

**Dapto Camera Club Magazine.**

# **Viewfinder.**

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## Night Sky Photography for Beginners

Photographing the endless wonders of the night sky is a highly rewarding experience that gives you a deeper connection to the universe. Though many modern smartphones have night-sky photography modes, a full-blown DSLR camera offers better clarity and the ability to bring out much greater detail than the human eye can see. Here are a few tips to help you get started.

How to take pictures of space You can take spectacular space images with your DSLR camera. We're going to show you how to get breathtaking photos of the Moon, star trails, and the Milky Way galaxy. *Video: The Planetary Society*

### Before the Shoot

Timing and planning are as important for astrophotography as they are for everyday photography. Scout your shoot location ahead of time to get a sense of the layout and visualize your compositions. Consider including interesting features of the landscape in the foreground of your image to help tell a story and convey a sense of place. Familiarize yourself with the night sky using apps and other resources. Know the moonrise time in your location, as well as when the objects you're interested, such as the Milky Way, will rise and the direction they will travel overhead. PhotoPills is a fantastic photography app to use for planning.

Light pollution is an important consideration when selecting a shoot location. Get as far away from city lights as possible, and if possible, go to higher elevations where there are less particles in the air to scatter light. This will make your images clearer and more detailed. Shooting in colder temperatures will give you cleaner images due to your camera's sensor heating less during long exposures and generating less noise.

### Basic Equipment

You don't need lots of expensive gear to take beautiful images of the night sky. These four items are enough to get you started:

- A camera with manual-mode functionality. Manually controlling the ISO, aperture, and shutter speed is very important. For best results, use a full-frame camera, which will have a larger sensor to capture more light. Full-frame cameras also generate less noise at higher ISO settings.
- A tripod sturdy enough for shooting long exposures in windy conditions. A ball-head mount on your tripod is much easier to use in the dark than a standard tripod mount.
- If you're photographing the Milky Way, you'll want a wide-angle lens with a wide aperture (f/2.8 or lower if possible).

### Links of Interest:

Viewbug - <http://www.viewbug.com/>

ePHOTOzine - <http://www.ephotozine.com/>

Federation of Camera Clubs [NSW] - <http://www.photographyNSW.org.au/>

Australian Photographic Society - <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/>

Gurushots - <https://gurushots.com/>

Free Lessons with Serge Ramelli - <http://photoserge.com/free-lessons/all>

Viewfinder cover photo taken by.

**Troy Walters**

infrared

Photo

A shutter-release cable to help minimize any potential camera shake and enable you to shoot exposures

longer than 30 seconds.

### Photographing the Moon

The Moon is a great starting point for night sky photography because of its brightness. This brightness varies as the Moon goes through its phases. The fuller the Moon is, the less exposure time is needed. And as parts of the Moon pass into shadow, you get more definition on the craters on its surface. All of these differences make for an interesting variety of photographing experiences.

Before photographing the Moon, decide on when and where you want to shoot it. For extra-sharp detail, wait until the Moon is at its highest point in the sky. For location, avoid ambient light from street lights and traffic. This may mean going off on a remote road or into a public park after hours, or at the very least turning off as many lights as you can.

For the best Moon photos, use telephoto lenses with at least a 200mm focal length, and zoom in as far as you can. Set the ISO to 100 or lower, and the aperture to f/11 to f/16, depending on your lens. You'll want to play around with these settings a bit to find which ones work best for your camera. You'll also want to adjust them depending on the Moon phase. When the Moon is less full, you'll want to use narrower aperture values and higher ISO. Set your shutter speed to 1/60th to 1/125th, and again you can play around

with this to find what works best. Manually focus on the Moon or set the focus to infinity, and click!

### Photographing the Milky Way

There's nothing more incredible than seeing the grandeur of the Milky Way from a dark location. The Milky Way is best photographed during a new Moon—or up to one week before or after—as the Moon's brightness will wash out the Milky Way.

When photographing the night sky, you need to account for the Earth's rotation. You can only expose your image for a short time before the stars are no longer pinpoints and begin to trail in your image. Since you're trying to capture as much light from the sky as possible, it's important to use a wide-angle lens that has a large maximum aperture (f/2.8 or lower). A 14-24mm wide-angle zoom lens ideal to use on a full-frame camera, or a 10-20mm lens on a crop-sensor camera.

