The Portrait Photography Book

Volume 2

The ultimate guide to shooting perfect portraits
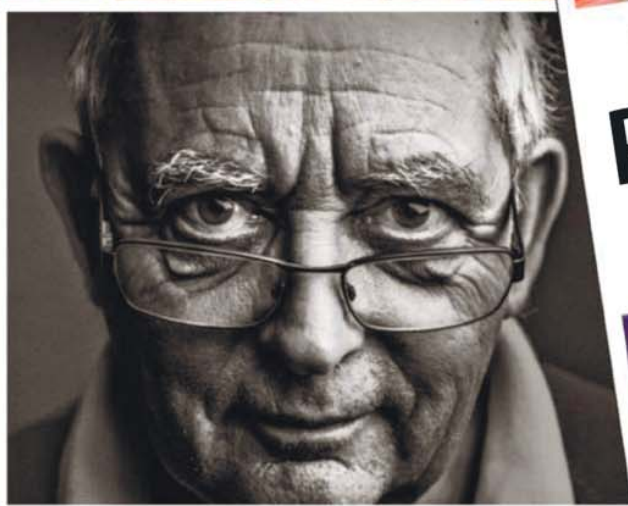
Over 250 creative tips

The Landscape Photography Book

Volume 2

The ultimate guide to shooting perfect landscapes

Pro tips for novices & experts

Includes Landscape Photography Book

Welcome to

The Portrait Photography Book

Portraiture is one of the most popular genres of photography but there is a lot to consider in order to capture a flattering portrait full of character and interest. The Portrait Photography Book is here to help, however, guiding you through all the tips and tricks you need to know. Our Getting Started section takes you through the basics, while our Skills section provides ways to improve your photography from working in different light and shooting group portraits to working with models and editing your shots. We've also got all the best in-depth guides with advice from the pros in the Techniques section, from high key portraiture to shooting people at parties. Read on and you'll be taking perfect portraits in no time at all. Don't forget to flip the book over to master landscape photography next!

The Portrait & Landscape Photography Book

Part of the

Digital Photographer™

bookazine series

ip

IMAGINE
PUBLISHING

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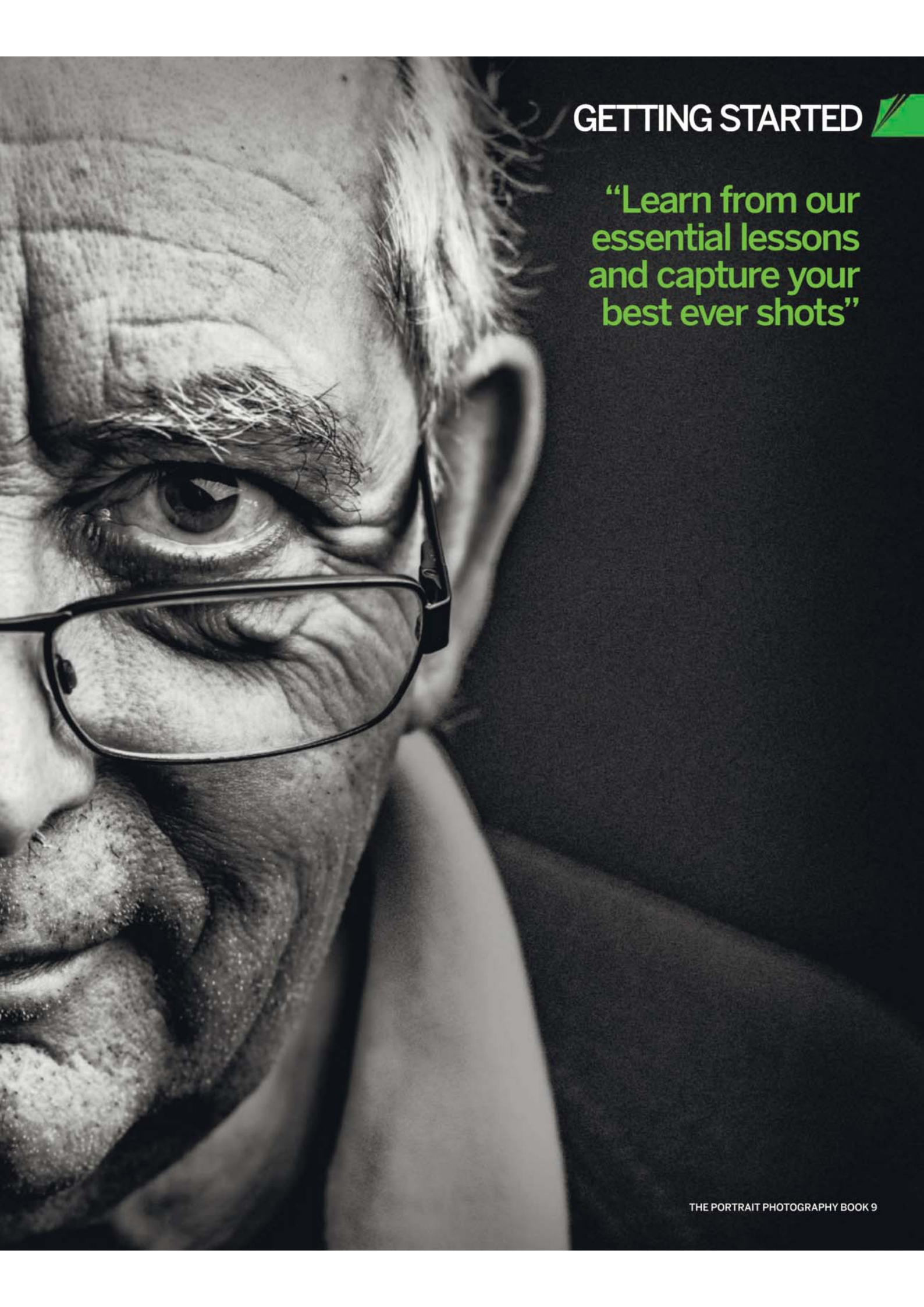
"Learn from our essential lessons and capture your best ever shots"

Master perfect portraits

Follow our 25 key tips for taking your best-ever people photos

Find the optimum settings

Use aperture priority

01 Set a low f-number in aperture priority mode. This creates a nice blurry background so your subject stands out in the frame.

Select a scene mode

02 Portrait mode can pick the best settings for you, so you can focus on the lighting and composition of your shot.

Use burst mode

03 Capture everyone with their eyes open; use continuous or burst mode for a series of shots, or use blink-detection mode.

Use selective focus

04 Make sure their eyes are sharp by using selective/flexible focus mode and moving the focus point over their eyes.

"Catch the light in their eyes to create highlights, making a portrait really come alive"

Perfect poses

Pose with their hands

05 Introducing your model's hands into the shot can look great. Just make sure their hands are relaxed and don't look awkward.

No slouching!

06 The best poses reflect your subject's personality. But, be sure you encourage them to sit or stand straight for a flattering photo.

Suggest props

Interesting clothing

07 Clothing can be a great prop for portraits. Get subjects to interact with accessories for fun or glamorous poses.

Everyday objects

08 Think about the message you want to convey in your shot and find objects that fit in.

Light your subject

09 Position the model

When you're shooting your photos indoors, make sure that your subject is positioned near to the window or your other chosen light source so they do not appear too dark. If using window light, turn off the overhead lights to avoid colour casts in your shot. See the 'Directional light' section on this page for tips on how to position them.

Directional light

You may think that capturing shadows across your subject's face in a portrait shot is a bad thing. In some cases, particularly if it appears unflattering for your subject, then it's true that this is the case. However, you can also use shadows for creative and dramatic effect in your shots. You could use natural window light and position your model at various angles for different effects. Or keep your model still and move an artificial light sources such as a lamp around to cast shadows. The distance between your subject and the light will affect the strength of the shadow, so move them further apart if you want more subtle results.

"Use shadows for effect"

Backlit

13 If your subject is in front of the light source, with their back to it, their entire face will be in shadow. Use your flash to fill in the light for a more flattering shot.

Use a reflector

10 To eliminate harsh shadows and create an even spread of light, use a reflector to bounce the light back into the dark areas. Point the reflector towards your light source and then angle it until the light hits your model. Keep repositioning it and watch where the light falls until you get it right.

Soften your flash

11 If you need to illuminate your model with flash, bounce the light off a piece of paper under it for a softer effect, or twist your flash gun to bounce off a wall. Diffusing the flash with tracing paper works well too.

Capture light in their eyes

12 Catch the light in their eyes to create highlights, making a portrait come alive. Try placing a reflector on your model's lap to create a larger catchlight and then keep experimenting to get the effect you want.

45° away from the light

14 Turn your subject 45° towards the window for a smooth progression between light and shadow, keeping most of their face still visible.

90° away from the light

15 Get your subject to sit or stand parallel to the window, at a 90° angle. This will produce a harsh contrast between the light and dark areas.

90° facing the light

16 Positioned parallel to the window, get your subject to turn towards it. Their face will then be well-lit but the back of their head will be in shadow.

Compose the shot

Avoid distraction

17 A busy backdrop will remove attention from your subject, so avoid capturing things like other people in your shot.

Look for colour

18 Look for a location with nice colours to complement your model. A simple, colourful background is really flattering.

Positioning

19 Look to position your model off-centre in the frame for a stronger composition. You can always crop into the photo later on in editing software.

20
Create a flattering, blurred background

If you can't avoid distracting backdrops, set a wide aperture and then move your subject further away from the background to blur it out even more.

Shoot high 21

For really flattering results, shoot from a high angle, as this is most attractive for your subject. Shooting from below can accentuate nostrils and chins so avoid this. If you can't elevate your position, try getting your model to sit on the floor instead.

Framing your shot

Get up close
22 Put the focus on your model by filling the frame with them, getting rid of any ugly or distracting backgrounds in the process. Try zooming in so that just their head and shoulders are visible. You can always crop in later using editing software if you need to.

Go wider
23 If you're shooting in a nice location, you could try including more of the background in order to capture your subject's surroundings. Do this by shooting at a wide angle. It works particularly well if your subject is in a location that they enjoy, to bring out natural smiles.

Consider the eyes

Eye contact
24 For a striking portrait shot, the eyes are very important. Get your subject to look down the lens for an engaging shot that captures their eyes beautifully. A nice trick is to get your model to turn their head away from you but keep their eyes focused on the camera.

Look away
25 It is okay to break the photo rules sometimes! Try shooting your subject as they look away, and include some 'looking space' in the image. This can often create a more playful or thoughtful look to your portrait and can help to capture your subject's true personality.

10 amazing portrait tips

Use these top tips to help get the best from your portraiture shots

Portrait shots are among the most popular choice in photography, as even when you're just taking quick snaps for fun, you'll often be photographing people.

Human beings can be quite complicated, so it's no surprise that there's quite a lot involved in taking great portraits too, with plenty to consider in order to increase your chances of capturing a flattering shot full of character and interest.

Understanding the effect that different types of lighting can have, perfecting your subject's pose and helping people to relax are among the skills you need to take great portrait images. In some portraits, lighting is particularly important, while for other shots it's the subject's expression that really counts – one of the secrets of great portrait photography is in understanding what matters. Here's a selection of essential tips for achieving great portraiture.

Tilt the camera

It's very tempting to frame and compose your portraits with the camera square to your subject, but this doesn't make for the most dynamic images. Often, a slight tilt of the camera will make a massive difference to how the image looks, particularly when there are strong lines in the background, as shown here.

Try butterfly

Butterfly lighting is so-called because of the shape of the shadow it creates on the underside of the subject's nose. It's a really great way of creating beautiful portraits, but it often gets overlooked. To create the effect, the main light is positioned above the subject and directed downwards onto them. Because this often creates a rather stark effect, with harsh shadows by themselves, reflectors are positioned below the subject, slightly out of the frame. A triflector unit, which consists of three panels, is often used in conjunction with butterfly lighting.

Moody mono

Black and white is a great medium for portraits of male subjects, as it conveys an edgy sense of aloofness and attitude that works very effectively. Shoot in RAW but change your camera's picture mode to Monochrome setting to enable you to preview the images in black and white. You can also try going for a high-contrast effect and square format, as made famous by David Bailey.

Dealing with bright sunlight

Capturing portraits outdoors in bright sunlight is notoriously difficult, but there are steps you can take to combat the problems that are often encountered. First, try to position your subject so they are not looking directly into the Sun. Then, use a reflector, or if you've got a speedlight handy you can use this off-camera to light your subject even more.

Split the light

Portraits are all about capturing someone's appearance and something of their personality too, but sometimes what you don't show is just as important as what you do. Rather than always arranging the lighting to illuminate all of your subject's face, deliberately create an equal amount of shadow by using split lighting, where the main light is to the side of the subject.

Capture character

Encouraging your subject to interact with the lens is a great way of capturing portraits with impact. However, not everyone will feel confident enough to do this at first, so you will need to be able to relax your subject and make them feel completely comfortable.

Action shots

Portraits are often fairly static, with the subject maintaining a particular pose, but great portraiture shots can be obtained if you try capturing your subject mid-action. Be prepared for some experimentation and don't be overly concerned if your first attempts don't completely work, as moving portraits are all about precise timing that's not easy to predict. Practise shots like this with friends and family before trying the technique out with a paid model or client for the first time.

Candid captures

Portraits don't always have to be posed and carefully staged. Sometimes a great portrait can be created when the subject isn't even aware that they are being photographed. It may sound obvious, but always be respectful when capturing candid portraits. If someone objects to being photographed, don't persist.

Not only the young

Many portraits that you see are of younger subjects – particularly female. However, male subjects, including older people, can make for fantastic images. Older people have a wealth of experience and this can be used to great effect in portraits.

Rather than trying to light, compose and retouch the image to smooth their skin and make them look younger, use their faces to tell a story and remember that really strong eye contact is often a big selling point in portraits, so talk to your subject and get them to relate their experiences to you. A black-and-white effect can work really well too.

BACKLIGHTING WORKS

If there's strong lighting coming from a window, you can create a powerful portrait using just a silver reflector to bounce some of this light back onto your subject. This is also great in the studio to create high-key images using fewer flash units

Skills

Improve your abilities for stunning shots

"Use these tips to transform your photos into professional-standard shots"

Get creative
with your portraits

With creative portraits, anything is possible.
Here the pros reveal how to divert from classic
portraiture and embrace your true vision

Portrait photography is loosely defined as an image of a person that conveys a little of their personality or mood. Think beyond the traditional setup of a subject sitting straight-backed on a stool against a brown Old Masters background, however, and the opportunities are endless. The various approaches have been defined as constructionist – the candid approach that catches people off-guard; the environmental style, which puts the subject in the context of their surroundings; and then there's the creative portrait, which uses props and post-processing to make anything possible.

The latter is experiencing a surge in popularity and its creative potential is paving the way for photographic artists to fulfil their vision. For Tori Mercedes (www.torimercedes.com), this sub-genre indulges her fantastical imagination. "I realised when I was 15 that photography was an outlet in which I could channel my ideas," she says. "I could play dress-up and make-believe like I did as a child... I'm still very involved in every aspect of my photographs. I not only take them, but also edit and style them. I believe my complete involvement enables my vision to really come through and turn what could be a simple portrait into something magical."

Unlike classic portraiture, the modern creative form shifts the focus from the sitter to the photographer and the final image. Here you'll find various ways to transform your portraits using ideas, props, location and lighting.

Planning your shoot

When studying photographs in magazines, you might be able to guess what lighting was used by noticing how the shadows fall. You can take a stab at the setup and try to mimic it in your own work, but what remains a mystery is the planning and production that went into the making of that image. Every shoot, whether it's to generate more content for your portfolio, or to fulfil a specific brief for a client, starts the same way.

"I begin with an idea, one typically initiated by a location, prop, model or concept," says Mercedes. "At first I make lists, lots of them. After I have the details all planned out I combine all my lists of thoughts into my sketchbook where I draw out my intended shots and make collages of inspiring images." Some of your scribbled ideas might never amount to anything, but keeping a catalogue of them as they occur to you will give you an endless archive to draw from. You could even start a visual log of ideas by posting pictures that trigger your creative juices and sites such as Pinterest are perfect for this. It was actually a quote that inspired Mercedes' 'Octopus' series: 'If only I had eight arms to hold you with'. "It related to how I was feeling at the time," she explains. "I was missing my boyfriend since we had just parted ways again for different colleges after spending a wonderful summer together by the sea. Automatically I thought of an octopus and decided to find a way to incorporate such a thing into a beautiful picture."

Following the idea comes the planning stage, which can take a while. "I searched for an octopus for weeks, calling local grocery stores and seafood markets, trying to find a perfect, whole, eight-armed creature to adorn my lovely model," she says. "My model, Cassidy, willingly asked to be a part of this photoshoot, but doesn't even like or eat seafood." Explaining to your model what's involved ahead of time will give you a chance to allay any worries. Another important element to secure in advance is the location. If it's a private site you'll need to get written permission, and if it's outdoors you must check the weather forecast. For Mercedes' 'Octopus' series the beach was the natural location, but anywhere can be suitable, as long as it connects with your concept.

"I searched for an octopus for weeks… trying to find a perfect whole, eight armed creature to adorn my model" Tori Mercedes

Secrets of a photo stylist

Fazia Ali reveals how picking an experienced, creative team can only make your shoot stronger

Do you usually come up with the initial ideas for your shoots, or is it a collaborative process?
In some instances, it's the art/creative director or the photo editor. Sometimes the client feels comfortable enough with the photographer to let he/she come up with a concept. Then there are times when the art director lays out their concept in a drawn-out conference call with lots of input from their office, from everyone including the janitor, or so it seems. On paper, it looks like gobbledygook, but it's the photographer's job to interpret this far-fetched concept to his crew.

What are some of the biggest challenges a photo stylist typically comes up against?
Style is subjective and dealing with a personality known by a particular look, or [someone] who's set in their ways is tricky. Psychology and compromise are instrumental, so if I feel strongly about a certain look, I'll put those pieces to the front of the wardrobe and place them almost as a story, with shoes and accessories close by. Sometimes you have to paint a picture for the subject in order to help them comprehend it.

What do you do to get the best out of your team?
Since I work with my husband [photographer Brian Smith], we treat our team as an organisation. When you respect and acknowledge the importance of each team member and what they bring to the table, they work harder. It then becomes less about individual achievement and more about the success of the organisation as a whole.

What qualities should a photographer look for when hiring a photo stylist?
A stylist should arrive on time and be prepared. They should have a good roster of contacts and pay close attention to detail. If a stylist has created extra work for the photographer in post-production – like the failure to steam clothes properly – that stylist shouldn't be hired again. Just listen, understand and interpret.
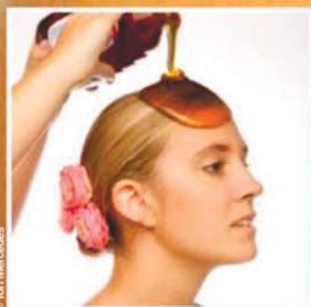
SWEET AS HONEY
"Taken in the studio, we created one sticky sweet mess! Emily had honey inside her eyes, ears and matted in her hair by the end of this," says Mercedes
Model: Emily Oot
Assistant: Jojo Boling

Setting up a shoot

The day of the shoot can vary, from just the photographer and model, to an entire crew including a make-up artist, stylists, assistants and an art director. For now Mercedes favours the intimate approach. "I keep things simple and I don't have a big creative team," she says. "I work closely with my model to direct and get the photos I want to achieve. When I'm working with an assistant, they're my extra set of hands, helping me carry equipment and touching up the model's hair and make-up."

Supportive friends and family members can help form a creative team when you're starting out, or you can take advantage of social network sites to search for budding stylists in your area that you can reward with images for their portfolio, as well as your own. The same goes for models, who could be anyone from a distant relation to someone who's signed to an agency. Always make sure you have a signed model release form, however, which will enable you to use the images wherever you wish and can be sourced easily on the internet.

Models will also be showcasing your work, so you should pick wisely. "I look for a strong model that will fit well with whatever prop I am using," says Mercedes. "I want them to play off one another and fuse together. *Sweet as Honey* was a photograph advertising honey and I chose Emily as my model because her warm skin blends with it just enough so that you notice both the golden honey and her stunning face. It would be easy for a face to get lost in all that sticky sweetness, but her features shine through and the honey enhances them."

While the subject is becoming camera-ready, the photographer will be preoccupied with setting up the lights and equipment. Whether you use natural lighting with a simple but effective reflector, or opt for a more elaborate setup depends entirely on the mood you're trying to create.
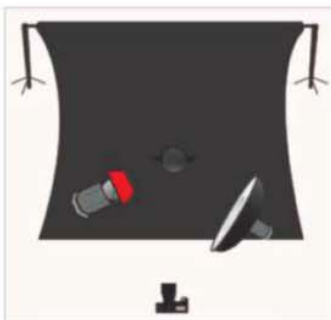
Using gels

Professional fashion and portrait photographer Lindsay Adler reveals how to enhance your shots with creative lighting

"Using gels is a great way to infuse vibrant colours into your images that can either dominate or introduce subtle tones to help communicate a mood. Gels can be beautiful and elegant, however, be sure that the colour serves a visual role and try not to go overboard or appear too gimmicky or clichèd. Aim to have your gel become an important element of the scene without it looking random or used as an afterthought.

I don't usually light my entire scene with gels, but instead I opt to use them when I want to fill the shadows and enhance the mood. Gels for mood work better when you have shadow areas of your photograph to work with. If you use a gelled light on an already high-key image, the white light of the scene overpowers the gels. Instead, when you have shadow areas, the shadows devour the light from the gels and take on those colour tones.

Because shadow areas are not already lit, they will absorb whatever light hits them. When I plan to utilise gels, I light my scene to have shadow areas, and often pick light modifiers with a bit more contrast, such as a beauty dish, long throw, or other gridded light source.

Lindsay Adler is a pro photographer who teaches workshops globally. To see her schedule, visit **www.blog.lindsayadlerphotography.com**.

▶ **SEEING RED**
"In this editorial that appeared in *Zink Magazine*, there were minimal shadows created by the main light, which was a beauty dish. The beauty dish was above eye level and to the right of the frame, casting shadows beside the model's arm, neck and jawline. On the left side of the frame I used a red gel. Notice how the shadow areas now absorb this red light," explains Adler

© Lindsay Adler

© Lindsay Adler

Back to the Future

Lindsay Adler explains how she used props and lighting to set up this stylised portrait

MAKE-UP
"I worked closely with my makeup artist to produce a very pale and clean look, making the subject appear nearly cyborg-like"

STYLING
"I asked my wardrobe stylist to get very structural and metallic clothing to emulate some of the vision of what I thought futuristic clothing might look like"

LIGHTING
"When I envision something futuristic, I think cool and sterile, so I used Broncolor lighting and a light called a long throw to the left to create Rembrandt lighting on the model's face. I then used a silver reflector dish with a teal-blue gel to the right of the frame"

BACKDROP
"I wanted to create a scene that felt like a spacecraft of the future. I needed to work within a small budget, so I decided to make this scene out of large pieces of foam core and metallic poster board"

THE BRIEF
"I was asked by the Framed Network to shoot an online series called 'The Concept' with fine-art photographer, Brooke Shaden (show launching late this fall). At the beginning of every episode we were given a theme – this was Back to the Future. It showed there are endless answers for any visual challenge," Adler explains

COMPOSITION
"A low angle made the subject look even taller and more slender than in reality. A graphic pose and clean composition helped to further enhance a cyborg-like appearance to this Back to the Future challenge!"

© Lindsay Adler

Pro tips

Marcus Hausser shares his secrets for using props in ads

When the prop is a product for an advertisement, it has to be in pristine condition. If it's an advertisement for a drink, the client will normally provide the bottle in a perfect state. You can enhance the appeal by adding condensation droplets.

Usually the client will provide the item in a perfect state, but sometimes we need an artist to create a mock-up production. This is when you must consider the texture and shapes that make the result more impressive.

When a shoot requires a prop, I always begin by studying the object. I experiment with how I can light the subject to create volume and dynamism, without distorting the prop's characteristics.

Encourage the model to interact with the prop so the final image looks totally natural. To put them at ease, I always try to make the studio comfortable with good music and a relaxed atmosphere.

The composition and lighting should give the subject a three-dimensional feel. With my fruit portraits, for instance, I didn't want the image to seem flat as if it were all on the same level.

To see more of Hausser's work, visit: www.marcushausser.com

"If used correctly, a well-placed prop can catch the attention of the target audience"
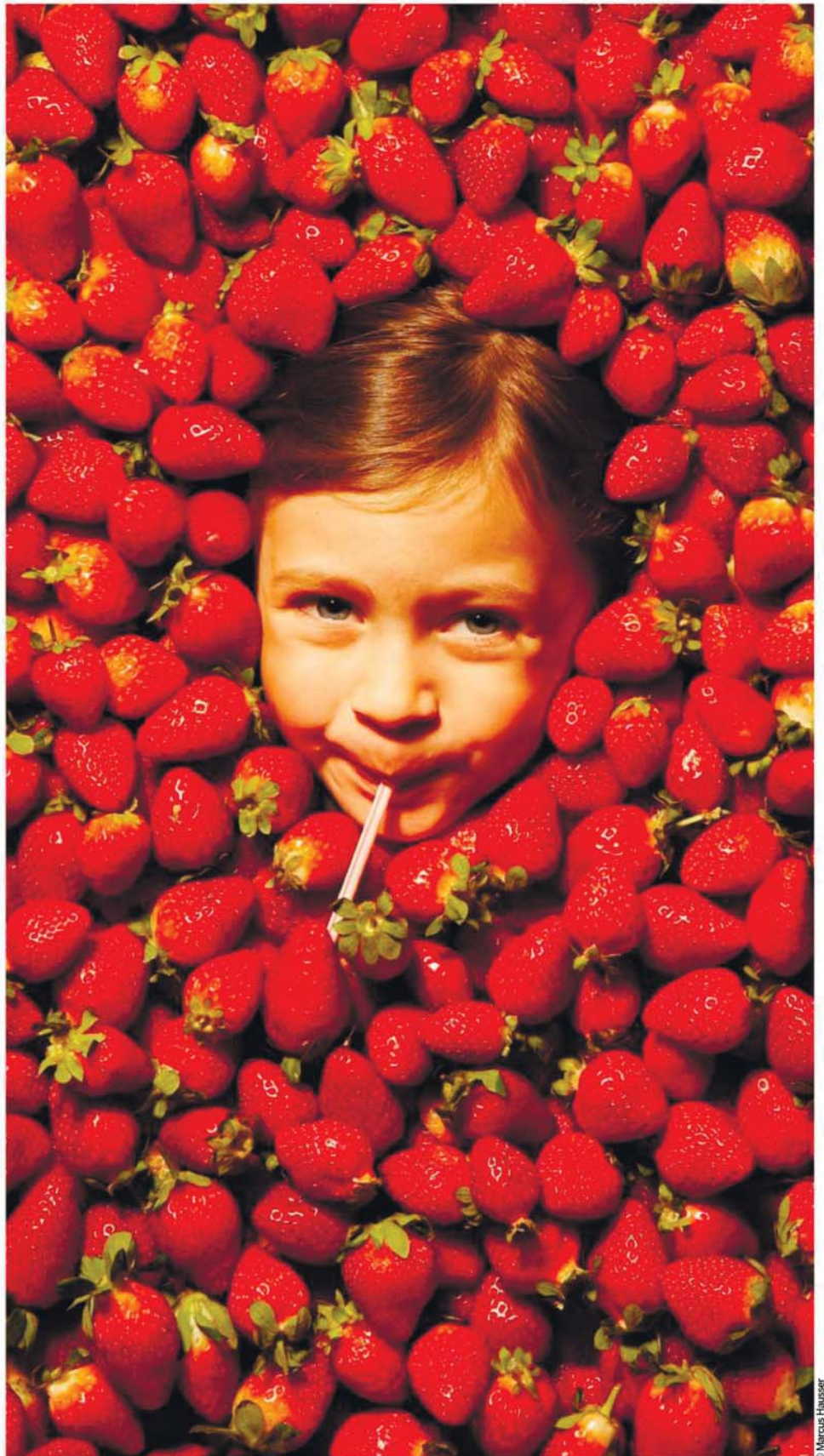
▶ **FEELING FRUITY**
"These fruity images were made for a fast-food company, to promote its new juice line. It was inspired by a campaign I had done for Fiat using a similar idea," Hausser explains

© Marcus Hausser

THE BENEFITS OF MODIFIERS

Simply lighting your portraits is not enough. Modifiers enable you to adjust the direction and intensity of the light to bring out your subject's features, flattering their skin, eyes and hair

Work with studio lighting

Lighting can transform your portraits – find out how as the secrets of studio lighting are revealed

Photography is always about light, but how photographers interact with it varies significantly according to the field that they're working in. While landscape photographers study the weather to predict when conditions are best, wedding and events photographers must make do with whatever they are presented with on the day.

Studio-based photographers are able to take full control of the light that they're working with, creating the exact lighting effects that they want for their images. For many photographers, this level of control over the light itself, its precise direction, character and shape is of enormous appeal and a significant component of what they love about working in studio conditions. For many portrait photographers, crafting the light and experimenting with the many different possibilities is the main appeal of what they do – and they wouldn't have it any other way.

Although the general concept of studio lighting – particularly the amount of modifiers available – can appear daunting at first, it's a lot more straightforward than it can first appear and, over the next few pages, you'll discover how to make the most of the different lighting products on the market to take your best-ever studio portraits.

HAIR LIGHTS
The use of a hair light provides separation from the background, giving a sense of dimension to the image

SKIN TEXTURE
The skin benefits from lighting, which de-emphasises texture such as pores. Meanwhile, shadows emphasise the model's cheekbones

CATCH LIGHTS
The eyes have pleasant catch lights from the flash and as a result are the main focal point

Studio basics

Get the essentials sorted out before putting lights and modifiers in place

Camera

You can take great studio portraits with any DSLR or CSC, but be aware of the maximum flash sync speed, which is likely to be 1/200sec or 1/250sec.

Lens

The focal length you use is important for portraits. To avoid any distortion, it's best not to go wider than 50mm, though you may need to for group shots.

Flash trigger

This is simply a device that triggers the flash units to fire in sync with your exposure. Wireless hotshoe devices are preferable as they avoid running cables across the studio floor.

Tripod

Though not essential, a tripod is still a useful accessory to have to hand when working in the studio, especially when you want a sequence of images to be uniform.

In many respects, modifiers are the heart and soul of studio lighting. Without them, you can certainly create light but you can't take charge of it in the way that you really want to; you cannot shape it, control it or change its character. Without modifiers, your flash will produce a bare-bulb effect in which the light disperses in all directions without restriction. Like most photographic accessories, modifiers range from subtle attachments that provide refinement or control of the light, to fittings that dramatically alter the entire atmosphere of the image.

The most basic of all light modifiers is the standard reflector dish, which is typically constructed of metal and features a stippled silver interior, though some models feature a smooth, polished silver interior instead. Like air-cushioned stands, these are often sold alongside flash heads as part of the kit that you purchase and are designed to limit the sideways spill of the light produced by the flash. Basically, the narrower the reflector, the more directional and focused the light will be. The depth of these dishes varies, which again has an impact on the light. The quality of light produced is comparable to undiffused sunlight and is therefore rather harsh. However, reflector dishes do have the added advantage of offering some protection for the modelling bulb and flash tube in your strobe in the event of an accident.

If you want to get more precise – and more creative – with the way you control the spill of light, you'll want to take a look at snoots and honeycomb grids. A snoot is a conical device that fits onto your flash and produces a tightly focused, circular beam of light; they offer a higher degree of precision than a standard reflector dish and enable photographers to isolate and light very specific areas of their subject. The quality of the light produced by a snoot can be refined with the use of a small honeycomb grid attachment fitted to the end, which results in an even more controlled fall of light with softer edges. Like reflector dishes, these grids come in different degrees, producing different levels of control over the pool of illumination. Larger honeycomb grids are also available to clip into standard reflector dishes.

> "Without modifiers, your flash will produce a bare-bulb effect in which the light disperses"

Modify light

Add different modifiers to your flash unit to create very different effects in your portraits

Softbox

This is perhaps the single most popular light modifier as it produces a very flattering light on your model that's soft and even but without too much spill. They can be purchased in a wide range of sizes and several shapes.

Beauty dish

The light from a beauty dish is a mix of hard and soft light. It's certainly not as soft as a softbox but it doesn't have a hot spot and has reasonably soft edges to it. For softer results, there are diffusers available to attach to the front of the beauty dish.

Umbrella

Umbrellas produce soft light and come in two distinct types, shoot-through and reflective. They are portable and cheaper than softboxes, but the catch lights they produce aren't as subtle or natural in appearance and are less light-efficient.

Snoot

This is designed to produce focused and strong directional light that's ideal for hair lighting. Honeycomb grids can be attached to the front in order to further refine their effect. Conical in shape, they're really simple to use.

It's no surprise that the main aim of studio portraiture is to flatter your subject and create lighting that enables the model to look as good as possible. While snoots and honeycomb grids can be used for the main key light, when producing very specific artistic effects, it's rather more common for photographers to employ different modifiers in this role. The most famous of these is the softbox, which provides very soft and flattering light around your model.

The ubiquity of softboxes is also down to their flexibility and diversity. They come in an enormous range of shapes and sizes, from quite small through to extremely large, and covering everything from square to rectangular, through to the popular octabox, so-called because of its eight sides. Some photographers particularly like this type of softbox because of the wrap-around effect that it offers and the shape of the catch lights that it produces – with a traditional square or rectangular softbox naturally producing a less interesting catch light shape.

Thin and narrow softboxes are also available, which are often referred to as strip-softboxes and are useful to create a controlled, soft appearance of light along the length of the model's body, as side- or backlighting.

Generally softboxes contain the same stippled silver interior as a standard reflector dish and feature a black, light-efficient exterior. In addition to the soft fabric diffuser at the front of the softbox, there is usually a second baffle that attaches to the interior of the softbox somewhere around its middle. This can, of course, be removed but most photographers keep these in place for the extra diffusion they afford.

Softboxes are durable, highly effective and are available in sizes to suit a wide range of photographic applications, so they are definitely very high in the pantheon of key equipment for studio portrait lighting.

How to create smooth skin

Save yourself time in Photoshop by ensuring that the light you use will flatter your subject's skin

Although the flash modifiers you are using will have an impact on the way your subject's skin looks, you will also find that precisely where you position your main, dominant light in relation to your model also has a significant role to play in this. Judging this correctly will of course have the added benefit of saving you a degree of retouching time later on in post-production, so it's well worth considering as an option.

As a basic rule of thumb, 90-degree side lighting should be avoided unless you want to emphasise and heighten the texture of the skin, such as pores and imperfections. Instead, try positioning a softbox at 45-degrees to your subject's nose and angled to shine down onto them slightly. This creates shadow on the cheekbones and jawline that can be very flattering. You can also try using a second softbox as a fill light on the opposite side to fill in unflattering shadows if needs be. Alternatively, explore butterfly lighting, in which the main light source is placed above and in front of the model and balanced out with a reflector (or triflector) placed beneath the model.

USE A FLASH METER
Get perfect exposures with flash by working with one of these handy and easy-to-use devices

INCIDENT READING
Place the meter close to the subject's face, to enable the meter to read the exact light falling at the scene

SETTINGS
You can tell the meter what shutter speed you are intending to shoot with and the ISO your camera is set to using the various buttons

FLASH TRIGGER
This socket allows you to attach a flash cable to trigger your flash units when you depress a button and perform a reading

Choose the right light meter for you

Sekonic L-758DR Digital Master
Web: www.sekonic.com
Price: £560 (approx. $916)
This is a complete package from Sekonic that can be calibrated and profiled to match the actual camera system that you are shooting with, as they are all subtly different in their response to light.

Sekonic L-478DR LiteMaster Pro Light Meter
Web: www.sekonic.com
Price: £400 (approx. $654)
This is a newer model and lays claim to being the first light meter to feature touch-screen functionality via a 2.7-inch LCD. Additionally, it boasts exclusive PocketWizard ControlTL.

Sekonic Flashmate L-308S Digital Light/Flash Meter
Web: www.sekonic.com
Price: £175 (approx. $286)
This is an affordable but effective model that will do most things that you are ever likely to need. It lacks extras such as radio triggering and multiple flash evaluation, however.

The two main alternatives to softboxes are umbrellas and beauty dishes. There are two main types of umbrella: shoot-through and reflective. A shoot-through umbrella is used with the flash head directed at the subject and is intended to diffuse the light, while a reflective umbrella is used with the flash head directed away from the subject with the stippled silver interior of the umbrella reflecting light back to the model. Umbrellas are cheaper to purchase than equivalently sized softboxes and are easier to fold down and transport. However, many photographers feel that they are less light-efficient than softboxes and offer less precision in terms of controlling the light.

A beauty dish is similar to a standard reflector dish, albeit rather wider and with a cap or plate in its centre that covers the actual flash head, eliminating any hotspots and making the light softer than a standard reflector. A beauty dish won't give the ultra-soft light of a softbox; instead, it produces a hard light but with fairly soft edges and no hotspots, as would be expected.

There are various other items that you can also make very good use of in the studio. First among these is a reflector. This is an incredibly simple accessory that enables you to control shadows by throwing light back onto key areas of your subject without the need for additional flash heads. A five-in-one reflector, containing silver, gold and white reflectors – plus a black anti-reflector and a diffuser panel – is the ideal solution and costs very little, particularly when compared with flash units and softboxes. Talking of reflectors, a triflector is another worthwhile accessory to have in your studio lighting arsenal. Consisting of three reflective panels – typically reversible gold and silver – these can be independently angled and positioned for the best effect and are typically used for butterfly lighting.

"A beauty dish won't give the ultra-soft light of a softbox; instead, it produces a hard light but with fairly soft edges and no hotspots"

Add a hair light

Put the finishing touches to your portrait by adding a subtle light on the subject's hair

As can often be the case with photography, sometimes it's the little touches with studio lighting that make all the difference. Backlighting is a good example of this, as is adding a hair light.

It's often only when you compare and contrast two images side by side – one taken with a hair light and one without – that you can really appreciate the difference. Portraits taken without a hair light aren't wrong and definitely don't look wrong as such, but adding a hair light helps separate the subject from the background and so gives the image an extra dimension.

Of course, there are some situations in which it's impractical or very awkward to use hair lighting, such as for group shots or portraits of active subjects.

▶ **WITH A HAIR LIGHT**
The hair light bounces light off the model's hair, making it look shinier and more voluminous

▼ **WITHOUT A HAIR LIGHT**
This low-key lighting setup is dramatic, but the model's dark hair fades into the black background without lighting

Creative gel light

Masking strips and gels enable you to produce powerful and inventive effects with colour

When you are in control of the light, the only real limit to what you can create and achieve is your imagination – as well as the equipment and accessories that you have access to.

One way of getting creative with studio lighting is to use masking strips to create patterns and shapes with the pool of light, either to fall on your actual subject or onto the background. You can purchase prefabricated masks for lights that are ready to go but they are actually quite straightforward to construct yourself if you prefer. Either way, they are easy to combine with a softbox (perhaps even without the front diffuser) and can be used to create a completely different atmosphere in your images.

Another great creative avenue to explore is the use of coloured gels. These are often associated with stage-lighting for theatrical productions and concerts but they can also work fantastically well with studio portraits and enable you to make colour schemes in-camera that would be either very time-consuming or impossible to re-create using Photoshop.

White background

Flash with snoot and red gel

Flash with honeycomb grid and green gel

Flash with honeycomb grid

Camera
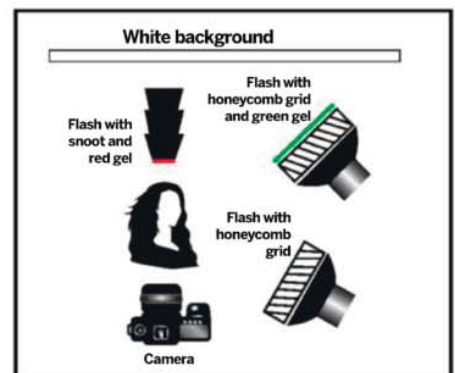
Shoot portraits at home

Great portraits don't always require a big studio and pro lighting; you can easily create stunning styles at home

Portraiture is an accessible genre, which needn't cost a fortune to practice. In this hands-on shooting guide we'll show you six great ways to capture stunning portrait styles, all of which are achievable with little time and money.

People are all around us every day of our lives, so you don't necessarily need to hire a model to get to grips with the genre. Grab a willing friend or family member and hone your shooting skills before you begin searching the model agencies.

You can also forget about expensive, elaborate studio kit; it's perfectly possible to take creative images without the need to spend thousands. Even some simple net curtains can be used as a portrait accessory; the key is knowing what you want to achieve and looking for ways to create it in-camera.

In order to demonstrate the scope and flexibility of portrait photography, we will demonstrate three very different environments – a small studio, outside in the middle of the day and inside in a living room using just the available light.

Each location presents its own unique challenges and benefits but all are equally ideal for portraits, and the similarities are actually greater than the differences. You can recreate each of the locations in your home and garden with ease. In each situation you will be working with the light to create your image.

You will also need to know how to work with your subject or model, to help them to relax and pose in a way that works with the type of image that you are trying to create.

Useful portrait kit Five useful tools of the trade

PocketWizard Plus II

Price: £200/$220

Tel: 0207 351 6681 (Jacobs Photo & Video)

Web: www.pocketwizard.com

PocketWizards are wireless transceivers that enable you to reliably trigger any off-camera flash – whether you're shooting in the studio or on location – with incredible ease.

Lastolite EzyBox Hotshoe Kit 54x54cm

Price: £195/$445

Tel: 01530 832570

Web: lastolite.com/ezybox.php

Available in three sizes, this hotshoe kit has absolutely everything you need for soft and diffused off-camera flash, including a portable stand, brackets and softbox.

Portrait Professional Studio

Price: £110/$140

Tel: 0117 230 7792

Web: www. portraitprofessional.com

Working differently to other airbrushing programs, this dedicated portrait software makes light work of removing skin imperfections and can even perform re-sculpting.

Interfit 5-in-1 32" Reflector

Price: £36/$45

Tel: 0121 522 4800

Web: interfitphotographic.com

This is an immensely handy and portable piece of kit, allowing you to control and modify the light quickly and easily. Includes gold, silver, black and white surfaces plus a translucent diffuser.
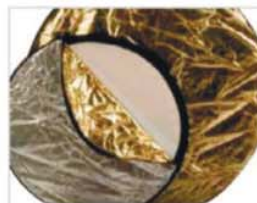
Honl CTO gel

Price: £16/$20

Tel: 020 7434 1848 (Calumet)

Web: www.honlphoto.com

A CTO (Colour Temperature Orange) gel can be purchased as part of a kit (a range of different configurations are available) and enables you to play with white balance and colour temperature while using off-camera flash.

