theuniversody

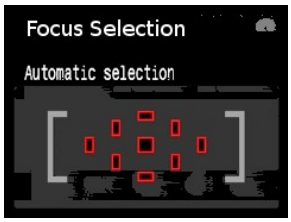
A basic guide to using a D.S.L.R.

This guide is designed to give an overview of the controls and options available when using a DSLR camera. It is not specific to any make or model and not all cameras will have the same features and they will not all be controlled in the same way. You will need to read the manual for your camera to find out how these notes relate to the equipment you are using.

This is a guide to the options you will need to find and set on your camera to allow you take control of your picture making.

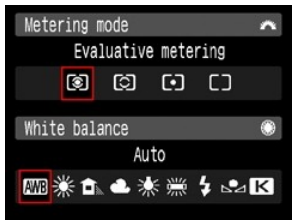
There are a number of basic setting that need to be made before you start to capture your photographs. These include auto focus, metering, white light balance, ISO, colour space, exposure modes, image quality, sharpening and in camera processing.

Focusing



Assuming that you will be using auto focus on the camera you will need to set your auto focus preferences. Depending on the model of camera you are using you will have a number of options, most default to the camera 'guessing' the focussing point from a range of possible points. I always set one auto focus point in the centre of the image.
Then I know where the camera is focussing and can lock the focus point and recompose the image if required. There may also be options for single or continuous (tracking) modes.

Metering

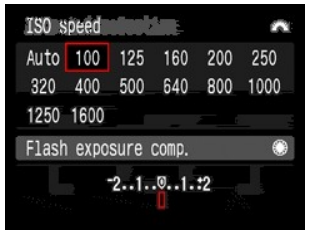


You will also need to set the metering options, these may include a number of possible 'auto' modes, average, centre-weighted, and spot.

White light balance

This can be set to auto, or a number of defined light sources – daylight, tungsten light, flash etc. or a specific colour temperature.

ISO



You will need to set an ISO sensitivity, (equivalent to film speed) This can be auto (leaving the settings to the camera) or to a specific ISO. To have proper control over the quality of your images you should set an ISO dependent on the lighting conditions and the type and quality of image you wish to capture.

Colour Space

Set the colour space capture in line with your colour work-flow management. The options are usually either SRGB or ARGB

Exposure Modes

Fully Automatic Exposure
Camera has complete control over exposure, point-and-shoot operation.

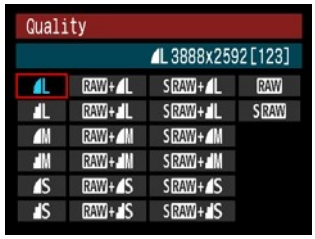
Program Auto Exposure (Flexible)
Very similar to AUTO exposure but you have access to all the normal manual controls, can set the ISO, exposure compensation, use AE lock, bracketing etc. Program AE is flexible which means that you can select one of a variety of equal exposures by turning the main dial.

Shutter Priority Auto Exposure
In this mode you select the shutter speed and the camera will calculate the correct aperture for the exposure (depending on metered value; metering mode, ISO).

Aperture Priority Auto Exposure
In this mode you select the aperture and the camera will calculate the correct shutter speed for the exposure (depending on metered value; metering mode, ISO).

Full Manual Exposure
In this mode you select the aperture and the shutter speed from any combination of the above (plus BULB for shutter speed, apertures limited by the lens used).

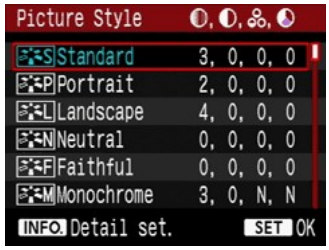
Image capture quality



Most cameras will give you a range of options for image capture.
The most common are RAW and .jpg, there may a number of possible compression options and some cameras will give you a choice of size. RAW is the best .jpg is a 'lossy' format which degrades your image before you have even seen it. Some cameras will offer the possibility to shoot both types together.

Sharpening and in camera processing.

Although some of these parameters will not be applied to RAW files it is good practice to set these the way you prefer. Most of these actions are best carried out after capture in an image manipulation program such as Gimp or Photoshop, so I would advise setting these at default or lower on most cameras.



All these notes are a guide to some the actions you need to carry out prior to shooting your pictures. It is vital that your fully understand your camera before you start using it. If you are unsure of the best settings in any of the areas described here, you should give yourself time to experiment with different settings and work out which suit your picture making style. There may be many other settings for multiple exposures, bracketing and single or continuous shooting etc.

It cost nothing to spend a few hours shooting and looking closely at the images you have taken. Most of the capture information will be recorded with the image in the exif file for you to see, or you can make careful notes on what you have done and refer to them when viewing your images.