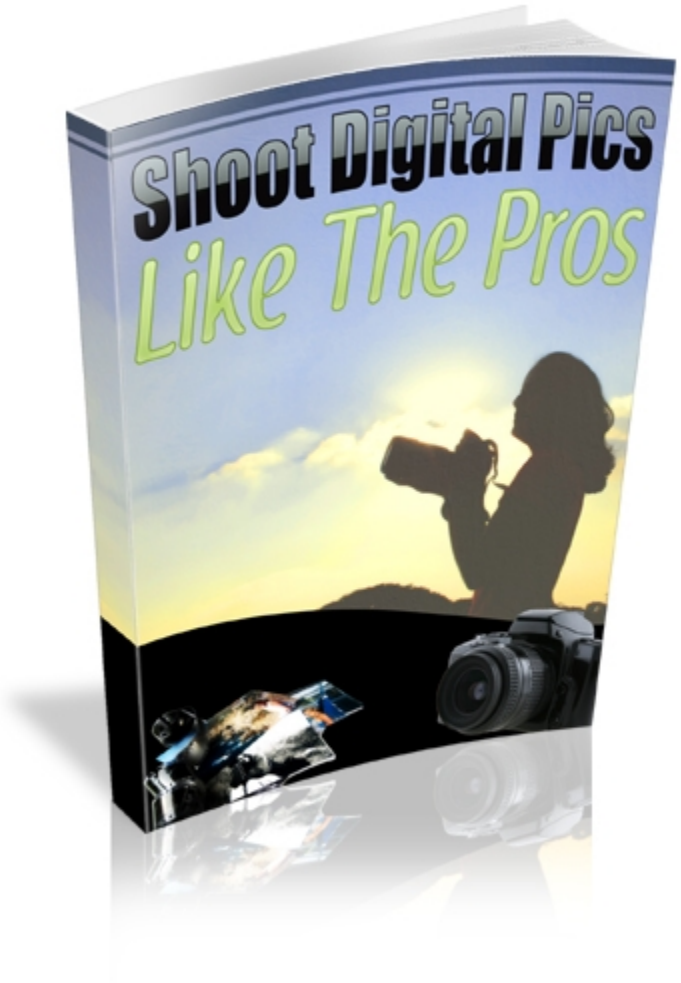
Shoot Digital Pics
Like The Pros

written by:
LearnDigitalPhotographyNow.com



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Getting Started As A Digital Photographer

Digital photography is definitely the best way to take your photos these days. While film cameras have their perks, the advantages of digital cameras are far better! Digital image recording simply opens up many new, valuable, and perhaps unanticipated opportunities.

For one thing, you've always got to make sure you have some extra film available with analog cameras. That is not only a hassle, it is also very expensive! With digital photography all you need is a memory card and you can fill it up with photos whenever you want and simply delete the ones you no longer need or have already uploaded from the memory card.

It’s not like you have to completely re-learn how to take photos either! In fact, digital and film photography are far more alike than they are different. You still need to make use of lenses, flash, and proper composition. The difference is that digital cameras are actually easier to use and offer more opportunities than ever before.

You won’t find this written on the box, but every digital camera comes with a license to experiment, test, tweak (and even screw up) to your heart’s content. Since every shot you take costs virtually nothing, why hold back? You can literally take dozens of shots with the hopes of landing a few keepers. This is something even the pros do, and that’s why it’s such a great feature of having a digital camera. There is no better or faster way to learn! Instant feedback is one of digital photography’s most powerful advantages.

How To Choose A Camera

The first thing you're going to want to do is choose a good camera. There are an incredible number of options out there, ranging from just under $100 to several thousand dollars. Of course, the more expensive cameras are generally the professional ones that the pros use. Those that are just $100 are point-and-shoot standard digital cameras. If you want the best results you might want to go in the middle range to the high range when you choose your camera.

One of the best things you can do to help you make your choice is to go online to read reviews. While the camera may look great on the box, people who have actually used it might have a different opinion! It may be that the camera you thought looked excellent is actually a dud.

If you're finding that the cameras you want are too expensive -- don't worry! It's easy to find good deals. If you're searching online, you should always look for a coupon code to help bring the price down even further. If you're searching off-line, you'll want to keep your eye out for weekly store circulars that come in your newspaper, because there are often deals on digital cameras.

