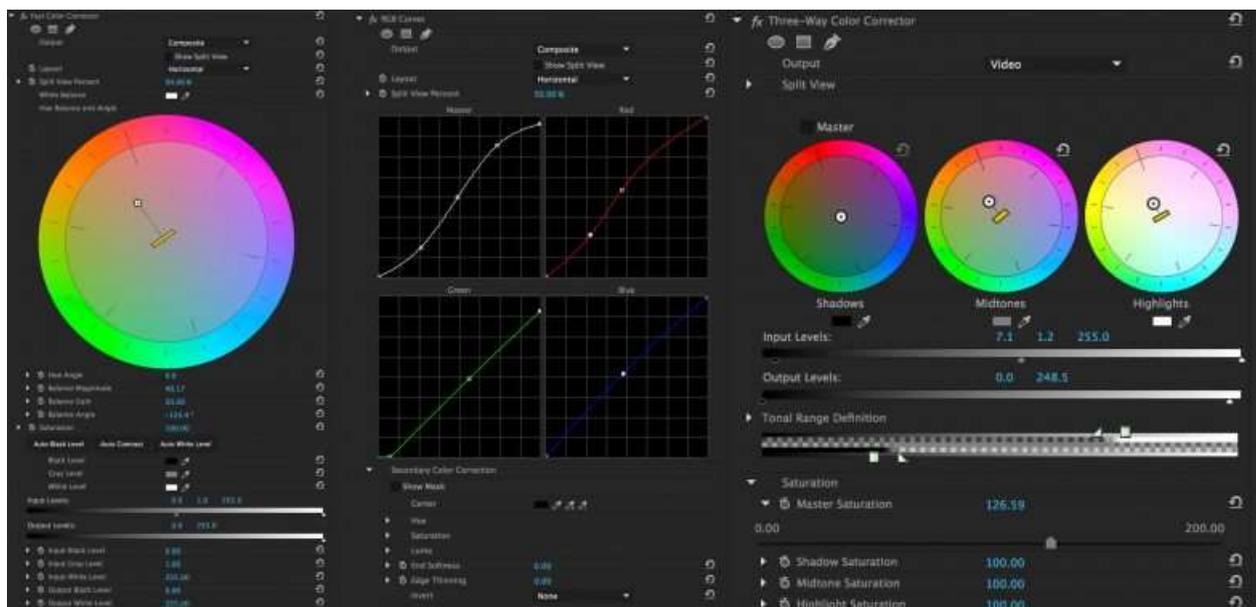
Make everything in the room neutral color. If your wall color is yellow or blue, your eyes will try to adjust, resulting in you adding too much of that color when grading. Neutral gray or black are the best wall colors to have. It's also good to keep all the furniture in the room a natural color too.

Calibrate your monitor. This will ensure that your colors and blacks are accurate. There are a few different ways to go about doing this. The most convenient is to use your computer's built-in calibrator assistant. To find this on a Mac, go to your System Preferences > Display > Color > Calibrate. Don't forget to do this in your color-correction-friendly working environment. If you want to take it a step further and you have the budget, you can purchase a high-quality calibration system like a [Spyder5](#) or an [X-Rite i1Display Pro](#).

Last, but not least, check to make sure you aren't color blind. I'm totally serious. This will sound crazy, but there are different degrees of color blindness, and some people might not know that they have a mild case. This might not be a big deal outside of the world of color correction, but it can make a big difference when you're grading your footage. Not sure if you're color blind? [Take this test!](#)

Choosing Your Tools

There are many different tools, filters, and plugins in Premiere that deal with color correction. Some of these tools overlap, meaning you can achieve the same results in different ways. Choosing which of those tools to use really comes down to your workflow style and preference.



