



Tips for Tack Sharp Digital Images

- TRIPODS!!! ALWAYS!
 - Use the self-timer if you don't have a cable release
 - Turn OFF Vibration Reduction on the lens if it has it
- Shoot at sharpest aperture...f/22, etc.
- Use Mirror Lock-up (especially for close-up images)
 - Need to push cable release twice, once to lock-up the mirror, then again to release the shutter
- Use lowest ISO setting whenever possible
- If shooting hand-held, set camera to shutter priority and choose a speed that matches or exceeds the focal length of the lens (a 180mm lens means you shoot at 1/200 of a second or faster)
 - Also use the continuous shooting (burst) mode
 - Turn ON Vibration Reduction on the lens if it has it
- Use the zoom feature on the camera LCD to check for sharpness and use the histogram or highlights preview mode for viewing images on the camera

Sharpening in Photoshop

- Use UNSHARP mask filter:
 - For People – Amount 65%, Radius 1, Threshold 10
 - For Cityscapes – Amount 65%, Radius 3, Threshold 2
 - For General Everyday Use – Amount 85%, Radius 1, Threshold 4
- Or Use a Photoshop Pro Sharpening Technique (allows you to sharpen more without creating halos and color artifacts which occurs when you use too much sharpening)
 - Image, Mode, Lab Color
 - Open Channels Palette and click on the Lightness Channel (this channel contains only the detail and not the color in the photo, which is why you sidestep some of the color problems you get with sharpening full-color photos)
 - Apply the Unsharp Mask Filter using the above settings.
 - Try applying the Unsharp Mask Filter again using the same settings. If the photo appears too sharp, before you do anything else, go under the Edit menu and choose Fade Unsharp Mask. In the Fade dialog, lower the opacity to slider to 50% for half the effect on the select filter application.
 - Image, Mode, RGB Color

Printing

- How many megapixels to do you need?
 - 3MP = 5" x 7"
 - 4MP = 8" x 10"
 - 5MP = 11" x 14"
 - 6MP = 13" x 19"
 - 8MP = 16" x 20"
 - 10-12MP = 24" x 36"
- When printing things of a softer nature (flowers, birds, landscapes, waterfalls, etc.), use a textured paper
- For serious portrait work, architecture, city life, travel, and finely detailed landscapes, try Epson's Premium Luster
- Use matte papers for B&Ws

Composition and Exposure Tips

- Don't shoot down on flowers...get down on the ground at the same level.
- Shoot flowers on cloudy days with most of the sky cropped out, or after a rain.
- Fake rain with a spray bottle on plants and flowers.
- Use a black jacket in the field as a backdrop for flowers with about 3 feet between the flowers and the backdrop.
- For a white backdrop with flowers indoors, use natural light for a window to keep it from going gray.
- White shower curtains works great to diffuse light, or as a backdrop with shallow depth of field.
- You generally need a shutter speed of 1/250 or faster to freeze the action of flowers and trees in the wind.
- When shooting sports, use Incandescent White Balance and shoot at 1/640 second or faster (increase ISO speed as needed...400) with a monopod (pre-focus for a shot and wait when action can be anticipated)
- Auto White Balance only works well outdoors
- Be a Pro and create a Custom White Balance with a neutral gray card for RAW capture.
- Bracket if you are not sure about exposure (but don't worry about it if shooting RAW)
- Scott doesn't agree that you should underexpose by a stop for digital...if you have to go one way or the other, overexpose because you'll get less noise! Darkening in Photoshop doesn't create noise, but lightening does.
- Use program mode for city and candid shots...it doesn't pop up the flash like auto mode does
- To show movement in night and city shots, use shutter priority and set the shutter speed to 1/16, 1/8, or ¼ of a second
- For fireworks, use full manual mode, and start at f/11 at 4 seconds and test results...make adjustments to the shutter speed as needed (and use a zoom lens)

Landscape Tips

- Always use a TRIPOD!
- Only shoot at two times of day...dawn and dusk, 15-30 min. before sunrise (then 30-60 minutes after sunrise), and 15-30 min. before sunset (then up to 30 min. after)
 - The only exception to this rule is storms, foliage right after a rain, and hazy/foggy times – or you can shoot on cloudy days if you can eliminate all or most of the sky from the composition (or fix the cloudy sky to blue in Photoshop)
 - Use a shower cap or protective gear for the camera
- Shoot in aperture priority mode
- All landscape shots must have a foreground (which doesn't start with water), a middle ground, and a background. Amateurs like to forget the foreground.
- Use a stop-down or polarizing filter if conditions are too bright, or when you want a slow shutter speed to create silky water movement
- Most forest shots are better without including the ground, unless its uncluttered and doesn't distract from the trees
- Horizon lines are best 1/3 from the top (or 1/8 sky if sky is boring) to maintain the depth
 - and keep the horizon line straight!
- Shoot down from mountains instead of up at them (don't shoot it like everyone always sees them...from the ground looking up)
- When shooting sunrises and sunsets, change the White Balance to Daylight, then press the right-arrow to fine tune to -3 and click ok. Does an amazing job of warming photos.
 - But a recognizable subject directly in front of the sun to create silhouettes
- Dial down the exposure compensation control if the highlights are blowing out (when looking at the histogram / highlights in the camera file view)
- Use a good quality polarizing filter (except with wide angels) to get richer colors (essential for landscape photographers)

