

Dapto Camera Club Magazine

Viewfinder.

January 2024





How to Take Great Photos of Holiday Lights Before they are Taken Down.

Years ago, taking great photographs of holiday lights was difficult because the films of yesteryear weren't very light sensitive.

They had difficulty recording an image in the low-light of a candle, for example. This is no longer the case as technology has solved these problems. Many DSLRs can be set to ISO 6400, 12,800 and even higher settings with little noise.

In addition, most photographers today rely on auto-exposure with their point-and-shoots or DSLRs. Unlike the light meters of old, which were often "fooled" by low-light situations, today's meters in auto-exposure cameras are able to give good readings even in low light.

This is an important point because holiday lights usually look their best when shot without added light. In fact, this is Rule One when it comes to getting good pictures of lights:

Turn off your flash. Let's repeat that: For most pictures of holiday lights, turn off your flash

Now, let's remember one important point if you're taking a picture without flash: You're probably going to need a slow shutter speed. This means you may need to mount your camera on a solid unmoving surface to avoid camera-shake. A tripod is best.

When else might you want to use your flash?

Let's say the subject of your picture is your kids under the tree. How are you going to light their faces? On the one hand, you may find that the Christmas-tree lights are sufficient and give a very soft glow to their cherubic expressions. Or maybe it is Christmas morning, and they are lighted by window-light that is streaming into the room. In these cases, you don't need your flash. But, on the other hand, maybe you don't have



Links of Interest:

Viewbug - <http://www.viewbug.com/>

ePHOTOzine - <http://www.ephotozine.com/>

Federation of Camera Clubs [NSW] - <http://www.photographyNSW.org.au/>

Australian Photographic Society - <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/>

Gurushots - <https://gurushots.com/>

Free Lessons with Serge Ramelli - <http://photoserge.com/free-lessons/all>

Viewfinder cover photo taken by.

Jenny Hale

enough light to really see their faces. Then you may have to use your flash. How do you know which way to go?

One approach is to shoot both ways, then select the better image. We think a better way is to plan ahead and meter your subject. Remember that Guideline One of the Three NYIP Guidelines for Great Pictures is to decide on your subject before you do anything else. In this case, you've decided that the subject is the faces of the kids. Guideline Two is to draw attention to your subject. One method of drawing attention is to make sure your subject is well-exposed. So meter the light that falls on their faces from the lighted tree. Get in close and meter just the faces! If there's enough available light for a well-exposed picture, shoot it. If not, use your flash.



Now let's move outdoors.

Here we see elaborate lighting on apartments, stores, and the street. Again, if you want to capture the lights themselves, don't use your flash.

One other tip for outdoor lights — you'll get the best results when you shoot at twilight. That way, you'll capture some color in the sky, rather than the pitch-black tone that will be recorded on film later at night. But what if you want to take a picture of your friend in front of a brightly lit display?

You want to capture both the bright lights and your friend. If you use flash, you get your friend, but you're



in danger of minimizing the bright lights behind. On the other hand, if you don't use flash, you get better detail of the lights but your friend is reduced to a silhouette.

There's an answer. Many of today's point-and-shoot cameras have a Night Portrait Mode. This setting tells the camera that you want the flash to fire (which will light your friend in the foreground); but that you also want the lens to stay open long enough to record the lights in the background. Your solution to getting light on your friend's face and capturing the light display is to use this setting. The flash exposes

the face. The long exposure captures the lights.

But, again, watch out here. The long exposure — typically, one-quarter of a second long — requires that you steady your camera to avoid camera shake. Once again, we advise you to use a tripod. To take great holiday photos in this season of lights, we offer you these 4 tips:

- Turn off your flash unless you have a very good reason to use it.

- Use a fast ISO — we suggest ISO 800, 1600 or above.
 - Avoid camera shake.
- Use a tripod...or, at least, brace the camera. Trust your camera's built-in meter.

Some Special Considerations

ISO NOISE

Amplifying a digital signal is like turning the volume up on your radio as loud as it will go. At the maximum volume every hiss, pop, and scratch is heard and, depending on the quality of the equipment, quality is diminished. The same thing happens in a digital camera. When the ISO setting is increased, every image artefact and defect is magnified.

To achieve the best image quality, you might try working with a slower ISO setting to start. If you are having trouble getting a good exposure, increase the ISO as needed. You might even try using the Auto ISO setting and see how the camera chooses to handle exposure.

