The Digital Photography Book

The step-by-step secrets for how to make your photos look like the pros!

Scott Kelby
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Scott Kelby
Dedicated to the amazing
Dr. Stephanie Van Zandt
for her excellent advice, for taking
such good care of my wife, and
for delivering the sweetest
little baby girl in the whole world.
Acknowledgments

Although only one name appears on the spine of this book, it takes a team of dedicated and talented people to pull a project like this together. I’m not only delighted to be working with them, but I also get the honor and privilege of thanking them here.

I’ve written more than 50 books, and in each book I write, I always start by thanking my amazing, wonderful, beautiful, hilarious, and absolutely brilliant wife Kalebra. She probably stopped reading these acknowledgments 30 or more books ago because I keep gushing on and on about her, and despite how amazingly beautiful, charming, and captivating she is, she’s a very humble person (which makes her even more beautiful). And even though I know she probably won’t read this, I just have to thank her anyway because not only could I not do any of this without her, I simply wouldn’t want to. She’s just “it.” It’s her voice, her touch, her smile, her heart, her generosity, her compassion, her sense of humor, and the way she sneaks around behind the scenes trying to make sure my life is that much better, that much more fun, and that much more fulfilling—you just have to adore someone like that. She is the type of woman love songs are written for, and as any of my friends will gladly attest, I am, without a doubt, the luckiest man alive to have her as my wife. I love you madly, sweetheart!

I also want to thank my crazy, fun-filled, wonderful 16-year-old son Jordan. He won’t read this either, because as he says, “It embarrasses him.” And since I know he won’t read it (or even let me read it to him), I can safely gush about him, too. Dude, you rock! You are just about the coolest son any dad could ask for—you dig Bon Jovi, you’re always up for a game of Black Ops, you play drums (just like your dad), you love to go to the movies with me, and you get as excited about life as I do. You are nothing but a joy, and I’m so thrilled to be your dad (plus, you’re such a great big brother to your little sister). I am very, very proud of you little pal (which is a relative term, since you’re 6’1” now).

I also want to thank my beautiful, hilarious daughter Kira, who is the best-natured, happiest little girl in the whole wide world. You’re only seven years old, and you’ve already been reflecting your mom’s sweet nature, her beautiful smile, and her loving heart for many years now. You’re too young to really know what an amazing mother you have, but before long, just like your brother, you’ll realize that your mom is someone very special, and that thanks to her you’re in for a really fun, exciting, hug- and adventure-filled life.

Also, thanks to my big brother, Jeff. Brothers don’t get much better than you, and that’s why Dad was always so proud of you. You are truly one of the “good guys” and I’m very, very lucky to have you in my life.

My personal thanks to my friend and fellow photographer Brad Moore, who shot most of the product shots for this edition of the book and worked as first assistant on many of the shots I took throughout the book. You’re absolutely invaluable and an awful lot of fun.

Special thanks to my home team at Kelby Media Group. I love working with you guys and you make coming into work an awful lot of fun for me. I’m so proud of what you all do—how you come together to hit our sometimes impossible deadlines, and as always, you do it with class, poise, and a can-do attitude that is truly inspiring. I’m honored to be working with you all.
Thanks to my Editor Kim Doty, who is just the greatest editor ever, and I couldn't imagine doing these books without her. Also, thanks to Jessica Maldonado (my awesome book designer and our newest co-host on Photoshop User TV) for giving the book such a tight, clean layout, and for all the clever little things she adds that make the book that much better. Thanks to my in-house Tech Editor Cindy Snyder, who puts everything through rigorous testing and tries to stop me from slipping any of my famous typos past the goalie.

Thanks to my best buddy Dave Moser, whose tireless dedication to creating a quality product makes every project we do better than the last. Thanks to Jean A. Kendra for her steadfast support, and an extra special thanks to my Executive Assistant Susan Hageanon for keeping everything running smoothly while I'm out traveling and writing books (and for making sure I actually have the time I need to write books in the first place).

Thanks to my publisher Nancy Aldrich-Ruenzel, my way cool Editor and friend Ted Waitt (BT), marketing maverick Scott Cowlin, and marketing gunslinger Sara Jane Todd, along with the incredibly dedicated team at Peachpit Press. It's a real honor to get to work with people who really just want to make great books. Also, thanks to the folks at iStockphoto.com for enabling me to use some of their wonderful photography in this book when I didn't have the right image to illustrate my point.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my good friend Bill Fortney for helping tech edit the first edition of this book, and it's infinitely better because of his comments, ideas, and input. Bill is just an amazing individual, a world-class photographer, a testament to how to live one's life, and I'm truly honored to have gotten the chance to work with someone of his caliber, integrity, and faith.

My sincere and heartfelt thanks to all the talented and gifted photographers who've taught me so much over the years, including Moose Peterson, Vincent Versace, Bill Fortney, David Ziser, Jim DiVitale, Helene Glassman, Joe McNally, Anne Cahill, George Lepp, Cliff Mautner, Kevin Ames, David Tejada, Frank Doorhof, Eddie Tapp, Jack Reznicki, and Jay Maisel. Thank you for sharing your passion, ideas, and techniques with me and my students.

Thanks to my mentors whose wisdom and whip-cracking have helped me immeasurably, including John Graden, Jack Lee, Dave Gales, Judy Farmer, and Douglas Poole.

