

Newsletter

InFocus at DVCC

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Learn, Develop, Share, Support

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Back to Basics

Going back to basics can at times be a wonderful reminder for the more advanced photographers and it can of course potentially unravel some of the mysteries and jargon that can cause confusion to those who are just beginning their photography journey. So this month we start our newsletter by looking at the exposure triangle and looking at how an exposure meter (aka light meter) can be of assistance in your photography.

Understanding the Exposure Triangle: A Guide for Dearne Valley Camera Club Members

The exposure triangle is the foundation of photography, comprising three interconnected elements: aperture, shutter speed, and ISO.

Mastering these allows you to control how light is captured, giving you creative freedom over your images.

Aperture controls the size of the lens opening, measured in f-stops (f/2.8, f/5.6, f/16, etc.). A lower f-number means a wider aperture, allowing more light in and creating a shallow depth of field—perfect for portraits with blurred backgrounds. Higher f-numbers reduce the opening, letting in less light but keeping more of the scene in focus, ideal for landscapes.

Shutter speed determines how long the camera's sensor is exposed to light, measured in fractions of a second (1/1000s, 1/250s, 1/30s, etc.). Fast shutter speeds freeze motion—essential for sports or wildlife photography. Slower speeds allow more light but can introduce motion blur, which can be used creatively for flowing water or light trails.

ISO measures the sensor's sensitivity to light. Lower values (ISO 100-400) produce cleaner images but require more light. Higher values (ISO 1600-6400+) help in low-light situations but introduce digital noise or grain.

Celebrating 75 years of Wath Camera Club.

These three elements work together in balance. Changing one requires adjusting another to maintain proper exposure. Want a shallow depth of field? Open your aperture, but you'll need a faster shutter speed or lower ISO to compensate for the extra light.

Camera Controls

On most DSLRs and mirrorless cameras, you'll find dedicated controls for the exposure triangle. The **mode dial** (often on the top right) lets you select shooting modes: Manual (M) gives full control over all three settings, Aperture Priority (A/Av) lets you set the aperture while the camera chooses shutter speed, and Shutter Priority (S/Tv) works oppositely.

The **main command dial** (usually near the shutter button) adjusts your primary setting depending on the mode. In Manual mode, this typically controls shutter speed.

The **sub-command dial** (often on the camera's front) adjusts aperture in Manual and Aperture Priority modes.

ISO buttons vary by camera but are typically a dedicated button that, when pressed, allows you to scroll through ISO values using a command dial. Some cameras place ISO settings in the quick menu, accessed by a "Q" button on the back.

The **exposure compensation button** (marked +/-) is crucial when shooting in semi-automatic modes, allowing you to override the camera's metering to brighten or darken your image.

Using an Exposure Meter with Flash Photography

Flash photography introduces additional complexity to exposure metering. Unlike continuous light, flash duration is extremely brief, making your camera's built-in reflective meter unreliable for flash work.

Exposure Meter

A handheld **incident light meter** is invaluable here. Position it at your subject, pointing the white dome toward the camera. This measures the light falling on the subject rather than reflected from it, giving accurate readings regardless of the subject's colour or tone.

Set your camera to Manual mode and configure your desired aperture based on depth of field requirements. Set your shutter speed to your camera's flash sync speed (typically 1/200s or 1/250s—check your manual). Trigger your flash using the meter's sync button or test fire, and the meter will display the correct aperture for proper exposure.

If the reading suggests f/11 but you want f/5.6 for creative reasons, adjust your flash power accordingly. Most meters show how many stops of adjustment are needed. Modern meters can also measure multiple flashes separately, perfect for complex studio setups.

For mixed lighting situations combining flash and ambient light, take two readings: one with flash, one without. This allows you to balance the flash exposure with the existing light, creating natural-looking results rather than the harsh, flat look of overpowering flash. The meter becomes your most trusted tool for consistent, professional flash photography.

Going that Extra Stop!

Sometimes photographers will say 'need's an extra stop' or needs 'half a stop less' but what doe call this mean ?

Understanding "stops" is crucial for mastering exposure control.

What is a stop?

A "stop" is a doubling or halving of light. One stop brighter means twice as much light reaches your sensor; one stop darker means half the light. This consistent measurement applies across all three elements of the exposure triangle.

How stops translate to your camera settings:

Aperture: Each full stop change is represented by multiplying or dividing by approximately 1.4 (the square root of 2). The common full-stop sequence is:

- f/1.4, f/2, f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6, f/8, f/11, f/16, f/22
- Going from f/5.6 to f/4 = one stop brighter (wider opening)
- Going from f/8 to f/16 = two stops darker (smaller opening)

Shutter Speed: This is more intuitive—each stop doubles or halves the time:

- 1/1000s, 1/500s, 1/250s, 1/125s, 1/60s, 1/30s, 1/15s
- Going from 1/250s to 1/125s = one stop brighter (longer exposure)
- Going from 1/60s to 1/250s = two stops darker (shorter exposure)

ISO: Again, doubling or halving:

- ISO 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600, 3200, 6400
- Going from ISO 400 to ISO 800 = one stop brighter (more sensitive)
- Going from ISO 1600 to ISO 400 = two stops darker (less sensitive)

Practical application:

If someone says "increase exposure by one stop," you could:

- Open aperture from f/8 to f/5.6, OR
- Slow shutter from 1/250s to 1/125s, OR
- Raise ISO from 400 to 800

All achieve the same brightness increase. The choice depends on your creative priorities—depth of field, motion blur, or image quality.

