

THE ENRICHMENT PROJECT

Badge Program

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DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY: BASICS

Steps

1. Why do you take photos?

The reasons why will often influence not only your choice of camera, but peripherals as well. Photography can be artistic, to capture memories, to supplement your written words, to share things you've created, to preserve documents and more. Your reason may be because it's a fun hobby. List the reasons why you take photos? What are you planning to do with them?

2. Advantages vs. disadvantages.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of digital photography? What can you do to minimize the disadvantages? Look at your choice(s) in Step 1 and decide if the disadvantage is something you need to overcome.

Some disadvantages might include:

- Temperature affecting battery life
- Small image preview on camera
- Editing photos
- Archival limits
- Features limited by your camera
- Resolution issues

Some advantages might include:

- Immediate gratification of viewing photos
- Ability to manipulate image
- Take shots for information only (location / staging)
- Cloud storage
- Digital sharing

3. Thoughts before you shoot: resolution.

What is your camera's resolution? The more pixels per inch, the larger you can print your image clearly. If you've seen a photo that looks "blocky", it was enlarged more than there were pixels to support it. What you do with your final photo determines your pixel need. Here's a short list to think about.

- Apple monitors need 72 ppi
- PC monitors need 96 ppi
- Standard printing needs 300 ppi
- High-end (fashion magazine) printing needs 450 ppi
- Text printing (readable) needs 800 ppi

Adjust the resolution on your camera if you feel you need to. Remember that you can remove pixels from an image but you can't add them.

Digital Photography: Basics

Whether you have a new camera or you would like to add to your photography skills, we'll explore what your camera does and practice taking some shots. We'll also think about common concerns before they become issues. So, get your camera and your owner's manual before we start!

When you feel comfortable with the basics, check out our "Digital Photography: Improving Your Photos" to continue your journey.



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4. Thoughts before you shoot: color.

Most cameras save their files as JPG files. The JPG format supports 16.8 million colors. This compression format groups similar colors together. The smaller you compress it, the more it groups colors and you lose detail. For example, if you take a picture of the sky with various shades of blue and compress it, when you open it back up, many of the blues will have changed so that similar colors are now the same color.

Professional photographers use the RAW setting as it stores 4.3 billion colors and doesn't compress them. Is this difference important to you? Read about these formats, find out what your camera supports and decide which is right for you.

5. Thoughts before you shoot: storage.

Without the cost of film and printing, digital photography is cheap. As a result, people take a lot of pictures. That coupled with your resolution and color can swell the size of your photo archives.

Digital photos are easily manipulated. Always keep your originals untouched in one location. Set up a filing system that makes sense to you so you can find your originals. Keep your edited photos in a separate area or use naming conventions so you can easily identify the untouched versus adjusted images. If you make a mistake editing your photo, you can go back to the original and start again. This duplication of images allows you a "safety net", but significantly increases the amount of storage you need.

In addition, you want to make sure to store more than one set of originals. Power surges and magnetic fields can damage your hard drive and you can lose your photos. Plan and start an archival storage system before you are in a critical situation.

6. Thoughts before you shoot: software.

Software for editing your photo can come with your camera or you may want to strive for the high-end, Adobe Photoshop. Look at the software choices available to you. Remember, the more features and power, the larger the learning curve. In addition, you may want to look at software to create slide shows, videos and more.

Examine your software options based on your list from Step 1. Take a class, read from groups / blogs or talk to someone who uses the software you're thinking of using to find out if it will fit your needs.

LEARN YOUR CAMERA

7. Modes.

With your camera and owner's manual in hand, start with the following modes to understand what your camera can do. If you have modes beyond these, explore those on your own.

- Auto Mode: Picture of a camera or the word "Auto"
- Portrait Mode: Profile of a head
- Sports / Action Mode: Picture of a person running
- Night Mode: Silhouette of a person with a moon or star
- Museum Mode: Picture of a museum / building
- Movie Mode: Picture of an old fashioned tripod camera



8. **Peripheral equipment.**

You have your camera and you're looking at all the extra *stuff* you want to have. Don't buy things because you want them. Will you actually use it? Will you be willing to carry it around?

Items you might want to consider purchasing include additional batteries and cards. A tripod will help stabilize your camera for low-light settings. Find a few things you think would be cool and research the cost and uses. Go back to Step 1 and determine if it fits with your current photography needs.

9. **Don't leave home without it.**

The more you use your digital camera, the better your photos. You don't have to worry about missing a shot because you forgot your camera. Explore places you can put your camera that are easily accessible.

10. **Experiment and have fun.**

Experiment with the following:

- Stand in one spot and take pictures with each mode on your camera. Do this a number of times and review the images to see the differences.
- Explore ways to hold your camera to minimize / eliminate shake and increase your stability
- Reaction time practice. I like to have my kids jump in a pool and practice getting "air shots." This gives me a feel for how long after I hit the button the camera actually takes the shot. It will also give you a feel for how long it takes until the camera is ready to take another.
- Practice distance shots. This includes landscapes and field sport shots. Find out what modes work best for these.
- Low light conditions. It is rare that light is good for great photos. Be aware of the light and which of your settings will give you the best shots possible.

11. **Plan your shots.**

When you want to take shots of an event, sports game, birthday party, etc., it helps if you know the shots you want to take. Trying to get the entire team in all the shots may sound like a great idea, but if they don't know one or two of the players may wander away before you get your shot. What is the story you want to tell with your shots? Can you recognize the people in your shots? Close-ups of faces convey feelings and tell a story on their own.

Take "staging" shots beforehand. Later, you can focus on the action. For example, get shots of the decorations and cake before the party. Perhaps a few shots of sports equipment or the field before the team starts playing. Additionally, you may take shots of signs, flyers, etc. so you have information to go with your photos. Chances are you'll misplace the flyer or forget where the big game took place. By including these extra shots, you will be sure to keep your facts straight for years to come.

Make a check list for your next event of photos you want to take. Make sure you get everything on your check list. Review these shots with the photos you took from another event. Do you get a more "complete" feel from your planned shots? If you are still missing a couple shots, adjust your check list for your next shoot.

12. **"Wasted" shots.**

There's no such thing as wasted shots. As soon as you stop to review your shots, you'll miss the best shot of the entire event. When your photo shoot is complete, you can discard the "bad" shots. If you have shots that are really close, look for closed eyes, blurriness and other distracting elements to pick the best one.

13. **Keeping your camera safe.**

Your camera should last you 3-4 years. Look into ways to keep your camera safe from a carrying case to cleaning cloths. Start practices that keep your camera safe so that they become a good habit.



14. **Explore places to learn.**

Find out if you have local classes available to learn digital photography. Ask a photographer to teach you in exchange for something you can teach him. Explore local amateur photography clubs. You can also look to Web offerings for classes that you do on your own.

Feel free to check out the Enrichment Project “Digital Photography: Improve Your Photos” badge program for steps you might want to take to start improving your photography skills.

Sites to Explore

www.shortcourses.com/index.html

www.digicamhelp.com/index.php

www.ehow.com/how_2005048_best-camera-beginners.html

photographycourse.net

www.berniecode.com/writing/photography/beginners

beginnersphotographyblog.com

digital-photography-school.com

zatz.com/connectedphotographer/article/understanding-the-parts-of-your-camera

www.makeuseof.com (under “EBOOKS”—The Essential Guide to Digital Photography)

Check out [larajla's](http://larajla.com) Enrichment Project to start your own adventure.