

# Steps to Learning To Use The Settings Available On Your Digital Camera and Taking Better Digital Photographs.

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The following is intended to be a step by step guide to help you learn to use some of the key settings available on your digital camera. .

## General Principles:

Carry extra batteries and an extra memory card. A camera with dead batteries or a full memory card is useful as an anchor.

Early morning and late afternoon light is best – avoid harsh noonday sun, if possible;

Get as close to the subject as possible – then get closer;

Fill the frame with your images;

Learn to use the *Rule of Thirds*;

If photographing people, concentrate on their faces, eyes and hands;

Avoid distracting backgrounds;

Look for small details to make your pictures more interesting; and

Have your camera ready to “grab” unexpected shots

## Specific Principles:

If you are just learning to use your digital camera, begin by taking all photos in the *Automatic Mode*. As you progress, learn to find, change, and use the settings listed below. Become proficient with each setting adjustment before moving on to the others.

Review each photo as soon as possible after you have taken it and ask yourself:

Did I get all or more or less than I wanted in this photo?

Is the subject in focus?

Is the exposure correct?

Do I need to retake the photo?

Reviewing helps you get the photo you want. There may not be another opportunity to retake the photo at a later time.

Read and review your User’s Manual before you begin each new step and practice each step before moving on to the next one. Move on to the next step only when you feel you have mastered the previous one. Always carry your manual with you and refer to it often.

## Useful Camera Settings:

Some of the following settings may not be available in the *Automatic* Mode. You may have to first select the *Program* or *Manual* mode to change some settings and adjustments.

Find and learn to use the *Macro* setting (indicated by a flower) to take extreme close up photographs;

Find and learn how to set the flash functions: *Automatic, On, Off, and Red Eye Reduction*. As you review your photos, ask yourself if you used the flash correctly? Were you too far from your subject to use the flash? Think about using flash during the day (forced flash). Would using flash during the day have made a difference in removing unwanted shadows?

Find and learn how to change and use the *White Balance* settings for the available light source and type. Select the tungsten or fluorescent settings as appropriate for indoor lighting. When in doubt use the automatic white balance (*AWB*) setting.

Find and learn how to change and use the *Exposure Compensation (Exposure Value)* settings. If the image is too dark when you review it, change to a positive exposure value. If the photo appears to be too light, select a negative value. Retake and review the photograph. Remember to reset the values after you have taken and reviewed your photograph.

Find and learn how to change and use the *Aperture and Shutter Priority* settings if available. (These settings may not be available on your camera model). The smaller the aperture (f 5.6 or f 8), the greater the depth of field. Use a faster shutter speed (1/500 or faster) to capture action shots.

Find and learn how to use the *ISO* settings. (*ISO* is similar to film speed in film cameras.) Practice changing the *ISO* to higher values for indoor photographs without flash. Use the lowest *ISO* setting outdoors for better color saturation.

Find and learn to use the *Scenic Mode* menu options that may be available to you. These menu settings may be located on your camera's mode dial. Scenic modes automatically preselect certain camera changes for optimal results under difficult conditions.

Practice, practice and more practice will help build your confidence and increase your skill level. If you do, you'll be rewarded with good photos that you will be proud to show and share.