To calculate how long your exposure can be before star trails appear, use the 500 Rule:

Full-frame cameras:

$$\text{Maximum Exposure Time (in seconds)} = 500 / \text{Focal Length}$$

Crop-sensor cameras:

$$\text{Maximum Exposure Time (in seconds)} = 500 / (\text{Focal Length} \times 1.5)$$

For example, if you're shooting at 14mm on a full-frame camera, the maximum exposure time would be  $500/14$ , or around 35 seconds.

Just remember that the 500 Rule is a rule of thumb and should serve only as a starting point. You'll need to experiment and adjust your exposure times accordingly. As you become more familiar with photographing the night sky, you won't even need to reference it.

Switch your wide-angle lens to manual focus and focus to infinity. You can then shoot at values in the following ranges to produce consistently great results:

Aperture: f/2 - 2.8

Exposure: 10 - 30 seconds

ISO: 1600 - 6400

Color balance: 4000 - 5000K (Daylight / Auto)

Try different settings in these ranges to find a combination that works best for your particular camera setup.

### Capturing Star Trails

We do everything possible to avoid star trails when shooting the Milky Way, but sometimes the trails are exactly what we aim to capture. Long exposures of star trails create gorgeous images of the night sky that depict the passage of time.

In the northern hemisphere, all of the stars in the night sky appear to revolve around the North Star, or Polaris. If you shoot a long exposure with your camera pointed at Polaris, you'll notice that all of the stars circle around it. Use Polaris as your guide when choosing a direction to shoot. The two outermost stars in the bowl of the Big Dipper point to Polaris.

You have two options when shooting long exposures of star trails. You can either take a single long-exposure photograph using a very low ISO, or you can take a sequence of images that can be stacked in

software like StarStax. For example, instead of a single 60-minute exposure, you can shoot 120 images of 30-second exposures taken consecutively.

Stacking exposures is the recommended method. First of all, the longer your exposure is, the more your camera sensor heats and generates noise in your image. Secondly, the stacking method makes it possible to photograph star trails in light-polluted areas. Even if you're in a bright city, you could shoot 1,000 images of two or three-second exposures and still capture star trails. Finally, many different factors could ruin a single long-exposure, such as a dead battery, tripod shake, or an unexpected light source entering the frame.

While a wide-angle lens is best for the Milky Way, you can use a lens of any focal length to photograph star trails. Note that the wider the lens is, the longer you'll have to wait for star trails to fill your frame. If you remember the 500 Rule example from before, you need to wait around 35 seconds for star trails to appear with a 14mm lens on a full-frame camera. Using an 85mm lens instead, you only need to wait  $500/85$ , or about 5 seconds.

Using a longer focal length is your best choice if you want longer star trails to appear over a shorter period of time. Use the widest aperture setting on your lens so you can shoot at the lowest possible ISO when exposing your image. Always remember that a higher ISO means more noise.

Place your camera in continuous shooting mode and set the shutter speed to your desired exposure time. By locking the shutter button down on your shutter-release cable, your camera will take consecutive images as each exposure ends until you stop it. Alternatively, you can use the built-in intervalometer on your camera (if it has one) to set the desired parameters.

Don't forget to bring extra batteries! Long exposures and cold nights will quickly drain their life.

### Happy Shooting

Photographing the night sky is a blank canvas of possibilities for a photographer. It will take a lot of experimentation to discover which settings work best for you. In the process, you'll gain a deeper understanding and fascination for the cosmos.

<https://www.planetary.org/space-images/the-milky-way-at-mono-lake>



These days, mirrorless cameras are all the rage – but what do they offer over a trusty, dependable DSLR? If you're a photography beginner, should you buy a DSLR or a mirrorless camera? And if you're already a DSLR user, is it worth upgrading to mirrorless?

In this article, I'll break it all down for you. I'll share the pros and cons of DSLRs vs mirrorless cameras, and I'll also include plenty of practical examples so you can evaluate how mirrorless and DSLR cameras fare when shooting landscapes, sports, portraits, and more. By the time you're done, you'll know which camera type is right for you.

Let's dive right in.

## Mirrorless cameras vs

### DSLRs: What's the big difference?

On the surface, mirrorless cameras and DSLRs look remarkably similar – but open them up, and you'll find some *major* differences. In this section, I'll get you up to speed on basic mirrorless and DSLR technology.

