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Best shutter speed for portrait photography

By **Brian Matias**



Often, portrait photographers will pay closer attention to the aperture setting of their camera and lens than the shutter speed. The photographer can use a wider aperture to introduce a shallower plane of focus with a pleasing falloff. That's why "fast" lenses (f/2.8 or faster) with longer focal lengths (85mm or longer) are so popular with portrait photographers. Here's a great example of how using a wide aperture (f/1.8 in this example) with portrait photos can yield a very shallow depth of field. Do you see that the eye closest to the lens is tack sharp, but the focus rapidly falls off as you go further into the frame?

However, this article will focus on how shutter speed, not aperture, impacts portrait photos. It's my experience that many portrait photographers prefer using faster shutter speeds when taking portrait photos. While 1/125 sec should suffice depending on the lighting conditions, a safe starting point would be 1/250 sec or faster. That is especially true if you're photographing a person outside and want to keep elements such as hair and clothing sharp. Let's use this outdoor portrait photo as an example. By using a fast shutter speed of 1/250 sec, the photographer

effectively froze the model's hair in place. Had they used a slower shutter speed, the hair would have been blurry and possibly distracting for the viewer.

While many portrait photographers rely on fast shutter speeds to ensure sharp results, there is something to be said about experimenting with longer durations, especially if there is room

Cover Photo this month is by,
Jenny Hale

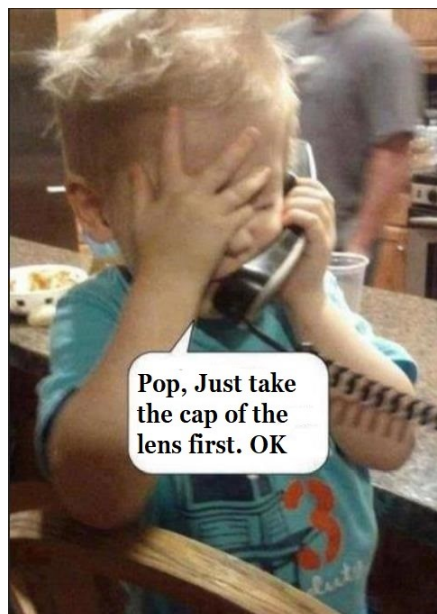
for creativity and fun. Let's use this portrait photo of a dancer in action. If the photographer opted to use a fast shutter speed, you would see the dancer frozen mid-stride. Every element of the subject would be static and in place. However, because the photographer used a longer 1-second shutter speed, he was able to capture the graceful fluidity of the dancer. This photo is undoubtedly a higher-concept and more abstract portrait photo. Still, it is an excellent example of why you should always experiment with unconventional shutter speeds if you can.



You can take this creative concept further by marrying a fast-moving element with a static portrait. In this example, I determined that one second was the optimal shutter



speed to capture the movement of the ocean against this iceberg. However, the composition was lacking because it was primarily monochromatic. So, I asked a fellow photographer to position himself in my frame and told him to stay perfectly still for one second. The resulting portrait photo is more interesting because it contrasts a moving element (the ocean) against static ones (the iceberg and photographer) and would not have been nearly as effective had I used a faster shutter speed.



6 Places to Upload Your Photos That Are Still Awesome

By Light Stalking

There are a number of photographers who don't find Instagram and other major platforms their cup of tea. Certainly, the engagement is great, but the sheer volume of content can feel suffocating and, oftentimes, building a consistent base is tough. And even if you've built a large following, you could be looking for ways to reach out to an audience of other creators and enthusiasts of your field.

Photo by Brooke Lark

Whether these are your reasons, or you're trying to set your roots, trying to branch outwards, find your place, escape the sea of content, or you just want to explore other options, we've got you covered.

We'll go through some lesser-known image-sharing sites which are worth a look, and maybe you might find just the place you'll slot right into.