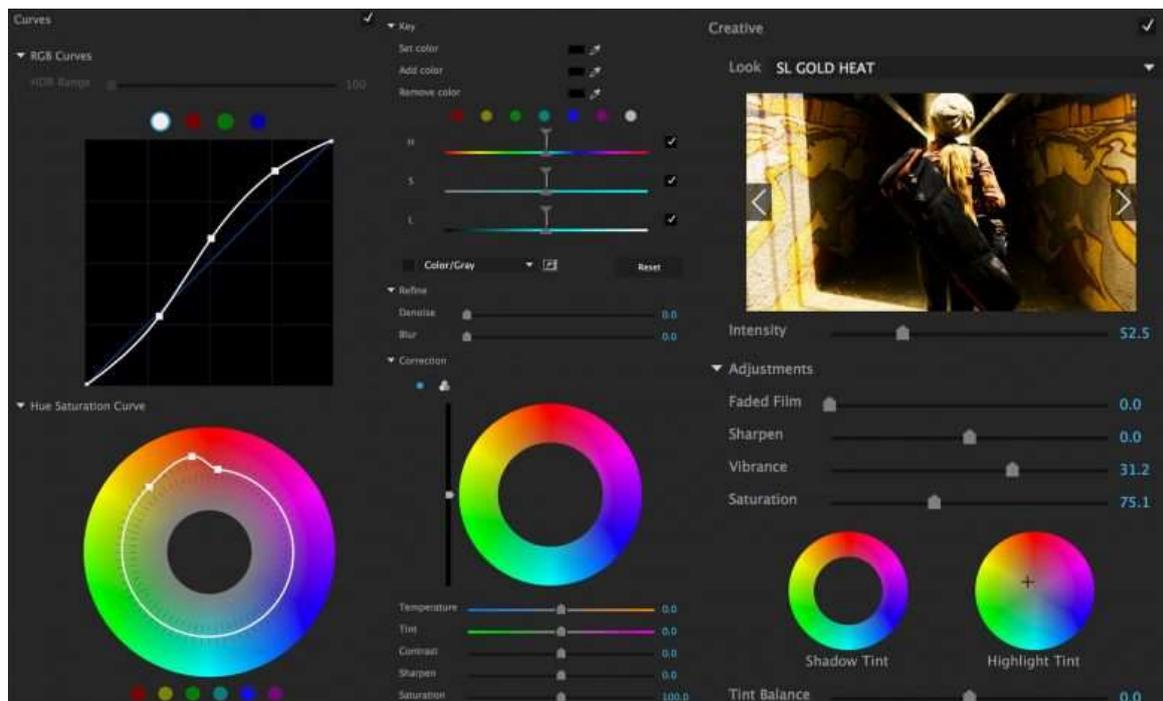
Fast Color Corrector: With the fast color corrector, you can use the color wheel to shift and boost a certain color's hue. You can also use the eyedropper to quickly set your white

balance, and you can add or subtract saturation and adjust your levels all in one panel. This is one of the most useful tools for on-the-fly color correction.

Luma and RGB Curve: With these filters, you can adjust your global luma levels and the levels of the individual red, green, and blue channels. This is where the term “S curve” comes into play. To create contrast in your image, you would raise your highlights and lower your shadows, creating an “S” curve. The more dramatic the curve is, the more contrast your footage will have. Use the waveform to monitor your changes.

Three-Way Color Corrector: The three-way color corrector is similar to the Fast Color Corrector, but with more controls. Instead of one color wheel, you have three, each one affecting a different tone (shadows, midtones, and highlights).

Secondary Color Correction: The secondary color corrector allows you to create a mask over a specific part of your footage so that you modify just that part of the image. For example, if you’d like to bring out the color in a blue sky without changing the rest of the image, use this filter to create a mask of just the sky and then adjust the levels, hue, and saturation.

