

Newsletter

InFocus at DVCC

May 2026



Learn, Develop, Share, Support

1951-2026

Using Flash outside

Often we think of using flash and studio lights as being 'an indoor thing' but next week we will be learning and developing our skills in using what's called 'fill in flash' as we use flash outside. (Whether permitting of course). We have Alice retuning to the club do do some modelling for us.

So to get you prepared for that weeks activity here is some information about using flash outdoors.

Outdoor portraits are often thought of as "natural-light only", but adding a touch of flash—whether on-camera or off-camera—can transform a shot. Flash outdoors isn't about blasting your subject with light. It's about balancing the ambient light with a controlled pop of illumination to shape the portrait, brighten the eyes, and add depth.

13th May with Alice modelling for us, we'll explore how to use both natural light and fill-flash to create flattering outdoor portraits.

Why Use Flash Outdoors?

Even on a bright day, faces can fall into shadow—especially under brows, hats, or when the sun is behind the subject. Flash helps you:

- Lift shadows without changing the background exposure
- Add sparkle to the eyes
- Control contrast on harsh sunny days
- Create separation between subject and background
- Add direction and shape when natural light is flat

Think of flash as a tool for balance, not dominance.

This means some changes to the settings you would use for flash in the studio.

Celebrating 75 years of Wath Camera Club.

Here are the ideas we have to
celebrate our 75th year. Why do you
think?

Step 1: Expose for the Background

Before you even switch the flash on:

1. Set your camera to Manual mode
2. Adjust shutter speed, aperture, and ISO until the background looks how you want it. Don't use auto ISO
3. Keep shutter speed at or below your camera's flash sync speed (usually around 1/200-1/250s)

This ensures the ambient light is under control. The flash will then fill in the subject.

Typical starting point outdoors:

- ISO 100-200
- f/2.8-f/5.6 (depending on depth of field)
- 1/160-1/250s

Step 2: Add Flash to Light the Subject

Once the background exposure is set, turn on your flash.

On-Camera Flash (Fill Flash)

This is the simplest approach and works well for gentle fill.

- Set flash to TTL for quick results
 - Dial in Flash Exposure Compensation (FEC) to taste
 - Start at -1.0 EV for subtle fill
 - Increase if the shadows are still too deep
 - Angle the flash slightly upward or use a small diffuser to soften the light
- On-camera flash won't give dramatic shaping, but it's brilliant for clean, natural portraits.

Off-Camera Flash (OFC)

Off-camera flash gives you direction, shape, and drama.

Place the flash:

- 45° to the side of the subject for classic portrait lighting
- Slightly above eye level for natural falloff
- Use a softbox, umbrella, or bare flash depending on the look

Start with the flash in manual mode:

- 1/16 power for gentle fill
- 1/8 or 1/4 power for stronger shaping
- Adjust based on distance and ambient light

Remember: distance matters. Double the distance = quarter the light.

What you seek to do is balance the relationship between the Flash and Ambient Light

A simple way to think about it:

- Shutter speed controls ambient light
- Aperture controls flash brightness
- ISO affects both

So if the background is too bright, increase shutter speed (but stay under sync speed).

If the flash is too strong, close the aperture or lower flash power.

High-Speed Sync (HSS)

You use HSS when the brightness of the ambient light is such that the exposure (iso and aperture) of the background / ambient light results in needing a shutter speed above your camera sync speed.

If you want to shoot at wide apertures (e.g., f/1.8) in bright daylight, you may exceed your sync speed.

If your flash supports HSS, you can shoot at 1/1000s or faster but consider that HSS reduces flash power and it works best at close distances or with powerful flashes.

Practical Tips for the Session

- Position Alice with the sun behind her for a natural hair light
- Use flash to brighten the face and add catchlights
- Try both on-camera TTL fill and off-camera manual shaping
- Move the flash closer for softer light
- Watch the shadows—direction tells the story
- Review your histogram outdoors; screens can be misleading in bright light

Suggested Starting Settings

On-Camera Fill Flash

- Camera: ISO 100, f/4, 1/200s
- Flash: TTL, FEC -0.7 to -1.3

Off-Camera Flash

- Camera: ISO 100, f/2.8, 1/200s
- Flash: Manual, 1/16 power, softbox at 45°

These are just starting points—adjust based on the light on the day.

Final Thoughts

Outdoor flash photography is less about technical wizardry and more about balance. Once you expose for the background and add just enough flash to lift the subject, everything starts to click. With Alice modelling and plenty of space around the club grounds, this session is a perfect chance to experiment, compare results, and build confidence.