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>

500px

500px blew up in popularity a few years back and has since relatively died down, but it remains a great place for both amateur and professional photographers. The community is known to give great feedback on posts, and your audience is mainly other creatives. With their free plan, you get seven free image uploads per week, but their yearly plan caps at \$60 USD, and you get several customizability features, analytics, and more. As an added bonus, you can submit your images for licensing to earn some money while you're at it. However, you generally have no reign over the pricing, most earn minimal, and they revoked earnings from images under a Creative Commons License. That said, earning on 500px is something you can try your hands on passively while engaging with one of the best niche photography communities you can find.

YouPic

For something broader and with more positive engagement, then YouPic is probably up your alley. From the get-go, it has a lot of intractability, giving you the options to re-pic, nominate, like, and Favorite other people's work. Added to that, your images have the opportunity to reach thousands of eyes in under a few hours, with some reporting upwards of 55,000 views in six hours. Did we mention you could create a shop too?

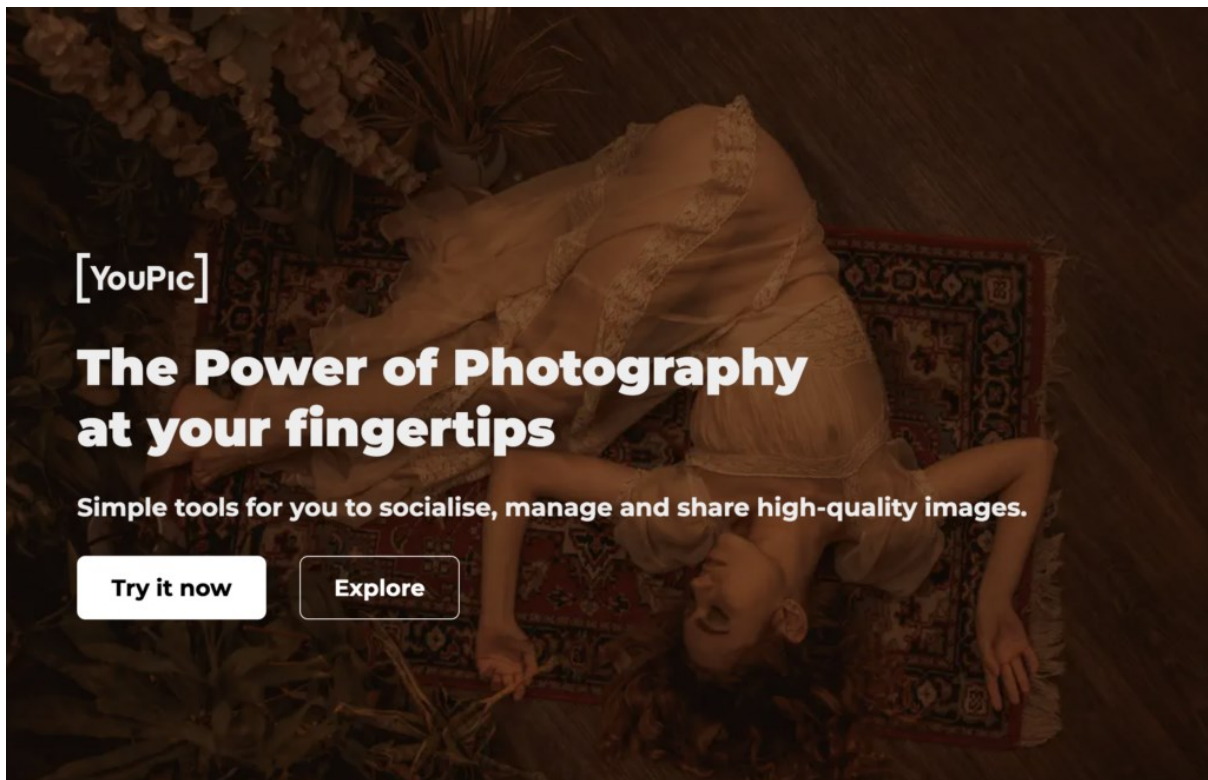


Image via YouPic

YouPic's free plan offers global engagement, unlimited uploads, statistics, and the opportunity to create a shop (if monetization is an end goal of yours). However, their paid plans are... on the more pricey end, with their highest tier at \$9.99 USD a month. In exchange, you are given courses, increased exposure, and priority to clients and new customers.

