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CAMERA MODES

If you're using a point-and-shoot camera, it was designed largely to be used in Auto mode, where it makes the deci- sions about what settings to choose.

Even the most basic entry level point and shoot digital cameras these days come with a variety of shooting modes which give you the ability to tell the camera what situation you're shooting in and what type of photo you're hoping to take. Understanding and using these modes gives you a little more control over settings like Aperture and Shutter Speed as each of them will trigger different settings in your camera for different results.

If you haven't found modes on your camera yet, and you don't see a dial such as this one to the left, you will change modes through the menu on your camera. If should be fairly obvious, as these options are important. Modes on your camera may look like some of the example on the following page. These are screen shots of different cam- era's menu options.

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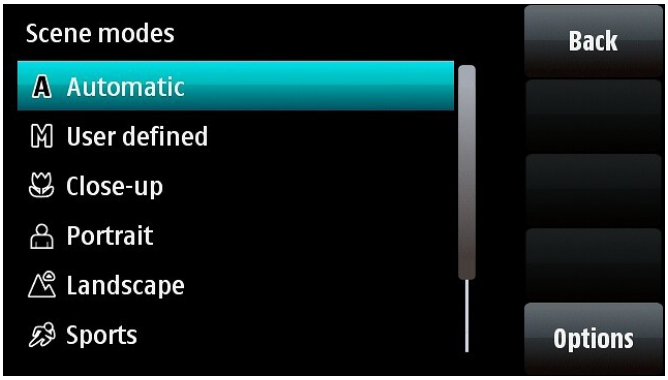

Automatic Modes

You should be pretty familiar with auto mode by now as you've used it in several shooting assign- ments. Auto mode tells your camera to use its best judgement to select shutter speed, aperture, ISO, to take the best shot that it can. Keep in mind that you're not telling your camera any extra informa- tion about the type of shot you're taking so it will be 'guessing' as to what you want. As a result, some of the following modes might be more appropriate to select as they give your camera a few more hints without you needing to do anything more.

Portrait Mode

When you switch to portrait mode your camera will automatically select a large aperture (small number) which helps to keep your background out of focus. In other words, it sets a shallow depth of field ensuring your subject is the only thing in focus and is therefore the centre of attention in the shot). Portrait mode works best when you're photographing a single subject so get in close enough to your subject (either by zooming in or walking closer) so that your photographing the head and shoulders of them).

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Macro Mode

Macro mode lets you move in close into your subject to take a close-up picture. It's great for shooting flowers, insects or other small objects. Different digital cameras will have macro modes with different capabilities including different focusing distances (usually between 2-10cm for point and shoot cam- eras). When you use macro mode you'll notice that focusing is more difficult at short distances as the depth of field is very narrow (just millimeters at times). Keep your camera and the object you're pho- tographing parallel if possible or you'll find a lot of it will be out of focus. You'll probably also find that you won't want to use your camera's built in flash when photographing close up objects or they'll be overexposed. Lastly, **a tripod is invaluable** in macro shots as the depth of field is so small that even moving towards or away from your subject slightly can make your subject out of focus.

Landscape Mode

This mode is almost the exact opposite of portrait mode in that it sets the camera up with a small aperture (large number) to make sure as much of the scene you're photographing will be in focus as possible (ie it give you a large depth of field). It's ideal for capturing shots of wide scenes, particularly those with points of interest at different distances from the camera. At times your camera might also select a slower shutter speed in this mode (to compensate for the small aperture) so you might want to consider a tripod or other method of ensuring your camera is still.

Sports Mode

Photographing moving objects is what sports mode (also called 'action mode' in some cameras) is designed for. It is ideal for photographing any moving objects including people playing sports, pets, cars, wildlife etc. Sports mode attempts to freeze the action by increasing the shutter speed.

Night Mode

This is a really fun mode to play around with and can create some wonderfully colorful and interest- ing shots. Night mode (a technique also called 'slow shutter sync') is for shooting in low light situa- tions and sets your camera to use a longer shutter speed to help capture details of the background but it also fires off a flash to illuminate the foreground (and subject). You should use a tripod or your background will be blurred. However it's also fun to take shots with this handheld to purposely blur your backgrounds – especially when there is a situation with lights behind your subject as it can give a fun and experimental look (great for parties and dance floors with colored lights).

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Movie Mode

This mode extends your digital camera from just capturing still images to capturing moving ones. Most new digital cameras these days come with a movie mode that records both video but also sound. The quality is generally not up to video camera standards but it's a handy mode to have. Keep in mind that moving images take up significantly more space on your memory storage than still images.

Other less common modes that I've seen on digital cameras over the past year include:

- **Panoramic/Stitch Mode** – for taking shots of a panoramic scene to be joined together later as one image.
- **Snow Mode** – to help with tricky bright snow
- **Fireworks Mode** - for shooting firework displays.
- **Kids and Pets Mode** – fast moving objects can be tricky. This mode speeds up shutter speed and helps reduce shutter lag with some prefocussing

- **Underwater Mode** – underwater photography has its own unique set of exposure requirements
- **Beach Mode** – another bright scene mode
- **Indoor Mode** – helps with setting shutter speed and white balance
- **Foliage Mode** - boosts saturation to give nice bold colors

Semi Automatic Modes

Aperture Priority Mode (A or AV)

Av This mode is really a semi-automatic, or semi-manual mode where you choose the aperture and your camera chooses the other settings (shutter speed and ISO) to ensure you have a healthy exposure.

Aperture priority mode is useful when you're looking to control the depth of field in a shot — usually a stationary object where you don't need to control shutter speed.

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Shutter Priority Mode (S or TV)

Tv
S

Shutter priority is very similar to aperture priority mode but allows you to select a shutter speed. The camera then chooses all of the other settings. You would use this mode where you want to control over shutter speed (obviously). For example when photographing moving subjects like sports you might want to choose a fast shutter speed to freeze the motion. On the flip-side of this you might want to capture the movement as a blur of a subject like a waterfall and choose a slow shutter speed. You might also choose a slow shutter speed in lower light situations.

Program Mode (P)

P

Some digital cameras have this priority mode in addition to auto mode (in a few cameras Program mode IS full Auto mode… confusing isn't it!). In those cameras that have both, Program mode is similar to Auto but gives you a little more control over some other features including flash, ISO etc. Check your camera's manual for how the Program mode differs from Automatic in your particular model.

Fully Manual Mode

M

Manual Mode

In this mode you have full control over your camera and need to think about all settings including shutter speed, aperture, ISO, flash, etc. It gives you the flexibility to set your shots up as you wish. Of course you also need to have some idea of what you're doing in manual mode so most digital camera owners that I have anything to do with tend to stick to one of the priority modes. You now have all the information about how to use your camera in manual mode, you'll just need to do some experimenting to really understand how to make a good exposure. As with anything, it's all about practice.