

Digital Camera Skills Photographic Project

Portraits

**Aim:**

Shoot a portrait with atmospheric lighting and shallow depth of field. Give the portrait a moody artistic feel.

Technique:

Position your subject in front of a window looking towards the light so that half the subject is in shadow. Frame the shot so that some of the background through the window or the window frame is visible and position the subject so that the light coming in the window produces dramatic shadows on the face. Try to catch the highlights in the subjects' eyes and make sure the background is out of focus.

Use Aperture Priority Mode with the lowest f/stop you can set, if you don't have Aperture Priority use Portrait Scene Mode. Try varying the distance from your camera to the subject and the distance from the subject to the background. Use your zoom to keep the framing tight. A reasonably fast shutter speed is essential to minimise camera blur so if, after a few test shots you feel this is a problem, increase your ISO until the blur is eliminated. Try using Spot or Centre Weighted Average Metering modes to ensure you are reading the correct light levels.

Take a number of shots at slightly different angles and with different zoom levels. Use some white or other coloured material to bounce some of the light from the window back onto the shadow side to see what affect this has.

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Freezing Motion



Aim:

Choose a fast moving object either in a natural environment or create a moving object yourself.



Technique:

Set the camera to Shutter Priority Mode or, if you don't have this, Sports Scene Mode. Try different shutter speeds starting at about 1/100th of a second and increase the speed for a range of shots. You probably won't have control over the shutter speed with Sports Scene Mode, so experiment with the ISO to see if increasing it gives you faster shutter speeds. Observe the effect the speed has on the level of motion blur associated with the object that is moving. Try to include a background so that you can see what happens to depth of field as the camera responds to increases in shutter speed by adjusting the Aperture. Try changing your metering mode to see if Spot or Matrix gives better results.

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Landscapes



Aim:

Choose a shot with ground and sky so that you can experiment with trying to achieve a balance between the brightness of the sky and the shadows in the foreground. Look for a shot with lots of interesting foreground objects.

Technique:

Set the camera to Matrix or Evaluative Mode Metering Mode so that the camera reads the light from the entire scene. Use Aperture Priority Mode with a large f/stop, f/16 or f/22, to ensure a wide depth of field. Use Landscape Scene Mode if you don't have Aperture Priority.

Focus on a suitable foreground object and frame the shot with the horizon, if visible, parallel to the frame bottom edge. Vary the balance between the amount of sky that is visible in the shot and the amount of foreground. Try variations with a smaller f/stop, f.3.5 or f/2.8 and see what affect this has on the shot. Review your photograph and experiment with EV compensation by increasing or decreasing exposure by 1 or 2 stops. See what affect this has on the sky and shadows.

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Nature



Aim:

Take a photograph of an insect or a flower in the garden (or a pot). Try to get a subject sitting within a natural environment with leaves or grass in the background so that depth of field becomes important.

Technique:

Most cameras have a Macro Mode. Macro Mode is represented on the camera by a button or a Mode Dial setting that looks like a little flower with leaves. Macro Mode allows the camera to get acceptable focus on small objects close to the lens. How close you can get and still have focus depends on the camera. So this is about experimenting.

Get low down and move as close to the subject as you can. Use the Zoom on your camera to get even closer. If you have a tripod use it, if not try to find something to support the camera to minimise blur caused by camera shake. Camera shake is more pronounced at high Zoom levels. If you still see blur, then the Shutter Speed is too low so increase your ISO so that the Shutter Speed increases. Ideally you will need a shutter speed of 1/125 or 1/250 of a second. Frame the shot so that some of the environment is visible within the shot. If your camera has trouble focussing you will have to switch to manual focus mode if you have it and focus manually. If you still can't focus then move the camera back away from the subject until you can. Sharpness is critical in Macro photography so take lots of shots until you get one that is pin sharp