



## TWOPEAS/INABUCKET.COM PHOTOGRAPHY COURSE: 12 WEEKS TO BETTER PHOTOS

By Mark & Joanna Bolick

### LESSON EIGHT: On the Go

This week we're going to focus on three things that typically have us on the go: kids, sports, and pets.

Linao asked: How do I take good pictures of moving objects? I have 2 kids and love taking pictures of them, but they can't seem to keep still.

#### Capturing Kids in Motion

Kids and constant motion seem to go hand in hand, don't they? Whew! They can tire us out just by watching them, and trying to capture them in photos - well, that can be a challenge, too!

Remember week 2 and the kitchen sink challenge -- how did we manage to "freeze" the water? By using a faster shutter speed. So your best bet right off the bat is to increase your shutter speed around kids.



Now, as we've already discovered, the drawback to using a faster shutter speed is that our cameras need a lot of light in order to perform. Outdoors this is fairly easy to accomplish with the abundance of light on any given day. Taking indoor action photos, on the other hand, can certainly try our patience.

A few things that can help when shooting photos in our homes are: a lens with a low f/stop (to compensate for your faster shutter speed), a tripod to combat the blur of a very low f/stop, and a diffused flash to "stop" the action.

One of the greatest frustrations you may encounter when taking action shots will be **shutter lag**. Shutter lag is the delay that you experience between the time you press the shutter and the moment when the image is actually recorded on your camera. Shutter lag is most noticeable in many types of point & shoot digital cameras. Your best bet in this situation is to try and anticipate the moment, so that you can press the shutter right before the action happens. (Easier said than done, we know.) Most SLR and digital SLR cameras don't have shutter lag -- there isn't a delay from when you press the shutter release to when the photo is recorded. However, with digital SLRs, if you're taking multiple shots in a row, it still may take your camera a bit of time to record those images to the card.



One thing you can do is go with the flow (literally) and **embrace the blur**. For instance, we consider our toddler, Harper, to be a whirling dervish, and so blurry photos don't seem quite as out of line with her personality. (We're kidding, sort of...) In all seriousness, though, a bit of blur can be used effectively to depict the motion (or *commotion*) that is a part of our lives. Of course, this type of photo works best if parts of the image are still in focus, rather than an entirely blurry photo. In the photo on the left the child's hand and leg are blurry, indicating the motion involved with kicking the soccer ball.

Another way to create a sense of motion with blur, but still maintain a sharp subject is to **pan the camera** (move it horizontally) with the subject. You may see this type of photography most often in cycling and motorcross. It's a relatively simple technique that creates a very compelling effect -- essentially what you are doing is tracking your moving subject (a child on a bike, a moving car or a running pet, for instance.) To do this you focus on the subject and keep your camera moving at the same rate as the subject. Fire off a few shots while the camera is moving at the same rate as your subject. What you'll find is that your subject stays in focus, but the background elements are a speeding blur that lend the feel & intensity of motion to your photo while your subject is frozen in place.



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## Sports Photography

Our guest writer this week to talk about sports photography is Kim Mattina.

Kim has been shooting action sports for approximately 15 years, professionally for 4 years (you can view her work at [www.kimmattina.com](http://www.kimmattina.com)). She resides in Phoenix, AZ and is the mother to a 17 year old Varsity athlete (specifically, baseball). Her sports images have appeared in various Arizona magazines and newspapers and she says that she "plans to have something in Sports Illustrated... someday. It's a personal goal on the 5-year plan." Kim is also an avid scrapbooker and goes by the pea name Kim M. *All photographs in the sports photography section are copyright Kim Mattina.*

*Sports photography text & photos by Kim Mattina*

Whether you are photographing Da Bears or Pop Warner, your child running in a field of flowers or your dog chasing a ball, or your teen on a field of play or playing drums in the band, you'll find one thing in common...these subjects are all poetry in motion. However, without freezing the action, your photos will be a blur. So, how do you freeze that moment in time? That's what this week is all about, stopping action without losing motion.

**The following are my 4 favorite tips for sports photography (although you'll find that they will apply to many other situations as well):**

### **1. Use a Fast shutter speed:**

Just like the kitchen sink challenge, in sports photography you want a fast shutter speed to freeze what is going on. To have this fast shutter speed you will need to adjust your f-stop / aperture accordingly. As a general rule of thumb, keep the shutter speed over 640 for outdoors and over 250 for indoors. This will allow you to keep your subject frozen!



