

The Outdoor Environment

When shooting indoors our main concerns are the amount of light (or lack thereof) and the color of the light. When outdoors, however, we must consider not only the amount of the light and its color, but also the direction of the light, the intensity of the light and the how the surrounding atmosphere affects the light. That's sounds like a lot of lighting issues -- but don't let that scare you, because outdoor photography can produce absolutely beautiful results (and it's not always as complicated as it sounds!)

Sunlight vs. Shade

Thankfully, when we're outdoors we will almost always have an abundance of light. Our main focus, then, should be on the intensity and direction of the light. More than likely we'll find ourselves in situations with far too much light, which can be difficult to shoot. For example, if it's an extremely sunny day, the light will generally be very harsh, causing hot areas on your images that are much too bright and shadows that are much too dark.



In this photo, taken in bright, overhead sunlight, the subject's face is partially shadowed (on the left-hand side of the photo) and partially overexposed (on the right-hand side.) Take note, too, that he's squinting from the sun and you can't see the color of his eyes.

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A large tree, a covered porch, or a garage can be a great place to take photos during mid-day. (This particular photo, for example, was taken underneath playground equipment that blocked the overhead sun. Notice the even lighting across the subject's face.

The easiest way to handle a really bright situation is to find some shade and reposition your subject. A shaded area will often provide you with even lighting that is complimentary to your subject. However, if you can't move your subject into the shade, a fill flash, as discussed in week 4, can also go a long way toward eliminating the overly harsh shadows created by intense light.

Keep in mind, too, the time of day. Some of the best full-sun lighting can be found in mid to late afternoon. This lighting generally creates nice, warm images with good depth and without the hotspots (those overexposed areas of your subject that you'll find in photos when the sun is directly overhead.)

The Direction of the Light

Just like when we're indoors, it's important to pay attention to where the light is coming from when you're outside -- in other words, heed the direction of the sun. Whenever possible, try to arrange your subject so that the lighting comes from a side angle rather than directly in front of or behind the subject. For instance, you don't want to blind your subjects, not to mention make them squint, by having them face the sun. You also don't want to point your camera so that the sun is directly in your lens as this creates difficult

exposures as well as lens flares (though flare can certainly be used effectively in specific situations.) If you do find yourself in a situation where you have backlighting (where the light source is behind your subject) you have two options that we've already explored through our challenges in previous weeks: expose correctly for your subject and have the background overexposed, or use fill flash to expose your subject while the camera exposes your background.

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You may quickly find that your dismay over overcast days for outdoor activities gives way to a joy for overcast days as a photographer. Some of the best outdoor lighting will be found on overcast days when the light is evenly dispersed across the sky, which naturally provides a nice, even tone to everything you shoot.



Helpful Tools for Outdoor Photos

Filters

As far as the atmosphere's effect on the light and color in your photos, there are a few important things you can easily do to help your outdoor photography. The first is to purchase a *UV Haze filter* for every lens you own. This filter not only helps protect the precious front element of your lens from scratches, but it also helps minimize the dull haze that pollutants add to your images. Color is simply reflected light after all, and when that light is filtered through a haze of pollutants in the atmosphere it adversely affects the "pop" of the colors in your images.

Another useful filter for outdoor photography is a *circular polarizing filter*. This filter helps to "bend" the light coming into your lens. After attaching this filter to the front of your lens, you simply turn the front portion of the filter to change the direction of the light coming into your lens. The benefit to this is that you can control the intensity of certain colors and minimize the glare caused by harsh lighting on reflective surfaces by "bending" that reflection out of your lens. For example, by looking through your viewfinder and turning the polarizing filter, you may notice that clouds gain more definition, blue skies change in color intensity (due to an increased saturation of colors), reflections are removed from eyeglasses, and water in lakes and streams becomes more transparent, revealing the objects beneath the surface.

Keep in mind that a polarizing filter will require you to have more light to properly expose your images (which is why it's important to remember to remove this filter when you head back indoors.)



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Natural Reflectors

We talked about using reflectors a bit at the end of last week's lesson. A helpful tip outdoors is to pay attention to those natural reflectors, such as water, for instance, that will help direct light to a subject's face. Also keep in mind that white surfaces, such as the siding on a house or a door, will reflect light as well. In this photo, the subject was facing a white door while the photographer sat with her back resting against the white door. The reflection of the sunshine from the door effectively lit up the subject's face.