Most importantly, I want to thank God, and His Son Jesus Christ, for leading me to the woman of my dreams, for blessing us with such amazing children, for allowing me to make a living doing something I truly love, for always being there when I need Him, for blessing me with a wonderful, fulfilling, and happy life, and such a warm, loving family to share it with.
Other Books by Scott Kelby

The Digital Photography Book, parts 2, 3 & 4

Professional Portrait Retouching Techniques for Photographers Using Photoshop

Light It, Shoot It, Retouch It: Learn Step by Step How to Go from Empty Studio to Finished Image

The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Book for Digital Photographers

The Adobe Photoshop Book for Digital Photographers

The Photoshop Elements Book for Digital Photographers

It’s a Jesus Thing: The Book for Wanna Be-lievers

The iPhone Book
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Scott is Editor, Publisher, and co-founder of Photoshop User magazine, is Publisher of Light It! digital magazine, and is co-host of the weekly videocasts The Grid (a photography talk show) and Photoshop User TV.

He is President of the National Association of Photoshop Professionals (NAPP), the trade association for Adobe® Photoshop® users, and he’s President of the software training, education, and publishing firm Kelby Media Group.

Scott is a photographer, designer, and an award-winning author of more than 50 books, including The Digital Photography Book, parts 1, 2, 3, & 4, The Adobe Photoshop Book for Digital Photographers, Professional Portrait Retouching Techniques for Photographers Using Photoshop, The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Book for Digital Photographers, Light It, Shoot It, Retouch It: Learn Step by Step How to Go from Empty Studio to Finished Image, and The iPhone Book.

For the past three years, Scott has been honored with the distinction of being the world’s #1 best-selling author of books on photography. His books have been translated into dozens of different languages, including Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Korean, Polish, Taiwanese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Dutch, Swedish, Turkish, and Portuguese, among others.

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CHAPTER ONE
Pro Tips for Getting Really Sharp Photos
If Your Photos Aren’t Sharp, the Rest Doesn’t Matter

The Real Secret to Getting Sharp Photos 2
The Other Most Important Secret 3
Perhaps Even More Important Than That! 4
If You Skip This, Throw Away Your Camera 5
If You Do This Wrong, It Will Lock Up 6
It’s Time to Get Serious 7
Getting “Tack Sharp” Starts with a Tripod 8
A Ballhead Will Make Your Life Easier 9
Don’t Press the Shutter (Use a Cable Release) 10
Forgot Your Cable Release? Use a Self Timer 11
Getting Super Sharp: Mirror Lock-Up 12
Turn Off Vibration Reduction (or IS) 13
Shoot at Your Lens’ Sharpest Aperture 14
Good Glass Makes a Big Difference 15
Avoid Increasing Your ISO on a Tripod 16
Zoom In to Check Sharpness 17
Sharpening After the Fact in Photoshop 18
Did You Resize That for the Web? Then Resharpen! 19
Hand-Held Sharpness Trick 20
Getting Steadier Hand-Held Shots 21

CHAPTER TWO
Shooting Flowers Like a Pro
There’s More to It Than You’d Think

Don’t Shoot Down on Flowers 24
Shooting Flowers with a Zoom Lens 25
Use a Macro Lens to Get Really Close 26
Can’t Afford a Macro? How ‘bout a Close-Up? 27
When to Shoot Flowers 28
Don’t Wait for Rain—Fake it! 29
Flowers on a Black Background 30
Flowers on a White Background 31
The Perfect Light for Indoor Flower Shots 32
Where to Get Great Flowers to Shoot 33
Stopping the Wind 34
Consider Just Showing One Part 35
CHAPTER THREE
Shooting Weddings Like a Pro

There Is No Retaking Wedding Photos. It Has Got to Be Right the First Time!

- Tricks for Low-Light Shooting in a Church, Part 1
- Tricks for Low-Light Shooting in a Church, Part 2
- Do You Really Need the f/1.4 Lens?
- Getting Soft, Diffused Light with Flash, Part 1
- Getting Soft, Diffused Light with Flash, Part 2
- Use Your Flash at Outdoor Weddings
- Finding That Perfect Bridal Light
- Don’t Spend Too Much Time On the Formals
- Formals: Who to Shoot First
- Formals: Build Off the Bride and Groom
- How to Pose the Bride with Other People
- The Trick to Keeping Them from Blinking
- Formals: Where to Aim
- Formals: How High to Position Your Camera
- Formals: Don’t Cut Off Joints
- Formals: The Trick to Great Backgrounds
- Reception Photos: Making Them Dance
- Your Main Job: Follow the Bride
- Shooting the Details (& Which Ones to Shoot)
- Change Your Vantage Point to Add Interest
- What to Shoot with a Wide-Angle Lens
- Keep Backup Memory Cards on You
- Back Up Your Photos Onsite
- If Shooting JPEGs, Use a Preset White Balance

CHAPTER FOUR
Shooting Landscapes Like a Pro

Pro Tips for Capturing the Wonder of Nature

- The Golden Rule of Landscape Photography
- Become Married to Your Tripod
- Shoot in Aperture Priority Mode
- Composing Great Landscapes
- The Trick to Shooting Waterfalls
- A Tip for Shooting Forests
- Where to Put the Horizon Line
- Getting More Interesting Mountain Shots
CONTENTS