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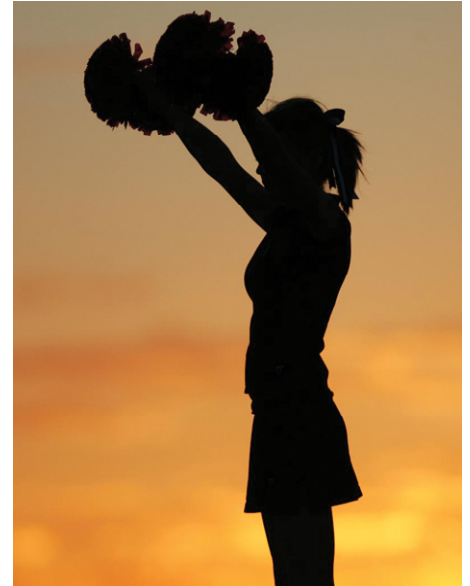
**2. Expose for the face:** When you're shooting action, go manual. Why? I'll put this in a sports setting, because this is the easiest example: There's always a home and an away team, and usually one is in white and the other in a darker color. When you use automatic mode and are shooting someone in white, your exposure adjusts for the white. (For the dark color, it adjusts to the dark reading.) So no matter what, in auto mode, your subject will be either under-exposed or over-exposed, and either way, it's not good! Unless the sun is going in and out of clouds, your lighting will normally be fairly consistent (especially if you are shooting under lights at a football game, or indoors on a basketball court) so when you're in manual mode you should be able to set your exposure and rely on it. Let's face it, unless you are on Project Runway, it's not the clothes that matter...it's the person in the clothes! When you use manual, you are able to control your camera and set your exposure specifically for the face.

### 3. Play with silhouettes

Now and then we'll encounter fun things like shadows when it's sunny. If you're using automatic mode, your subject will most likely be dark because of the backlighting. It's ok to blow out the background a bit, because your person will still have features that are well exposed. So the same thing applies in a backlit situation -- expose for the face to keep the details! By the way, if you want a cool silhouette shot, do the opposite! Photo #2 is backlit (as I was facing the sunset) and exposed for the sky, but the shutter speed was still fast enough to freeze the action. Think of the cool things you can do with silhouettes... with mom or dad holding a baby in the air, a child swinging high in the sky, or even the end of the game when the baseball player is walking off the field! The key is to set your exposure based on what you want!

### 4. Pay attention to your depth of field

When you have a smaller aperture (a higher number) you will normally have more depth of field, depending on how far away your subject is. Do you really want that background in focus? Normally, no. You want your subject to "pop" and really stand out from the background. This is why you hear sports shooters say that they are shooting wide open: they're shooting at the widest aperture (f/1.8, for example), using the fastest shutter speed to freeze the action, and adjusting the ISO as needed. *When shooting wide open, though, you need to have your focus absolutely spot on.*



## Sports Photography, cont.

Wolfpup003 asked: I have a hard time getting good pictures at indoor sporting events (my daughter's volleyball games to be exact.) The flash doesn't do any good and the shots come out blurred and dark.

What are your options for freezing action in lowlight conditions? Well, I'll be honest. It's the gear -- fast lenses make all of the difference in the world. Getting a lens that allows you a low f/stop will enable you to keep the shutter speed faster, therefore, freezing the action. The kit lens that comes with the camera will definitely restrict what you can do in low light. (Keep your expectations in these conditions realistic.) But, if you have a child, spouse or friend who plays a lot of indoor sports (basketball, volleyball, etc.), you may want to invest in a faster lens. My recommendation is an 85mm f/1.8. This is a great lens for indoors as well as portraits. It's also fast focusing, which is critical when shooting sports!

Your other option is flash. Remember though, that most sports (indoors especially) do not allow flash photography from the stands. Not because a flash will impact the athlete (they hardly notice them!), but because 40 parents with flashes will distract from the event. If you are on the floor with permission from the coaches and/or athletic director to use flash, try bouncing your flash off the ceiling. You'll have very few shadows and will not have those evil red eyes! (You will only be able to do this with an external flash, though.)



Still want more information on sports photography? Join Kim this coming **Thursday, February 28th at 8pm (CST)** on the 2peas photo message board for a chat and a chance to ask your questions!



