

MANUAL SETTINGS by Donna Russell

Here's how I roll, (manually speaking)

I take all my photos in Manual mode, so it has now become second nature. But it wasn't always so.

Think of the settings like a triangle. Or maybe pillars of a house, with the 4th pillar being you, the photographer. Each has to be in balance to get the result you want. It doesn't really matter which setting you adjust first, and there will be some here who will do it differently but this is how I do it and hopefully it will help you.

FIRST STEP

Set your ISO.

ISO stands for the International Organisation for Standardisation, which in the olden days of film photography was called ASA. You could buy different speeds of ASA film depending on what you were photographing.

ISO settings will brighten or darken a photo.

ISO range can go from a low ISO of 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600, 3200 to really high at ISO6400.

Each time you double your ISO speed, you are doubling the brightness of the photo.

This can be really helpful on dull days or in dark bush, for example.

The drawback is that you end up with noise in your photos, which makes them look grainy. While you can correct this somewhat in post processing, it is much better to not have it in the first place.

The good news is:

Most of the time you can leave it at ISO100, which will give you the crispest images.

SECOND STEP

Choose your Aperture of F-stop setting.

I think of this is how far you want your camera to see.

In other words, how much of the background do you want to be in focus.

If you want the subject to be totally in focus with all the background lovely and blurry, then you need to set your F-stop at 5.6 for a start. Depending on your lens and camera, you can often go much lower than that but I find 5.6 is pretty good.

F8 is the middle so you can start with that.

If you are photographing a landscape, for example, you want to increase "how far the camera can see" to something like F13.

When you are trying to do close-up or macro photography, or are using a macro lens, sometimes the depth of field will be very small so you might need to take lots of photos at different settings and then stack them.

TIP: For landscapes, the focal point is best just inside the length of the lens, so wind it all the way out to infinity and then bring it in a touch.

THIRD STEP

Shutter Speed setting

Now you have the other settings done, you only have to roll the wheel around for this setting when you are taking pictures.

Watch what is happening in your view finder when you roll that button around. Newer cameras will show you exactly what you will get. Older cameras won't but you can take a photo and then look at it to check if it is too dark or light.

The exposure meter will show you if you are underexposed or over exposed so keep an eye on that. Ideally it should be at zero to give you the perfect exposure in your image.

TRIPODS

So many times I have a love-hate relationship with my tripod. I grumble about carrying it, curse as I try and get the legs out, hate that I am stuck at one viewpoint.

Sometimes, though, you have to suck it up and use a tripod.

For best results, always use a tripod for macro, caves, dark rooms, photographing large groups of people, landscapes, long exposures --- you get the idea.

A tripod will allow you to get perfectly crisp images, and to do perfect stacking.

OVER AND UNDER EXPOSURE

Ideally your exposure will be perfect – but sometimes you might be in a dark place and need to increase the ISO to let more light in. But you don't want too much grain, so you might decide to shoot darker and recover the details in post processing. The detail will be there. The same is not true for over exposure. Once the photo is blown out, those details usually cannot be recovered.