

## **Maghull and Lydiate U3A – Digital camera group**

# **10 common camera mistakes every photographer makes !**

We've all made simple camera mistakes – some great and some small – but there are some that creep up a bit more frequently than others.

Here are the top 10 most common camera mistakes that most photographers make at some point and how to avoid them.

## Camera Mistake No. 1: Lens cap still on



Image by [Peter G Trimming / Flickr](#)

This is a classic error and nothing makes you feel dumber than some smart-Alec pointing out that the camera works better when the lens cap is off.

Most of us manage to laugh it off only thinking of the retort 'actually I'm just taking a dark frame for my noise removal protocols calibration. Don't you do that?' much later in the day. And inside you're kicking yourself.

Try to get into the habit of tipping the camera up as you lift it towards your eye so that you can check if the lens cap is on.

## Camera Mistake No. 2: Wrong sensitivity selected

If you've been shooting in low-light indoors without flash and then you head out into brighter conditions (or vice versa) there's a danger that the selected sensitivity setting will be wrong for the light conditions.

In some cases you may notice that the [aperture or shutter speed values are flashing in the viewfinder](#) to let you know that the maximum or minimum value is not sufficient, but on other occasions the settings may stay within these limits.

The key is to stay vigilant and keep an eye on the exposure settings and if you are shooting a landscape in aperture priority mode with an aperture of f/16 and you find that the camera is suggesting a shutter speed of 1/2000sec, check the sensitivity setting.

You may still get a correctly exposed image, but it will be noisier than it needs to be.

Conversely if the sensitivity is too low when you head indoors the shutter speed won't be fast enough to freeze any movement.



### Camera Mistake No. 3: Flat battery



Is there anything worse than flicking the power switch of your camera to discover that it's completely lifeless? In some cases this can be followed by a few moments of panic during which the hapless photographer desperately tries to operate every control in a frantic search for life.

And then it dawns on them...it's the battery, the battery is flat.

It doesn't matter how many times you flick that switch on and off, the battery is out of juice and the only way you can take any shots is to charge it up for a couple of hours.

The best way out of this photographic hiatus is to have two batteries, one in the camera and the other in your bag and fully charged, ready to roll.

Then as soon as the opportunity comes along to charge the flat battery you do so. Don't leave it, do it straight away.

## Camera Mistake No. 4: Wrong white balance



If you always shoot with the white balance setting set to automatic this probably won't be a major issue for you, but if you take care to get the very best result you can in-camera and set the white balance to match the shooting conditions, then this is something to look out for.

Using a white balance value that's designed for rendering warm indoor light neutral when you're outside will make the world look very cold. Conversely, using a daylight white balance under artificial lighting can result in a very warm, almost orange image.

Your camera's LCD screen is your saviour here, checking your image in it should alert you to any colour problems.

If you're shooting outside in bright conditions don't just give the LCD a cursory glance to check for exposure warnings, shade the screen and have a good look at the image colour, maybe even check the colour channel histograms to see if there are any unexpected peaks.

If things don't look right, the chances are that [the white balance needs adjusting](#).

## Camera Mistake No. 5: Spot metering still on



A camera's spot meter can be extremely useful because it lets you take very precise light measurements from small areas within the scene and ensure that your subject is correctly exposed.

However, if you leave it on and pick up your camera expecting the general purpose Evaluative, Matrix or Multi-zone system to be in action you are likely to get some very varied exposures.

If the metering spot (which may be linked to the AF point) falls over a very bright area the camera will reduce the exposure so that you get a very dark image and if it falls over a very dark part of the scene you will get a very light image.

The obvious way to avoid this situation from arising is to try to remember to [switch the camera to the metering setting that you normally use](#) before you put it away, but that's easier said than done.

If you find that the camera is saying that the image will be correctly exposed, but the results look very wrong, check that the metering isn't set to spot metering.

## Camera Mistake No. 6: Memory card full



The comparatively low price of memory means that we can now afford larger capacity cards, but this can lull us into a false sense of security.

Eventually, if you don't clear the card you will run out of space.

This situation is slightly less problematic than having a flat battery as memory cards, especially the SD variety are widely available on sale, but if you're miles from the shops that's not much comfort.

It's also bad practice to walk around with a collection of cards that are full with images.

Those cards are small and easy to misplace and it's easy to lose track of which images have been downloaded and which haven't.

