



SIMPLE
SLR

HANDS-ON PHOTOGRAPHY TRAINING

by ANDY LIM (WWW.SIMPLESLR.INFO)

Welcome to SimpleSLR Hands-On Photography Training!



Thank you for purchasing this e-book. My name is Andy Lim, and I have been conducting short, single-session photography classes since 2006. This is the electronic version of my SimpleSLR PhotoClass. If you have this e-book, it's almost like being there at my class, because the exercises that I take my class participants through have been distilled into this e-book.

Unlike a regular book, it's *designed to quickly get you up to speed* with basic photography principles, and provides a platform for you to experiment and refine your techniques. Learn to take better pictures in 4 hours with this e-book!

We start off with a section of "Photography Exercises" to familiarize you with the basic techniques of photography, using a show-and-tell approach. This breakthrough approach has been proven time and again to be effective in getting beginners to start experimenting intelligently with photography. My approach emphasizes deep understanding, and strives to make photography simple.

In the accompanying section called "Analyzing The Shot" I will take you through my thought process with the photographs that I have taken, describing how I arrived at the combination of settings I used for each shot, and further advice on how you can apply these techniques to your own photographs.

Lastly, I have taken great care in designing an e-book that is easy to use, elegantly crafted and most importantly effective in teaching you photography. You would have noticed that this e-book is horizontally laid-out, which maximizes your screen area for reading (instead of the portrait orientation that many e-books use). Paragraphs are narrower for easier reading, and diagrams/photos are used throughout to illustrate each point.

Andy Lim

HOW TO USE THIS E-BOOK

Hold your DSLR while reading this e-book. Exercises are highlighted in this color, so when you see a paragraph in this color, perform the exercise by following the instructions, at the end of which you will discover a technique. Try not to skip ahead when performing the exercises, as they are inter-related. After going through the exercises, move on to the section called "Analyzing The Shot" in order to see how those techniques are applied in real picture-taking situations.

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Testimonials from Participants of SimpleSLR PhotoClass

Here are some actual comments from previous participants:

I would like to say a BIG thank you to you for your patience and the approach you use to conduct the class last Sunday which I found most appropriate for those who are new to DSLR cameras. I would not hesitate to recommend my friends to attend your class. I have been using my dslr camera for the past few months but do not know the right way to handle the camera at different situations.(by asking around did not help) I really learned a lot from you within this short time of a few hours as there were so many questions in my mind that I wanted to ask and you have answered them. Your photo class has been really a help to me.
- *Mike*

It was extremely helpful and I would like to compliment you on your ability to share information and educate. - *Jana*

Thank you for your very informative class. I learned various techniques that would enable me to maximize the usability of

my Nikon D90. I also find using aperture mode is kinda handy. Like you said, when we are traveling, we would normally prefer to absorb the moment personally and not only via the lens. So, i picked up something useful. - *Gina*

Was glad my friend introduced it. I learnt quite a few things, especially about certain techniques and tricks which we haven't been exposed to. I'd visited your website prior to that and found the contents very helpful, resourceful and encouraging (well, at least it inspires the thought that someday, maybe we could achieve that kind of images too ;)). It won't be the last time we're visiting your website. Your deep pool of knowledge and experience is pretty evident overall. Hope you keep sharing with others the passion! - *Joanna*

Thoroughly enjoyed the class yesterday. Highly recommended for beginners like myself. - *Khairul*

Attended this class conducted by Andy Lim today. He is very experienced and knowledgeable in photography. Very interactive session and get to learn something new! Thanks Andy! - *Kevin*

I would like to say a thank you note to you for the class. I think i have learnt a great deal and your enthusiasm helps. Keep up the good work. - *Samson*

Joined Andy Lim's SimpleSLR class, a very good class and lots to learn and understand - *Aeric*

Really useful and practical and you can be sure that I'll recommend it to all my friends interested in taking their photography skills to the next level. - *Nika*

Thank you for the class. It was very informative for me. - *Ming Ee*

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HANDLING BACKLIGHTING, PART 1 (MANUAL MODE)

Manual Exposure mode is the best mode to handle backlighting conditions, which is when there is a bright source of light behind your subject, causing the subject to appear dark in the picture.

STEP 1

Set your camera to Manual Exposure mode, ISO1600 and F5.6. Only the Shutter Speed remains a question mark. Do NOT turn on your flash. Your metering mode should be Matrix/Evaluative. Find a room, ask your subject to stand against a wall. Point your camera at her, frame the shot so that you include her head to her waist. Choose a Shutter Speed, guided by the exposure meter, and take a picture. You should get a good shot with just the right exposure.

STEP 2

In that same room, now ask your subject to stand in front of a very bright open window. There needs to be plenty of light coming through that window. Point your camera at her, frame the shot so that you include her head to her waist. Choose a Shutter Speed, guided by the exposure meter, and take a picture. This is where the exposure meter will fail you, giving you an underexposed (dark) face.

NOTE: The exposure meter CANNOT tell between the subject and the bright background, so it tries to give you an exposure reading that attempts to balance both the subject and the background, which is not possible.