In the studio

Learn to create a high-key setup and a moody low-key arrangement

HIGH KEY

The look

The high-key look typically involves bright and bold images set against a white background. The subject is normally very brightly lit by the key light – hence the term 'high key'. This style gives the photographer flexibility to break some of the rules of portraiture. The skin tones may be a stop or more lighter than they should be and spill from the background lights may be incorporated into the image.

The setup

To achieve the high-key look you will normally need at least three lights. Two of these lights will be used to light the background, one on each side. A third light is used as the key light that illuminates the subject. Some photographers choose to also add a fourth light to further eliminate shadows. This shot uses a three-light arrangement and we're using a standard zoom lens on our DSLR as this gives us plenty of flexibility. A fast shutter speed of 1/200sec and an aperture of about f11 work best.

Getting the shot

If you position your subject very near the background and background lights, you may find that a lot of light bounces back onto the subject and creates a soft-looking image or flare spots. Avoid overexposing the background and bring the subject nearer the key light. Try to get your model to adopt bold, striking poses and experiment with interesting compositions that look dramatic and dynamic.

Alternatively, you can try this...

If you only have access to two lights, you can still produce effective high-key images. Light your background to produce pure white and then place a reflector between the camera and the subject to bounce some of the light back in lieu of a key light. Open up your camera's aperture to ensure correct exposure on the model – we've gone for f5.6 here.

Place a reflector in front of the subject to bounce light back and produce a different high-key effect

HIGH KEY
Using a three-light setup with a white background has enabled us to create this modern high-key image

TWO LIGHTS
High key generally demands more lights but we also achieved the same effect using just two studio lights

Setup 1 – High-key studio

WHITE BACKGROUND

MODEL

FLASH WITH STANDARD REFLECTOR

FLASH WITH STANDARD REFLECTOR

CAMERA

SOFTBOX

BACKGROUND LIGHTS
Our model is lit by just one light here but there are a further two lights used on the white background

LOW KEY

The look

The low-key look is a much more traditional and classic approach to portraiture. Very often the images will look especially effective when converted to black and white. Portraits taken using low-key lighting tend to make use of moody expressions from the subject and frequently have an air of mystery and intrigue about them.

The setup

You can produce low-key lighting effects with just one light. One studio flash fitted with a softbox (or beauty dish) is all you really need. The only potential problem is that in a small studio space light may bounce back from walls, floors and ceilings and spoil your shadows. Avoid this by using black 'absorbers' (you can use any black surface with a matte finish, which will do the job of reducing reflections) and by shooting with a fast shutter speed to reduce the influence of ambient light as far as possible. We've increased the shutter speed to 1/250sec here.

Getting the shot

You will need to position your subject carefully in relation to the light in order to make the shadows as attractive as possible. The modelling lamp in the flash heads will give you some idea, but firing some test shots and watching the camera's LCD allows you to see exactly what's going on. Aim for an elegant, sophisticated or moody pose. You also want your model to be wearing black or very dark clothing which will enhance the shot.

"One studio flash fitted with a softbox is all you really need"

LOCATION
We shot our portraits in a very small studio space, but had all the room we needed

LOW KEY
This low-key image is very simple to create and requires a minimal amount of equipment – in this case, just one flash with softbox does the job

Setup 2 – Low-key studio

BLACK BACKGROUND

MODEL

CAMERA

SOFTBOX

ONE LIGHT
One light source is sufficient for a low-key portrait

Pros and cons of studio lighting
✔ Control all aspects of the light and background
✔ Images look polished and professional
✗ Not easy for everyone to access a studio
✗ Equipment may not suit everyone's budget

Natural light setups

Discover how window light can be all you need to create dramatic results

NET EFFECT

The look

When you use studio flash, you almost always modify it, such as by using a softbox. When working with natural light, keep the same idea in mind. The net curtains in a living room are ideal, diffusing the light in much the same way as a softbox does. This is an ideal technique for photographing a bride on her wedding morning.

The setup

Aside from the large window and net curtains, a small silver reflector is used to bounce a little light back onto the side of her face. A shallow depth of field reduces unwanted detail so a wide aperture of f2.8 is ideal. By ignoring the camera's meter and slowing the shutter speed, we've been able to overexpose the shot and create a high-key effect without any flash.

Getting the shot

We've asked our model to lean into the curtains and rest her head on them while looking back at the camera. We've also asked her to wear a simple white top to match the texture and tone of the net curtains.

Pros and cons of natural lighting
- ✔ Natural light is free! It doesn't cost you anything to use and it's all around us
- ✔ Images taken in natural light look closer to what our eyes actually see in everyday life
- ✘ You can't control natural light to the extent that you can control flash lighting
- ✘ On very dull days or in low light you'll need to use a camera that can perform well when using high ISOs

WINDOW LIGHT
Diffused window light can be used as a natural 'key light' for portraits

COUNTERACT HIGH CONTRAST
If contrast is too high, use a reflective surface to subtly fill in shadows on the other side of the face

MODEL FACING TOWARDS WINDOW

WINDOW WITH CURTAIN

SILVER REFLECTOR

CAMERA

Setup 1 – Natural light

SIMPLE REFLECTORS
You don't need any fancy gear beyond the camera itself – some white card or silver foil can be used as a reflector

WINDOW WITH CURTAIN

NATURAL LIGHT SOURCE

MODEL WITH
BACK TO WINDOW

CAMERA

SILVER
REFLECTOR

Setup 2 – Natural light

"If there's space, try getting the model to sit down or go for a full-length shot"

OVEREXPOSED BACKGROUND

The look

Rather than positioning the model so that the light is falling onto her face, you could also try posing her with her back to the light source. If there's enough space in your location, perhaps you could even consider getting the model to sit down or go for a full-length shot.

The setup

A small reflector is used to ensure light bounces back onto the model from the window behind her. This setup almost exactly recreates the studio setup we tried using just two background lights and a reflector. Just as we did then, we've opened up the camera's aperture to ensure that the model is correctly exposed.

Getting the shot

Ask the model to look off to the side and slightly overexpose the image again. Ignore the camera's meter. If you expose for the background (in this case the window light) not only will the model end up being very underexposed, you will also record detail from outside such as cars and brick walls.

Location setups

Use flash or speedlight off-camera to dramatically increase the range of shots you can take on location and control the ambient light

OFF-CAMERA FLASH

The look

For this shot, we will produce a fashion-style image with very underexposed ambient light. Our model is illuminated by just one small off-camera flash. The more power offered by the flash the better as it makes underexposing the ambient light easier. However, the effect can still be achieved with a regular hotshoe flash or speedlight.

The setup

We are using a Nikon SB-800 mounted on a portable stand and fitted with a small softbox to light this shot. This was positioned to the right of the camera (the model's left) and angled at 45 degrees towards her. Using the flash mounted on the camera would have resulted in a less effective-looking shot as we wouldn't be able to control how the shadows fall on her face.

Getting the shot

The ambient light is underexposed by two and a half to three stops, leaving the flash to do all the work. We asked the model to play with her scarf and look straight into the lens.

▼ **DETAILS**
Keep an eye on the details. Ensure stray hairs are tucked away and the clothing and accessories are right

OUTDOOR LOW KEY
Underexposing the ambient light and using off-camera flash means you can replicate a low-key style of lighting outside in the middle of the day

▲ **HOTSHOE FLASH**
A hotshoe flash on a stand diffused with a Lastolite EzyBox can overpower harsh light during the day
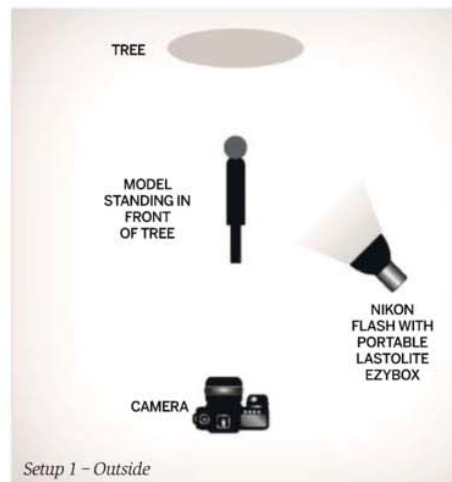
▲ **AMBIENT LIGHT**
An incredibly quick and easy setup – the shade provided by the tree helps control the ambient light

TREE

MODEL STANDING IN FRONT OF TREE

NIKON FLASH WITH PORTABLE LASTOLITE EZYBOX

CAMERA

Setup 1 – Outside

CTO GELS
This is a great way of creating a quick and dramatic effect outside. For an extra bit of contrast, try adding a half CTO gel in addition to the full CTO gel

"Play around with the white balance settings on your DSLR"

USING GELS

The look
You can create dramatic effects outdoors by experimenting with a gel on your flash and playing around with the white balance settings on your DSLR. This can produce a range of creative and interesting effects straight out of the camera with minimal post-processing work.

The setup
A hotshoe flash fitted with a full CTO (Colour Temperature Orange) gel was positioned on a portable stand to the right of the camera (the model's left). The gel ensures that the background records as a cool blue due to the white balance settings used.

Getting the shot
We asked the model to sit in one of the trees and compose the image so that the line of trees stretching out into the distance is visible over her right shoulder. Only the model, plus the tree in which she is sitting, are affected by the output from the flash, creating the effect we were after.

Pros and cons of location lighting
- ✔ There can be lots of potential to explore
- ✔ Use flash or the ambient light, depending on the effect you want
- ✘ Weather conditions may not be great on the day
- ✘ It can be hard to get rid of all distracting/ unattractive elements from the scene

TREE

MODEL
SAT IN TREE

NIKON FLASH
WITH FULL
CTO GEL

CAMERA

Setup 2 – Outside

▲ This setup only requires one hotshoe flash, incorporating the shade of a tree helps to subdue the midday sun

▼ Take the Lastolite EzyBox off and just use the flash on a stand off-camera for this kind of shot

▲ **TUNGSTEN**
Using an off-camera flash, place a full CTO (Colour Temperature Orange) gel over the flash head and set the camera's white balance to tungsten

Take portraits with your cameraphone

Master simple skills to shoot perfect people photos

Any genre of photography can be practised with your cameraphone, but portraits are particularly popular for snapping on smart devices, whether it's a shot of a friend or family member or a self-portrait. In fact, it is often easier to take a self-portrait with your phone rather than a normal camera, as many models now come with a forward-facing camera to help you frame the shot on the screen.

Taking photos of yourself and your loved ones is a great way of preserving your memories, and better still, you can share those memories with everyone else too. Your cameraphone lets you instantly upload your shots to social networking websites, and you can even tag your friends so that they can see and share them instantly too. Your photos are stored on your device but can also be easily uploaded to cloud storage for extra security.

Of course, you are going to want to take the most flattering portraits possible, so we are here to guide you through the best techniques and settings to use, and then show you how to edit your shots to make sure they are really perfect.

Zoom in by moving closer

For a really intimate and engaging portrait, try shooting a close-up of just your subject's head and shoulders. When using a normal camera, you might zoom in to get a close-up from a distance, but this is not a good idea when using a cameraphone. Most only have a digital zoom, not an optical one. This means that the camera simply zooms in on your digital image, rather than physically moving the lens closer to your subject, and therefore reduces the quality. Instead of zooming with the camera, zoom with your feet. Take a few steps closer until your subject fills the frame.

Instead of using your digital zoom, crop into your shot later

Find flattering light

Lighting is one of the key elements that can make or break a portrait, so it is important to consider when and where you take your shot. If you are shooting indoors, try to find a room with plenty of natural light coming through the windows and then use some white card or tin foil to reflect the light onto your subject's face for even coverage.

When you are shooting outdoors, avoid standing your subject in bright, direct sunlight, as the results can look quite harsh and it may cause your subject to squint into the camera. Instead, move your subject into the shade, such as under a tree, or wait for some cloud cover to diffuse the light a little, and then use a reflector to bounce light into the shadows.

HARSH LIGHT
✗ Bright sunlight can wash out your subject and cause them to squint at the camera

IN THE SHADE
✓ Find some shade or wait for some cloud cover, for a softer and more even coverage of light

Pick your settings Prepare to shoot your perfect portrait

USE A SCENE MODE
If your phone gives you the option of picking a scene mode, use a portrait setting to get the optimum results. This should help to keep your subject well exposed and will also blur the background a little to make it less distracting
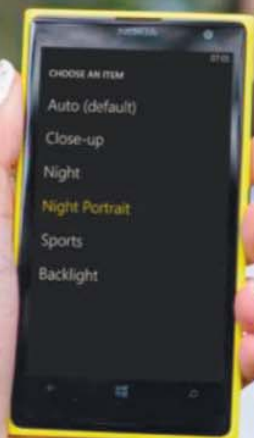
FIRE THE FLASH
Avoid firing your phone's flash, as it can be harsh and unflattering. However, if you have to use it, try putting a piece of tracing paper in front of it to soften it

CONTROL THE CAMERA'S WHITE BALANCE
Some models of cameraphone will let you adjust your white balance to make sure the colours in your photo are accurate. If you're shooting indoors, use the Tungsten/Incandescent setting, but switch to Daylight, Cloudy or Shade when outdoors
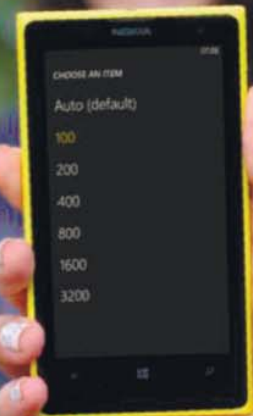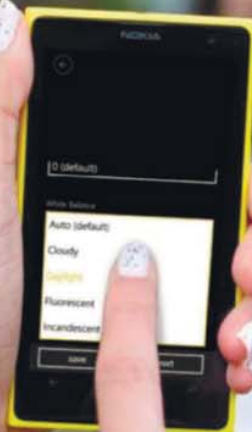
PICK YOUR ISO
A high ISO will make your shots really grainy, so only raise it if your shots are too dark and you can't use flash to brighten them

TAP TO FOCUS
Focusing with a cameraphone is incredibly easy, as all you have to do is tap the screen. When taking a portrait, make sure you tap your subject's face or eyes to keep them sharp, as this is the most important part of the photo

"Tap your subject's face to focus"

Edit your shot Perfect your portrait with the Cymera app

Blur the background

01 Tap the Edit tab, then select the Effect option. Choose Blur, then tap the centre of your subject's face and adjust the circle until it covers it. This will ensure that this area remains in focus. Once this is done, adjust the slider to control the amount of background blur that is applied.

Enhance the sitter's smile

02 Under the Beauty tab at the top, select the Smile option. The app will automatically detect the face in your portrait, so that you can then drag the slider to the right to increase your subject's smile. Be careful not to make it too large though, otherwise it could end up looking unnatural.

Slim down the face

03 If you select the Slim option under the Beauty tab you can slim down your subject's face. Again, the app will automatically detect their face shape, so if you increase the slider it will slim their face without you having to select anything. Too much and your subject will look gaunt, though.

Apply some make-up

04 The Cymera app has plenty of options for adding make-up to your subject's face. The Makeup tab has eye shadow, mascara and blusher options, or you can use the Concealer tab to remove specific blemishes. In total, there are 70 different realistic hair and make-up options.

Portrait apps

Top apps for edits on the go

Facetune
£1.99/$2.99 (iOS)
Facetune is a dedicated portrait editing app that will let you touch up your people shots with a few taps. You can emphasise smiles, smooth skin, apply make-up and even change your subject's eye colour.

Visage Lab
Free (iOS/Android)
This app does all of the hard work for you. When you take a photo or open one from your gallery, it automatically retouches the subject. You can then add some creative filter effects from a range of options if you wish.

Big Lens
£0.69/$0.99 (iOS)
This camera and editing app lets you adjust your depth of field before or after you take the shot. Select which area of your shot you want to keep sharp and the app will blur out the rest.

PhotoWonder
Free (iOS/Android)
This app has plenty of options for beautifying portraits. You can add make-up, clear acne and even remove dark circles from under your subject's eyes. There's also a one-click option that does it for you.

Cameraphone accessories Use a handy gadget to enhance your portraits

Manfrotto KLYP+
Price £70/$73

This clever case for the iPhone comes with a handy clip-on LED light that will be much more flattering than using your phone's built-in flash. The continuous light is great for shooting both stills and video of your friends and family in low light.

Photojojo Pocket Reflector
Price Approx £9/$15

If part of your subject's face is in shadow, you can use this tiny reflector to bounce the light back into the dark areas for a more flattering and even coverage. This one is 12" (30cm) in diameter but folds to just 5" (13cm).

Holga Muku Shuttr
Price £30/$40

Make putting yourself in the picture even easier with this handy remote shutter release that you can attach to your keys. It works with both iOS and Android devices and, once activated, can take shots from up to 30' (9m) away via Bluetooth.

Tiltpod Mobile
Price From £13/$15

If you're going to take a self-portrait using self-timer or a remote release, then you're going to need a stand for your phone. This one pivots so you can easily adjust your angle, and can be attached to your keys so that it's always to hand.

Shoot, edit & share group portraits

Essential tips for taking perfect group shots

Match colours for a perfect shot

Think about the colours in the scene you're shooting. Try to get your subjects to coordinate their clothing and make sure that the backdrop doesn't clash either.

What you'll need...
Digital camera
Tripod

We used...
Nikon D3200
Adobe Photoshop
Elements 11

You could try...
Any camera
GIMP

What you'll learn...
How to take a great group portrait.
How to perfect and enhance your photo.
How to create a personalised card.

Getting the whole family or an entire group of friends together is a great excuse to practise your group portrait skills, and is particularly important for preserving precious memories if these occasions are rare. Group portraits can be trickier to get right than single portrait shots, as you need to pay attention to several subjects instead of just one. This can increase the chances of mistakes, such as people blinking or looking away from the camera in your photos.

Luckily, there are some foolproof tricks that you can use to guarantee great photos quickly and easily, which is very useful when trying to keep the attention of small children. Using blink detection or Burst mode will help you to get a photo where everyone is looking at the camera, and some cameras even have a smile detection function. It is also important to make your shoot fun for everyone, so you could try out whacky poses and introduce humorous props to

keep everyone entertained. This will also help you to evoke natural smiles and facial expressions that convey your subject's personality instead of forced and cheesy grins. You could even give your shot a theme, maybe getting everyone to wear festive jumpers to give the shot a winter feel.

In the first part of our guide, we will show you how to set up your group portrait shot and get yourself in the picture too. Then discover how to edit your photo for flattering results, learning how to whiten teeth, remove blemishes and smooth problem skin. You can then find out how to turn your photo into a great card to send to your loved ones and give your message a personal touch.

Alternatively, you could turn your shot into a canvas print to place above the mantelpiece or simply print it out for your photo album. So whether you are shooting a family portrait in the living room, or photographing your best mates at the local park, follow our step-by-step guide to producing fantastic shots.

"You could try out whacky poses and introduce humorous props to keep everyone entertained"

Shoot! Get everyone together for a group portrait

Position your subjects
01 Find a suitable location, considering your backdrop, and then get everyone into position. Try getting your subjects to sit or stand at different levels to avoid a dull shot with everyone in a straight line.

Control your aperture
02 Set your camera to Aperture Priority mode and choose f8. This should be narrow enough to keep everyone in focus, but wide enough to create some background blur. Keep the ISO low to avoid noise.

Use Burst mode
03 If your camera has a blink detection function, use this to prevent the risk of blinking eyes in your shot. Alternatively, use Burst mode to take a series of shots and increase your chances of getting a good one.

Use the zoom
04 To ensure everyone is in the frame, you may need to zoom your lens out. This may also capture some of the scenery to add context. If you can, though, take a few steps back and zoom in to avoid distortion.
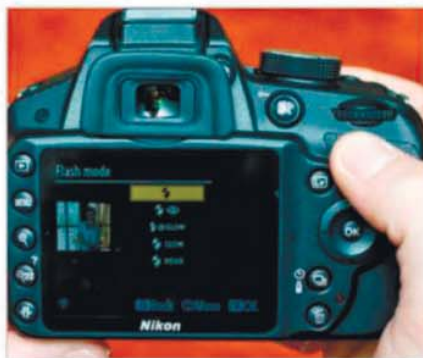
Light the shot
05 Make use of natural light by shooting outside or by a bright window. If you can't or any of your subjects' faces are in shadow, fire your flash to fill in these areas, or use a reflector to bounce light back in.

Get into the frame
06 If you want to be part of the shot, set the camera up on a tripod or sturdy surface and then switch on the self-timer. Once you press the shutter, quickly get into position before the shot is taken.

3 of the best...
Items of kit for portraits

Flashgun
Sometimes the flash on your camera can be quite harsh. External flashguns usually have tilting heads that are perfect for bouncing the light off of the ceiling, for softer results.

Camera with articulated LCD
If you want to get yourself in the shot, a camera with an LCD that flips out or tilts up is great for framing. Otherwise, you can set your camera up on a tripod and use the self-timer.

Reflector
Fill in any unflattering shadows in your shot by bouncing the light back into the dark areas with a reflector. Different colours create different effects – gold, for example, will cast a warm light.

"Check your camera's settings for blink or smile detection and burst mode"

Edit! Perfect your portrait using Photoshop Elements
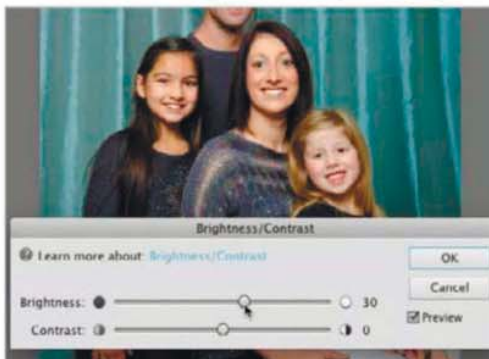
Brighten it up
01 If your shot looks a little dark, go to Enhance>Adjust Lighting>Brightness/Contrast and boost the Brightness slider. You can tweak the exposure further by going to Enhance>Adjust Color>Adjust Color Curves.

Bring out the detail
02 You may need to sharpen it up a bit. Go to Enhance>Unsharp Mask and increase the Amount slider to sharpen, the Radius slider to determine the area and the Threshold slider to set the amount of contrast.

Remove imperfections
03 To remove blemishes or stray hairs, select the Spot Healing Brush tool. Make sure the Content Aware option is on, adjust your brush size and click or drag your cursor over the problem area.
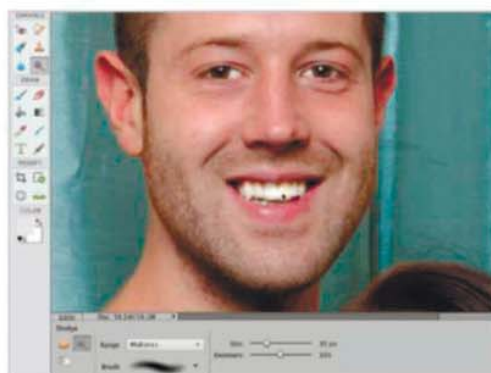
Whiten the teeth
04 Select the Dodge tool and set the Range to Midtones. Set the Exposure value to 50% and then brush over the teeth to whiten them. The longer you hold down the cursor, the whiter they will get.

Brighten the eyes
05 You can use the same technique to brighten the whites of the eyes. Just make sure that you use a small brush size to avoid brightening the iris and pupils of the eye too for an unnatural effect.
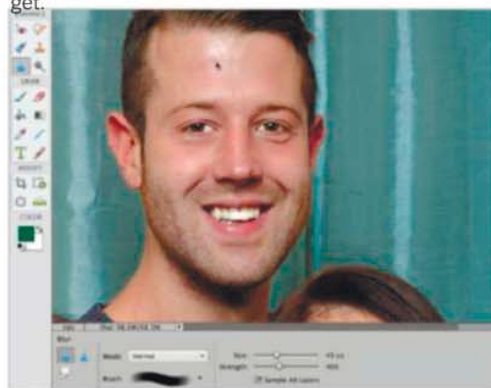
Smooth the skin
06 To smooth out areas of skin, select the Blur tool, set the Mode to Normal and set the Strength to around 40%, depending how smooth you want to go. Brush over the skin as desired.

Share! Create a card with Snapfish
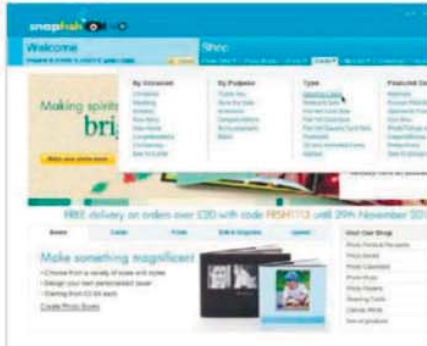
Choose a template

01 Go to www.snapfish.co.uk, click on the Cards tab and choose the style of card – we chose Greeting Cards – then select the card template. We went with Full Photo. Select an orientation and then click Create Card.

Upload your photo

02 Click the Upload button and create an album to upload your photo into and pick an upload speed. There is an automatic photo correction box you can tick if you want Snapfish to make basic edits to your shot.

Position your shot

03 After you have uploaded your photo, click on the Front tab and drag and drop the photo onto the front of your card. Click in the centre of your photo to drag it into a position you are happy with.
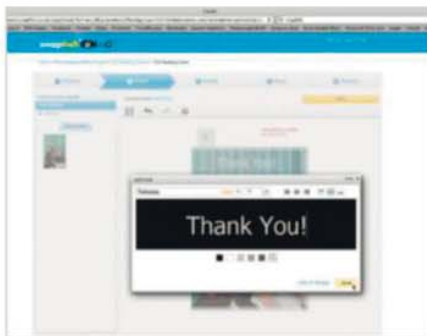
Add some text

04 Click on the Text button and position the text box where you want it on your card. Select the Edit Text icon and type your message, choosing the font, size, colour and alignment of the text. Now click Done.
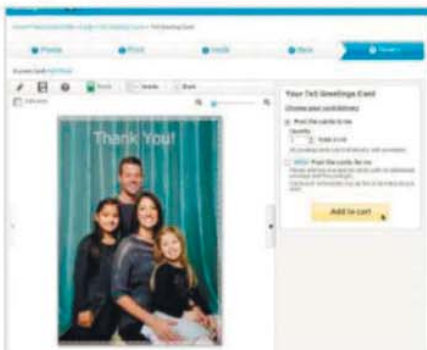
Order your card

**05** Select the Inside and Back tabs to edit the rest of your card. You can even add more photos inside. Finally, go to the Review tab and choose where you want your card to be posted, then click Add To Cart.

TECHNICAL TIP
Position your shot from a high angle or at eye level for the most flattering results. A low angle will accentuate chins and noses

Extra space
Make sure you leave enough room for the message on your card when you take the shot

Natural smiles
Interact with your subjects to help them relax and get natural smiles from them

Simple backdrop
Find a simple yet colourful backdrop to complement your group of subjects

Get together
Make sure everyone is close together to close up any gaps and create an intimate photo

Learn how to pose your portrait model

Capture flattering portrait photos by positioning your model into key poses

What you'll need...
Model
Camera

We used...
Panasonic FZ200

You could try...
Props
Reflector

What you'll learn...
Various ways to pose your model

A great pose will make your model look relaxed and confident, yet many people freeze up in front of the camera. This is especially true if you've asked an inexperienced friend or family member to help you out, but your natural rapport should help put them at ease. If you're working with a stranger, however, take some time to get to know them a little.

Before the shoot, find inspiration by scouring magazines and the internet. By bringing these visual aids along, you can easily communicate the kind of look you're aiming for. Work together with your model to come up with some ideas and get the creative juices flowing, but make sure you come armed with some poses too. It's the photographer's job to direct the subject

so don't be afraid to tell them to turn their head slightly to the left, or twist their upper body away from the camera. This will help them – and your photos – to look their best.

We've listed a few fail-safe poses for portrait shots, whether the model is standing, sitting, or reclining on the floor. They will not only make your photographs look more professional, but they also help to flatter your subject. By extending one leg in front of the other you can create the illusion of longer limbs, and by turning their body at a 45-degree angle they will appear at their slimmest. Celebrities do this all the time on the red carpet, but your model may not know these photo tricks. Take five minutes to familiarise yourself with the top poses for better portraits.

"Work together with your model to come up with some ideas"

Perfect poses Help your models to look their best

Frame the face
Hands can be awkward to place, so give them something to do and ask the model to rest them gently on or near her face. This creates a natural frame and looks soft and feminine. Watch out for claw-like hands or fists in your images; they should be graceful and relaxed.

Sitting down
Don't worry too much about posture as a little slouching can look natural. Crossing the legs enhances this relaxed feel but make sure you arrange the model's body at a 45-degree angle. Bring her arms in front to create a pyramidal shape, drawing focus to her face.

Hug the knees
For a youthful, coy shot ask the model to bring her knees to her chest and wrap her arms around them. This is a variation on the previous sitting pose and gives you a wider variety of poses to choose from. Compliment the model to bring a genuine smile to her face.

Lying down
Get your model to lie on the floor to create this open and inviting pose. Crossing the legs and placing a hand near the face ensure she still looks composed. Lay down on the ground and shoot at eye level to keep a connection between the model and the camera.

Using props
Props can add a point of interest in a shot, but be careful they don't detract from the model. Place them near her face and this will naturally draw the viewer's eye to hers. Tilting her head slightly away from the camera but keeping the gaze locked is more complementary.

3 of the best...
Camera settings for portraits

Aperture priority
This mode gives you control over how much of the image is in focus. Blur the background by selecting a low f-number.

White balance
Avoid unattractive colour casts by selecting the appropriate white balance for you lighting. For example, choose Tungsten if indoors.

Focus
Single-Shot AF mode is great for portraits as you can select a single spot for the camera to focus carefully on, most importantly the eyes.

Shoot portraits in the shade

Get out of the sun to capture great outdoor shots

What you'll need...
Camera
Shaded area

We used...
Nikon D200 with
35-70mm f3.5/4.5
zoom

You could try...
Any camera

What you'll learn...
How to use the best
light for your portraits

People generally think that everything looks and photographs better in the sun, but that's not always the case, especially when it comes to portraits. The high, bright sun tends to make people squint, and the strong contrast and high angle of sunlight isn't very flattering for some subjects. We all either hide behind sunglasses, or shine from too much factor 50 sunscreen.

Instead, take your subjects into the shade where the light is more gentle and flattering and your subject can relax their eyes. On bright sunny days, people also change when you take them into the shade. They visibly relax and smiles come easier, which is great for your shots. Wedding photographers often take their photographs under trees, or on the shaded side of the church where the light is more gentle and even. This is great for white dresses!

The main thing to remember about using the shade for photography is that the light tends to be bluer and shaded areas readily pick up any dominant colour, such as painted walls, leaves and beach umbrellas. Most cameras now have a white balance control, which will help you to ignore these unwelcome colours and allow you to concentrate on getting the best from your subject. The lower light levels in shade also require you to let more light into your camera by opening the aperture on your lens. This has the added bonus of throwing cluttered or busy backgrounds out of focus. In this feature, we will help you to make the natural light work best for you.

"Take your subjects into the shade where the light is more gentle"

Natural portraits Learn to shoot in the shade

Look at the light
01 In the shade, the light tends to have a blue cast, so try using the Shade setting in the white balance control on your camera to warm up skin tones. Make sure you change it back once you return into the sunshine, though.

Turn off your flash
02 Don't forget to kill the flash. There is less light in the shade and some cameras will automatically put the flash on, which can ruin the effect you are looking for and make sunscreened skin shine in an unflattering way.

Consider your location
03 Think about the backdrop for your shoot and make sure it's not too distracting. Watch out for bright colours reflecting onto your model from coloured scenery. Move your subject toward the edge of the shade, where the light is brighter and colour reflects less.

Support yourself
04 If you can, use a tripod. This will allow you to come out from behind the camera and engage with your subject. People often react better and pose easier if you are not talking to them with a camera in front of your face. The tripod will keep your camera steady.

Shoot wide and long
05 Zoom in on your subject to remove them from any clutter in the background. Use the widest aperture on your camera lens. F4 will blur the background nicely. Don't forget to focus on their eyes, as they're the most important part of a portrait.

3 of the best…
Tricks for shady shooting

Try using Aperture Priority
Using Aperture Priority mode will let you choose the widest aperture to allow more light into the sensor and create a blurry background. The camera meter will match the shutter speed to it.

Fill and reflect
Use a reflector to throw extra light onto your subject and fill in any harsh shadows. Silver reflectors are good in low light, while gold ones cast a warm glow. White card also works well.

Be remote
Use a cable release or self-timer when using a tripod or other support to avoid having to press the shutter button. Even the tiniest movement can create camera shake.

Simple ways to edit your portrait photos

Retouch your portraits quickly with Elements, GIMP or iPhone and Android phone apps

Selections
To select areas, you can find the Quick Selection tool right here. The Selection Brush is also here for more precision

Spot Healing
Here you'll find the Spot Healing Brush, which does the bulk of the skin clean-up work in Photoshop Elements

Gaussian Blur
Skin smoothing is achieved with Gaussian Blur, which can be found under the Blur section of the Filter menu

Layers panel
This is where it all happens! Note the spot removal, smoothing, noise as well as dodge and burn layers

TECHNICAL TIP
In Step 6 of the skin tone tutorial we dodge and burn, which simply means to lighten or darken respectively. This is because smoothing doesn't always even out skin tone enough, and areas of light or dark skin can detract from its smoothness.

What you'll need...
Photo editing application

We used...
Elements 11
GIMP
Pixlr Express app

You could try...
Photoshop CS
PicBeauty app

What you'll learn...
Removing blemishes
Smoothing skin
Sharpening up
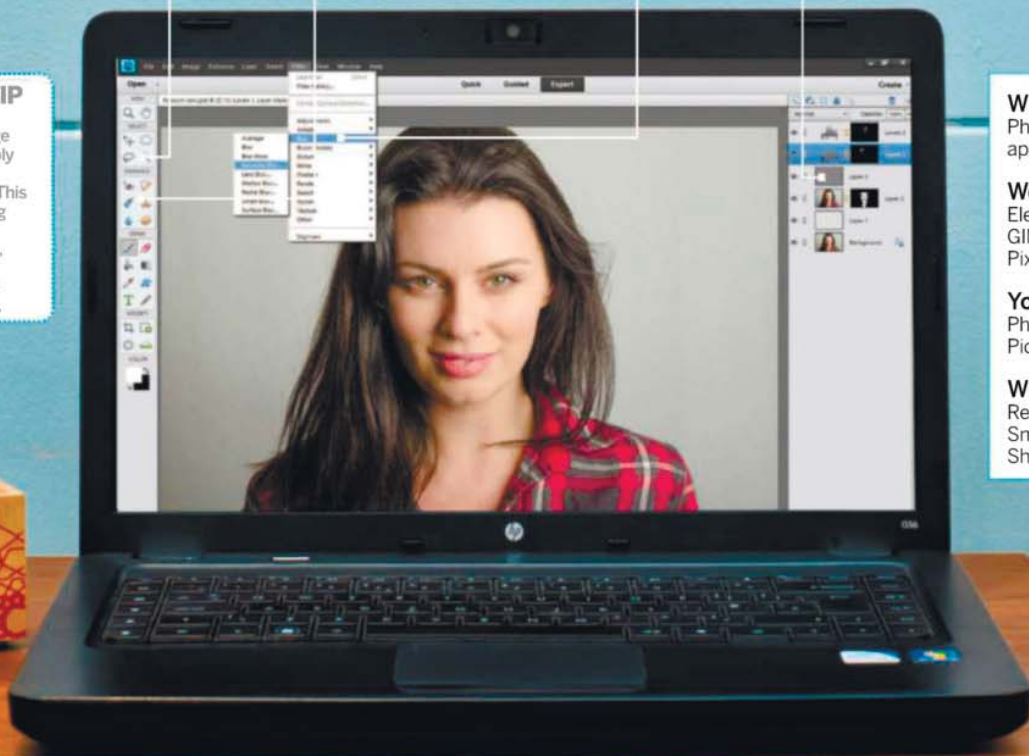
Perfecting skin Remove spots and smooth lines in Photoshop Elements 11

Before

After
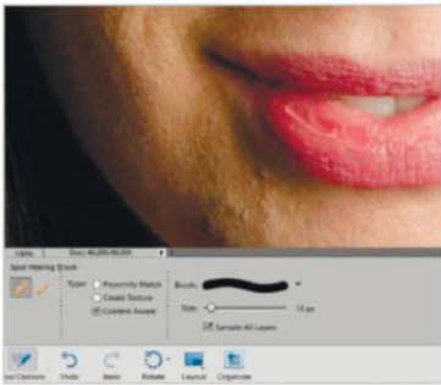
Set up spot healing
01 Open your image in Expert mode inside the Photo Editor and create a new layer on top by clicking the icon in the Layers panel. Press J for the Spot Healing Brush and set it to Sample All Layers. Zoom in to 100%.

Remove spots and flaws
02 Resize the brush to make it slightly bigger than each blemish and click on them to remove. Do the same for lines and wrinkles, removing bit by bit. Hold down the spacebar and click and drag to move around.
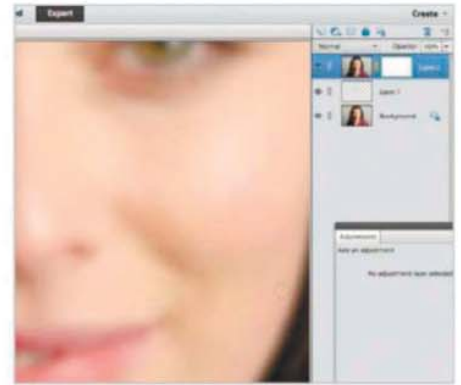
Build smooth skin
03 Create a merged duplicate layer on top with the shortcut Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+ Shift+E. Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and run about 10px of blur for a high-res image. In the Layers panel, select Add Layer Mask.
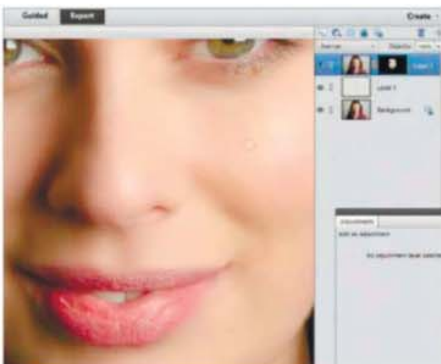
Brush in smoothing
04 Invert the layer mask to Hide All with Cmd/Ctrl+I. Press D to reset the colour palette, which gives you white as a foreground colour. Press B for the Brush tool and carefully brush the blur into skin areas, avoiding face contours, lips, eyes, nostrils and eyebrows.
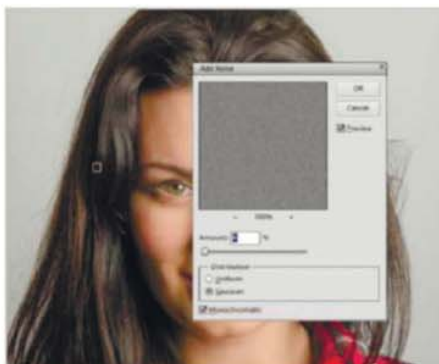
Recreate skin texture
05 Zoom out a little to examine the effect and drop layer opacity if it looks too strong. Hold down Opt/Alt and click the Create a New Layer button. Choose Overlay from the drop-down menu and check the box below. Hit Enter and go to Filter>Noise>Add Noise.
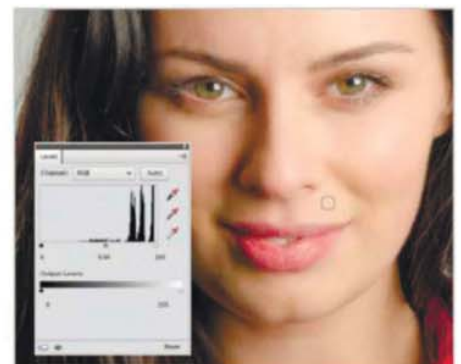
Dodge and burn to finish
06 Add 4% Noise with Gaussian and Monochromatic checked. Next add a Levels layer and push the middle slider left to lighten. Add another and move the slider right to darken. Invert both layer masks, then use a white brush at 20% Opacity to dodge and burn.

Beautify with Pixlr Express

Find your image

01 Open the Pixlr Express app and select Camera to take a shot, or tap the icon to choose a photo from the gallery. Select your image and it will appear in the dialog with options below it.
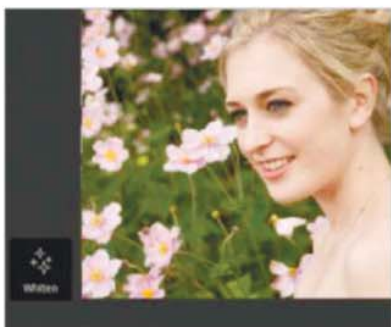
Whiten the skin

02 Click the Adjustment button then select Whiten. Set Brush Size to 65 and change Whitening to 15. Brush into the skin with your finger to whiten. Select the Eraser to brush out unwanted areas.
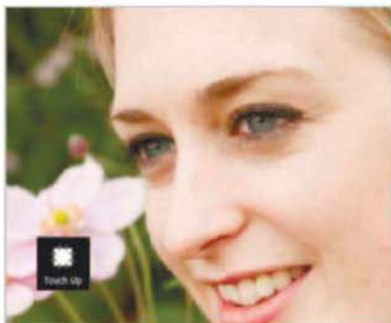
Spots and skin tone

03 Go back and select Touch Up. Set the brush size to about twice that of a blemish. Zoom into the face and click Spot. Touch any spots to remove. Switch to Shine and then brush into the skin.

Whiten eyes and teeth
Master Levels in Elements

Before

After
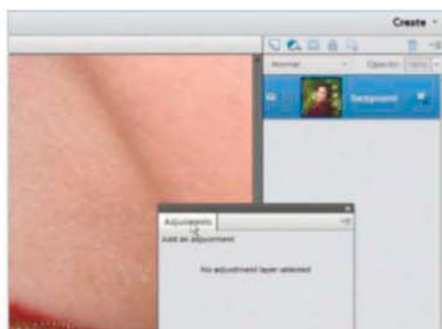
Select the teeth

01 Take the Quick Selection tool (A) and zoom into the teeth, then click and drag inside to select them, avoiding gums and lips. Hold Opt/Alt and drag to remove from these areas. Now add a Levels adjustment layer.
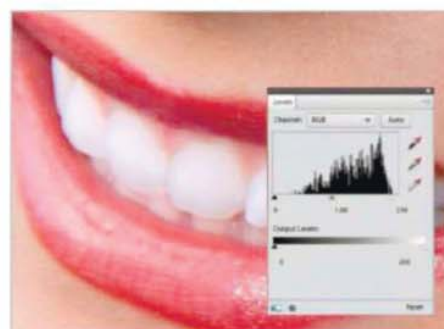
Remove yellow and lighten

02 Change the mode from RGB to Blue and drag the top white slider in. Switch back to RGB and repeat (to about setting 240). Use a black brush to remove the adjustment from unwanted areas included in the selection.