What is a DSLR camera?

DSLRs, also known as *digital single-lens reflex cameras*, all share a similar design:

Light enters through the lens, bounces off a mirror, goes through a special prism, and beams through the viewfinder into your eye.

Then, when you press the shutter button, the mirror flips up to expose the camera sensor to light. Immediately, the viewfinder blackens (no mirror means no light, right?), the shutter moves out of the way of the sensor, and – *voila!* – your photograph is taken.

Here's a neat diagram that displays the process.

Now, DSLR cameras work smoothly, but they come with a fundamental problem:

Mirrors take up a *lot* of space. If you've ever held a DSLR, you've undoubtedly noticed the significant size and weight; that's courtesy of these unique DSLR components, which require a large, heavy housing. For some photographers, this isn't an issue, but for others – those who shoot all day, travel frequently, carry a camera nonstop, or simply prefer a small, lightweight package – DSLRs are just too big and bulky. And that's where mirrorless cameras come in.

What is a mirrorless camera?



Mirrorless cameras are like DSLRs, but with one fundamental difference:

They *don't* include a mirror. Light enters the lens and *never* bounces off a mirror to beam through a viewfinder; instead, the light goes straight to the sensor. The sensor is then digitally projected onto the camera's rear LCD, and (sometimes) through an electronic viewfinder.

When you hit the shutter button on a mirrorless camera, the sensor simply starts recording data, and you get a photo. (Often a mechanical shutter is involved, but that's beyond the scope of this article.)

Thanks to the absence of a mirror, mirrorless cameras are generally much smaller than their DSLR counterparts, especially when compared to cameras of an equivalent sensor size – though the removal of mirror technology has led to a number of additional benefits and drawbacks, as I discuss below.

By the way, it's important to note that there are actually many different types of mirrorless cameras on the market. Some have interchangeable lenses, and others offer a single, built-in lens. In fact, if you own a smartphone, then you already have a mirrorless camera, because all smartphone cameras lack a mirror (imagine trying to fit a mirror mechanism inside one of those tiny lens holes!).





Even though the Panasonic Lumix GH4 uses a smaller Micro Four Thirds sensor, it produces photos on par with most APS-C sensors and even shoots 4K video. (Photo courtesy of Panasonic)

## Mirrorless cameras: the benefits

Now that you're familiar with the basic mirrorless vs DSLR differences, let's take a closer look at the pros of mirrorless technology, starting with:

**Mirrorless cameras are smaller and lighter than DSLRs**

I mentioned it above, but it's such a big deal that it bears repeating:

Thanks to the loss of the mirror mechanism and the viewfinder prism, mirrorless cameras are significantly smaller than DSLRs. Full-frame mirrorless models compare favorably to full-frame DSLRs, APS-C mirrorless models are the size of compact point-and-shoot cameras, and Micro Four Thirds mirrorless models are generally *tiny*.

If you like to take your camera with you wherever you go, you'll have a much easier time with a mirrorless camera. And they're pretty light, too, so you can shoot all day without feeling fatigued (assuming your lens is on the smaller side!).

**Mirrorless cameras offer feature-rich electronic viewfinders and LCDs**

Pretty much all enthusiast and professional mirrorless models feature an electronic viewfinder, which gives you a continuous live feed to the sensor. And if your camera doesn't feature an electronic viewfinder, it still offers an LCD display that includes the same features (albeit without the convenience of a light-shaded viewfinder).

Benefits vary from camera to camera, but may include:

- An accurate preview of image exposure *before* you ever press the shutter button
- Focus peaking, which lets you identify in-focus and out-of-focus areas in the viewfinder

Manual focusing aids, so you can consistently nail manual focus

A live histogram, so you can accurately check exposure as you adjust your settings

**Mirrorless cameras offer silent shooting modes**

If you've ever fired a DSLR, you'll know that it is *loud*, which can be a problem when you're trying to shoot surreptitiously (during a wedding, for instance, or when capturing candid shots on the street).

But many mirrorless cameras feature some form of silent shooting, and it's literally *silent*. This is perfect for event photographers looking to keep their presence as unobtrusive as possible, as well as street photographers and even wildlife photographers hoping to remain unnoticed by their subjects.