Mark Wallace (AdoramaTV)

Mark is one of the clearest instructors for beginners. He explains balancing ambient exposure first, then adding flash in a simple two-step method. His "Fill Flash Basic" and "Exposure Diamond" tutorials are especially beginner-friendly



David Bergman (AdoramaTV)

Bergman teaches practical, real-world fill flash outdoors. He covers flash exposure compensation, matching light quality, and making fill look natural. Great for people who want quick, digestible lessons.



Gavin Hoey (AdoramaTV)

Gavin is excellent for visual learners. He demonstrates balancing flash with ambient, overpowering the sun, and subtle fill flash on location. His step-by-step approach is ideal for beginners.

[Better Outdoor Portraits with One Flash](#)

[Flash vs Ambient Light on Location](#)

Pye Jirsa at the SLR lounge

Excellent collection of easy to understand tutorials.

[Using Flash to create dramatic images](#)

[Dance Floor Photography with a twist](#)

Vanessa Joy

Since 2002, Vanessa Joy has been photographing luxury weddings.

[Flash Photography: High Speed Sync EXPLAINED \(EASY\)](#)

[easy OUTDOOR Flash Photography | Portrait Photo Tutorial](#)

Will Simpson

Exploring flash for events, on camera flash for event made simple

[On Camera Flash for Events MADE SIMPLE](#)

[How to connect Godox Flash with Transmitter](#)

Members Showcase

We are having a landscape show and tell this week, here are a few member images I've lifted from our Facebook pages



Ali and Infrared



Cath on holiday (when not gate-crashing WeirdFish photoshoots)

