

Camera and Photography Practice Exercises

Camera settings and situations

1. Determine Killer Checklist settings for common shooting situations you encounter
2. Look at a photo you find online and figure out what settings might have been used to capture it.
3. Take completed Killer Checklist cards and put them face down. Like a flash card, flip each one over one at a time and set the settings on your camera as quickly as possible.
4. Call out settings to yourself and change them on your camera while keeping your eye to the viewfinder. Especially settings like aperture, shutter speed, ISO, exposure compensation.
5. Setup a little still-life scene (like a figurine, a camera lens, etc.) and put your camera on a tripod. In aperture priority mode, put your aperture at a low value. Starting at ISO 1600, take a properly exposed photo at each higher ISO (i.e. 3200, 6400, etc. ISO) of the same photo trying out all of the main steps of higher ISO's on your camera. Then put them on your computer screen to compare the results deciding what ISO is your preferred limit due to noise.

Camera handling

1. Practice pulling your camera from a rest position (hanging to your side with a sling style strap or from in front of you if using a regular strap around your neck or shoulder) up to your face with the proper grip each and every time. Repeat it in the vertical position.
2. Practice drawing your cameras from a resting position and pointing it directly at an object you have picked out in advance. See if you can put the camera to your eye and be "on target" with the object in the center of the viewfinder.
3. Find a detailed subject inside your home and put your camera in TV or S (Shutter priority mode). You may need to raise the ISO to 800-1600 but start with 1/60 and take a photo of the subject practicing your best camera hold techniques and trying to be as steady as possible. Then reduce the shutter speed to 1/30, 1/15, 1/8, 1/4 and 1/2 taking a photo each time and being steady. Review your results on the camera screen magnified to see how slow of a shutter speed you were able to hand-hold with acceptable sharpness. After doing one run through, do it again but this time making it harder (i.e. turn off any image stabilization on your camera lens, zooming your lens in to a higher focal length, using a heavier lens, etc.). Note your lowest acceptable shutter speed in each more difficult situation.
4. Change from one lens to the next as quickly as possible. When you can do it with a table nearby, then do it with the lens in an open camera bag on your shoulder without putting the lens down or picking it up except from the bag.
5. Practice setting up your tripod and camera in a standing position. Repeat but as you are walking try to set it up as you go.
6. Practice changing your batteries in your camera without looking and as quickly as possible.
7. Practice changing the batteries in your flash without looking (memorize which direction each battery goes in).
8. Find a moving subject and just see if you can keep it in the same place in the viewfinder as you track it (bicycle riders at the Giordana Velodrome in Rock Hill, SC). Repeat the exercise but zoom your lens in more so that it is a tighter image and still try to keep them evenly positioned in the frame.

9. With a moving subject coming at you, see if you can keep the cropping as tight as possible as the subject moves towards you (A person walking and then running towards you is a great way to practice this).
10. Setup a monopod at a standing height and kneeling (or sitting) height as quickly as possible.
11. Do a custom white balance as quickly as possible both with a gray card and with whatever appropriate subject you have on location that is neutral

Lighting

1. Have a subject like a person pose for you outside in the direct sunlight. Try taking a photo without the flash and see if you can get a good exposure with the exposure compensation control. Then reset any exposure comp. and try another shots with the flash turned on. The same can be repeated in the shade, under overcast conditions, etc.
2. Take a test picture and see if you know how much exposure compensation (if needed) to use based on the histogram to get proper exposure. Take test shot at the given exposure compensation to confirm the results.
3. Practice indoors with your external flash on your camera. See how much flash compensation is needed to get the proper exposure using:
 - a. Flash pointed at subject
 - b. Flash pointed straight up with white dome on it
 - c. Flash pointed straight up with white bounce card in use

Try this in a different room preferably with various heights of ceiling, more ambient light in the room, etc.

4. Try a variety of white balances under a given lighting situation including using fill flash (on Auto WB) and doing a Custom WB. Determine which WB setting provides the most accurate color for the scene.

Other

1. Read camera instruction manual
2. Read an online review of your camera or of a couple of lenses you own. Good starting places are www.dpreview.com or Optical Limits www.photozone.de