The photo below is a little overexposed, making it appear too bright with colors that look faded and washed out:
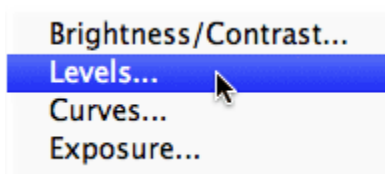

Step 1: Add A Levels Adjustment Layer

With the image newly opened in Photoshop, click on the **New Fill or Adjustment Layer** icon at the bottom of the Layers panel:
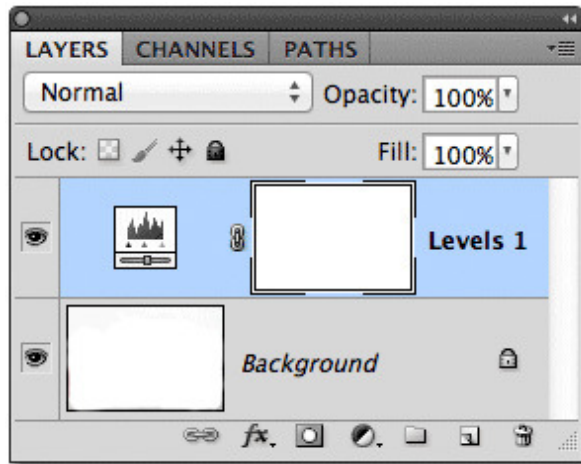

Click on the New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon.

Choose a **Levels** adjustment layer from the list that appears:
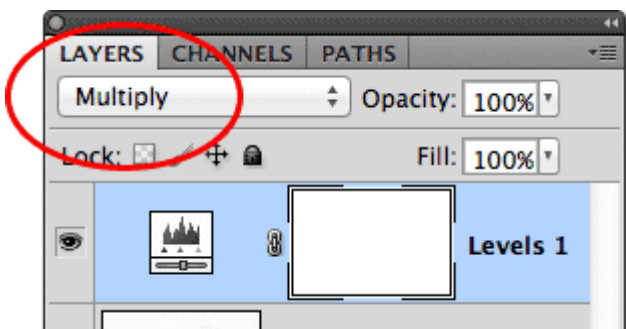

Select Levels from the list.

If we look in the Layers panel, we see that Photoshop has added the Levels adjustment layer above the image on the Background layer:

The Levels adjustment layer sits above the Background layer.

Step 2: Change The Adjustment Layer's Blend Mode To Multiply

In the previous tutorial, we used the Screen blend mode to brighten the underexposed image. This time, our image is overexposed - the opposite problem - so to fix it, we'll use the opposite of the Screen blend mode - Multiply. Change the blend mode for the Levels adjustment layer from Normal to **Multiply**. The blend mode option is found in the top left corner of the Layers panel:

Change the blend mode of the adjustment layer to Multiply.
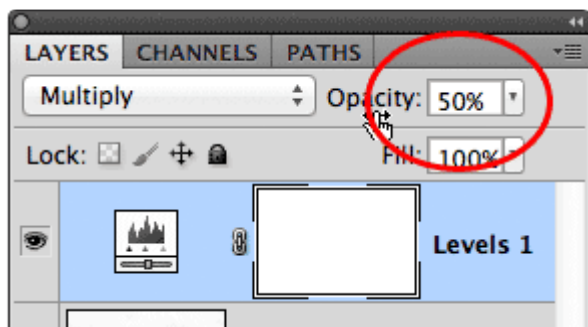
Multiply is one of several layer blend modes in Photoshop that darken an image, and simply by changing the blend mode of the adjustment layer to Multiply, the photo now appears much darker, with more detail and colors that appear more saturated:

The photo after changing the blend mode of the adjustment layer to Multiply.

Step 3: Lower The Opacity Of The Adjustment Layer

The Multiply blend mode often does such a good job of darkening an image that your photo may appear too dark afterwards. We can bring back some of the brightness and fine-tune the results simply by lowering the opacity of the adjustment layer. You'll find the **Opacity** option directly across from the blend mode option at the top of the Layers panel.

Lower the opacity value of the adjustment layer to fine-tune the results.

Here's a "before and after" view of the results, with the original overexposed image on the top and the darkened version on the bottom:
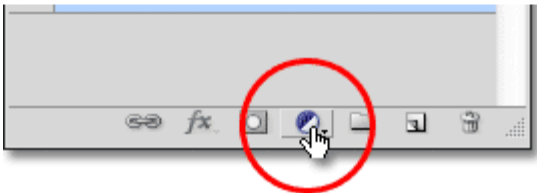
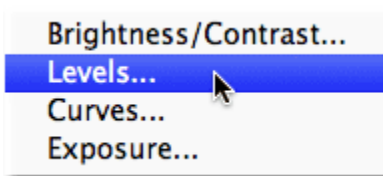The photo below is a underexposed, making it appear too dark:
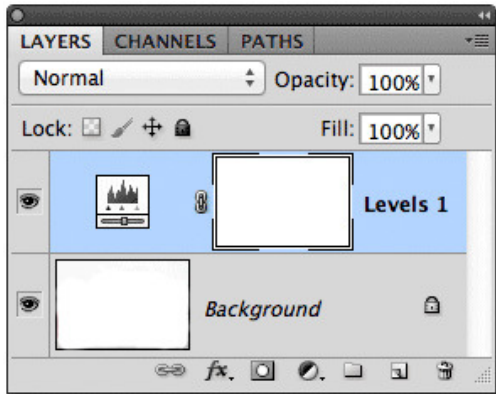

