

**The Official Magazine of
the Dapto Camera Club**

Viewfinder.

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Cover photography by Daniel Lewis.

The next Club Meeting is on the 5th of June.

Getting Familiar With Your Camera's Modes

by Christina Harman

When it comes to capturing great images, the truth is there's a lot that you can do in auto mode – at least when you're first starting out.

But if you'd like to step out of your comfort zone, and start creating images that are a bit more unique and perhaps more in line with your creative vision, then you'll want to learn how to take advantage of the different modes on your camera.



Getting used to your different modes, though, can be daunting. With so many options and dials and numbers, it can be tricky to know where to start. Perhaps a misguided journey into manual mode a time or two that resulted in some lackluster images was enough to scare you back to trusty auto.

While it can seem confusing, the good news is that it's not too terribly difficult to master your camera's modes once you get the hang of the basics. And once you're familiar with your different options, you'll be able to start taking advantage of your newfound capabilities, and start creating images that you may not have realized that you or your camera were capable of!

Let's take a look!

Auto Mode (A)

Despite the bad rap that Auto Mode gets, in certain situations it can prove to be ideal. Say, for example, the light's quickly changing and you have limited filters and gear with you. Or suppose you have to work quickly to capture wildlife or a moving subject, you may want to stick with Auto to be quick on the trigger!

Using Auto can also be a good way to learn about the exposure triangle. When using Auto, it's a good idea to pay attention to the camera settings. Namely, the f-stop and shutter speed. See which settings your camera's choosing, and then look to emulate those by dialling them in yourself in manual mode.

Semi-Automatic Modes (Creative Modes)



The mainstay for most photographers; the semi-automatic or creative modes on your camera will give you a lot more freedom than Auto! These modes are listed as letters on your camera's dial.

Aperture Priority (A or AV)

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Aperture Priority mode allows you to control your aperture, while it handles the rest for you. You can choose your preferred depth of field and adjust it as you see fit, and your camera will compensate by choosing the appropriate shutter speed.

When it comes to aperture, the smaller the number, the wider the opening, and the more light you are letting in. With a wider aperture (smaller number), your depth of field will be narrower, allowing you to create images where your subject or foreground are clear and in-focus, while elements in the background are gently blurred.

Shutter Speed Priority (S or TV)

With Shutter Speed Priority, you choose the shutter speed and your camera will take care of the aperture.

A fast shutter speed is ideal for “freezing” movement or action. A slow shutter speed, or long exposure, on the other hand, is used to slow down movement; rendering moving subjects as gently blurred.

Shutter Speed Priority is an ideal mode for sports, where you’ll want to freeze the action using a fast shutter speed. It’s also ideal for capturing seascapes, streaky clouds, and waterfalls, or any time you’ll need a slower shutter speed to gently blue movement. You might also want to adjust your shutter speed in low-light situations, slowing it down to allow more light to reach the sensor.

Program Mode (P)

Program mode is often confused with auto, but there are some distinct differences between the two. With Program, the camera selects both the shutter speed and aperture but you get control over a number of settings including ISO and white balance, giving you a bit more flexibility.

Manual Mode (M)

This brings us to manual mode. Manual mode will give you full reign of your camera, allowing you to choose each setting. This setting may be the trickiest to master, but it’ll also give you the most freedom in terms of flexibility and creativity.

When shooting in manual, you’ll need to adjust the aperture, shutter speed, and ISO.

Here’s a brief look at each:

- **Aperture** – The size of the opening in the lens
- **Shutter Speed** – The length of the exposure
- ISO** – The camera sensor’s sensitivity to light

Using manual successfully requires a pretty good grasp of what each element of your exposure triangle does and how they work together.

Icon Modes

Many entry-level and semi-professional cameras have “*icon*” modes such as portrait, macro, and sports – aptly named for the little icon images that appear on the dial.

It’s worth noting that professional cameras don’t have these modes and generally, it’s a good idea to learn to use your camera without relying on them since they don’t always produce the best results.

Still, if your camera has them and you’d like to try them out, here’s a look at each.

- **Creative Auto** – Creative Auto mode is a fun mode that’s on some Canon models, that allows you to adjust how blurred you’d like the background to be.
- **Portrait Mode** – Portrait mode uses a large aperture to help keep the background out of focus. It works if the image is taken in close proximity to the subject, and when photographing a single person as opposed to a group.
- **Landscape Mode** – Landscape mode is pretty much the opposite of portrait mode in that it op-

erates with a narrow aperture (wide depth of field) allowing you to capture a much wider scene that's sharp and in focus.