The Trick for Warmer Sunrises and Sunsets 72
Turn on “The Blinkies” to Keep More Detail 73
How to Deal with the Dreaded Blinkies 74
How to Show Size 75
Don’t Set Up Your Tripod. Not Yet 76
The Trick to Getting Richer Colors 77
What to Shoot in Bad Weather 78
Atmosphere Is Your Friend 79
Getting Rid of Lens Flare—The Manual Way 80
The Landscape Photographer’s Secret Weapon 81
Keeping Your Horizons Straight 82
Shooting on Cloudy Days 83
Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 1 84
Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 2 85
Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 3 86
Faking Panoramas 87
Why You Need a Wide-Angle Lens 88
Want to Take Things Up a Notch? Shoot Low 89

CHAPTER FIVE

Shooting Sports Like a Pro 91

Better Bring Your Checkbook

Pro Sports Shooting Is Dang Expensive 92
Which Lenses to Use 93
This Lens Rocks for the Money 94
Stability for Shooting Sports 95
Don’t Plan on Changing Lenses 96
Set Your White Balance for Indoor Sports 97
Shoot at a 1/1000 Sec. Shutter Speed or Faster 98
Shooting at Night or Indoors? Raise Your ISO! 99
Getting Burned by Indoor Lighting 100
Shoot Wide Open 101
Shooting in Burst Mode 102
RAW or JPEG for Sports Shooters? 103
Pan to Show Motion 104
Pre-Focus to Get the Shot 105
Shoot Vertically for More Impact 106
Don’t Be Afraid to Crop Your Photos 107
You Need Two Eyes and a Ball 108
Don’t Always Focus on the Winner 109
Composing for Sports 110
The Pros Know the Game 111
CHAPTER SIX
Shooting People Like a Pro
Tips for Making People Look Their Very Best

The Best Lens for Portrait Photography 114
Which Aperture to Use 115
Using Seamless Backgrounds 116
Using Canvas or Muslin Backgrounds 117
The Right Background Outdoors 118
Where to Focus 119
Where to Position Your Camera 120
Positioning Your Subject in the Frame 121
Tip for Framing Portraits 122
Getting Great Light Outdoors 123
Getting Great Light Indoors 124
Taking Great Photos of Newborn Babies 125
Great Sunset Portraits 126
Better Natural-Light Portraits with a Reflector 127
Aiming Your Reflector 128
Use a Reflector When the Lighting Is Flat 129

CHAPTER SEVEN
Avoiding Problems Like a Pro
How to Avoid Digital Headaches

Pro Tips to Avoid White Balance Problems 132
Cold Weather Shooting Means Extra Batteries 133
Don’t Change Lenses in Dusty Weather 134
Apply for Permits to Shoot with Your Tripod 135
Be Careful What You Shoot 136
A Tip for Shooting on an Incline 137
The Other Reason Pros Use a Lens Hood 138
Keeping Your Lens Out of Trouble 139
Limit Your LCD Time to Save Battery Life 140
Bracket If You’re Not Sure About Exposure 141
Avoid Red Eye 142
Remove Red Eye 143

CHAPTER EIGHT
Taking Advantage of Digital Like a Pro
It’s More Than Just a Replacement for Film

Level the Playing Field: Press That Button 146
The LCD Monitor “Gotcha!” 147
Edit as You Shoot to Get More Keepers 148
Take Advantage of the Blinkies 149
The Viewfinder “Border Patrol” Trap 150
No Penalty Fee for Experimenting 151
Don’t Cram Too Much on One Card 152
Take Advantage of Poster-Sized Printing 153
You’re Probably Going to Lose Your Lens Hood 154
Is It Better to Underexpose or Overexpose? 155
Keep from Accidentally Erasing Memory Cards 156
Which Brand of Camera Should You Buy? 157

CHAPTER NINE 159
Taking Travel & City Life Shots Like a Pro
Tips for Travel Photography
How to Be Ready for “The Shot” 160
Shoot Kids and Old People, It Can’t Miss 161
Hire a Model (It’s Cheaper Than You’d Think) 162
What Time to Shoot 163
Look for Bold, Vivid Colors 164
Shooting Travel? Visit 500px.com First 165
Don’t Try to Capture It All: Shoot the Details 166
The Best Shot May Be Just Three Feet Away 167
Shoot the Signs. You’ll Thank Yourself Later 168
Showing Movement in the City 169
For Maximum Impact, Look for Simplicity 170
The Monopod Scam 171
What to Do When It Has Been “Shot to Death” 172
Including the Moon and Keeping Detail 173
Shooting Fireworks 174
If You Have a Laptop, Take It With You 175
Want a Rooftop Shot of the City? Try This 176
Getting “Nearly Tourist-Free” Shots 177

CHAPTER TEN 179
How to Print Like a Pro and Other Cool Stuff
After All, It’s All About the Print!
The Advantages of Shooting in RAW 180
How to Process RAW Photos in Photoshop 181
Compare Your LCD to Your Computer Monitor 182
Organizing Your Photos with Lightroom 183
How Many More Megapixels Do You Need? 184
Printing Lab-Quality 8x10s 185
Printing Lab-Quality 13x19s 186
Printing 17x22s—The Pros' Choice 187
Which Paper Should You Print On? 188
What Determines Which Paper You Use? 189
Getting Your Monitor to Match Your Printer 190
Download the Color Profiles for Your Paper 191
Selling Your Photos as “Stock” Online 192
A Quick Peek at My Gear 193
There Are Three Other Books in This Series 194
Learn More with Me Each Week on The Grid 195

