

Photography Tips

General

Lighting: Other than being in focus, which is no longer a major concern with modern point and shoot cameras (when using Auto Focus), lighting is one of the most important elements in good photography. For outdoor photos, rule number one is—whenever possible, shoot with the sun behind you. For scenic shots, while early morning or late date sunlight is the most pleasing, any time of day will get you satisfactory results. If you are including people in the shot you can use flash outdoors, even in sunny weather. It will lighten dark shadows under the eyes and nose, especially when the sun is directly overhead or behind your subject. On cloudy days, it will brighten up faces and make them stand out from the background.

Know your flash range. Most have a range of about 10 feet (4 steps)—check your owner’s manual if you aren’t sure.

If you just can’t resist sunset or sunrise pictures . . . many digital cameras have exposure compensation, but most don’t come near the range of settings available on a traditional SLR camera. So, metering your sunset is certainly the most professional way to shoot, but perhaps not the most practical considering the limitations of current digital setups. Plus, to get the most accurate reading, you’d have to meter every few minutes as the sun sinks toward the horizon. For these reasons, I recommend using your camera’s internal light meter to evaluate the scene, then bracketing up and down one stop. Since we’re talking digital here, you aren’t wasting film. You’ll just be giving yourself the best chance to get the correct exposure in a challenging lighting situation. Don’t forget to turn off the flash!

For indoor shots, flash is normally needed, unless you would like to take advantage of natural day light and pose your subject near a window.

Note: Check your camera’s manual to find out how to bracket your shots.

Resolution: Most digital cameras allow you to change the resolution setting, so you can fit more or fewer images on your memory card. This can be helpful if you only have one card, and don’t have the opportunity to transfer photos to your computer. My

advice is to have more than one memory card. That’s because the low resolution image lacks detail, and may also appear jagged. The higher the resolution, the more plentiful printing and sharing options exist. With this in mind, shoot at a high resolution, and if you need to adjust the size of a photo downward (to e-mail to friends—only to be viewed on a computer screen), you can do this on your computer (Windows XP will do this with one click when you’re sending photos in e-mail). High resolution will assure you can print out a photo at a larger size, say 8x10, and it will still be sharp.

Image quality settings vary depending on the camera used. Using the department’s Canon EOS 30D, you have a choice of S, M, and L (small, medium, and large). All photos have the same initial resolution (72 ppi—pixels per inch), but the actual dimensions of the photo increase significantly when using the M or L setting. Further adjusting for resolution can be done by Marcom or other professionals using PhotoShop. When in doubt, use “L,” as larger images can always be reduced for web use, but the opposite is not true.

Composition: For personal photos, get candid. Not all pictures have to be posed. Get a new perspective. Move around a little bit and check things out. You may find that the lighting is much better, or the angle more interesting, if you move over to your left or right a few inches, or drop down a little bit.

Take a lot of pictures! One of the great things about digital cameras is that you can take and delete the ones you don’t like. Shoot several pictures of the same scene (especially the ones with people in them). You will have a better chance of getting a good image.

**Marketing Communications Dept.
Saint Mary’s College**

Curt Sochocki
2/29/08