- **Macro Mode** – Macro mode allows you to move in close to your small subjects, such as flowers or insects. With macro, you'll have a narrower depth of field to work with as well.

Sports Mode – Sports mode makes it possible for you to freeze action by using a fast shutter speed. You can also try your hand at **'panning'** – focusing on your subject with your shutter half-way down, and moving the camera to track their movement before releasing the shutter.

Night Mode – Used in low light conditions, with Night mode, your camera uses a slower shutter speed to capture the details in the distance, but also fires off the flash to illuminate the foreground.

While Auto is fine for some situations, especially when you're first starting out, it's important to branch out and begin experimenting with the other modes that you have as well. After all, without the flexibility of semi-automatic modes and manual, a camera's just an expensive point-and-shoot!

<https://contrastly.com/getting-familiar-with-your-cameras-modes/>

Skin is hard to photograph.

Hell, I have a couple of babies and despite their flawless skin I still manage to mess it up!

It's complicated by the fact that cameras treat it differently too - shoot the same person with 3 cameras and you get 3 different skin tones.

A few things I always try to do when photographing people so that their skin looks accurate and nice:

Shoot with soft light - this is probably the big one. If you're outdoors, look for that beautiful, soft and dispersed light that you find in the early mornings or late afternoons. If you're shooting with a flash, use a soft-box or bounce it off a wall.

Set your white balance properly (or shoot in raw so you can set it in post-production).

Beware of reds and yellows in post-production. It is very easy to make skin look off by going too hard on the reds or yellows. Often you will have to reign in the reds.

Don't go overboard with smoothing. Easy to make people look like aliens if you do.



https://photzy.com/ld/theartofportraitphotography/?sc_ref=242248

Beginner's Guide to Light Art Performance Photography & Light Painting



Light Art Performance Photography, (often abbreviated as LAPP) is a unique type of art that was developed and invented by Jan Leonardo Wöllert and Jörg Miedza. Unlike different forms of light painting, LAPP is one of the first types of art that uses light as the medium to get widespread attention.

Not only does it require the illumination of existing objects, it requires the photographer to **capture and create new subjects** based entirely on light. The main reason as to why it differs from other photographic forms such as light writing and light painting is due to the **inclusion of a background** in the photo.

LAPP is an easy form of art; all you need is a DSLR or a Lomo camera that has a shutter frequency under 5 seconds. Despite the appearance, LAPP does not require the artist to have any Photoshop skills. The additional tools one can use in creating this art form include a **source of light** e.g (glow sticks, laser beams, poi balls, LED lights), a **tripod, flashlight, flash and strobes, lenses and tape**.

As simple as it sounds, LAPP requires certain techniques to be followed in order to achieve the best results. However, you are not entirely restricted to solely using them.

Here are some of the techniques you can use for creating perfect Light Art Performance photographs.

Using Different Angles

Using different angles in creating the images is the key towards making your light photography come to life. It helps bring out interesting three dimensional effects to the objects you are photographing. A great example would be when taking the pictures from the ground, hold the beam down low, then pan the light above the ground.

When you are working with different angles don't let the object stand in between the light and the camera or else the resulting picture will be a silhouette. Other than just presenting light from behind the camera around the object, try painting it from the sides. This could involve illuminating the sides of flat surfaces, which will allow you to bring out the various textures of the surface.

Appropriate Use of Light

Avoid shining the source of light at the camera directly, as this will create a bright spot on the image. **Flashlights with red filters** are great to use, as they will prevent you from ruining your night vision. They also come in handy when you need light and want to make camera adjustments.

Keep the light moving; the beam should be moved in slow strokes in the areas where less lighting is required. Just like you would paint with a brush, paint with the light; up and down or side to side strokes. Make sure the clothes worn are non-reflective, so as to ensure you don't appear as a ghost in the picture.

Choosing the Right Surface

This is important when shooting objects on surfaces. Since different surfaces react differently to light, it is good to note the right surface to get the desired result. Surfaces such as wood are believed to require more light because the **rougher the surface, the more light is absorbed**. For shiny surfaces such as glass or metal, it is quite the opposite as they reflect light at maximum exposure.

Camera Settings

Adjust the following camera settings accordingly:

Aperture: Make sure the aperture setting is high. This is because you'll need the lowest amount of light hitting the sensor as it counters the long shutter. Any aperture set above f/8 will work perfectly. It may seem odd to take images at such a high aperture, but you can always decrease or increase the exposure when editing. Photoshop and other photo editing tools can assist in adjusting the image to the right exposure.

- **ISO:** Photographers report that the lower the ISO setting, the better the shots. You can try out different settings to choose the most suitable in your setup.