Whether or not that's enough bang for your buck, with or without the pricey plans, if your aim is recognition and earning then this could very well be your new home!

ViewBug

For a more competitive platform, you may want to check out View-

Bug. ViewBug is a fairly regular photo-sharing site at its base, permitting ten images a week for a free account, allowing direct messaging of other photographers and the like. You get free reign over your copyright, and get to sell what you post. It even runs its own blog with tips (though you'll have to scroll a bit)!


Image via ViewBug

What ViewBug is most known for, however, are its contests. If you feel that a more competitive creative environment is key to honing your skills, then ViewBug could be the right spot for you. Opening ViewBug's "Contests" tab, features several paid and free photography contests ongoing concurrently.

The contest judges are supposedly prominent figures in various fields, from photography, film, and even writing. Not to mention the prizes! Rewards range anywhere from actual cash, to more exposure, to winning DSLR cameras. The competition is tight, but if you feel up to it you could be the next one to succeed!

Flickr

Flickr is next up on our list and is another really well-rounded site. It boasts one of the largest photographer and enthusiast communities on the internet and is reliably versatile and fast, even without payment. Your capabilities here range anywhere from uploading and storing photos, to implementing them on your WordPress site and so on.

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 Recommended for you by AmyLynne517



 Recommended for you by dbfoto



Image via Flickr

The free plan gives a terabyte of storage maintained through ads. But you are limited to one thousand photos with only fifty photos allowed to be private, which is still a lot if you don't have a sizeable collection of images to upload (oh, and you can publish the RAWs too, so the terabyte is very much welcome).

Flickr Pro is around \$5 USD a month and provides unlimited variations of the features listed above along with an ad-free experience, greater customizability, and upload resolutions for 6k and above. If versatility and robustness are what you are looking for, Flickr could be one of the few top-notch options available for your purposes.

Behance

Behance is a part of the Adobe Ecosystem and has often been called "The Instagram for Designers." Quite rightfully so, as with one scroll

your eyes are blessed with thousands of images, animations, illustrations, posters, so on and so forth (even obscure things like mood boards!) all within a neat and stylish visual interface.

Image via Behance

Most members use Behance as a way of putting themselves out where other creatives can see what project they're up to next, while others use it mainly for inspiration for their personal use. For your photographic purposes, Behance is very image-focused and the necessary features are free. It does not have any limit on the number of projects you can make either. As part of the Adobe Ecosystem, you also have the option to use Behance for your portfolios and linking your latest stuff to your websites and other supported platforms. If you want, you could also use their job listing service to search for jobs, or even their paid Pro site feature if you want major customizability freedom to your Behance page (adding sub-pages, tiny tweaks, Google analytics, and more control over HTML). It is a bit pricey starting at \$9.99 USD a month, but whether you choose Pro site or use it for free, it is one of the best niche places for photographers to showcase their works and mingle with other visual creatives.

SmugMug

Our last site on this list is one designed and optimized primarily for photographers. SmugMug is a photography, e-commerce, and portfo-

lio website builder, and while it isn't as much a social site as our previous features, it is a good place if you're looking to host a personal site to showcase your work. It has several features to help deal with problems you may run into online in this field, such as photo organization, galleries, a built-in image lab for commercial purposes, and even end-to-end details like shipping, payment processing, and printing.

