

Field Checklist

Initial Camera Checks

I learned all of these the hard way. Do these checks to avoid discovering problems later.

- Check Image Quality - ensure you are capturing RAW files
- Check Image Stabilization/Vibration Reduction - turn this off when using a tripod
- Check Lens – ensure there are no dust or water droplets on the front of your lens
- Check Memory Card – if you have multiple slots, make sure you are writing to the right card
- Check Battery Level – duh, but we’ve all messed this one up, and it ruins your whole day

Compositions

When possible, take test shots first while hand holding, then take final shots on a tripod.

- Define the subject
- Fill the frame with your subject
- Consider the foreground
- Try getting low
- Try framing your subject
- Put your subject off center
- Find a leading line
- Find an interesting shape
- Do a final check for any distractions
- Check for Balance

Shooting

Now it is time to take the shot. Make sure your focus and exposure are correct.

- Mode – Stick with Manual or Aperture Priority
- Focus Mode – stay in AF-S or One-Shot unless you have a fast-moving subject
- Focus Point – generally use the middle focus point
- Set ISO – that high ISOs increase the exposure but can lead to more digital noise
- Set Aperture – a smaller aperture provides more depth of field, but costs you light
- Set Shutter Speed – faster speeds promote sharpness but cost you light

Add-Ons

Don’t just take the shot and move on. Consider how you can improve elements of it.

- Bracket your photo: if there is a wide disparity in tones
- Create a panorama: if it is a wide scene or you might want higher resolution later
- Use a Neutral Density filter: if there are moving elements such as water or clouds
- Use a Polarizing filter: if you are shooting near the middle of the day.

Improvement Items

Before you go home, take your time and make sure you have the shot.

- Wait – the light might improve, or if you’re lucky there just might be a decisive moment
- Repeat – remember that digital photography is free. Forget about your “hit rate.” Take lots of exposures and make sure you have what you want.