

Digital Photography Workflow

Before you take Your Pictures

1. Choose File Format

The usual choices are JPEG and RAW and TIFF. JPEG will produce the smallest files, RAW larger and TIFF largest. If you little photo editing and prefer to “get it right” when you take the picture, then shoot JPEG. If you can, and want to do more editing, choose RAW. With larger sized memory cards, 2 or more Gigs, the larger RAW format file size will not be a major impediment.

2. Choose Color Space

Your choices are Adobe RGB and sRGB. If your intention is to use your photos for on-screen viewing only, use sRGB. Otherwise set your camera at Adobe RGB. The setting is not so important when shooting RAW since you can change the setting when opening the RAW document.

3. Choose ISO setting.

If you can choose the setting, use the lowest setting as default, usually 100 or 200. Higher ISO setting will produce grainy or noisy pictures.

4. Set White Balance

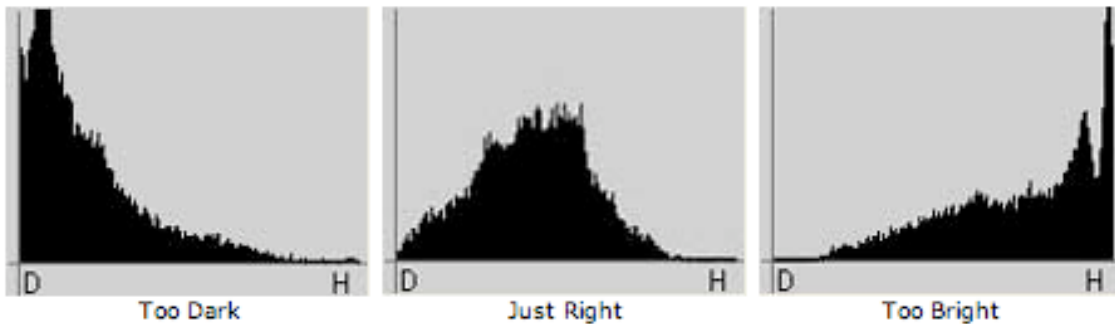
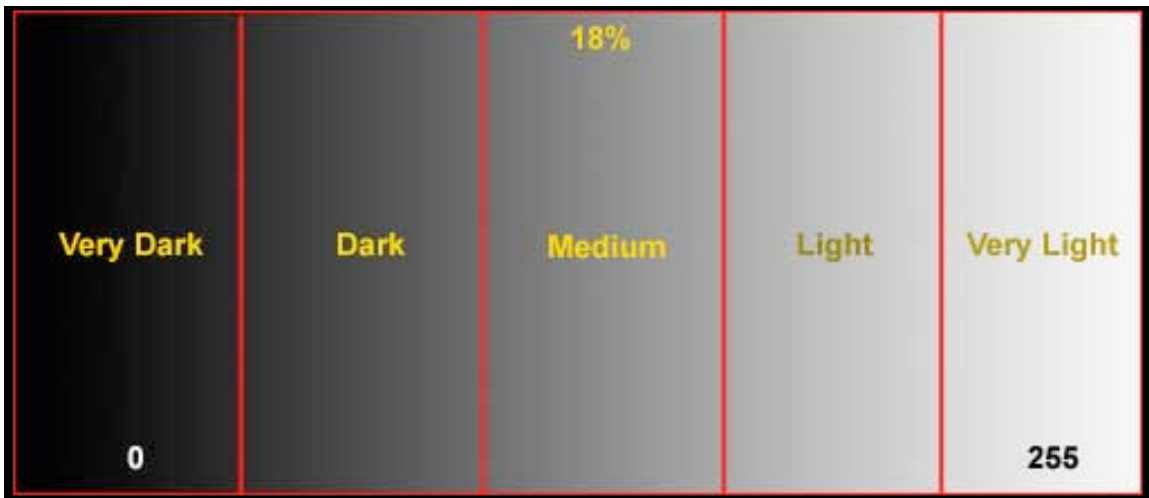
When the white balance setting does not match the lighting situation, you will get a certain colour cast that makes the picture appear warm (yellow-red) or cool (blue-green). If you use the JPEG setting, this information gets locked into the file, and not as easy to correct. If you shoot RAW, this is not a problem as you set the white balance when you edit. In most cases, the AUTO setting for white balances suffices, but keep tabs on the results as you go along and adjust the settings accordingly.

Taking the Picture

5. Make the Exposure

You do not want to over or under expose your pictures. If you had to make choice, defer to underexposing as you can do more editing. If you overexpose, you have little or no data to work with.

In many cameras there is a “Histogram Review” feature. Use this feature to monitor your picture taking behaviour. Histograms read the tonal range of our photos.



“Just right,” is subjective. For example,, if you take a picture of a full moon, your histogram will look different. It is a good idea of using the histogram data to understand your picture taking and make adjustment according to the results that you are seeking.

6. Transfer Pictures to Your Computer

Use a card reader to move your pictures to your computer. Make a folder on your desktop using a recognizable name like Tom’s 4th Birthday Party. Grab and drag those pictures into the folder. If you have other shooting session on the card, make other folders and put the pictures in the right folder. Then, eject your card. Do not erase what is on your card until you complete the next step.

7. Archive Your Folders

Make a copy of your new folders on another hard drive or burn a CD or DVD. Make sure that you label the CD or DVD and put them in a safe place.

Post Production and Editing

8. Work with the Folders on Your Desktop

Move your Folder(s) from the desktop, and then rename the pictures in each folder. This can be done easily by batch rename. You can change the name again later, but at least now you have something recognizable when you are looking for pictures.

9. Preserve the Original

Make duplicate copies of the renamed pictures. And put them in a folder called “Original Pictures”. Of course, you already have the pictures archived, but they are on disc media or on another hard drive and are not as accessible.

This way, if you mess up, you can always go back to original.

Remember, that every time you save and re-save a JPEG picture, you lose data due to compression... more on this later.

10. Fix the Biggest Problems First

Usually this means overall tonality and colour. Try out auto levels and auto colour. If you like the results, great. If not, undo and use the levels and colour adjustment tools.

11. Start Global and then go Local

Start making adjustments that affect your entire image first. For example, do tone, contrast, colour, exposure first and then crop last.

12. Perform Retouching

Use the tools red eye tool, clone stamp and other touch up tools.

13. Perform Spotting

Make your picture larger (zoom) and start looking for dust, noise and scratches and then use the spot healing brush to fix them.

14. Apply Creative Effects

15. Archive Project File

Save the file as a .psd file. Do not save as JPEG. This will compress your picture, flatten layers and reduce your opportunities for further editing.

16. Scale and Sharpen for Specific Output

What is your output target? WEB, inkjet, commercial printing. To make sure that you do not change the master project file, choose Image > Duplicate before making changes.

- A. Cut your picture to size by choosing Image > Image Size.
- B. If you want to sharpen the picture, make sure that you choose Layer > Flatten so you will sharpen all layers.

17. Save Output to Specific File Format

You have many choices here: JPEG, PDF, TIFF, WEB Optimized, and more. If going to a commercial print shop the printer what they require. Images going to a commercial printer are usually converted to CMYK mode by choosing Image > Mode > CMYK Colour after inputting the Color Settings provided by the printing house.