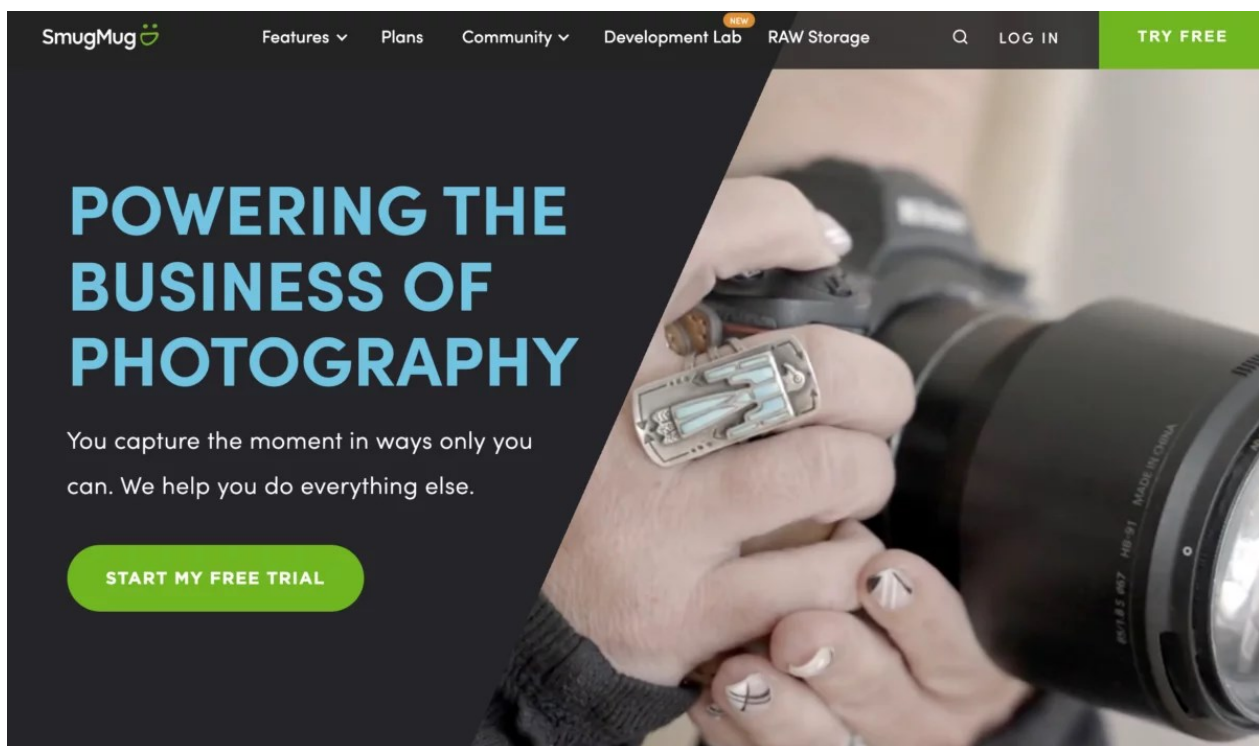


Image via SmugMug

Sadly, unlike our other features, this site is not free and starts at a \$15 USD a month Power plan and ends at a \$500 USD a month Venture plan (very large discounts with their annual plans from \$120 USD to \$365 USD instead). For smaller purposes, Power works just fine with unlimited photo storage, privacy, and more, but commercial features are limited until the \$31 USD mark, and there you can only

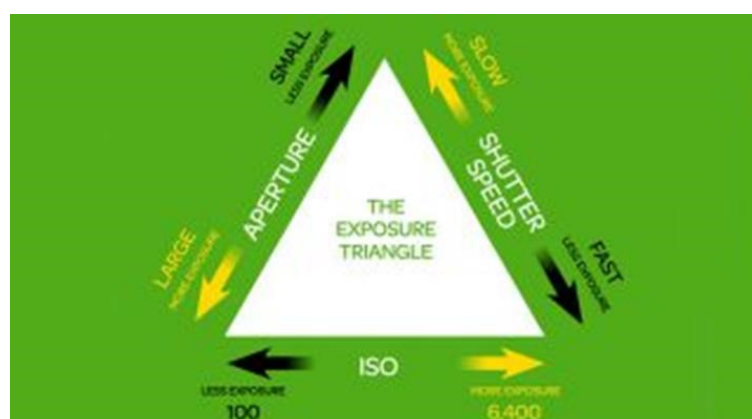
set a limited number of profit margins (of course, with watermark and theft protection, among other features). Multiple custom price lists are only available upwards of \$45 USD a month.

