

# Through The Lens

*A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts.  
After the click of your camera, you're only half done!*

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## Evening photography

*by Lynda Buske*

There are three ways that I take evening photographs:

- 1) For a serious shoot, since light levels are low, being on a tripod allows me to use longer shutter speeds than I would if the camera was hand-held.
- 2) I hand hold a camera but adjust for a faster speed (see below)
- 3) I use my cell phone which is well suited to evening photography because it can give a faster shutter speed in low light situations than a traditional camera. I always have it with me so I can grab shots of a city street, festive lights, etc.

The key to evening photography is to force your camera to underexpose from what it calculates, resulting in a more realistic dominance of darker tones. The camera normally tries to average all tonalities to a middle-brightness, which is too bright for a realistic evening photo. As well, a brighter exposure can wash out colours that you want to capture like the reds and oranges of a sunset.

There are various ways you can avoid this phenomenon. Most cameras (even pocket size) have an EV (exposure value) button you can adjust before shooting to lighten or darken the resulting photo. It usually will have +/- indicator 

This button allows you to over- or under- expose an image differently from what the camera thinks is the correct exposure. Fully automatic mode does not permit you to adjust the EV, so set the camera to *P*, *A*, *S* (or *Tv*), or fully manual mode. See your manual for details. For an evening image, set the EV to the negative side of the scale resulting in a darker photo. Cell phones usually have an adjustment as well but the location and method of use will vary depending on the make and model.

Some cameras have a night time “scene mode” that can be used as well. It basically has been programmed to create an optimal image in a low light situation without making it look like daytime. A cell phone might have *Night Sight* which uses computational photography techniques to combine multiple short exposures into a single, properly-exposed image without camera motion. Some also have a night time portrait mode so faces are exposed more than the dark background. This avoids the situation of a beautiful sunset with silhouetted people if indeed you do want to see their faces clearly.

Another method of capturing an evening pic is to let the camera automatically choose the speed and aperture, then switch to manual mode and underexpose by reducing the shutter speed, aperture, or lowering the ISO, creating a darker image. Keep in mind that there are other effects caused by changing parameters: with a longer shutter speed, you may end up with blurred portions of your image caused by objects within the frame moving during the exposure, and a smaller aperture will cause a longer depth of field. This creates a darker image.

Failing these methods, if there is still some light in the sky, point your camera to that area, press the shutter halfway which locks the exposure based on this brighter area. Then recompose the image to what you want to capture and press the shutter the rest of the way to take the shot. Keep in mind that half-pressing the shutter also locks the focus.

If despite these efforts, your camera requires a longer speed than you can manage to hold steadily without a tripod, you can bump the ISO to a higher number and increase your shutter speed. The tradeoff however, may be increased graininess (or noise) in your photo. This can be removed later with most photo editing software packages (free Photoscape X, Lightroom, ON1 Photo Raw, etc.), however, not with Windows Photos.

For fireworks, if you want a frozen image, the above instructions will work well. If you want to try a long exposure to get the trails of light, you will need a tripod and a speed of perhaps two seconds or more depending on the desired effect.