Shutter Speed: Try shutter speeds of a few seconds for the initial LAPP shots and scribble with the flash-light. Then adjust the ISO and the aperture depending on what you want to paint. Once the pictures are starting to appear as you wish and you want more time to draw the images, move towards the bulb setting on the DSLR.

Additional Light Source Techniques

There are three light sources that one can use in light art performance photography. The three most efficient light sources are the **on-camera** light source, **off-camera** light source and the **kinetic light**.

1. **On-camera Light:** This involves creating the lighted image where the element that is illuminated can be viewed by the camera. This source is appropriate when creating light drawing, graffiti, photo booths and light writings.

Off-camera Light: This involves creating the image where the illuminated element is not visible to the camera. This involves having the artist or object behind the camera during long exposures. Light is also projected into the scenery to create the design and required colour within the frame now by using light painting brushes.

Kinetic light: This involves the process of leaving the light stationary and moving the camera around to create **motion, colours** and **designs** within the frames. A great example of using kinetic light is holding the camera with your hands and opening the camera's shutter for long exposure while using the moon's light to create drawings.

If you are ready to experience a unique art form, get innovative and you'll be surprised with what you can

create. You don't have to follow this guide to the letter, try out something different and discover the possibilities. Create your own mix of composition, colour and lighting, and blend them together to invent astonishing pieces of art that stand out in the world of photography. This is what true art entails.

<https://www.apnphotographyschool.com/>

Panorama Photography Tips

You can take a panoramic image with a very wide-angle lens or you can take a series of shots and stitch them together. The great thing about creating a panorama by stitching photos together is the incredible detail that can be preserved. Using a sequence of shots also makes it possible to create 360×180 degree panoramas.

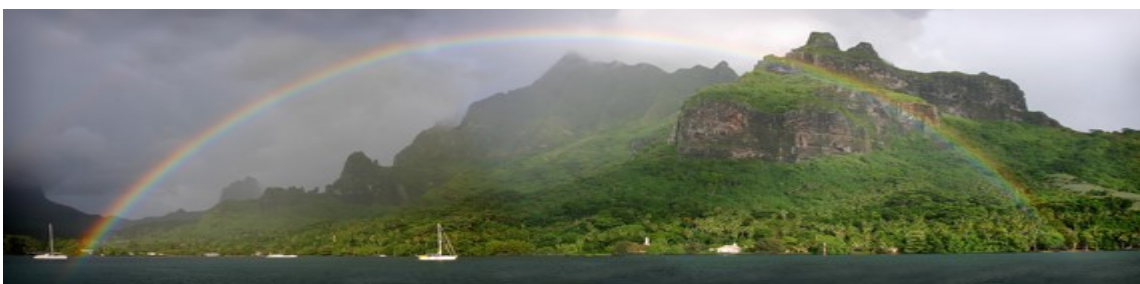


“Smokey Mountains Panorama” captured by PictureSocial member Todd Ward

Here are some tips for creating a standard panorama composed of multiple shots stitched together:

- Select a focal length between 18mm and 55mm.
- Use the same exposure, white balance, and focus for all the shots.
- Expose and focus on the focal point of your composition. Whatever is most important in the composition needs to be exposed properly. Everything else will have to use the same settings. Don't vary the settings or you will be able to easily see separate photos. Some point-and-shoot cameras have a panoramic mode built-in. For these cameras, you may need to take a photo of the focal point then start the panoramic sequence.
- Always shoot from left to right. The software that you will use to stitch the images together will expect the first image in the sequence to be on the far left.

Imitate the field of view that we see with our eyes. The normal field of view for human sight is



nearly 180 degrees.

“Panorama Moorea” captured by PictureSocial member Roland

- Overlap the images by about 1/3. This means that the second picture will repeat about 1/3 of the first picture. The third picture will overlap the second picture by 1/3, etc. If you have a tripod that shows degrees, each photo should be 25 to 30 degrees apart. You should take four to five shots—the number of shots depends on your focal length and the degrees between shots.

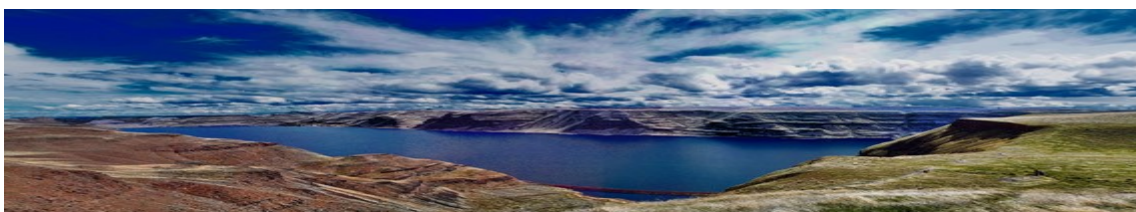
Use a tripod. It is possible to hand-hold panoramic shots, but the images probably won't line up very well. Point-and-shoot cameras with a panoramic mode usually show you a ghost image of the previous shot to help see the overlap, but you have to guess with DSLR cameras.