All that aside, the higher plans aren't needed for a comprehensive and simple to use website builder. You even get built-in integration with Adobe Lightroom with the Power plan! If you have cash to spare and are looking for greater freedom over customization, then Smug-Mug could just be your next best friend.

Conclusion

So what's your choice? The stellar feedback of 500px's community? The quick and positive engagement of YouPic? The enthusiast niche audience of Flickr? The competitive environment of ViewBug? The "Instagram for designers?" Or the commercial web builder Smug-Mug?

Whatever your "pic" is (you could go for several or none), we hope this list has motivated you to check out some of these awesome lesser-known places for your photography journey.



8 Ways to Become More Comfortable with Your Street Photography

By James Maher



I know many people who mention that they would like to get involved in street photography, but they can't get over the initial hump, because they are too afraid to capture strangers candidly in the street.

This is a shame, because it is a wonderful and creative form of photography that everyone should try. If you are one of those people, here are eight tips to help you become more comfortable getting involved with street photography.

1. Ethics

I am not going to go into a long analysis about whether street photography is ethical. Both sides of the issue have valid arguments, and I understand the points of the many people who are against it. Some countries do not even allow it in public spaces.

Use your personal ethics when capturing strangers. If you do not feel comfortable capturing a person, do not capture them. I know photographers who don't photograph homeless people and photographers who do. Everyone has a different level of ethics.

However, keep this in mind: when you look at images of the past, what are your favorite images? I bet most of you are going to say that they are images with people and culture shown in them. These are my favorite type of image, as well. These images have a place in history and society, and they teach us about ourselves. They are very important to capture, both for the present and for the long term.

Think about street photography with this frame of mind, and you will feel more comfortable.

2. Let People Enter Your Space

It is so tough to walk up to someone, enter their personal space, and take their photo without their permission. A lot of photographers do it, but it's tough, especially at the beginning. The true key here is to pick a spot and let people enter your space.

Pick a location with foot traffic and wait there with your camera ready. The same amount of moments will occur around you whether you are walking or stationary, but it is easier to see and capture them if you are waiting in place. Most important is that by letting the subject enter your space you will feel much more comfortable capturing them.

3. Smile and Look Confident

I cringe sometimes when I see how sneaky photographers can be. I take sneaky shots and shots without looking through the viewfinder when it is necessary, but I always try to look happy, calm, and comfortable.

If you look like you are doing something wrong, people will pick up on that and feel uncomfortable. If you look like you are confident in what you're doing, people are more likely to ignore you.



If I'm in a situation where I want to put the camera to my eye and take a candid shot and I know the person will notice, I make sure to smile after. Sometimes I'll comment on how interesting the subject looks. A majority of the time, however, they will not notice or will just keep walking.



4. Disarm Them with Enthusiasm and Kindness

It's so rare that I have ever had a bad situation from taking a candid photo of a stranger. Sometimes people will come up to me and ask me if I took their photo and why. I tell them that I am a photographer doing a project on interesting New Yorkers; I thought they looked amazing and had to capture them. I will often shake their hand, look them in eye,

and ask what their name is.

If you are complimentary and enthusiastic, they will most likely feel flattered. I've made a lot of people's days by telling them this. Of course, occasionally someone will ask you to delete the photo, but after you sound so enthusiastic, they will do so nicely and will thank you when you do. Apologize and move on.

5. Bring Business Cards

For the people who stop you, it can help to have a business card printed up with your email and a link to your photography portfolio, even if you are not a professional photographer. This makes you more legitimate, and it's a great way to further break the ice. Hand them your card and tell them that you will email the photo if they contact you.

6. Try Street Portraiture

Portraiture on the street is different from candid street photography, but it is a great way to take a step toward getting over your fear. Make a point to ask one or two strangers to take their portrait at the beginning of each photography session. Some people will say no, of course, but don't let that get to you.

The more people you ask over time, the more comfortable you will become, and this comfort will follow into your traditional candid street photography.