Lighten the whites

03 To lighten the eyes, add another Levels adjustment layer. Drag the top white slider in to about setting 220 to lighten the whites. Invert the mask using Cmd/Ctrl+I to Hide All for the adjustment layer.
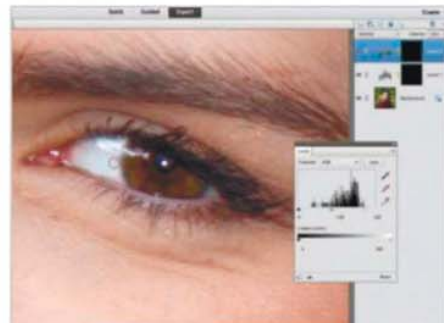
Focus the adjustment

04 Zoom into the eyes and select the Brush tool, then press D to make white the foreground colour. Adjust the brush size and brush the adjustment into both eyes, switching to black (X) to cover mistakes.

Sharpen eyes

Use Elements to bring eyes into focus

Before
After

Create layer duplicate

01 Open your image and zoom in close to the eyes. Duplicate the Background layer by dragging it to the Create a New Layer button at the top of the Layers panel. Rename the layer 'Sharpen' by double-clicking the text.

Apply an Unsharp Mask

02 With the top layer active, go to Enhance>Unsharp Mask. Set Radius to 0.5px, leave Threshold at 1 and push up the Amount slider to suit. You'll need quite a high setting with such a low radius. We used 350%.
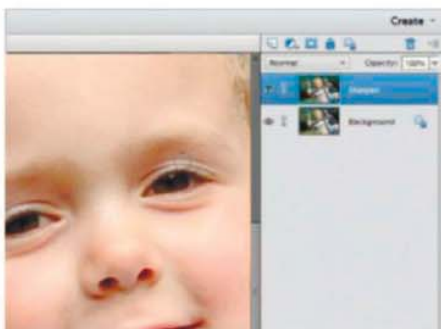
Add a layer mask

03 Add a layer mask and invert it using Cmd/Ctrl+I to Hide All and remove the effect temporarily. Press D to reset the colour palette and create a white foreground, then press B for the Brush tool.

Focus the sharpening

04 Take a soft brush at 100% Opacity, resize it and then brush the adjustment into the eyes. Press X if you make a mistake to switch to black and brush out. Use layer opacity to reduce the strength if need be.

Skin retouches using GIMP

Set up healing

01 Duplicate the Background layer by clicking the button in the Layers panel. Change the zoom mode to 100%. Select the Healing tool (H) and resize it to slightly bigger than the spots on the skin.

Remove blemishes

02 Hold Cmd/Ctrl and click on a clean part of skin to set it as the source area. Move around the image, clicking to remove spots and resizing the brush as needed. Make a duplicate of the top layer.

Smooth the skin

03 Go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set Horizontal and Vertical to 30px. Ctrl/right-click the layer and select Add Alpha Channel. Select the Eraser brush, hold Opt/Alt and brush out the rough skin.

Techniques

In-depth guides to make you an expert in all types of portraiture

"Follow these pro tips to transform your portraits into stunning photographs"

Capture striking outdoor portraits

Think you need a studio to capture stunning people shots? We'll show you the secrets of creating lovely portraits in the great outdoors with minimal gear

There are some subjects that many photographers don't have easy access to, whether it's vintage cars, celebrities or major sports events. People, however, are everywhere, so it's not surprising that portrait photography is one of the most enduringly popular subjects.

Unfortunately, some people assume that you need either a studio or elaborate equipment in order to take brilliant portrait images, when the reality is that you need neither. Striking portrait images can be created outside using very minimal equipment and, no matter where you live, there will almost certainly be many excellent locations that you can take advantage of.

As photographers, we're often attracted to breathtaking places, but if you don't happen to live near a scenic beach or park to use as your backdrop, don't assume that there's nothing left for you to work with. In fact, buildings and alleyways that might normally seem very unappealing can be used to great effect, as you'll discover throughout this feature.

You'll also discover how to make use of relatively ordinary and everyday accessories, including a speedlight flash and a reflector, to open up a wide range of exposure possibilities. If you're struggling to find a location where the general public isn't getting in your way, we'll even provide you with some tips for how to use that to your advantage.

Scout a location

While it is possible to identify photogenic locations by simply stumbling upon them, if you are planning a portrait shoot outdoors it makes sense to spend a bit of time scouting and researching potential areas and specific locations that you want to use beforehand. This has been made so much easier in recent years thanks to the internet and online facilities, such as Google Maps and Street View. When location scouting, use these websites to give you an idea of both where things are and what they look like. This will mean you can plan a sensible itinerary and establish which locations will probably work well and which locations may require extra thought. You can also try using online photo communities, such as Flickr and search by including the name of the location that you want to visit for your shoot, plus the search term 'portraits'.

Rural locations can provide the naturally warm and reassuring colours of nature as well as the shade provided by foliage

Always keep a look out for walls and doorways that will make for suitable backgrounds for modern urban portrait shots

Find a model

If you'd like to work with a model, there are networking websites available, such as www.modelmayhem.com, where you can get in touch with retouchers, make-up artists and, of course, models. Many models will agree to pose for free provided they are allowed use the images to build their own portfolio.

"No matter what camera you own, a 50mm f1.4 or f1.8 lens is a great investment for outdoor portraits"

WIDE APERTURE
A wide aperture is a useful means of ensuring that backgrounds are rendered slightly out of focus. A 50mm f1.8 lens is ideal

REFLECT THE LIGHT
A gold or silver reflector enables you to throw light back onto your subject when it's angled correctly to catch the sunlight

FILL IN WITH FLASH
Subtle fill-flash can be used to ensure that shadows are lifted and to provide catchlights in the model's eyes

The best news is that excellent outdoor portraits can be captured without the need to invest in much – if any – additional equipment beyond what many photographers already own. As can be expected though, there are some advantages offered by certain items at slightly higher price points.

Although any camera can be used for outdoor portraits, whether it's a CSC or a crop-sensor camera, a full-frame DSLR presents a distinct advantage over cameras with smaller-sized sensors in that the effective aperture is not compromised in any way. Smaller sensors result in images in which more of the available frame is in focus, even when wider apertures are used. Depending on the size of the sensor, a crop factor of anything from 1.5x

to 2x might be at play. For example, this means that on a Nikon DX format DSLR with an f1.8 lens wide-open, the image might look like it had been captured on a Nikon FX format DSLR at an aperture of f2.8 or even f4.

Why does this matter? Basically, aperture is one of the best tools available to you for controlling how the image looks – wide apertures mean you can throw distracting backgrounds, which are often encountered outdoors, beautifully out of focus. This is the main advantage that a full-frame camera gives you when capturing portraits outside.

The best way to get around this issue if you only have a crop-sensor camera to hand is to use as long a focal length as you can such as the extreme

telephoto end of a 75-300mm lens. This, coupled with the use of the lens' widest aperture at this focal length will enable you to minimise the depth of field effectively. The only drawback of this kind of workaround is that you need to work at a much greater distance from your subject.

No matter what camera you own, a 50mm f1.4 or f1.8 lens is a great investment for outdoor portraits. These offer a very wide aperture and cost relatively little compared to many other lenses, while also offering generally excellent optical quality.

A speedlight flash, preferably one with plenty of adjustments and custom settings, is ideal for outdoor portraits, and just a single unit can provide many lighting options, particularly with a reflector.

Shoot on location

Photographer and tutor Damien Lovegrove reveals his tips for great portraits outdoors

Why do you enjoy shooting portraits on location?
Unlike a studio, locations are continually variable. They introduce textures and depth to my pictures. Lighting can be more of a challenge because you have no control over the ambient light.

What are the potential challenges of shooting portraits on location?
You have very little control over the environment around you. A consideration for the safety of other people who are using the same space is also an issue and in some locations, I always feel like I'm about to be moved on. The gift of the gab will come in handy.

What approaches do you like to take to shooting portraits on location?
I have a repertoire of picture styles that I know work and I can pull from that collection at will. It makes it easier to identify the potential in a space and also to select the right lighting equipment.

What practical tips do you have for working with ambient light on location?
Take control of the light. Wherever you shoot, avoid top light because lighting from above is really unflattering. If you can, use a window or a clearing to create rim light on your subject, as this will give separation and depth to your pictures.

What advice do you have for balancing flash and ambient light on location?
Keep your backlight cooler than your key light, so putting a half blue gel on a speedlight as a backlight when you are working in normal daylight gives a really lovely look. Then, if you have the option, have a softer key light and a hard backlight. Soft light goes everywhere so you need more power.

Check out more of Lovegrove's images at www.lovegrovephotography.com

OUTDOOR OPTIONS
Damien Lovegrove captured these shots at various locations, demonstrating the range that's available when you exploit a location's potential to the fullest

All images © Damien Lovegrove

Perfect backlit outdoor portraits

Add a sense of dimension by using a light behind the model

Studio portrait photographers often go to great lengths to set up their lighting to create hairlighting or kicker light effects. Outdoors, you have the power of the Sun to do this job for you. When low in the sky, particularly during late afternoon or early evening, the Sun can produce dramatic effects, including flare, which many photographers choose to incorporate into their photos for artistic effect.

Even during the winter months, the light from the Sun is powerful so you'll almost always need to use a reflector to bounce some light back onto your subject. For this, a gold reflector works particularly well, as it complements the colour temperature of the light from the Sun. Silver or white reflectors will produce a more subtle result.

Alternatively, you can create a similar effect by placing a flash behind the model. This needs to be positioned very carefully though because a speedlight won't have anything like the same reach as sunlight and will therefore have a much more dramatic and noticeable fall-off. You'll also need to ensure that the flash isn't visible in any way in the frame, as it might not be particularly easy to edit out in post-production.

The effect may be a subtle one, but backlighting can add a professional touch to your images

If the sun isn't available or positioned correctly, use a speedlight off-camera to create the effect
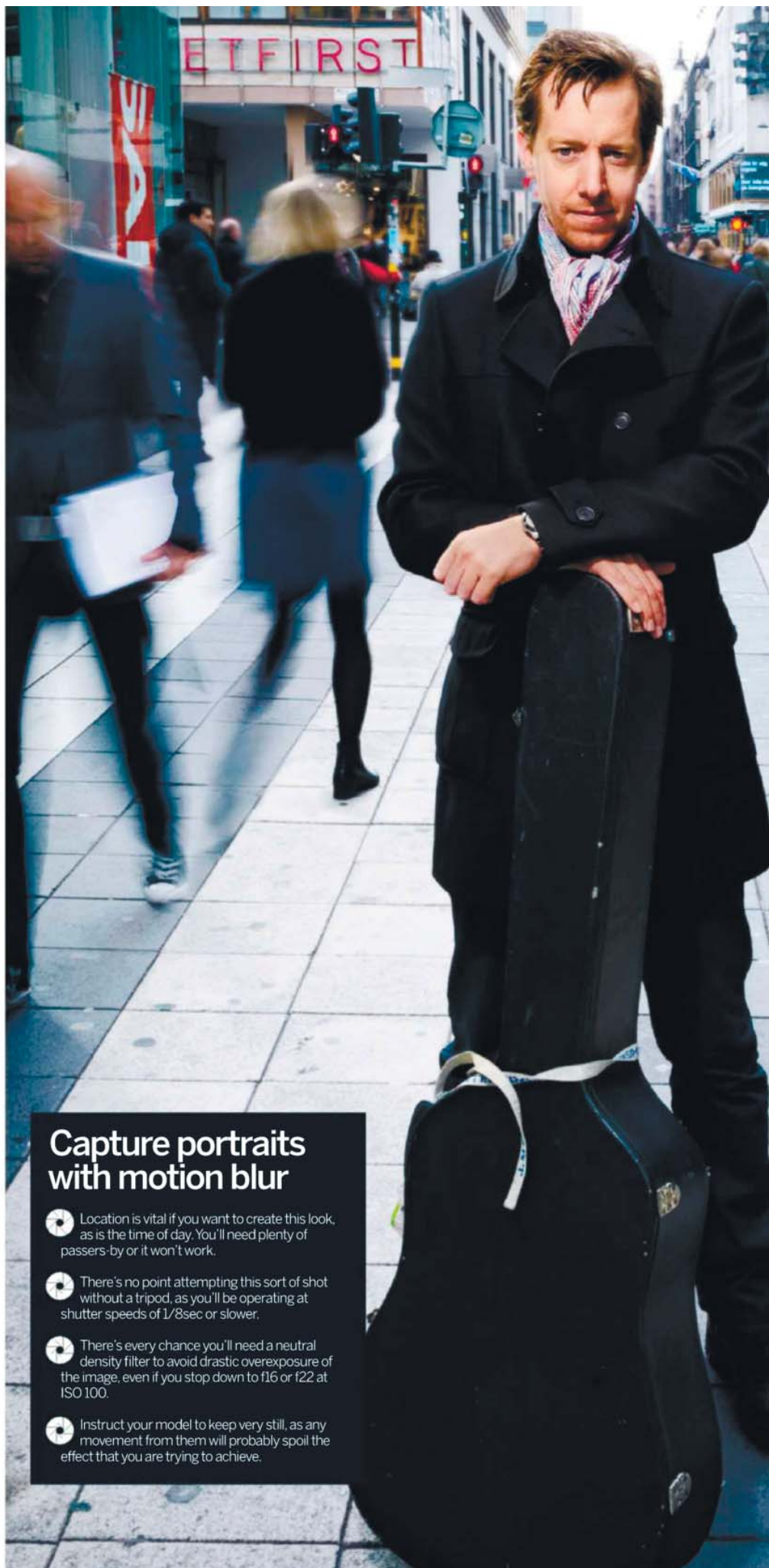
Capture portraits with motion blur

- Location is vital if you want to create this look, as is the time of day. You'll need plenty of passers-by or it won't work.

- There's no point attempting this sort of shot without a tripod, as you'll be operating at shutter speeds of 1/8sec or slower.

- There's every chance you'll need a neutral density filter to avoid drastic overexposure of the image, even if you stop down to f16 or f22 at ISO 100.

- Instruct your model to keep very still, as any movement from them will probably spoil the effect that you are trying to achieve.

One potential difficulty that you are almost certainly going to encounter when capturing portraits on location is that often, you and your model will not be the only people around. In most cases, there will be nothing that you can do about this. However, even if it is possible to move on to a quieter spot, why not use the crowds to your advantage and make them a part of your image?

By using a slow shutter speed you can blur the crowds to ensure that, despite the people milling about, your model is still the centre of attention. As ever, one of the best ways of directing the viewer's eyes to the desired location is to use focus judiciously. Provided that you have a tripod, you can set a narrow aperture and low ISO to force a longer shutter speed of around one or two seconds. The main way to achieve this kind of image is to ask your subject to keep as still as possible. If this causes over-exposure problems, a one or two-stop neutral density filter, or perhaps even a polariser, will help solve this.

When you're concentrating on a creative effect like this, it can be easy to forget the basics, so double-check that your subject is well-lit using a speedlight unit or reflector.

CHOOSE YOUR MOMENT
Remember to wait for the optimum time to capture your shot, when there are plenty of people passing by

Moving portraits

Pro shooter Stefan Tell reveals secrets behind motion portraits

What appeals to you about motion portraits?
I like the feeling you get with a mixture of movement and non-movement in a still image – almost like time-lapse.

What conditions are required?
You can do it by yourself, but it would help to have someone assisting. I did this shot [to the left] on my own, in broad daylight. If I tried this again, I would ask someone for help with managing the crowd around us so they didn't avoid the camera as people often do. You want to be a fly on a wall, but that is easier said than done with a big camera and light stands.

What shutter speed do you need?
This photo [to the left] was taken with a shutter speed of 1/8sec and an aperture of f16. This was the longest shutter speed we could manage without problems with motion blur on the model, as it was quite windy outside that day. Opening the shutter for a little longer might be better to get the feeling of flow in the people walking by. For cars or trains, you can use a shorter shutter speed; it all depends on how fast things are moving and in which direction.

Do you need to use a neutral density filter to avoid overexposure?
For this photo I used a neutral density filter on the camera to be able to have a long exposure in daylight, which bought me at leasts three f-stops.

Do you have any other motion portrait tips and advice?
Use a remote to trigger your camera. Not only can you avoid a little bit of shake on the camera, but you can also stand away from it so people won't avoid it, making it look a bit more natural.

Scout your location so you know beforehand how the movement of people will be in that particular spot at different times. We thought it would be crowded during lunch hour but it wasn't.

Think about how you want the lines of movement. That will specify how you place the model and the lights. Sometimes it's better to use a lower vantage point to achieve a better perspective, or let the movement go from left to right instead of at the camera.

"Why not use the crowds to your advantage and make them a part of your image?"

© Stefan Tell

© Stefan Tell

10 steps to portrait success

The important things to consider when shooting portraits

Do your research
Make sure that you spend a bit of time working out where you want to shoot and planning how you might take best advantage of those locations.

Consider the time
Pay attention to the time of day and day of the week that you have chosen for your shoot. This could dramatically affect what the light is doing and how many other people there are around.

Get permission
Don't venture into a non-public location without obtaining permission first. However unlikely it seems, you and your model might end up in serious trouble if you do.

Think about clothing
Discuss clothing options with your model in advance of the shoot and ensure that they have different styles available. The clothes the model wears need to fit in with each location.

Buy a 50mm lens
A 50mm prime lens with an aperture of f1.4 or f1.8 is very useful to have when you are shooting outdoor portraits.

Separate the model
Think of ways to make your model distinct from their surroundings. There are a many different ways of doing this, including movement, exposure and colour.

Decide on props
Some props might work well for outdoor portraits just as they do for studio shots. As with the clothing, ensure that they match the setting.

Go wide
A wide-angle lens can be used sometimes to create a dramatic image in which the model is captured within the wider context of their surroundings.

Defocus backgrounds
Use the different colours around as an effective backdrop for your portraits. Use a wide aperture to ensure these are softened, reducing any distractions.

Look for texture
Keep an eye out for textures such as brick, concrete or metal. These will make for interesting backgrounds and settings for your outdoor shots.

Turn day into night

01 Set the flash Adjust the power output of the flash in Manual mode and its distance from your subject until you're happy with it. A good formula to use is the Guide Number divided by the distance to equal your f-stop.

02 Change your settings Ensure your camera is set to Manual Exposure mode and use the shutter speed to control how the ambient light is exposed. Start with your shutter at the camera's maximum sync speed, which is usually around 1/200sec.

03 Adjust the ambient You can easily make the ambient light appear brighter, without needing to adjust the flash at all by simply lengthening the exposure time.

04 Balance the light If you want the ambient light darker, you'll need to use a narrower aperture and increase the flash power. If you changed the aperture from f8 to f16, your flash power needs to increase by two stops.

© Shelton Muller

Another great way of lighting your outdoor shots is to combine ambient light and flash. This enables you to separate your model from their surroundings and, effectively, light the background and the subject independently.

As professional photographer Shelton Muller (www.livinginpictures.com.au) explains, separately exposing flash and ambient light is a powerful and versatile approach to outdoor photography. "This technique can work almost anywhere. I have used it indoors, outdoors, in broad blazing daylight and rain – there is really no limit other than your own vision."

A typical starting point for this is to underexpose the ambient light by one or two stops and then use the speedlight in Manual mode to light the subject. You can easily do this by setting your camera to Manual mode and observing the exposure indicator that's normally present either in the viewfinder or on the LCD screen. Working at ISO 100 or 200, set the camera's shutter speed to the fastest flash sync speed for your camera – typically 1/200 second – and adjust the aperture so that the exposure indicator level suggests that the ambient light will be underexposed by two stops. If, for any reason, you need more ambient light and don't want to, or can't use a wider aperture, increase the shutter speed.

Next you simply need to dial in the correct exposure on your speedlight – 1/4 power, 1/8

Experiment with temperature

Create brilliant colour effects without the need for editing

As has been said throughout the feature, one of the most effective ways of capturing stunning portraits outdoors is to find a way to separate your subject from their surroundings in a way that looks artistic and visually interesting.

Colour temperature provides you with another excellent means of doing this, and there are a number of different approaches that you can take to achieve this and they are not especially complicated or time-consuming to perform in-camera.

First of all, you can try setting your camera's white balance to a deliberately cold Kelvin setting, around 3000K. This will give the image a cool blue colour cast, but you can then place a CTO (colour temperature orange) gel or filter over the flash so that your subject appears warmer than their surroundings. Another approach is to place blue filters over the flash unit and use this as a background light, either aimed towards the back of your model or projecting it onto a wall behind them.

Set your camera's white balance to around 3000K to create a cool blue effect for the ambient light

Use a CTO (colour temperature orange) gel on the flash to ensure that the light on the model is warm

power, 1/16 power – to light the subject. Once everything is set, you have many choices and you can start getting a little bit more creative with your shots. A popular technique among many photographers is to underexpose the ambient light much more dramatically, making daylight appear rather like dusk.

In order to do this from the point you're at, you'll need to narrow the aperture down further. Bear in mind that the shutter speed is your only means of controlling the ambient light completely independently without affecting the flash at the same time. When you close your aperture down, say from f8 to f16, you will need to change the power output on your flash, in this example from

1/16 to 1/4 power, in order to keep that consistent.

If you want a more scientific way of getting the correct flash exposure, Shelton Muller has a formula that may come in handy. "Every flash has a Guide Number, and it does exactly what its name suggests. It is usually presented as a number in metres at 100 ISO. The Guide Number divided by the distance equals the f-stop to use (GN/D=f-stop). So, if your guide number was 40 and your subject was about 5 metres from the flash, your aperture setting at 100 ISO would be f8. Simple! If you were shooting at 200 ISO, it would be f11, continuing in this kind of way. If you then reduce the power to either half or a quarter of the power, you would open your aperture one or two stops accordingly."

Shoot high key portraits

Take a closer look at how you can master this diverse and powerful style of photography

Photography is all about capturing the world around us in a still image, but where we point the lens – and the lighting conditions that we choose to shoot in – enables us to be both selective and creative in terms of how we choose to present that world.

Taken as an average, most scenes consist of a range of different tones, from fairly deep shadows through to relatively bright highlights – with the many midtones generally dominant.

However, some scenes have something a little different about them. If you look down a side street or alleyway in a city at night, illuminated by perhaps just a single streetlight, much of the scene will be in shadow. A faithfully exposed image of the scene will be a classically low-key shot. This means that the areas of shadow in the image will be more visually dominant and a low percentage of the photo will consist of brighter midtones or highlights.

Conversely, a scene in which white or pale tones dominate, such as a swan against a pale-blue sky, is high key. Once again, this can be thought of as an image in which a high proportion of the scene is formed of brighter midtones and highlights, with darker midtones and shadows pushed aside.

In this feature, we'll show you to set up a studio for shooting high key and the best gear to use, as well as how to retain skin detail.

5 reasons to shoot high key:

- Very bright or light-toned images are instinctively attractive to the human eye.

- High key is very flattering for particular subjects and scenes.

- The format converts into a black-and-white style beautifully.

- High-key images can be made to look modern and dynamic or simple and classic.

- High-key studio portraits enable you to work very flexibly with your subjects, enabling them to move around and change poses without the need to change the lighting setup constantly.

Although, on the face of it, high-key photography seems like a fairly clear-cut and definite concept, some of the subtleties and nuances of what constitutes a high-key image are flexible. Different photographers have slightly varying ideas of what, to them, is a high-key image.

This is the case when it comes to the creation of high-key images in a studio environment. For the sake of creative flexibility, photographers don't always strictly adhere to all of the characteristics often ascribed to high-key photography. Some features of high-key imaging may be used, while others are adapted or even completely overlooked.

Some photographers consider that a true high-key image should have limited areas of shadow – and lack deep shadows – resulting in low-contrast, soft images. However, in recent years a lot of studio-based portrait and product photographers have eschewed this approach to high key, opting for bright but high-contrast images.

Similarly, light and relatively pale tones are often associated with high key and many images are presented in monochrome. However, this is not always followed in modern high-key portrait and product photography, with strong, bold colours being used in place of soft, pastel ones.

In these situations, the term 'high key' is used slightly differently, referring to high-impact images in which the background is a clean, pure white and the subject has been purposefully brightly lit. Appropriately enough, the key light is also often turned up to a high power setting in these cases.

Deliberate overexposure of the scene is an element of most high-key photography, but it's really only a supplementary step in creating a high-key image. What this means is that it's not generally possible to force a high-key image simply by using excessive exposure compensation or opening up the aperture to the widest possible setting. The most important high-key ingredients – whether it's ultra-bright lighting in the studio or a light and bright colour palette in the field – have to be in place.

Arguably the form of photography most closely associated with high key today is bright studio portraiture. Most modern photography studios have offered this style of lighting, often as their signature look, during recent years.

It's not hard to see why. Low-key lighting, especially when presented in monochrome, lends itself well to serious and moody portraits, but isn't, perhaps, quite so appropriate for portraits of families and young children – which is what many portrait photography studios specialise in.

As the areas of bright illumination are relatively small within a low-key image – and the lighting needs to be carefully positioned in order to achieve this look – the subject needs to be fairly static, which is of course not always easy to achieve when photographing active children.

However, with high-key lighting, creating an abundance of bright light means that precise subject positioning is less important, enabling children the freedom to move around the studio space while the photographer is still able to capture images. High-key lighting is also great for capturing group shots, again due to the amount of light that's created in this setup.

As many as four or five separate flash units are often used to create high-key portraits in the studio, although great results can be achieved using only three lights. One of the most important elements of the high-key lighting setup is the illumination of a pure white backdrop.

"The subtleties and nuances of what constitutes a high-key image are flexible"

▶ **HIGH KEY**
This image, with the background correctly lit to produce a pure white and the right kind of processing applied post-capture, is a high-key portrait

▼ **MID KEY**
If the background isn't correctly lit, even if it appears white to the naked eye, it will appear a muddy grey or murky pink in the image, resulting in an effect closer to mid key

A high-key studio portrait setup

Three lights are all that's required to produce a strong high-key studio portrait

WHITE BACKGROUND

FLASH WITH BARNDOORS   MODEL   FLASH WITH BARNDOORS

CAMERA   SOFTBOX

High-key portrait setup

High key histogram

This histogram, from a high-key studio portrait, demonstrates that there is still a good spread of tones present in many high-key images and the detail isn't all crowded at the far right.

Even if the backdrop looks completely white to the naked eye, if it's not separately lit then it could appear grey or even a purplish shade of pink in your images. While the lighting used for the subject – which might include a key light, a fill light and possibly even a rim or hair light – is usually dialled up to quite a powerful setting in high-key lighting, these lights will not ensure a white background, even if a degree of overexposure is included.

In a small studio space, with white walls acting as reflectors, it's often not necessary to use anything other than a powerful key light for the subject and many photographers favour using fewer lights, so that more contrast is created.

High key is by no means restricted to a studio environment and several high-powered flash units. In fact, high-key images can be created with nothing more than your camera and lens, because some scenes are inherently high key and the right composition and exposure is all that's required.

Very simple minimalist scenes, with relatively few elements and a limited colour range, are often ideally suited to high-key shots and there are even certain weather conditions that work extremely well for capturing your high-key photographs outdoors.

Snow is perhaps the best example of this, covering the world in a blanket of white that's perfect for producing high-key images. Fog and mist are also great for high key, especially when combined with slight overexposure and then conversion to monochrome.

High-key portraits don't always need to be planned to every detail with a serious set up. They can also be captured on-location, with or without portable lighting and accessories. For example, a model can be photographed against a cloudy sky or plain wall and, with the right use of overexposure, a high-key effect can be produced.

Of course, access to off-camera flash units – including speedlights and reflectors – offers an advantage. Outside, a single speedlight in a portable softbox can be used as a backdrop, while a second speedlight or reflector can be employed to ensure correct exposure on the model. Indoors, backlighting can again be employed via sunlight coming in through a window with the help of net curtains or blinds.

Obviously, as is very often the case, you'll have more to work with if you capture your images in RAW. This will increase your chances of rescuing any lost detail, especially on the subject's clothing. In fact, Photoshop enables you to light and expose your high-key images with a degree of caution, so you can ensure that all skin and clothing detail is retained while fine-tuning the brightness and exposure of the image in post-capture.

In addition to the options provided within the RAW processing interface, Photoshop and Elements both offer a range of tools to improve and enhance high-key images. Using Screen blending mode on a duplicate layer doubles the brightness of the image and this can be combined with blending options for fine control. Adding a Gaussian Blur filter can also be quite effective with high key and a similar effect can be achieved using Diffuse Glow in the Distort section of the Filter Gallery.

Curves and Levels adjustments can both be used to lighten an image as well as improve contrast and a similar effect can also be achieved by duplicating Overlay and Soft Light blending modes.

Set up for high key Getting a studio ready to shoot high-key images is easy

Background lights
01 Getting the lights set up correctly to expose the background as a pure white is the first step to take in setting up for high-key portraits. Take a few test shots to see how it's working.

Softbox
02 The key light is normally fitted with a softbox in high-key photography to produce a soft and diffuse spread of light. Bigger softboxes will result in a broader, softer light.

Power settings
03 Make sure that the power settings on the flash units are correctly set. The two background lights should match each other and the key light should be dialled to a setting that won't overexpose the subject.

Use Manual
04 Set the camera to Manual mode (M) and unless your flash units are low-powered, avoid a very wide aperture as this could result in overexposure. Use a shutter speed of 1/160sec or 1/200sec.

Get in gear for high key

Take a look at this guide to some of the many kit options to consider when shooting high-key photography

Nikon SB-910 Speedlight

A speedlight flash might seem like it's not sufficient to produce the kind of light power frequently associated with high key. However, not only is it possible to create a high-key effect with a lot less flash output than is often believed, but speedlights are surprisingly powerful and several units can be picked up quite cheaply secondhand.

Price: £402/$550

Web: www.nikon.co.uk

Lastolite Ezybox II Octa Quad Kit – Medium

Consisting of an Ezybox II Quad Bracket and Ezybox II Octa softbox, this kit enables photographers to attach four speedlight flash units that are then fired through the Octa softbox to produce a highly powerful, soft light source that's ideal for high key.

Price: £240/$330

Web: www.lastolite.com

Interfit 5-in-1 32-inch Reflector

Sometimes you don't have the option of controlling and shaping the light entirely with flash. There's nothing better to have to hand than a 5-in-1 reflector, which enables you to diffuse and reflect the light in different ways, all in one very portable package.

Price: £33/$44

Web: www.interfitphotographic.com

Elinchrom BXRi 500/500 Kit

If you want to start taking high-key portraits and product shots in the studio, this is an excellent starting point. This kit features two powerful flash heads, two square softboxes and two solid clip-lock stands.

Price: £990/$1,667

Web: www.theflashcentre.com

Lastolite Collapsible Background

Achieving a completely white background is vital to modern high-key portraiture and product photography, and it's a lot easier to achieve this if you've got a professional white background to start with. This black/white background is also collapsible.

Price: £115/$160

Web: www.lastolite.com

OVEREXPOSURE
When the lights are turned up too high and too wide an aperture is used, the image is grossly overexposed and skin tones are spoilt. A more carefully balanced exposure produces much better results

BALANCED EXPOSURE
You don't need to severely overexpose the subject to achieve a high-key look. Carefully balance the key light, background lights and lens aperture to ensure that the subject's skin tones aren't lost

Skin matters

Retaining skin detail is still important in high key

A common mistake with high-key photography is to simply turn the power up high on all flash units and use a wide aperture. However, the key light and the aperture should be set to expose the subject's skin fairly accurately, with perhaps some degree of overexposure but certainly no more. Similarly, the lights being used for the background should not be dialled up too high, as they will then cause excessive flare around the subject.

Slight underexposure is preferable, as images can easily be brightened up in Photoshop, whereas recovering significant lost detail is far harder, with flare almost impossible to remove.

Photograph people at parties

Get your best-ever images of parties and events with our guide to the essential techniques for photographing people having fun

Quick gear guide The kit you need to succeed

Canon EOS 5D Mark III
Price: £2,400/$3,499

Tel: 01737 220000

Web: www.canon.co.uk

Why is it good for parties and events?
The EOS 5D Mark III has a great autofocusing system, with 61 AF-points, allowing you plenty of flexibility when it comes to creative composition. It's also sensitive down to -2EV, which is ideal for focusing in low-light conditions.

AF-S Nikkor 35mm f1.4G lens
Price: £1,736/$1,800

Tel: 0330 123 0932

Web: www.nikon.co.uk

Why is it good for parties and events?
Professional photographer Paul Underhill says that this is one of his favourite lenses for shooting parties and events. "It's a classic lens. It doesn't give too much distortion and allows you to capture most stuff that's going on."

Nikon SB-910 speedlight flash
Price: £450/$550

Tel: 0330 123 0932

Web: www.nikon.co.uk

Why is it good for parties and events?
Some event photographers favour flash, others don't. But wherever you stand on flash, it's a bad idea to not have one with you when photographing events, as you can't predict the kind of lighting that you will – or won't – be presented with.

FESTIVAL FUN
It always helps to really know the event you are photographing, so that you can anticipate things like crowd reactions
Shot details: Canon EOS 5D Mark III with a 135mm lens at f2.8, 1/320sec, ISO 1000

Photographing people when they are happy and having fun sounds like a recipe for great images, yet it can often be difficult to end up with the sort of photos you imagined you might get.

Parties and events place huge demands on you as a photographer. First, you have to be incredibly alert and observant if you don't want to find yourself missing the best moments. This isn't helped by the fact that, very often, the parties are at the end of a long, intense day of constant photography, such as a wedding or bar mitzvah. No matter how exhausted you may be feeling, you have to summon all the reserves of energy that you can. Being able to watch out for and anticipate golden moments is a key element of photographing parties and events.

Second, because of the fast and unpredictable nature of events, you need to know your camera and flash like the back of your hand. There's no time to hesitate, no time to stop and flick through the settings and menus – at least not if you don't want to miss some of the best moments.

You also need a keen eye for creative composition and finely tuned exposure technique to elevate your shots above those of the average snapper. Your camera's meter may well struggle to interpret the scene in the way that you'd like it to, so you'll need to have the skill and confidence to take full control.

Over the next few pages, we'll show you the techniques you need to master in order to shoot parties and events the professional way. Before we start, take a look at the Quick Gear Guide to see some of the gear that the pros favour.

©Paul Underhill

Work with available light

Photographing parties and events isn't all about flash – you can get brilliant images using the available light

Some events and situations dictate the use of flash in some form, but you run the risk of destroying the atmosphere of a scene if you use your flash when it's not really required. There are two situations in which using flash can have a detrimental effect on the images that you capture at a party or event.

If there's one thing that's guaranteed to make a photographer stick out and lose all hope of being discreet and unobtrusive, it has to be flash. Even the built-in flash on an ordinary compact camera can be difficult to ignore, so it's no surprise that the light emitted by a professional external flash unit, such as the Nikon SB-910 Speedlight or the Canon Speedlite 600EX-RT Flashgun, is very unlikely to go unnoticed.

One burst of flash and, all of a sudden, everyone in the room is conscious of the presence of a photographer, and it's not unusual for people to become less relaxed and at ease as a result. All those fly-on-the-wall, photojournalistic shots you were hoping to capture are instantly much harder to get.

Not only that, many people simply find a powerful flash firing uncomfortable and even irritating, especially if it's fired directly at them or near them. During a wedding or bar mitzvah ceremony, not only would you run the risk of capturing less natural and emotive images, you may also find yourself offending people who, quite understandably, consider a photographer flooding the room with light every five seconds during such a sensitive moment rather rude.

Second, if the available light has an interesting character and mood of its own, you'll want to capture this in your images, and unless used carefully flash will overwhelm the ambient light completely. If you are capturing a singer on stage illuminated by an atmospheric spotlight, firing your flash will neutralise the contrast and drama that the spotlight is seeking to create. Very often, the shadows are as interesting as the highlights, but flash will indiscriminately illuminate the entire scene, creating an image that looks flatter and less atmospheric. Many events and parties have unique and carefully planned lighting of some kind, and your images should record that.

When you are trying to capture the feel and mood of the ambient light, it's not always possible to trust what your camera is telling you. If you're using Evaluative or Multi-matrix metering and you set your camera to Aperture or Shutter Priority mode, you may well find that the camera either overexposes to lift the shadows up to something more like a midtone or, if there is a bright light or object somewhere in the scene, will underexpose to try to retain the highlight detail.

To overcome this, you can try using your camera's Spot metering mode, which allows you to base your exposure on an area equating to just one or two per cent of the overall scene. Better still, you can

> "Many events and parties have their own unique and planned lighting"

Top tips for available light

Manual works

Consider using manual exposure on your camera to ensure that you record the true atmosphere of the available light, as your camera's Evaluative or Multi-matrix metering may get it wrong.

Wide open

Try using prime lenses with ultra-wide apertures like f1.8, f1.4 or even f1.2 to give you the maximum light-gathering potential and ultimate sharpness.

Raw power

Shoot in RAW format to record the maximum tonal range in your images and to allow you to adjust the white balance in post-production if you need to.

Af-assistance

If your camera has an AF-assist beam, turn it on to help your camera to autofocus in low light. Alternatively, attach a flash and use its infrared AF-assist.

Quick check

Use your camera's LCD and histogram to help you to assess exposure, but try to resist the temptation to check every single image, as you might end up missing those key moments!

© Ron and Gabrielle Levy

CAPTURING ATMOSPHERE
Vibrant images can be easily attained using on-camera flash bounced to the ceiling
Shot details: Canon EOS 5D with a 16-35mm lens at 16mm and f3.5, 1/60sec, ISO 800

QUICK RESPONSE
Fast reactions are required to capture spontaneous moments
Shot details: Canon EOS 1D X with a 35mm lens at f2.8, 1/1000sec, ISO 200

© Paul Underhill

PRO INTERVIEW

Paul Underhill

Web: www.paulunderhill.com

What kit do you recommend for shooting parties and events using available light?
Invest in wide aperture lenses. That makes a big difference. Most of my kit is made up of prime lenses, like the Canon 35mm f1.4 L USM and the Canon 50mm f1.2 L USM. The main challenges of using available light are darkness, uneven lighting and the resultant different colour balances. By using cameras like the Canon EOS-1D X and the Canon EOS 5D Mark III and shooting in RAW, the amount of stops that I can recover is absolutely fantastic. Even the prosumer cameras now have great sensors in this respect.

What techniques do you use to shoot available light at parties and events?
I shoot and expose for the lighting that's there. If there's one light shining on someone on stage, I expose for that light source and not for the entire scene. This way you can capture the atmosphere. Generally, I shoot in manual rather than trusting the camera, especially when it's dark. That's a classic mistake – overexposing a dark scene. If it is dark, it's meant to be dark. That sort of atmosphere is there for a reason, so if it's atmosphere that you want to capture, don't overexpose to bring up the shadows.

What other tips do you have for using the available light?
Take a test shot and look. Technology has changed – you've now got feedback on the back of the camera which you can learn from.

What are the advantages of using available light at parties and events?
Available light doesn't disturb the scene – it's unobtrusive. You record the atmosphere whereas flash can destroy it and make it very flat – especially on-camera flash when not used correctly. Flash also draws attention to you, often changing people's behaviour. and you can't necessarily take as many pictures using flash as the flash might actually miss on certain frames.

© Paul Underhill

PEOPLE POWER
Capturing happy expressions is a huge part of creating great images of parties and events
Shot details: Canon EOS 5D Mark III with a 16-35mm lens at 16mm and f4, 1/800sec, ISO 200

try shooting using full Manual mode. This method allows you to set the ISO, Aperture and Shutter Speed values, and check the results quickly using the LCD screen on the back of the camera, giving you full creative control over how the scene is exposed.

Not only does this allow you to dictate how the camera responds, rather than the camera making the critical decisions, it has another key advantage, allowing you to shoot exposures that are consistent and uniform. This has an enormous impact on post-production – remember that at an event or party you might well shoot hundreds of images, and being able to batch-adjust files that you know were shot with the exact same settings can save vast amounts of time.

Finally, RAW files contain more information than JPEGs, due to the lack of compression. Shooting RAW allows you to capture the most shadow and highlight detail possible in each file, and also gives you the flexibility to tweak the white balance for the best possible colours and skin tones.

Working with flash

Sometimes, getting the best images will require you to use flash. We show you how to get the best results at parties

Using flash at parties and events can be something of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, flash renders your chances of remaining inconspicuous considerably lower, and people are much more likely to grow tired of a flash firing constantly than they are of the comparatively benign sound of a camera's shutter. However, at some parties and events, flash may be unavoidable, as the available light will either be too uninteresting and dull to use or there may simply not be enough of it, resulting in nothing but very dark frames – even at a high ISO, slow shutter speed and wide aperture. Let's not forget also that your flash has plenty of creative potential, particularly when used off-camera or in combination with slower shutter speeds, so using flash can be about much more than simply coping with bad light.

The first secret to success with flash at parties and events is to avoid using your flash on-camera, fired directly at the subject without modification and at normal shutter speeds. If all these three boxes are ticked at any one time, then you're likely to find that your images look rather flat and unexciting. Basically, the fact that you have used flash will be all too obvious, and you run the risk of your images looking like little more than well-composed snaps.

Using your flash off-camera is a fantastic way of avoiding many of the problems that normally result

FLASH DANCE
Getting in close and using a wide-angle lens while people are dancing is a great way to capture dynamic images, especially when combined with slow-sync flash
Shot details: Canon EOS 5D Mark II with 16-35mm lens at 16mm and f5, 1/15sec, ISO 2000

© Ron and Gabrielle Levy

Slow-sync flash

Here's how to combine flash with a slow shutter speed for creative effects at parties and events

In manual or shutter priority modes, you simply set a slow shutter speed in order to use slow-sync flash. If you favour shooting using aperture priority mode, many cameras allow you to set your flash controls to slow-sync flash mode. Your camera will therefore select an aperture that facilitates a slower shutter speed.

You should also set your flash controls to rear-curtain sync mode. This means that your flash will fire just before the shutter curtains in your camera close, rather than just after they open. This allows any motion blur that you record to trail behind the subject, which generally looks more appealing and natural.

1 Slow it down If you are shooting in manual mode or shutter priority then simply dial your camera to a slow shutter speed.

2 Slow-sync If you prefer to shoot in aperture priority mode, you can set your camera to slow-sync flash mode via a button or menu option.

3 Rear-curtain Set your camera to rear-curtain sync mode. This ensures that ambient light trails behind your subjects as they move.

Removing red-eye

Nothing looks quite as unappealing as glowing red eyes, so we show you how to get rid of them in Photoshop

Many cameras now come with a red-eye reduction setting, in which pre-flashes are emitted that cause the pupils of the eyes to contract, therefore reducing or eliminating the problem. However, it's good to be able to call on Photoshop to get rid of problems with red-eye as well. Fortunately, since Photoshop CS2, we've had access to the Red Eye tool, which makes incredibly light work of removing red eye. Here's how it works…

After

Before

1 Red Eye Tool The Red Eye tool is nestled in the same menu as the Healing Brush. You can hold the Shift key and press the J key until it appears.