Now, some DSLRs do feature silent-shooting modes, but (in my experience) these aren't *really* silent.

Sure, they're quieter than the standard *clunk* of a DSLR shot, but in a quiet room, the noise from a silent-shooting DSLR will still be audible.

**Mirrorless cameras feature superior autofocus**

Until recently, DSLRs were *undoubtedly* faster (and better) at focusing – but thanks to recent improvements in fundamental AF technology, along with various additions made possible by on-sensor mirrorless AF, today’s best mirrorless cameras are, on average, speedier and more accurate focusers than DSLRs. Why? For one, top-notch mirrorless cameras offer far more focusing points than their DSLR counterparts, which means more focusing flexibility, improved precision, and better tracking.

And mirrorless cameras allow for high-level focusing technology, including Eye AF (where the AF mechanism focuses on the eye of human subjects, which is helpful for portraits and events), Animal Eye AF (where the AF mechanism focuses on the eyes of animals, such as wildlife and pets), and Vehicle AF (where the AF mechanism focuses on cars and motorcycles).

Not all mirrorless cameras offer these class-leading autofocus features, and some DSLRs can still trounce many mirrorless cameras when photographing sports and other action scenes. But mirrorless autofocus technology *has* started to pull ahead of DSLRs (plus, manufacturers are adding new updates all the time).

## DSLR cameras: the benefits



DSLRs might be based on old technology, but don’t count them out just yet. They are preferred by many photographers and still have some advantages over mirrorless cameras. (*Photo courtesy of Canon*)

Mirrorless cameras are impressive, but there are plenty of reasons to stick with a reliable DSLR. Here are the key items to consider:

### DSLRs offer better battery life

DSLRs are mostly mechanical, whereas mirrorless cameras rely heavily on LCDs and electronic viewfinders. Consequently, while most DSLRs are rated at 800 shots per charge or more, many mirrorless cameras sit in the 300-400 shots range.

Now, the figures above are based on CIPA ratings, which don’t mimic real-life use. A standard mirrorless user may capture more than 400 shots on a single battery – but you’ll still need to carry a handful of extra batteries for day-long shoots and when traveling, which can get inconvenient (and rather pricey, too).

On the other hand, you can expect your DSLR to perform well on one or two batteries, so if you’d prefer to work without the need for plenty of spares, a DSLR may be the better buy.

### DSLRs feature optical viewfinders

When you look through a mirrorless viewfinder, you see a digital image – but when you look through a DSLR viewfinder, you see *exactly* what the lens sees.

In other words, DSLR viewfinders (called *optical viewfinders*) show you the world as it is, while mirrorless viewfinders (*electronic viewfinders*) show how the world looks to your camera sensor.

While electronic viewfinders have their advantages, some photographers simply like seeing the real world, *not* a digital display. Plus, electronic viewfinders come with a couple of issues. They get very noisy and low quality at night, and they don’t work well with strobes – so if you’re an astrophotographer, a studio

portrait photographer, or a product photographer, you'll likely appreciate the true-to-life viewfinder of a DSLR.

## DSLRs vs mirrorless cameras: which should you buy?

Here's the truth about DSLRs and mirrorless models:

Neither is fundamentally better than the other.

Instead, mirrorless cameras offer several key advantages, such as live exposure simulation, a smaller size, and silent shooting – while DSLRs counter with a few advantages of their own, including outstanding battery life and optical viewfinders.

So which should you buy? It depends on your shooting needs. If you like to travel with your camera, you appreciate silent shooting, and you like the idea of a helpful exposure preview, then I'd recommend purchasing a mirrorless camera.

But if you prefer the clarity of an optical viewfinder or you hate the idea of short battery life, go with a DSLR.

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## Backlighting Photography Tips for Photo Magic

By Ian Plant

My favourite style of shooting is against the light (known as contre-jour or backlighting). Backlighting in photography occurs when you point your camera directly toward a source of light, whether it be the sun, a street lamp, or a relatively bright portion of the scene. This effect causes the subject to be lit from behind, making its fringes seem to glow from within. When used properly, backlighting can help you create dramatic and mysterious photos.

