

## 6: Arts & Craft Badge – Photography Tips

### Image Quality

Most digital cameras allow you to reduce resolution or increase compression to get more images on to a memory card. However, both these will reduce quality. Unless you have a very small memory card, select the highest resolution pictures.

When it comes to how much resolution you need, it depends on how much detail you want to capture. More mega pixels means higher detail and this allows bigger enlargements or crops before the image starts to become pixelated.

### Exposure

All digital cameras have an auto setting which calculates what it anticipates will be the most suitable exposure. Most devices get it about right, but mistakes happen. There will also be times when you want a darker or brighter result.

In these situations use the exposure compensation settings available on all but the most basic cameras. These allow you to deliberately over or underexpose the image and are normally offered in a range described as -2EV to +2E, in EV increments of a third. A setting of -1EV doubles the exposure making it brighter.

Deliberately underexposing an image can be an effective way of cutting through haze or bringing out a colourful sunset. Overexposing is also handy if your subject is dark and you can't or don't want to use a fill-in flash. Remember to set the exposure compensation back to zero afterwards.

### Focus

Digital cameras have an auto focus mode but, as with auto exposure, this can go wrong. A common problem is where the subject in the foreground is out of focus, but the background is in sharp focus. It's clear that the camera has focused on the background by mistake.

You need to understand that most cameras will only focus on the spot in the middle of the frame. So if your subject is not bang in the middle you should first point your camera at it, and then lock the focus by pressing the shutter button halfway.

Next recompose the shot while keeping the button half-held and, finally, press it all the way to take the photo.

The first time you try this it's easy to press the button all the way and accidentally take the photo early. It takes practice to learn the right pressure, but at least a digital camera lets you delete the pictures that went wrong.

Focus-Locking is an invaluable technique, but it relies on the camera's auto focus system to be working in first place. Under some conditions the auto focus won't work properly, e.g. at dark parties or through windows. In such cases you'll need to use manual focus, with a setting of 1-2m for people at parties and infinity when shooting through a window. If you're taking extreme close-ups activate your camera's macro mode, indicated by a small flower icon. Like exposure compensation, though, ensure you set your camera's auto focus mode afterwards.

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### Zoom

Most digital cameras are fitted with optical and digital zoom facilities. It's best to disable the digital zoom as it just crops the centre of the picture and enlarges it, thereby losing quality. The optical zoom uses lenses to get closer to a subject with no loss in quality, but zooming in and out also has other

Shorter focal lengths have larger depths of field, so if you want the maximum in focus zoom out to the widest setting. Conversely, longer focal lengths have smaller depths of field, so if you want a portrait with a blurry background stand back and zoom in to the closest setting. Adjusting the lens in this way in combination with specific aperture settings will best control the depth of field.

Instead of just standing still and zooming in and out, try moving closer or further away from your subject to see how this changes the image.

### Camera Flash

The key to using the flash is to understand its limitations. Built-in flashes are only effective over a distance of a few metres and, beyond this, have no effect at all. Unless your subject is within a few metres, you might as well switch off the flash. It's also a good idea to switch off the flash when taking photos through windows to avoid reflection.

Flashes are useful in more than just darkened rooms, though. If you're taking a portrait outdoors during dusk, at dawn, in dim conditions or even on very bright days, forcing the flash to fire can really help illuminate the foreground subject. This is known as a fill-in flash and is essential when taking a picture of someone in a long exposure night scene.

Source: Tips and Trick for Digital Photography <http://www.alexolan.net/>