2 Duplicate layer It's a good idea to create a duplicate layer before you continue working, as this allows you to quickly and easily correct any mistakes you may make.

3 Red removal The default settings for the Red Eye Tool work well. Simply click and drag over the offending pupils and watch the red disappear!

from using flash, as it allows you to change the angle at which your flash hits the subject and you can also attach modifiers like softboxes and umbrellas. However, it takes a little extra confidence, time and space to do so.

The chances are that you'll need to switch your flash into manual mode if you plan to use it on a stand, which means that you may not obtain the correct power level for a good exposure straightaway unless you are very experienced. You'll also need to be prepared to tinker with the flash if the light levels in the room change at any point, so using your flash off-camera isn't the quickest method of working at a party or event. Portable flash stands also require space that may not be readily available at many parties and events, and there's a risk that they could get knocked over. These factors need to be taken into account when using an off-camera flash at a party or event.

However, some photographers find that they are able to use their flash off-camera by holding it in one hand while operating their camera with the other. This requires the use of a flash sync cord or a trigger like Nikon's Creative Lighting System. The big advantages with this method are that you can use TTL-flash, rather than having to rely on manual

mode, and you don't have to worry about your flash getting knocked flying by a partygoer.

This can obviously be awkward, so a great alternative is to actually keep your flash on-camera and tilt the flash head so that you can bounce it off the ceiling or a nearby wall. This results in a much more diffuse and natural-looking result and is very often the best, quickest, easiest and most effective flash solution. Just be aware that your flash has to travel further to illuminate your subject, which requires slightly more power and can therefore cause your flash to take a little longer to recycle between shots. There are also modifiers available that can be used when your flash is on-camera, like the Sto-Fen Omni-Bounce.

Last, you can try using a slow shutter speed and firing your flash – using rear-curtain sync – to capture motion and a glow of ambient light. Slow-sync flash can work particularly well when people are dancing, but it's a technique that has to be well-executed as it can easily end up looking a little untidy and clichéd if not. This is a good example of where your camera's LCD really comes into its own, allowing you to check the results to ensure that you have the correct combination of shutter speed, flash output and composition.

> "Your flash has lots of creative potential, particularly when used off-camera"

Five tips for great results from flash

Take it off
01 Avoid using your flash on-camera, pointed directly at your subject. This will create flat, lifeless lighting.

Bouncing back
02 Look for a reflective surface, like a white ceiling or wall, to bounce your flash from, thus creating soft, diffuse light.

Balancing act
03 Try thinking of the light from your flash and the ambient light as two separate entities and try to balance them.

Hold on
04 Try handholding your flash off-camera. This can be tricky but is a great way of getting better results from your flash without the need for portable stands which get in the way.

Speed control
05 Consider using your flash at slow shutter speeds. Slow-sync flash can create some interesting creative effects when combined with rear-curtain flash sync.

© Ron and Gabrielle Levy

Candid captures

Photographing events requires excellent management skills – here are our dos and don'ts!

At parties and events you will be called on to capture huge groups of people, most of whom you will have never met before and will never meet again.

Depending on the type of event, these people may be serious and emotional, or inebriated and rowdy. Your ability to cope with a range of scenarios with tact and sensitivity will either make or break the success of your photos.

If you are going to be photographing the event in a professional capacity, it's important not to leave everything to chance on the day, but to begin working with your clients well in advance to develop a dialogue with them about how the event or party is scheduled to proceed. This gives you the opportunity to ensure that you understand the nature of the event fully, which improves your ability to anticipate key moments on the day. It may also provide you, as the photographer for the event, with an opportunity to give the clients some of your own ideas as to what

you think will work, and what will help you to get better images. "We try to educate our clients so that their expectations can be met," explains Gabrielle Levy. "As the photographer, you have to understand the event. We see videographers who don't really know what a bar mitzvah is and so they have no idea what to capture."

On the day, good interpersonal skills really are important. As professional shooter Paul Underhill says, "You need to be aware of etiquette and basic manners", but it's not merely a matter of ensuring that you don't offend anyone along the way. It's vital that you hone your ability to read people and respond to their emotions so that you are able to capture the very best shots.

Paul believes that being attentive at the event or party is key. "You need to be observant," he explains. "It's about observing how people are and then interacting with them accordingly. To capture a

moment, you need to be in the right place at the right time – that comes from anticipation of the moment through observation."

This holds true no matter what kind of event you are photographing. "At a music event, you get dead spaces in crowds. You get people who don't really do much and you get groups of people who are really mad for it," explains Paul. "Observation of that allows you to get in the right positions and get the right composition. It's the same for a wedding. You'll get people who are extrovert and you'll get people who are really quiet, people who stand in very small groups and look bored. It's about observing how people are and then interacting with them."

One technique that photographers who capture parties and events use a lot is what psychologists refer to as 'mirroring'. This means responding to people's emotions by mirroring them but also exhibiting certain behaviour in the hope that other people will 'mirror' this back to you. Photographers can utilise this so that they are not relying purely on things happening spontaneously and to build a rapport with the people they are capturing.

Paul says that he uses this mirroring technique frequently when capturing events such as music gigs and parties like wedding receptions. "I'm often trying to entice a moment to happen. I'll get excited

Ron Levy

Web: www.
ronlevyphotography.com

What advice do you have for using flash at parties and events?
Even though low lighting during a wedding ceremony or a bar mitzvah in the synagogue is a challenge, you cannot distract people with flash. But I love flash; if I want to 'turn off' the ambient light and get a moodier picture then I can do that. I love dragging the shutter and using rear-curtain flash sync, and we try to use flash modifiers to spread the light and make it softer. You have to know your flash and be able to put it in the right modes. A lot of people have a hard time controlling their flash because they over-power it.

What kinds of lighting challenges do you encounter when you are capturing parties and events?
DJs sometimes bring lots of lights that are really cool and we actually like to shoot towards those lights, but sometimes they bring lasers and you get all these spots on people's faces!

What tips do you have for anyone wanting to photograph parties and events?
You'd better be quick on changing settings and thinking fast. It's really important. You have to be able to handle that pressure and be able to change your settings quickly as things unfold.

At events, you never know what's going to be thrown your way and you always have to be on your toes, always looking over your shoulder and always ready for the next thing. If you're not the type of person who is able to do that then I don't think you'll do well in an event setting. You're always given less time than what you need so you have to just try to get whatever you can as fast as you can and the best way that you can. Your camera settings need to be second nature so you are not worrying about them. Moments will be long gone while you are trying to remember what a button on your camera does!

▲ **BE FLASH**
Using a slow shutter speed, combined with handheld flash, can allow you to capture great images of people dancing at parties
Shot details: Canon EOS 5D Mark II with a 16–35mm lens at 16mm and f4, 1/10sec, ISO 640

▶ **SECRET SNAP**
By kneeling down, remaining unobtrusive and keeping a careful eye on proceedings, you can capture moments like this
Shot details: Canon EOS 5D Mark III with a 35mm lens at f2.8, 1/200sec, ISO 5000

© Paul Underhill

and share that excitement through my body language and how I vocalise – and I get a reaction from it. But you have to be adaptive. When it's a really sensitive moment, it's about being unobtrusive; it's about the right body language. I might kneel a lot and I might hold my camera differently." Ron Levy echoes this: "Making things fun is a huge part of what we do."

One of the key elements of party and event photography is persistence, coupled with a certain amount of fearlessness. Paul says that to capture great images, "You need to get involved. It's about being fluid and going with it – and not being afraid. People are looking for you to capture the essence of the atmosphere, so it's about knowing your subject and pursuing 'the moment'."

Ron and Gabrielle both agree with Paul that when people hire an event photographer, they are looking for images that portray the feeling of their event or party. "They are looking for you to capture the emotion of the day, and the unique personalities of their friends and family. They want you to really tell a story and encapsulate the spirit of the day," explains Gabrielle.

The Photo Lounge

Web: www.the-photo-lounge.co.uk

What kind of service do you offer?
We provide an event photography service that takes a creative and bespoke twist on the old-school photo booth concept. From weddings and birthdays to corporate shindigs, The Photo Lounge offers 'photo entertainment' to guests, creating an atmosphere that encourages silliness and spontaneity. The Photo Lounge system allows guests to pose as it automatically counts down through a photo sequence in order to produce instant photographic prints for the guests to take away.

What do you feel that people are looking for in photographs of events and parties?
As nearly everybody now carries a camera or smartphone and with the recent boom in instant photo sharing, I feel people now expect more from event photography than receiving just a disc of images in the days following an event. I feel that people are looking for an event photography service that ticks more boxes and produces results that cannot be replicated by the guests – in an amateur fashion – themselves. The Photo Lounge not only produces digital photos that capture guests having a good time, but also serves as an entertainment centrepiece.

As a photographer or business owner, what kind of person do you need to be to offer this service?
The Photo Lounge is fully bespoke, therefore it is important to be a creative thinker to ensure every event is different to the last and new ideas are constantly being introduced to ensure we don't fall into the trap of becoming a generic "photo booth". It is also crucial to be a people person, to be able to connect and interact with guests of all ages and interests, and to keep high levels of energy and enthusiasm at all times until late into the night. I feel this is just as important, if not more so than the set-up itself. At events, it can sometimes be more about crowd control than anything else, whether it is groups of teenagers at a prom or partygoers under the influence of alcohol at a wedding or festival. It is all part and parcel of offering an event photography service.

What are the common mistakes or misconceptions people make about party or event photography?
I think the biggest misconception people make about event photography is the amount of time that is invested before and after the events themselves. From the hours of preparation to the hours spent getting to and from a venue, to the setting-up and de-rigging time. People only consider the event coverage time and do not factor in the bigger picture.

© The Photo Lounge

MORE ON OFFER
The Photo Lounge offers a service that provides something extra at parties and events

© The Photo Lounge

GROUP SHOT
Fun group shots can be hard to get at parties and events but The Photo Lounge provides a great solution

"I feel that people are looking for an event photography service that ticks more boxes and produces results that cannot be replicated by the guests themselves"

© The Photo Lounge

© The Photo Lounge

YOUNG AND OLD
Getting great images of all age groups isn't easy but the right kind of setup can make all the difference

PROP DEPARTMENT
A few well-chosen, bespoke props are an ideal way of getting party images that stand out from the pack

SANDRA BULLOCK
"We'd already made a strong personal connection the first time I shot her for German *Marie Claire*. This was our second shoot together, and one of the images ran as the cover of British *Marie Claire*. We were both really happy with how true to Sandra it was. I just adore her" – Naomi Kaltman

Shoot celebrity portraits

Photographers at the top of their game explain what it's really like behind the scenes of a high-profile portrait shoot with a famous figure

For most people, photographing celebrity portraits would be a dream job. Chances are the images will be seen all over the world, because everyone knows the person in the frame. It could end up on a billboard, a sprawling magazine spread or the cover of an album, but that's an awful lot of pressure to bear when you might only have ten minutes to bag the shot. What are the magic words to say in order to strike up a rapport and elicit the emotion you need?

It turns out that there's no one key phrase that will elevate a picture from *Zoolander's* 'Blue Steel' to something extraordinary, as you'll find out from the three industry pros featured here. Over the following pages, they provide a rare insight into the stories behind some of their most prized shots, as well as spilling their secrets for capturing memorable portraits of everyone from actors and musicians to sporting heroes. You can even apply these insider tips to your own portrait work. Naturally, the celebrity photography genre is a tough one to break into, but these experts give their top tips for making the headlines or, more precisely, the pictures that go with them.

© Naomi Kaltman

In the director's chair

In some ways, photographing celebrities can be easier because the viewer already recognises them, but it takes a personal connection to bring out their best side.

Photographer Naomi Kaltman has become the go-to shooter for portraits of world-class thespians, and she explains how to bag cover-worthy shots: "For me it's about being myself and being confident," she says. "Knowing what you're going for stylistically before you're on set can help. My best work comes from not worrying about the noise around the celebrity and instead focusing on my own vision and relationship to the subject."

> "My best work comes from not worrying about the noise around the celebrity and instead focusng on my own vision for the subject"

It's not easily done when your subject is Daryl Hannah, dressed in satin lingerie and clutching a bow and arrow on the rooftops of New York. That shoot ranks as particularly memorable. "It was one of my favourite shoots ever," she tells us. "Those on-the-fly shoots with a famous actor are rare, but we were very close friends at the time, and she was fearless about shoots." And then there was the time that Mick Jagger phoned Naomi up out of the blue, looking for a female shooter to photograph the Stones. It's no surprise that a celebrity photographer is full of stories, but the images say even more.

On set, Naomi will share a conversation with the subject to discuss whether she's looking for something sexy or playful, mainstream or serious, and they will work through the concept together. "I want them to have a strong sense of what I'm looking for and to feel comfortable," she says, revealing that the best way to get an actor to perform is to become the director. Give them a character to play, and they'll treat your set like a film set. Even a strict brief can allow for experimentation, as Naomi discovered on a shoot with *The Tudors'* Jonathan Rhys Meyers. "Once the TV network had what they needed for their art, Jonathan and I did a series of 'emotional shots' where he morphed seamlessly from joy to rage to sobbing to laughter," she recalls, "it was astonishing."

◄ THANDIE NEWTON
"This was shot in LA using only small mirrors and reflectors; no artificial light used at all. It really captures Thandie: a great balance – in her face, in her body language, in the light – between vulnerability and strength"

Working with actors

Name: Naomi Kaltman
Bio: Naomi left the skyscrapers of New York for Paris to pursue a career in fashion photography. Her big break came when she took a train to Milan to showcase her portfolio, and the art director of Italian *Glamour* magazine hired her to shoot actress Sean Young (*Blade Runner*). From there, the offers for celebrity shoots started appearing, and suddenly it was her niche. Today, her portfolio reads like the Hollywood walk of fame, including stars like Nicole Kidman, Tom Cruise and Natalie Portman.
Web: www.naomikaltman.com

Naomi's top three tips:

Build a rapport
If you have the opportunity, make a personal connection with the subject. Sometimes you don't get that chance until you're already on set, but this is a big one.

Create a mood
Give them a clear idea of what you want to achieve with the story. Actors appreciate direction, and helping them find a sense of character is when they work best.

Be confident
It's okay to be a fan of the person you're shooting, but you can't be intimidated by fame. In the deepest sense, they're no different to non-famous people; you're either connected with them or not.

All images © Naomi Kaltman

JONATHAN RHYS MEYERS
"I was hired by Showtime to shoot the promo material for the first season of *The Tudors*. We had a very specific concept, a set builder and period costumes from the show. Jonathan has everything that you want in an actor on a shoot: openness, sexiness, presence and ease"

Setting the stage

Just like actors, musicians have many masks. There's the eccentric onstage persona, the conscientious studio crooner and the interview extraordinaire. The question is, can you really capture the 'real' person behind the facade? "I think the best you can hope for is a glimpse of an element of the person," says music photographer Michael Robert Williams. "People are complicated, and professional performers are very good at showing you what they want you to see, so it's doubly difficult."

His shoots are usually commissioned by magazines such as *NME*, *Uncut* and *Time*, as well as record labels and sometimes even the artist directly. Then it's a case of setting the stage, and Michael prefers to keep things simple, packing a couple of lights, black cloth and coloured gels in his kit bag. "I like to create a certain mood and feel in a portrait," he tells us. "Sometimes that's simply achieved by how I light the person; I always take my own lighting to interior portrait shoots."

However, not all interior shoots allow for many peripheries. When photographers are called into the studio, they are essentially stepping into a musician's place of work, and top of the agenda is to keep quiet and be unobtrusive. "They know you're

there, of course, and will make allowances, but still try to be invisible when you're there when they are working," he says. "Sometimes, everyone simply stops doing any real work for a little while, and we may take a few portraits in the recording studio. Then I'll use lights and set up a couple of options."

Given the choice of shooting scenarios, Michael would always opt for the portrait shoot that allows for a greater degree of control, as opposed to live concerts. Local gigs are a great way for budding photographers to develop their skills and build up a book. For larger gigs, however, you will need to request a photo pass from a publicist, providing them with the necessary information: who you're shooting for, which concert you wish to attend and your name. Seeing a band live and meeting your musical heroes can be a major perk of the job, as Michael found out when he photographed Stone Roses singer Ian Brown. As they bonded over football and Manchester, the resulting shots are among his all-time favourites. Indeed, a fiery passion for the subject matter will crank up your chances of success to 11, Spinal Tap style. "Stay determined and focused," he advises. "You'll hear 'no' a lot starting out, so you have to be thick-skinned."

Stage and studio shooting

Name: Michael Robert Williams
Bio: Michael made a name for himself in music photography by showing his work to music magazines both at home and in America. This was the Nineties, and the internet was becoming a usable tool, so he took advantage of this opportunity to cross geographical boundaries with an online portfolio. His big break was photographing a London-based band for a US magazine, getting the ball rolling on what would become a portfolio that positively sings with iTunes favourites.
Web: www.michaelwilliams.co.uk

Michael's top three tips:

Be direct
Don't let nerves get to you during a high-profile shoot. You need to be direct with what you want the subject to do, so come prepared with an agenda and don't let others dictate the portrait.

Research and plan
Take the time to plan and research your location ahead of every photo shoot, but allow for some improvisation on the day. Sometimes your subject will offer you something better than you imagined.

Know your kit
Don't use a piece of equipment for the first time on a big shoot. It sounds obvious, but people still get caught out. Try not to panic if there's a problem, though; have a back-up plan just in case.

IAN BROWN
"I wanted a certain mood and feel to come across, so I lit this shot of Ian Brown carefully. I love shooting portrait setups, using real places as a location and then lighting them. I want to take these setups further; suggesting a story"

► **LA ROUX**
"I got a call from a magazine art director asking if I was interested in shooting La Roux for them. I'd heard In For The Kill, and liked the feel and thought we could do something. This was shot with one light, and I told her I wanted something cold and detached"
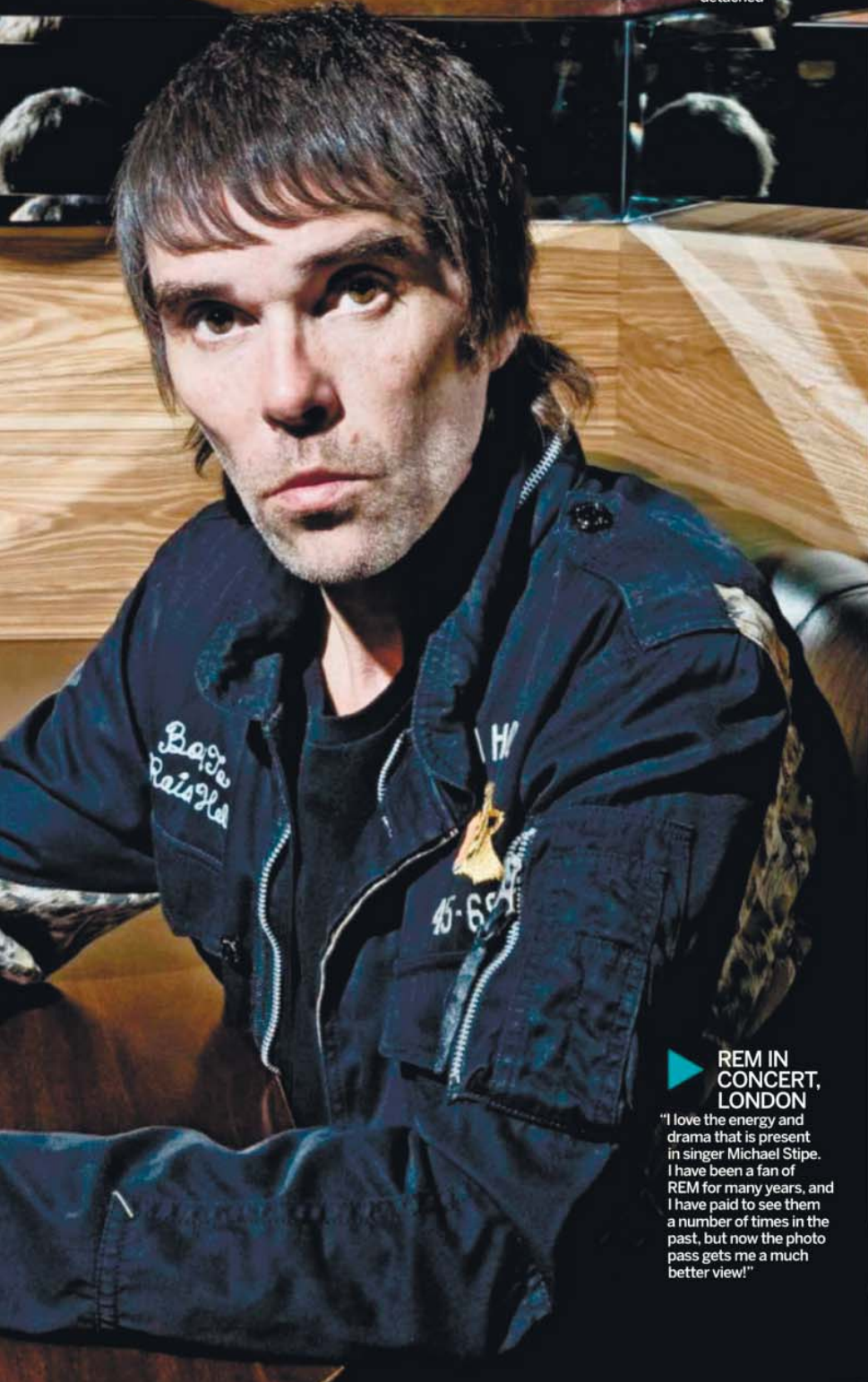
► **REM IN CONCERT, LONDON**
"I love the energy and drama that is present in singer Michael Stipe. I have been a fan of REM for many years, and I have paid to see them a number of times in the past, but now the photo pass gets me a much better view!"

Show sportsmanship

A similar tenacity is a must-have trait for a sports photographer, as this speciality brings a whole new set of challenges. The main hurdle when shooting pro athletes is a limited amount of time. Your first instinct might be to switch to burst mode and machine-gun through the allotted slot, but photographer Robert Seale says it's best to do the opposite and think before you hit the shutter. "Choreograph your shoot so that you can move them to different setups and work fast without ever fumbling with lights or moving any equipment," he advises. "Act like an amateur and they will walk."

Another obstacle is pulling emotion from an athlete. Unlike actors, who can serve up a feeling on demand, sports personalities take some convincing. "Most athletes want to look tough and stoic, so getting them to show emotion is difficult," he says. "Occasionally you get someone who is willing to make faces, scream during a dunk or something. I find that they'll emulate me, so sometimes I'll yell and scream, and that will get them there. That, or they'll start laughing, which can be good, too."

As with any portrait shoot, communication is key, and working with a sporting hero can bring plenty

▶ SLAM-DUNK
"This photo of John Wall was taken inside a university auditorium. Due to conflicts we couldn't use the gym, arena, or shoot outside, so we found an interesting window on campus to frame him within instead. We used softboxes with Lighttools fabric grids to light him and still keep the room black"
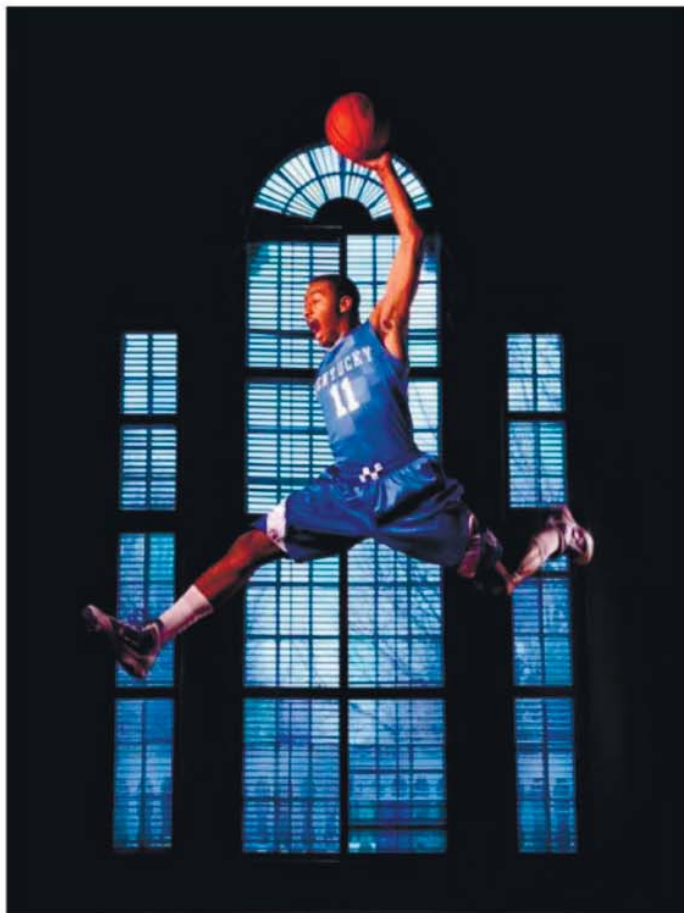
"Most athletes want to look tough and stoic, so getting them to show emotion is difficult"

EARLY LIGHT
"This is Liz Jackson at Bonneville Salt Flats: a 13-times All-American steeplechase runner. It was shot with fantastic early morning sunlight on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah"

All images © Robert Seale

"This was for a *Sports Illustrated* baseball preview issue, and we built a set outside with 1.5-inch thick plexiglas on a platform. Evan Longoria is lit from behind, below and above. Everything near the plexi (including the photographer) was wrapped in black to eliminate reflections"

of previously untapped poses to your portfolio. You might not be able to tell David Beckham how to take a free kick, but you can tell him when he looks best on camera. With this in mind, the subject can help you capture that motion. A perfect example of this technique in action is Robert's portrait of National Football League player LaDainian Tomlinson on the deck of the USS Nimitz, a huge aircraft carrier. "We photographed him leaping like he was being launched off the catapult at sunset," he explains. "Many elements have to come together to make the shoot a favourite: logistics, the player, lighting, location, time of day, action and emotion."

This shoot was part of a story that declared LaDainian as the 'top gun' in the NFL, and it was Robert's job to convey that message in a picture. "If you're preparing for an editorial in a magazine, you learn about the story and try to do something with some context," he adds. "If it is for a clothing company or sponsor, then you listen and work with the other creatives to solve their problems and make something that shows off the athlete as well as the client's product." Ultimately, a good portrait will always show the sitter in their best light, whether they're an actor, a musician, an athlete or just Joe Bloggs. It's just the budgets and the entourages that differ.

Sporting action

Name: Robert Seale
Bio: After graduating with a degree in photography and journalism, Robert became a photojournalist for newspapers, capturing sports in action as well as sports portrait photography. Landing a job as staff photographer for the Sporting News cemented this speciality. Every year he would cover major US sporting events, including the World Series, Super Bowl and the NBA Finals. Now, Robert runs his own business, shooting for magazines and companies all over the world.
Web: www.robertseale.com

Robert's top three tips:

Use low angles
The angle of a photograph can have a big difference on how your subject comes across. Athletes look more heroic from low angles, so bend your knees or lie on the ground to frame your shot.

Consider the lighting
When deciding how to light your portrait, consider what you kind of mood you wish to create. Whether it's hard, soft or strobe, it should always be interesting and flattering to your subject.

Come up with a concept
Always formulate your concepts and set up lights in advance. Pro athletes, like other celebrities, smell blood in the water if you start tweaking things after they are on the set.
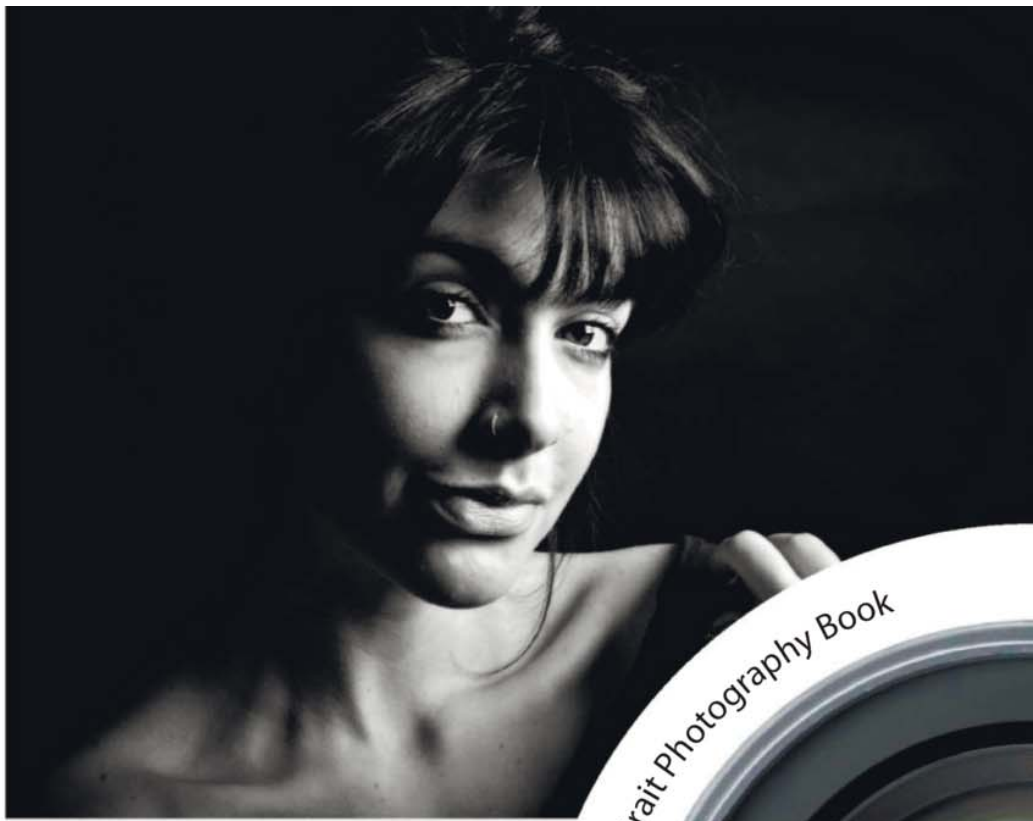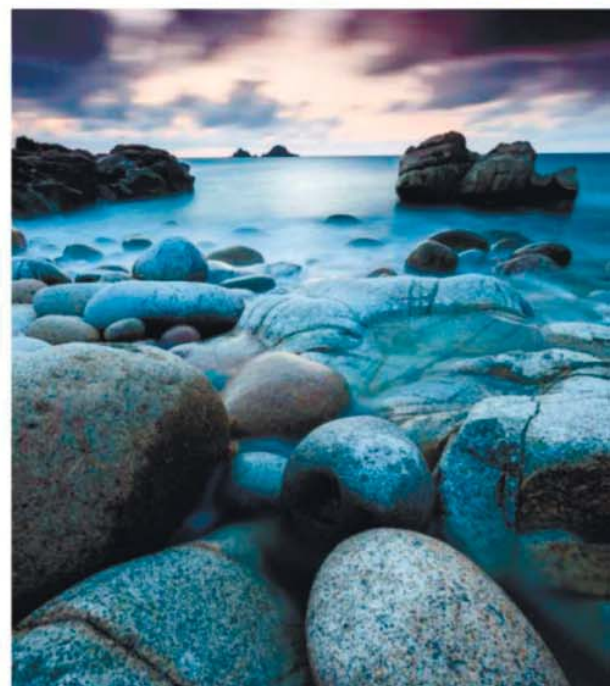
The Portrait Photography Book

© Damien Lovegrove

The Landscape Photography Book

The
Landscape
Photography
Book
Volume 2

The ultimate guide to shooting perfect landscapes
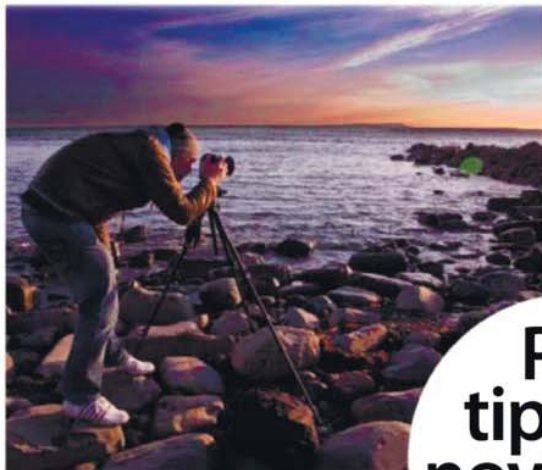
Pro
tips for
novices &
experts

Welcome to
The
Landscape Photography Book

Taking landscapes like the pros need not be a difficult task. Developing your skills and mastering key techniques will help you to create stunning images and The Landscape Photography Book is here to help. Our Getting Started section ta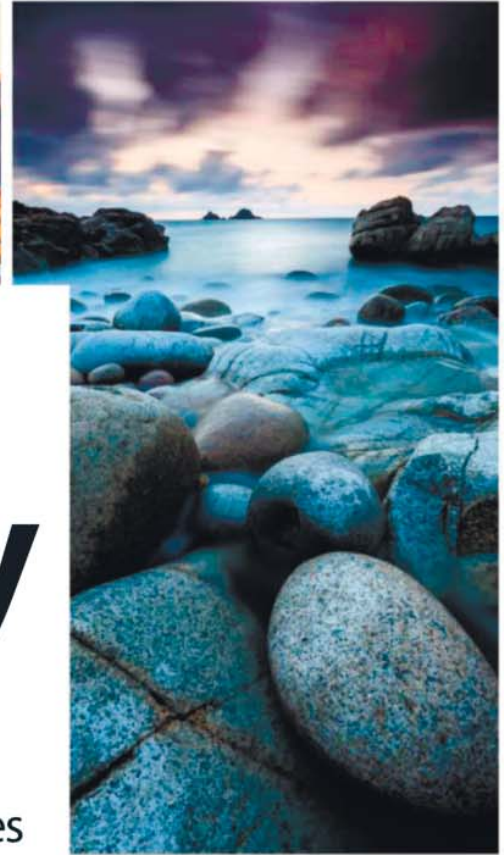kes you back to basics, while Skills takes you through essential techniques from using filters and blending exposures to reducing noise and taking landscapes on your cameraphone. On top of this, we have in-depth features on the most exciting areas of landscape photography, from seascapes to low light. With step-by-step guides and advice from the experts, you'll soon be taking your most outstanding landscape shots. Once you've got to grips with landscapes, don't forget to turn over for the ultimate guide to shooting portraits!

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TECHNIQUES

"Capture your own stunning landscapes with our inspiring advice and images from the experts"

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Getting started

Everything you need to start taking better landscapes

"Follow our tips and get all of the fundamentals right to improve your landscape shots in no time"

© Fraser McCallum

Master perfect landscapes

Learn these easy tips and tricks for capturing stunning vistas

I t's possible to get great landscape photographs on any camera, whether you have a DSLR, a compact or a cameraphone. The genre is also a brilliant one in which to practise your skills, as landscapes are stationary. You can take all the time you need to get your settings and composition just right, and also experiment with more creative techniques and filters. Then, when you have your perfect shot, you can go back to the same spot when the light or weather changes and get an entirely new image.

Stunning landscapes can be found anywhere, so you don't have to travel far. The coast, the city, and the countryside are excellent places to go, and you don't have to wait for clear sunny days as even cloudy or stormy skies can look great in your captures.

We'll show you the essential kit and settings you'll need for shooting great landscapes, including how to capture a landscape with high dynamic range. You'll also learn how to master the important compositional rules to turn your photos into works of art.

Kit for landscapes

Tripod
01 Prevent wonky horizons and avoid blurry shots at slow shutter speeds

Backpack
02 Carry your essential kit with you to your various landscape locations

Wide-angle lens
03 Capture the entire scene without missing out important details in your shot

ND Filter
04 Block some of the light so you can shoot at long exposures

LOOK FOR COLOUR
Seek out vibrant colours to create a strong image that pops out. The colour of the sky and flowers really help this image

Settings

Discover how to take perfect scenic shots

Landscapes are so popular that many cameras now come with a dedicated landscape scene mode. This will automatically select the correct setting for taking fantastic photos of beautiful views. However, you may wish to take more control over your camera's settings to achieve certain techniques. For example, many photographers use a slow shutter speed when they want to capture the movement of water. You may also wish to use an art filter, if your camera has them. Vivid mode is great for landscapes as it makes the colours appear more vibrant, even if you're shooting on a cloudy day.

PICK A NARROW APERTURE

To keep the entire landscape scene in focus, select a narrow aperture (f8 or higher) for your shot.

SLOW DOWN YOUR SHUTTER

To let plenty of natural light into your lens and capture some motion, use a slow shutter speed.

TRY A SCENE MODE

If you don't want to do it manually, landscape scene mode selects the correct setting for you.

Capture a scene with a high dynamic range

High dynamic range (HDR) photography enables you to take an image that captures more detail in the shadows and highlights. This technique involves shooting a series of photos of the same scene with different exposures. You then layer them on top of each other to produce a well-exposed photo that has a deeper range of colours. You can achieve this with any camera that has manual controls, but it helps if you have an exposure bracketing function. Some cameras even have an automatic HDR mode that will do the work for you.

Use a tripod

01 Use a tripod to avoid camera movement, framing each of your shots in the same way so they look right when you layer them.

Use a narrow aperture

02 Set your camera to Aperture Priority mode and choose a narrow aperture (high f-number). This will keep the entire scene in focus.

KEEP STABLE

If you have decided to use a slow shutter speed for your landscapes, you will need to use a tripod to keep the camera steady and ensure you don't get blurry images.

Bracket the exposure

03 Do it manually, or if you have an exposure bracketing mode, use it to take over-, under-, and well-exposed shots at the same time.

Layer your shots

04 You can now layer the shots using software. Photomatix is a free program for creating HDR images, or use Photomerge in Photoshop.

OUR FINAL SHOT
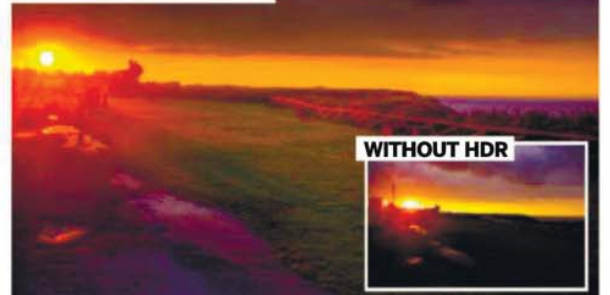
WITHOUT HDR

Composition
Follow compositional rules for engaging landscapes

When looking at a photo of a vast and spacious landscape, it can be easy to get lost in the scene and possibly lose interest altogether. This is why it is important to consider the composition of your shot to help grab the viewer's attention. There are several handy compositional rules to learn, and once you get to grips with them, you won't be able to stop looking for foreground interest and lead-in lines when you're out and about. It is easy to produce a well-composed landscape image, and it's often a case of experimenting with shooting from different viewpoints and angles.

Explore near or far to find different landscapes

Landscapes are among the most accessible things to shoot – there is always a great view to be found, wherever you are in the world. You can go out in your local area to look for a stunning scene, or travel further afield in search of a completely different vista. You might stumble on a great location while out and about, so it's a good idea to always have a camera with you, or you could research interesting landscapes and carefully plan your shoot. Here are some of the most popular types of landscape…

The seaside

01 Visit the coast for beautiful seascapes. You could try a slow shutter speed to capture the movement of the water and make it look silky smooth.

The city

02 Take a trip to the city to take striking cityscapes. Find an unobstructed vantage point so you can capture the scene without people walking into view.

Look for a focal point

When setting up, look for a main focal point such as a tree or rock to give the image a clear focus.

Fix with image-editing software

If you're not happy with the composition of your image, use editing software to crop, straighten and recompose.

Lead-in lines
01 Use either natural or man-made lines to lead the viewer through your shot.

Background
02 Consider your background and make sure it doesn't distract from your main focal area.

Depth
03 Find some interest in the middle section of your landscape to give it more depth.

Use the rules of thirds
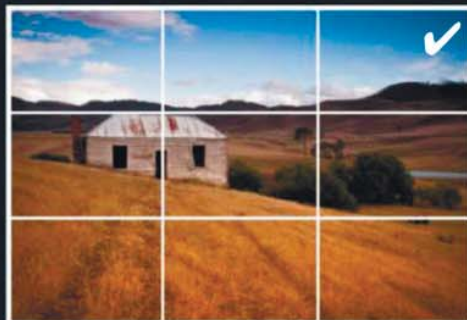
Place your focal point and horizon off-centre in the frame. Use your camera's gridlines to help you position them.

Straighten horizons
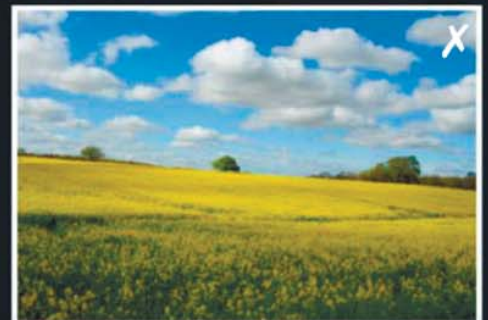
A wonky horizon will ruin your shot. Use a tripod or turn your camera's gridlines on as a guide to get the horizon straight.

The countryside
03 The patchwork fields and rolling hills of the countryside look fantastic in photos. Old farm buildings make great focal points to position in the foreground.

Public parks
04 An easy way to guarantee finding a brilliant landscape is to visit a public park or nature reserve. Arrive early to avoid getting people in your shots.

The woods
05 There are some fantastic shots to be taken in the woods. Tall trees may block out some of the light, so raise your ISO to avoid dark shots.

Town and villages
06 Your hometown can present some excellent opportunities. Try using streets, paths or rivers as lead-in lines to guide the viewer through the scene.

35 tips for shooting stunning vistas

Capture standout landscape shots with 35 tips
to help you compose, shoot and edit creatively

© Christian Lim

TIPS FOR SHOOTING VISTAS

Once the summer season is in full swing, it's the perfect time to get out and shoot vibrant colour-filled vistas. With more hours of sunlight in the day you'll also have far more time on location to find new ways in which to frame the view, expose your images and ultimately build up your landscape portfolio. Whether you're working inland or shooting along the coast, there are plenty of fantastic views to be found and photographed during the summer months.

Before you get out with camera in tow, check out the following 35 practical tips to help kick-start your next summer landscape shoot. You'll not only discover how to work in all weathers, but you'll also master dealing with difficult lighting conditions, focusing the frame and recording motion for fresh summer landscape shots that really stand out.

You can still apply the same lessons you'll learn here throughout the year too, so you're guaranteed to build up a great portfolio that's filled with fantastic seasonal shots.