### Make It Glow

Anything translucent will appear to glow from within when backlit. In particular, subjects surrounded by fog, steam, dust, sea spray, and even falling snow can look magical in backlighting. During a photo trip to Namibia, the clear desert air there was perfect for contre-jour shooting, especially at sunrise and sunset when the light was most colorful. When I saw a trio of elephants heading my way at sunset, I selected a camera position designed to maximize my backlight opportunities. I photographed the elephants kicking up dust as they walked; the dust caught the warm light of the setting sun, giving the resulting image a colorful, mysterious look.



*Etosha National Park, Namibia. Canon EOS 5D Mark III Camera, Canon EF 200-400mm f/4L IS USM Lens with Internal 1.4x Extender, ISO 400, f/5.6, 1/640 second.*

### Shade Your Lens to Prevent Flare

Flare, which results from light directly striking the front glass element of your lens, can be a significant challenge when shooting into the light, especially when the light source is very strong. Flare can reduce contrast, add strange

color casts, and even leave your images covered in unsightly “alien space ships” (oblong blobs of color caused by excessive flare). It is typically possible to shade your lens from direct light striking the glass by using a lens hood, your hand, or something handy like a hat. Make sure you completely block the light, keeping the lens glass in shadow; just don't get your fingers in the shot!

For this image below of a charging grizzly bear, I chose to let the bear go into silhouette, retaining detail only in the fringe of its fur and the backlit water drops, resulting in a graphic, simplified, and mysterious





presentation. Even though this is midday light, which conventional wisdom suggests is of limited utility for nature photography, backlighting nonetheless proves to be effective. I was careful to use my lens hood to prevent the light from directly striking the front element of my lens. The result is a crisp, sharp, and dramatically lit image.

*Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, USA. Canon EOS 5D Mark II Camera, Can-*

*on EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM Lens, ISO 800, f/5.6, 1/2500 second.*

## Expose with Care

The edges of backlit subjects, such as this snowy egret, glow with light, and often it is difficult to keep these areas from becoming overexposed. Do your best to avoid overexposing highlights, but if you cannot, set your exposure to ensure that important mid-tones have sufficient detail. For this shot of the egret, I was unable to avoid slightly overexposing the backlit fringes of the bird's white feathers, so I chose an exposure that optimized exposure for the rest of the scene, ensuring an overall brightly lit and colorful photo.

## Look for a Dark Background

Backlit subjects look best when juxtaposed against a dark background (usually another part of the scene which is in shade). For this photo of a rain forest, strong midday backlight created a dramatic rim light effect. The translucent moss-covered fringes of the trees seem to glow from within; I was able to enhance the effect by choosing a camera position which put a shadowed hillside behind the trees, making them seem to “pop” out of the background.



## Shoot in Strong Light for Maximum Effect

Strong light is vital to getting the best backlighting – the stronger the light, the better the effect! For this image of one of the world-famous Chincoteague wild ponies, a clear horizon, free of clouds, haze, or any other obstruction, allowed bright, warm light to catch every translucent surface and set it on fire. This is precisely the look you should be aiming for!

*Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, USA. Canon 5DIII, Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II USM Lens with 1.4x Extender, ISO 400, f/5.6, 1/500 second.*

## Conclusion

Although backlighting presents a number of technical challenges, the results are well worth the effort. So the next time you're out taking pictures, start thinking of creative ways to shoot into the light!

# Back Button Focus Explained the Easy Way! [2020 Updated]

Wondering why you should use back button focus?

Back button focus usually confuses photographers at first but once they “get it”, they love it! If there is anything I wish I had known sooner in my journey as a photographer, it would be this one simple thing: *Back Button Focus*.

Back button focusing has been quite possibly the biggest game changer in my photography journey. Since I set up back button focusing, I have noticed a remarkable difference in the accuracy of my focus.

## What is Back Button Focus?

Within your camera’s menu settings, you have the ability to assign certain functions to different buttons on your camera. With most DSLR cameras, by default, you half press the shutter button down to set the focus. This article is intended to explain photographers the benefits of assigning the task of focusing on one back button *other than* pressing the shutter button.

Back button focusing simply changes the method of focusing by assigning the focus function to one button on the back of your camera (this button will differ depending on your camera model, but it’s often on the button on the back of the camera).

Back button focusing means that your index finger is now solely responsible for releasing the shutter, and your thumb is now responsible for focus.