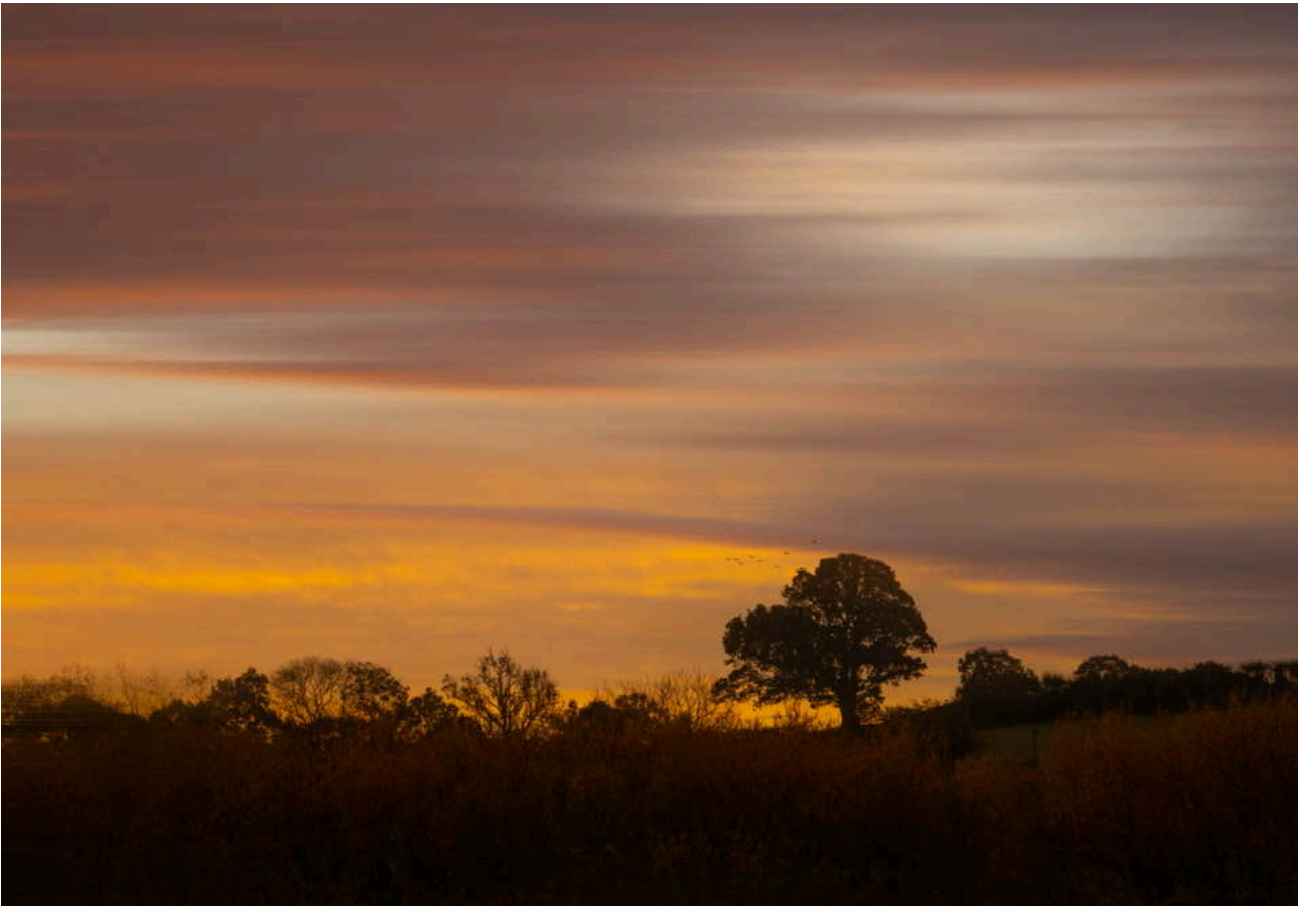


Tom on the hunt for the blarney stone and a Guinness or two

And absolutely nothing to do with landscapes a great imaginative photo of Keith and his 'little friends'



David Balls



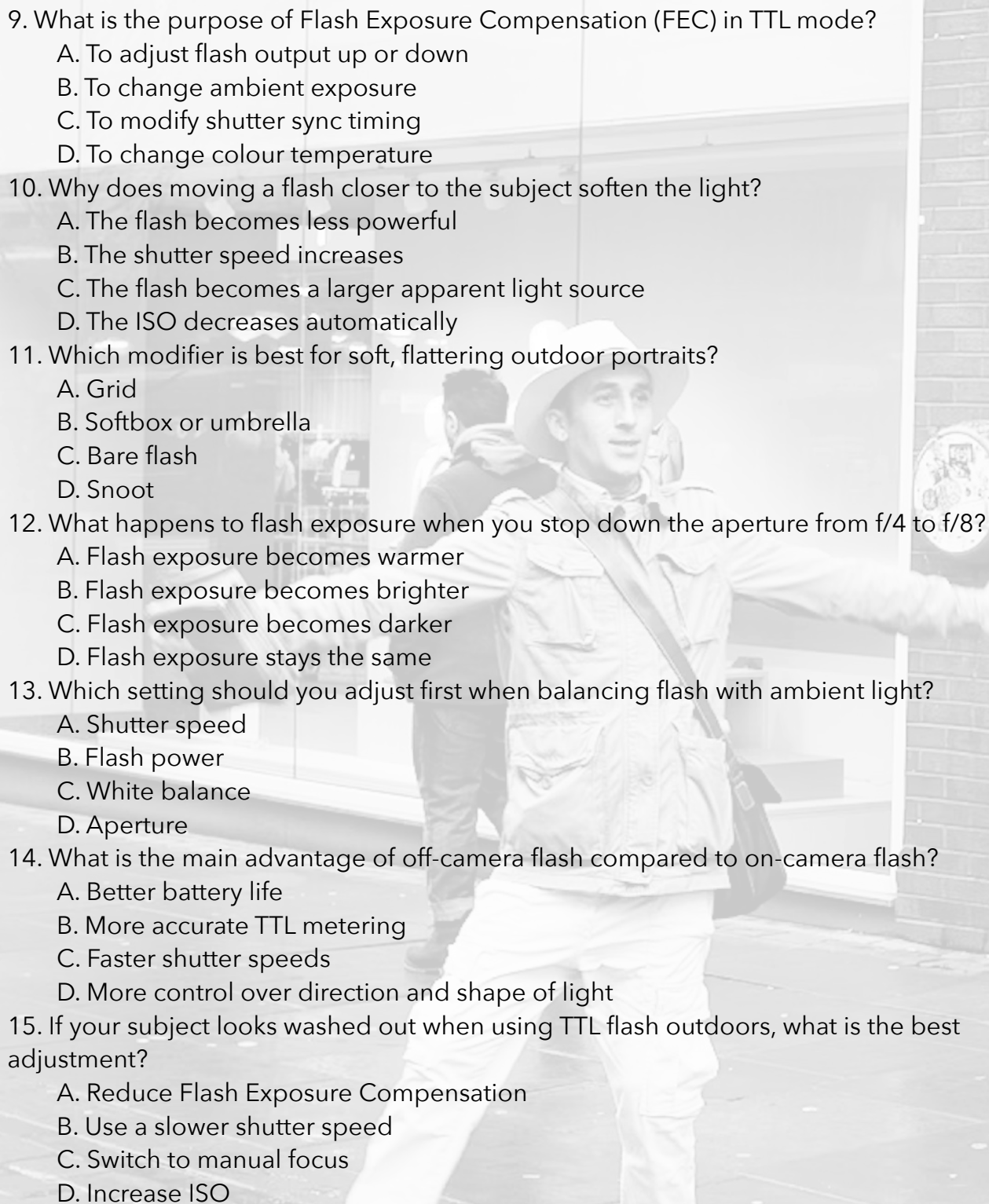
Patrick enjoying the sunset



Neil in reflective mood

Quiz time.