Get to grips with your subject

01 Before venturing out into the great outdoors, do some location research and check the weather conditions to ensure you're adequately prepared. If you're hoping to shoot at sunrise or sunset, you'll also need to look up the exact direction in which it will take place, as this changes continually throughout the year.

© Peter Bolman

Focus on the foreground

02 Change the perspective you're shooting from by crouching down to focus on the foreground interest within the frame. This works particularly well if you're shooting in a field of flowers. Don't be afraid to throw the background out of focus slightly either; simply use a wide aperture setting and make use of the shallow depth of field.

Embrace motion

03 Landscape shots don't have to be static; embrace moving clouds or rustling trees by slowing down your shutter speed. You'll need to use an ND filter on bright summer days to reduce the risk of overexposing your image.

Shoot into the light

04 If you've got an interesting focal point within the frame, try shooting it from a direction where you're facing the sun. The shadows cast by the structure will add an extra dimension to your image.

Shoot in all weather

05 The sun doesn't have to be shining throughout the summer to venture out on a landscape shoot. Summer storm clouds are great at adding depth and drama to your scenic shots too. Get creative shots with puddles, and if you go out after rain, you may also be lucky enough to capture a rainbow.

Use and abuse the rule of thirds

06 Keep in mind the rule of thirds when composing your landscape scene. Placing a point of interest along one third of the frame will strengthen the structure of your shot. Rules are made to broken though so don't be afraid to break the compositional rules, as long as the landscape lends itself well to it.

Lead with a sky

07 Your landscape doesn't have to be all about the foreground: if there are some dramatic cloud formations or vibrant colours in the sky, lead with it by placing the horizon line lower down in the frame.

Keep ISO low

08 Avoid upping your ISO to keep noise levels to a minimum. Slow down your shutter if necessary and open your aperture slightly. Use a tripod if necessary.

Shoot morning mist

09 An early start can certainly pay off when there's a morning mist. Keep an eye on the weather conditions to predict its occurrence and aim to get up before the sun rises so that you will have time to set everything up. If possible, find a high vantage point so that you will be able to capture more of the landscape between the mists.

Underexpose images

10 If you do not have access to a tripod or filter and find you're working under rather strong summer light, make sure you keep your exposures safe by underexposing them by a stop. Providing you are shooting in RAW, you will be able to brighten it up in postproduction, which is far easier than rescuing blown-out highlights in overexposed shots.

Seize the light

11 Have a go at removing your lens hood and embracing lens flare for a change. You'll find that it will add more of a summery atmosphere to your shots, which can be very effective in the right setting.

Take your time

12 Good light really is the key to great landscape shots but don't rush to capture it. A well-composed and accurately exposed image will always be better than one that's been taken in a hurry and needs a lot of work in post-production.

Shoot summer features

13 If you're shooting for stock photography, think literally about a summer landscape photograph. Lighthouses, deck chairs and beach huts all encapsulate the season and will sell well when keyworded as such on any stock photography site.

Maintain the sky

14 On bright summer days, you may struggle to expose both the sky and land correctly. Overcome the issue by using an ND grad filter, which will effectively reduce the amount of light recorded within the sky. You can select between a soft blend or hard line grad depending on what type of scene you're shooting and how straight the horizon appears.

Venture inland

**15** Summer landscapes are not all about the beach. Move away from the coast and set off inland to photograph rolling green hills, fields of flowers or flourishing woodland.

> "Good light really is the key to great landscape shots but don't rush to capture it"

▼ SUNRISE
Do your research when planning a shoot. Find out sunset and sunrise times for stunning captures

© Matt Wardle

© Fraser McCallum

© Paul Chambers
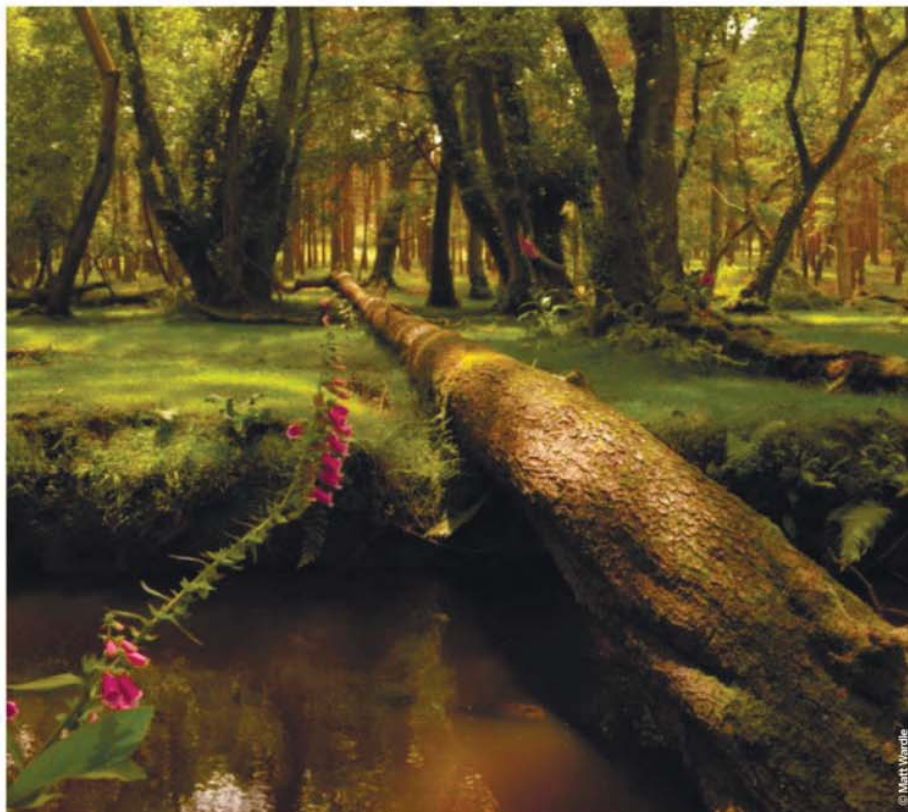
Vary your lenses

16 Take a selection of lenses out on a summer landscape shoot. Wide-angles are fantastic for framing vast vistas but telephoto lenses are great for bringing the background in closer.

Go with the flow

17 Soften flowing summer waterfalls by slowing down your shutter speed and adding an ND filter onto the end of your lens. The water motion will be recorded as an artistic soft blur.

Capture sunstars

18 Wait until the sun dips near the horizon to capture sunstars. This effect is caused by diffraction, which is due to light bending around the aperture blades in your lens. You'll need to work with a small aperture around f11 to increase the size of the sunstar.

Keep it simple

19 You don't have to fill the entire frame – keeping your composition simple can often add more impact. Focus on getting the right exposure under the best light for the most impressive results.

Turn around

20 When you're caught up in capturing a scene it's easy to dismiss what else is going on around you. Don't forget to turn around to take in other possible views. You'll find at sunset a lot of the best light and colour is happening behind you, which may not be where the sun is going down.

Change the orientation

21 Mix things up and shoot a scene both in landscape and portrait orientation. This is particularly important if you're shooting for stock, as many sites prefer the extra option.

Focus manually

22 Ensure focus accuracy in your summer landscape shots by switching over to your manual mode setting. You can use your camera's Live View mode to zoom in on a specific area while adjusting the focus ring. As a rule always try to focus the camera centrally and one third of the way up into the frame. With a small aperture setting you should be able to get more of the scene in focus and sharp.

> "You'll find at sunset the best light and colour is happening behind you"

Reflect scenes

23 Lake locations are perfect for capturing summer landscape reflections. Place the horizon centrally within the frame so there's enough space to capture the scene and mirrored image. You'll also need to use a slow shutter speed and ND filter if the light is strong.

Exposure bracketing

24 To capture the full dynamic range of light in your landscape scene, take multiple exposures at different EV settings, which you can then blend together in Photoshop. Aim to capture at least one correctly exposed image, one overexposed image (+1/3EV) and one underexposed image (-1/3EV). Merge them together in post-production to get the best out of the highlights, midtones and shadows.

Create panoramic vistas

25 Wide-angle lenses don't always do a scene justice. Consider shooting a panorama to capture much more of the vista. You'll need to use a specialist tripod head in order to ensure a seamless stitch result.

Work with vibrant shades

26 Make the most of capturing the warmer red and orange hues at sunset by adjusting your custom white balance setting. If you're shooting in RAW, you'll be able to adjust and enhance colour tones further during the editing stages too.

Use leading lines

27 Look for natural shapes in the scene that'll help lead the viewer's eyes up and through the frame. Changing the position or angle you're shooting from will also help to make them more obvious when composing.

Wait for the light

28 It's no secret that patience is a big part of a landscape photographer's success. Shoot around the golden hours in order to make the most of the warm sidelight that adds extra depth and dimension to forms within the frame.

Use a polarising filter

29 Use a polarising filter when the sun is positioned directly above you; it'll help to reduce reflections and darken blue skies.

Care for your kit

30 Shooting summer coastal scenes means your kit is going to be up against sand and salt water. Take care to clean it after a shoot and always keep your camera in your camera bag when it's not in use. And don't forget your sunhat and sun cream!

▶**VIBRANCY**
Make the most of vibrant shades in the summer months, and capture the warmer hues

© Yaman Ibrahim

"Shoot around the golden hours in order to make the most of the warm sidelight that adds extra depth and dimension"

© Martin Lievers

"Frame a scene by shooting through windows, archways, bridges or trees"

© Peter Bolman

© Paul Chambers

Start a project

31 Summer is a great time to start a landscape photography project. Look into finding one location that you can return to through the year to document the seasonal changes.

Keep it steady

32 If you're shooting summer coastal scenes and there's a risk of possible in-coming tides, you'll need a sturdy tripod that can withstand the water force. Help to cement your tripod down further by hanging your camera bag off the central column; this is also useful if you're shooting in windy conditions.

Frame the view

33 Try to take a fresh approach to framing a summer scene by shooting through windows, archways, bridges or trees. This gives a framing effect and adds a bit of creativity to an otherwise standard landscape.

Try camera dragging

34 Make the most of the summer hues by capturing a few colour-focused abstract shots. Use a camera dragging technique to do this: simply set a long exposure and physically move the camera while releasing the shutter.

Post-production

35 All RAW files require some level of editing. Start with Photoshop's Curves tool to increase overall contrast and help colour hues pop. You can then sharpen it all up with the Unsharp Mask tool.

Take a themed photo workshop

Achieving great shots of landscapes close to home and further afield requires a good knowledge of the location and subject that you're shooting. If you'd like to master travel and landscape photography, Cruise Holidays is offering a themed photography cruise that features a workshop with pro photographer David Taylor. The seven-night cruise explores the Mediterranean coast, including locations as diverse as Barcelona, Tunis (pictured), Sicily, Florence and Rome, and Toulon . Prices start from £899 per person. Find out more at www.pashworth.cruiseholidaysuk.co.uk/theme-cruises/photographic-cruise

Skills

Improve your abilities for stunning landscapes

"Follow our guides for all you need to know to start shooting perfect landscapes"

All images © Lee Pengelly

SKILLS

24 hour landscapes

It may seem like the golden hours are the only times worth shooting landscapes, but here you can learn simple photography tricks for great shots at any time of day

Landscape is one of the most popular genres of photography, with books and magazines brimming with advice on how to get the best results. As with all types of photography, the key ingredient is light, but unlike studio photography, there's very little you can do to control it. This means it's important to understand how light at different times of day affects your results.

It's generally agreed that the most flattering light for landscape photography is the low, warm light in the half-hour either side of sunrise and sunset – the so-called golden hours. With these hours heralded as the best for shooting landscapes, you'd be forgiven for thinking that it's impossible to take stunning shots at any other time of day.

Nothing could be further from the truth, however, and it's perfectly possible to take breathtaking vistas throughout the day – and night – in a variety of conditions. It's simply a matter of knowing how to work with the light.

There are a few simple tricks that can help you to make the most of the conditions in front the camera. These include knowing how to work with shapes and shadow, controlling contrast, experimenting with different viewpoints and working with filtration to balance the light and to improve saturation. Over the next few pages, you'll see how to get great results at any time of day.

SEEING THE LIGHT OF DAY
There's no need to pack your kit away when the golden hour is over. You can take eye-catching landscapes even when the Sun is high in the sky – or long after it's disappeared below the horizon

© Mark Bauer

[8:22AM]
15 MINUTES AFTER SUNRISE

COLOURFUL SKY
Cloud cover with breaks near the horizon resulted in plenty of colour and drama above the church

SIDE-LIGHTING
The low Sun raking across the scene reveals form and texture, complemented by the warmth of the early morning light

FRAMING
With lots of interest in the sky, the rules have been broken here, with the horizon placed low in the frame

Shooting the sunrise

For many photographers, it's the best time of day for landscapes, so get up early and put these tips into practice

Sunrise is the favourite time of day for many landscape photographers and it's easy to see why – there are fewer people to get in the way of your composition, the air has great clarity and clouds can be lit from below, adding colour and drama to the scene. After a cool, clear, still night, there is also the possibility of mist, adding a touch of romance and simplifying the scene, encouraging you to seek out strong, bold shapes to base compositions around.

The light changes rapidly at dawn, so planning and preparation are key. The most intense colour can start well before sunrise, so it's best to arrive at a preselected spot at least 30 minutes beforehand with a clear idea of where the Sun will be rising, as this will influence composition. Maps and a Sun compass are useful tools, along with smartphone apps such as The Photographer's Ephemeris, which will tell you in detail how the Sun will fall on the

land. Because it will be dark when you arrive and start setting up, you will need to have researched the location in advance and planned your composition. A torch is an essential piece of equipment for both practical and safety reasons.

There are a range of technical challenges involved in photographing sunrise. Contrast can be extremely high and may exceed the dynamic range of your sensor, so graduated ND filters are necessary. You should be prepared to use heavier grads or, if the contrast is really extreme, bracket exposures and blend them in software.

The light levels will be low when you first start shooting, but it's better to set a low ISO to maintain image quality. This can mean long exposures, so a sturdy tripod is a must. If shutter speeds go beyond 30 seconds then you'll need to shoot in Bulb mode, so will need a remote release to avoid camera shake

when you lock the shutter open. Remember that the scene will be getting lighter while the shutter is open, so correct exposure may be a half to one stop shorter than expected.

In terms of composition, all the usual rules apply, but do make a point of looking for interesting shapes in the foreground, which might look good against a colourful sky. The placement of the horizon is also important – if the sky is dramatic, don't be afraid to break the rules and choose a bold composition, with the horizon low in the frame.

▶ **GET SET UP EARLY**
The light changes rapidly at sunrise and the best moments can be very fleeting, so it's important to plan your shoot, set up early and wait for the best light. That way, you won't rush and miss the best shot

Key kit: Graduated neutral density filter (ND grad)

ND grads have a neutral grey half and a clear half, with a transition zone where the two meet. To help you capture the full range of tones in scenes with a very bright sky – as is typical at sunrise – simply place the grey section over the sky and line the transition zone up with the horizon. This will bring the contrast within the sensor's dynamic range.

Backlighting and use of shadows

Side-lighting is great for depth and texture emphasis, but for real drama, try backlit scenes

Landscape photographers absolutely love side-lighting, as it helps to create depth in a composition and highlights surface texture. Backlighting, however, can add a sense of drama to a composition, with shadows racing towards the camera and an emphasis on form. Look for strong shapes – trees in particular can make great subjects.

Try to use shadows creatively – they can be an excellent way of generating foreground interest and are a great way of leading the eye to the main subject. Shadows that stretch into the corners of the frame can pull the eye into the foreground, as diagonal lines are very dynamic, particularly in portrait format.

If you include the Sun in the frame, stopping down to minimum aperture can create a starburst effect. Placed in a key part of the frame, such as an intersection of thirds, starbursts can be a strong focal point in a composition.

Exposure can be tricky because of the strong contrast. It's easy to lose detail in the shadows and highlights, so reduce the chances of this happening by shooting when the Sun is low in the sky. Strong backlighting can cause underexposure, so check the histogram and be prepared to add exposure compensation, or reshoot if necessary.

Flare is also a potential problem when shooting towards the Sun and, in this situation, a lens hood is no help. To avoid this problem, make sure that your lens and filters are scrupulously clean.

SUNRISE SKY
This cliff-top chapel is a dramatic sight and provides an obvious focal point in the landscape, especially when shot in the right light with a dramatic sky. Shooting at 16mm enabled the top of the frame to be filled with dramatic clouds

EQUIPMENT
With the sky much brighter than the foreground, a graduated filter was needed. Even with the Sun over the horizon, at ISO 100 the shutter speed was too slow, so a solid tripod was essential

COMPOSITION
From this spot, a three-quarters view of the church was able to be framed. This is much more dynamic than a head-on view showing equal amounts of each side, which would be rather static

DEPTH
The camera was positioned so that the rising Sun would light the front of the building, leaving the side in shade. This creates a feeling of depth in the shot

All images © Mark Bauer
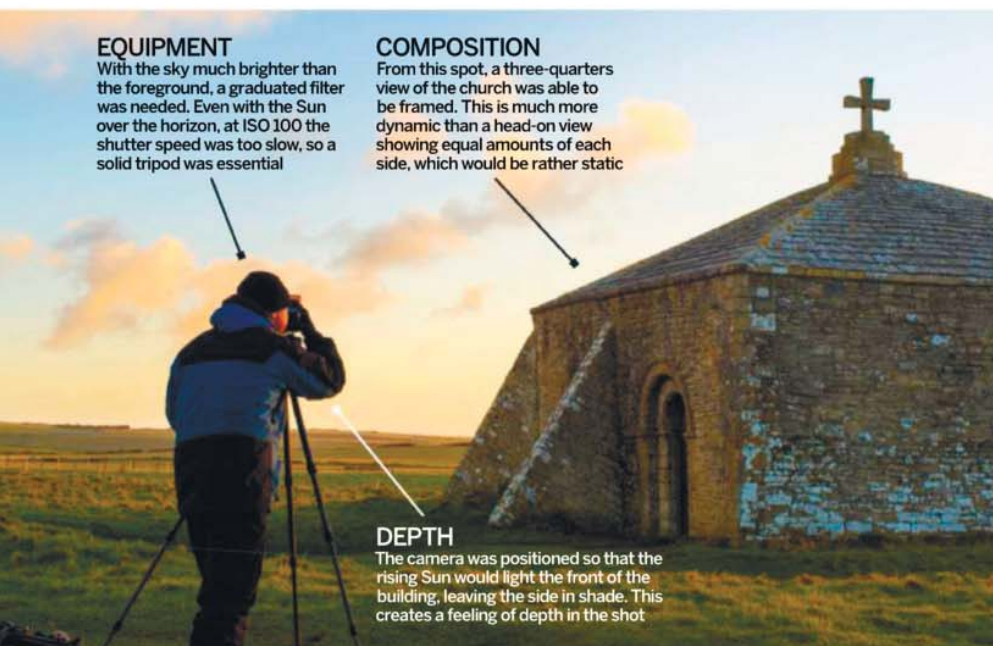
Midday captures

Conventional wisdom says that you can't shoot landscapes around noon, but with a little effort you'll get stunning shots

The light in the middle of the day is the most challenging for landscape photography, so creating moody shots is difficult – high contrast and harsh shadows provide little textural relief or modelling of objects. However, although afternoon light lacks the drama of sunrise and sunset, with a little creativity, you can still shoot interesting landscapes.

Subject choice is important. Simple compositions based around strong shapes will look good, especially shot from low-angles, and scenes with man-made structures lend themselves well to harsh lighting. Try to shoot when there is some cloud in the sky – plain blue skies with nothing to break up the tone makes scenes look even more flat. Overcast skies can work quite well at midday, especially if there's some layering or texture in the cloud. Landscapes shot in these conditions make very good monochrome conversions.

On a bright day, although strong midday light produces harsh shadows, it can also produce intense colours. These can be enhanced by using a polarising filter, which cuts through surface reflections and glare on non-metallic surfaces, giving a boost to colour saturation.

With the Sun high in the sky, contrast can be a problem. The difficulty is with harsh shadows, where it can be tricky to record much detail. Use your camera's spot meter to check the difference in brightness between the lightest and darkest parts of the scene and make sure your camera can record the full range of tones.

Nowadays, cameras have excellent dynamic range – in theory, up to 13 or 14 stops, but in practice, most will struggle with scenes containing more than eight or nine stops. Graduated neutral density filters are not much help in this situation, so try to find an angle where the shadows are less obvious. If this isn't possible, the only real solution is to bracket exposures and blend them in post-processing.

If trying to capture the scene in a single frame then take care with brighter tones, as there is little room for manoeuvre with clipped highlights. Although highlight detail can sometimes be recovered from RAW files, it's better to protect the brighter areas and pull up shadow detail in processing, especially with modern sensors, which have much cleaner shadows than their predecessors.

▶ **AFTERNOON LANDSCAPE**
The light is less dramatic than at sunrise and sunset, but there's no reason why you can't take good landscape photographs at midday. Choose your angles carefully, wait for an interesting sky and use the right filtration

Boost colour saturation using filters

Get the best from a polarising filter to improve your midday shots

A polarising filter is a handy bit of kit for this time of day, as it can really help to boost the colour saturation in bright skies. To get the best results, shoot at right angles to the light source. Take care with wide-angle lenses, though, as you can get uneven polarisation. Rotate the polarising ring until you see the effect that you want. Remember that you don't have to use full polarisation for every shot – sometimes subtle effects are better.

Without a polariser filter

With a polariser filter

All images © Mark Bauer

TIMING
Picking the right time to fire the shutter is always important, but probably more so when the light is less naturally flattering to the landscape. Wait for the clouds to drift into the right position in the frame, as this will make a huge difference to the composition

Shoot great midday vistas

01 **Pick a spot** Choose a location that will work well in midday light. Bold subjects without clutter work best.

02 **Compose** Choose the best angle to minimise the impact of shadows and to give space to what's important. Shape-based compositions work well.

03 **Filter the light** Midday light can produce strong colours, so use a polarising filter to boost the saturation.

04 **Wait for the moment** Don't shoot the instant you've set up – wait for clouds to drift into the scene to help balance the composition and to soften the shadows.

USING THE SKY

It would be a mistake to fill the frame with the foreground, as there is little interest there. Instead, give priority to the sky and, as before, wait for clouds to fill the top of the frame

Key kit: Lens hood

Flare is a potential problem when shooting in strong midday light, as the light can reflect on the inside of your lens. Using a lens hood can reduce the chances of flare by casting a shadow across the front element of the lens. There are compromises, though, as you won't be able to use slot-in system filters with a lens hood fitted.

COLOUR

The lighting creates less texture and depth, but it does generate strong colours, especially blues and greens. These colours are enhanced by a polarising filter, which is an excellent tool for increasing the colour saturation of blue skies and foliage

KEEP STABLE

Even in bright light when using a fast shutter speed, a tripod is necessary for landscape photography. This is because it slows you down and forces you to make fine adjustments to framing, resulting in a more considered composition

BE PATIENT

You need patience for successful landscape photography. When the light is harsh, you need to wait for the various elements, such as the clouds and shadows, to fall into place. Unfortunately, there may be no alternative to a long wait

PICK A FOCAL POINT

Subject choice can make a big difference to the success of midday landscapes, and man-made structures work well in harsh lighting. Go for simple, bold compositions based around strong shapes, with a clear focal point and not too much clutter to detract from the image

SKILLS

[5:30pm]
ABOUT 10 MINUTES
BEFORE SUNSET

CLOUD COVER
The right amount of cloud cover can really help a sunset by providing interest in the sky. This aids composition and catches colour from the setting Sun. An ND grad filter will prevent the bright highlights from clipping

Key kit: Tripod
A tripod is an essential item for preventing camera-shake in low light. One area that often gets overlooked when choosing a tripod is the head. A good head enables smooth movements and fine adjustments, which are essential for landscape photography – small changes to a composition can make a big difference. Geared heads, which provide very fine control in three planes, are very popular with landscape photographers.

© Mark Bauer

DIRECTIONS
The best sunset shots aren't always shot straight towards the Sun. Not only can you get colour all around the sky, but in this case, shooting away from the Sun meant we were able to capture a rainbow above the church

SUNSET COLOURS
The light is naturally warm and golden at sunset, but Auto White Balance can cancel this out, wrongly interpreting it as a colour cast. Rather than setting Auto, try Daylight to capture the natural warmth, or Cloudy to enhance it

© Mark Bauer
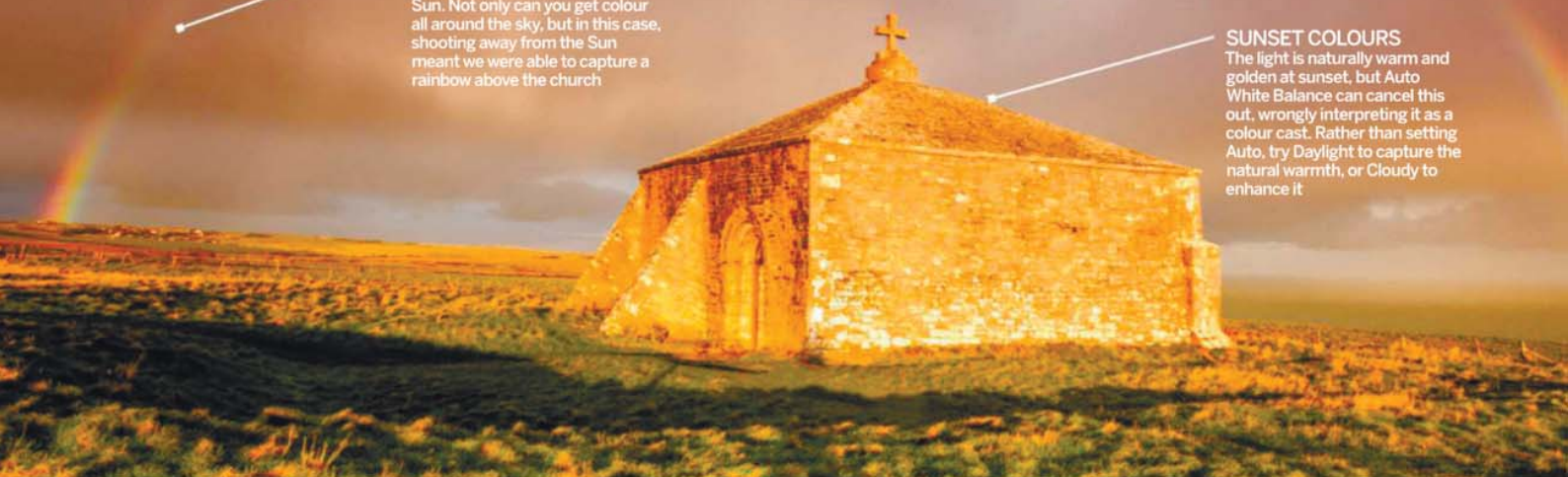
Sunset scenes
Find out how to get the best from the most dramatic light

Few photographers can resist shooting a colourful sunset – after all, it's the day's grand finale. However, it's not enough just to point the camera at the colour and hope to get a good result. You'll need to use good technique to make the most of what's in front of you.

In many ways, shooting at sunset is easier than dawn as you can set up while it's light and see how the light is changing. Preparation is still important, so research your location and make sure you know where the Sun will be setting. Decide on your composition in advance, so that you're not rushing around at the last minute and miss the best light as a result.

Keep an eye on the weather forecast before setting out. The ideal conditions for sunset involve having cloud cover of around 50 to 70 per cent to pick up the colours of the setting Sun. However, don't despair if it's heavier than that – if there's a break on the horizon, there's still a chance of some colour in the sky.

Look for strong foreground interest, and don't overlook objects that can be used as silhouettes. The natural temptation is to shoot directly towards the Sun, but this is only possible when it's low in the

frame or diffused by haze. It's natural to assume that the best colour in the scene will be looking towards the Sun, but the colour tends to spread almost anywhere across the sky.

As with dawn, the main difficulty is contrast, as the sky can be a lot brighter than the foreground. This contrast increases after the Sun is below the horizon as there is no direct light cast on the land, but the sky is still strongly lit from below. Use a graduated neutral density filter or bracket exposures and blend them in post-processing.

As light levels drop, exposure times increase, so it's essential that you use a tripod and cable release. It's easy to underexpose, so add more exposure than you think you need.

"The main difficulty is contrast"

© Mark Bauer

After the Sun sets

Don't pack up too early as you might miss some stunning colours in the sky

It's important not to pack up the moment the Sun dips below the horizon, as often the show doesn't end there. The best colour can come after sunset – sometimes as late as 20 or 30 minutes afterwards, as a warm afterglow spreads across the sky. Keep shooting throughout this time, varying your focal length and experimenting with your exposure to see what results you can get. When shooting after sunset, it won't be long until it's pitch black, so make sure that you have a torch to hand to help you find your route back and to avoid any potential hazards.

SUNSET SKY
It can be hard to resist the saturated colours and dramatic sky of a good sunset, but don't make the mistake of thinking you can only shoot directly towards the Sun, as colour can spread throughout the sky

COMPOSITION
Being in the right place at the right time is important, but you also need a strong composition and good technique to make the most of sunset landscapes

USING APPS
It's important to know the direction of the sunset when planning your shoot. Smartphone apps such as Sun Scout are extremely useful

© Corbis

Capture the night

It may seem hard, but with modern equipment, night imagery is easier than ever

Night photography, involving subjects such as the Milky Way, star trails and the aurora borealis, is becoming increasingly popular. It's easy to see why – even entry-level equipment can deliver good results once you've mastered a few simple techniques. Fast, wide-angle lenses are useful, but not an absolute must. Other than that, the only specialist equipment you need is a sturdy tripod and a torch.

The most important thing to remember is that good composition applies as much to night photography as it does during the day – a photograph of the night sky, however dramatic, needs a well-composed landscape beneath. Look for strong shapes or shoot near water, so that reflections double the impact of the sky. A torch can be used for painting the foreground with light, though take care not to overdo this. Done subtly, it can look like moonlight, but too much will look unnatural.

It's much easier to compose a shot while it's still light, so either set up before sunset, or research your location and plan your composition in advance. Another advantage of arriving early is that it's so much easier to find infinity focus while there's still light (you'll need to focus on infinity to get sharp stars). If you have to set up in the dark, a powerful torch is useful not only to help with composition, but can also be used to pick out distant objects to aid focusing. You should always check focus on the review image and be prepared to tweak it and reshoot if necessary.

Unless you're deliberately shooting star trails, exposures need to be reasonably short so that there is no star movement. The 300 rule is a useful guideline for determining maximum exposure time – simply divide 300 by the focal length of your lens. For example, the longest exposure you should use with a 16mm focal length is $300 \div 16 = 18.75$ seconds. Adjust aperture and ISO to enable you to work within the limit. Obtaining correct exposure is largely a matter of guesswork, so start with ISO 3200 and 15 seconds, check the review histogram and adjust exposure if necessary.

Because of the limited depth of field when focused on infinity, your foreground may be out of focus. To get round this, take a second shot with a smaller aperture and a longer shutter speed, and then blend the sky and sharply focused foreground in post-processing.

Keep it sharp

Use mirror lock-up to squeeze out a little extra sharpness

Night shots look best when everything is pin-sharp, which can be a problem when shooting longer exposures. There are a number of things you can do to maximise sharpness. The obvious things are to use a solid tripod and to shoot in conditions that are as still as possible. You should also use a remote or cable release to trip the shutter, as even the gentlest touch of the button can cause shake. In some instances, however, even this may not be enough. With SLRs, the mirror has to swing out of the way in order to take a shot, and this movement can cause vibration. How much depends on how well-damped the mechanism is, plus the size of the mirror – it's more of a problem with full-frame DSLRs.

Fortunately, most cameras have a mirror lock-up function. With this activated, the first press of the shutter moves the mirror up out of the way. You then wait a few seconds for any vibrations to stop, and press the shutter a second time to start your exposure. The way you set mirror lock-up varies among camera manufacturers – with some brands there is a dedicated button, while others can be set up by selecting it in the camera's Settings menu.

There is a critical range of shutter speeds in which mirror shake is a problem. For exposures longer than a few seconds, it's probably not a serious issue, but as mirror lock-up won't actually have any negative impact on your shots, it's good practice to use it anyway.

▶ **NIGHTTIME LANDSCAPE**
Even when it's so dark that you can hardly see, you can carry on shooting. The light-gathering properties of modern digital sensors are so good that great night photography results are within everyone's grasp

[10:00pm]

SHOOT THE STARS
Stars either need to be sharp or to be proper star trails. For sharp stars, keep exposures short – 15 to 30 seconds with a wide-angle lens is good. This means using a fast lens wide open at a high ISO

▶ **ISO ADJUSTMENTS**
You'll need to weigh up whether to raise your ISO to stop star trails or keep it low for less noise in the shot

INFINITY FOCUSING
To keep the stars sharp, you'll need to focus on infinity, but the markings on most lenses are not 100% accurate – a fraction of a millimetre can make a big difference. While it's still light, establish where infinity focus is and don't adjust focus again

Key kit: Timer remote control
A remote release with a built-in timer is excellent for longer exposures at night as you can dial in the length of exposure, rather than having to use Bulb mode and count. Some models also include an interval timer, so you can set it to take a series of exposures, which you can then stack together to create star trails.

PAINT IN LIGHT
Night scenes often look better when there is a little light in the foreground. A Full Moon on a clear night can provide enough light, but otherwise, a powerful torch can be used to paint in detail on the main subject

Control your exposures with ISO
Use ISO to get the right balance between exposure time and noise levels

The only way to keep exposures short enough to avoid star movement is to increase your ISO. This basically makes the sensor more sensitive to light, enabling you to get correct exposure with shorter shutter speeds than is possible at low ISO settings. It sounds perfect, but of course, there's no such thing as a free lunch, and the trade-off with pushing up ISO levels is increased image noise.

Technology is improving all the time, however, and modern sensors are capable of remarkable results at high ISO. Shooting at ISO 3200 or even higher is rarely a problem these days, especially as noise reduction software is very good at reducing noise while preserving image detail. For best results you'll need to shoot in RAW and process images in a good RAW developer.

Noise is worse in the darker areas of the sensor, so check your histogram and make sure that you're not exposing too deep into the shadows. Increase your exposure to push the tones to the right-hand side of the histogram, if possible.

If you want to record star trails then you will need an exposure time of an hour or more, so low ISOs and smaller apertures are possible. However, keeping the shutter open for this length of time can cause the sensor to get hot, resulting in increased image noise, so many photographers prefer to take a series of shorter exposures and then stack them in software.

▶ STRONG SCENES
Night shots are far more effective if you can include a well-composed landscape beneath the night sky

A guide to filters for landscapes

Landscape pro Lee Pengelly demonstrates how filters enable you to get the image right in-camera, banishing those washed-out skies and weak colours

BEFORE

As the landscape is one of the most accessible subjects, you would think this would make it easy to capture. However, unlike studio photographers who can control their own lighting, for landscape photographers it's a slightly different story. We work with natural light and in the UK this can be unpredictable at the best of times. We have to measure and cope with a changing light in all its various forms – side lighting, back lighting, sunsets, sunrises, into the light, harsh light, diffused light... the list goes on and the techniques for capturing each aren't at all simple. Add to this other elements such as cloud cover, the seasons, the Sun's position and you start to get an idea of what we're faced with. We have to be aware of how the camera sees things and help it along to capture what we see.

Unfortunately our cameras don't work as well as our eyes. Look at any landscape and in microseconds our eyes will adjust to the light, balancing the scene. Try to capture the scene with one frame and getting this balance right in-camera is nigh on impossible. Nine times out of ten we end up with washed-out skies and poor contrast. All is not lost though, as we can control this light with filters, getting the image in-camera to match what we see.

After
TRANSFORM A LANDSCAPE
Use long exposures alongside a neutral density filter to capture atmospheric landscape images like this one

All images © Lee Pengelly

FILTERS FOR LANDSCAPES

Control the light

Learn to capture stunning landscapes in-camera using three essential photographic filters

Look through any holiday brochure and a good deal of images will have been taken with the addition of a filter. Some purists out there believe that filters are a way of cheating, adding something to an image that wasn't there. In landscape photography this is especially true and it's a subject that requires honesty to record only what you see. There are filters that add colour and effects to an image, but nowadays filtration is a more sedate affair with the majority of photographers opting to simply control the light.

We now have a massive amount of software at our fingertips to alter an image, add colour, morph multiple exposures together and even filter, but the old adage of getting it right in-camera still rings true. I still approach photography the old-fashioned way. By this I mean using what I have available – the light, the exposure settings and the filtration to record what I see as close as I can and as faithfully as I can.

A key factor to remember with filtration is, if you can see that a filter has been used, you've failed. This is where light-controlling filters come in.

There are three main types of filter in this category: the polariser, the graduated neutral density filter and the standard neutral density filter. These filter types don't add colour to an image, but instead control the light entering the camera. They affect the light, hold it back and help the camera see as we see.

Look through any photographic supplier catalogue and you are met with an array of different sizes, strengths and shapes of filter.

There are also two main types: screw-on filters and system filters that fit into a holder. The screw-on types have various filter thread sizes and these are screwed on directly to the lens and rotated, in the case of polarisers and grads.

The system type of filters are usually square or oblong in shape and fit into a specialised holder that attaches to a threaded ring placed on your lens. These can be moved up and down, tilted sideways and stacked. You have to make your own decision when picking a system type, though the more expensive ones tend to be more accessible.

▶ **PORTLAND BILL LIGHTHOUSE, DORSET**
RA polarising filter transformed this scene, making the clouds stand out against the sky and removing glare from the water surface

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Essential landscape filters
Choose the right filter for your landscape shot

Polariser

Price: From £218 (approx. $358 US)

Web: www.leefilters.com

The polariser filter comes in either linear type for manual focus, or circular type for autofocus. They are available as screw-on types, as system types, or square slot-in types. Although each affect the image in exactly the same way, the system holder screw-on types are best, as the filter will always be in front of other filters and easier to operate. The polariser filter works best when the Sun is at 90 degrees to your shooting position.
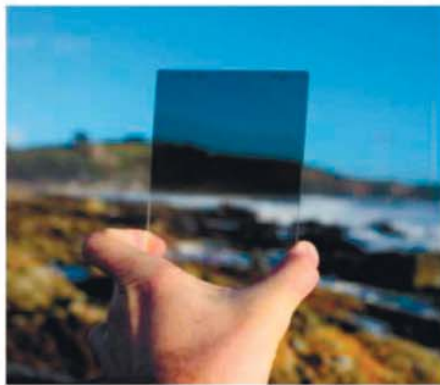
Neutral density grad

Price: From £176 (set of 3, approx. $289 US)

Web: www.leefilters.com

The simple ND (neutral density) graduated filter is a filter is essential when shooting landscapes if you want to balance exposures between a bright sky and darker landscape. They come in varying strengths measured in density, for instance 0.3=1 stop, 0.6=2 stops and 0.9=3 stops. The filters are grey and graduate to clear resin, though they don't colour the image, only hold back the light. They come in hard or soft graduation and as screw-on or slot-in system types.
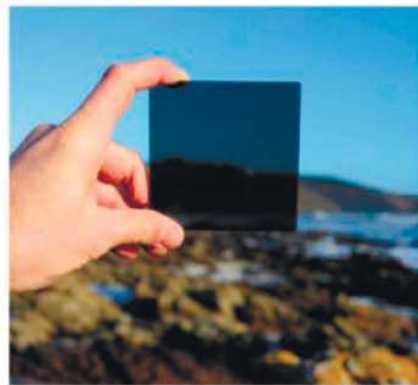
Neutral density

Price: £79 (resin type, approx $130 US)

Web: www.leefilters.com

Unlike the neutral density graduated filter, the ND filter is grey overall. Again, as it's neutral it doesn't add colour to the image, it only holds back light. Various strengths are available and they come in either resin or a glass versions. The glass pro filter is more balanced and a better choice for digital sensors, although major colour shifts only result in extreme exposures. The glass pro filter can extend exposure to create movement.

AFTER

BEFORE

Filter uses

With many software filters around, physical filters still have a place

Balance exposure
A graduated grey filter balances exposure between bright skies and dark foregrounds, bridging the gap in exposure between the two.

Saturate colours
A polarising filter will cut down the glare from reflective surfaces, making colours look more saturated.

Extend exposure
You can add a neutral density filter to prevent light entering the camera and in turn increase the exposure time to enhance movement.

Remove reflections
Use a polariser to remove annoying reflections from shiny surfaces. Shoot through glass as well as through the surface of the water with this simple filter.

Creativity
Filters enable your creative juices to flow, so try to pre-visualise how a filter will affect a scene, add movement or add impact to dramatic conditions.

How does a polariser work?

Explore the science behind the simple polarising filter

Light from the Sun travels in a straight line as a wave that is oscillating up and down and side to side. When light is reflected off a subject, it's the reflected wavelength of the light that determines the colour of the subject – the subject absorbs other colours. A blue subject, for example, reflects only blue light and absorbs other colours such as reds, oranges and greens. If the light that's being reflected travels in only one direction, it will cause glare and reduce the colour of the reflected surface. A polarising filter removes this polarised light by filtering the sunlight that's reflecting towards the camera lens from specific angles, enabling you to restore colour intensity in your captures. The polarising filter has a layer of Polaroid between two plates of glass to do this. In a circular polarising filter, the front plate is rotated. This directly affects the angle of polarisation, as well as the amount of polarised light entering the filter, enabling precise control over the degree of polarised light that is to be removed.

Without a polarising filter

Without a polarising filter

A polarising filter works best when you're shooting perpendicular (90 degrees) to the Sun

Enhance colour using a polariser

Discover how a polarising filter can reduce glare, boost colour saturation and refine reflections

Despite the myriad of different filters and effects available in software, there is still nothing as yet to match what the simple polarising filter can do when shooting. This is because the filter physically affects the light entering the camera. Yes, there are software effects that can replicate the filter's effects and of course there are the Saturation and Vibrance sliders, but a polariser is the one filter that every photographer should have at hand.