And while many photographers would argue that this makes it more complicated, I would have to disagree. While at first to set up back button focusing may be *different* than you are used to, using your thumb and index finger simultaneously is certainly no more complex, easier once muscle memory kicks in. Simultaneous use of fingers is something photographers do all the time in everyday life!

Before we get started, I’d like to explain that there is nothing “magical” about how to set up Back Button Focus. However, there are many situations in which utilizing the methods below will make better use of your camera and its capabilities.

A lot of times, many photographers just don’t know what those capabilities are. This article & video below is intended to help explain some of these capabilities, enabling you to have a higher degree of focusing accuracy in your photos.

## Why use it?



There are a few reasons why I prefer to use Back Button Focus over focusing with the shutter button.

### 1. Your Focus will Hold (even if you release the shutter button).

When you remove the focusing function from the shutter button, you no longer need to worry about how to press your shutter button down to maintain focus on your model. How many times have you focus a shot, accidentally removed your finger from the shutter, only to have the camera refocus (and usually not on your intended model) once you pressed it down again?

Set the camera shutter button to obtain focus requires that you continually find that perfect pressure balance of hold-

ing the shutter halfway down without 1) releasing the button and losing focus entirely, or 2) half press or pressing the button too firmly and taking the shot before you were ready.

Placing the focusing function on another button on your camera entirely allows the shutter button to *only* be responsible for releasing the shutter.

This way to set focus on your camera may not seem like much of a game-changer but think for a moment about photographing a subject moving (sports or family and child photographers, anyone?). In the millisecond you need to focus and *then* shutter release, your model may have moved.

The result: a blurry and out of focus model. By separating the focus and shutter functions with this setting on your camera, you can focus and get the shot *simultaneously*. Gaining back those precious milliseconds via back button focusing allowed me to nail focus and get this shot as the family jumped from rock to rock.



## 2. Focus and Recompose with Ease

Additionally, when you remove the focusing function from the shutter button on your camera, you enable yourself to focus the shot and then recompose the shot as needed, while your model stays in focus.

When the back button controls the focus on your camera, as soon as you recompose the shot and press the shutter, the camera will attempt to refocus again, leaving your intended model out of focus.

Sure, you could bypass this by locking focus, then switching your camera lens into manual focus, but locking focus on the camera and switching your camera lens into manual focus is a hassle.

Some photographers would say that the manual way to focus and recompose should be avoided and that you should just toggle your focus point. I agree, and I toggle my manual focus point in all situations.

*However*, I also remember how few manual focus points some cameras have, and sometimes the area of manual focus points falls outside of the focus point. Being able to recompose in those situations is key.

For more on recomposing your shots with the back button focus on your camera and manual focus, be sure to scroll down and check out the graphic below!

## 3. More Versatile Focusing

What I really love about Back Button Focusing is the ability to pair the back button with a continuous focus mode for accurate and quick focusing in all situations.

Back button focus alone is beneficial, but if you frequently photograph moving subjects, you can really take your ability to nail focus up a notch by utilizing a focus mode along with back button focus.

A continuous focus mode (AI Servo mode for Canon, AF C for Nikon) allows you to track a subject moving and keep it in focus while you take a picture.

By continuing to press the button, your Canon or Nikon camera will automatically readjust focus as your subject moves. This series of images to the right is a perfect example.

These were shot using the AI-Servo manual focus mode, and back button focus. As my son was swinging the bat, I was able to maintain focus on him (even while he was moving) *and* take a series of shots in quick succession.

I was able to do this because 1) the shutter was not trying to regain focus for each shot, and 2) my focus mode allowed me to track his movement.



In this photo, I was able to track the movement of my daughter running towards me by keeping my thumb on the button as I shutter release with my index finger.

Even though she was running towards me and the plane of focus was changing by the millisecond, by utilizing back button focus and the continuous focus mode together, I was able to achieve excellent focus on an otherwise difficult shot.

Can you use a continuous focus mode with the button as your focus button? Absolutely. *But*, you forgo the above other benefits and the flexibility they afford you in all situations.

This is why I love pairing Back Button Focus and a continuous focus mode—no matter what situation I find myself in, I have the ability to nail focus quickly and accurately.

If I have a moving subject, I can hold down my button to track my subject and shutter release at anytime. If my subject is still, I can lock focus with my focus button, recompose if I need or desire, and press the shutter to get the shot at any time. It truly is a versatile set up.