- And while the polarizing filter is essential, the neutral density gradient filter is a secret weapon that allows you to balance the exposure between sky and ground
- Get rid of lens flare manually by holding a cap to block the beam of light near the camera lens
- Always focus on the eyes when shooting wildlife and don't crop in wildlife movement to close...give them somewhere in the frame to move into (use a 1.4x to 2x teleconverter to zoom in close)
- Tips for Panoramas:
 - Always a Tripod and shutter release (or self timer) with 5 to 6 or more VERTICAL photos in the series
 - Switch the White Balance to Cloudy (Auto will change on you as you move the camera)
 - Press the shutter halfway down to set your exposure, then look at the f-stop and shutter speed. Now switch the camera to Manual model and dial in the f-stop and shutter speed.
 - Once you focus on the first subject, turn off auto focus for the lens (you don't want the camera re-focusing from shot to shot!)
 - Before you shoot the first segment, shoot one shot with your finger in front of the camera so you know where to start in Photoshop...do the same at the end
 - Overlap each segment by 20-25%...1/4 overlap from segment to segment
 - Move quickly in case clouds are moving
 - See page 84 for tips on merging in Photoshop
- Visit photosecrets.com for special photo tips off the beaten path (also can purchase more detailed books)
- How to include the moon and keep the exposure right for the darker part of the image:
 - Create two exposures on the same frame (on a tripod in aperture priority mode):
 - Use wide-angle lens at f/11 and take the city/skyline shot without the moon in the frame
 - Then put on the zoom lens, switch to manual mode at f/11 and the shutter speed at 1/250 of a second...zoom in tight on the moon (placed where you want it to be) and take the shot

Wedding Tips

- Low-light shooting in churches, etc. – change ISO speed to 800 or 1600 and use a fast lens (f/1.4, f/2.8, or f/3.5)
 - “Noise Ninja” from PictureCode.com is a great plug-in to help reduce noise when shooting at fast ISO speeds
- Use a tripod when possible, even outdoors
- Have a wide-angle lenses available for shots where you want to include everything, churches, receptions, rice toss, bouquet toss, garter toss, etc. (and use continuous shooting/burst mode when appropriate)
- Use a diffuser for the camera flash like the LumiQuest's Soft Screen Diffuser (\$13) or Gary Fong's Lightsphere-II (\$48)
- Aim flash head at a 45 degree angle, preferably at a white ceiling less than 10' high
 - Or aim the flash head at a reflector held by an assistant on the left or right side of the subject(s), slightly above shoulder height for side lighting effect
- Use fill flash when shooting outdoors on sunny days to reduce harsh shadows and add nice catch lights – never aim directly at the subjects, but to the right or left at a 45 degree angle...this works if you're not more than 8-10 feet away
- Formals / Who To Shoot First:
 - Gather everyone together and have them watch the bride and groom formals
 - Then shoot the largest groups first and second off the relatives as you finish with them
 - Aim at the eyes of the people in the first row at f/11 or better
 - Have everyone close their eyes, count 3-2-1...open, wait for count of 1 more, then take the shot
 - If you can get the bride and groom to stay longer for more formals, great
 - Camera position/height is critical!

- Standing, Full-Length Portrait: Position tripod/camera at the bride's waist height and keep your lens pointed straight ahead (not angled up at the face)
 - 7/8 Shots From The Calf Up: Position tripod/camera at the bride's chest level and keep your lens pointed straight ahead
 - Head and Shoulders Shots: Position tripod/camera at the bride's eye level or slightly above
 - Never cut off anyone at the joints at the knee or elbow
 - Keep backgrounds as simple as possible with little foliage and do the formals behind at least two different backdrops for some variety
 - Try to shoot some images for a high vantage point...2nd story window, ladder, stairs, bridge, etc.
 - If you have some good window light, do some nature light shots and have subject stand 6-8 feet from the window.
 - When posing the bride with others, make them position their heads close to the bride to create a comfortable level of closeness
- Reception Photos:
 - Don't use flash because it freezes the moment in awkward positions – pan with the camera instead at a slow shutter speed (or add motion blur in Photoshop (see page 46))
- Make the bride the focus of everything...pre-wedding, ceremony, formals, reception
- Shoot the details...bride's shoes, dress on a hanger, wedding invitation, rings, sheet music played at the wedding, guestbook, champagne glasses, groom's boutonniere, bouquet, fine details of the dress
- Back-up all the files on-site!
- When shooting RAW files, use Auto White Balance and fix in Camera RAW later
- When shooting JPG files, select the proper White Balance (and pay attention when the light changes!!) Use Incandescent for standard reception halls

Shooting People

- Best portrait lens: 85-100mm range (28-105 zooms give you some freedom) at f/11
- Always focus on the eyes and position tripod 8-10 feet from your subject
- Try positioning the eyes 1/3 way down in the frame for interesting portraits
- Outdoors, make sure the background is no darker than the subject
 - Move into shade, but not a cave
 - When shooting portraits at sunset, and you want to prevent a silhouette or a washed out flash shot: turn off the flash and aim at the sky and hold shutter halfway, turn on exposure lock, then turn on the flash and take the shot...you get a good fill-flash effect
- Use seamless backgrounds
 - With a black background (for dramatic portraits), use an extra light to backlight your subject (especially if they have dark hair)
 - With a white background (for everyday use), position 1-2 lights behind the subject positioned directly at the background (will usually come out gray)
- Avoiding Red Eye:
 - Use the red-eye reduction mode of the flash (so you get the pre-flash)
 - Get the flash off the camera and a couple of feet away, or at least a few inches above the camera
 - Bounce the flash off the ceiling
 - More room light helps reduce change for red-eye (the darker the room, the worse the red eye)
 - Ask the subject to look slightly away from the camera
 - move the camera closer to the subject
 - See page 143 for tips on how to remove red-eye in Photoshop