

SCRAPCHAT TRANSCRIPT on PHOTOGRAPHY held 20 JULY 2006 9-11 p.m.

TAKING PICTURES INDOORS/NIGHTTIME SHOTS/AV MODE

Q: Why is it when I take pictures inside the house, they don't come out nice? It seems yellowish. I've tried fluorescent and tungsten mode but it's still not what I hoped for.

A: I don't like to use flash myself. It's quite tricky shooting at night time. You don't want to use the flash because it takes out the "drama" of the lighting in the house and it comes out too white.

Q: What if the light inside is not enough?

A: If your camera has a slow synch flash mode you can switch to that mode so that your flash will not be too strong. Or a trick is to put it at AV mode, while the pop up flash is on...your subject becomes lighted but the background will have traces of light.

By the way, on the tungsten mode, that is a WHITE balance setting and NOT an exposure setting.

Try to experiment with the different settings of the flash mode in your camera. You can also make sure there's a lot of light in the room. Set to a high ISO (absorption of light by the camera) at 400. This will also help compensate for the low light as well.

Another trick I've seen some photographers do is putting tissue paper over the flash to diffuse the light.

APERTURE VALUE

Q: Can you please explain more about the AV mode you referred to earlier?

A: AV is aperture value, which means the opening of the lens. The size of the opening affects the amount of light that goes in the lens, which in turn affects the exposure (brightness) of the shot. When you set your camera to AV mode, you get an effect where your subject is lit but not too white. Try it and see how it works with your camera.

The lower the number, say 2.8 the larger the opening of the lens. You use this when you want a very blurred background, say in portraits.

But for sceneries like landscapes, you want everything to be in focus or sharp. So, use a higher aperture value, say 11 to 22.

Q: I tried the AV mode just now when I took a pic of my son. Problem is, your subject has to stay very still, otherwise the shot will come out blurred.

A: Did you use the pop up flash? Try it again, the result is a bit artistic in effect. I usually use that trick during parties or in bars... :)

Q: How much aperture do I use if in the AV mode?

A: Standard photo 5.6 aperture value

TELEPHOTO LENS

Q: I just got a 75-300mm lens for my Canon 350D camera. Some say the cam's built in flash is not enough to take photos with this type of lens. Any recommendations?

A: It depends on what you're shooting. If it's outdoor like wildlife, then no need for flash. That's outdoor at daylight of course.

Q: So you wouldn't advise the use of these lens for indoors?

A: You can of course. I just can't think of too many occasions when you can use it indoors, unless at weddings for example. The lens we are talking about are telephoto lens for those who are unfamiliar with the 75-300mm.

TAKING SHOTS OF KIDS/USING THE ZOOM OF YOUR CAMERA

Q: Most of the photo subjects of scrappers are their children. In my case, I like to capture the natural expression on their faces so I try to keep my distance to be inconspicuous and just use my zoom to get a close up shot of my kids. What do you suggest regarding this and the use of zoom?

A: On shooting kids, you need to be quick, the need is SPEED! Because kids are unpredictable and we want to capture their cutest moments! You don't need to hide when taking pictures of kids. In fact, you have them comfortable so you bring out their natural behavior in front of the camera.

You don't need to take shots of kids with them always looking at the camera and saying "cheese"! Shoot them while playing or when they're having fun. The best shots are usually those taken very close to the subject to capture the wonderful expressions.

Also, go down to the kids' eye level. Kneel down when taking the shot. Kids will look small when they are looking up, unless that's the effect you want.

Q: Most digital cameras nowadays have a standard 3X optical zoom. Is this good enough?

A: 3x or 4X optical zoom is equivalent to 135mm focal length. That's a very good range already.

Q: 135mm is how far away in terms of feet? How far away can you be from the subject and still get a clear close up shot of him/her?

A: It's relative to how you are composing the subject, so I can't give an absolute answer in terms of feet. The thing is, point and shoot cameras have that constraint on zoom ability vs SLR cameras with telephoto lens. What you can do is, set the image size to large format. Then you can crop the picture later on to achieve the photo composition you wanted and still get a clear shot or a good resolution of what was cropped.