## How to Set Back Button Focus

*If you use a Canon:*

Setting your camera to back button focus isn't difficult, if you know where to go. I will explain how I set it on my Canon 6D, and the process should be similar for other Canon DSLR cameras.

Please note, every camera model is slightly different, you might have to consult your manual or google for how to set back button focus up on your specific camera model.



Step 1: In my Canon 6D, the custom settings can be found in Custom Function III (C.FnIII)

Step 2: Scroll to screen 5 for custom settings controls.

Step 3: In that camera menu, I set the button to “metering start.” (*Turning if OFF of AF Start is what removes the focus function from the shutter, and this is a crucial step!!*)

Step 4: Set the AF-ON button to “metering start and AF start.”

Look to the photos below for help with these settings.



Custom Controls Menu for Canon 5D Mark III – the rest of the steps are the same as on the Canon 6D as outlined above.

*If you use a Nikon:*

First check to see if your camera has an AF-On button. If you do, then it's quite easy to set the focus to a

back-button focus! The photos below are from a Nikon D800.

Step 1: All you'd have to do is choosing your focus selection in the custom settings menu (pencil icon)

Step 2: Select "a – Autofocus"

Step 3: Select "a4 – AF activation" and

Step 4: Select "AF ON only" and you're done.



If your Nikon doesn't have a AF-ON button, you'll need to assign AE L AF Button or select AF L button in the custom menus to use the AF L button as the AF-On button. Do this:

Go back to Custom Settings menu on your camera and then the Controls section. Choose Assign AE Lock button or Select AF L button and scroll down to AF-On. Press OK and then the AE L button or the AF L button at the back of the camera now acts like an AF-On button for back button focusing.

## How to Set Continuous Focus Mode

The continuous focus mode for Canon is AI-Servo (Nikon is using AF C) To set this on my Canon 6D I press the AF C button on the top of my camera, and use the top dial to scroll to AI-Servo after I've pressed the shutter AF C button.

Note: If you typically photograph still subjects or are a landscape photographer, back button focus and a continuous focus mode may not make much of a difference for you. Separating the functions of focus and being able to track your subject proves to be most beneficial for those who photograph a subject moving. Back Button Focus is a great tool that has a lot of benefits. Some would even say it feel more natural and intuitive. *But is it for everyone?* Not necessarily! If you have a focusing method that already works for you, and don't have issues with accurate focus, by all means, do what works for you.

Now it's your turn! Are you already an expert with the back button focus? I'd love to hear what kind of changes have you noticed in your photos since making the switch!

If you haven't already made the switch, give it a try and let us know how you like it! It may take some time to get used to, but I think you'll see a notable difference in your precision of focus!

<https://www.colesclassroom.com/back-button-focus-explained/>

**We are on the web !!**

**[www.daptocameraclub.org.au](http://www.daptocameraclub.org.au)**

**[www.facebook.com/groups/560318574135732/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/560318574135732/)**

# How to Use a Ring Light for Spectacular Photography Lighting

By Natalia Robert

You may have noticed the circle light reflection in the eyes in some portrait or beauty photos. Or you may have wondered how some incredible macro photos are so perfectly lit.

A ring light can open up options in your photography work, whether in the studio or out in nature!

Ring light photography is ideal for portraiture. (Photo by Hivan Arvizu SoyHivan)

## What Is a Ring Light?

A ring light is basically a light in the form of a circle. It can flash or be continuous and is generally made up of rows of LED lights that form one large ring.

The sizes can vary. Small ones can fit around your lens, while large ones may need their own weighted stand. You'll most often see ring lights be used in studio settings. But you can easily use the smaller ones outdoors and on location as well!

LED lights in a circle form the basic ring light. (Photo courtesy of B&H Photo)

## Why Use a Ring Light?



Ring lights provide even lighting, eliminating harsh shadows. (Photo by Jessica To Oto)

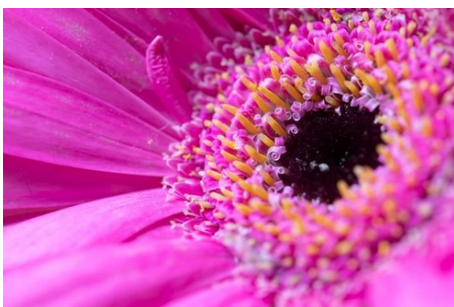
Another common use for a led ring light is with macro photography. Once again, the main benefit of eliminating shadows is what makes a ring light the perfect fit for macro photos. You'll have a light that wraps your lens. This means you no longer have to worry about creating any distracting shadows as you get closer to the subject!



