

Newsletter

InFocus at DVCC

20th July 2025



Learn, Develop, Share, Support

Back to Basics: Part 2

Quite often, no matter how experienced we are, or think we are, its quite good to refresh the mind set and "go back to basics", and of course for some of us this may not just be a refresher but a new learning experience as we get to grapple with all the buttons and controls on the camera. So here is the second part of our back to basics.

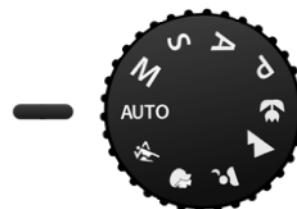
Alas all camera manufacturers have their own views on buttons and button layouts and screen interfaces and lets face it they cant even keep a consistent layout form camera to camera.

However the principles for all cameras are the same and if the image is too dark we can adjust the settings to let in more light, or if its too bright we can adjust the settings to let in less light but what about all those other dials and buttons?

This week we are going to explore the concept of exposure modes and metering. Again different cameras have different buttons and uses different names but the concepts are the same.

Exposure Modes

Exposure modes determine how your camera decides who is in control of the combination of aperture, shutter speed, and ISO to produce a properly exposed image. Is it you, the camera or both in partnership?



Mode	For	What it Does	Best Used When
Auto Mode (Green Icon)	Complete beginners	Camera makes all decisions, including flash.	Quick snapshots.
Program Mode (P)	Beginners stepping up	Camera sets aperture/shutter, you control ISO and flash.	More control with ease.
Aperture Priority (A or Av)	Control depth of field	You set aperture; camera sets shutter and ISO	Portraits, landscapes.
Shutter Priority (S or Tv)	Capture motion	You set shutter; camera sets aperture and ISO	Sports, action, motion blur.
Manual Mode (M)	Full control users	You set everything. (You can let camera set ISO)	Night, studio, tricky light.

In all modes except M, the camera sorts out the correct exposure, (based on your metering mode) so you wont see the exposure meter in your display / viewfinder.

So once you have established which of the exposure modes you are going to use, then its down to selecting which auto focus mode to use (assuming you're not using manual focus). Once again different cameras use different names!

Auto focus modes.

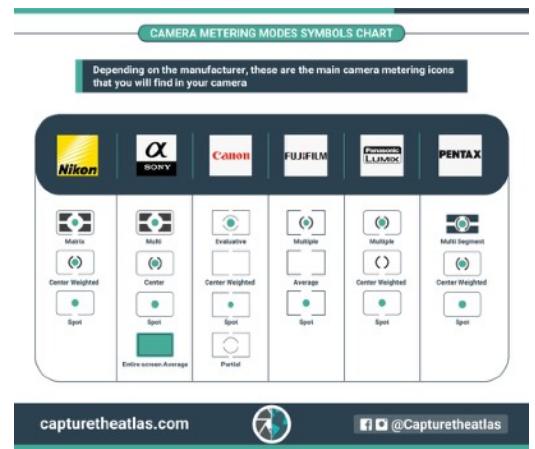
This table will give you a guide to which focus mode is best to use, but very simplistically - if it moves use AF-C, if it doesn't use AF-S, not sure, use AF-C where the focus system refocuses while your subject moves - provided you've half pressed the shutter button and keep it half pressed whilst following your subject.

Mode	What it Does	Best Used When
AF-S / One-Shot AF	Locks focus when shutter is half-pressed.	Portraits, still subjects.
AF-C / AI Servo AF	Continuously adjusts focus.	Sports, wildlife, moving subjects.
AF-A / AI Focus	Auto-switches between AF-S and AF-C.	General beginners, unpredictable motion.

Slightly off topic, make sure your shutter speed is faster than the focal length of your lens, so if using a 50mm lens don't go below 1/50th second, if on a 200mm lens don't go slower than 1/200th of a second. This rule of thumb to eliminate camera shake is based on using a "Full frame" frame camera - if its a cropped sensor camera then multiply the length of your lens by 1.5 to get an approximate shutter speed, and if its a micro four thirds then multiply the figure by 2 - its all to do with the size of the sensor. [Isn't "four thirds" actually 1 and 1/3rd ?]

Metering Modes

When you set your exposure levels you can instruct the camera whether to meter light and dark across the whole of your image, or part of it or a specific part. Again these tend to have different names depending on camera manufacturer, but this table will explain what they do.
There is some excellent reading material at <https://capturetheatlas.com/metering-modes/>



Metering mode quick guide

Mode	What it Does	When to Use It
Evaluative / Matrix	Whole-frame light average.	General scenes, balanced exposure.
Center-Weighted	Prioritizes center.	Portraits or centered subjects.
Spot	Tiny area of focus.	Backlit subjects, high contrast scenes.

Can I take a photograph yet?

Of course you can, it's appreciated that it can be a lot to take in: set my metering mode; set my auto-focus mode; set my exposure mode and don't forget to watch the exposure meter.