Digital Noise

Regardless of the ISO setting chosen, most inexpensive digital cameras produce "noise" during long exposures. Noise is caused by the small electrical disturbances that are present in every electrical system. In order to capture a weak light signal, such as a subject in low-light, longer exposures are usually needed. The longer a digital camera shutter is open, the more electrical noise is recorded as well.

So, it seems we have a double-edged sword: Increase the ISO to achieve faster shutter speeds and you will amplify noise and other image problems. Reduce the ISO and shutter speeds are slower. As a result, you will record inherent noise that might not be seen in a "normal" exposure.

Limited Dynamic Range

To make things worse, digital cameras have a limited dynamic range. Image sensors are only sensitive to a specific range of brightness. Anything outside of that range is recorded as pure white or pure black. This can result in an image without shadow or highlight detail.

Solutions

Here are a few ways to solve these problems. Noise can be reduced with software. In fact some cameras offer in-camera noise reduction features. Proprietary software is used exclusively, yielding uneven results. Test your camera's capabilities before committing to this feature. There are many noise reduction software products on the market today, some as stand-alone applications and others which are plug-ins that work in conjunction with your favourite image editor. This means you can select a camera with noise reduction or address any problems later in the digital "darkroom."

Timing is Everything

As we noted earlier in this article, when shooting holiday lights outside, I find that the best exposures can be made at twilight. Twilight is after the sun has set but before the dark of night. This fleeting balance of light and shadow will yield the brilliance of the lights while maintaining details in the shadow. Don't underestimate shadow detail to help establish your composition. Consult your camera's manual for details on your white balance options and how to adjust them. In the finished photo the viewer will perceive the twilight photo to be taken at night.

When shooting holiday lights inside, try turning on lights in the room to increase the ambient light, rather than using a flash. Flash can produce a harsh, high-contrast quality that obliterates the brilliance of the light. A carefully positioned incandescent light can work increase the ambient light without overpowering your holiday lights.



Shoot Two Exposures

One way to extend the tonal range of a digital image is by making two exposures of a scene. Shooting in Manual mode, make one exposure configured to capture the best highlight detail. Make a second exposure



to capture the best shadow detail. Then combine the two exposures in Photoshop as separate Layers. Using the Eraser tool remove poorly exposed areas to reveal detail and take advantage of the best parts of each Layer/exposure. Using this technique you could extend the tonal range well beyond the possibility of any single exposure made with the same camera. Of course this requires a strong tripod to ensure both compositions match perfectly. Consider using a remote control to reduce the possibility of camera movement.

Accomplished photographers may also create two separate images,— one favouring highlights, the other shadows,— from a single RAW file.

Turn Off Automatic White Balance

In many photographic situations white balance is a godsend. By automatically neutralizing extreme color casts, believable digital color is rendered without breaking a sweat. It is important to remember, not all photos require white balance. Tone down the rich, saturated colors of a sunset and you're left with nothing. Attempt to white balance a fireworks display and you end up with dull lifeless, de-saturated bursts and streaks of light. Holiday lights should be treated similarly. By turning off the auto white balance feature you are sure to capture the exaggerated colors the holidays have to offer.

You could try turning off white balance altogether or even experiment with any of the other manual settings to find a color balance that suits your visual needs. Either way is a better bet than giving the decision to the camera.

Test, Test, Test

The immediate feedback of digital photography begs you to test your exposures to determine what works best. Take advantage of the metadata that most digital cameras embed inside every digital picture you make. Metadata can include camera make and model, exposure, flash, white balance and other important information that can help you to determine what works and what doesn't work. This means you don't even have to take notes! The Camera Data screen reveals shutter speed, aperture, ISO settings, lens focal length, flash settings and even the metering modes.

Holiday lights are usually around for more than a couple of days each year, take advantage of this by shooting early in the season and then re-shooting if you have to.

*May we take this moment to wish all our member a very
Happy and safe New Year*

The complete beginner's guide to drone photography

Never has it been so easy to capture aerial images of some of the world's most stunning (and sometimes hard to reach) places. The drone—a sky-high flying, unmanned camera—is undoubtedly the wildest photography development in recent memory. Almost like a remote-controlled toy for the photo obsessed, drones are as much fun as they are revolutionary.

As the desire for drones has risen, the price has dropped, making it easier than ever to get a camera in the air. But with so many factors to consider—whether you're just planning to get into drone photography or have already gotten one—getting started can be a challenge.