7. Go to the Same Locations Over and Over Again

This is important for so many reasons, but becoming comfortable with the location will make you more comfortable capturing the people there. In addition, the regulars will begin to get to know you and will eventually stop noticing you all together.

8. Look at the Works of Other Street Photographers

This is my favorite tip. Look through the work of famous street photographers for inspiration. There is nothing better for building your confidence than seeing other people do this work well. They were once beginners, too, but they pushed through the problems at the beginning. Spend 20 minutes looking through the work of your favorite photographers before you walk out the door, and you will find that you will become much braver and more enthusiastic on the street.

When to use filters

By photoreview.com.au

Back in the days of film, most photographers fitted UV, haze or skylight filters to every lens, partly to block the ultraviolet radiation that could impart a blue cast to photographs (all films can record invisible UV radiation) and partly to protect the front element of the lens. Filters still have their uses for today's digital photographers, however there are situations where you need to be discriminating in your choice of filter.



A typical shot of flowing water blurred by a slow shutter speed. An ND8 filter, which reduces the light intensity by three f-stops, enabled a two-second exposure at f/11 to optimise the blurred effect.

Digital sensors are much less affected by UV radiation than film and haze penetration is less of a problem because most cameras include some form of built-in compensation that is at least as good as a regular haze filter. The colour correction provided by skylight filters is handled seamlessly by all auto white balance systems. So the traditional reasons for using these filters no longer apply.

In fact, there are valid reasons to avoid filters when shooting with digital cameras. If your camera has an anti-aliasing filter in front of the sensor (and most do) it presents a flat and highly reflective surface that causes light to bounce back into the lens. When this scattered light hits a flat piece of glass (such as a filter), it reflects back to the sensor causing veiling flare. Contrast and colour saturation will be significantly reduced.

Filters still have their uses, but there are situations where they should be avoided and, when used, you must be discriminating in your choice of filter. Even the highest quality filters can degrade image quality by increasing veiling flare and reducing image contrast.

It may not be by much. In fact, you may not be able to see it unless you enlarge the image and/or examine it very closely and have a comparison image taken with the same lens without a filter. But, if you have invested in a top-quality lens, you want to be able to achieve the best performance it is capable of "" with no compromises.

In this feature we will look at situations where filters can provide genuine benefits.



UV filter



Skylight filter



Polariser

UV, skylight and polarising filters have been popular since the days of shooting on film. Note the slightly warm colour cast of the skylight filter and the increased density of the polariser, compared with the transparent UV filter.

1. Filters as Protection

Fitting a protective filter (UV or skylight) is wise when you're shooting in places where there is salt spray, blowing sand or dust, all of which can etch the surface of the lens. A filter is also recommended when photographing small children and pets, particularly if there's a likelihood of the subject touching the lens.

When shopping for a protective filter, try to avoid cheap filters. Even the best filters can degrade image quality; cheap filters *will* degrade image quality.

Keep your filter spotlessly clean for optimal performance, particularly when photographing backlit subjects. Even a trace of grease or dust will increase veiling flare and reduce image contrast.

Look for filters with neutral colours. A filter that isn't neutral doesn't simply alter the white balance, it actually absorbs a specific waveband of colour. This changes colour relationships and intensity in uneven ways, resulting in a less subtle image.

Most skylight filters are slightly warm and UV filters can also apply slight colour casts. Even when you try to remove them with white balance adjustments, the end result is unlikely to restore the original colour relationships.

While some attenuation of blue might be acceptable when you need to cut atmospheric haze, even a slight yellow cast will attenuate deeper blues in the scene. This can mean losing some of the deep blue colour you might want to capture. Colour casts will also cause a slight loss of light, so you sacrifice a little bit of shutter speed.

If colour reproduction is important and you want to achieve consistent colour across your lenses, don't mix and match brands of filters. Stick with one brand as any colour casts are most likely to be the same for all filters of the same type. It's worth paying extra for filters with multi-resistant coating because they are genuinely more resistant to dust and scratches and will usually do a better job and last longer than uncoated filters.