Red

Our next Facebook challenge is Red and is chosen by Marsha. As the winner of our first Facebook challenge (circles) she not only gets a 64GB SD memory card she also get to choose the theme for the coming month she also gets to pick the winner. On this later point I understand that Marsha is partial to

February is of course a short month, so to help you with your thinking processes here are a few words to, hopefully, inspire you.

Red is one of photography's most powerful colours—emotionally charged, attention-grabbing, and endlessly versatile. Here are some inspiring approaches for your red-themed challenge:

Classic Red Subjects

Post boxes, telephone boxes, and red doors offer quintessentially British subjects with strong graphic appeal. Look for peeling paint and weathered textures to add character. Red buses, both vintage and modern, provide dynamic opportunities, especially with motion blur or reflections.

Poppies and other red flowers are obvious choices, but don't dismiss them—seek unusual angles, macro details of stamens, or backlit petals glowing like stained glass. Visit a florist for roses, tulips, or gerberas and experiment with water droplets or dramatic black backgrounds.

Food and Still Life

Tomatoes, peppers, strawberries, and chilies offer fantastic texture and shape. Arrange them with complementary greens for colour theory impact, or photograph them individually with dramatic side lighting to emphasise form. A splash of red wine in a glass, caught mid-pour, makes for dynamic action shots.

Consider creating your own still life with red fabric, ribbons, or objects from around the house. Red candles, books, kitchen utensils, or Christmas decorations (timely if you photograph soon!) can be arranged for creative compositions.

Urban and Abstract

Seek out red signage, painted walls, or architectural details. Red brickwork photographed close-up creates wonderful abstract patterns. Look for red cars, especially classic or vintage vehicles—chrome reflections against red paintwork can be stunning. Traffic lights, neon signs, and red emergency vehicles provide contemporary urban subjects. Try long exposures of car tail lights creating red light trails through city streets.

People and Fashion

Red clothing pops beautifully against neutral backgrounds. A portrait featuring red lipstick, a red scarf, or a flowing red dress can be striking. Consider photographing hands holding red objects—a simple but effective approach.



Natural Red

Autumn leaves offer incredible variety—from vibrant crimson to deep burgundy. Photograph them backlit on trees, scattered on the ground, or floating in puddles with reflections. Berries like rowan, hawthorn, or holly provide seasonal subjects, especially with frost or dewdrops.

Sunsets and sunrise skies often feature dramatic reds—silhouette subjects against them for powerful images.

Creative Techniques

Try selective colour processing, converting everything except red elements to black and white for dramatic emphasis. Experiment with red gels on your flash to add colour to your lighting setup. Use red as an accent—a single red element in an otherwise muted scene draws the eye powerfully.

Explore high-key approaches with red on white backgrounds for a clean, minimalist look, or low-key with red emerging from shadow for mood and drama. Multiple exposure techniques can layer red elements for artistic effects.

Conceptual Approaches

Consider red's symbolic meanings: passion, danger, warmth, anger, love. Create images that communicate these emotions. Warning signs, fire extinguishers, and safety equipment tell stories about protection and caution.



Facebook

Please remember to share some of your photographs on our Facebook pages - don't forget I've still got lots and lots of English Heritage plant pot photos to share - even had a second round although this second round did include a lawnmower!

So, stop the spread of the plant pot and get sharing now :)



Rediscovering Your Photography Mojo

Every photographer experiences it—that deflating moment when your camera feels heavy, uninspiring, or when you can't muster enthusiasm for shooting. Losing your photography mojo is completely normal, but the good news is there are proven ways to reignite that creative spark.

This is where our camera club can help you and you can help it ... but here are some things to consider to help you get into the groove.

Change Your Perspective

Sometimes we get stuck in visual ruts. Try physically changing your viewpoint: shoot everything from ground level for a day, or explore only from a bird's-eye perspective. Use only a single focal length—preferably a prime lens—to force creative problem-solving. The constraint paradoxically liberates creativity.

Flip your usual approach entirely. If you typically shoot landscapes, try street photography. Portrait photographers might explore architecture. Wildlife enthusiasts could experiment with still life. This cross-pollination often brings fresh techniques back to your main interest.

Set Playful Challenges

Give yourself arbitrary rules: photograph only blue objects, capture 20 images without looking through the viewfinder, or create a photo story using just five frames. Join online weekly challenges or create your own 365-day project—though don't be rigid; missing days shouldn't derail you.

The Dearne Valley Camera Club's monthly themes are perfect mojo-boosters. The deadline and creative constraint provide structure when motivation wanes, and seeing others' interpretations sparks ideas.