“Portofino Panorama” captured by PictureSocial member Jack Harwick

Some camera manufacturers, such as Canon, bundle software with the camera that can be used to stitch photos together. You can also use Adobe Photoshop to stitch the images together by selecting *File > Automate > Photomerge*. A free alternative is to use Hugin to stitch together complex panoramas such as 360×180 degree panoramas.

If you become obsessed with taking panoramas, you may want to get a special panoramic head for your tripod. These heads are specifically designed for taking panoramas and allow you to position the entrance pupil/no-parallax point of the camera's lens over the pivot point of the tripod in order to eliminate parallax errors.



“Columbia Gorge Panorama” captured by PictureSocial member Jack Harwick

There are even robotic heads that automate the process and take the pictures for you. Parallax errors become most obvious when there are really close objects in your scene. I have taken many panoramic shots of landscapes and seldom see parallax errors, but if you are a perfectionist, you will probably want to invest in a one of these heads.

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Night Landscape Photography

Many photographers assume that once the sun goes down, so do the opportunities to take spectacular landscape images. Some of my favourite photographs were taken under extremely low light or nearly pitch-black conditions. In fact, I have found that the darker it is the better results I usually get in my images. You are more likely to pick up unusual colors not typically visible to the naked eye while capturing wonderful streaks in the sky when shooting at night. Here are a few suggestions that will help you capture great nighttime landscapes.



Scout out locations during daylight hours

This is extremely important because it will be difficult at best to find good places suitable for nighttime photography during hours of darkness. I normally try to find several potential spots where I can go to shoot during a single trip out. Look for areas where it is safe to park your car and where you might be able to setup your tripod.

I have found myself standing right next to lonely country roads, in deep ditches, and over irrigation sloughs to get just the right composition. Having a specific place to setup in mind before it gets dark can save you a lot of time and frustration.

Find a strong subject to anchor your image

A good landscape image typically has something of interest in the foreground to grab the viewer's attention. Whether it is an old barn, hollowed out tree, or windy creek, try looking for something to make your image visually interesting. Also keep in mind the rule of thirds when composing your shots.

Avoid artificial light

The farther away you can get from city lights, the better your images will turn out. I have found that shooting in nearly pitch-dark conditions using long shutter speeds pulls out colours and tones not generally visible to the naked eye. I typically drive an hour or more to get to locations that have few or no artificial lights. Nearby artificial lighting will not kill a decent landscape image; however it can overwhelm the subtle ambient light that is naturally present. Remember that you can adjust the color temperature of your images later in processing so do not let a nearby light spoil your evening.

Do not trespass

Nothing ruins a night of landscape photography faster than being contacted by the police for trespassing on someone's property -especially at night (I know this from experience). My general rule of thumb is if the area in question has a fence around it, a sign posted advising that

trespassing is not allowed, or if it appears that someone is caring for the property, I usually stay out. I have been pretty successful at obtaining permission to go onto private property to take photographs; however remember to do this during the day. Being respectful and courteous can help you get into places that might be ordinarily off limits.

Take the right gear

Obviously you will need a sturdy tripod and remote bulb switch for the long exposures. I almost always shoot landscapes with a wide-angle lens. If you are shooting in cooler weather, ensure you have a fully charged camera battery and even consider bringing a second one with you. Between shooting in cold or cooler weather and long exposure times, battery life can dwindle quickly.



Be sure to bring a couple of flashlights along too. I typically bring a small LED light to adjust the exposure and shutter speed on my camera so as not to ruin my night vision. I also bring a small, high intensity Surefire flashlight to quickly shine on my foreground subject to get my image initially focused. There is nothing more frustrating than staying out all night shooting landscapes just to return home to find the main subject out of focus because it was too dark. I consider a bright flashlight so important that I will return home if I forget to bring it.

Bring warm cloths and snacks

Most of my images required between 5 and fifteen minutes to properly expose. I also typically take several shots of same composition at varying exposures (manual bracketing). This means that there is a lot of lag time between photographs. Standing outside in the middle of the night-even during the summertime-can get chilly. I usually wear pants; bring a light fleece jacket, cap, gloves, and light walking boots. I also recommend wearing something reflective so that passing drivers can easily see you. Bringing along snacks helps the time go by while waiting between exposures.