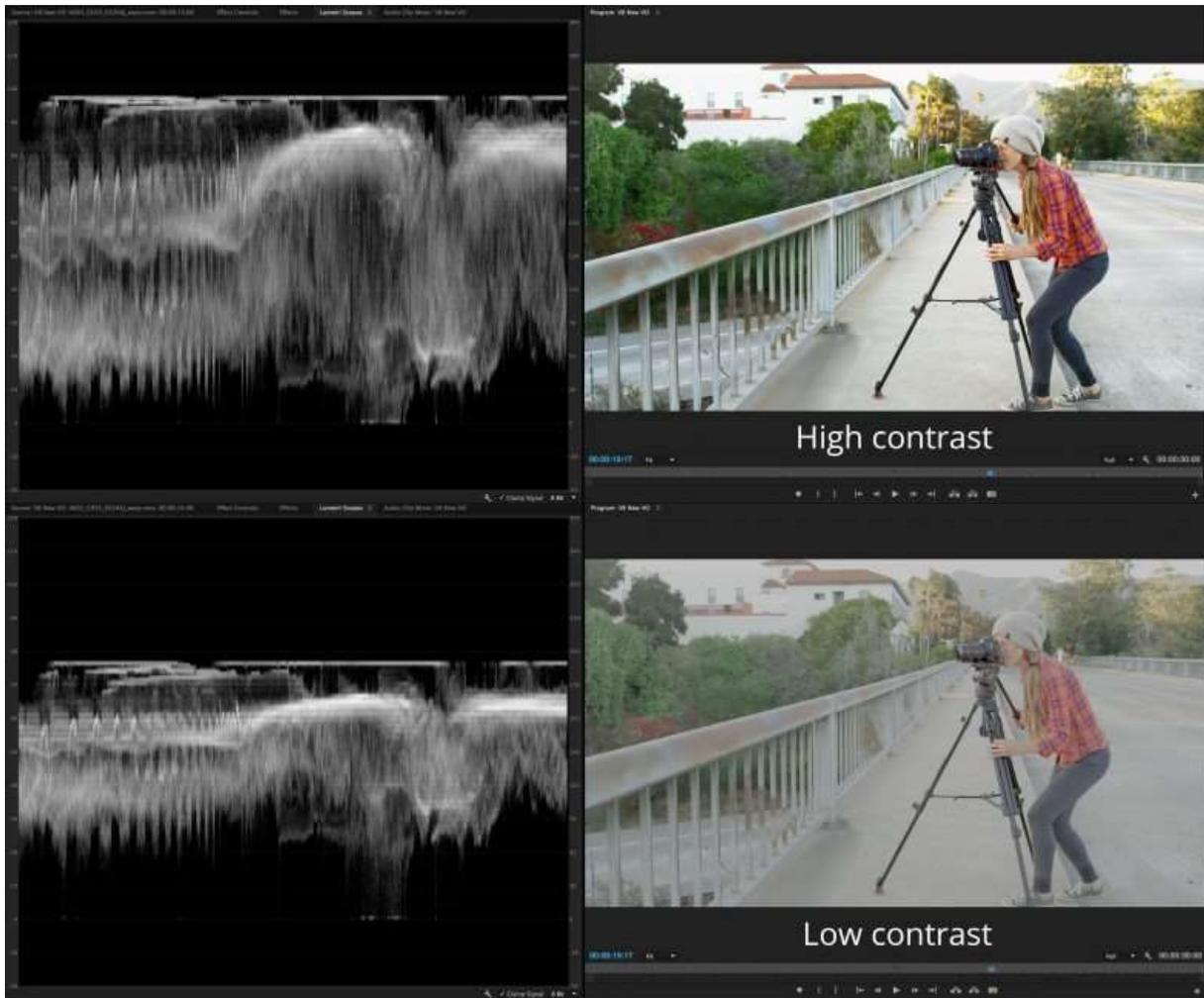


The Lumetri Color Panel: New to the Premiere interface is the Lumetri Color panel. This color-correction tool was brought over from [Speedgrade](https://www.blackmagicdesign.com/products/speedgrade/), offering a powerful and intuitive workflow for those who want the features of an advanced grading software without having to leave the Premiere interface.