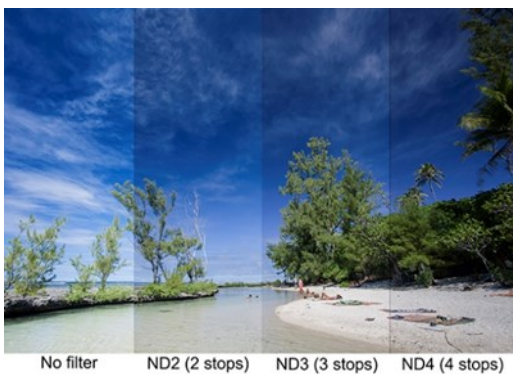
2. Filters for Control

Three types of filters are used for exposure control: polarisers, neutral density (ND) filters and grad-

uated filters. Special effects filters are also available but in most cases it is easier to use the digital filters associated with the camera's image processor, or apply effects when images are edited. We'll cover polarising filters in the Insider feature in the next issue, so we'll concentrate on ND and graduated filters here.

ND filters reduce the amount of light reaching the sensor without affecting the colour of the image. Their main use is for exposure control by providing greater flexibility to select wide lens apertures and/or slow shutter speeds in bright ambient lighting.

This illustration simulates the effects of the most popular neutral density filters, showing how up to four f-stops stop of darkening can affect brightness levels without altering image colours or tonal relationships.



ND filters are available in a wide range of densities, providing a reduction in light from one f-stop to 13 f-stops, the latter being rated as 'extreme'. The table to the right shows the density ratings of typical ND filters, along with the most widely accepted notation and the light 'transmittance' percentage.

The most common application for ND filters is enabling slow enough shutter speeds to be used to capture motion blur, particularly with water. The intensity of the filter depends on how fast the water is moving and the brightness of the ambient light.

You can usually get by with a three-stop ND filter when photographing waterfalls or cascades in normal daylight because a couple of seconds' exposure is enough to create an attractive blur. With seascapes, longer exposures will be required, typically 20 seconds or more, since the sea and clouds may not be moving as quickly. Allow for reduced light intensities on cloudy days and when the sun is close to the horizon.

No filter was needed to capture blurred spray in this shot taken just on sunrise. A 14mm lens was used on an M4/3 camera for a two-second exposure at f/8. Timing was critical to the success of this shot.

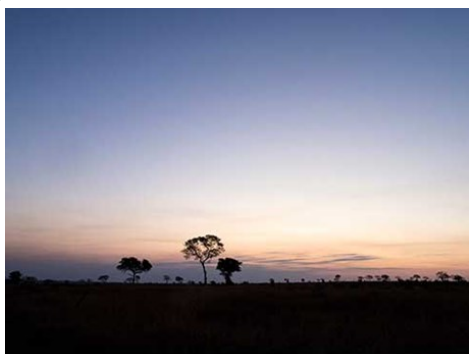
ND filters can also be used to eliminate human subjects from streetscapes and architectural photographs. Exposures of two minutes or more will be required to make people 'vanish' and it will only happen if they move through the scene.

Another use for ND filters is to enable wide lens apertures to be used to obtain a shallow depth of field on bright, sunny days. In such situations, an ND filter can provide the only way to blur out distracting backgrounds in portrait shots.



ND filters can also be used creatively to extend exposure times in order to record blur patterns produced by moving the camera with respect to the subject. In bright sunlight, the optimal exposure is 1/2 to one second at f/8 or f/11. Mounting the camera on a tripod restricts camera movements to up/down or side-to-side, while hand-holding provides greater flexibility. With practice you will learn to pre-visualise the effects of different types of movements.

Creative use of an ND filter to extend exposure times. This shot was taken with the camera hand-held



while the shutter remained open for 3.2 seconds. The blurring is due to camera shake, which is mainly vertical in nature.