Q: What's the difference between optical and digital zoom?

A: In lay man's terms, optical zoom is the "real" zoom. With digital zoom, the more you use this, the quality of the picture will suffer.

IT'S NOT THE CAMERA, IT'S THE ONE BEHIND THE CAMERA/BASIC SHOOTING TIPS

Q: Can you get a good shot even if it's with a low-end digital camera?

A: YES! I once read "digital cameras don't take good pictures...people do" TRUE! You just need to familiarize yourself with your camera's features. I recommend to everyone here, READ THE MANUAL and make the most out of your camera's features.

There are some basic rules or tips in taking good photos.

- First, move in physically closer instead of using the zoom. The closer the better.
- The best LIGHT is natural light like sunlight. Best TIME is shortly after sunset.
- Always give your picture a main focal point, let your pictures tell a story. Don't put the subject dead center! A basic rule of photography is the rule of thirds. If you imagine the LCD display, divided that equally into 9 small squares. Position the main

subject at any point where the "virtual lines" intersect. You will get a far better picture and composition.

- Shoot from different angles or views. Experiment.
- In most instances, shoot with the sun behind you.
- To avoid blur because of shakes, position yourself with one foot in front, your elbow close to your body for stability, or have something to lean on to.

Those are the basics that will significantly improve photos.

BLACK & WHITE PHOTOS

One more, most people don't use the black & White photo mode. Try that once in a while for more dramatic photos!

Q: Why is it my B&W photos turn out looking washed out, unlike other people's black and whites which look sharp? Is this merely a matter of photo editing?

A: Check the setting, the contrast, the ISO may be the cause. Or check the exposure compensation. You might have unintentionally set it at +1 or +2 thus pictures turn washed out.

The Canon 350D has many pre-setting for B&W and monochrome mode. It even has filter settings, like sepia, green, purple (meaning B&W with a hint of these colors). To change the filter settings in the 350D, go to menu, picture mode, choose monochrome, choose filter setting. Experiment with the different settings taking the same subject to appreciate the different effects.

You may enhance your bw photos using photoshop software that came along with your camera kit. Try playing with the hue, contrast, setting and then sharpen using "unsharp mask" to create crisper bw shots.

POINT AND SHOOT vs SLR. TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY AN SLR.

Q: Can you give some advise on the pros and cons of a point and shoot vs an SLR in terms of size, price, picture quality...

A: Depends on your purpose or use of the camera. The top of the line point and shoot cameras are very good, with at least 3.3 megapixels for taking standard photos. Just put image size at maximum if you intend to print for the best print quality. I suggest you invest in a larger memory card.

Q: What about for scrappers who are mommies?

A: I wouldn't necessarily suggest buying an SLR. Again, it really depends for what purpose you will use the camera. In fact, if you want to take quick pictures, and take your camera everywhere, or take pictures of your kids anywhere, a smaller portable point and shoot camera is better than the bulky SLR.

For more serious photographers or hobbyists, then having an SLR will be rewarding. BUT it will not guarantee good pictures. The principles of basic photography is the same for point and shoot and SLRs. I suggest you really familiarize yourself with your camera's features. READ the manual. It's worth the time if you want great impact photos for your scrapbooks!

PHOTO PRINTING

Q: If I want to blow up a pic, say 8x11 or a little bigger for a scrapbook page, should I go to a professional photo lab or a regular Kodak store will do?

A: Kodak is ok.

OTHERS

Q: How can we take panoramic shots with your digicam?

A: Panoramic shots would require a special type of lens to execute. If you would like to do it with your regular cameras, you can "stitch" them together using photoshop. Or you can have the developer do that for you if they offer such a service.

There also some camera models like the Canon A40 which have the photostitch mode.

FINAL WORD FROM PATEN

Happy shooting everyone! Remember, express yourself through your photos! Capture those intimate, cute moments of your kids. And most importantly, have fun and enjoy!