To find your exposure time with a single strip

Exposure test strip

A strip of the same paper as your prints, a piece of opaque card and times that double from one step to the next[1]. The next day, once dry, the strip tells you what time your light needs.

Dry strip: each step got twice the light of the one before (approximate blues, just as a guide)



Total time for each step, in units you choose: 1, 2, 4, 8, 16 and 32

1 Prepare the strip

Cut it from the same paper and the same batch of solution as your prints, and let it dry in the dark. Commercial cyanotype paper varies from one maker to another and from batch to batch[2].

2 Set up the contact print

Lay the number strip from page 2 on top, printed on transparency film with the printed side against the paper[3]; add a piece of your negative if you like. Cover with glass.

3 Expose, covering one step at a time

Uncover the whole strip and slide the card over each step at the time the table gives. That way each step gets twice the time of the one before[1].

> ☼ **Safety:** In the sun, protect yourself as you would for any time outdoors: shade while you wait, UV-blocking sunglasses and sunscreen; don't look at the sun.

4 Wash and let dry

In running water, until the yellow is gone from the whites; Ware allows about 20 minutes for the classic formula[4].

5 Read it dry

The shadows regain their blue as they dry, over about 24 hours according to Ware and Jacquard[5,6]. The right time may fall between two steps[1]; when in doubt, Jacquard advises erring on the long side, and shortening it if everything comes out dark and clogged[6].

When to cover each step

Choose a unit of time (for example, one minute) and write it down. The strip covers 1 to 32 units: pick the unit so the time you expect falls near the middle.

Step	Cover it at… (its total time)	Actual time
1	1 unit	
2	2 units	
3	4 units	
4	8 units	
5	16 units	
6	32 units	

Step 6 never gets covered: take the strip out of the light at 32 units.

Unit chosen _____

Light (sun, clouds, lamp, distance) _____

Best step _____

Signs during exposure

With the classic formula, the National Science and Media Museum exposes until the shadows look bronzed, and advises going one step further[7]. With Ware's formulas, the highlights look pale green and the shadows turn a pale bluish gray[8].

Sources

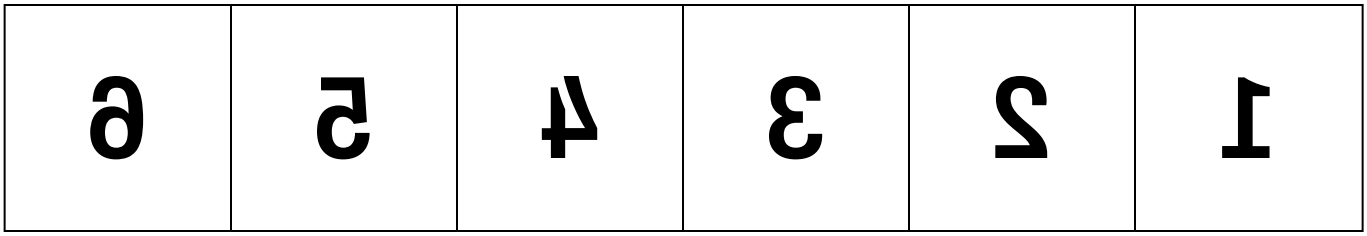
1 Ilford Photo. (2017, March 30). Making a black & white print: Exposure testing.
2 Turner et al. (2014). From ultraviolet to Prussian blue: A spectral response for the cyanotype process and a safe educational activity to explain UV exposure for all ages.
3 Reeder, R. and Anderson, C. Z. (2013). How to make digital negatives [Excerpt].
4 Ware, M. (n.d.). The traditional cyanotype process.
5 Ware, M. (2009). New Cyanotype: Siderotype workshop notes.
6 Jacquard Products. (2021). Cyanotype detailed instructions.
7 National Science and Media Museum. (2011, February 18). Introduction to the cyanotype process.
8 Ware, M. (2022). Alternative photographic processes: Simple Cyanotype.

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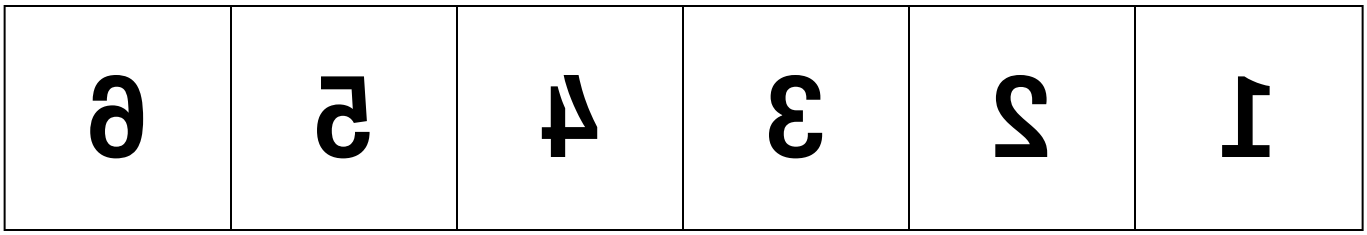
Print this page on transparency film at 100%, without “Fit to page”

Number strips for the test

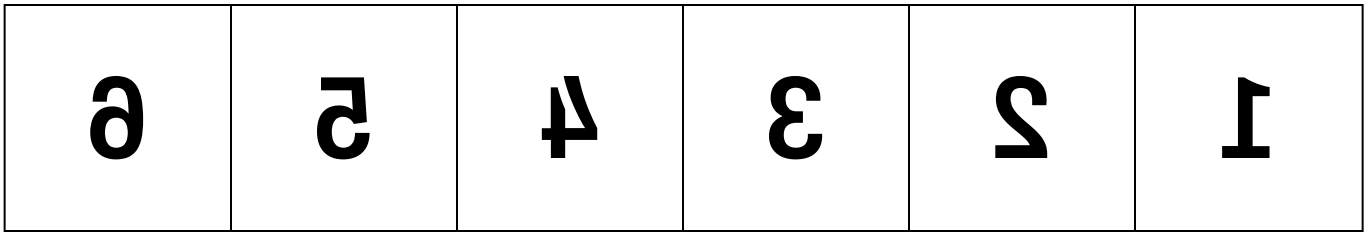
The strips are already mirrored: with the printed side against the coated paper, the numbers come out the right way around and white on the print, and the thin lines mark where each step starts. Cut each strip along its edge.



Strip 1 · 7.1 × 1.2 in (18 × 3 cm)



Strip 2 · 7.1 × 1.2 in (18 × 3 cm)



Strip 3 · 7.1 × 1.2 in (18 × 3 cm)



Measure the rulers on the printed film: if they aren’t 50 mm and 2 inches, the printer has changed the size.

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