Consider shooting in RAW format

If you have not started doing this already, this might be a good time to begin shooting in RAW format. Nighttime landscape images are typically shot with long duration shutter speeds and the results are unpredictable. Shooting in RAW format offers you the ability to push shots a stop in either direction depending on your needs.

Carefully consider your composition

Most of the time you are not going to see much of anything but black through the viewfinder. I usually start out by taking a short exposure of what I think is a properly composed shot. For example, I found myself standing in nearly pitch-black conditions for the shot below. The light visible in the horizon in the image was only faintly visible to me while taking the photographs. I started out by exposing the image at f-3.5 for about 30-seconds. This yielded a very

dark image; however I was able to at least see the overall composition. I ended up needing to straighten out the skyline and move the composition upward to include more of the sky. After taking several short duration exposures, I was ready to start zeroing in on a proper shutter speed.

Since I am usually shooting in very dark conditions, I rarely raise my f-stop up past f-3.5 or f-4.5. Remember that each time you close your aperture down by one stop, you are doubling the exposure time. This can really add up if you are starting out with a ten-minute exposure.

Keep it in focus

Take the time to get your image in sharp focus. As I mentioned above, having a bright flashlight will make it easier to use your camera's automatic focus. This is method I prefer because I never know if the image is truly focused if I set the focus manually (since it is typically so dark). I usually focus on a main foreground subject using a high intensity flashlight. When that isn't possible, I sometimes try to focus on the horizon or a bright object in the distance such as a streetlight. I have even been successful finding a focus point by using distant stars. If all else fails and your camera refuses to settle in on a focus point, switch to manual focus mode and start experimenting.

Consider including the sky as much as possible

The beauty of nighttime landscape photography is the wonderful tones, textures, and colours you get in the sky. Each time I go out, I come back with something new. I have found clear or partially cloudy nights work best. I especially love shooting nighttime landscapes when a few high altitude, thin cirrus clouds are moving through the area. These clouds, against a clear night sky, turn into feathery streaks during long exposures. Pay attention to where the bright stars are and do the best you can to include them in your shot. I have found setting the shutter speed to 5-minutes or longer creates beautiful streaks of light from the individual stars.



Use the bulb setting on your camera

After arriving and setting up my camera on a tripod, I take several test shots to confirm my composition. At this point I also lock in on the focus. The test shots I take will range from 30-60 second exposures at f-3.5. This usually gives me just enough of an image preview in my camera's LCD to allow me to adjust and finalize the overall composition. Next I work to find the ideal shutter speed. I typically have a rough idea of how

much time I am going to need to expose the shot after looking at the 30-second test shots I took. This can range from two or three minutes to 15-minutes depending on the lighting conditions. I usually try to adjust my in-camera exposure settings so that my shutter speed is at least five minutes or longer. I do this in hopes of capturing the unique and interesting colours and tones present in the non-visible ambient light. I also want to get as much streaking out of

the stars and clouds in the sky as possible.

Keep in mind that each f-stop increment upward doubles your shutter speed. For example, if the settings for a properly exposed image are f-4 at 120-seconds, then the shutter speed would jump to around 240-seconds if you bumped your f-stop up to f-5.6. This can add up real quick!

Long exposures can result in more digital noise

Always shoot at the lowest ISO possible for your camera. For example with my Canon I shoot at 100 ISO. Even after shooting at a low ISO, you may find that there is a bit more digital noise in your nighttime images as a result of the longer shutter speeds. My experience has varied in that I sometimes find more noise than usual and other times the noise is not noticeable at all. The most likely place for you to spot increased noise will be in the sky. To resolve this problem I typically run the noise reduction filter later in Photoshop and then paint out areas of the image that I do not want it to affect. Noise Ninja is another effective noise reduction tool.

Have fun

Remember to have fun and experiment. None of these suggestions should be considered hard and fast rules. I am always trying out new ideas. I think the key to getting exceptional landscape images is to shoot often and to be willing to go out and come back empty handed. As strange as that sounds, it has really proven true for me. Every time I head out to shoot I always hope to come back with stunning images. The sad truth is that I occasionally come back with just mediocre shots that never see the light of day. At some point I realized that this was just a natural part of learning and growing as a photographer. You just never know when you are going to be in the right place at the right time with your camera. It is all about capturing those unique and beautiful moments. Good luck!

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"I'M LACTOSE INTOLERANT!"

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