From choosing a set-up to post-processing photos, take these nine tips with you on your journey to drone photography:

01. Choose a drone based on your needs and skills

One search of “drone” in Google will shock you with the mind-boggling number of drones available out there. But what are the things you actually need to consider in getting one for yourself?

The two most common types of drones you can choose from are those with a built-in or on-board camera and those of which you can attach your own. Drones with a built-in camera are often larger, and their cameras might not have a very high resolution—which can compromise the quality of your photos. Smaller drones which allow you to attach your own camera, such as a GoPro, on the other hand, could be easier to manage since you already have the hang of your camera and really only need to learn how to fly.



Photo by David Henrichs

One of the most important things to consider is how well you can fly a drone. For beginning drone photographers, sturdier, lighter, and cheaper drones are available. They aren't as expensive as heavier and more advanced drones either because they have less features. Look for a drone that matches your skill.

You also need to know what your drone can do. For instance, some drones can only be flown indoors. Some drones are also equipped with lighting that can be used for shooting at night. Some fly farther than others. Decide what you want to achieve with your drone, check out the features of the drones you are choosing from, then choose one that best satisfies your needs.

Channels like That Drone Show and Drone Camps RC on YouTube test, review, and compare different drones and accessories. You might consider watching the videos before purchasing your drone.

02. Study the instruction manual carefully

Reading the instruction manual is nowhere near as exciting as soaring your camera over the ocean, but if you want to give yourself the best chance of nailing drone photography, get to studying.



Photo by Curate Labs & Magazine

Your instruction manual holds everything you need to know about your new drone. It will give you the answers to a bunch of questions you might not have even known you had. Knowing what your drone can and cannot do, you'll be spending less time tinkering with it and more time improving your shots.

03. Understand the features of your drone

Drones offer various features that help optimize your flying time. Learning these will ensure you shoot efficiently with your drone.

While they vary for each brand and type of drone, these are the typical features you will encounter:

Smartphone Feed

Photo by Samuel Schwendener

This tool is great for beginners as it allows you to see exactly what your drone is capturing, increasing your chances of a great shot.

Smart Mode

Smart mode essentially translates to "beginner mode." This innovation is put in place to essentially help newbies get the most out of their shots.

For example, if you're inexperienced and it's a windy day, chances are you won't have the chops to fly your device without it looking like your photos were caught up in an earthquake. Smart mode will have some form of stabilisation feature that will help to counter this.

Tracking

Drones sometimes also have a "follow-me" option. This combines futuristic visual recognition with your smartphone's GPS to help you take the perfect photo.

If you want yourself in the shot, this technology will allow it: put your phone in your pocket, turn on the "follow-me" option, and the drone will make sure that you're always in the frame.

Geofence

A geofence will restrict how far and how high your drone flies. Essentially, it locks your drone in an invisible jail, and the minute you try to escape, you'll run into trouble.

Drone photographers have varying opinions on these features—some find them useful, and others don't. Find out which features you can use to maximize your drone's potential.

04. Learn the federal, state, and local drone regulations

Because of how many people have gotten into these little unmanned aircrafts, there's been a lot of developments into the legality of where, how, and who can pilot one.

For instance, in the USA, UAVs weighing between 0.55 and 55 lbs. require a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) registration. This means that before you take to the sky, you must make your aircraft known—much like registering a car. It's a simple process: just hand over a small fee and your name, address, and email.

There are also regulations on where you can fly your drone. For example, you (fairly obviously) can't go flying your drone around another aircraft, so airports are a no-no.

Whilst most laws and regulations are quite obvious and easy to understand, a lot are still quite messy—especially surrounding fines. The laws surrounding registration also vary for every country. The best thing to do is to take the time to check the legality of drones (which you can do online) before you launch your camera.

05. Prepare a pre-flight checklist

Knowing what your drone can do and where you can fly it, you'd think it's time to finally get it in the air, but before you do that, it's advisable to first devise a pre-flight checklist. A pre-flight checklist will not only ensure that you have everything you need before you fly but also that everyone around you, including your drone, will be safe.

Before you fly, check these things off the list:

- Fly Zone: Where are you going to fly? Is it private or public domain?



- Weather: Are flying conditions good? Will you need to utilize anti-stabilization because of the wind?
- Surroundings: Will there be people around at this time of day? Will it be safe to fly low/high? Will they mind a drone hovering around them?
- Battery: Have you charged up all your batteries? How long can you stay in the air?
- Settings: What resolution do you need? How bright do you need to set your camera? What frame rate, shutter speed, and ISO are best for what you want to achieve in your photo?