Chapter Eleven 197

Ten Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me
When I First Started Out in Photography

#1: Buying a More Expensive Camera
   Doesn't Necessarily Mean Better Photos 198
#2: You Need to Sharpen After the Fact 199
#3: The Pros Take Lots of Bad Photos 200
#4: Learn Exposure Compensation 201
#5: Don't Worry About Manual Mode 202
#6: Today You Should Probably Shoot Wide 203
#7: Nothing Has Impact Like a Print 204
#8: Ignore Your Histogram 205
#9: Figure Out What Type of Photographer
    You Are 206
#10: Do What It Takes to Get the Photos
     You Want 207
#11: You Need a Portfolio 208
#12: Stop Reading Books About Photography 209

CHAPTER TWELVE 211

Photo Recipes to Help You Get “The Shot”
The Simple Ingredients That Make It All Come Together

Index 227
Chapter Four  
**Shooting Landscapes Like a Pro**  
Pro Tips for Capturing the Wonder of Nature

If you ever get to shoot in some truly amazing outdoor locations, like the Grand Canyon or Yosemite National Park, it’s really a very humbling photographic experience. The reason why is you’re looking at this amazing vista, at the sheer grandeur of it all, and it looks so awe inspiring you’d figure a chimp could even take a great photo of it. I mean, it’s just so spectacular, how could you mess it up? Then you set up your tripod, look in your viewfinder, and it happens—you begin to silently sob. You’re sobbing because you bought all this expensive camera gear, with multiple camera bodies and lenses that cost more than a Toyota Prius hybrid, you’ve got more filters than a Ritz Camera store, and your camera bag weighs approximately 54 lbs. You saved all year, took your two-week vacation from work, bought round-trip airfare, and rented a huge SUV big enough to haul you, your family, and all your expensive gear out into the sweltering summer heat of the canyon. Now you’re looking through your viewfinder and what you see doesn’t look half as good as the stinkin’ postcards in the park’s gift shop that sell for $1.25 each. Tears begin to stream down your face as you realize that you’re not going to get the shot you came for. And whose fault is all this? Ansel Adams—that’s who. He screwed up the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and a dozen other locations for us all. But even though we’re not Ansel Adams, we can surely get better photos than the ones in the gift shop, right? Well, it starts with reading this chapter. Hey, it’s a start.
There’s a golden rule of landscape photography, and you can follow every tip in this chapter, but without strictly following this rule, you’ll never get the results the top pros do. As a landscape photographer, you can only shoot two times a day: (1) Dawn. You can shoot about 15 to 30 minutes before sunrise, and then from 30 minutes to an hour (depending on how harsh the light becomes) afterward. The only other time you can shoot is (2) dusk. You can shoot from 15 to 30 minutes before sunset, and up to 30 minutes afterward. Why only these two times? Because that’s the rule. Okay, there’s more to it than that. These are the only times of day when you get the soft, warm light and soft shadows that give professional quality lighting for landscapes. How stringent is this rule? I’ll never forget the time I was doing a Q&A session for professional photographers. The other instructor was legendary National Geographic photographer Joe McNally. A man in the crowd asked Joe, “Can you really only shoot at dawn and dusk?” Joe quietly took his tripod and beat that man to death. Okay, that’s an exaggeration, but what Joe said has always stuck with me. He said that today’s photo editors (at the big magazines) feel so strongly about this that they won’t even consider looking at any of his, or any other photographer’s, landscape work if it’s not shot at dawn or dusk. He also said that if he takes them a shot and says, “Look, it wasn’t taken during those magic hours, but the shot is amazing,” they’ll still refuse to even look at it. The point is, professional landscape photographers shoot at those two times of day, and only those two times. If you want pro results, those are the only times you’ll be shooting, too.
Okay, so now you know that as a pro landscape shooter your life is going to be like this: you get up before dawn, and you miss dinner about every evening (remember, there’s no shame in coming to dinner late). If you’re okay with all that, then it’s time to tell you the other harsh reality—since you’ll be shooting in low light all the time, you’ll be shooting on a tripod all the time. Every time. Always. There is no hand-holding in the professional landscape photography world. Now, I must warn you, you will sometimes find landscape photographers out there at dawn some mornings shooting the same thing you are, and they’re hand-holding their cameras. They don’t know it yet, but once they open their photos in Photoshop, they are going to have the blurriest, best-lit, out-of-focus shots you’ve ever seen. Now, what can you do to help these poor hapless souls? Quietly, take your tripod and beat them to death. Hey, it’s what Joe McNally would do. (Kidding. Kind of.)