There are three types of polariser available. The first is simply a sheet of polarising gel, which can be cut by hand and held in front of the lens or mounted in a handmade gel holder. Alternatively you can buy these from various manufacturers, however they aren't very durable and can cause
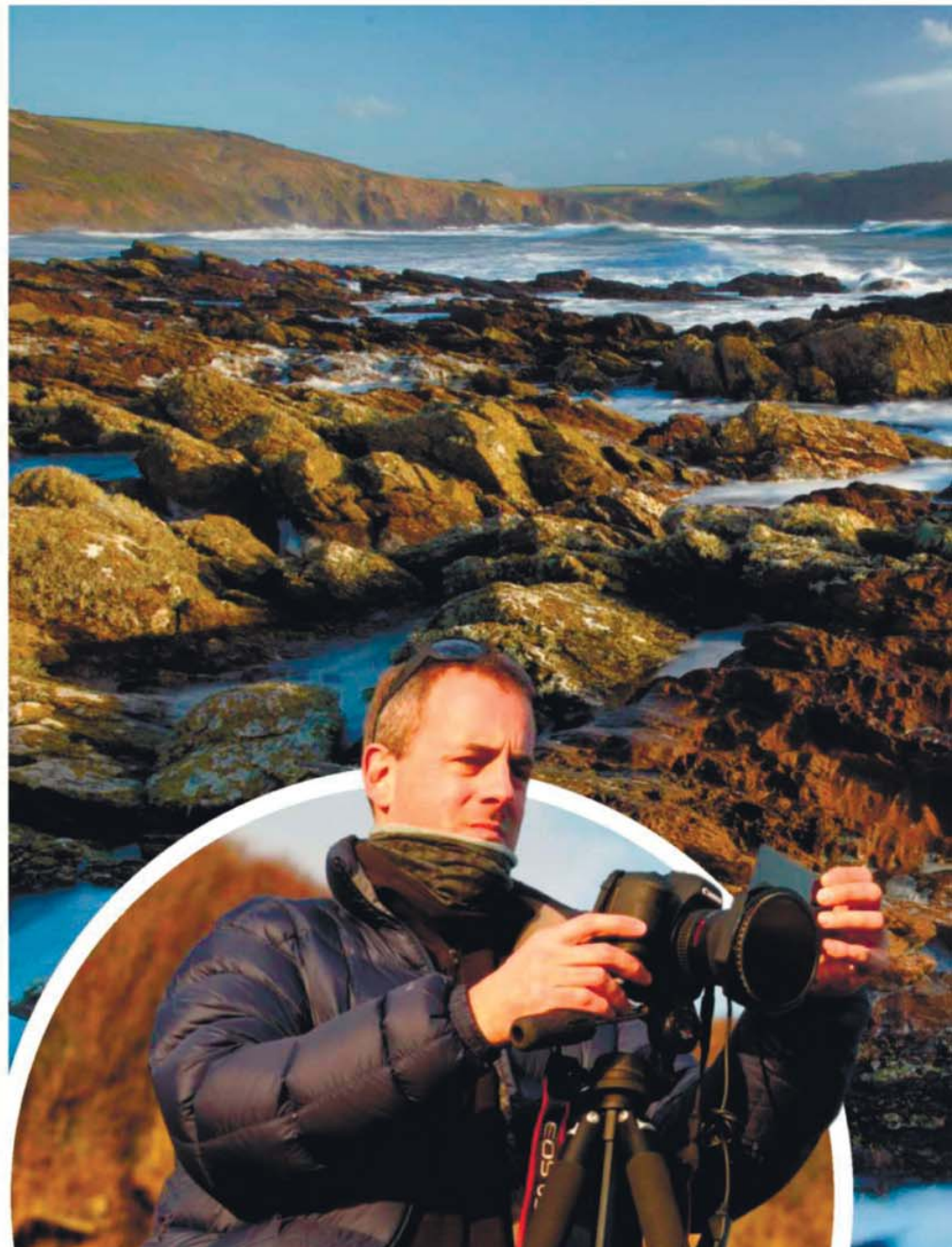
problems with flare. There is also the most common type, which consists of a polarising material between two pieces of optical glass. This is usually circular and either screw onto the front of your lens or to an adapted holder. The effect can be seen by rotating the filter while viewing the image through the viewfinder or Live View. You can also hold it up to your eye and rotate first, then carefully place the filter back onto the lens. Some polarisers are even marked up to help with positioning.

One important thing to bear in mind when using polarisers is that they prevent around 1.5 to 2 stops of light entering the lens, so if you are using manual exposure you will have to compensate for this. The polariser has a maximum effect when the Sun's position is at 90 degrees to your shooting position. Be careful not to over-polarise though, as this happens when using lenses wider than 28mm, causing a darker mass in the sky of the image. When stacked with other filters, you will sometimes notice vignetting in the corners of the image. Look for a slim-type circular polariser to help prevent this.

Polarisers can also be used as ND filters. Unpolarised, they will hold back the light but beware that some can cause slight colour casts, which can be compensated for at the processing stage, or even by increasing the colour temperature via White Balance settings.

▼ WEMBURY BAY, DEVON
A polariser has been used on this shot of a rough sea. The waves have been softened a great deal, making them much easier on the eye

REDUCE REFLECTIONS WITH POLARISERS
Polarisers reduce or even remove reflections. They block the unwanted rays of light from non-metallic surfaces. As you rotate the filter, reflections on water and wet rocks will disappear, so much so that it makes the water transparent

AFTER

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Boosting saturation

How to increase the saturation in a shot by using a polariser

Open a travel brochure and you will see deep-blue skies, flowers and foliage jumping off the pages. This is usually the result of the photographer using a polariser. One of the main uses for polarisers is to boost colour saturation. This isn't the same as the software equivalent of moving a slider; it just increases colours that are already there. A polariser works by removing glare and reflections from surfaces, in turn making the subject appear more colourful. In essence the contrast is improved and not weakened by the harsher light.

So, where would you use this to maximise a scene? Take a woodland scene, for example. Even on a dull overcast day a polariser can work wonders by boosting the colours in foliage, which is great for autumnal scenes. White puffy clouds will stand out against a deep-blue sky, as the polariser is rotated and for close-up nature work flowers can benefit from the boost in contrast and colour. One thing to be aware of is over-saturating with the filter, which is noticeable in skies where the Sun is off to one side of the frame and the other half of the image is darker than the brighter side. An angled soft graduated filter can help to balance things up in this situation.

AFTER

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All images © Lee Pengelly

Shoot long exposure with ND filters

Capture movement and atmospheric scenes using ND filters and longer exposure times
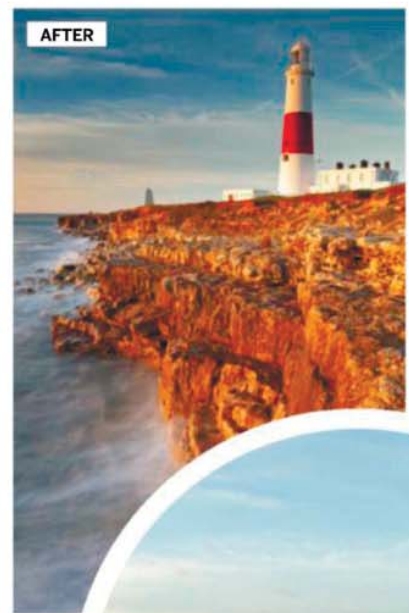
Use the Big Stopper filter

Take long exposures to the extreme using a 10x Big Stopper filter for atmospheric effects

In recent years a number of companies have produced 10x ND filters and the Big Stopper is Lee Filters' version. This glass filter resembles a piece of welding glass, totally opaque. It takes exposure times to the extreme, turning 1sec exposures into mind-boggling 30-minute ones. The filter was designed to use during the day, creating the same motion effects as you would get at dawn and dusk. Using the filter takes some practise, as a meter reading has to be taken, focusing done, settings put into the camera, then the filter is placed and exposure taken. This can produce a blue colour cast, but it's easily corrected either at the process stage or by increasing the White Balance kelvin setting in-camera to around 8500K. Light leaking can also be a big problem, so make sure your viewfinder is covered during exposures.

Let's not forget that photography is a creative process – not does it produce a true representation of a subject, but it's also used to capture what we have in our minds, whatever the subject. With current software it's all too easy to create montages and all kinds of creative imagery, but in-camera it requires a practical knowledge and forethought. The landscape in particular is restrictive in terms of what you can add to it, unlike studio photography where lighting and effects can be created. With the landscape you get what you're given, but with filtration you can bend the visual rules.

One filter that can do this is the ND (neutral density) filter – a piece of grey resin or glass that holds back light from entering the lens. Although grey in colour it's similar to the ND grad, as it doesn't colour the light, but only reduces it. These filters come in either screw-on fit or as a square system type filter. They are also measured in density and available in varying strengths from 0.3 to 1 stop, right up to 10 stops. Most are made from resin, however professional glass ND filters are also available; these are less prone to colour casts during long exposures. The filters are typically stacked together with either grads or a polariser, but can be used alone depending on the subject.

Primarily the ND filter is used to reduce the amount of light entering the lens. This is usually done to extend exposure times, creating movement in an image – blurred waterfalls, traffic trails and making people disappear. For example, let's say you are shooting a scene within the landscape at a wide aperture of f5.6. You don't want to deviate from the aperture, but can't get the shutter speed slow enough to create blur – the ND filter is the cure. It can also be used to improve contrast in a scene taken on a bright day where overhead light is harsh.

> "The ND filter is used to reduce the amount of light entering the lens"

MAN O WAR BAY, DORSET
Although the scene's composition was nice, the rippled water out in the bay was a bit messy. By adding a 3-stop 0.9 ND filter I was able to achieve a longer exposure

Guide to smooth water

How to extend exposures with an ND filter for smooth water motion shots

One of the most common subjects to use an ND filter on is water, as where there is water there's scope to create something a little different. Of course, photography is subjective and nowhere is this more apparent than in scenes with blurred water, with some preferring to freeze the motion.

Used in combination with a polariser the two filters will extend exposure times into seconds while removing glare and boosting contrast and colour saturation at the same time. The general rule for water is using

1sec to 4sec to create a blur of water, while still giving it definition. From 4sec up to 30sec the water tends to lose any definition, taking on a cotton wool appearance. Into the minutes and water will take on a misty, atmospheric quality. The camera will meter through the filter up to 30sec, but beyond that you will have to double up exposure times for each stop over and use Bulb mode.

This technique usually requires fairly small apertures. Plus, when combined with the filters, exposure times are long, so a tripod is a must.

All images © Lee Pengelly

FILTERS FOR LANDSCAPES

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Guide to using grad filters

Practical guide to setting up and using a graduated ND filter

Take a meter reading
To ensure you use the right exposure settings and filter strength for the scene, take a meter reading of just the midtone areas and then another of the sky. Work out the stop difference based on the results of each.

Select a grad strength
You can now determine which filter strength is best for the landscape. A two-stop difference, for example, would only require a 0.6ND grad. Too dark and the balance would be wrong, resulting in an unnaturally dark sky.

Position the filter
Select a hard or soft grad line depending on the horizon in the scene. Once you've positioned your camera on a tripod, you can switch to Live View mode and position the grad line accordingly.

Check the histogram
Once the filter is in place you'll be able to better expose the midtones and reduce the glare from the highlights. Always check your histogram on the LCD screen while shooting to tweak the various exposure settings if necessary.

Preserve skies with graduated filters

Discover how you can easily protect precious detail in the sky using a graduated ND filter

How many times have you taken a quick snapshot of a beautiful landscape scene, only to find you are left with a bleached-out scene with no detail or colour? Unlike our eyes, which can instantly adjust to around 24 stops in light difference, the camera cannot record anywhere near this amount of variation in one frame. This is where the simple graduated grey filter comes into play.

It bridges the gap in exposure difference between a bright and dark subject, balancing exposure. Graduated filters come in two types: circular screw-on filters and resin oblong filters that slide into a filter holder attached to the lens. Although screw-on grads are in principle the same as the system type, they are more restrictive – to move the graduation line means moving the camera, as opposed to just sliding a system filter up and down.

Grads are available in varying strengths, most commonly 0.3 to 1 stop, 0.6 to 2 stops and 0.9 to 3 stops, measured in density, the darker grey part of the filter holds back the corresponding amount of light. Although grey in colour they are neutral so don't affect the colour of the image, however be careful with cheaper versions, as these aren't neutral and produce strange magenta colour casts. You also have a choice of varying gradation types: hard graduated and soft graduated. Which to use depends entirely on the subject you are

shooting. A hard-edged grad would be ideally suited for coastal scenes, with a well-defined horizon, whereas a horizon broken by trees or buildings would require a less harshly graduated line, so a soft grad would be a better choice here.

The technique for choosing and using grads requires two meter readings to be taken: one for the sky and one for the land, both taken from midtoned areas. Say for instance the land reading comes in at 1sec at f16 and the sky reads 1/8sec at f16. That's a three-stop difference between the two, so a 0.9 graduated filter will bridge that exposure gap, resulting in a 1sec exposure for the entire frame.

Grads can also be stacked together if a bigger exposure gap is measured and they can also be inverted. This is useful, for example, for a bright oilseed field and blue sky, where the field is brighter than the sky.

▼ **KIMMERIDGE BAY, DORSET**
Although the scene was side lit the sky was around 2 stops brighter than the foreground. I placed a 0.6 hard edged grad over the sky bringing the gradation line down to the sea level

All Images © Lee Pengelly

AFTER

BEFORE

How to capture cloud motion

Discover how to capture movement in the sky using a grad

Grad filters can be used with other filters to create dramatic images of the landscape. Having a starting image in your head helps, as well as knowing how each filter used will affect the exposure, the elements, the colour. When shooting longer exposures we are going to end up with a result that the eye can't replicate.

Cloud motion is hard to capture, as it involves getting the right conditions and techniques. First the wind needs to be fairly strong, ideally blowing towards or away from you. Either way this means getting the tripod splayed as low as you can, weighing everything down to prevent it shaking and toppling. Grad filters can balance exposure between the land and sky, but also by stacking two grads together they will act in the same way as ND filters, extending exposure. Add to this a polariser and your exposure times will run into many seconds.

▼ **EXPOSURE BLENDING**
Exposure blending enables you to merge multiple images of the same scene at different exposures to retain more detail

Blend your exposures

Become a master of exposure by discovering how to blend multiple shots together to create a single flawless image that's bursting with detail

When compared to the human eye, it's no secret that digital cameras have a much narrower dynamic range. If you've never heard the term dynamic range before then to clarify, it simply refers to the scale between what the camera records as the lightest and darkest points within a scene.

As already hinted, the human eye has a much broader dynamic range than a digital camera. This enables us to look out at a beautiful vista and absorb all of the wondrous detail within the bright highlights of the sky and clouds, as well as the intricacies in the shadowed areas, and everything in between.

In comparison, even the most expensive digital cameras are only able to digest a fraction of this information within a single still image. This means that when presented with the same scene, the camera has to make a judgement (using the metering mode it's set to as a guide) as to whether it favours the exposure towards the highlights, the shadows, or somewhere in between. This is because it's unable to capture the entire spectrum within a single shot.

As you can imagine, this limitation can be rather infuriating for landscape photographers who are unable to capture the beautiful scene laid out in front of them in its full glory.

All images © Michael Wolszczowicz

Exposure blending versus filters

©Zack Schnepf

Zack Schnepf

Web: www.zschnepf.com

Brief bio: Zack Schnepf is an award-winning photographer specialising in landscape photography.
He has produced a video tutorial detailing his advanced tonality control and multiple exposure-blending techniques.
Learn more here: www.zschnepf.com/Other/Videos2.

How long have you been using the multiple-exposure technique?

Well over a decade now; I started experimenting with multiple exposure-blending in Photoshop version 4.5, though I had to work in 8-bit, which was much more challenging! We have so many more tools these days, which make the process better.

What would you consider to be your essential camera kit for this technique?

A good tripod is essential in order to keep things locked down between exposures – any movement of the camera will only complicate things later on in post-processing. Even with the help of Photoshop's Auto Align function it can be a real nightmare. A cable release is also very important to avoid unwanted vibrations transferring into the camera; a programmable remote is even better.

What difficulties do you face when shooting landscape exposure blending?

Moving subjects and even skies can be a challenge, though strong winds are my biggest problem when taking multiple exposures as it causes trees, grass and flowers to move around wildly, which can make aligning the photos together after in Photoshop almost impossible.

When would you use exposure blending?

I use exposure blending any time my camera cannot capture the full range of light in a scene. The whole point of multiple exposure blending is overcoming the limitations of your kit.

Is the multiple-exposure technique better than using traditional ND filters?

In most cases blending is better for me as it enables the flexibility to choose exactly which areas to control tonality-wise. I find grads are quick and dirty as you're often left with grad lines that are hard to get rid of. They're convenient and get the job done easily without any fuss, though personally I only use grads when I don't have time for two exposures or if I have a moving subject, like crashing waves, where it's sometimes easier to get the shot in just one exposure. I find I use them less and less these days – I don't think I've used them at all in two years!

What's your best advice for capturing landscapes with multiple exposures?

Stick with it. It takes a lot of practise to master the techniques used to manually blend exposures, but it's well worth it.

"Doing this enables you to capture detail within the highlights, midtones and shadows across the three images"

Photographers have been trying to remedy this issue for decades with the use of Graduated ND (Neutral Density) filters, which are placed in front of the lens during an exposure to shade a portion of the scene. Typically, the grad is placed across the sky, as this is often the brightest area within a scene, with the shot being exposed for the foreground. The grad then enables you to purposefully under-expose the selected area by a number of stops (depending on the strength of the filter) in order to retain cloud and sky detail that would otherwise appear burnt out. Although this method is certainly tried and tested, and was arguably the only option available to photographers in the days of film, it does have some slight drawbacks – the first being the limited control it offers over which areas of the scene are under-exposed. The straight line of a gradient is fine if you're shooting a bare landscape with not much on the horizon, but if an object were to cut into the skyline, it would cause it to become under-exposed also, potentially losing detail as a result. It's also more equipment that you'll have to lug around with you, not to mention the financial commitment, with filters – optically good ones at least – being rather expensive. What's more, you're often required to purchase multiple filters at varying strengths so that you're well prepared no matter what the intensity of contrast.

Luckily, with the invention of digital photography, photographers have devised a more modern technique that tackles this issue, known as exposure blending. Using exposure blending it's possible to manually broaden the dynamic range of your camera by combining multiple shots using editing software. So, how does it work? Well, you start by taking a series of images of the same scene, with each shot taken at a different exposure setting – although this can be done with just two images, usually it requires one image to be under-, one over- and one image correctly exposed. Doing this enables you to capture detail within the highlights, midtones and shadows across the three images. Then, using post-processing software such as Photoshop, it's possible to cleverly merge

the images together to produce a single image that offers a greater dynamic range, where detail will flourish. Although at first this may sound rather difficult and time-consuming, once you've run through the process it's actually incredibly easy to do and affords far greater control over the exposure blends within your images, rather than using a set of traditional filters.

So, what equipment will you need? Well, as you'll be taking multiple shots from the same position, a sturdy tripod is an absolute must, as any movements of the camera between shots will cause some real headaches for you later on when you come to blending the shots together. Not only that, but as you'll be purposefully under-exposing the scene in one or more of the shots you take, a tripod will also help to reduce any chance camera-shake blurring your shot when using slower shutter speeds. This is also why using a shutter release cable is a wise choice, as this too will reduce the amount of contact you have to make with the camera in between shots, reducing any chance of it either accidentally being knocked out of position or for vibrations to blur your shot during the exposure.

Although it's not mandatory for this technique, shooting in RAW is also a good idea. As RAW files are able to store a broader latitude of data than a compressed JPEG file, they'll in turn grant you greater flexibility when it comes to editing your shots. Ultimately, though, you won't want to rely on pushing your RAW files too much, as being heavy-handed with the various adjustment sliders in the RAW interface will only increase the amount of digital noise and will often distort colours for an unrealistic and undesirable result. For the optimum results it's always best to try to get the exposures spot-on in-camera.

If the idea of manually altering the exposure between each shot sounds like a lot of effort, then you're in luck. Most modern DSLRs feature a Bracketing mode that, when activated, will tell the camera to rattle off a succession of shots, each varying exposures at equal stops, ranging from -/+0.3 EV to -/+2.0EV. Some cameras will let you choose between a total of three, five or even more exposures in one go, which will make the whole process a lot faster and smoother. When taking your multiple shots, it's essential that the aperture value is kept the same throughout the sequence so that the depth of field is left unaltered.

For the most accurate results, speed is key. It only takes a second for the light to change and alter the entire appearance of the scene, ruining the uniformity of your sequence. Bracketing will help solve this problem, though it's always worth keeping one eye on the position of the Sun and timing your shots so that they go off when the Sun is being consistently covered or uncovered by clouds to keep the lighting as even as possible.

Moving objects can also pose a problem. If the subject moves between each still it can make blending the shots in post-processing next to impossible. Here it's best to either avoid shooting a scene with moving elements, or you can always attempt to time your sequence of shots so that they go off while the subject is completely stationary. Of course, this will only work with mechanical objects, like cars and trains, rather than anything with unpredictable movements.

5 top tips for exposure blending

Use Aperture Priority mode
It's vital that the aperture stays consistent, which makes Aperture Priority mode vital. This enables you to dial in the desired f/ number, while the camera sorts out the shutter speed.

Focus
As much as it's important that the aperture stays constant, it's equally vital that the focus point stays put. Once you've focused up correctly, switch over to Manual focus (MF) to prevent the camera from refocusing.

No cable, no problem!
Reduce the chance of vibrations ruining your shots when shooting with a slow shutter speed by setting the camera to its shortest self-timer setting.

Work fast
To make a series of images with consistent composition, you have to take your shots in quick succession to avoid any light changes.

Shoot RAW
A RAW file is able to retain a greater amount of data than a JPEG, granting greater control in post-production.

"It's possible to cleverly merge the images together to produce a single image that offers a greater dynamic range, where detail will flourish"

HDR: Does it go too far?

Find out the difference between HDR and exposure blending

High Dynamic Range, or HDR photography for short, is a very close cousin to exposure blending. It works off the same theory as exposure blending, by taking multiple images of the same scene but at differing exposures in order to compile them together in post-production to create a single, well-exposed image. The difference, however, is that HDR photography takes this idea one step further by using a greater number of exposures – usually consisting of five or more individual images – in order to record the greatest amount of detail in the very darkest shadows and brightest highlights within a scene. The resulting images are then compiled together using specialist editing software, producing an image that reveals an extremely broad dynamic range – greater even than that of the human eye. The result, as you can see from Marc Perrella's shot (below), is a highly detailed image that has a distinct hyper-real appearance. HDR photography works well with highly detailed interior shots, landscapes and cityscapes alike. In recent years the format has become an iconic style that's synonymous with high-end digital photography.

© Marc Perrella
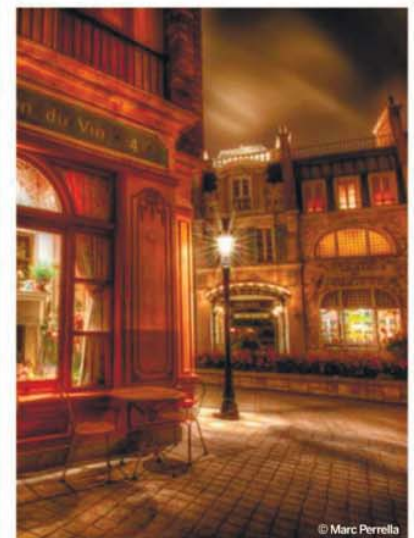
The high end of photography
This HDR image was constructed from a total of five different exposures that were compiled together using specialist HDR software. They created this hyper-real result with detail recorded in the darkest shadows and brightest highlights.

© Michael Woloszynowicz

Midtone detail

The midtone exposure has been used to ensure that some elements of the image are kept well-exposed, such as the water and bridge stonework in the background of the image. This either appears too dark in the highlights exposure or too bright in the shadows exposure.

Highlight detail

Bags of detail has been retained in the sky and clouds thanks to the under-exposed shot. You can now clearly see the fine texture of the clouds against the vibrant blue sky, even in the brightest areas of the image. This kind of detail just wouldn't be possible otherwise.

Shadow detail

Thanks to the over-exposed shot, the final image displays a healthy amount of shadow detail in the brickwork under the bridge and around the tree line in the background of the image – all of which would have been otherwise engulfed in complete darkness.

THREE EXPOSURES
Photos for the highlights, midtones and shadows are shot separately at different exposure values to create the basis for a blended exposure image

COMBINED EXPOSURES
The three images are then combined, providing bright highlights, deep shadows and richly coloured midtones. This produces an image in which the best of each shine through
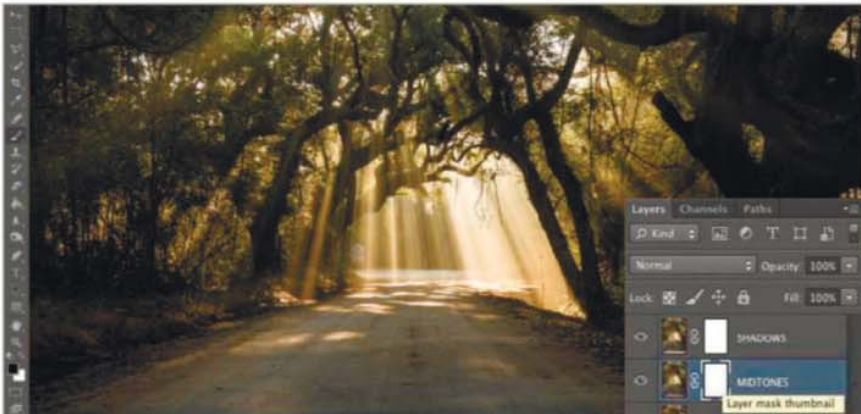
Create a seamless blend in Photoshop

Use layers

01 Grab the Move tool to click and drag the highlights, then the midtones shots into the shadows exposure document. Order the layers as follows: shadows at the top, midtones in the middle and highlights at the bottom.

Create a layer mask

02 Click on the shadows layer to activate it, then click the Add Layer Mask icon – repeat this for each layer in the list so each has its own layer mask.

Refine the mask

03 Grab a soft brush with Foreground set to black. Click the shadows layer mask, paint over the bright areas and repeat for the midtones layer mask, covering the bright tones.

How to take multiple exposures

Use a tripod
Set up your tripod on a stable surface and attach the camera to the top. Look through the viewfinder and compose the shot, ensuring that the horizon is straight and that there's nothing in the shot that could move between each of the frames (cars, people and so on).

Set up the camera
Switch your camera to Aperture Priority mode (A or Av) and set an aperture of f/11 with the ISO at 100. Activate the camera's Bracketing mode (consult the manual) and set it to take three shots with 0, +1 and -1 stops of exposure compensation.

Take your shots
Set the camera's Drive mode to Continuous Shooting, then attach the shutter release cable. Looking through the viewfinder, focus up and switch the lens to MF to prevent it refocusing between shots. Finally press and hold the shutter release cable to take the three shots.

Take landscapes with your cameraphone

Essential tips for capturing beautiful vistas on your phone

These days, most people have a camera with them at all times. For some it might be a DSLR or a compact, but for most it is usually a cameraphone. As it is always in your pocket or bag, the trusty smartphone is often the go-to device for snapping away when a photo opportunity arises, and now that the cameras on these devices are getting better and better, it is possible to get some truly great results.

While you may not have much control over your cameraphone settings, there are lots of simple ways to make sure you come away with great shots every time. Then, and this is the best bit about smartphones, you can share your fantastic photos straight away to keep your friends and family updated and even get instant feedback on your photo skills.

Landscapes are fantastic subjects for your cameraphone photography, as they are very straightforward to shoot. Let us guide you through the basics and teach you exactly what to do next time you find a stunning vista and have your cameraphone to hand.

Frame your shot

No matter what camera you are using, you can always control the composition of your photo. In fact, it is often the secret to making sure your shots stand out from all the others. Before you start snapping, think about which angle to shoot from to capture the best perspective of the scene, and try to include foreground interest. Common compositional tricks such as the rule of thirds and lead-in lines are great to use for landscapes. Many cameraphones will also enable you to switch on a gridlines display when you are shooting, which will help you frame your scene and keep the horizon straight.

Wait for the right light

As with any landscape shoot, the hour after sunrise and the hour before sunset will give you the best light. At these times of day, the sun is low in the sky and so will project a lovely soft and golden light across your scene. It might even give you the chance to capture some of the fantastic vibrant colours in the sky. However, if you don't manage to catch the sunrise or sunset, you can still get great shots. Bright blue and even moody, cloudy skies will still look great in your images, and you can always rescue dull shots by adding instant creative effects using the thousands of editing apps available.

Avoid lens flare or embrace it

Lens flare can occur when using any camera, but smartphone cameras seem to be especially prone to the problem. It is caused by light reflecting internally off of the elements inside the camera's lens and onto the image sensor, and usually appears as a coloured haze or series of coloured spots in your shots.

Typically, lens flare appears when you are pointing your camera in the direction of a bright light, and particularly when you are including the light source in your image. This is often the case when shooting landscapes, and the light source is the Sun. The simplest way to avoid it is to change your position so that you are not shooting into the Sun, or you could try shielding the lens with your hand.

However, lens flare is sometimes used deliberately to enhance photos, as the haze it creates can add a dreamy quality. You can even download apps that add lens flare to your shots.

Set up your shot

Choose the best settings for shooting a landscape

Switch on HDR

Most cameraphones have an HDR (High Dynamic Range) function which will let you take a photo with added contrast. This is useful for landscape photography as it will prevent your photos from looking flat and dull and prevent blow-out skies. If your phone does not have this function, then you can download an app, such as the Pro HDR app (£1.49/$1.99), to re-create it.

After

Before
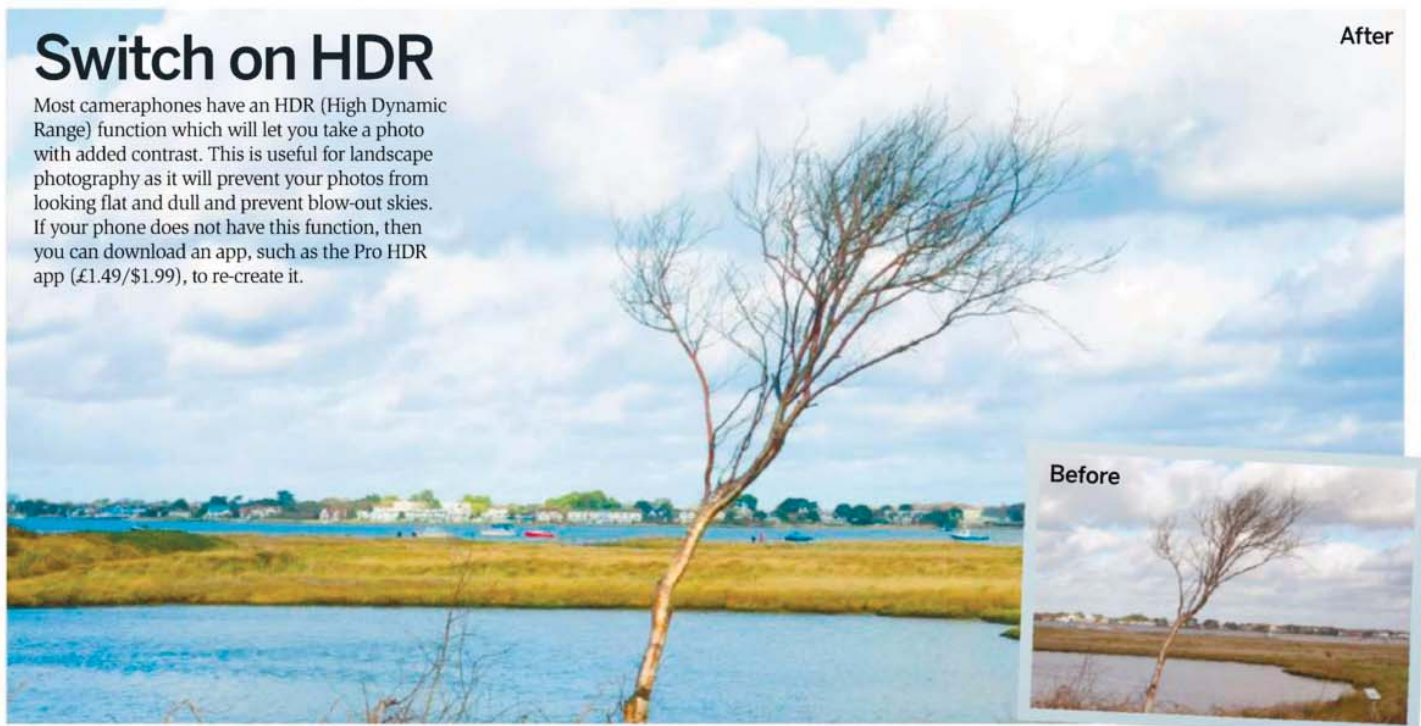
TURN THE FLASH OFF

Your flash won't be of much use when shooting a landscape, as the light won't be powerful enough to illuminate the entire scene. If you're shooting in low light or at night-time, switch it off to prevent it from firing automatically.

PICK A SCENE MODE

Some phones will give you a selection of scene modes to choose from that will pick the best settings for you. Use the Landscape mode to keep everything in focus and boost the blues and greens in the scene.

SELECT A METERING MODE

You might be able to adjust the metering mode, which controls how it measures the available light. Set it to Matrix/Evaluative so that it reads the light for the entire scene and picks the settings accordingly.

ADJUST THE WHITE BALANCE

If your cameraphone allows you to change your white balance setting, switch it to daylight, cloudy or shade, depending on the lighting conditions. This will prevent colour casts and ensure the colours in your photo appear true-to-life.

Get creative

Take your photography further with panoramas and accessories

Find Panorama mode

Many cameraphones have a panorama function that will automatically stitch several photos together to create one long image. Some will even let you create vertical panoramas as well as horizontal ones. If this option isn't available, there are plenty of apps to help you.

Swivel smoothly
Start by pointing the camera at the edge of the scene, and then slowly swivel your body around as smoothly as possible until you have captured everything. Using a tripod will create a more seamless image.

Avoid moving subjects
If someone is walking through the scene you are shooting, they will appear several times throughout the photo. Wait until they are out of the way before you take your shot to prevent this happening.

Take a step back
If you take your photo while standing too close to the scene you are shooting, then any straight lines in your vista may appear curved in your panorama. It is best to shoot from a distance if you can.

Add an accessory
Landscape photography accessories for your cameraphone

olloclip 4-in-1 iPhone Lens
Price: £60/$70
Clip this gadget onto your iPhone and choose one of the four lens options to suit your shot. Use the wide-angle lens to capture the whole view. You can also use the fish-eye lens to really extend the field of view and take close-ups with the 10x and 15x macro lenses too.

JOBY GripTight GorillaPod
Price: £25/approx $41
This mini tripod is flexible so that you can stand it on and wrap it around a variety of surfaces. The attachment is adjustable so it can hold any smartphone model, even if it has a protective case attached.

Holga iPhone Lens
Price: From £16/$27
Clip on this case and use the rotating disk to choose from nine different lens filters to enhance your shots. There are coloured filters, vignettes, multi-image lenses and more, plus you can preview the effect on screen.

Daylight Viewfinder
Price: Approx £18/$30
Reflections on your iPhone screen on a bright day can make it difficult to see. This viewfinder fixes to the screen to make things clearer. Attach it with the screw-on suction pad and download the free app.

Shoot and edit vivid landscape photos

A handy guide to capturing bright and colourful vistas

What you'll need...
Colourful scene
Camera

We used...
Nikon P7700

You could try...
A tripod

What you'll learn...
How to take a vibrant landscape photograph with ease

With landscape photography, it's possible to convey a whole range of styles and emotions, all with just a few in-camera and post-production editing considerations.

Perhaps you want a retro feel with fading colours and soft focus, or a dramatic and moody look with dark, cloudy skies and bare trees. Alternatively, a really eye-catching option is to shoot a vivid landscape with bright and bold colours. Spring and summer are the perfect time to capture this style of landscape, with foliage at its most vibrant and (with a bit of luck) bright blue skies. You could also venture out at dawn or dusk to capture the golden colours of sunrise or sunset in your shot.

Remember to apply the essential rules of landscape photography: keeping the background and foreground in focus; carefully composing your shot; and using a tripod if you plan to use a slow shutter speed. If you wish to use a long exposure to capture the movement of water or clouds in your scene, then be aware that you may need to use a filter to block out some of the light. Using a slow shutter speed on a bright, sunny day could leave you with an overexposed photo if too much light enters your lens, so a Neutral Density filter will ensure a well-exposed shot.

Many cameras come with handy modes to help you take a vivid landscape photo, but don't worry if you are struggling to get the effect you want on your shoot – we'll also show you how to boost the effect on your computer at home.

3 of the best…
Landscape shooting accessories

Wide-angle lens
Use a wide-angle lens with a short minimum focal length (around 18-35mm) to allow you to include as much in the frame as possible.

Tripod
A tripod will help you to avoid camera shake when using slow shutter speeds, and it will also help to keep your shots straight.

Polarising filter
Polarising filters increase the colour intensity, saturation and contrast in photos to enhance bright blue skies and vibrant green foliage.

Bright and beautiful Capture a vibrant vista

Look for colour
01 Firstly, find a scene that has plenty of colour. Perhaps look for vibrant foreground interest such as a field full of flowers. It also helps if you have a bright blue or golden sky, so think about the time of day and the weather you are shooting in.

Choose your settings
02 If your camera has a vivid picture mode, use that to boost the colours. Team it up with Aperture Priority mode and select a narrow aperture (high f-number) to create lots of depth of field and keep everything in the scene, from the front to the back, in focus.

Use a scene mode
03 Many cameras come with a dedicated scene mode which will select the optimum settings for you. It will also help you to produce a vivid image, as it usually boosts the greens and blues (the most common landscape colours) to make them brighter.

Compose correctly
04 Think about where you want everything in the frame. Use the rule of thirds to position your main focal point off-centre and look for lead-in lines like fences or pathways to guide the viewer through the shot. You can use your camera's gridlines as well.

Boost vibrancy
05 If your image is still looking a little flat and dull, increase the brightness using editing software when you get home. Most programs will allow you to adjust the saturation of your image, so boost the slider to make the colours appear more vibrant.

Capture reflections

Double the impact of a landscape scene

What you'll need...
Still body of water
Camera (preferably with manual controls)
Tripod

We used...
Canon EOS 5D Mark III
Neutral density filter

You could try...
Any DSLR, CSC or compact camera with manual settings
Any smooth reflective surface
Polarising filter

What you'll learn...
How to make the most of reflections in the landscape

Find the right location

01 Any body of water can work well, including lakes or large ponds. Look for bold shapes on the shoreline that will make interesting reflections, like trees or buildings. It helps if it's sheltered from the wind.

Choose good conditions

02 For good reflections, the water needs to be very still, so plan your shoot for a calm day. Dawn is often the stillest time of day, and the low sun means that there will be less glare and stronger reflections.

SHUTTER SPEEDS
Long shutter speeds will smooth the water, but use a neutral density filter to manage the light levels

Compose your shot

03 Shooting reflections in landscapes is one time when you can ignore the rule of thirds, as symmetry often looks best. Don't be afraid to put your horizon in the middle of the frame and leave an even amount of space around your subject.

Use a tripod

04 If you're shooting at dawn, light levels will be low and exposure times long, so put your camera on a tripod. This will also slow you down, so you can check the details in the frame and make changes to the composition.

Use a polariser

05 Polarising filters are normally used to boost colour saturation in photos, but they also help to remove glare from surfaces, therefore enhancing reflections. Rotate the filter until you see the effect you like best.

Watch your exposure

06 Bright reflections and glare can fool your camera's meter into underexposure. Check the shot and histogram on the review screen, and if it's too dark, add between +1 and +2 stops of exposure compensation and re-shoot.

VIEWPOINTS
Experiment with different camera heights – often a lower viewpoint will make the most of the reflection

Repair skies with gradients

Discover how to use Photoshop's Gradient tool in order to rescue and restore colour

In challenging light conditions it can be difficult to get an evenly exposed landscape without the extensive use of neutral density filters. Fortunately there are plenty of ways to rescue lost details in the sky areas of your shots and even replicate them using the range of tools and techniques available in Photoshop.

Over the next few steps you'll discover how, with the use of the powerful Gradient tool, it's possible to recover and replicate a vibrant sunset in place of a bleached sky. By applying the right tools in the right way, you'll easily be able to enhance your golden hour landscapes. For this example

we'll be using a combination of Photoshop's Gradient tool, blending modes, layers and layer masks, which will all be needed for the final result.

To begin you'll need to make a few quick tweaks to the overall exposure of the image using a Curves adjustment. You can then move to mastering the Gradient tool itself, which is fantastic for accentuating or applying colour tones, as well as darkening the edges of your shot for better overall composition. Select the Gradient tool from the Tools palette and adjust the settings along the top bar in order to select the correct gradient and opacity for the effect that you're after.

Enhance existing detail
01 Select Curves from the Create New Adjustment Layer icon in the Layers palette. Adjust the anchor points along the diagonal lines to enhance the sky's contrast, ignoring the effect this has on the foreground.

Protect the foreground
02 Activate the white layer mask next to the Curves adjustment and select the Brush tool with a soft edge, 100% Opacity and Foreground set to black. Paint over the foreground area to remove the contrast increase.

Balance the exposure
03 To ensure that the exposure is balanced, follow the same two steps again, focusing on the contrast in the foreground. Use layer masks in the same way to remove the new adjustment effect on the already contrasted sky.

Create a new layer
04 Before you add a gradient, select a new layer from the Create New Layer tab at the bottom of the Layers palette. Add blue to the top of the shot and a graduated orange along the horizon. Start by selecting a deep blue hue using the Eyedropper tool.

Select a gradient
05 Select the Gradient tool and opt for a linear gradient in Foreground to Transparent mode. The blue hue should appear as the Foreground colour; select a high opacity. Place the marker at the top of the shot and drag it down to the horizon to add your gradient.

Drop in the sky
06 Adjust the blue gradient layer's opacity to blend the effect in further. You can also select the Overlay blending mode from the drop-down menu to bring back some cloud details in the sky. Add a new layer and use the Eyedropper tool to select a vibrant orange hue.

Words by Hayley Paterek

After
By controlling the effect of a gradient using blending modes and layer masks, it's possible to create convincing and vibrant results

Before

Warm the horizon

07 Use the Gradient tool with the same settings as before but with Foreground set to orange. Place the marker on the horizon and drag it up to blend the orange from the bottom to the top of the image. Lower the layer's opacity and select Overlay blending mode.

Add a sunset glow

08 Select the Add Layer Mask icon at the bottom of the Layers palette to control how much the orange hue affects the foreground. Select the Brush tool, set it to black with an Opacity of 40% and apply over the foreground to control the amount of orange.

Final adjustments

09 You'll want the foreground to appear warmer than before in order to accentuate the sunset but by using the layer mask you can control how much orange is present. Flatten all of the layers and make any final tweaks to the exposure before saving.

Reduce noise in your low-light landscapes

Learn how to eliminate noise in Photoshop to improve the quality of your high-ISO captures

I t's not uncommon to zoom into a low-light landscape capture and be faced with high levels of noise. This is largely due to the fact that low-light photography requires high ISO settings in order to compensate for a lack of light and ensure bright, even exposures. High ISOs, however, can introduce noise into your images, as they are used to increase the camera's sensitivity to light. Noise is destructive and can not only ruin your images but also reduce the quality of captures, often limiting the size of prints.