STEP 3

In order to get your subject properly exposed, you need to override the exposure meter's recommended shutter speed. Do this by slowing down the shutter speed by a few clicks. 3 clicks = 1 stop. 6 clicks = 2 stops. *

The exact number of clicks cannot be made into a formula, because it depends on the intensity of the bright light behind your subject. Experiment with several different shutter speeds to get just the right exposure on the subject's face. Eg. if your meter recommended 1/500, try 1/250 (if the light is not very bright) or 1/60 (if your light is extremely bright).

* This is assuming your DSLR is set to 1/3 EV steps. This is usually the default setting, but you can change it to 1/2 (which I use for faster adjustments). If you set it to 1/2 EV steps, every 2 clicks = 1 stop, and 4 clicks = 2 stops.



Step 1
(no backlighting)



Step 2
(backlighting fools the exposure meter, causing the subject's face to be dark)



Step 3
(subject's face is now properly exposed) but the details of the background are now lost. See Part 2 for the solution.

FOCUSING TECHNIQUE (PART 2) USE THE RIGHT FOCUS POINT

Select the Focus Point nearest to where you wish to focus.
For human subjects, it is best to focus on the eyes.



For focus accuracy, focus on high contrast areas



The most accurate focus point on your DSLR is the center focus point, which was why I asked you to use it in the earlier exercise. Having said that, you can also use the other focus points if your camera is mounted on a tripod or you just don't want to recompose the shot.

Going back to the 2 cups we shot earlier, we will now select the LEFT Focus Point, or the Focus Point that falls directly on the LEFT cup. Look through the viewfinder to get this right.

Focus Point Selection: NIKON Left point (use  to select)

CANON Left point (use  to select)

STEP 1

Set your camera to Aperture Priority mode, ISO1600 and F5.6.

Position the camera at table height, point your camera at the 2 cups, making sure your selected LEFT Focus Point is aimed at the LEFT cup. Press the shutter button halfway to focus, and then all the way to take the picture. Both cups should be sharply in focus. There is no need to recompose the shot.

We can combine both focusing techniques as well. This is when the selected Focus Point does not fall EXACTLY where we want it to focus on. We can still perform the Focus, Lock, Recompose technique using any Focus Point. This allows us to focus on any part of the picture, with the nearest Focus Point selected so that when we do a Focus, Lock, Recompose, we only need to move the camera slightly.

This same technique can be used if you are shooting the many fleeting expressions of a baby, and you need the eyes to be in focus. Selecting the TOP Focus Point will allow you to focus on her eyes, and quickly take successive shots without needing to move the camera much.

NOTE: Your camera's autofocus works best when you focus on areas with high contrast. If you are focusing on a cup, try to focus on the rim of the cup, not on the featureless body of the cup. Have you noticed that you cannot focus on a plain blue sky? Your lens will struggle to find a spot to lock focus on. The solution to this is to focus on the horizon, where there are distinct differences between the sky and land.

CHOOSING A COMPROMISE

I had no tripod with me, so in this scene, I increased my ISO setting to 400 because at ISO 200, my shutter speed would be too slow to use without causing camera shake.

The aperture was set to F6.7 in Aperture Priority Mode, and the camera chose a shutter speed of 1/45. If I wanted more depth of field, I would have needed to use F11 and my shutter speed would have dropped to 1/15 which is way too slow, and would have caused camera shake.

So I settled for a compromise between an acceptable depth of field (provided by F6.7) and an acceptably fast shutter speed of 1/45 which would not cause camera shake. Of course, at that shutter speed, I would need to hold my camera really steady.

The other path I could have taken was to increase my ISO to 800. This would have let me use F9.5 with a shutter speed of 1/45. Or increase to ISO 1600 and get F13. Neither of these options were good, because such high ISO settings on my crop-sensor Nikon D70 would produce unwanted image noise. Full frame cameras (eg. Nikon D700) have much better tolerance to image noise at high ISO settings. The lesson here is to work with the gear that you have.



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Mode: Aperture Priority
ISO: 400
Aperture: F6.7
Shutter Speed: 1/45
Exposure Compensation: None
Camera/Lens: Nikon D70 with Nikon 18-70mm lens
Time: 5.32pm

About the Author

Andy Lim got started in photography after leaving design college in 1992, and has given several public talks on the subject of photography. He has a gallery of [travel and landscape](#) photography, which showcases his work, some of which have been published worldwide.

Andy conducts [photography classes](#) for beginners to advanced. SimpleSLR PhotoClasses are hands-on digital photography classes for small groups. PhotoClasses have been running since 2006, and are short, affordable, single 4-hour sessions, designed for busy people who may not be able to commit a long stretch of weekends at one go. In a SimpleSLR PhotoClass, Andy Lim gives instructions on what camera settings to use in specific situations, and provides guidance on framing and composition, using real-world examples. Participants perform photography exercises which will help them achieve a deep understanding simply because they did it themselves, instead of just being shown what they should do.

He also writes useful and practical [digital photography tips](#) on his [GoodPhotography.info](#) website.

Andy Lim is a professional wedding photographer. His brand, [Emotion in Pictures](#), attracts clients worldwide with its unique flavor of wedding and portrait photography.

Follow Andy Lim on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)!

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