**TRIPODS: THE CARBON FIBER ADVANTAGE**

The hottest thing right now in tripods is carbon fiber. Tripods made with carbon fiber have two distinct advantages: (1) they’re much lighter in weight than conventional metal tripods without giving up any strength or stability, and (2) carbon fiber doesn’t resonate like metal, so you have less chance of vibration. However, there’s a downside: as you might expect, they’re not cheap.
The shooting mode of pro outdoor photographers is aperture priority mode (that’s the little A or Av on your digital camera’s mode dial). The reason why this mode is so popular is that it lets you decide how to creatively present the photo. Here’s what I mean: Let’s say you’re shooting a tiger with a telephoto zoom lens and you decide you want the tiger (who’s in the foreground of the shot) to be in focus, but you want the background out of focus. With aperture priority mode, it’s easy—set your aperture to the smallest number your lens will allow (for example, f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6, etc.) and then focus on the tiger. That’s it. The camera (and the telephoto lens) does the rest—you get a sharp photo of the tiger and the background is totally out of focus. So, you just learned one of the three aperture tricks: low numbers (and a zoom lens) leave your subject in the foreground in focus, while the background goes out of focus. Now, what do you do if you want the tiger and the background to both be in focus (you want to see the tiger and his surroundings clearly)? You can move your aperture to either f/8 or f/11. These two settings work great when you just want to capture the scene as your eye sees it (without the creative touch of putting the background majorly out of focus). Far away backgrounds (way behind the tiger) will be a little bit out of focus, but not much. That’s the second trick of aperture priority mode. The third trick is which aperture to use when you want as much as possible in focus (the foreground, the middle, the background—all things): just choose the highest number your lens will allow (f/22, f/36, etc.).
The next time you pick up a great travel magazine that features landscape photography or look at some of the work from the masters in digital landscape photography, like David Muench, Moose Peterson, Stephen Johnson, Bill Fortney, and John Shaw, take a moment to study some of their wonderful, sweeping images. One thing you’ll find that most have in common is that these landscape shots have three distinct things: (1) A foreground. If shooting a sunset, the shot doesn’t start in the water—it starts on the beach. The beach is the foreground. (2) They have a middle ground. In the case of a sunset shot, this would be either the ocean reflecting the sun, or in some cases it can be the sun itself. And lastly, (3) they have a background. In the sunset case, the clouds and the sky. All three elements are there, and you need all three to make a really compelling landscape shot. The next time you’re out shooting, ask yourself, “Where’s my foreground?” (because that’s the one most amateurs seem to forget—their shots are all middle and background). Keeping all three in mind when shooting will help you tell your story, lead the eye, and give your landscape shots more depth.

Another advantage of shooting at dawn (rather than at sunset) is that water (in ponds, lakes, bays, etc.) is more still at dawn because there’s usually less wind in the morning than in the late afternoon. So, if you’re looking for that glassy mirror-like reflection in the lake, you’ve got a much better shot at getting that effect at dawn than you do at dusk.
Want to get that silky waterfall or that stream effect you see in those pro photos? The secret is leaving your shutter open (for at least a second or two), so the water moves while everything else (the rocks and trees around the waterfall or stream) remains still. Here’s what you do: switch your digital camera to shutter priority mode (the S orTv on your camera’s mode dial), and set the shutter speed to 1 or 2 full seconds. Now, even if you’re shooting this waterfall on a bit of an overcast day, leaving your shutter open for a few seconds will let way too much light in, and all you’ll get is a solid white, completely blown-out photo. That’s why the pros do one of two things: (1) They shoot these waterfalls at or before sunrise, or just after sunset, when there is much less light. Or they (2) use a stop-down filter. This is a special darkening filter that screws onto your lens that is so dark it shuts out most of the light coming into your camera. That way, you can leave the shutter open for a few seconds. Such little light comes in that it doesn’t totally blow out your photo, and you wind up with a properly exposed photo with lots of glorious silky water. Now, if you don’t have a stop-down filter and you run across a waterfall or stream that’s deep in the woods (and deep in the shade), you can still get the effect by trying this: put your camera on a tripod, go to aperture priority mode, and set your aperture to the biggest number your lens will allow (probably either f/22 or f/36). This leaves your shutter open longer than usual (but that’s okay, you’re in deep shade, right?), and you’ll get that same silky-looking water.
A Tip for Shooting Forests

Want a great tip for shooting forest scenes? Don’t include the ground in your shots. That’s right, the ground in the forest is often surprisingly messy (with dead branches, and leaves, and a really cluttered look) and that’s why so many pro forest shots don’t include the ground—it distracts from the beauty of the trees. So, easy enough—frame your shots so they don’t include the ground, and you’re shooting better forest shots right off the bat. Now, if the ground looks good, then by all means include it, but if it’s a mess, you’ve got a way to save the shot. Here’s another forest shooting tip: overcast days are great for shooting forests because it’s difficult to get a decent forest shot in bright, harsh sunlight. However, there is one exception to this rule: if there’s “atmosphere” (fog or mist) in the forest on bright days, the sun’s rays cutting through the fog or mist can be spectacular.

**THIS ISN’T A FOREST TIP. IT’S FOR WATERFALLS**

So why is this tip here instead of on the waterfalls page? I ran out of room on that page. The tip is this: when shooting waterfalls, if you don’t have a stop-down filter, then you can try putting your polarizing filter on instead. This serves two purposes: (1) it cuts the reflections in the waterfall and on the rocks, and (2) since it darkens, it can eat up about two stops of light for you, so you can shoot longer exposures with it than you could without it. Also, choosing slower shutter speeds exaggerates the silky water effect, so try a few different shutter speeds (4 seconds, 6 seconds, 10 seconds, etc.) and see which one gives you the best effect for what you’re currently shooting.
When it comes to the question of “Where do I place the horizon?” the answer is pretty easy. Don’t take the amateur route and always place the horizon in the dead center of the photo, or your landscape shots will always look like snapshots. Instead, decide which thing you want to emphasize—the sky or the ground. If you have a great-looking sky, then put your horizon at the bottom third of your photo (which will give you much more emphasis on the sky). If the ground looks interesting, then make that the star of your photo and place the horizon at the top third of your photo. This puts the emphasis on the ground, and most importantly, either one of these methods will keep your horizon out of the center, which will give your shots more depth and interest.