But, what matters is finding the settings which you are happy with and when you are comfortable with them try some other settings - using one clutch of settings rather than another does not reflect on you as a photographer, and there is no progression in any terms of "qualification", in its widest possible meaning, of moving from Auto to P, to S, to A to M.

Perhaps, if you are going to the horse racing at Doncaster this week you could practice some of these things. Perhaps a long lens would be great - if using a 200mm lens and want to shoot in manual mode to capture the horse racing try a shutter speed of 1/2000 to freeze the action, put your aperture as wide open as it will go (smaller f number), and change your iso up or down to get the correct exposure (or leave it on auto ISO). Don't fancy manual then choose the Tv (Canon) or S (other cameras) mode, set a fast shutter speed and leave the rest



Going to the races

An evening at **Doncaster Racecourse** offers a great mix of fast-paced action, candid moments, vibrant colour, and architectural interest. Here's a guide covering lens choices, camera settings, and creative opportunities.

Lenses to Consider

Action/Sports Lenses

- **70-200mm or 100-400mm:**

Perfect for capturing horses mid-race from a distance with excellent sharpness and background blur.

Great for reach if you're far from the track or want close-ups without cropping.

Street/Documentary Lenses

- **24-70mm, 35mm, 50mm prime or a 16mm lens**

A wide choice to suit your artistic intent.

Great for paddock, crowd scenes, jockeys, and horses close-up.

Ideal for candid shots and portraits with shallow depth of field.

The wider the lens (the smaller the focal length) the greater the field of view (left to right, top to bottom) in your lens. The 16mm will be great for either a different view of the world or for capturing the wide panorama of a scene,

Recommended Camera Settings

For Racing Action

- Mode: Shutter Priority (Tv/S) or Manual
- Shutter Speed: 1/1250s or faster to freeze motion
- Aperture: f/4-f/5.6 for some background blur, depending on lens
- ISO: Auto ISO or manually set (start at ISO 400 in evening light)
- Focus Mode: AF-C / AI Servo (to track moving horses)
- Drive Mode: Continuous high-speed burst

For Candid & Paddock Shots

- Mode: Aperture Priority (Av/A)
- Aperture: f/2.8-f/5.6 for portraits; to blur the background, or f/8 for groups where folks are behind each other
- ISO: 100-400 (adjust for light)
- Focus Mode: AF-S / One-Shot AF
- Metering: Evaluative / Matrix metering

Types of Photography You Can Try

Action Shots

Horses at full gallop, coming round the bend, or crossing the finish line.

Use **panning**: Try 1/125s-1/250s and track the horse with your camera for motion blur in the background.

Use a fast shutter speed to freeze the action

Portraits & Candid Moments

Capture emotions of jockeys, spectators, trainers, or vendors.

Look for candid interactions, joy, or tension in the paddock.

Details & Close-Ups

Saddles, silks, hooves kicking up dirt, betting slips, and fashion accessories.

Architecture & Environment

- Wide shots of the grandstand, crowd scenes, racecourse signage, and infrastructure.
- Use leading lines and symmetry for dramatic shots.



Final Thoughts:

Encourage members to **tell a story** with their photos—from the build-up in the paddock to the thunder of hooves and the celebrations after. A race day is full of photographic opportunity—just keep your eyes (and shutters) ready!

Don't worry about the settings, if not sure or want a bit of help ask a friend, and remember enjoy your photography for your benefit.

Coming soon

Doncaster Races, national coal mining museum, Wharncliffe Craggs, these are some of the places we are going to visit / might visit in the next few weeks, then we have the annual general meeting which all being well will be accompanied by some "light refreshments and a bit to eat".

Over the spring and summer we have done many exciting things, photographically speaking, be that booking a rock band, visiting local villages, doing some portraits of folk like Steve, Jess, and Alice, some still life photography and some zoom tutorials on creating composite pictures. The occasional guest speaker has also graced our screens with Mike Martin providing an excellent presentation which was both informative and practical - oh and Nigel tried to cheer us up with inaugural the YPWhat! Awards



Now we need to start thinking about what to put into our programme for the autumn and early winter months, so if you have any ideas then let Gill, Chrissy, Tom, Patrick or Nigel know.

Next year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of our camera club. Let us know if you've got any ideas of how we could celebrate this occasion and if you'd like to get involved in any events associated with the 75th year.

Coming Soon to a camera club near you

Wednesday 23rd July	Doncaster Racecourse	Horse, events, people ... bring your camera and if you've got one maybe a long lens
Wednesday 30th July	TBC but possibly National Coal Mining museum at Wakefield or Canon Hall grounds	Nature, industry, people
Wednesday 6th August	TBC- but possibly Wharncliffe Craggs for some landscape or Deepcar or some natural light portraits	
Wednesday 13th August	AGM, Social and food!	Make sure you let Chrissy know you are attending, as we would not want you to miss out on a bite to eat
Wednesday 20th August	Holiday no meeting.	
Wednesday 27th August	Whilst there is no actual camera club meeting there is nothing stopping you from getting to gather with camera club friends to have a chat, a pint and do some photos. The clubhouse at Wath will be open.	
Wednesday 3rd September	The new season begins	