

Silver Surfers @ Bedford Vocality Project Training 2007

Session 3 – Teaching Digital Photography to Older Learners

How To Take Better Digital Photos

My camera offers a choice of formats, I don't know which one I should use?

Most modern digital cameras support two different compression modes for saving your photos, one mode does not lose any data and is called lossless, another is called 'lossy' and does involve some data loss. You should always save your pictures using a lossless mode unless space is at a premium, more advanced digital cameras offer a further option to save image data, this is called RAW mode and represents the uncompressed data from the actual RGB pixels on your cameras CCD sensor.

How do I use the ISO and white balance settings on my digital camera?

The ISO setting on a digital camera controls the cameras sensitivity to light, basically the higher the ISO number used means you need less light within your digital pictures. Factors such as the cloud cover, shading and whether you are taking photographs inside all affect the ISO setting. If you just adjust the ISO setting to its highest value in dark light conditions then you run the risk of producing grainy digital pictures-so use it sensibly.

How do I adjust the white balance setting on my digital camera?

White balance is a feature found on more advanced digital cameras, this type of feature is particularly important when shooting indoors where light sources such as lightbulbs can dazzle your cameras CCD. To use the white balance feature you point your camera at an object that is white so camera can calculate the difference between the object and true white and adjust your pictures accordingly.

Can I take fast action shots with my digital camera?

Even today a modern digital camera still struggles to compete with a film based camera in this particular area, digital cameras can't compete with film when it comes to response speed. Digital SLRs and high-end compact cameras are far quicker than they used to be, they should be more than adequate for most users. You should also use an ultrafast memory card which has a fast response time our final tip if you want to take fast motion digital pictures is to minimise the use of your cameras or auto settings by setting everything manually.

How do I make my digital pictures look more professional?

Taking blurred pictures with shaky hands is the number one way to produce amateurish results. You could consider investing in a tripod as camera shake is a major cause of poor quality digital pictures, they are also useful if you intend to take photos using a zoom lens.

I want to e-mail my pictures - how do I make them smaller?

The easiest way to make your picture smaller is to adjust the resolution and quality sizes downwards using your digital camera settings, saving image is using the JPEG format will also bring about dramatic savings in file size.

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How to take better photographs of people

Photographing people, either with a digital camera or a film based unit is still one of the most challenging aspects of photography – we believe that people shots can make the best pictures of all because they can capture real life and emotion and allow the viewer to make a connection with the photograph.

Placement of the subject

Don't try to shoot the person's whole body from head to toe, unless of course you really need to capture the entire person, instead try to focus on the face to capture the individual's expression – capturing the look in the eyes is probably the most important thing to get right and don't be afraid to really crop the image in tightly to really capture a certain look.

Set the scene first

This one is important – you should be waiting to take the persons picture, not the other way round. The golden rule is to get set up first and then direct the person, tell them what you want, encourage them, don't just say 'stand there', give them some encouragement and guidance.

Other tips are to make the person feel at ease, engage them in conversation and help them feel natural and try not make them 'pose' for too long. If you are photographing children then you should crouch down so you are at their own level.

Of course you want them to smile don't you??? So why not try it yourself !!

And don't forget also that digital photos cost nothing, so shoot away, you can always delete the images later.

How to light your shot

If you are taking pictures outdoors then you should position yourself between the person and the sun so the sun is coming from behind you and shining on your subject, you should try to ensure that the sun is not directly behind you – try for around 10degrees either left or right, this will introduce some shadows into your shot and will not bathe the entire subject in too much bright light.

Alternatively you can position your subject within a shadowed area and use the shadows to add a tonal range to your pictures. If the shadows are too deep or you are shooting on a very overcast day try using the 'Fill flash' mode on you digital camera to add some subtle lighting.

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Top 10 Tips

Try to get the sun behind you

Think about how the light will affect your subject, think about shadows, harsh light flattens photos.

Create some depth in your photos

To get depth try to include something further away or nearer to you to create that depth.

Position your subject

Use the 'rule of thirds', don't just plonk your subject in the centre of the shot. Create some interest and depth.

Capture the details

Don't try to just include everything, try to pick some interesting detail to work your picture around and to include into your picture.

Hold the Cameral steady

Use both hands and/or a tripod to avoid camera shake giving blurred shots.

Get closer to your subject

Try capturing a look or expression instead of just photographing the whole person.

Vary the format of your photograph

Try turning your camera around – makes for interest in your pictures.

Consider where the horizon is framed in your picture

To emphasise the sky you should position the horizon low in your photo and vice versa.

Try to capture people in your shots

People add interest and life to a photo – position them to the side or in a small part of your photo to add depth.

The Spice of Life

Take variety in your photographs – lots of different types of photos, lots of different shapes and views.