**REALLY BORING SKY? BREAK THE RULE**

If you’re shooting a landscape shot with a sky where nothing’s really happening, you can break the 1/3 from the top horizon line rule and eliminate as much of the sky from view as possible. Make it 7/8 ground and 1/8 sky, so the attention is totally off the sky, and onto the more interesting foreground.
One theme you’ll see again and again throughout this book is to shoot from angles we don’t see every day. For example, if your subject is mountains, don’t shoot them from the road at the bottom of the mountain. This is exactly how we see mountains every day when we drive by them on the interstate, so if you shoot them like that (from the ground looking up), you’ll create shots that look very normal and average. If you want to create mountain shots that have real interest, give people a view they don’t normally see—shoot from up high. Either drive up as high as you can on the mountain, or hike up as high as is safe, then set up your camera and shoot down on or across the mountains. (This is the same theory as not shooting down on flowers. We don’t shoot down on flowers because that’s the view we normally have of them. In turn, we don’t shoot up at mountains, because we always see them from that same view. It’s boring, regular, and doesn’t show your viewer something they haven’t seen a hundred times before.)
Here’s a trick I picked up from Bill Fortney for getting even warmer sunrises and sunsets: For Nikon shooters, go to your camera’s Shooting menu and choose Cloudy as your white balance. Press the right arrow button to get the White Balance Cloudy submenu, and move the dot in the middle of the grid to the right three spots (to A3), and then click OK. This does an amazing job of warming these types of photos. If you’re a Canon shooter, go to your camera’s menu and choose Cloudy as your white balance. Go back to the menu, select WB SHIFT/BKT, move the dot in the middle of the grid to the right three spots (to A3), and then press the Set button. *Note:* Don’t forget to turn this setting off when you’re not shooting sunrises or sunsets. Okay, it wouldn’t be the worst thing in the world (it won’t ruin all your subsequent shots), but your world will be a little warmer.
Okay, they’re technically not called “the blinkies” (that’s our nickname for them), they’re actually called highlight warnings (or highlight alerts) and having this turned on, and adjusting for it, is a critical part of getting properly exposed landscape shots. This warning shows exactly which parts of your photo have been overexposed to the point that there’s no detail in those areas at all. You’ll be amazed at how often this happens. For example, even on an overcast day, clouds can blow out (turn solid white with no detail) easily, so we keep our camera’s highlight warning turned on. Here’s how it works: When the highlight warning is turned on and you look at the shot in your LCD monitor, those blown out areas will start to blink like a slow strobe light. Now, these blinkies aren’t always bad—if you shoot a shot where the sun is clearly visible, it’s going to have the blinkies (I don’t mean sunlight, I mean the red ball of the sun). There’s not much detail on the surface of the sun, so I’d let that go. However, if your clouds have the blinkies, that’s a different story. Probably the quickest way to adjust for this is to use your camera’s exposure compensation control (covered on the next page). For now, let’s focus on making sure your highlight warning (blinkies) is turned on. If you have a Nikon camera, press the playback button so you can see the photos on your memory card. Now, push the down arrow button to see file information, then the right arrow button until the word Highlights appears below your photo on the LCD monitor. If you have a Canon camera, press the playback button to view your images and then press the Info button to see the blinkies.
If you look on your camera’s LCD monitor and you see the blinkies appearing in an area that’s important to you (like in the clouds, or in someone’s white shirt, or in the snow, etc.), then you can use your digital camera’s exposure compensation control. Basically, you’re going to lower the exposure until the blinkies go away. It usually takes a few test shots (trial and error) to find out how much you have to back down, but normally this only takes a few seconds. Here’s how it works:

**Nikon:** Press the exposure compensation button that appears just behind your shutter button (as shown above). Then move the command dial until your exposure compensation reads –1/3 (that’s minus 1/3 of a stop). Now take the same shot again and see if the blinkies are gone. If they’re not, do the same thing, but lower the amount another 1/3, so it reads –2/3 of a stop, and so on, until the blinkies are gone.