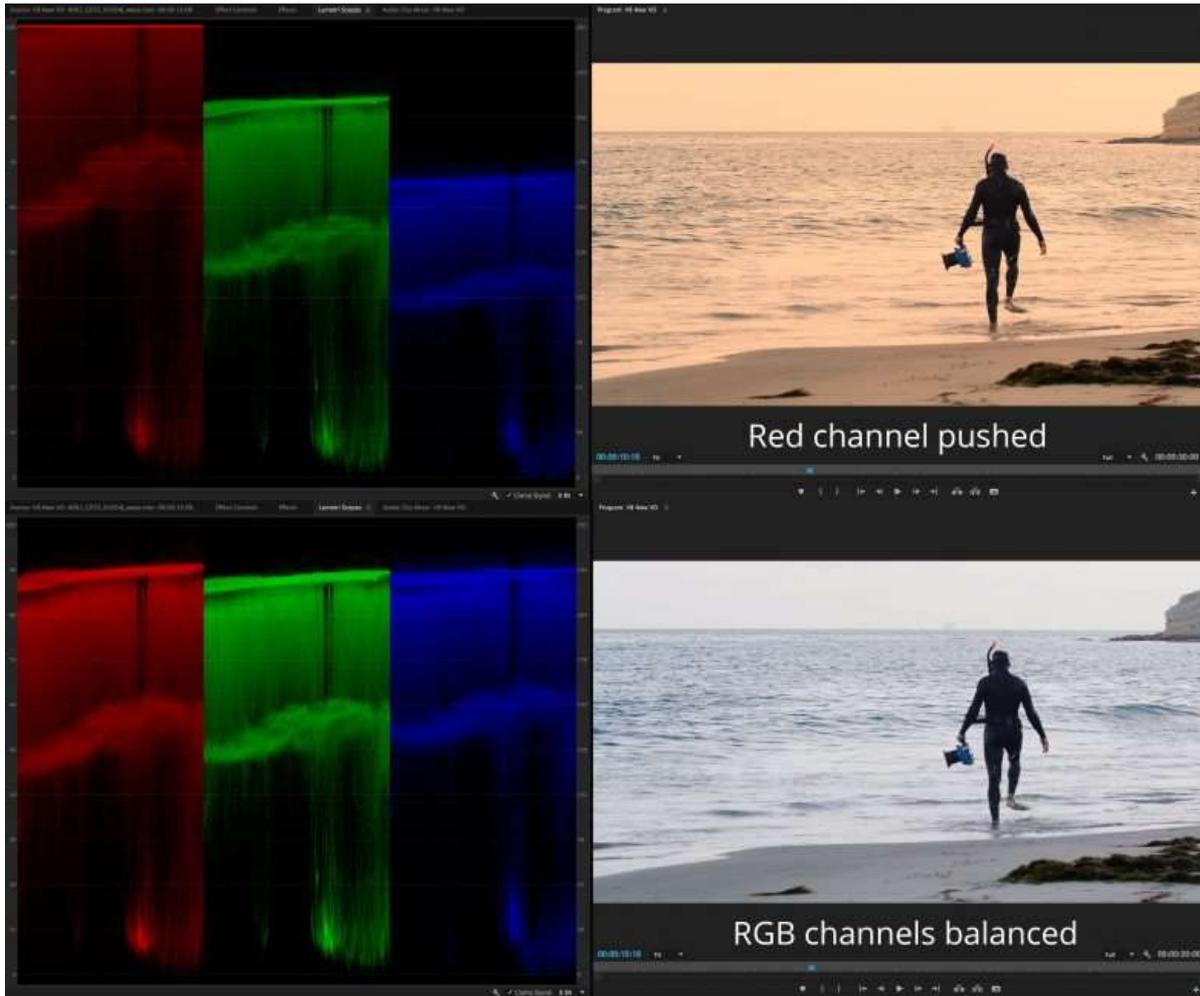
Get Familiar With Your Scopes

Scopes are a critical tool to use when monitoring your color-correction adjustments. They’re even more useful if you happen to have a color blindness or if you’re grading in an unfriendly color-correcting environment. Most importantly, scopes will help you keep your

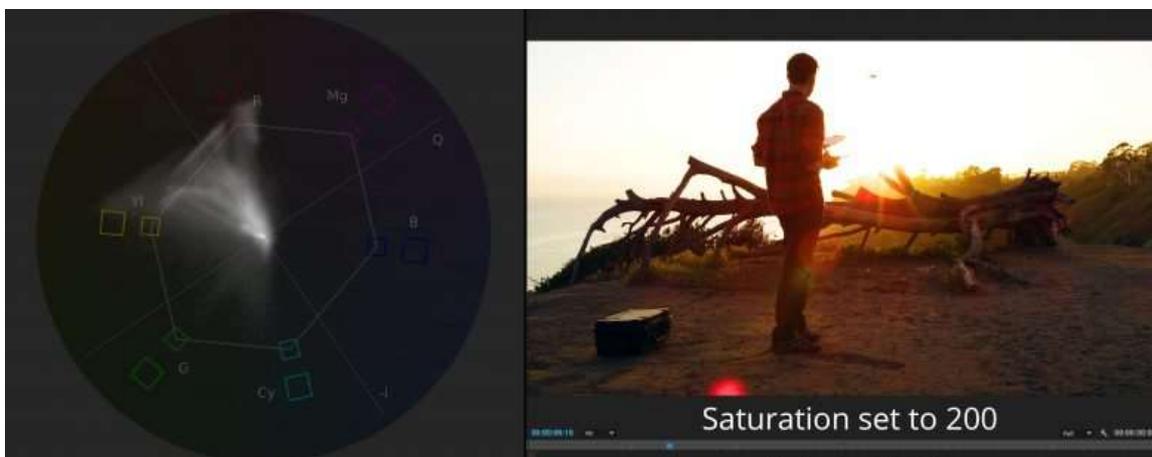
footage within the [IRE limits](#). (IRE is a scale set by the Institute of Radio Engineers that measures luminance levels.) If you plan on sending your video to broadcast, you must stay within the IRE limits.