## Keeping up with your Pets

We recently had the opportunity to photograph a very, very, *VERY* hyper 3-year-old Boston Terrier. Needless to say, the experience didn't go quite as planned, mainly because the dog never sat still! To say that we see pet photography in a whole new light is an understatement! (That is to say, we're not experts on the subject.)

But besides a faster shutter speed, turning off your flash (to avoid green-eye), and having plenty of treats in hand, here are a few other things to keep in mind when photographing your pets:

### 1. Show off their personality

There's nothing better than a dog who's willing to smile at the camera

### 2. Play with proportions

You can see just how small the kitten is in the hands of an adult

**3. Use a macro** - For those little pets or neighborhood nusinces (insects, reptiles, etc.) consider macro mode or a macro lens (but remember to take the photo quickly before they hop away!)

### 4. Document interactions

This shot of the dog licking the baby's face was completely unplanned, but because we used a faster shutter speed we caught those loveable kisses

### 5. Take a telephoto

Okay, obviously, this animal is not our pet! But if you're taking photos at a zoo or in the wild it's wise to maintain a safe distance while zooming in for the close-up.



## Q & A: Interview with Anna Kuperberg

Although Anna Kuperberg photographs pets and people equally well, she was kind enough to agree to an interview this week to answer our canine-related questions. You can check out an overview of her photography at [www.kuperblog.com](http://www.kuperblog.com). In addition, Anna recently photographed over 60 dogs for a new book, *Designer Dogs*, and you can view a multitude of adorable puppy and dog photos from the book (as well as outtakes) at [www.slobberspace.com](http://www.slobberspace.com).

Q: What are your top tips for working with a hyper dog?

A: My main strategy for working with any dog (hyper or not) is to have lots of treats. I usually hold the camera in my right hand and a treat in my left hand. Actually the hyper dogs are not the hardest, the super submissive or shy dogs are the hardest. With a hyper dog, you just have to take a lot of photos. Most of your photos will be out of focus, so just expect that and make sure you shoot a huge quantity. Keep shooting and a few of them will be in focus. Also, with practice you will be able to focus faster. Think of it as a sport, like basketball or tennis, where you just have to practice and hone your reflexes. You get better over time. Another trick, if you have a professional camera, is to set the custom function so that the focus and shutter are done with two different buttons, not the same button. On my Canon cameras I can set the back (looks like an asterisk) button for the focus. I focus with my thumb and hit the shutter with my index finger. This keeps the camera from refocusing all the time. It also removes that situation, when the camera won't take a shot because whenever you try to hit the shutter it tries to refocus first.

Q: What should we, as photographers, focus on — for instance, do you always aim for getting the eyes in focus?

A: This is very subjective, sometimes I don't even get the eyes in the photo. Sometimes it's just the tail or ears or whatever. Generally, when you're taking a portrait then you do want to focus on the eyes. But I think this is a rule that is made to be broken.

Q: When you're taking photos of an active dog, is your main goal a fast shutter speed to capture the dog in action?

A: If the dog is running on the beach, for example, you will want your shutter speed to be 1/250 or faster. If you have a very long lens (like a 200mm lens) then set it for 1/500 or faster.

Q: Do you prefer a certain time of day for taking photos of dogs?

A: Usually I take photos of pets and people in the early morning or late afternoon. But not always.

Q: What is your favorite lens to use when photographing dogs?

A: I really love the 24mm lens. It distorts things, so make sure you like that look if you want to use this lens. A good beginner lens is the Canon 50mm 1.8.

Q: Any advice for taking photos of active pets indoors?

A: That's hard. There is usually not enough light to get a running dog indoors. But if you have a lot of light from windows, then it's just like taking a photo of a running dog outdoors.

Q: For the dog photos in *Designer Dogs*, how long did you spend with each pet? And (roughly) how many photos did you take of each dog?

A: About one to two hours with each dog. I took about 500 photos of each dog, and gave the publisher about 50. Then they narrowed it down to 1 to 5 final photos for the book.



## WEEKLY CHALLENGE: Capturing Action



**This week:** Let's see some action!

*Consider using shutter priority or the sports setting for this challenge if you're not comfortable in manual mode.*

Choose any of the following options for this week's challenge:

1. Use a fast shutter speed outdoors to photograph your moving subject
2. Experiment with panning
3. Embrace a little blur indoors
3. Take action - practice your skills at a sporting event
4. Take a portrait of your pet-in-motion

*Then post your favorite photos from the week in the photo gallery!*



ISO 200, shutter speed 800, f/4.5

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