**Canon:** Turn the mode dial to any creative zone mode except manual, turn the power switch to the quick control dial setting, then set the exposure compensation by turning the quick control dial on the back of the camera and using the settings mentioned above.
If you’ve ever had a chance to photograph something like the California redwood trees or a huge rock formation out in Utah’s Monument Valley, you’ve probably been disappointed that when you looked at those photos later, you lost all sense of their size. In person, those redwoods were wider around than a truck. In your photos, they could’ve been the regular pines in your backyard, because they lost their sense of size. That’s why, when trying to show the size of an object, you need something in that shot to give the object a sense of scale. That’s why many photographers prefer to shoot mountains with people in the scene (hikers, climbers, etc.) because it instantly gives you a frame of reference—a sense of scale that lets the viewer immediately have a visual gauge as to how large a mountain, or a redwood, or the world’s largest pine cone really is. So, the next time you want to show the sheer size of something, simply add a person or a familiar object to your shot and you’ve got an instant frame of reference everyone can identify with. It’ll make your shots that much stronger. (Note: By the way, this also works for things that are very small. Put the object in someone’s hands, and it instantly tells the story.)
Okay, so you walk up on a scene (a landscape, a mountain range, a waterfall, etc.) and you set up your tripod and start shooting. What are the chances that you just happened to walk up on the perfect angle to shoot your subject? Pretty slim. But that’s what most people do—they walk up on a scene, set up their tripod right where they’re standing, and they start shooting. It’s no big surprise that they wind up with the same shot everybody else got—the “walk-up” shot. Don’t fall into this trap: before you set up your tripod, take a moment and simply walk around. View your subject from different angles, and chances are (in fact, it’s almost guaranteed) that you’ll find a more interesting perspective in just a minute or two. Also, hand-hold your camera and look through the viewfinder to test your angle out. Once you’ve found the perfect angle (and not just the most convenient one), you can then set up your tripod and start shooting. Now the odds are in your favor for getting a better than average take on your subject. This is one of the big secrets the pros use every day (legendary landscape photographer John Shaw has been teaching this concept for years)—they don’t take the walk-up shot. They first survey the scene, look for the best angle, the best view, the interesting vantage point, and then (and only then) they set up their tripod. It sounds like a little thing (surveying the scene before you set up), but it’s the little things that set the pros apart.
One tool the pros use to get richer, more vivid colors is the polarizing filter. Of all the add-ons used by landscape pros, the polarizing filter is probably the most essential. This filter screws onto the end of your lens and it basically does two things: (1) it cuts the reflections in your photo big time (especially in water, on rocks, or on any reflective surface), and (2) it can often add more rich blues into your skies by darkening them and generally giving you more saturated colors throughout (and who doesn’t want that?). Two tips: (1) polarizers have the most effect when you’re shooting at a 90° angle from the sun, so if the sun is in front of you or behind you, they don’t work all that well, and (2) you’ll use the rotating ring on the filter to vary the amount (and angle) of polarization (it’s also helpful so you can choose to remove reflections from either your sky or the ground). Once you see for yourself the difference a polarizing filter makes, you’ll say something along the lines of, “Ahhhh, so that’s how they do it.”

POlarizing TIP

If there’s a lens the polarizing filter doesn’t love, it’s the super-wide-angle lens (like a 12mm or 10.5mm, etc.). Because the field of view is so wide, the sky winds up having uneven shades of blue, and because of that, many pros avoid using polarizers with super-wide-angle lenses. Also, when it comes to polarizers, it pays to buy a good one—that way it will be truly color balanced. It doesn’t pay to scrimp here.
Okay, so you’re thinking that it’s an overcast or drizzly day, and you’re going to spend the day inside working on your photos in Photoshop. That’s not the worst idea in the world, but you’ll miss some great shooting opportunities, like:

(1) **Right after a rain**, while it’s still cloudy and dark, is the perfect time to shoot foliage, forests (the green leaves look more saturated and alive, even leaves on the ground look good, plus the water droplets on the leaves and flowers add interest), mossy rivers, and waterfalls (you can use slower shutter speeds while the sun is buried behind the overcast rain clouds).

(2) **If it’s storming**, there’s a good chance that right after the rain stops, and the clouds break, and the sun peeks through, there’s a very dramatic shot coming. It may only last a couple of minutes, and it will either start storming again or clear up and just get really sunny (an outdoor photographer’s enemy), so be ready for those few magical moments between storms. They’re worth waiting for.

(3) **Before the storm “lets loose,”** you can get some really amazing skies, with angry clouds and sometimes colorful light or strong light beams. Most people miss these shots, so be ready (just don’t shoot in the rain, to protect you and your gear).
Besides just keeping us here on earth, the atmosphere (low-hanging clouds or fog) can make for some really interesting landscape photos (we’re talking soft, diffused light heaven). In fact, some of my personal favorite shots are taken when the fog rolls in between mountains (but, of course, you need to shoot this from above the fog on a higher mountaintop). I’ve shot horses on the beach with the fog rolling in and it creates almost a Hollywood fantasy effect that looks great on film (digital film, anyway). Also, beams of light in the forest, beaming through moisture in the air, or through thick fog, can be just amazing. Get up early (or miss dinner) to make the most of these atmospheric effects.

