

Why Not Use Automatic Settings?

In this lesson, we'll be taking a look at
Why Not Use Automatic Settings?

Estimated Completion Time: 8 minutes.

Why Not Use Automatic Settings?

All cameras have an **automatic mode**. In fact this is the only mode some cameras have.

In automatic mode, a camera will automatically determine the best settings to take a photograph. This means *shutter speed, ISO, aperture, and white balance*.

In a lot of cases, this means you'll get a reasonably good shot. It is also the mode that does not give you much flexibility.



Why Not Use Automatic Settings?

Most amateurs probably never use anything else but automatic mode when taking photos. If they use the photographic techniques we learn about later, they will get some good shots.

But - if you learn more about what your camera can do, and start manually tweaking some settings, you'll be able to take photographs that are simply not possible in automatic mode.



This action shot, taken using a fast shutter speed, would not be the same if automatic settings were used.

Why Not Use Automatic Settings?

Let's look at just a couple of examples where manually tweaking camera settings can give you that special photograph.

Every type of photo we illustrate over the following steps are covered in much more detail in following lessons.



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Action Shots. Depending on lighting conditions, if you use automatic mode, the shutter speed of the camera will be set somewhere in the 1/60, to 1/250 of a second range.

Often, this will not be enough to capture the action. You might get a slightly blurry movement where the camera or the subject move.



We used a shutter speed of 1/1250 to capture the action on the trampoline. At this shutter speed, everything is frozen - no blurring at all.

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Movement. When you deliberately want to capture movement in a photograph, sometimes a slower shutter speed than that suggested by the camera should be used.



To give the impression of movement in this creek, a shutter speed of 1/15 of a second was selected - far less than would have been suggested by the camera.

Why Not Use Automatic Settings?

Out of Focus Backgrounds. For great control over how blurry a background is, manually adjusting *aperture* is the way to go. You don't have to let the camera decide.



An aperture of F/5.6 was selected to get the background to blur.

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Exposure. A camera won't always get the exposure correct - especially when it cannot determine exactly what the subject is meant to be. Below is a perfect example.



On the left - automatic settings. The camera has determined that the leaves were the subject - and has set focus and exposure based on this. On the right, we manually adjusted exposure (in this case, by setting a faster shutter speed to let in less light), and set the focus manually on the moon.

Why Not Use Automatic Settings?

Shooting in Low Light. In the image below, a camera in automatic mode would have insisted on using the flash, and we'd lose the effect.



We've manually turned off the flash, and set a 1/8 of a second shutter speed.

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Special Effects. Manually setting controls allows you to create imaginative and unusual photographs.



This unusual effect was only achieved by manually setting the shutter speed to a slow 1/10 of a second.

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Underexposing. Sometimes, for special effect, deliberately underexposing an image can give a much better result.



In order to achieve this silhouette, we set the shutter speed to 1/500 of a second, to reduce the light coming into the camera.

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Flash. You can get much better shots if you determine when the flash should be used, rather than the camera deciding.



Automatic settings on a camera would rarely suggest a flash be used outdoors. Here, we turned it on manually to give a fill in effect.

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White Balance. A camera can often get white balance wrong. This is where the camera tries to determine the color 'temperature' - essentially the type of light currently available. If it gets it wrong, colors can turn out rather strange...



This is a real life example - the image on the left was taken with all automatic settings. On the right, we adjusted the white balance manually to get a much better result.

Why Not Use Automatic Settings?

This doesn't mean you should never use automatic mode on the camera. Most of the time you will, and probably should.

Part of the purpose of this course is to give you the knowledge, and the confidence, to experiment with camera settings to give you much more control over the sort of photographs you take.



We're not even sure what this was of - but we like the effect.

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You've now completed this lesson.

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