The most common use for ring lights is in portrait photography. The most appealing benefit to using a led ring light is that it helps to eliminate harsh shadows. For portraits, being able to provide soft, even lighting on the face is crucial. The circle of light provided by a ring light does just that by widening the source of light. It provides a light hitting the face from slightly below, directly in front, and slightly above.

Another fun effect of using a led ring is the circular reflection in your subject's eyes. This is the typical tell-tale sign of a ring light in use. It also provides a sparkle of light in your subject's eyes.

Take a closer look at your fashion magazines. You'll find that fashion and beauty photography use ring lights very often!



Macro photography greatly benefits from ring lights due to the proximity of the subject. That's why a small portable light is everything you need for perfect macro lighting.

With their even and soft light, ring lights are also a great option for food photography. When it's used off-camera, it is perfect for lighting your subject from the side. This means you'll want to have one on a stand or handheld.

Ring flashes for food photography will help when creating an editorial look for blogs or restaurant marketing. A commercial or product pho-



tography look will require more extensive lighting setups.

Food photography can also benefit from the even light of a ring light. (Photo by Whitney Wright)

## What Should You Look for in a Ring Light?

Let's look at factors to consider when comparing models. There are so many options on the market that it will all come down to your genre of photography and your budget.

The main factors to consider are:

- Cost;
- Quality of build;
- Accessories needed (stand, mount for the camera, etc);
- The ability for different light settings;

Size/portability.

Small ring lights can fit on your lens. (Photo courtesy of B&H Photo)

### Cost

The main guiding factor will most likely be your budget. If you're testing out ring lights or don't plan on using them much, consider getting a model at a lower price point.

You can find ring lights starting at approximately \$100.

If your speciality is portraiture, macro, or food photography, you may want to consider a bigger investment for heavier use.



Be sure to consider what you can invest in without straining your finances.

### Quality of Build

Directly connected to cost, the quality of build is another factor to consider. The lower-priced models or those from smaller manufacturers will often lack in quality.

Sturdier ring lights will cost a bit more. But they will hold up to more wear and tear over time, making the higher investment worthwhile!

Consider your general habits with gear. Do you work in a studio? Your gear most likely doesn't take too tough of a beating.

Do you work on location and often stuff your gear into a backpack or case? Sturdier gear will be a better investment for you to withstand all the handling.

Accessories like mounts and stands are often needed and can add expense. (Photo courtesy of B&H Photo)

### Accessories

Also related to costs. Consider if any other items are necessary for using that particular ring light.

Are replacement bulbs expensive or hard to find? Will you need a mount of some sort in addition to the light itself? How does it charge?

Being fully informed of all the parts needed will help you make a better decision.

### Light Settings

Conditions will vary with every photo you take, so being able to adjust the light is vital. Before purchase, check whether you can adjust the light strength. Make sure it has enough adjustments to offer you the flexibility you'll need.

It is also important to check the light temperature and what options there are for adjusting that. Some setups might require warmer or cooler lights than usual. Having a color temperature dial on the ring light will



make  
your  
white

balance post-processing much easier.

It can also serve as an artistic effect. Filters are available for some models to allow you to shift the colour right away!

Adjusting the brightness and even the light temperature can give you greater control. (Photo by Motah)

### Size and Portability

The size and portability of the led ring are directly affecting your use. Do you shoot macro? You'll want a small ring light that wraps around your camera lens.

Do you do studio work for portraiture or detailed food setups? You may want to consider a larger ring light that goes on a weighted light stand.

Take some time to consider your use before investing money.

Macro photography calls for lots of mobility and ability to get close to your subject. (Photo by Dawn Armfield)

### Conclusion

A ring light can provide sharp, cleanly lit photos for many types of photography.

If you specialize in portraiture, you'll want to consider using ring lights. For other genres like macro and food photography, ring lights can also be extremely beneficial.

Whether you start with a cheap ring light or decide to invest in a larger one with a stand, your photography clients will thank you!

<https://expertphotography.com/ring-light-photography/>



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