Don't forget that if you do eventually want to get into professional photography you'll

need a camera that can handle attachments and accessories (many point-and-shoot cameras can not).

The good news is that it's less expensive than ever before to get a good SLR digital camera, so you may want to "do it right" the first time. What used to cost a couple thousand dollars a few years ago, now costs just under $1000. Just do your research and you're sure to find the camera that’s right for you.

Read The Manual

After you've chosen your digital camera, the first thing you're going to want to do is sit down with it as soon as you can. You can't hope to take good pictures if you don't understand the basic and advanced features your camera comes with. Every camera is different! Even if you are well-versed in the world of film cameras, digital cameras are different enough that you'll need to educate yourself.

Another great perk of reading your manual is that you'll probably discover some photography tips you would not have thought of otherwise. There are automatic and manual settings that can help you achieve amazing things with your photographs. As you read about these things, make sure you try them out on your camera. That's the best way to learn!

It's not about memorizing everything about your camera right away! Still, using the functions will become like second nature for you if you take the time to read. Also, practice every chance you get, because that will help the information sink in even more. You can take pictures of things as simple as your feet, things that are in your house, your family members, and things outdoors. This will help you get a feel for how your camera functions.

Understanding Your Camera's Settings

There are some settings you need to learn more about as soon as possible. These probably won't be familiar to you even if you have a film camera experience.

The first is the way the pictures are stored. It's not like the days where you had to quickly put your film in a canister role and take it to a shop to get printed. With digital cameras you can see the picture right away, and it is immediately stored on the camera. This might be in a JPEG or RAW format. Many modern digital cameras will save your image in both formats. The RAW format is the highest quality, but it is very large. The JPEG format often loses a lot of quality but it's the easiest to work with on your computer and to send to friends and family.

A great setting on your camera is the auto focus. If you're used to trying to figure out the focus setting yourself, you'll be very relieved to discover that your camera will now do it all for you. Still, it's important to keep in mind that the camera does not always "get it right." As you become more advanced with your photography, you will want to learn how to focus your camera manually as well. This will be very helpful in special situations.

Another feature you find is the auto-ISO. You actually want to avoid this for anything other than low-light action shots. You should try the lowest ISO setting on your camera before venturing higher. The higher your ISO, the more "noise" you'll have in your shot.

As you become more advanced, you also want to learn much more about white balance and camera sharpening. When you're just starting out, it's fine to accept the camera defaults for these. Even so, you'll soon find that you get better photographs if you learn how to do the settings manually.

Yet another setting that is common in digital cameras is macro mode. You can get some really great pictures of close-up objects using this mode. This is something that only the most experienced photographers could get right back to the days of film cameras. These days, all it takes is an automatic setting on your camera! There are also some incredible manual settings you can tweak to make your macro shots better than ever.

Finally, one of the biggest problems that people have with digital cameras is the lag between pressing the shutter button and the photo actually being taken. This can be very annoying, and results in some missed shots. This is one of the main reasons why it's so important to research your camera ahead of time. The companies themselves do not usually disclose the shutter lag time, but other consumers certainly do! It doesn't matter how much you're spending on your camera, you want to make sure that the shutter will not be a problem.

The reason the shutter lag occurs is because digital cameras have more to do in preparing to take a photo than film cameras. They have to focus the lens, just like with film cameras, but they also have to take a pre-exposure to get a proper color balance. The good thing about this is that digital cameras are able to achieve better exposure, color

balance, and better focused images than film cameras. The bad news is that you might miss some of your photo opportunities.

Even if you do end up with a camera that has a long shutter lag time, there is something you can do about it. The simplest trick is to simply push the shutter button down half way as you are waiting for the action. Keep your finger down halfway until you're ready to take the photo. Then press it the rest of the way.

Pressing halfway signals the camera to immediately choose focus, color balance, and exposure. For example, when I'm shooting basketball games I keep the shutter button half depressed, and press all the way when I see something great -- and I get great action shots!

A second approach is to switch to manual exposure and focus. If lighting is stable, as it is indoors, this works rather well. Most digital cameras have tremendous depth of field, so focus is not as critical as it might be otherwise. Set your focus for a typical distance, and you will probably be happy with the results. If you are at an indoor sporting event or something similar, you want to adjust the shutter speed as high as possible. Choose maximum aperture and adjust shutter speed for proper exposure.

