

Digital Photography: Beyond The “Auto” Button

The Automatic Mode on a camera can be a very convenient mode to use, but in many situations, more control over how your camera is functioning can result in better photos. There are several different principles of how a camera works that are the same in nearly all digital and film cameras. Knowing a bit more about how these features of the camera work can lead you to doing better photography by using more than just the Automatic modes on the camera.

Aperture (or F Stop) - F 1.4, F 2.0, F 2.8, F 4, F 5.6, F 8, F 11, F 16

The Aperture number or F Stop describes the size of the opening of the camera to light to expose the image on the digital sensor (or film)

- The higher the number (ie F 11 or F 16), the smaller the aperture opening, (less light)
- The lower the number (ie F 2 or F 2.8), the larger the opening, (more light)
- The higher the F Stop or aperture opening, the more things are in focus (greater depth of field.) The lower the number, the less things are in focus (shallower depth of field)
- If you want everything in focus you might use F16
- If you want just one thing in focus, and the rest blurred out you might use F 2

Shutter Speed - 1/500s, 1/250s, 1/125s, 1/60s, 1/30s, 1/15s, 1/2s

The Shutter Speed describes the amount of time the shutter is open in seconds. The longer the shutter is open, the more light comes into the sensor. However, the longer the shutter is open, the greater the chance of the image being blurry (especially if the camera is not on a tripod).

- Shutter speed of 1/60 is a good minimum for people photography (to avoid movement blur)
- Shutter speed of 1/250 is a good minimum for action photography (to avoid movement blur)
- Shutter speed of 1/(length in mm of lens) is a good minimum to avoid camera shake blur.

ISO / Sensitivity - ISO 100, ISO 400, ISO 800, ISO 1600, ISO 3200

ISO describes how sensitive to light the camera’s sensor is. The lower the number, the more light is let in. The higher the number, the more noisy the image.

Examples of using your camera’s Semi-Automatic Modes to control the size of the aperture (Av mode), shutter speed (Tv mode) and different ISO and Color Balance Settings can be found here: <http://goo.gl/tvBkpP> -or- here: <http://www.kqwedphoto.com/infomation/photography-basics-tips-for-using-your-camera/>

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