

USING A DIGITAL COMPACT CAMERA

Introduction

Whether you are using a Digital Compact Camera to record family, friends and holidays or you are an experienced photographer wanting a small camera for convenience. It is worth following a few guide lines to help you get the best from it.

Advantages

Digital Compact Cameras are convenient and easy to carry and have some advantages over a Digital SLR (DSLR):

- Very little photographic knowledge required to use it
- It is possible to take pictures without attracting attention
- Images have a large depth of field

Limitations

To get the best from this type of camera it is important to work within the camera's limitations which are:

- Because of the small sensor size, image quality can be poor at high ISO settings. Therefore these are best avoided unless absolutely necessary in low light conditions
- Although most have a telephoto lens, it is not usually long enough or of the quality for types of photography where long lenses are the norm as with sport or wildlife photography
- Digital Compact Cameras have the facility to shoot continually, normally referred to as burst speed, however they cannot compete with the frame rate of a DSLR

Therefore as long as you do not need to take pictures in low light, of distant subjects or fast moving subjects then a Digital Compact Camera is capable of producing excellent results.

Because a Digital Compact Camera has a smaller sensor than a DSLR the image quality will not be as good. However this does not mean they cannot produce good photographs as, good photographs are about visual effect rather than image quality.

Getting the Best Results

If your photographic knowledge is limited it will be better to avoid the more advanced settings and let the camera do the work; because in most situations the camera will be able to interpret the situation. However in certain conditions having a little knowledge can enable you to take good images in situations where the camera can misinterpret the scene.

6 Steps to Better Photography with a Compact

1. Fill the Frame

Rather than relying on the zoom, get as close to the subject as possible, then use the zoom if necessary to fill the frame with the main subject.

2. Use the camera upright

Not only can the camera be used horizontally, it can also be used vertically to frame the subject. Decide what format will suit the subject and hold the camera accordingly.

3. Think about composition

Although in the first instance it is always best to fill the frame, consideration is also needed as to where the subject sits within the frame. Composition can be a complex subject but two simple rules are: try and compose using the "Rule of Thirds" and if the subject is moving – give it space to move in to.

4. Avoid Camera shake

Camera shake is responsible for blurred unsharp images which cannot be made sharp – not even in Photoshop. Camera shake occurs when taking pictures in low light and the camera selects a slow shutter speed. The ways to avoid camera shake are: try and steady the camera by resting or leaning on something when taking the picture, avoid using the zoom or selecting a higher ISO.

5. Underexpose

To help preserve the details in the highlights it is advantageous to underexpose by -0.7 EV or sometimes more depending on the contrast. The resulting images will be slightly darker, but the images can be lightened afterwards in Photoshop with the highlight details being retained. This is normally referred to as "Exposure Compensation" in most instructions manuals.

6. Use the flash

The main use of the flash is to take pictures indoors when it is too dark. However it is easy to use it outside to take professional looking portraits. In sunny conditions, rather than having your subject squinting into the sun, turn them so the light is behind or slightly to the side of them. By using the flash it will "fill-in" the subjects face when the picture is taken for a natural looking portrait.