The main issue associated with ND filters is that add-on filters not only reduce the light reaching the sensor, with DSLR cameras they also reduce the light passing through the optical viewfinder. Cameras with EVFs will automatically compensate by brightening the 'finder's screen. Shooting in live view mode can achieve a similar effect and both types of screen usually support manual brightness adjustment.

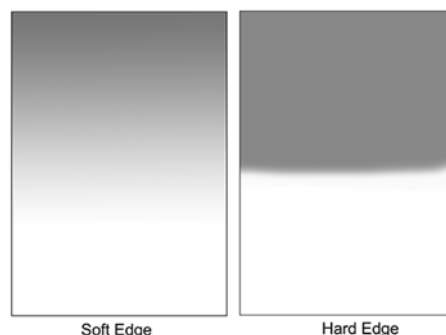


Some cameras come with dial-in ND filters that reduce recordable light without affecting the 'finder or screen image. However, the extent of adjustment is usually restricted to a maximum of three or four f-stops.

Graduated filters have variable light transmission with one end being optically clear (and transmitting 100% of the light), while the opposite end is of neutral density or has a colour that changes the hue in the areas it covers. The transition between these zones can be abrupt ('hard edge') or gradual ('soft edge').

This illustration shows the differences between soft edge and hard edge graduated neutral density filters.

Hard edge filters are used when there is an abrupt change in brightness, such as you would see in the zone between a dark area of land or sea and a bright sky. Soft edge filters are used when the light and dark portions are not distinctly separated and when horizons aren't totally straight.



ND graduates are mainly used to bring an overly-bright part of a scene within the dynamic range the image sensor can record, thereby preventing highlight clipping. Coloured graduates introduce colour, while also reducing the light level in the filtered part of the scene.

The top picture was taken without a filter, while a graduated ND filter with a soft edge was used for the lower photo to enable an exposure that would bring out detail in the foreground without over-brightening the sky.

Like polarisers, graduates are angle-critical and they must be correctly aligned to cover the area you want to darken. Although they darken only part of the scene, this can be enough to affect the camera's metering system. Evaluative multipattern metering usually yields the best results.

Use the brightness histogram to set exposure levels, ensuring the filter reduces the light levels enough without blowing out highlights or losing shadow information. If the histogram doesn't reach the right hand end of the graph, the filter is probably too dark to deliver good results.

Like regular ND filters, ND graduates come in different densities, the most popular being ND2, ND4 and ND8. Most photographers tend to buy a set of graduates to handle different lighting conditions.



Without a graduated ND filter, the sky in this scene would have been too bright to show much detail in the clouds (which are the main subject of the picture). The bottom quarter of the frame should be cropped off before the image was printed to improve the composition of the picture.

Practical Matters

Filters are normally made from resin, polyester or glass. Polyester is the cheapest option and has the lowest optical quality. Glass filters are usually the

most expensive and many include advanced coatings to minimise flare and ghosting as well as darkened rims to further reduce reflections.

Circular, screw-mounted filters are usually easier to adjust and more compact to carry around because filters with the same diameter are stackable. But, if you have two lenses with different filter thread sizes, you may need to buy two filters (which aren't stackable), whereas with a system type of filter you would only require another adaptor ring for the filter holder. It's best to buy a filter to match the largest lens you own and get step-down rings for fitting it to smaller lenses.

Stacking filters is not recommended for actual shooting even though a polariser can be attached on top of a UV protective filter. The first problem is that the depth of the filter rims will probably cause a small amount of vignetting, particularly with wide angle lenses. The second is that each filter you add increases the number of glass-to-air surfaces and, with it, the potential to degrade image quality.

To minimise the risk of vignetting, choose screw-in filters with slim rims and select a larger filter holder than the minimum required, particularly for wide angle lenses. And minimise the number of filters, leaving them off unless they provide a genuine benefit.

Square, slot-in filters require an adapter and holder, which means more gear to carry. Initially they are trickier to set up, but they're more adaptable. It's easy to stack ND filters for increased exposure times or combine different types of filters, such as ND graduates with a polariser.

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ITEM of the MONTH

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