- Propellers: How are your propellers looking? Are they nice and straight, or do they need replacing?

• Motor: is the motor and mounts in tact? Are the motors rotating freely? Is it making any unrecognisable sounds? Are the screws tight?

Controls: If you're using a smartphone or tablet, is it ready to go for your flight? Are other apps turned off? Is the fully charged? If you're using a remote control, does it have batteries? Is it responding to your drone?



Photo by Dose Media

With all these in check, now comes the exciting part—flying your drone.

06. Test drive your drone

Can you imagine spending a lot of time and money on a shiny new drone, hooking your expensive camera up to it, and then losing control and watching it plummet to the ground? Don't set yourself up for tragedy—test drive your drone.

How to: perfect photo

Get the fireworks this NYE

By City of Sydney News

Learn how to master this tricky night-time shot with the help of SYDNYE's official photographers. We spoke to the official Sydney New Year's Eve 2023 photographers to get their best tips on how to shoot fireworks.

This year Damian Shaw, Matt Lambley, Daniel Tran, Morris McLennan and Keith McInnes will be stationed around the city to capture the best shots at midnight.

While these tips are for those using DSLR or mirrorless cameras, you can apply these tips to phone photography too.

1. Location, location, location

If there's one thing all our photographers agree on, it's that location is crucial to a good shot. Henry Li recommends scouting your vantage point and picturing what your composition will be well in advance.

Location is everything, so make sure to get to your designated location early! – Matt Lambley.

There's nothing worse than having other people blocking your view so try to find a spot in front of the crowds.

2. Bring a tripod



The best firework photos are long exposures so you can capture the sparks flying through the air. Make sure your camera is well supported with a tripod so that your images don't turn out blurry. Remember to bring your base plate so you can attach your camera to the tripod.

Flat lay of camera equipment.
Image: Abril Felman/City of Sydney

3. Play around with your camera settings

You'll want to spend some time figuring out which set-

tings to use before New Year's Eve.

Make sure your camera is set to manual mode. There are 3 things you need to know when shooting in manual: shutter speed, aperture and ISO.

'Shutter speed' means how long your camera's shutter is open for. 'Aperture' is the opening in your lens. A wide-open aperture like f/2.8 lets a lot of light in and also has a narrow depth of field, meaning not everything is in focus. This is great for portrait photography where your subject is in focus but the background is blurry.

An aperture of f/16 is a much smaller hole, letting in less light and has a wider depth of field. This is perfect for landscape photography where you want everything in focus.

You also have ISO, which respond to light. A higher ISO like 1600 will mean your photo is brighter than one at 200. Try to keep your ISO as low as you can so you don't introduce digital noise.

The firework shows are only a very short window of opportunity, so you don't want to be 'practising' during the main event! – Morris McLennan

Our photographers recommend trying a 2-second exposure with ISO at 300 and an aperture of f/8 so you don't miss focus. Remember to have fun and play around with the settings. Why not try a 5-second exposure on f/16? Daniel Tran also recommends having your camera set to manual focus. This way you won't miss out on the perfect shot because your camera isn't trying to focus every time you press the shutter.



4. Practise makes perfect

Practise shooting at night so you can learn how to balance shutter speed, ISO and aperture. It'll give you time to work out which settings and composition you like best.

When starting out you will get more misses than hits but with time you will start to get better at timing it right. – Keith McInnes

Don't forget to tag your photos with #SYDNYE and share your photos online with us and other budding photographers.

For all the latest information about the night, head to sydneynewyearseve.com.



What an end to 2023,



A close-up photograph of a person's right hand holding a black DSLR camera with a large lens. The hand is wearing a black, padded wrist brace that wraps around the wrist and extends up the forearm. The brace has a strap with a buckle. The camera is held in a way that demonstrates the brace's use for support.

Quantity: 1

Price: **AU \$10.96**
or 4 payments of AU \$2.74
with Afterpay

Add to cart

Make Offer

[Add to Watchlist](#)

Mouse over image to zoom



 Have one to sell? [Sell it yourself](#)

CLICK HERE

Sent from Australia

Payments:     

after  4 payments of AU \$2.74 | [Learn more](#)

www.facebook.com/groups/560318574135732/



For Info or Contact - dcc.newsletter.editor@daptocameraclub.org.au