Photography Basics

While it's important to understand the features and quirks of your camera, you also need to know the basics of photography in general! There are some simple tips and tricks that follow to help you take a better picture. You can use these as a guide to lead you in capturing the extraordinary pictures you crave. Remember -- there are exceptions to every rule. If you think that something looks good but is not in this guide, don't be afraid to try it. Enjoy!

Using The Viewfinder

This seems like a little thing, but they are often times were taking just a small pause before snapping the shot will go a long way toward improving the outcome. Just check that everything is in the viewfinder that you want to be, and that there is not too much excess there. You should also check that the settings on the camera are just as you want them to be, and that the camera is straight and level.

If you're shooting a person, try to make sure the objects behind the subject do not appear cluttered around the subject's head or body. People often think that they need to add extra stuff in the background, but close-up pictures of people that are framed properly are often more interesting. An example of a no-no is having a lamp behind someone's head, because this will detract from the picture.

Use Different Angles

You should try shooting your subject from different angles instead of just straight on. Often times this can add a unique point of view and dimension to the picture. You should not be afraid to stand on a chair, climb up a hill, lay on your back, or get on your knees. Great artists will go to great lengths to get that perfect shot!

Try turning the camera 90° in taking a vertical shot instead of a horizontal shot. This technique works great when you're shooting something that is long, or when you're taking a picture of one or two people.

Continuous Shots

You'll likely notice that there is a delay between the time you can take one shot, and the time you can take another. This is annoying!

The good news is that many cameras on the market today have buffers that allow you to continue shooting during the processing time. This is a must-have for fast action photography. If your camera doesn't have this setting you will have to wait between shots. That's why it might be a good idea to look for a camera with a fast shot-to-shot time, or a continuous mode. Generally, you won't have to worry about this because even point and shoot cameras offer this feature.

If your camera lets you override the auto-focus, you want to use this feature if you take a

live action shots, or if you are shooting through glass. Even if your camera has a buffer, the auto focus may not react fast enough to allow you to snap pictures if you shoot quickly or the light is too low.

White Balance

Have you ever noticed that your shots sometimes have a cold, clammy feel to them? If so, you're not alone. The default white balance setting for digital cameras is on auto, which is fine for most snapshots. Still, it tends to be a bit on the "cool" side.

When you're shooting outdoor portraits and sunny landscapes you should try changing your white balance setting from auto to "cloudy." The reason for this is because it's like putting a warming filter on your camera. It results in richer, warmer pictures.

What Makes A Good Photo?

While it's important to understand everything above, it is also very necessary to know what makes a good photo in the first place. Your goal as a photographer is to grab the attention of the viewer, communicate an idea, or share an experience. You can also usually tell an amateur photo from a professional photo right away . Understanding the basics of photo composition is the best way to make sure your photos turn out as professionally as possible.

Usually, the strongest photos are those that are simple and present the subject in a clear, uncluttered way. Photographers work with line, shape, texture, color, and pattern. Before we go into those elements, here are some "golden rules, you should follow with your photography.

Always have your camera with you. The most common reason people miss the pictures because they don't have their camera! Think about those times you've been out and about when something amazing happens, and you said to yourself, "why don't I have my camera!?" You never know what you might miss when inspiration strikes, so make it a habit to have your camera handy.

Shoot more pictures. Even if you think you have enough pictures, you never can tell! There is no added cost to taking more pictures with a digital camera, so why just take one picture when you can take several? Even the most day-to-day scenes can be memorable in a few years, so shoot away! You also never know which shot will be the best. Since it's free, you really can't lose.

Trust your eye. After you study the laws of composition, you can ultimately trust your own vision and feelings when it comes to taking your pictures. For example, when you frame the shot you should move the camera around and explore the scene. Find an angle and composition that feels right to you and take the picture.

In reality is not the camera that makes the picture, it's the photographer! You can buy the most expensive camera on the market but it doesn't guarantee you will take better photographs. What you need it is a way to become more experienced so that you'll be able to find the best shot.

Now that you understand that, it's important to make sure your composition is on target. You'll need to learn about the rule of thirds, as well as framing techniques. This will help you know exactly where to aim your camera and where to focus so your pictures turn out better than you ever thought possible. Once you learn these techniques, it would seem like second nature. Before you learn them, it might seem like a foreign language!