Step 1: Add A Levels Adjustment Layer

With the image opened in Photoshop, click on the **New Fill or Adjustment Layer** icon at the bottom of the Layers panel:

Choose a **Levels** adjustment layer from the list that appears. Technically you could choose any of the adjustment layers for this technique, but we'll use Levels because it's one of the most popular and commonly used image adjustments:
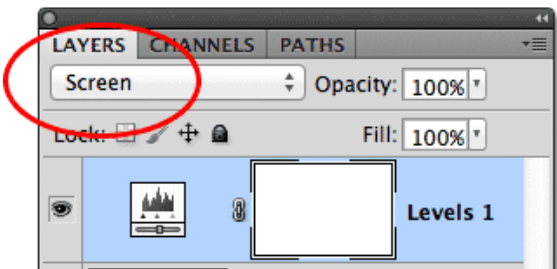
If we look in the Layers panel, we see that we now have a Levels adjustment layer, which Photoshop named "Levels 1", sitting above our image on the Background layer:

Step 2: Change The Blend Mode Of The Adjustment Layer To Screen

To brighten the image at this point, all we need to do is change the **blend mode** of the adjustment layer from Normal to **Screen**. You'll find the blend mode option in the top left corner of the Layers panel:
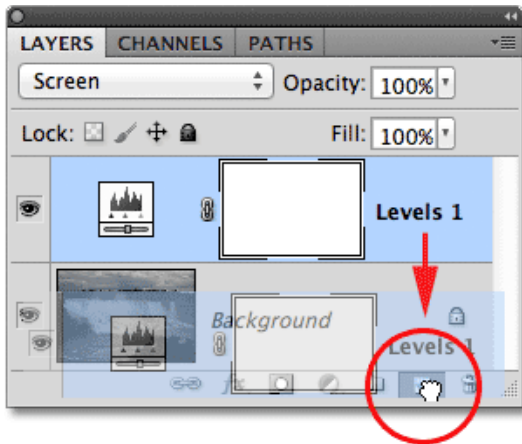

The Screen blend mode is one of several layer blend modes that lighten an image, and simply by adding a Levels adjustment layer and changing its blend mode to Screen, the underexposed photo now appears brighter.
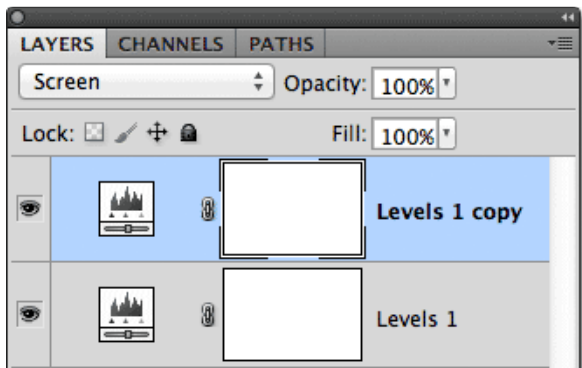

The Screen blend mode has instantly brightened the underexposed image.

Step 3: Duplicate The Levels Adjustment Layer (Optional)

If you find that your photo still isn't bright enough, simply duplicate the Levels adjustment layer by clicking on it and, with your mouse button held down, dragging it down onto the **New Layer** icon at the bottom of the Layers panel (it's the icon directly to the left of the Trash Bin):

Release your mouse button when the hand cursor is over the New Layer icon. Photoshop makes a copy of the Levels adjustment layer and places it directly above the original. Notice that the newly added copy is already set to the Screen blend mode for us, so there's no need to change it ourselves:
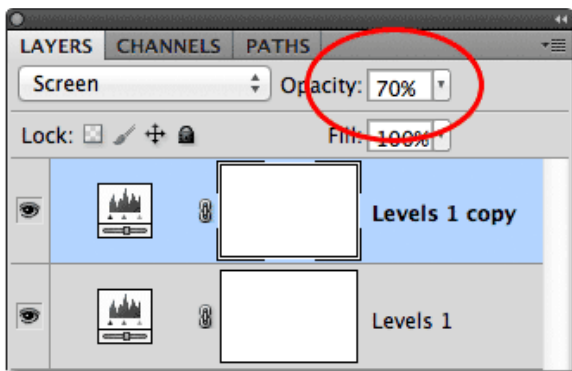

With two adjustment layers now added, both set to the Screen blend mode, the image appears even brighter, with much more detail visible in the darker areas:

Step 4: Lower The Opacity Of The Adjustment Layer If Needed

With two Levels adjustment layers added, you may find that the image now appears a little too bright. To dial back some of the brightness and fine-tune the results, lower the opacity of the top adjustment layer. You'll find the Opacity option directly across from the blend mode option at the top of the Layers panel. By default, opacity is set to 100%. You'll want to keep an eye on your image as you lower the opacity value to judge the results:

And with that, we're done! By adding just a couple of Levels adjustment layers, both set to the Screen blend mode, we were able to quickly and easily brighten an underexposed image. Keep in mind, however, that this technique will only bring out detail in the darker areas of the photo if there is actual image detail there to restore. If your image is so badly underexposed that the shadows are nothing but areas of solid black, you can still use this technique to make the image brighter overall but it won't magically bring out detail that wasn't there to begin with.

Here's a "before and after" view of the results, with the original underexposed photo on the left and the brightened version on the right: