Keep the Camera Still

In this lesson, we'll be taking a look at
Keep the Camera Still.

Estimated Completion Time: **9 minutes.**

Keep the Camera Still

It is a pretty simple concept - but one so important, we thought it required some reinforcement.

Keep the camera still when taking a photograph. There are a range of ways this can be done.

For the sharpest of photos, you'll need to keep the camera as still as possible.

Keep the Camera Still

There are several scenarios where keeping the camera still is even more important. These include:

- When zooming in;
- In low light situations (where shutter speed is likely to be lower);
- Macro (extreme close-up) shots.

Macro shots are one example where keeping the camera still is vital.

Keep the Camera Still

Sometimes, the very act of pressing the shutter can contribute to camera shake. DSLRs, with an internal mirror that flips as a camera is taken, can also contribute to camera shake (this is not an issue with compacts).

The physical movement of the mirror inside DSLRs can contribute to camera movement.

Keep the Camera Still

The most obvious way to keep the camera still is to use a tripod. A nice, heavy, tripod.

But using a tripod is not always practical - around the house, at the beach, at a party...

Nothing keeps a camera as still as a nice tripod - but they are not always practical.

Keep the Camera Still

Sometimes a smaller tripod is easier to carry around. A ***monopod*** is also a stabilizing device that is easier to carry and move around than a large tripod.

Keep the Camera Still

Many cameras now have ***image stabilization*** features. These *help* reduce the effects of any inadvertent camera movement or shake.

If your camera has such a feature - ensure, in general, it is on. Some cameras recommend it be turned off if you are using a tripod, so check your manual.

Turn on image stabilization if your camera supports it.

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Image stabilization can either be mechanical (internal gyroscopes, or shifting sensors), or in some models, digital.

Mechanical or optical stabilization is *generally* better quality than digital (which is why some cameras recommend turning this feature off if not required). Digital image stabilization can mean slightly longer camera processing time, and sometimes increased *noise* in the photograph.

In DSLRs, image stabilization is often built into the lens, rather than the camera itself.

Keep the Camera Still

OK, so you are out and about, and taking photos. And you don't have a tripod. How do you keep the camera as still as possible?

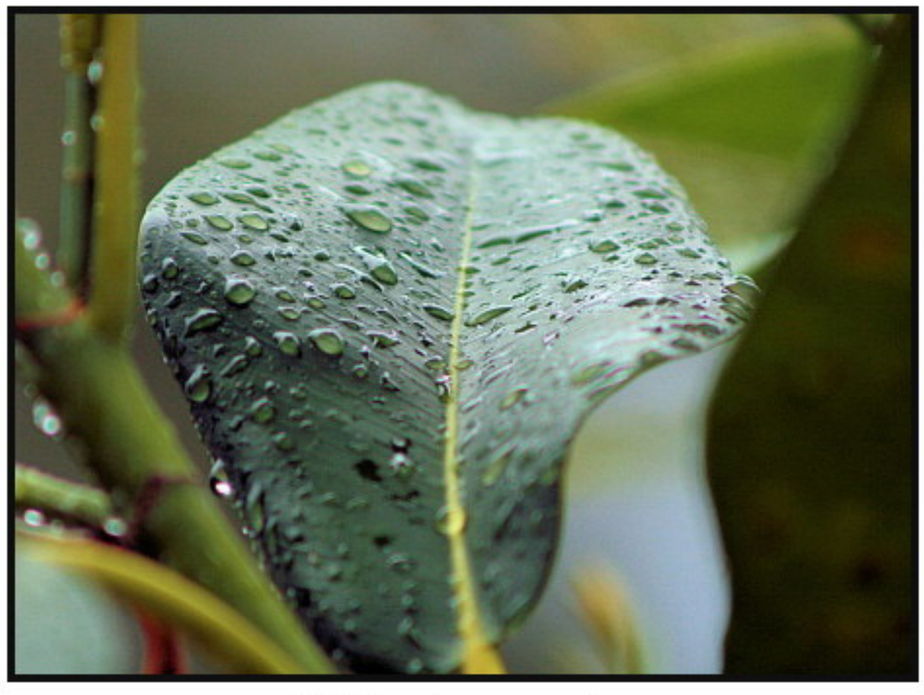
First of all, just making a conscious effort to keep the camera still will help. Just remember it will help you take sharper photos.

Try and make a conscious effort to keep the camera still.

Keep the Camera Still

Shutter Speed. Setting the shutter speed as fast as is practical will also reduce the effects of camera shake or movement.

If there is enough light, setting the shutter speed to faster than 1/500 of a second will really help reduce any camera shake.



1/500 of a second...

Keep the Camera Still

Stabilize Yourself. Lean up against a wall. Or lie on the ground. Or lean over the bonnet of a parked car. Sit on the couch. Anything that stabilizes you will help to stabilize the camera.

Elbows on the ground made keeping the camera still here quite easy.

Keep the Camera Still

Take a Lot of Shots. The standard fallback. When taking shots in the field, and reviewing them on your camera, it can often be hard to see how sharp a focus you actually got on any shot - much less if there was any camera shake.

Quite often it is only really apparent how sharp your photos are once you get them onto your computer. Giving yourself more shots to choose from gives you a greater chance of sharper photos.