Macro Mode

Macrophotography, according to the online Oxford American Dictionary, is defined as photography that produces photographs of small items larger than life size. Since some of the most wonderful things to shoot outdoors are very small (such as flowers, insects, and water droplets) it's very helpful to use the macro mode on your camera or a lens with a macro option. CONTRACTOR OF THE OF TH



Usually indicated by a flower icon on the dial of your camera, selecting the macro mode indicates to your camera that you want to closely focus on a subject - you want to get a close-up. *However, here's the catch: while the macro mode works effectively on point & shoot cameras, on SLR & dSLR cameras the same setting merely sets the stage for using a lens with a macro.* Basically, the main job of macro mode on your point & shoot camera is to effectively reduce the minimum focal distance -- the distance between the camera and the subject. What this means is that when you are using macro mode you should be able to hold your camera closer to your subject than when you're not using the mode. Macro mode on an SLR camera without a macro lens will still provide you with a pleasing, shallow depth of field, but using it does not have the same effect that using a macro lens would give you in order to highlight your small treasure.

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Finally, a note about protecting your investment outdoors

As we've discussed, unlike the climate-control we appreciate in an indoor environment, outdoor photos are often complicated by a variety of issues brought on by being exposed to the elements. Similarly, our cameras can be affected by outdoor elements as well. It is *very important* to take care of your camera outdoors just as you would prepare yourself for going outside on a cold day.

-- Temperature and moisture levels change dramatically between the indoors & the outdoors and can play havoc with our equipment. In extreme temperature differences (such as taking the camera from an air-conditioned house out into a humid, hot summer day, or bringing your camera back inside your warm house after being out on a freezing cold day) you need to help your camera acclimate to the changes in environment slowly. Before moving your camera from one extreme to another, it's helpful to first wrap your camera in a towel and place it in a plastic bag. (Basically, you're wrapping it up to cushion the effects of the difference in temperature -- so it's important to employ this tip in both hot & cold weather.) After you move your bundled equipment outside or inside, allow it to sit for a few minutes (sometimes up to 30 minutes or more if the temperature/moisture difference is severe). Taking the time to pamper your camera & equipment allows the camera to slowly adjust to its new environment and prevents parts from expanding and contracting too quickly, as well as moisture from building up inside your delicate electronics or inside your lenses.

-- A plastic bag is a great deterrent in watery environments - such as a snowy or rainy day, or at those times when you're at the beach. The only part of the camera that you need to leave exposed (uncovered) is the front of the lens (which is already protected in part by that UV filter you put on it, right?)

-- Speaking of the beach, once sand has invaded your lens, you might as well start saving your pennies to replace it, because it will never truly be the same again. Sometimes it's wisest to leave your favorite camera at home. But if you can't do that, make sure that you have some lens-cleaning cloths on hand as well as canned air to help get rid of the sand. It's also best to avoid changing lenses while at the beach, to prevent anything from getting inside your camera.

-- Finally, if you're shooting in cold weather, remember to keep extra batteries on hand because extreme cold can zap a battery's strength.

Phew! Who knew cameras were so much work? *week seven* 5

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	TWOPEASINABUCKET.COM PHOTOGRAPHY COURSE: 12 WEEKS TO BETTER PHOTOS WEEKLY CHALLENGE: The Close-Up	
	This week: Move in for the close-up!	
	This week we're going to experiment with macro mode. The good news is that this is a great challenge to try with your point & shoot camera!	
	1. With your point & shoot camera We want to see the difference between macro mode & another mode, so simply take a picture of an object after selecting macro mode on your camera. Move as close to the object as your camera will allow. Then take the picture again in a different mode.	
	2. With your SLR/ dSLR camera If you have a lens with macro, use it! (Use a tripod for more control and ease of use.) Unfortunately, if you don't have a lens with macro, the macro mode setting will just give you a shallow depth of field for your photos. You can still take a photo using this mode, but it's not the same as having a lens with a macro. To compensate, you could try "imitating" a macro shot by taking a photo and then cropping it very closely in a photo editing program.	
	For this example we used our 70-300 telephoto, extended all the way to the 	

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Q&A: Outdoor photo shoots

As previously mentioned, garages, carports, or covered porches can be great locations for taking photos because they provide a great deal of ambient light while blocking the harsh overhead light. Here's a glimse at a garage set-up we've used before.





The above photo reveals the set-up at the back of the garage. Keep in mind the garage door was open for this shoot. We hung a white sheet behind our subjects to hide the tools & junk on the metal shelves from view and borrowed our loveseat from the living room. We placed the loveseat toward the back of our garage because we wanted to avoid the shadows/bright light found at the front of the garage thanks to the bright sun shining into the room.

The photo on the left is a product of the shoot. The ambient light found in the garage allowed us to use a lower ISO and faster shutter speed than we would have been able to use indoors for the same type of shoot, so we could catch sweet moments like this. *week seven* 7