Although noise can rarely be completely removed from a low-light image, there are ways to reduce it in photo-editing software, like Photoshop. In this tutorial you'll learn how to control noise and maintain sharpness using features such as Reduce Noise and Unsharp Mask. Follow along and find out how to enhance your low-light captures in a matter of minutes.

▶ QUALITY IMPACTED BY NOISE
Low-light photography requires the use of high ISO settings, which can introduce destructive noise and lessen the impact of your images

Before

Duplicate the layer
01 Open your image in Photoshop and duplicate the original layer via Layer>Duplicate Layer. Rename the new layer 'Noise reduction' and select the Reduce Noise filter via Filter>Noise>Reduce Noise.

Select the filter
02 Once the Reduce Noise filter dialog box opens, select the Preview icon and the Advanced tab for more control. Now in the Overall tab pull all the sliders back to 0 and select the Remove JPEG Artifact icon.

Amend channel noise
03 Switch from the Overall to the Per Channel tab to enable you to reduce noise from each colour channel. First select the Blue channel from the Channel menu, which often has more apparent noise.

Preserve details
04 Pull up the Strength slider slowly. Click and hold on the Preview box to see what difference the adjustment has on the image. Pull the Preserve Details slider up slowly, without introducing noise once again.

Reduce overall noise
05 Repeat the process followed for the Blue channel, this time with the Red and Green channels. Continually check the preview to avoid over-softening the image. Now switch back to the Overall tab.

Words by Hayley Paterek

After
ENHANCE LOW-LIGHT IMAGES
Using Photoshop's Reduce Noise and Unsharp Mask filters, you can improve the appearance of invasive noise to create stunning images

Manage colour noise
06 To ensure overall noise reduction, increase the Strength slider alongside Preserve Details. You can also increase the Reduce Color Noise slider and once you're satisfied click OK.

Select Unsharp Mask
07 Duplicate the layer named Noise reduction and rename it 'Sharpen image'. Select the Unsharp Mask filter via Filter>Sharpen>Unsharp Mask, then click Preview and zoom in to check adjustments.

Sharpen image
08 Keep the Threshold at 0 levels and slowly increase the Amount percentage. Increase the Radius Pixels amount but ensure it remains below 2.0 pixels. Check the preview to avoid reintroducing noise.

Techniques

In-depth guides to make you an expert in shooting all types of landscapes

"Follow these pro tips to transform your landscapes into stunning photographs"

© Mark Bauer

Shoot black & white landscapes

BLACK & WHITE

© Lee Acaster

Uncover the secrets of transforming your colour photos into timeless black and white imagery with this complete in-depth guide

Black and white imagery has been the mainstay of photography throughout its history. In the early days of film, photographers would painstakingly process their colourless negatives and manipulate the tones of the image in the darkroom before being able to reveal their masterpieces. Fast-forward 200 years and not much has changed – black and white remains as popular as ever, despite the invention of colour photography.

Even though digital cameras now enable us to review the shot immediately after it has been taken, creating a black and white image requires converting the resulting colour photo into mono later. This means that to

some extent you're shooting blind when it comes to black and white imagery, like film photographers of yesteryear.

Being able to identify elements that will translate well into mono takes a certain amount of skill. Capturing the image is just half the battle, as when it comes to post-processing there's much more to creating a black and white than simply removing the colour – boosting contrast and enhancing textures are just a few key areas that need to be considered during processing. We'll be covering everything you need to know about how to start capturing stunning black and white landscapes of your very own with our complete guide.

Learn to see in black and white

Find out the four key ingredients that are paramount to creating incredible black and white imagery

Dramatic lighting

01 In its essence, photography is all about capturing light and the effect of light in different environments, and so capturing a scene with impactive lighting is a guaranteed way to add lots of drama to your shot. An easy way to do this is to simply time your shot when the sun passes behind a layer of clouds, as this will cause them to become back-lit, increasing contrast and emphasising their shape. This also works well when the sun is low in the sky.

Strong composition

02 A strong composition is the backbone to any attractive landscape. Make sure you utilise common compositional rules like the rule of thirds by placing the horizon on one of the horizontal thirds, as well as using lead-in lines to draw the viewer's eye through the shot. Foreground interest can also be a great way to fill empty space at the front of the frame – rocks and even tall grass will work well.

Tonal contrast

03 Tonal contrast is created when light and dark tones are placed against one another. Having good tonal contrast within an image will cause brighter elements to stand out within the frame, particularly because the human eye is naturally drawn towards the lightest areas within the frame. Try to bear this in mind when composing your shots and work to place brighter objects next to or against darker ones to create a more dramatic effect.

Texture and pattern

04 As both textures and patterns are strongly emphasised within a black and white image, using this to your strength is always a good idea. Rocks, plant life and even bodies of water are rife with intricate textures and can be found in abundance throughout the great outdoors. Identifying these elements for your black and white image and placing them at the forefront of the shot will help to create a point of interest that draws the viewer's eye to the image.

PATIENCE IS PARAMOUNT
Waiting for the sun to pass behind a group of clouds can sometimes result in visible beams of light being streamed out of the sky and cast upon the landscape. This will add both drama and contrast to your scene

© Tom Catton

One of the first things any photographer must do before heading out is to ensure that they have the correct gear. Starting with the basics, a sturdy tripod is a must – especially if you're planning on using slower shutter speeds. Not only that, but keeping your camera in a fixed position will enable you to slow down the pace and really think about the compositional elements within your shot.

Although not fundamental to creating striking mono images, a polarising filter is a handy tool to have as it will help to darken the blue skies, generating contrast between the fluffy white clouds and the rich tones of the sky.

If you want to capture fine-art style images then a Neutral Density filter is also worth investing in, as it means you will be able to use slower shutter speeds. This is often useful when shooting near bodies of water as using a slower shutter speed will blur the ripples in the water to create a silky

The clouds make a difference

Discover why the sky is just as important as the landscape

When the colour is stripped from an image, everything from shape, form and texture become incredibly important in achieving an attractive and alluring photo, but one area that's commonly overlooked is the sky.

A common misconception is that shooting on a bright, sunny day will result in much more attractive images. Shooting a landscape where the sky is a cloudless expanse of blue is unlikely to translate well into black and white as the sky will be devoid of any texture or shape, making your image appear bland.

To increase your chances of shooting a healthy-looking sky, plan ahead – aim to shoot on a cloudy day with the odd break of sunlight for best results. Dull, grey clouds may not look so appealing in colour, but when converted into mono they add extra drama to a shot.
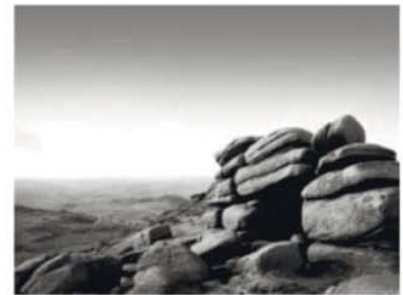
smooth appearance. Using a slow shutter speed on a windy day will also blur the clouds as they pass across the frame, creating dynamic streaks of texture in the sky. An ND Grad may also be useful to balance exposures and enhance cloud details.

Gear aside, it's also a good idea to plan out where you would like to shoot ahead of time and, if possible, decide on a series of locations that are within close proximity to one another so you can maximise your time by visiting each spot in one trip. As the weather plays a pivotal role, keeping track of the weather forecast in your chosen shoot location is also vital.

Avid mono landscape photographer Grant Murray (www.grantmurrayphotography.com) explains, "I tend to do a lot of homework on the potential subjects and likely weather and environment conditions by visiting several locations and using tools like online maps, tide tables and radar and weather apps to determine the conditions for shooting."

It's important to remember that the scene you shoot doesn't always have to be a sprawling vista. Even a small expanse of land can create an eye-catching photograph, it just requires you to train your eye to spot these gems. As landscape photographer Steve Landeros (www.stevelanderosphotography.com) explains, "Lines and texture are, of course, great elements to have within a composition, but I first look for a subject with as little clutter as possible. I have found that too many lines or textures can also distract from what I look for in a composition."

▲ **CLOUDY SKIES**
Making sure that you shoot on a day where the sky is filled with an abundance of fluffy clouds is vital as this will add a much needed boost of texture and shape to your image

NORMANTON CHURCH

Just by following a handful of simple compositional rules it's possible to create an alluring landscape image out of even the most minimal of scenes. This image uses both the rule of thirds and lead-in lines to draw the viewer's attention

Steps to great shots

01 Set up the tripod As we'll be using a slow shutter speed to blur the nearby water and sky, lock-off your camera on a sturdy tripod to prevent it from moving during the exposure. Then, carefully compose the shot and focus.

02 Attach an ND filter An ND filter helps to reduce the amount of light entering the lens and enables us to achieve a slower shutter speed. We used a 6-stop ND, though this will ultimately depend on the amount of light in your scene.

03 Switch to Aperture Priority Set the camera to ISO 100 then switch the camera's mode dial over to Aperture Priority mode and keep closing down the aperture until you achieve a shutter speed of around 15 seconds or slower – this should be slow enough to enable the moving water to blur.

04 Take the shot It's best to use a shutter release cable to avoid knocking the camera during the exposure. If you don't have a cable release, set the camera to Self-Timer mode before taking the shot.
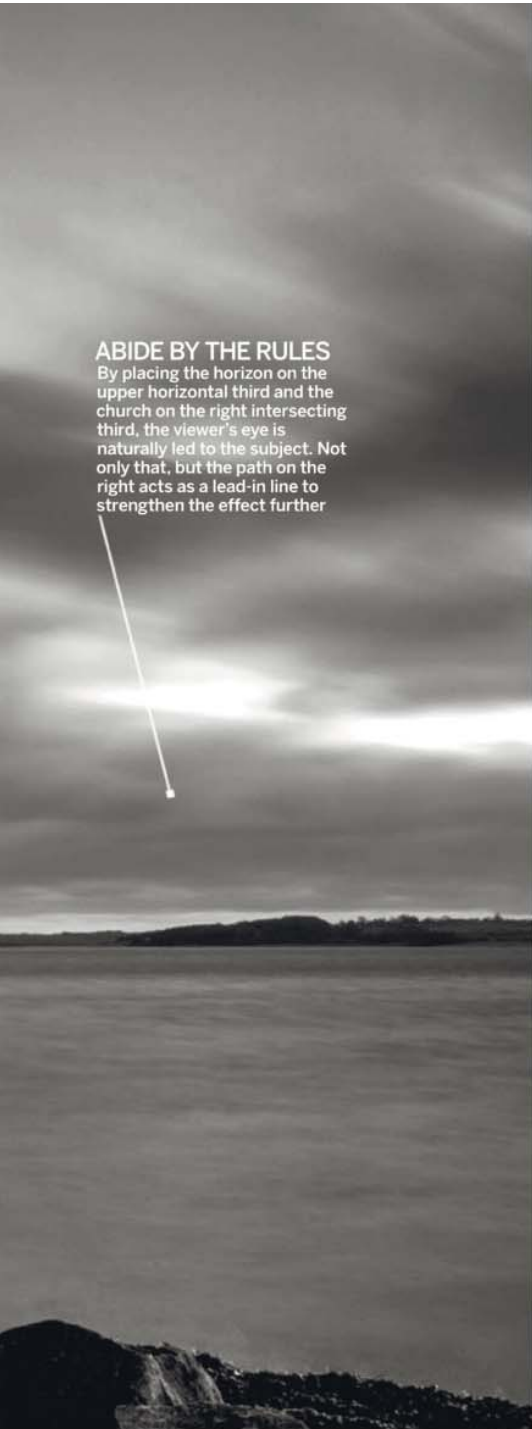
ABIDE BY THE RULES
By placing the horizon on the upper horizontal third and the church on the right intersecting third, the viewer's eye is naturally led to the subject. Not only that, but the path on the right acts as a lead-in line to strengthen the effect further

In-camera photograph		Conversion photograph
	V	
Most modern DSLRs enable you to capture black and white JPEG images in-camera. The benefit is that you can immediately see the final mono image without any further processing needed.	**Shooting**	Although shooting and processing a colour RAW file requires more time, working with a RAW file will give you greater flexibility later on in post-processing compared to a JPEG.
With a black and white JPEG, most of the editing work has been done for you. This saves time, though it also removes the chance for further creativity in post-processing.	**Editing**	Shooting in RAW grants access to a host of editing tools in post-processing, giving you full control over the tonal range and amount of contrast featured within the image.
Your camera will automatically add contrast, sharpening and noise reduction to your image, though as the file is compressed into a JPEG, data is discarded to reduce its size.	**Quality**	Without suffering from compression, RAW files are ultimately much larger but also retain more data than a regular JPEG would, which means they offer higher quality images.
If you're not confident with post-processing then this is a great way to get started in black and white, though you'll soon be seeking more creative possibilities in RAW.	**Verdict**	This method requires more time and skill to master, especially in post-processing, but it's undoubtedly the most rewarding way of achieving high quality mono imagery.

© Tom Calton

So, you're at the location, you have your kit set up and you're ready to shoot. The question is, what settings do you use? If your camera is set up on a tripod then you won't need to worry about achieving a fast enough shutter speed to avoid camera-shake as you would if you were holding the camera. With a tripod in tow you can experiment with long exposures to create motion in clouds or water, but you may need an Neutral Density filter to stop images overexposing on brighter days. You'll want to ensure that all of your image is pin sharp from front to back too, which means that using a small aperture is going to be important. Stopping your lens down to an aperture of f11 or smaller will make sure that everything remains pin sharp. This also happens to be the aperture where most lenses will perform best optically,

which will certainly help to ensure optimum sharpness throughout the image.

Although not entirely mandatory, shooting your images in RAW is often regarded as the best choice as it will give you greater flexibility when it comes to editing later on. However, if you're struggling to envision how the scene will look when converted in black and white, a handy tip is to try shooting in both RAW and JPEG and switch the camera's Picture Style option to Monochrome. This will cause the JPEG images to appear on the back of your camera's LCD screen in black and white, giving you a rough preview of how the final image will look. Another advantage to this method is that although the JPEG images will be fixed in black and white, the RAW file that is recorded alongside it will remain in full colour, ready for editing later.

The downside to both RAW and JPEG at the same time is that it will take up more space on your camera's memory card, so you'll either have to invest in a larger card or simply buy more smaller ones in order to accommodate for the number of files created.

When you have everything set up, you mustn't be afraid of altering your position and trying out new angles. With your camera locked in position on a tripod, it's often tempting to get one good shot and call it a day. "I'm constantly changing my tripod height, focal length, filters and so on, to see what works best," Murray explains. "You can't be too rigid with preconceived plans and compositions because you could miss out on some fantastic opportunities that you might not have the opportunity to shoot again."

Enhance textures

Use the tools in Photoshop to intensify patterns and textures

Texture is vitally important in black and white photography. However, sometimes patterns and details aren't always as dramatic as you'd hope and may require a some tweaking in Photoshop. The Dodge and Burn tools draw influence from techniques used in film photography, when photographers would expose a negative to a sheet of light-sensitive paper in the darkroom to create a positive photo. They would selectively brighten (dodge) and darken (burn) specific areas in order to increase contrast and bring out fine details. In Photoshop, the Dodge and Burn tools follow the same principle, whilst also providing brush influence over only the Shadows, Highlights or Midtones in the image for greater creative control.

Before you start editing your images, one of the most important things to understand is how colours will appear once they have been converted. If your image relies heavily on the use of colour to stand out, it doesn't necessarily mean that it will have the same effect once the colours have been stripped away. A basic way of understanding how this works requires looking at a colour wheel. Colours that appear near one another on the colour wheel – like green and purple – will not generate much contrast, as both tones will appear as a similar shade of grey. Using the same logic, contrasting colours – colours that are placed on opposite sides of the colour wheel, like red and green – will appear as significantly different shades of grey and will help to create contrast.

There are many ways to go about converting your images into mono and over time every photographer will develop their own optimised workflow. Steve Landeros gives us an insight in to his method. "I first import my images into Lightroom 4 for a quick crop and evaluation. Then I export to Photoshop CS6 where I dodge, burn and create contrast in the image. I also use Niks Silver Efex Pro 2 to add any toning and maybe a few more focused contrast adjustments, then it's back to CS6

for dust-spotting. Once that's complete, I move the file back to Lightroom for a final curves adjustment and maybe add a vignette."

One fundamental error often made by beginners is to simply desaturate the image and leave it at that. Desaturating the image will turn the image into greyscale, but it will also mean that the image lacks contrast, appearing flat and lifeless. There are a host of ways to add contrast to a mono image and, once mastered, it will make the world of difference to your images. If you've shot in RAW, an easy way to get started is to open your image in Photoshop to reveal the Camera RAW Interface. From here, move the Saturation slider to the left to remove all colours and then move the Contrast and Clarity sliders to the right. This is just one very quick example of how to process your images, but check out 'Take control of tones' on the next page to find out how to manipulate individual colour channels.

▼ **CAPTURE TEXTURES**
The patterns and shapes found on the surface of rocks are a fantastic source of texture and form, as displayed in this image taken by Danilo Faria of the Vermillion Cliffs in Arizona, USA

© Danilo Faria

Black and white Red Green Blue
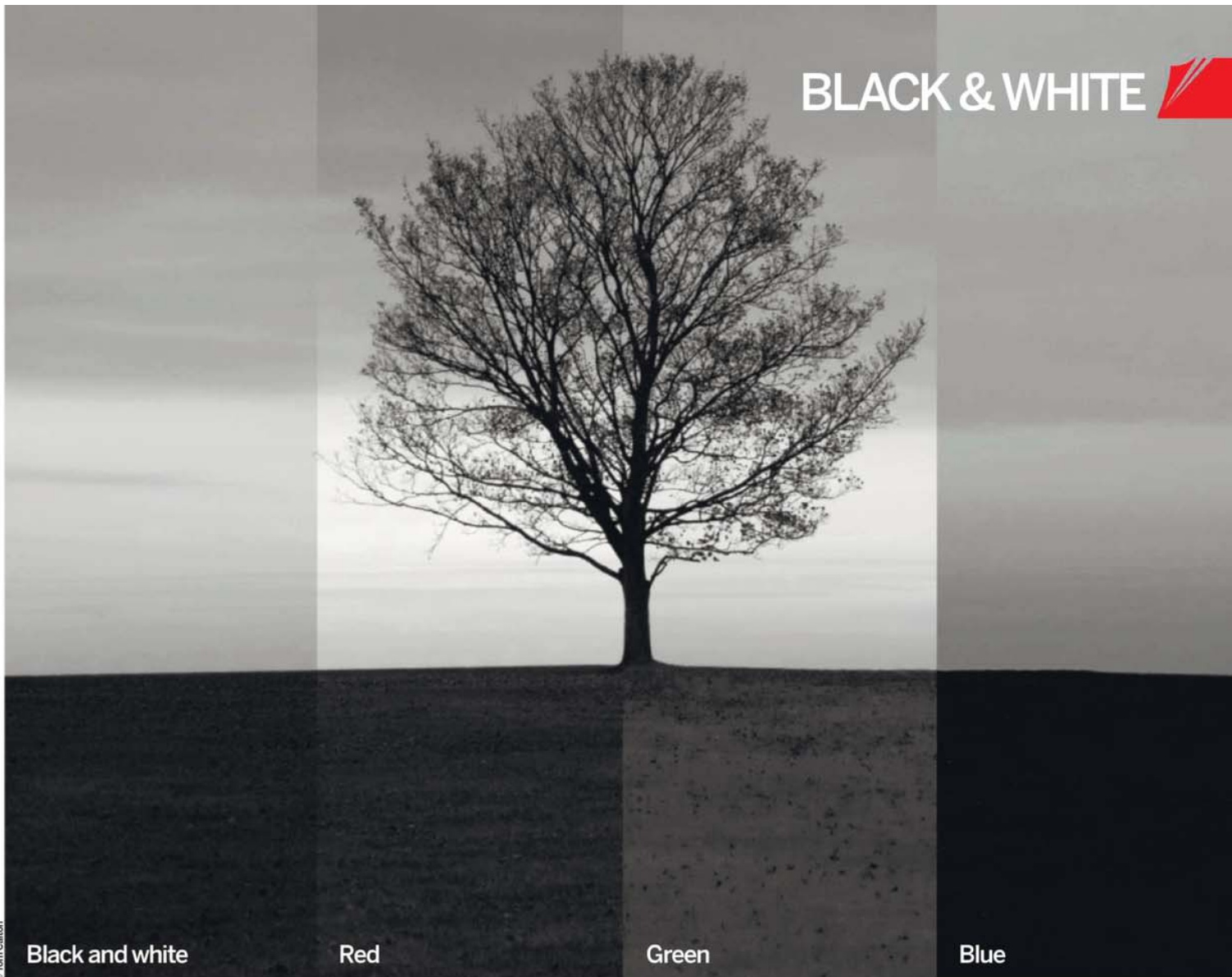
© Tom Calton

Take control of tones

Transform your colour photos into stunning black and white images using Photoshop's Black & White adjustment layer

Start by loading your chosen image into Photoshop and then head down to the Create New Fill or Adjustment Layer icon at the bottom of the Layers palette (Window>Layers) – this is shown as a half white, half black circle. In the list of options, find the one called Black & White and select it. You'll notice that your image has been transformed into black and white and you now have access to a host of different coloured sliders consisting of Reds, Yellows, Greens, Cyans, Blues and Magentas. Although your image is currently being shown as a black and white image, these sliders will enable you to manipulate the various colours within your photo to increase tonal contrast. Move any of the sliders to the left and Photoshop will start to darken these colours present in your photo, while moving it to the

right will lighten them. The effectiveness of these sliders will vary depending on the vibrancy of all of the colours that are present in your photo.

At the top of the Adjustment palette you'll see a Preset option – clicking this will reveal a list of ready-made adjustments that mimic the effects of traditional coloured photographic filters. Cycling through this list of options to see how they affect your image is a great way of getting to grips with how each slider alters your photo. Remember, you can always refer back to the Default Preset at any time to go back to the original settings. The main advantage of using adjustment layers is that they're non-destructive. This means that you can always delete the layer at any time from the Layers palette to refer back to your original colour image.

Work with low light

Discover the secrets behind shooting at night with practical tips and techniques that will assist you in capturing the stars, astro events, low-light vistas and much more

I t's true that photography is all about light, but that doesn't mean you need lots of it to get some stunning shots. Once the Sun goes down, there's still a magnificent world of illuminated darkness waiting to be captured on camera. Getting to grips with low-light photography can be challenging, but with the right exposure settings and shooting techniques, it's possible to come away with some exceptional shots to show your subjects in a whole new light.

As a year-round genre, night photography offers endless possibilities. Whether you want to photograph astro events, star trails, or nightscape scenes, there's something to suit every shooter. To help you discover the creative potential after dark, check out the following 25 practical tips and low-light techniques. You'll soon feel inspired to shoot between dusk and dawn, as you begin to explore long exposures, wide apertures and high ISO settings.
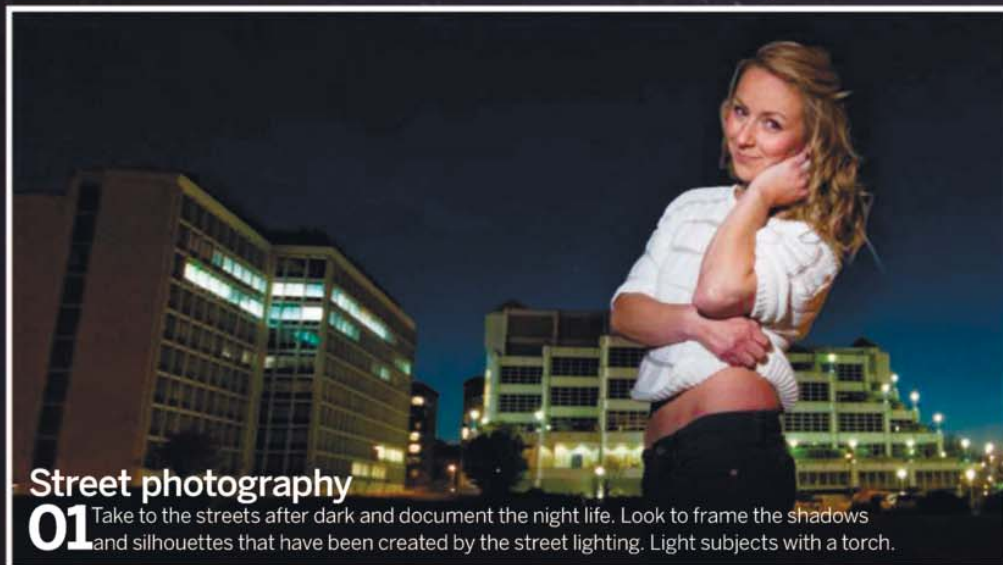
Street photography

01 Take to the streets after dark and document the night life. Look to frame the shadows and silhouettes that have been created by the street lighting. Light subjects with a torch.

Paint with light

02 Get artistic in front of the lens by using a long exposure and coloured LED lights. Set a slow shutter speed of around 30sec or more and focus the camera on an object that's roughly the same distance away as the lights will appear. Once you've released the shutter, you can paint shapes with the lights facing the direction of the lens.

Scout in sunlight

03 Always scout your location during the daylight hours. This way you can check accessibility, safety and determine exactly where you want to set up to shoot.

Balance exposure

04 Use flash to light a night portrait image. You'll need to balance the flash output with the street lamps by slowing down your shutter speed slightly. With this technique you can illuminate the model without the flash overpowering the image, as the slower shutter speed will still enable you to record the background lights, adding more depth and context to your capture.

Reflected scenes

05 Try shooting mirrored scenes to make more of the available light. Lake locations or cityscapes across water are great for capturing reflected light. Slow shutter speed settings will also smooth movement in the water, resulting in much clearer reflections.

Stellar star trails

06 Record the earth's movement by capturing star trails across the night sky. For the best results, take multiple long exposures throughout the evening and then simply stitch them together in Photoshop. Provided you've set your kit up in the right location, you should be able to capture a full rotation. If you're working in the Southern Hemisphere, face towards the south celestial pole and in the Northern Hemisphere, the North Star. Use a tripod and remote timer if possible to take regular shots throughout the night.

Astrological events

07 Do your research and keep a close eye on any upcoming astrological events. Meteor showers, comets and Moon phases are challenging to shoot, but well worth the effort. Check out sites such as bit.ly/gWTgmF for in-depth details about the next occurrence.

Mirror Lock Up

08 Use your camera's Mirror Lock Up feature to ensure much sharper long exposures. By locking the mirror, you're less likely to capture camera shake, as only the shutter will need to open and close when you expose the scene. Remember to only lock the mirror after you've composed and focused the frame.

Northern Lights

09 The Northern Lights are a well-known natural phenomenon that occur in the night sky close to the Arctic Circle. The Southern Lights are located near the Antarctic Circle. For optimum results, do your research and find out which time of year and weather is best to work in. To capture them, you'll need a wide-angle lens, a steady tripod and a remote shutter release. Select a wide aperture setting, around f4, as well as a high ISO, at around ISO 1,600 or above. You'll also need a relatively slow shutter speed but avoid anything slower than 30sec, so as to prevent misshapen stars in your shot. Once you've focused the lens, you're ready to shoot.
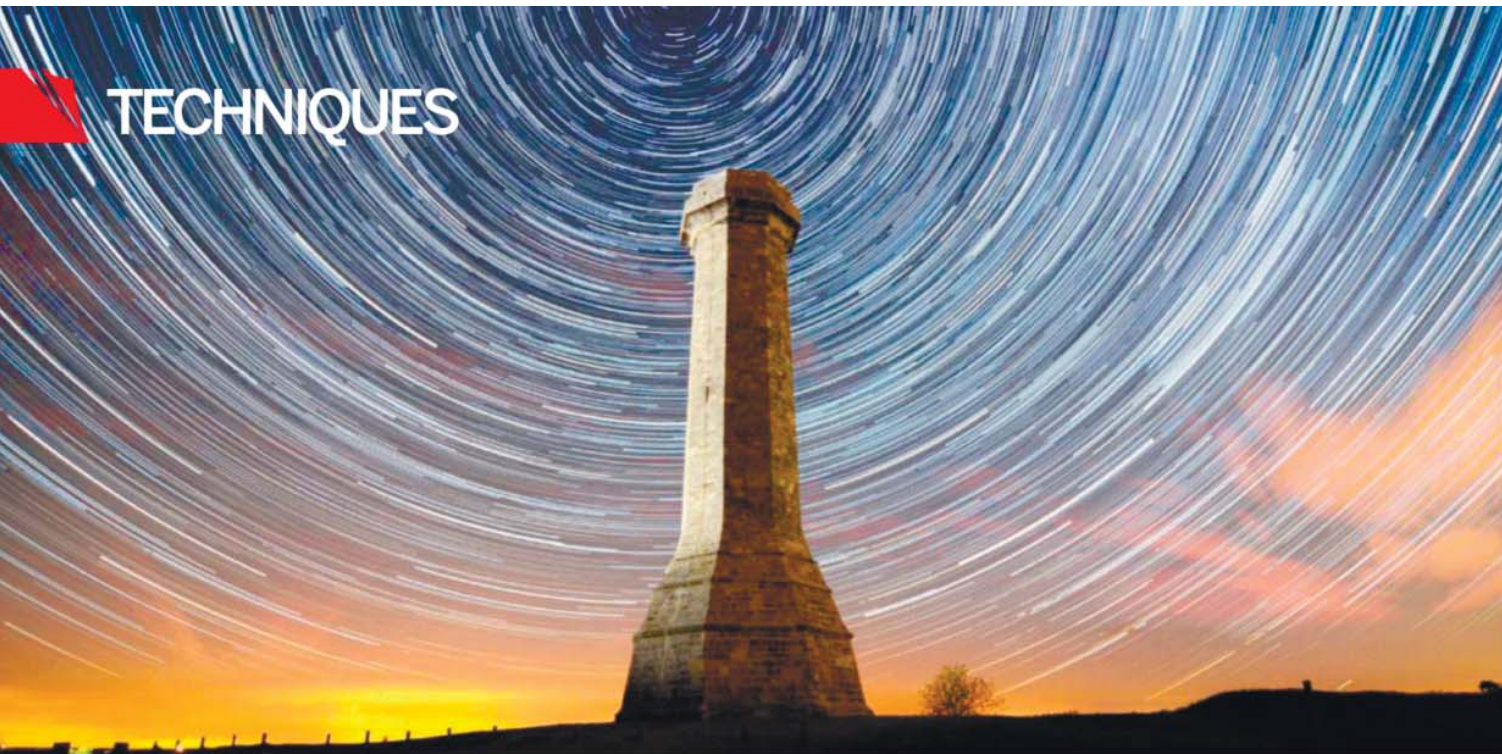
Backlight and bokeh

10 Use any available street lights to creatively light your location portraits. With a wide aperture setting you'll be able to create an artistic bokeh effect in the background too.

© Billy Currie

Telephoto lenses

11 A telephoto lens can offer many creative possibilities at night. You can work with high focal lengths to compress the background with the foreground, ensuring the stars and Moon look a lot closer in captures.

Milky Way

12 To incorporate the remarkable Milky Way, you'll need to shoot away from light pollution. Set up your kit in the direction of the Scorpio and Sagittarius constellations with a wide aperture setting, a relatively high ISO and a shutter speed no slower than 20sec. If you don't intend to frame anything in the foreground, set your focus to Infinity and then release the shutter.

Stay safe

13 Don't venture out into the dark without telling family members or friends where you're going and roughly what time you'll be back. It may seem obvious, but ensure your mobile phone is fully charged and that you're wearing warm clothing.

Stormy skies

14 A dramatic storm can look breathtaking over well-lit city locations at night. To shoot these, find a safe and high vantage point that offers a good view. Use a low ISO setting of around 400 and keep your aperture at around f11 for depth of field. The lightning itself will light up the sky and record like flash on the camera, so you won't need a particularly slow shutter speed. Around 10sec should suffice, which will enable you to capture some of the ambient light in the city too.

Starburst effect

15 Create a starburst effect with streetlights by using narrow aperture settings around f16+. This will also increase depth of field and image sharpness.

Wait for the light

16 It's still possible to capture colour in the night sky, even after the Sun has gone down. Wait half an hour after the Sun has dipped below the horizon and you'll be able to capture purple and deep-blue hues.

Shooting the night

Stephen Banks reveals the story behind the image on the right and shares his tips for shooting at night

PRO INTERVIEW

Stephen Banks

Bio: Based in Dorset, Stephen Banks is a hobbyist photographer who spends his free time photographing the landscapes of Dorset, usually at night.

www.dorsetscouser.com

What do you enjoy about shooting at night?
The quietness of some of the places I visit – you can set the camera up on a time-lapse, sit back and watch the stars above. It gives you great time to think, or to just do nothing and relax. I also enjoy the fact that I don't know exactly what I'm going to get. Slight changes in conditions can completely change the shot when the shutter is open for 30 seconds. The main enjoyment is knowing that I'm shooting scenes many people have seen before, but in a completely different light.

What are the biggest photographic challenges you have to face when shooting after dark?
Light pollution is a real killer. There are so many places along the Dorset coast that would look fantastic at night, but are spoiled by huge amounts of light pollution. When there is absolutely no light available, however, you often cannot see what you're photographing through the viewfinder. However, by setting up roughly and using in-camera tools, such as virtual horizons, you can correct things incrementally.

What's your favourite location for night photography and why?
I would love to explore Dartmoor and Exmoor one day. There would be even less light pollution there than there is here in Dorset. I've driven through Snowdonia at night as well and the Milky Way was breathtaking. However, my favourite spots locally are probably more towards the north and east of the county: Knowlton Church, Lulworth Cove and Durdle Door are all very dark.

How did you capture the stunning shot on the opposite page?
One cold spring evening, the weather was clear in my neck of the woods (West Dorset), so I drove over to Durdle Door on the east of the county. I encountered fog for most of the journey and had it still been foggy at the bottom of the walk, near the shore, the shot would have been ruined. But it turned out that it was clear close to the water, with a hazy horizon rendering a boat in the distance a wonderful yellow glow. A lot of people mistake it for the sun rising or setting. Had I weighed up the facts and given up that evening, I would never have got that shot! This just goes to show that perseverance really is key, especially with nighttime photography.

What's your top tip for night photography?
Once you've sorted out the right camera, you need to get the right lens. A wide angle, with a very large aperture (f/2.8 or less) and a manual focus ring, is a great place to start.

Any other advice?
Get a good sturdy tripod, have everything prepared before you go out, keep warm, don't be afraid to push your camera to its limits and go out shooting as often as you can. Your pictures will get better with practise.

> "Many places are spoiled by light pollution"

"It's still possible to capture colour in the night sky, even after the Sun has gone down"

Light trails

17 Capture nighttime action in the city by recording light trails created by passing cars. Consider the road's turns to judge just how the lights will weave through the frame. Use a steady tripod and a slow shutter speed of around 10sec to start with. When you're ready, just release the shutter and record the lights.

Light it up

18 You can highlight important subjects in your night scene with a torch. Simply set a long exposure and then, using a large torch, paint light on the subject in the foreground. Pay close attention to areas that you've covered and for how long to avoid blown-out highlights.

Photographic fireworks

19 To shoot a firework display, you'll need to set your camera up on a tripod and use a low ISO setting of 200. Set your aperture to f5.6 and use your camera's Bulb mode for a controlled exposure. Focus the lens on a light that's roughly the same distance away as the display then, once the fireworks begin, open the shutter and wait until the first burst of fireworks has ended to close it.

Manual settings

20 Night photography requires a confident approach to exposure and manual settings. In order to get the best results, no matter what you're shooting, try to familiarise yourself with your manual settings and camera interface. Get out a do some test shots first.

Illuminate scenes

21 You can capture a beautiful nightscape scene using a relatively long exposure and the moonlight. For optimum results, work around the first and last quarter phases of the Moon to ensure that there's enough reflected light for land illumination in your shot. If possible, shoot with your back to the Moon and avoid capturing star trails by opening up your aperture, using higher ISOs and shutter speed settings of around 15sec.

Nocturnal wildlife

22 Once darkness falls, nocturnal wildlife will awaken. Urban locations are ideal for brighter exposures, as you'll be able to widen your aperture and increase your ISO to shoot. Avoid using flash where possible and aim to keep your shutter speed relatively high to freeze any skittish subjects.

Convert to monochrome

23 Street shots taken at night will convert well to black and white, as you'll find there's already a lot of contrast in the low-light scene. Always shoot in colour first and convert to monochrome later for complete control over the conversion process.

Focus in the dark

24 It can be challenging to focus your lens when there's limited light. If you're framing a subject in the foreground, your camera's in-built Focus Assist Lamp should work well enough. Alternatively, use a torch to illuminate subjects a little further away until the camera locks focus. Once you've focused, always switch over to Manual Focus mode so that your camera doesn't hunt for other areas to focus on when you're ready to release the shutter. To focus on the stars, rotate your lens focus ring to Infinity, which is as far as it will go. You can also try focusing on the Moon.

High ISOs

25 Don't fret about using high ISO settings. Most modern cameras are capable of handling noise well these days, even if you're working in high sensitivity settings in low light. Always increase your ISO settings if you want to avoid capturing movement or misshapen stars in your night shots.

> "Most cameras are capable of handling noise well these days, even working in high sensitivity settings"

"Always increase your ISO if you want to avoid capturing movement or misshapen stars in your night shots"

© Steve Clasper

Capture seascapes

Grab your rain cover and kit bag, as pro landscape photographer Mark Bauer reveals his secrets to capturing stunning costal shots

© Adrian De Vittor

Photographers love shooting pictures of the sea, and non-photographers love looking at them. It's no wonder, as many people are drawn to the hypnotic pounding of waves on the shore.

One of the biggest attractions that the coast boasts for photographers is some of the most dramatic and varied landscapes that you are likely to find. Coastal landscapes are ever-changing – with different tides, different weather and seasonal variations, no two days will ever look the same at any one location. Finding genuine wilderness is becoming increasingly difficult in the modern world. Almost everywhere has been shaped by the hand of man, but look along and beyond the shoreline and you'll see a vast, rugged, untamed environment. This makes for exciting subject matter, especially as the raw power of nature is rarely more clearly demonstrated than by the sea.

Compositions are easy to find on the coast, with plenty of foreground interest to choose from, including rocks, reflections and wave patterns, plus obvious focal points such as headlands, rocks and lighthouses. Combined with the dramatic light you get on the coast, this makes for compelling images. Read on to find out how to take your best ever seascape shots with our essential tips and tricks.

BALANCE THE LIGHT
To balance the harsh light of
the sunrise, a LEE 0.9 Hard ND
grad was used here

DIVIDE THE FRAME
The frame is divided according to the rule of thirds, with a clear focal point in the background

LEAD THE EYE
Rocks angling in from the corner of the frame help to direct the viewer's attention into the picture

SMOOTH WATER
A long exposure smooths the sea and simplifies the detail in the middle distance, focusing attention on what's important in the frame

FOREGROUND, BACKGROUND
Wide-angle shots benefit from having a strong foreground and a clear focal point in the background, which provides structure to the composition

SHOOT FROM DOWN LOW
Getting down low lets you place more emphasis on a strong foreground and helps to reduce the impact of empty space, especially with wide-angle lenses

To start off, the key to successful seascape photography is thorough planning and preparation. Without planning, you are highly unlikely to arrive on location at the best time of day, in the best light, with the correct tide height and be able to find the best viewpoint.

The first thing to try and establish is what time of day and year will best suit the location. There's no point driving for miles to get to a viewpoint only to discover that the Sun is setting over the land and there is no light falling on the shoreline. Generally, east-facing coastlines will look better in the morning and west-facing coasts will suit the evening light, though it is a little more complicated than that. Headlands can block the light and the Sun only rises due east and west on the day of an equinox. In mid-winter, it will rise and set much further south, meaning that, depending on its shape, an east-facing bay may not see the sunrise at that time of year and a west-facing bay may not get a good sunset.

Therefore, you need to have a good look at a map and work out when your chosen stretch of coastline will be at its best. There are some extremely useful apps to help with this, such as *The Photographer's Ephemeris*. It integrates with Google Maps and gives sunrise and sunset times and angles for anywhere in the world on any date, as well as a wealth of other useful information, such as Moon phases.

Next, you need to know what tide will suit your chosen location. This requires a visit to the location and some pre-visualisation. Go at low tide and see how tidy the shoreline is – for example, is there a large expanse of sand or is there an untidy jumble of rocks that might look less cluttered with waves washing in among them? See the 'Time and tide' box for further information on how to predict the tides. Scout for suitable viewpoints and make sure you know how to find them again. This is especially important if you're going to shoot at sunrise, as you'll be setting up when it's dark.

Time and tide

By understanding the tides, you can make sure you're in the right place at the right time

It is vital to know the tides for the location you're photographing, for both a successful shoot and for safety. There are some great websites for finding out tides, such as www.ukho.gov.uk.

In general, sandy beaches look good at low tide, especially if the sand is wet and reflective, and rocky shorelines look best at higher tides, with waves washing around the rocks. Sandy beaches look best when clean and free of footprints, so shoot on a falling tide.

Make sure you arrive at least half an hour before sunrise and stay well after sunset, as the pre-dawn and post-sunset glows often provide the best colour.

LOW TIDE · HIGH TIDE

What's in a pro bag?

What a professional photographer takes on a trip to the coast

Camera rucksack

01 You may have a long walk to your location, so a good camera rucksack will distribute weight evenly, making it easier to carry.

Wide-angle lens

02 A wide-angle lens is great for getting in close to foreground interest, and zooms give you more flexibility for framing than primes.

Remote release

03 Being able to trip the shutter without risking camera shake is ideal, particularly if it's a wireless remote release, so you don't have any ports exposed.

Shammy leather

04 A shammy is useful for wiping down your equipment if it gets splashed and protecting your camera from salty seawater.

Filters

05 ND grads prevent bright skies from overexposing and polarisers reduce glare. ND filters enable you to extend shutter speeds.

Head torch

06 You'll often arrive or leave a location in the dark, so a reliable head torch will help you find your way, leaving your hands free.

Rain cover

07 A rain cover will help to protect your camera and equipment from destructive splashes and spray.

LONG EXPOSURE

CALCULATE THE SETTINGS
To calculate the exposure needed with extreme NDs, take a test shot without the filter and then double the exposure time for every stop of filtration you add

USE BULB MODE
For exposures longer than 30 seconds, put you camera into Bulb mode. Some models have a dedicated dial, but with most, you'll need to set it while in Manual mode

BALANCE EXPOSURE TIME
If you're shooting in fairly low light at the beginning or end of the day, slightly less extreme ND filters, such as the 6-stop LEE Little Stopper, enable you to generate long exposures which aren't unmanageable

CONSIDER YOUR SPEED
When exposure times run into minutes, water completely smooths out, while a normal exposure of around 1/2sec leaves the surface of the water looking choppy

Try to visualise what conditions would suit the location. Keep an eye on the forecast and head out when it looks most suitable. Make sure you arrive in plenty of time, so that you can get set up and wait for the right light, rather than arriving at your location when the light is at its best and rushing to set up, with the inevitable result that you fail to get the shot you want.