Return to Basics

Revisit why you fell in love with photography initially. Look through your early work—not to critique it, but to remember that sense of discovery and excitement. Sometimes technical obsession overshadows the joy of simply seeing and capturing. Shoot purely for pleasure without any pressure to share, post, or achieve perfection. Delete freely. Experiment recklessly. Use your phone camera if your "proper" camera feels intimidating. Photography should energise you, not drain you.

Learn Something New

Book a workshop or online course in an unfamiliar technique—perhaps studio lighting, infrared photography, or intentional camera movement. Learning reactivates the beginner's mindset where everything feels possible. YouTube tutorials on specific techniques can provide that same spark without financial commitment.

Study photographers whose work you admire. Not to copy, but to understand their vision and approach. Visit galleries or photography books from the library. Visual inspiration is powerful fuel.

Photograph With Others

Isolation kills creativity. Attend camera club meetings even when you don't feel like it—the collective energy is contagious. Organise a photo walk with fellow members. Seeing how others approach the same scene reveals new possibilities you'd never considered alone. Find a photography buddy for regular shooting sessions. The gentle accountability and shared enthusiasm make outings happen when solo motivation fails. Your camera club is full of potential photo buddies, so if you want to organise a trip out or wander round the streets then shout out!

Embrace Imperfection

Perfectionism is creativity's enemy. Give yourself permission to take terrible photos. Some of the best photographers shoot thousands of frames to get a handful of keepers. The delete button exists for a reason—use it liberally and without self-judgment. Try deliberate "bad" photography—intentional blur, extreme over/underexposure, chaotic compositions. Breaking rules playfully often leads to surprisingly interesting results and reminds you that photography is supposed to be fun.

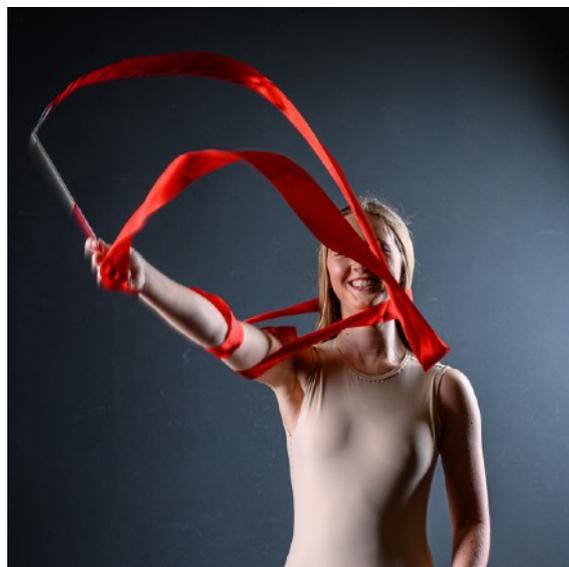
Rest and Reflect

Sometimes the best thing you can do is step away completely. Put your camera down for a week or a month. Read novels, watch films, visit museums, walk in nature without equipment. Creativity needs input as much as output. You're not abandoning photography; you're refilling the well.

When you return, you'll see with fresh eyes. That tree you've passed a hundred times suddenly becomes interesting again.

Your photography mojo isn't gone—it's just resting. Be patient and kind with yourself, and it will return.

So, I've rested and reflected and determined that it is time for me to try and move away from embracing imperfection :)



Claude Says ...

If I could offer just one tip to club members, it would be this: **Get closer.**

Get physically closer to your subject. Emotionally closer to what you're photographing. Closer to the moment, the detail, the story. Most photographs fail not because of technical issues, but because the photographer stayed at a comfortable distance. We stand back, zoom in from afar, and capture scenes rather than experiences. But the magic lives in proximity.

What are we up to.

As always, watch out for changes - look in Facebook, or Whats' App. And (don't start a sentence with 'and') if you have any ideas as to what we could do on a club night let us know.

How to photograph plant pots anyone ?

Date	Main Theme	Type
11/02/2026	Creative Activities	Learning and practical
18/02/2026	Street Photography Presentation and Guide	Learning
25/02/2026	Urban landscapes / street Show and Tell	Show and Tell
04/03/2026	Couples portraits (Toys and Miniatures)	Practical
11/03/2026	Toys and Miniatures (Couples portraits)	Practical
18/03/2026	ZOOM: Oliver Wright external speaker: Landscape	Zoom meeting presentation
25/03/2026	Night time photography. Show and Tell	Show and Tell
01/04/2026	Grumpy Old woman with camera, guest visitor	Guest Visiting speaker
08/04/2026	Abstracts	Learning
15/04/2026	That's Safari enough (My photography journey)	Member presentation
22/04/2026	St George's day photos / The Spirit of England	Show and Tell
29/04/2026	Landscapes	Show and Tell
06/05/2026	World Cup Football theme - practical TBC	Practical
13/05/2026	Outdoor model fill in flash. Plus alternate activity	Practical
20/05/2026	YP What awards	Presentation
27/05/2026	Outdoor model fill in flash. Plus alternate activity.	Practical

You will find dates, times, places and topics on the club's website.

Curiously it is under the menu item on the top of the web pages called "What's On"

Sheffield.

If you'd like to submit some images for consideration in our bid to showcase DVCC to members of other camera clubs then send in your images via the link on the web page