The solution is to get into a routine of downloading your images (and backing them up to a second hard drive) as soon as possible after a shoot and then formatting the card in-camera so that all the images are erased and the card is ready for use next time.

## Camera Mistake No. 7: Shutter speed too fast for the flash



This can catch you out when you're shooting portraits outside with a fairly larger aperture to blur the background and you decide to use a bit of flash to fill in the shadows.

In some cases the camera refuses to fire because it has recognised that the shutter speed is too fast for the exposure to sync with the flash firing.

In this situation also usually gives you a clue by flashing the shutter speed in the viewfinder.

In other instances, however, the shutter will fire and the image has a black section because the shutter wasn't fully open when the flash fired.

If you want to stick with the same aperture the solution is to use a neutral density filter on the lens to take out some of the light and allow a longer shutter speed.

## Camera Mistake No. 8: Missing tripod quick release plate



Quick release plates are very useful because they allow you to mount and unmount a camera on a tripod in a jiffy.

The problem is that they are quite small and unless you always leave one on your camera or always make sure that the plate is clicked properly back onto the tripod head after use, they are prone to going missing.

In an emergency a camera can be attached to a tripod head with elastic bands or even Gaffa tape, but it's some way off ideal!

Another option is to look around to see if there's anything else that can be pressed into service. Can the camera be rested on a wall for example?

Also consider pressing the camera onto the side of a tree or convenient post to help reduce some of the wobble.

You may need to push the camera's sensitivity setting up a little to allow a safer hand-holding shutter speed.

If none of this works look to see if you can introduce more camera movement to make a creatively blurred image.

And if that's not on, put it down to experience and head to the shops to buy a quick release plate for every camera you own.

## Camera Mistake No. 9: Dust marks



Most modern SLRs and CSCs have a dust removal system that keeps loose dust at bay, but they are not infallible.

A few little specks of dust here and there aren't a major problem and will only take a few seconds to clone out on a computer, but keep an eye on the situation so it doesn't get out of hand.

If the cloning starts to run to minutes then it really is time to clean the sensor. It's not as tricky as you might fear, but if you really don't fancy it contact your nearest camera servicing centre.

Before you make a print check the whole image carefully at 100% (Actual Pixels) on screen to make sure that there are no spots, specks, splodges or hairs that will spoil the end result.

A mark might look quite small and insignificant on-screen, but it will scream at you from the wall once the print has been framed and hung on display.

## Camera Mistake No. 10: Wrong focal length

**EXPLAINED ANGLE OF VIEW**  
The shorter the focal length of a lens, the wider the angle of view, and the greater the amount of a scene the lens can potentially 'see'. The term 'field of view' is used to describe what the lens can capture when the distance to the subject is also taken into account

 	 
<b>FISHEYE (4-16MM)</b> Fisheye lenses produce a distorted view of up to 180°. There are two types: either full frame, or one that creates a circular image.	<b>WIDE-ANGLE (16-35MM)</b> A 16-35mm full-frame wide-angle gives an angle of view of 108° to 63°. The equivalent angle on an APS-C sensor needs a 10-20mm lens.
 	 
<b>STANDARD (35-50MM)</b> Standard focal length lenses offer an angle of view that's broadly similar to what the human eye is able to keep in focus.	<b>TELEPHOTO (70-800MM+)</b> Long telephoto lenses offer full-frame focal lengths of between 300mm and 800mm, and a wafer-thin angle of view of just 8° to 3°.

Okay, so you've consulted the maps, checked the weather forecast and headed out before dawn to photograph a landscape that you've already visited to find the perfect vantage point.

The camera battery is freshly charged, with a spare nestling in your bag along with a collection of formatted memory cards.

You've checked and cleaned the sensor and the glass of your favourite wideangle lens is spotless.

The sun begins to rise, the image you have imagined appears before you and you get the shot. Perfect, everything is just as you planned it would be.

But then, a magnificent stag appears from the shadows. It turns and looks directly at you with its antlers beautifully side-lit by the rising sun and its breath creating billowy steam.

It injects a little more interest into your already enchanting landscape shot, but to make the best of it you really need to switch to a 300mm lens.

The lens you left at home because you were going out to shoot landscapes.

Fair enough that's a pretty extreme example, but it illustrates the point that no matter what you are heading out to shoot, it's often worth sticking another lens or two in your bag just in case.

<http://www.digitalcameraworld.com/2013/03/13/10-common-camera-mistakes-every-photographer-makes/>