



Exposure Correction Systems

Cameras have reflected-light metering systems built in. They are good for average subjects but need help dealing with very light or very dark subjects. Some systems use multiple sensors that compare readings from several areas within the subject and, using sophisticated computer algorithms, compare the readings to thousands of options to get the best exposure. This works well for most subject matter. When it doesn't, you have options.

An exposure compensation system allows you to add or subtract light from your automatic exposure. This tool is usually labeled with an icon like this: . Using this tool, if you want more exposure dial in a plus amount (e.g., +0.7). To reduce exposure dial in a minus amount. When you don't need the correction any more simply dial the setting back to 0.00. While the compensation system is in use the  symbol will appear in the camera data window. To use this tool efficiently you need to know how much the light needs to be adjusted. This knowledge can only be gained through experience.

The inexperienced photographer can use the "Scene" options that give advanced exposure compensation for some common situations. Some scene modes give better exposure on sand or snow. One allows you to photograph fireworks displays. Another will mix the built-in flash with the ambient light in party or night pictures.

Even with these helpful tools at your disposal you still need to understand how the camera's exposure system determines the amount of exposure needed. For outdoor images the Sunny 16 guide forms a basis. In other situations a light meter or test exposures will be needed. A big benefit of digital imaging is the immediate feedback regarding image exposure. If the subject and the lighting conditions allow for testing, then you can tweak the settings until you get your image right.

The automatic settings on a camera will often give acceptable results. Each photographer must decide what level of photographic quality you will accept. The more you want to control the quality in your pictures the more you will need to master the tools and techniques that give you control over the process. Just as a painter strives to perfect his brush strokes, you must learn to master the camera to capture your pre-visualized image.