

Helpful Hints to Achieving a Good Print:

If your print is:

- | | |
|---|--|
| The whole paper is black or there is black on one edge | Your paper was exposed to light before you printed it. Make sure to only open your package in the darkroom, and keep it closed in between prints. Make sure that your and everyone else's enlarger head is closed, and that the door is firmly into the doorway, not slightly pushed out. |
| The paper is white, but image brown | Your developer is either exhausted, mixed incorrectly, or the wrong developer was used. If it is the color of coffee, it needs to be dumped and made fresh. Make sure to use the box in the darkroom; fill the breaker to 900ml with water, then up to 1000ml with developer. |
| The paper turns brown when in normal light. | The fixer is exhausted. Check your fix with a piece of unprocessed film; whisking it vigorously in the fixer for Thirty seconds. If it is not clear so you can see through it, you need to put the bad fixer in a brown bottle from under the sink and use fresh. |
| Chemical Stains (Brown Streaks) | Your developer is contaminated or you did not agitate properly. Chances are you back pedaled your tongs, getting stop bath or fixer in the developer tray, so dump it out, rinse the tray, wash your tongs, and make fresh. |
| Fingerprinted | You had chemicals on your hands when you were handling the paper. Make sure to wash your hands and use the tongs! |
| Out of Focus | Check your focus with a grain finder, looking for the tiny black silver halide crystals. You can actually see these on your print in the smooth toned areas: if there are no grains on your print, your enlarger is out of focus. If there are grains on your print and it is still out of focus, your camera was out of focus when you initially shot it. |
| Soft edges or black lines | Your easel is not squared to the projected image under the enlarger or the enlarger head needs to be put up higher. Make sure that the image goes beyond the borders of your easel. |

Black Spots	There is nothing you can do about these. They are scratches in the emulsion of your negative. You could strategically place dust on the scratch so that it covers it and thus prints as a white spot, which can be spotted.
White Spots	There is dust on your negative. Using a can of air, spray your negative at a 45° angle, top and bottom. Do NOT shake can! If it is still there, use the spot tone pens and gently build up a shade of gray blending the spot into the surrounding tones.
Other Spots	Your negative probably has watermarks on it. Using a drop of Isopropyl Alcohol from the Pec12 bottle on a Q-tip, gently clean the whole negative on the shiny side, moving across the whole surface in gentle, soft strokes from sprocket to sprocket. Don't press hard or you will scratch your negative, and do NOT do this on the matt side.
Dark	It needs less time. If your time gets under 5 seconds, make your aperture on your lens a click darker and do another step wedge test.
Light	It needs more time. You may need to make your aperture on your lens a click brighter and do another step wedge test.
Flat (Gray)	It needs a higher numbered filter. You want your whites to be white and your blacks to be black; if in doubt, compare your print to one that you know has good contrast.
Contrasty (no Midtones)	It needs a lower numbered filter. Make sure that you still have some shades of gray in the middle areas; you do not want your print to have blank white spots in the middle.
Some areas are too dark, but overall the print is good	You need to dodge the dark area out. During your exposure, use your hand or a piece of cardboard to block out the dark area, being careful not to block the other areas out accidentally. Make sure to move enough not to cause a line, and make sure that it feels natural, not too light.
Some areas are too Light (corners particularly), but overall the print is good	You need to burn the light area in. After your exposure, use your hand or a piece of cardboard to add extra time to that area, being careful not to get the rest of the print. Do not be surprised if it takes as long as a minute or two to get really bright areas to show up, but, at the same time, make sure that it feels natural, not too dark. And move quickly enough that no line is caused.