In addition to learning that, you can certainly invest in different accessories, lenses, and filters to help you take more memorable photographs. Still, there are many ways you can take memorable pictures without spending tons of money on expensive accessories.

Polarizing

Warm up the tones of the picture -- this will make the picture more aesthetically pleasing

to there will not be as harsh. This works very well for outdoor photos. Use your camera on the “cloudy” setting to lessen the harshness.

If your camera doesn't have this, you can actually use a simple pair of sunglasses to filter the shot. Place the glasses as close to the camera lens as possible, then check their position on the LCD viewfinder to make sure you don’t have the rims in the shot. This will enhance the colors and deepen sky tones in outdoor photos. Position yourself so that the sun is over your right or left shoulder for the best effect. The polarizing effect is strongest when the light source is at a 90° angle from the subject.

Here is a picture without a filter on it:

And here is one with a filter:

Notice how much softer the second one looks -- it can really help "make" your pictures when you use a filter of some sort!

Fill Flash Mode

One of the great hidden features on digital cameras is the "fill flash" or flash on mode. By taking control of the flash you can make sure it goes on when you want it to, not when the camera deems it appropriate. If you do this, you've just taken an important step toward capturing great outdoor photographs.

When the camera is in flash on mode, it exposes for the background first and adds just enough flash to illuminate your portrait subject. The result is that you get a professional looking picture where everything in the composition looks good. This is something that wedding photographers routinely use. After you get the hang of using the/outdoors, you can try a couple variations of this theme by positioning the subjects so that the sun illuminates their hair from the side or the back. This is often referred to as rim lighting.

Another good technique is to put the model in the shade under a tree, and then use the flash to illuminate the subject. This keeps the model comfortable and cool they won't have to squint their eyes from the harsh sun. This also often results in a more relaxed looking portrait.

Here is an example of the above concept:

By placing the boys in the open shade beneath a tree and turning on the fill flash, both of those subjects in the background are properly exposed. Remember, though, that most built-in flashes only have a range of 10 feet or less. Make sure you don't stand too far away when using fill flash outdoors.

Macro Shots

Remember how fun it was when you were a kid to discover a whole new world beneath your feet while playing on the grass? When you got very close to the ground, you could see an entire community of creatures that you never knew existed!

These days, you might not want to lie in your belly in the backyard, but if you activate the close-up or macro mode on your digital camera and explore your world in finer detail, you'll be rewarded with fresh new images that are unlike anything you've ever shot before.

Even the simplest objects take on new fascination in macro mode. The best part is, it's so easy to do this with digital cameras.

Look at this picture of a simple flowering bloom:

Nature can look much different and even much more compelling when you shoot a close-up!

Just looked for the close-up or macro mode icon, which is usually a flower symbol. Once you turn it on you should get as close to an object as your camera will allow. Once you've found something to your liking, hold the shutter button down about halfway to allow the camera to focus. When the confirmation light gives you the go-ahead, press the shutter down the rest of the way to record the image.

Keep in mind that you have a very shallow depth of field when using the close-up mode, so focus on the part of the subject that is most important to you, and let the rest of the

image go soft. This will result in an excellent looking photo.

Dealing With The Horizon Line

For some mysterious reason, most human beings have a hard time holding the camera level when using LCD monitors on their digicams. The result is that sunsets looked cockeyed, landscapes are lopsided, and towers are tilted.

Part of the problem is that your camera's optics system introduces distortion when rendering broad panoramas on tiny, 2-inch screens. The trees they tried to photograph might look straight when you see them with the naked eye, but they bow inward on your camera's monitor. It's no wonder that new photographers often become disoriented when lining up their shots!

What can you do? Well, there's no silver bullet to solve all of your horizon line problems, but you can make improvements by keeping a few things in mind.

First of all, be aware that it's important to capture images as level as possible. If you're having difficulty framing the scene to your liking you can take your best shot at a straight picture and then reposition to take another one. Taking a third might offer even better adjustment. The chances are very good that one of the images will "feel right" when you view them on the computer. You can simply disregard the others after you find the perfectly aligned image.

Look for the natural lines in nature are shown above the picture. Use these kinds of guides when lining up your view. Sometimes, you can use the line that exists where the sky meets the water, or you can use a strip of land. If you practice level framing of your shots, the process will become more natural over time and your percentage of level horizon lines will increase dramatically. Don't forget -- using a tripod is very essential in this case!