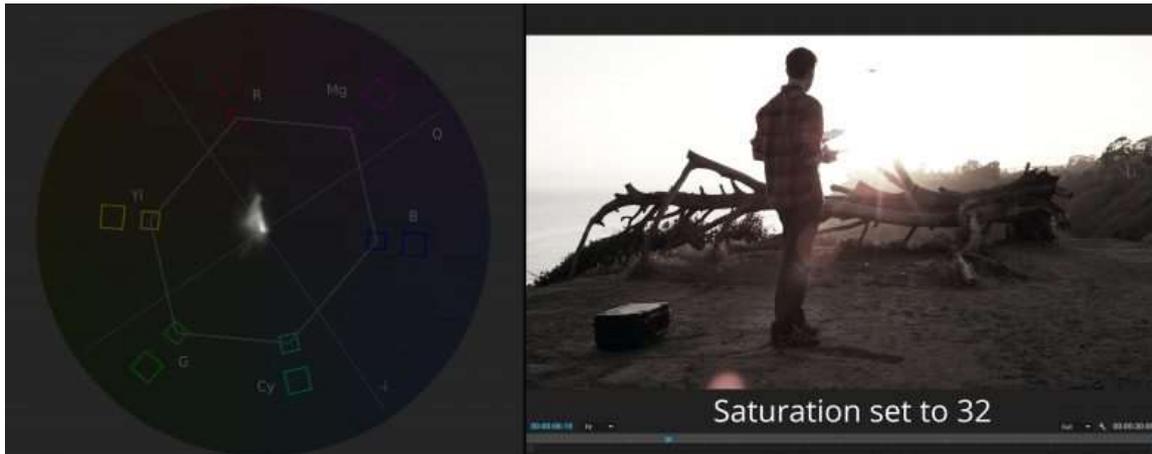


Waveform: The waveform scope displays the luma (brightness) levels from left to right on your image. The IRE scale starts at 0, which is your blacks, and goes up to 100, which is your whites. Everything in between 40 – 60 IRE represents your midtones. Anything beyond 0 or 100 will either be underexposed or overexposed (aka “crushed”), and broadcast entities might not accept your video if you have levels that go beyond these limits. Unless you’re going for a specific look, you don’t want to crush your blacks or whites. Notice above how the first waveform is more spread out on the IRE scale, giving the footage more contrast. The second waveform is concentrated toward the middle of the IRE scale, making the image look more flat.



RGB Parade: Video has three channels — red, green, and blue. In the RGB parade, each color has its individual waveform representing the intensity of that color from left to right on the image. The closer the three channels match, the more balanced your image will be. This scope is useful when adjusting the temperature and color balance of your footage. You can see the two RGB parades above, one where the red channel is pushed, making the footage look more red, and one where the color is more balanced.





YUV Vectorscope: This scope is a different representation of your red, green, and blue channels that focuses more on the hue and saturation. Hue is your color balance and saturation is the amount of color. Notice in the images above that the further these pixels are spread out, the more saturated the image is. The red, magenta, blue, cyan, green, and yellow larger squares on the vectorscope represent the HD limits. Again, if you have pixels that pass these limits, then broadcast entities might not accept it.

Color Correcting Step-by-Step

Now we're ready to start color correcting. Like I mentioned before, there are many different ways to go about color correcting your footage, and it usually depends on your grading style, but the video below will take you through a simplified workflow.

With a basic understanding of how to correct and grade your footage, you can dramatically enhance its quality. You'll also be able to take your videos to the next level and create more moody, emotional, or artistic pieces to give your viewers exactly what you want them to see and feel.