Shots like this, with a narrow depth of field, are particularly difficult to determine if they are really sharp based on an in-camera review.

Keep the Camera Still

Prop up the Camera. Prop the camera on a pole, a wall, on the couch, on a beanbag, on a tree, on a bonnet, or on the ground, and set up the shot.

Not quite as good as a tripod, and not always practical, but worth a thought.

A fence like this is a perfect place to steady a camera - as long as you hang onto the strap.

Keep the Camera Still

Use the Self Timer. All cameras have a self timer - one that delays a shot for 2, 5 and/or 10 seconds so you can get into the shot.

This feature can also be used to help keep the camera still. This can even be used when using a tripod (especially for longer exposures).

Prop the camera, or place it on the tripod. Then set the self timer, press the shutter, and you'll be guaranteed of no camera shake.

We use this technique for many macro and long time exposure shots.

Keep the Camera Still

Zooming In. When you zoom in, any movement of the camera or the subject is magnified. Extreme zooming in requires a tripod for best results.

In fact, there is a simple rule you can apply when zooming in with a handheld camera - at least a DSLR camera. Whatever mm setting you zoom in to, at least match that with the shutter speed. So, if you have the camera set to 400mm, you should have a shutter speed of at least 1/400 of a second.

Here we zoomed in to 300mm - but a shutter speed of 1/1000 of a second just about removes any possible camera shake effects.

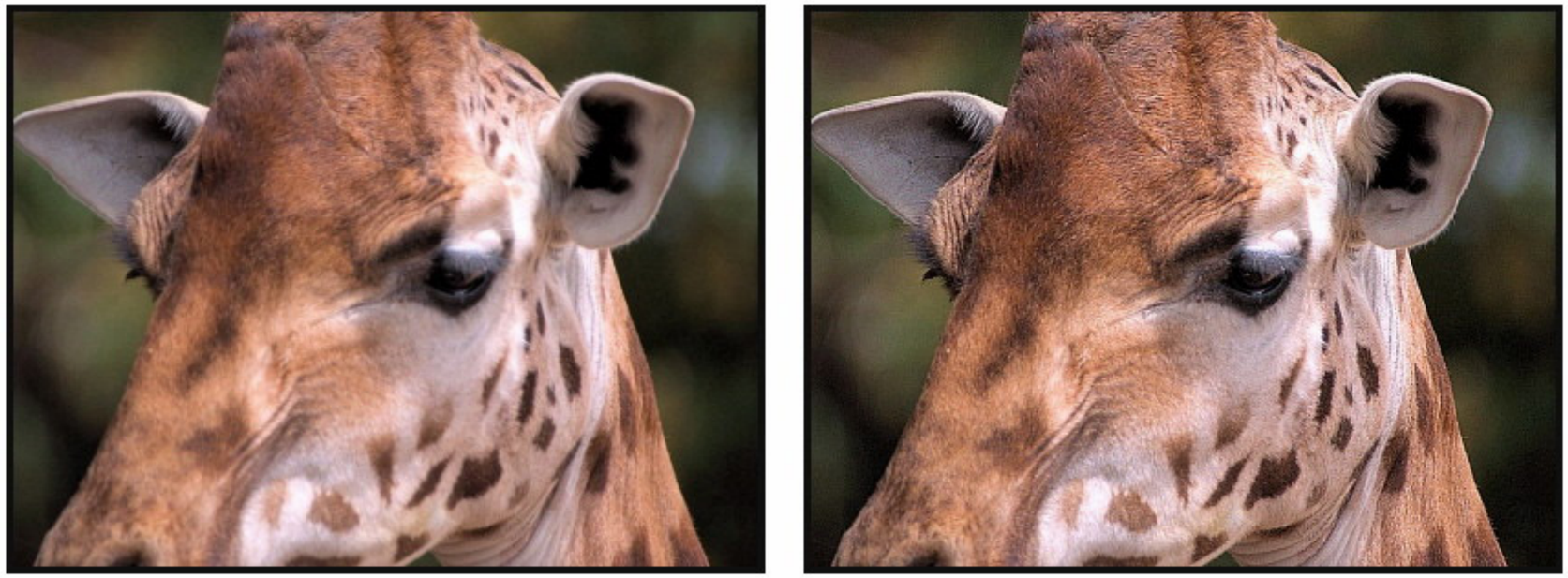
Keep the Camera Still

The iPhone. Because of a generally slow shutter speed used by the iPhone - in conjunction with the slightly awkward shutter button - iPhone photos can tend to suffer more from camera shake than other cameras. But that not need be the case.

Many photography applications are available from the iTunes App Store that use the iPhone internal movement sensors to delay the taking of a photograph until the iPhone is still. Or they allow voice activation of the shutter. Both can help reduce camera shake tremendously.

Keep the Camera Still

Sharpening. During post processing, in a graphics program on your computer, you can use some form of sharpening process to reduce the visible blurring that may appear from camera shake.



On the right, we've performed some sharpening on this image, which was not really on that sharp. Zoom in on each image for a better view.

Some cameras have built in sharpening features as well - worth trying.

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You've now completed this lesson.

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