Memory Cards

You definitely need to invest in a large memory card for your camera if you want to be able to take many photographs to get the best shots.

If you have a three mega pixel camera you should get at least a 256 MB card.

If you have a 4 mega pixel camera you should get at least a 512 MB memory card. If you have six mega pixel or higher camera you should get at least a 1 GB memory card.

That way, you'll never miss another shot because your memory card is full!

One of the most important reasons for having a massive memory card is to enable you to shoot your camera's highest resolution. If you pay a premium price for six mega pixel digicam you should get your money's worth and shoot at six mega pixels. That requires a larger memory card! And, while you're at it, you should shoot your camera's highest quality compression setting too.

If you take a beautiful picture at the low 640 x 480 resolution, that means you can only make a print about the size of a credit card. That's definitely not good for those eight by tens and poster size prints.

On the other hand, if you recorded the image at 2272 x 1704 (four mega pixels) or larger, you can make a lovely 8 x 10" photo quality print suitable for framing.

If you were not able to get as close to the action as you wanted, adding these extra mega pixels and will allow you to crop your image and still have enough resolution to make a decent sized print.

You can really tell the difference when you look at the following pictures:

The one at left is shown at a higher resolution while the one at right is shown in the lower resolution. It really can make all the difference!

The point is, if you have enough memory (and you know you should), then there's no reason to shoot a lower resolution and risk missing the opportunity to show off your work in a big way.

Self Timer Function

There is no reason why you can't be in some of the pictures you take! It's often helpful to invest in a small tripod to make a self-portrait taking easier. You can also set the camera on a table or somewhere else to set the self timers they have time to jump in the photo.

To take self-portraits and put yourself in group photos, you want to line up the shot, activate the self timer, and get in the picture. It's helpful to turn off the flash to ensure that that the exposure is even on everyone who is in the composition. Also, make sure the focusing sensor is aimed at a person in the group and not in the distant background, or you'll get very sharp trees and fuzzy family members.

Is Digital Photography Really Right For You?

While it might seem like the section belongs beginning of this book, it’s really best placed right here -- now that you've had a chance to see what digital photography is and what it involves. So, is digital photography really something you want to get into? If you like convenient, easy ways to take your photographs then the answer is probably yes!

It’s not enough, however, to just buy a digital camera and start using it. While they are very simple to use, it’s important to learn as much as you can about the camera, different photography situations, and camera settings. That’s why it’s critical for you to educate yourself as much as possible and to practice the things you learn.

Where To Go Next

This is the end of your special free report. We packed a lot into these few pages to give you as much useful information as possible so you can get started with digital photography.

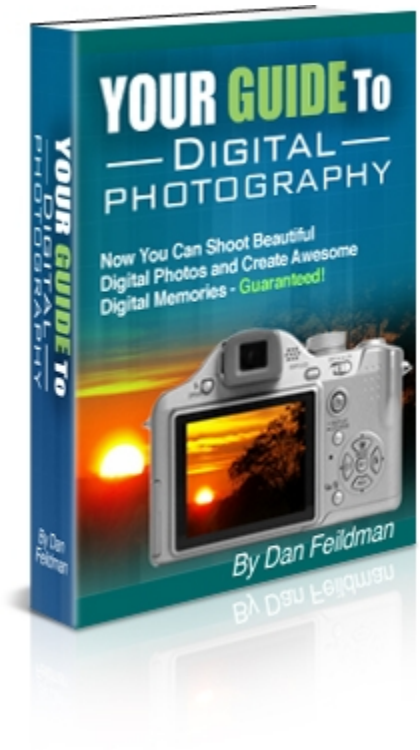
However, there is still so much more involved in shooting great photos. You need to discover how to create the proper lighting, composition, the graphical limits, image storage, image manipulation, different photography situations, shutter release, and many more expert photography tips. They're bound to be situations where you aren't sure which settings you need and what you need to do.

Since it's so critical that you learn as much as possible the next step is to download our "Guide to Digital Photography" home study course here:

http://learndigitalphotographynow.com/guide

I also strongly recommend you check out our free blog, which is updated weekly with great photography tips:

http://learndigitalphotographynow.com/blog



The time you save in trying to figure these things out will be well worth the small purchase price. Photographers can go for years without learning the information in our Guide to Digital Photography home study course. Make sure you get a head start by reading the book to save yourself years of frustration.