After you've done all the required planning and preparation for your seascape shot, you'll need to decide what to put in your kit bag. There's little that you need in the way of specialist equipment for seascapes – any DSLR or good CSC will do the job. It's good to have a selection of lenses, though wide-angles will prove most useful. You'll find a range of filters handy, including grads, a polariser and neutral density filters.

As with all landscape photography, you'll need a sturdy tripod, especially as many of the best seascapes are taken in low light using long exposures. Tripods can sink in the sand during longer exposures, causing ghosting and blur, so to prevent this, push the legs as far into the sand as they will go. Taking good care of your tripod is essential, as sand and saltwater can cause harm.

When setting up in sand, make sure that the bottom leg sections are extended, so that sand and grit don't find their way into the leg locks, resulting in them seizing up. When you get home, rinse your tripod down to remove any salt and after, strip it down and clean it from time to time. This might seem like a lot of hassle, but it will extend the life of your tripod.

Other items that you should have with you are a rain cover to protect your camera from splashes and spray, a shammy leather to wipe it down if it gets splashed and a good lens cloth for keeping lenses and filters clean. Sea spray is notoriously difficult to clean from glass, so consider getting a pack of pre-soaked lens tissues. These are effective and make it much easier to clean filters. Also don't underestimate the importance of suitable clothing when shooting by the sea, as if you're cold, wet and miserable, it will be difficult to feel motivated to take good photos. Waterproof clothing is a good investment, as are good boots – either waterproof walking boots, or good wellingtons.

Finally, it makes sense to take especially good care of your camera and lenses. Try not to change lenses on the beach, as it's very easy for spray

or sand to get inside the camera. Researching locations in advance helps, as you will be able to anticipate which lens you're likely to use the most. If your camera does get splashed, wipe it down immediately and when you get home, always wipe it down with a damp cloth to remove any salt from the body. When shooting, try to avoid having any of the electronic ports open and exposed to the elements. For this reason, a wireless remote is a better option than a wired one.

Once you arrive at your location, it's time to think about the effect you want to achieve in your seascape shot and the techniques you'll need to use to achieve it. When shooting any landscape, you need to be in control of depth of field, and seascapes are no exception. This means that you should set your camera either to Manual or Aperture Priority mode, so that you can select the aperture you want. The advantage of Aperture Priority is that the camera will automatically adjust exposure to take account of changing light conditions. The disadvantage is that you have slightly less control than in Manual mode, though you can override the camera's setting using the Exposure Compensation facility.

SHORT EXPOSURE

QUICK EXPOSURES
A normal exposure of around 1/2sec doesn't have the same atmosphere. The surface of the water is choppy and doesn't reflect the colour of the sky

Telephoto seascapes

Give a different look to your seascapes by swapping the wide-angle for a telephoto

The majority of landscapes and seascapes are shot with wide-angle lenses. There are several reasons for this. First, when confronted with an impressive vista, most people's natural instinct is to try to capture the whole view. Furthermore, using wide-angles enables us to create a sense of scale by getting in close to foreground objects, with the rest of the view stretching out behind them. Wide-angles also have extensive depth of field, meaning that it's easy to create front-to-back sharpness in your images.

However, you shouldn't ignore longer lenses, as they too can be used for great creative effect with seascapes. It is often said that telephotos compress perspective, but this is not technically true. What affects perspective is the distance from the camera to the subject – the further the camera is from the subject, the less the apparent distance between the subject and background. This can create an interesting look in seascapes, with cliffs looming large in the frame over foreground objects, creating an imposing sense of scale and a threatening atmosphere.

Longer lenses can also be used to pick out distant subjects, such as lighthouses, or to isolate patterns in the landscape. You can also use them to create the opposite look to the majority of coastal landscapes and exploit their inherently shallow depth of field to throw backgrounds out of focus. Moderate telephotos are also useful for detail studies, focusing in on patterns and texture close to the camera.

TELEPHOTO

WIDE-ANGLE

KEEP STABLE
A tripod is vital for seascapes. Not only does it enable long exposures, it slows you down and makes you consider composition

USE FILTERS
A polariser helps to reduce glare and reflections, while increasing colour saturation, making them perfect for seascapes

Creative filtration

Filters can be used for creative effect, including enhancing reflections and creating atmosphere

Neutral density filters are excellent creative tools. When using extreme ND filters, there will not be enough light passing through the lens for the camera to meter accurately, so to calculate exposure, take a test shot without the filter and then double the shutter speed for every stop of filtration you are adding. If you need to shoot for longer than 30 seconds, put your camera into Bulb mode and lock the shutter open with a remote release.

Polarisers reduce glare and increase colour saturation. They are excellent for coastal work, as they can be used to remove reflections, enabling you to see below the surface of the water. Alternatively, they can be used to enhance reflections for foreground interest. They are most effective when shooting at a 90-degree angle to the Sun. Simply rotate the filter until you see the effect you want in your image.

Long exposure conversion chart
Use this to calculate the exposure time when using a 10-stop filter. The unfiltered exposures are in the left column with the equivalent filtered exposures on the right

Without filter	With filter
1/1,000th	1 second
1/500th	2 seconds
1/250th	4 seconds
1/125th	8 seconds
1/60th	15 seconds
1/30th	30 seconds
1/15th	1 minute
1/8th	2 minutes
1/4	4 minutes
1/2	8 minutes
1 second	16 minutes
2 seconds	32 minutes

All images © Mark Bauer

CAPTURE CRASHING WAVES
Freezing a wave crashing on the shore creates a greater sense of drama than using a long exposure. The scene shot with an exposure of a few minutes would look tranquil, but wouldn't capture the stormy feel captured here by Adrian De Vittor

FREEZE THE ACTION
If you want to freeze the waves' movement, you'll need a fast shutter speed. This means you may find yourself pushing up the ISO, but most modern cameras have great high ISO image quality

Make the most of challenging weather

Bad weather doesn't mean bad photographs. Stunning results are possible in all conditions

If the weather is overcast, dull and foggy, think long exposures and look for minimalist subjects such as sea defences, isolated rocks and piers. It's possible to create very atmospheric images. Take care with metering though, as the predominance of white tones can fool your camera's meter into underexposure.

Big, crashing waves can make dramatic photographs. You'll need a shutter speed of 1/500sec or faster to freeze the movement, but big waves can look good when there is a bit of motion blur, so experiment with longer shutter speeds.

To maximise depth of field, choose a small aperture and focus about a third of the way into the scene. If shooting with a wide-angle, in most situations this will ensure sharpness throughout the frame. However, if you have foreground interest close to the camera, you'll be better off focusing on the hyperfocal distance.

When it comes to capturing water movement, there are two options. You can use a fast shutter speed to freeze movement, or use a longer shutter speed to capture motion blur and introduce creamy texture. To create the misty look, a shutter speed of 5 to 20 seconds works well, depending on the speed and size of the waves, so set a low ISO and use an ND filter. With exposures of longer than 30 seconds, water can smooth out completely, creating a minimalist look and capturing reflections that the eye may not see. To freeze water movement, you'll need a shutter speed of 1/500sec or more, so push the ISO to higher settings to help reach a suitable shutter speed.

The most natural water look comes from an intermediate shutter speed, which suggests a sense of movement with motion blur, but still allows waves to keep their shape and texture. Experiment with speeds in the region of 1/4sec to 2 seconds, depending on the wave size.

Once your settings are in place, it's time to consider how to frame the scene. Good compositions rely on having strong foreground interest and a clear focal point. With coastal landscapes, you'll find yourself spoilt for choice. Rocks, pools, patterns, reflections and groynes all make excellent foregrounds. When using rocks in the foreground, try to find a clean arrangement – waiting for waves to wash in between rocks creates separation between them and helps to simplify the arrangement. In the spring, coastal flowers, such as thrift are abundant in some areas, so look for cliff-top viewpoints and fill the foreground with colour.

You can also generate your own foreground interest by shooting waves breaking on the shore. With an exposure time of one to five seconds, if you wait for the wave to drag back out to sea, interesting patterns are often created in the sand, including lines, which will pull the viewer's eye into the shot.

THE TRIGGER FINGER
Timing is critical to maximise the sense of drama with this type of shot. Review shots frequently to see if you're tending to release the shutter too early or too late, so that you can then correct your natural tendency

© Adrian De Vittor

© Mark Bauer

Take charge of your exposures

Stay in control of shutter speeds in Aperture Priority mode by using exposure compensation

Metering systems in modern cameras are very good, but not infallible. They work on the assumption that the subject is a mid-tone. This will produce correctly exposed results in most situations, but high contrast scenes can fool the meter.

With particularly light subjects, it may set a shutter speed that is too fast, resulting in underexposure. Equally, dark subjects may fool the camera into setting an exposure that is too long, causing overexposure. With landscapes, you don't want to change aperture to adjust exposure, as this will affect depth of field. If shooting manually, you will need to change shutter speed to compensate for exposures.

If you're shooting in Aperture Priority mode, the camera's chosen shutter speed can be overridden using the Exposure Compensation facility. Most cameras have a dedicated button, which enables you to set compensation in third-stop increments. The amount needed will depend on the scene and the original shot's exposure.

In the case of seascapes, the most common scenario is underexposure, caused by bright skies and strong reflections off the surface of the water. However, if you fill your foreground with dark rocks, you may find that the camera will overexpose the scene.

UNDEREXPOSED

© Mark Bauer

Seascapes also provide many options for background focal points, such as headlands, lighthouses, islands, rock stacks and boats. Place the focal point in a key part of the frame, such as the intersection of a rule of thirds grid.

Water is excellent for hiding distractions, so long as you shoot when the tide level is right to keep compositions as uncomplicated as possible. Minimalism is the natural extension of simplicity, so keep an eye out for minimalist subjects. Long exposures can enhance the minimalist look by smoothing out water and creating soft texture in cloudy skies.

Don't ignore the miniature landscape. Swap the wide-angle for a short telephoto lens and isolate details in sand, rocks and seaweed. This subject works well in low-contrast lighting, so it's a great option on dull days. Look for points of interest that can be used to divide the frame, or strong lines that can be arranged diagonally to create a dynamic composition.

The most important thing, however, is that no photograph is worth risking your life for, so make sure you take some basic safety

precautions. Before you head out, check the tide times and don't underestimate the speed, power and force of the sea. Make sure you tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back and don't forget your mobile phone. Use good-quality footwear and take extra care when walking on slippery rocks.

▲ **STORM CHASING**
In this shot by Adrian De Vittor, a LEE 0.6 Soft ND grad was used to darken the sky and to accentuate the crashing waves

▶ **COMPENSATION**
A bright sky fooled the meter into underexposure, but 2-stops of exposure compensation brought detail back in
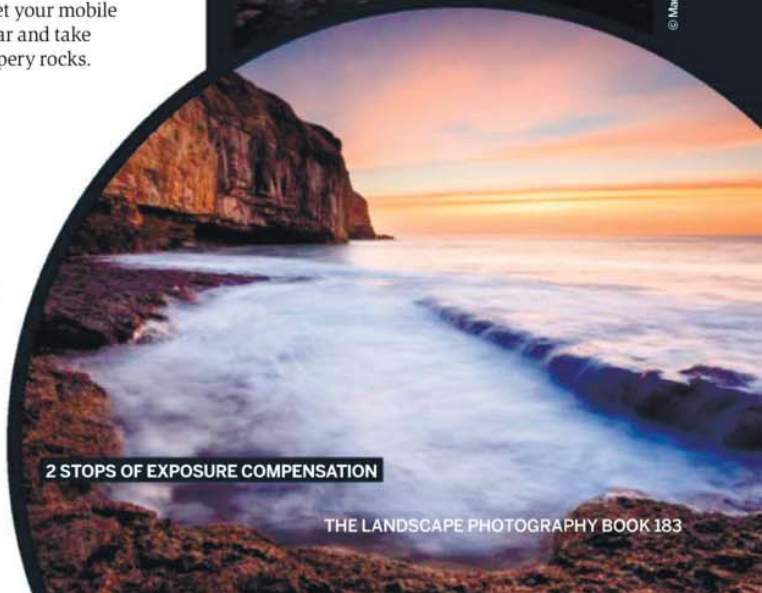
2 STOPS OF EXPOSURE COMPENSATION

Master grand landscapes

David Clapp takes a whistle-stop journey around the world, showing how to photograph mountains and mountain peaks in all seasons and conditions

SNOWDON FROM FFESTINIOG
Simple scenes like this often do not take much work.
Standing on the railway wall at Porthmadog provides a
beautiful low-tide view towards Snowdon itself
Shot details: Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III with a 70-300mm
lens at 300mm and f1, 1/80sec, ISO 100

There is nothing more inspiring than the majesty of mountains. They inspire us to gaze upon them, to take holidays near them, to photograph them and, for those who dare, to climb them. The power and sense of awe they exude is so overwhelming, it's no wonder that they actually have their own gravity.

Mountains and their landscape have been a draw for photographers since the beginning of photography itself. The great American wilderness photographers like Ansel Adams and Galen Rowel, pioneering photography with their love of the outdoors, made it their lifetime's work to capture their very heart and soul.

This quest to feel that mountain spirit is stronger than ever, but how do you capture the true essence of a mountain scene in our modern digital world? If you have ever heard the phrase 'in the end the mountain will decide' you will know that mountains and their weather systems are often indefinable. Pushing air upwards by thousands of feet, they are unpredictable even at the best of times. The bigger the mountains the more chaotic this can become, with peaks hiding in the clouds for days on end among stable climes. The key to great mountain imagery is to abandon preconceptions and adapt to whatever is presented.

Without this mindset, prepare to wrestle with disappointment instead.

TECHNIQUES

## Shooting advice: Canadian Rockies
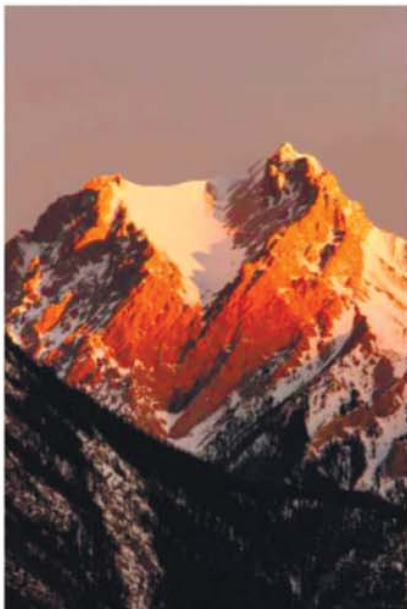
The Canadian Rockies is an incredibly easy location to shoot that excels in autumn and winter in particular. Although a long way for many to reach, the potential is simply staggering, even from the road. There are three great places to stay along the route to some breathtaking scenery, Banff, Lake Louise and finally Jasper. There are lakes and mountain scenes in abundance very close to major routes, so for a big mountain result with minimal effort, the Canadian Rockies is a brilliant choice.

01 Spend two weeks in the Rockies if possible; the scenery gets better and better the more that is uncovered

02 Drive sensibly as mobiles do not work in many of the more remote locations. There is often wildlife and even rock falls on bends in the road

03 Be sure to visit Medicine, Patricia and Maligne Lake, all of which have fabulous mountains to capture
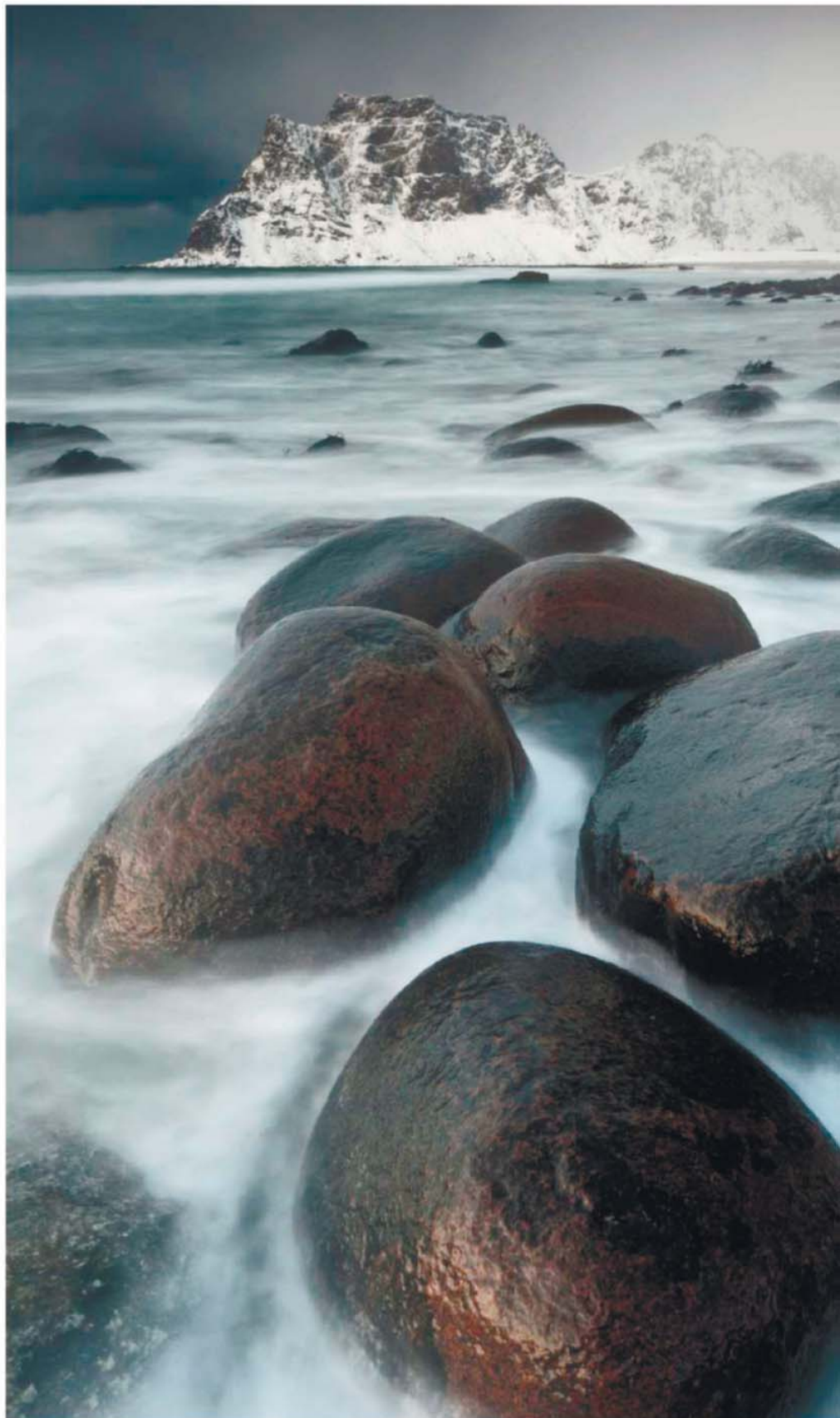
► **COASTAL MOUNTAINS, NORWAY**
What's better than to mix the best of Northumberland with mighty Norwegian mountains? These wonderful round boulders work perfectly against the characterful peak
Shot details: Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III with a 24mm lens at f16, 6sec, ISO 100

"Great mountain photography is about shape, form and character"

LOFOTEN ISLANDS, NORWAY
Norway has some truly beautiful mountain scenes, especially the Lofoten Islands. These are small mountains on a worldwide scale but they are very beautiful to photograph
Shot details: Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III with a 24mm lens at f11, 1/30sec, ISO 100

So are all the best mountains in the world far away? No, not at all. England is somewhat lacking in mountains, but nearby Wales and Scotland contain some true gems. It doesn't have to mean a trip to the Himalayas or the Canadian Rockies, but these mountains are naturally more spectacular in comparison. Casting this aside, great mountain photography is about shape, form and character. The size of the peak is not important; it's personality that counts and also the surroundings. Although the direct pull of these giants will always transfix photographers, so much can be done without the need for a plane journey.

Start by assessing the seasons. Nothing looks more inspiring than a mountain locked in snow and ice, so winter is without a doubt the number one season. Surroundings can also be beneficial in autumn, with a riot of colour climbing the foothills. Ferns are also spectacular this time of year, with russet reds catching the morning sunlight to create very special textures and tones. Alpine meadows filled with spring flowers make for perfect photographs at warmer times of year, with fresh greens in abundance. It is therefore important to look at the geography and also be ready to make swift decisions, especially if snow arrives. In the United Kingdom, this will often be very fleeting,

so the chance to capture a true snow-capped icon may only last a very short time.

Everything from a wide-angle lens to super telephotos are really useful. Whether picking out the peak or placing the mountain within the landscape, the concept is to get good light and also a sense of dimension. Wide-angle lenses will have a tendency to shrink the size, whereas longer focal lengths, 30-100mm, will create a relatable image. Longer focal lengths can help explore detail and structure in particular, but lighting is at the core of image success.

'Alpen glow' is an American term used to describe the colourful orange lighting hitting the peak at dawn. When the atmospheric conditions are right, the tip of the mountain can glow beautifully, offset

MOUNT WHITNEY
Mount Whitney in California lit with strong morning light. Iconic peaks like this are heavily photographed but a great mountain shot is a great shot nonetheless
Shot details: Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III with a 70-300mm lens at 300mm and f5.6, 1/10sec, ISO 100
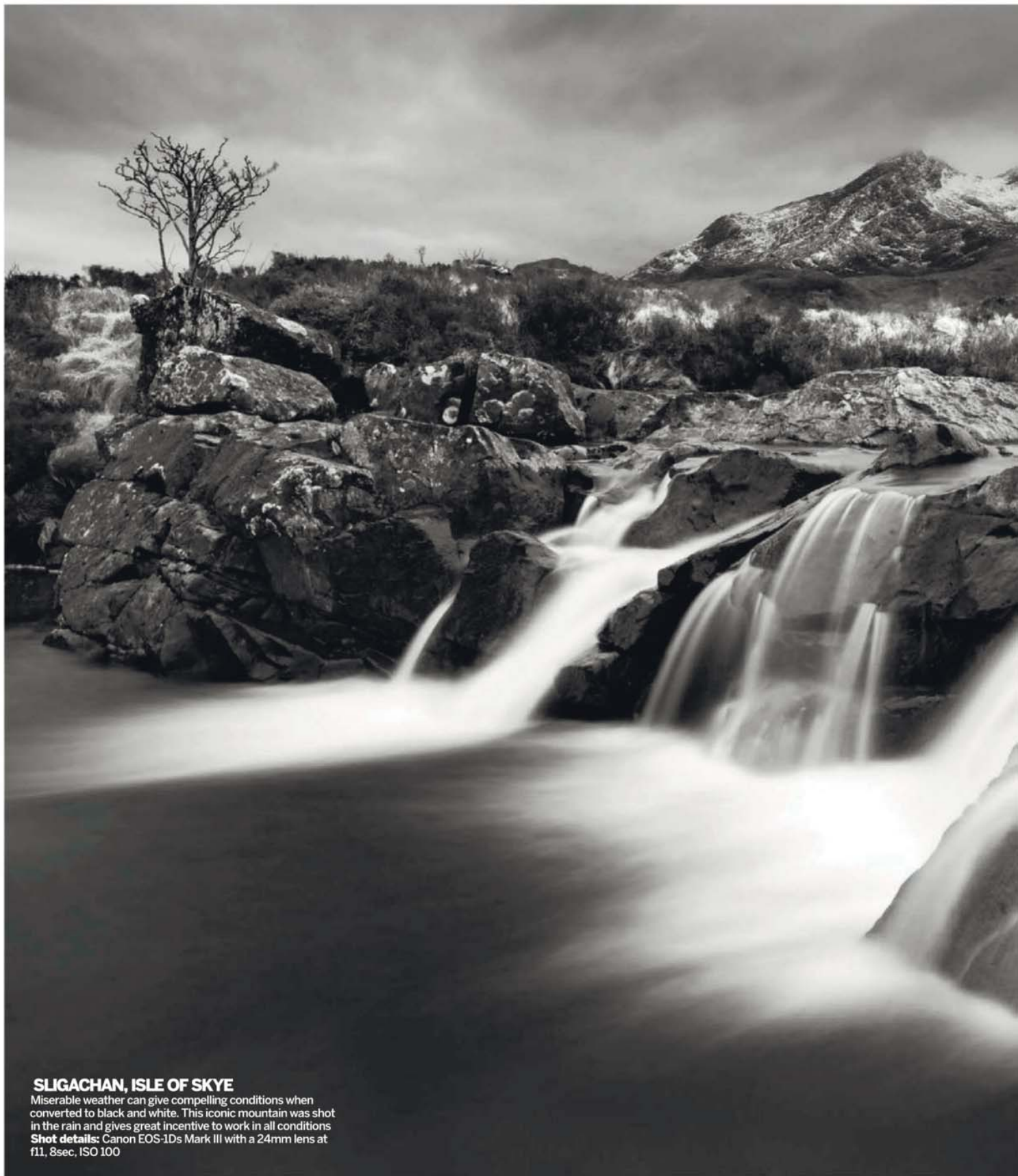
SLIGACHAN, ISLE OF SKYE
Miserable weather can give compelling conditions when converted to black and white. This iconic mountain was shot in the rain and gives great incentive to work in all conditions
Shot details: Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III with a 24mm lens at f11, 8sec, ISO 100

against a blue or even overcast sky. As with all dawn shoots, make sure to arrive in very good time. The peak will start to get good lighting well before the sun hits the horizon. Expect pinks letting go to oranges and finally direct lighting. The results can be absolutely sensational, fleeting or evasive. Finally, mountaineering is not the next step. There are lots of ideas that can present themselves. Look for reflections by visiting lakesides too. Still mountain air is quite common. Couple this with pre-dawn light and there is truly no better place to be taking photos. Do not forget to use polarisers, graduated filters and neutral-density filters as all will be extremely useful. Think all varieties of format: landscape, portrait and, of course, the mighty panorama.

With some of the most dramatic scenery in the world on our doorsteps, visit a mountain region in the UK before heading off to hunt bigger game. Learn to frame and position yourself in the best locations and push your photography towards a most enviable standard.

Shooting advice: Snowdonia

Snowdonia is one of the most accessible places to begin mountain photography and gives access to some great mountain opportunities from the foothills, peaks or from further afield. Two principal mountains are Tryfan and Snowdon itself, both situated close to each other. The ascent of Snowdon couldn't be easier as there is a train to the top, albeit a rather expensive one. Also try shooting from the lakes beneath as well as from as far away as the Ffestiniog railway.

01 Assess the angles for dawn and dusk to work out your positioning. Ensure you arrive at a chosen location in good time

02 The coastal weather can cause the conditions to change very fast. Be very aware of this before setting out for higher viewpoints

03 The best views are often just minutes from the car! You are not cheating if you find a remarkable view from the window

◀ **LAIG BAY, ISLE OF EIGG, SCOTLAND**
Don't forget to shoot at the coast too. There are some amazing places to photograph coastal mountain vistas in Scotland, as well as Norway. It's a completely different take on mountain photography
**Shot details:** Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III with a 24mm lens at f11, 1/10sec, ISO 100

Atmospheric visibility

01 Having good visibility is best for sunset or sunrise images because it reveals the best light. Often the clearest times come after heavy rain. There are, however, exceptions to this rule. When the visibility is an atmospheric haze combined with dark cumulus clouds, the sun peeking through can create amazing sun rays.

Sunrise & sunset techniques

Pro photographer Alex Nail reveals his 20 top tips for taking stunning sunrise and sunset photographs
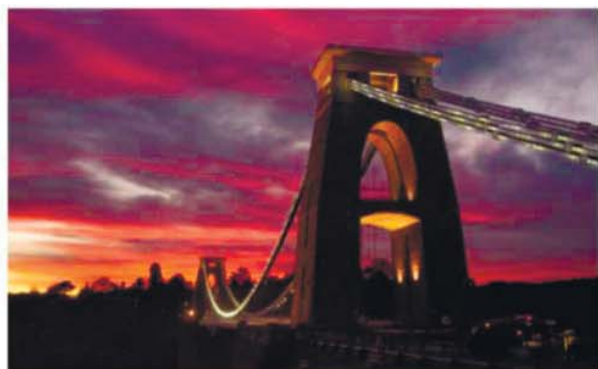
Reduce vibrations

02 Around the golden hour, light levels are lower than during the day. In order to shoot with a low ISO and a small aperture, a tripod is essential. Use Mirror Lock Up if your camera has it, and set the self timer or a shutter release to cut vibrations down further. A tripod should be stabilised by protecting it from the wind or hanging a weight from the centre column.

Look behind you

03 Often the most spectacular part of the sky is directly opposite the sun, and this is particularly true if there are high altitude clouds around. The balanced light levels between foreground and sky should also make it easier to produce a correct exposure. Be careful that direct sunlight doesn't shine through your viewfinder and throw your settings. Take a test shot and tweak your settings.

Reflections

04 Still water creates a strong connection between the sky and ground, and direct sunlight on moving water can be accentuated with a long shutter exposure making the colour spread across the surface. Reflecting a mixture of land and sky in ice will reveal its structure and provide a texture-rich shot.

White balance

05 Sunset light is likely to be more red and orange than at midday. You can use a white balance of 5,500k to reveal this warmth but a white balance of 4,500k will produce better results, making the sky even more stunning. If you shoot RAW then you can experiment with the white balance at the post-processing stage.

Use filters

06 Neutral-density graduated filters are used to balance the exposure by holding back the brightness of the sky while keeping the exposure of the foreground as it reads. A polariser will increase saturation, remove reflections, cut through haze and improve cloud contrast. To get the best results you should keep your filters clean and scratch free.

Sidelight

07 The low, soft light produced at sunrise and sunset is excellent for revealing the form of your subjects, particularly when side-lit. Look for interesting foreground shapes and textures to make your composition stronger. You can use a polariser to bring out the sky and provide your image with a dynamic impact.

Balance and flow

08 Composition is just as important when photographing a sunrise or sunset as it is for any other subject. Don't let an amazing sky overpower your image. Concentrate on the structure, flow and balance of your image and keep the horizon level. It's easy to be dazzled by the light and forget the other elements.

Careful planning

09 Careful planning and preparation will produce wonderful results. You should scout locations on grey days and plan for better light. Set custom modes on your camera to ensure you aren't fiddling with controls when time is short. Use internet image searches to get a feel for the location before you arrive.

Take your time

10 Time can be critical when the light is good, but that doesn't mean you should rush. Set up your camera and tripod as quick as you can, but spend time ensuring that your composition and exposure are correct. One great shot is better than 10 average ones, so stay focused and concentrate.
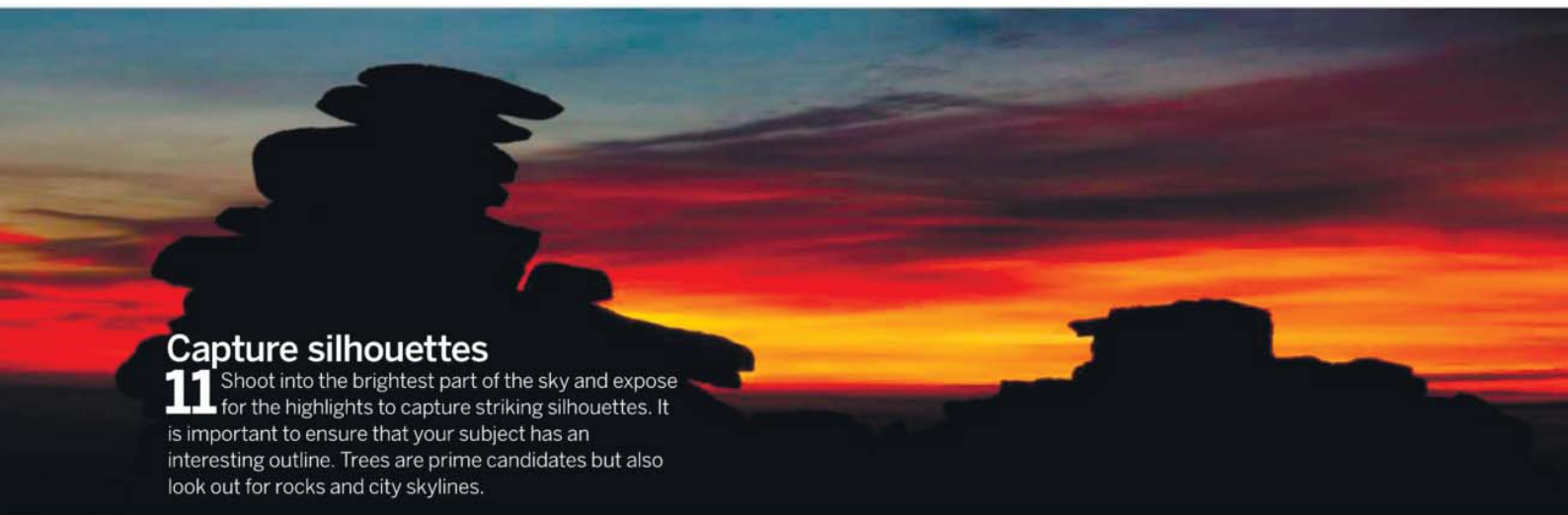
Capture silhouettes

11 Shoot into the brightest part of the sky and expose for the highlights to capture striking silhouettes. It is important to ensure that your subject has an interesting outline. Trees are prime candidates but also look out for rocks and city skylines.

Morning mist

12 Mist is often produced at sunrise and is usually forecasted so keep an eye on weather reports in anticipation. If you understand the conditions that create mist then you can predict it. Use mist to simplify your landscapes and create a tranquil atmosphere. Photograph the mist when surrounded by it or from a high view point.

Twilight magic

13 Twilight comes before sunrise and after sunset. On clear days it provides a directional, soft blue light, and can be used to create calm atmospheric images, particularly if there is some mist or snow on the ground. Twilight can extend an hour or more after sunset or before sunrise so don't head home too early.
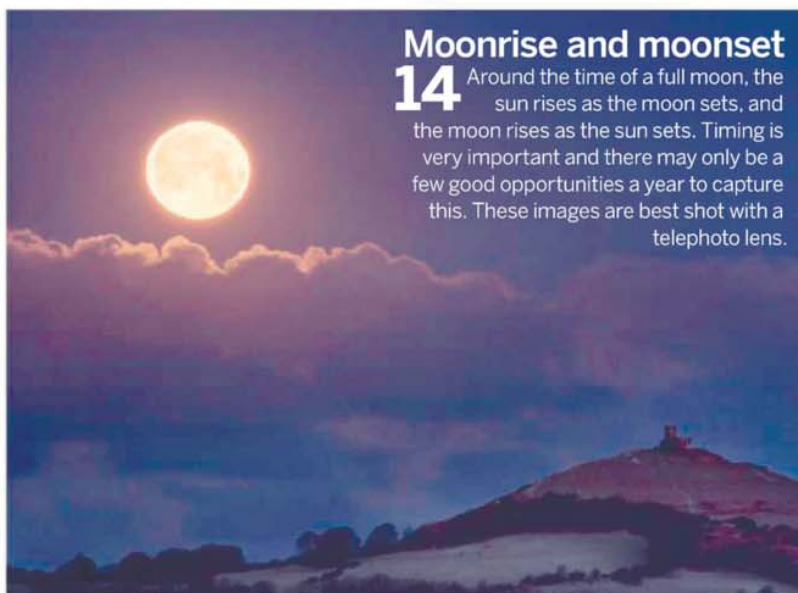
Moonrise and moonset

14 Around the time of a full moon, the sun rises as the moon sets, and the moon rises as the sun sets. Timing is very important and there may only be a few good opportunities a year to capture this. These images are best shot with a telephoto lens.
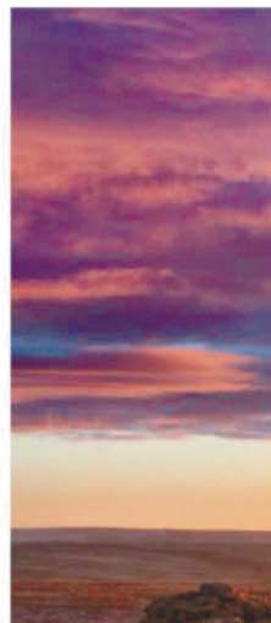
Colour contrast

15 The warm light at the start and end of the day produces stunning colour contrasts that will illuminate your subject. The strongest colour casts come with fierce sunlight and clouds overhead. Cold winter mornings are also a great time to head out, as the frosty ground in the shade will reflect the blue of the sky.

The Photographer's Ephemeris

16 When combined with a map and compass The Photographers Ephemeris is a great piece of freeware that tells you when and where the sun and moon will rise and set on any given date. This will allow you to pre plan your image without even visiting the location.
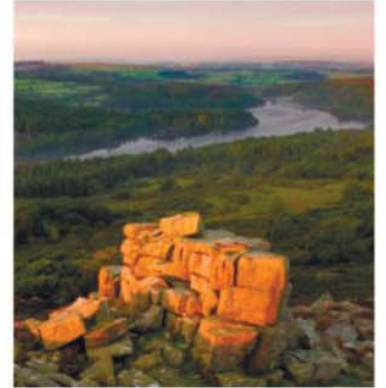
Capture sunstars

17 Sunstars are caused by diffraction, which is the bending of light around the aperture blades of the lens. Small apertures of f13 or so increase diffraction and hence the size of the sunstars. High-contrast sunlight at sunrise or sunset when combined with high-end optics will produce stunning photographic results.

Weather fronts

18 Incoming and outgoing weather fronts at sunrise or sunset will provide sensational skies rich in colour. Learn to recognise low-altitude clouds like cumulus and high-altitude clouds like altostratus and cirrus. Understand how they change colour in 'the magic hour' and this will explain why a grey sky will suddenly become red at sunset.

Exposure bracketing

19 You can shoot multiple different exposures of the same scene on a tripod and combine them in post processing to achieve an even exposure. Spending time using Layer Masks in Photoshop will help you produce incredibly realistic results.

Lens flare

20 High end optics reduce lens flare but using a lens hood or even your hand can help if sunlight is glancing the front element. Subtle lens flares can be removed in post processing with a little bit of practice using the Curves tool in Photoshop.

The ultimate guide to
shooting perfect
portraits & landscapes

The Portrait Photography Book

Volume 2

The ultimate guide to shooting perfect portraits

Over **250** creative tips

The Landscape Photography Book

Volume 2

The ultimate guide to shooting perfect landscapes

Pro tips for novices & experts
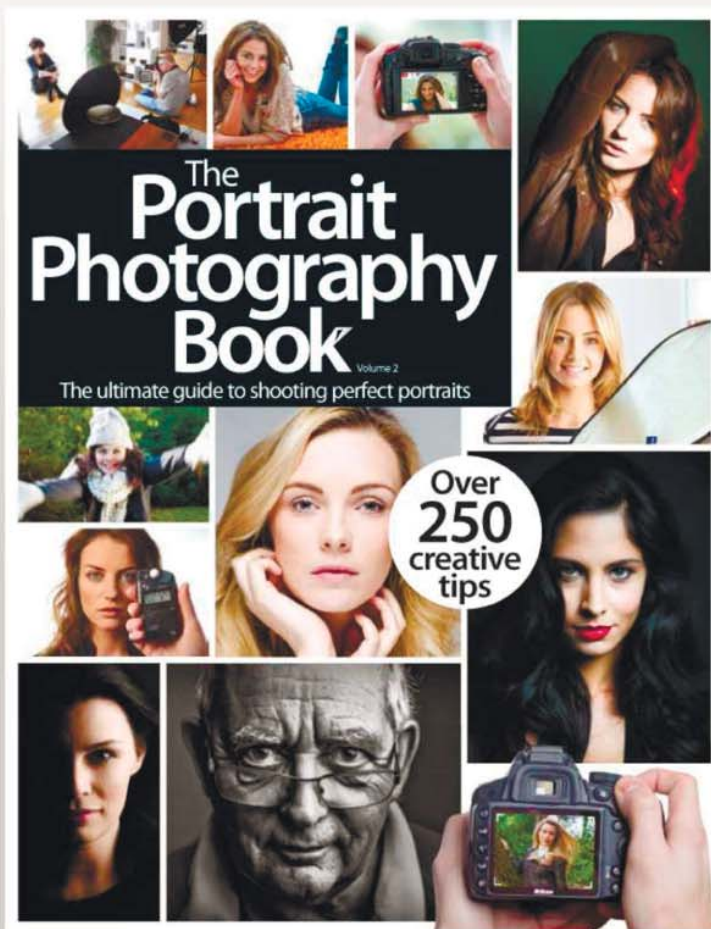
Lighting • Metering • Flash
Home studio • Essential kit
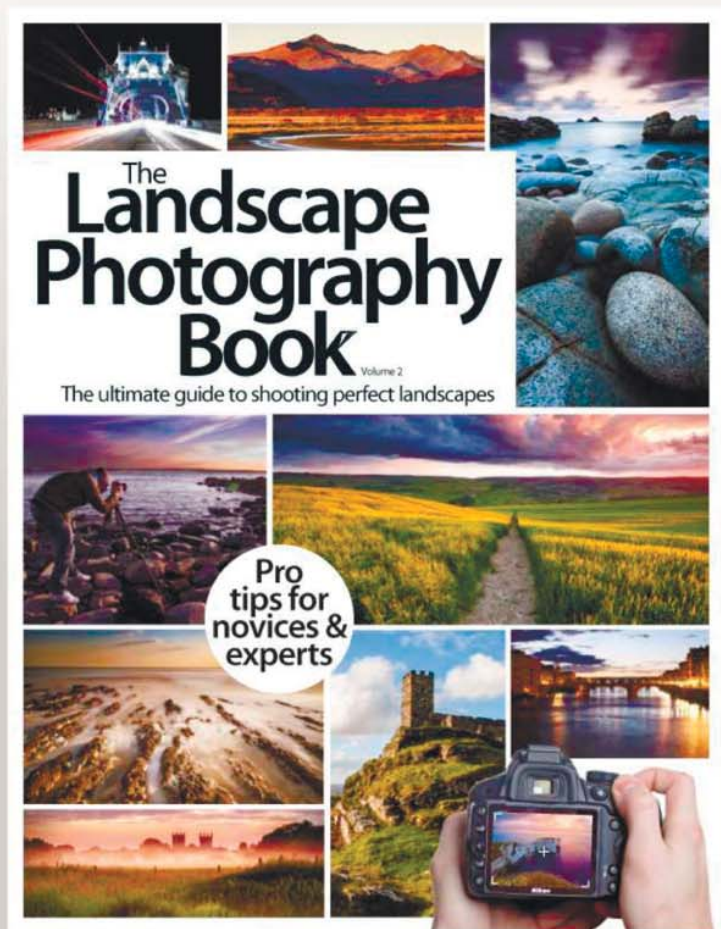
Exposure • Focusing
Filters • Cameraphones