

First step to getting off Auto setting

By Lynda Buske

If you have never taken your camera off the Auto setting, there is a good chance that some of your photos have been either over or under exposed. Certainly, there are adjustments that can be made with photo editing on your PC but overly bright or overly dark areas can be difficult or impossible to rescue. If you are shooting in RAW format (instead of jpeg) you have a bit more leeway with dark photos but an overly bright section of an image may be too “blasted out” to fix. In other words, the camera sensor has recorded the maximum value for light and as such will render it pure white with no detail or texture. The safest way is to nail the exposure, as best you can, while taking the photo and then just tweak on your PC later. In an overly bright or dark situation, it is easy to override your auto setting to make a simple exposure adjustment.

For many cameras, this means turning the mode dial off Auto and on to “P” which stands for program mode. A or S/Tv modes will also work, but we will leave that for a future article. With the P mode setting, aperture and exposure times are still automatic but you can further adjust the exposure for a bright or dark situation. While it is located in different areas depending on the make and model of camera, there is usually an EV (exposure value) adjustment in the shape of a +/- box that, when activated, provides a sliding scale to adjust the amount of light entering the camera by small increments. Left on automatic, the camera will assume a middle ground for exposure making the assumption that you wanted the picture neither too dark or too light. But you may wish a sunset shot to be dark and a snow scene to be bright. In these circumstances, it is nice to override the camera’s decision and give yourself a little less or more light. You can then fine tune later with photo editing software on your PC. Most photo editing programs allow you to selectively brighten or darken specific tonal areas such as shadows, mid-tones, and highlights.

Finally, if you are in a tricky lighting situation, take multiple exposures, at different EV adjustments and then choose the best when you review your photos on your computer. Using the Program mode of your camera with EV adjust is a good way to begin taking control!

