

Balancing Workflow Checklist

The Level 1 gate, as a checklist: exposure → contrast → white balance → saturation — each step verified on the scopes, not your eyes.

Balancing means bringing a shot to a correct, neutral baseline — before any creative look. Run this order every time until it's automatic; you may deviate once you're fluent.

0 Prep

- If the shot is log, normalize first with a CST node or RCM (Lesson 1.5) — balancing comes after.
- Build a four-node serial tree, labeled: *Exposure, Contrast, Balance, Sat* (Lesson 1.4).

VERIFY

Normalized image reads correct and neutral on the waveform before you balance.

1 Exposure — first

- Set overall level (offset is the fastest route in).
- Mid-tones (the face) sit at a sensible brightness.
- Nothing clips at the top or crushes at the bottom.

VERIFY ON

Waveform — trace fills the range, nothing slammed against ceiling or floor.

2 Contrast — next

- Add contrast for punch, shaping the tonal range.
- If it drags the image too dark or too bright, fix with **pivot** — keep the punch, restore the brightness.

VERIFY ON

Waveform — stretches toward both ends without over-clipping.

3 White balance — third

- Neutralize the color cast on the **RGB parade**, not by eye — line the three channels up.
- Pick a "preferred miss" (lean slightly green or slightly magenta) and apply it consistently if it can't be perfect.
- Faces land on or just clockwise of the vectorscope's skin-tone line.

VERIFY ON

RGB Parade (primary read), Vectorscope (second opinion + skin-tone line).

4 Saturation — last

- A small push only — a big one reads as amateur.
- Skin still sits on its line.

VERIFY ON

Vectorscope — trace hasn't ballooned past sensible limits.

5 Consistency — stills & wipes

- Grab a still into the gallery (it carries the whole node tree).
- Wipe-compare the next shot against the still.
- Balance the second shot until the two halves agree; repeat per shot in the scene.

FINAL CHECK

Toggle the whole grade off/on (Shift-D) to confirm before/after.