1. What does shutter speed primarily control when using flash outdoors?
 - A. Flash brightness on the subject
 - B. White balance accuracy
 - C. Flash recycle time
 - D. Ambient light exposure in the background
2. What does aperture primarily control when balancing flash with ambient light?
 - A. Only the flash brightness
 - B. Only the background brightness
 - C. Shutter sync timing
 - D. Flash brightness and depth of field
3. What does ISO affect when using flash outdoors?
 - A. Both flash and ambient light
 - B. Only flash light
 - C. Neither flash nor ambient light
 - D. Only ambient light
4. Why is flash often used outdoors in bright sunlight?
 - A. To fill shadows on the subject
 - B. To increase shutter speed
 - C. To darken the background
 - D. To reduce lens flare
5. What is the typical maximum shutter speed you can use without High-Speed Sync (HSS)?
 - A. 1/30s
 - B. 1/60s
 - C. 1/1000s
 - D. 1/200-1/250s
6. What is the main drawback of using High-Speed Sync (HSS)?
 - A. Increased shutter lag
 - B. Inaccurate autofocus
 - C. Overexposed backgrounds
 - D. Reduced flash power
7. If your background is too bright but your subject is correctly lit by flash, what should you adjust?
 - A. Increase shutter speed
 - B. Increase ISO
 - C. Lower the flash power
 - D. Open the aperture
8. If your subject is too dark but the background looks correct, what should you adjust?
 - A. Lower ISO
 - B. Increase flash power
 - C. Increase shutter speed
 - D. Close the aperture

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9. What is the purpose of Flash Exposure Compensation (FEC) in TTL mode?
- A. To adjust flash output up or down
 - B. To change ambient exposure
 - C. To modify shutter sync timing
 - D. To change colour temperature
10. Why does moving a flash closer to the subject soften the light?
- A. The flash becomes less powerful
 - B. The shutter speed increases
 - C. The flash becomes a larger apparent light source
 - D. The ISO decreases automatically
11. Which modifier is best for soft, flattering outdoor portraits?
- A. Grid
 - B. Softbox or umbrella
 - C. Bare flash
 - D. Snoot
12. What happens to flash exposure when you stop down the aperture from f/4 to f/8?
- A. Flash exposure becomes warmer
 - B. Flash exposure becomes brighter
 - C. Flash exposure becomes darker
 - D. Flash exposure stays the same
13. Which setting should you adjust first when balancing flash with ambient light?
- A. Shutter speed
 - B. Flash power
 - C. White balance
 - D. Aperture
14. What is the main advantage of off-camera flash compared to on-camera flash?
- A. Better battery life
 - B. More accurate TTL metering
 - C. Faster shutter speeds
 - D. More control over direction and shape of light
15. If your subject looks washed out when using TTL flash outdoors, what is the best adjustment?
- A. Reduce Flash Exposure Compensation
 - B. Use a slower shutter speed
 - C. Switch to manual focus
 - D. Increase ISO

No cheating, here are the answers.

1. D; 2. D; 3. A; 4. A; 5. D; 6. D; 7. A; 8. B; 9. A; 10. C; 11. B; 12. C; 13. A; 14. D; 15. A;

What are we up to.

As always, watch out for changes - look in Facebook, or Whats' App. If you have any ideas as to what we could do on a club night let us know.

Date	Main Theme	Type
06/05/2026	Landscapes	Show and Tell
13/05/2026	Outdoor model fill in flash. Plus alternate activity	Practical
20/05/2026	YP What awards	Presentation
27/05/2026	TBC	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"

What activities and ventures out would you like to do in the coming months - please let us know

Posing:

Need help in how to pose your subjects so they look their best ...

Looking up Rigel Jackson Photography might be the place for you, look her up on Facebook

Perhaps try looking up the Lyndsay Adler Posing guide

Another look up would be The Photography Posing Guide for Flawless and Natural Shots by Skyrre design, or maybe 14 Tips for Posing People With Confidence (+ Examples) by Andrew Gibson on Digital Photography School