**PROTECT YOUR GEAR TIP**

Fog and moisture are fancy names for water, and digital cameras flat out do not like water, so make sure your gear is not getting silently soaked. You can buy rain gear for your camera from B&H, but in a pinch, use the shower cap from your hotel room and put it around your camera—it’s not pretty, but it works.
Another great reason to wear a baseball cap when you shoot (besides the two obvious reasons: [1] it protects you from the harmful rays of the sun, and [2] it looks cool) is to help eliminate (or at the very least, reduce) lens flare. If you’re using a lens hood on your camera, that can certainly help, but I’ve found that often it alone is not enough. That’s where your ballcap comes in—just take it off and position it above the right or left top side of your lens (depending on where the sun is positioned). Then look through your camera’s viewfinder to see (1) right where to position your ballcap so it blocks the lens flare from the sun (it’s easier than you think), and (2) to make sure your ballcap doesn’t show up in your photo (I’ve had more than one photo with the edge of a ballcap in the frame. I guess that’s why they make Photoshop—to remove silly stuff like that). I’m still surprised how well this totally manual technique for removing lens flare works.
So, earlier you learned about the polarizer and how essential that filter is. This filter, the neutral density gradient filter, isn’t necessarily essential but it is the secret weapon of professional landscape photographers. It lets them balance the exposure between the ground and the sky to capture a range of exposure which, without it, their camera could never pull off (it’s either going to expose for the ground or for the sky, but not both at the same time). For example, let’s say you’re shooting a landscape at sunset. If you expose for the sky, the sky will look great but the ground will be way too dark. If you expose for the ground, then the sky will be way too light. So, how do you get both the sky and the ground to look right? With a neutral density gradient filter (a filter that’s dark at the top and smoothly graduates down to transparent at the bottom). What this essentially does is darkens the sky (which would have been overexposed), while leaving the ground untouched, but the brilliance of it is the gradient—it moves from darkening (at the top of the filter) and then graduates smoothly down to transparent. That way it only darkens the sky, but it does so in a way that makes the top of the sky darker, and then your sky gradually becomes lighter until the filter has no effect at all by the time it reaches the ground. The result is a photo where both the sky and ground look properly exposed.
There is nothing that looks worse than a crooked horizon line. It’s like when you don’t get the fleshtone color right in a photo—it just jumps out at people (and people can’t resist pointing this out. It doesn’t matter if you’ve taken a photo with composition that would make Ansel Adams proud, they’ll immediately say, “Your photo’s crooked”). A great way to avoid this is by using the Virtual Horizon feature on your camera (if your camera has this feature, like the Nikon D600 shown above on the left) or with a double level—a simple little gizmo that slides into your flash hot shoe (that little bracket on the top of your camera where you’d attach an external flash). This double level gizmo has a mini-version of the bubble level you’d find at Home Depot and it lets you clearly see, in an instant, if your camera is level (and thus, your horizon line). The double level version works whether your camera is shooting in portrait or landscape orientation and is worth its weight in gold (of course, that’s not saying very much, because I doubt the thing weighs even one ounce, but you get my drift). As luck would have it, they’re more expensive than they should be—between $25 and $80—but still very worth it.
This is another one of those things that may initially elicit a “Duh” response, but I’ve been out shooting with more photographers than I can think of who didn’t think of this simple concept when shooting on gray, overcast days—shoot to avoid the sky. I know, it sounds silly when you’re reading it here, but I’ve heard it time and time again, “Ah, the sky is so gray today, I’m not going to shoot.” Baloney. Just take shots that limit the amount of visible sky. That way, if you make a tonal adjustment later in Photoshop (that’s a fancy way of saying, “I’m going to make the sky look bluer than it really was on that gray, overcast day”), you won’t have to work very hard. This just happened on my last shoot, where we’d have 20 minutes of blue sky and then an hour and a half of gray, overcast sky. I just really limited the amount of sky in my photos (I was shooting urban city photos), and then it took just seconds to fix in Photoshop. Here’s what I did:

**Step One:** I opened one of the photos where the sky looked nice and blue, then took the Eyedropper tool (I), and clicked on the blue sky to make that my Foreground color.

**Step Two:** I then opened a photo with small amounts of gray, overcast sky and with the Magic Wand tool (W) clicked in the sky to select it (which took all of two seconds).

**Step Three:** I added a new blank layer above my Background layer and filled the selection with my Foreground color. That’s it—my gray sky was blue.
There is something so fascinating about what happens when you stitch together five or six (or more) landscape photos into one long, single image. It’s as close as you can get (with a photograph anyway) to recreating the experience of being there. Now, although this will take more than one page to describe, shooting panos right is easy, so if you’re serious about panos, follow these rules. However, if you have Photoshop CS4 or higher (or Elements 6 or higher), Photomerge is so vastly improved, you can simply just overlap each shot by 20% when you shoot your pano.

(1) **Shoot your pano on a tripod.** *(Note: Panos work best shot on a tripod, and if you’re shooting at sunrise or sunset, they’re a must. That being said, you can shoot handheld if the light is bright enough, like if you’re shooting in daylight or really bright cloudy light.)*

(2) **Shoot vertically** (in portrait orientation) rather than horizontally (in landscape orientation). It’ll take more shots to cover the same area, but you’ll have less edge distortion and a better looking pano for your extra effort.

(3) **Switch your camera’s white balance to Cloudy.** If you leave it set to Auto, your white balance may (will) change between segments, which is bad, bad, bad.

(4) **There’s more**—go to the next page...
Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 2

(5) **Press your shutter button halfway down** to set your exposure, then look in your viewfinder and make note of the f-stop and shutter speed. Now switch your camera to manual mode and dial in that f-stop and shutter speed. If you don’t, and you shoot in an auto exposure mode of any kind, your exposure may (will) change for one or more of the segments.

(6) **Once you focus on the first segment,** turn off auto focus for your lens. That way, your camera doesn’t refocus as you shoot the different segments.

(7) **Overlap each segment by 20–25%**. That’s right, make sure that about 1/4 of your first shot appears in the second shot. Each segment needs to overlap by at least 20% so Photoshop’s stitching software can match things up. This is very important.

(8) **Shoot fairly quickly**—especially if clouds are moving behind your landscape. Don’t be lollygagging for two minutes between each shot. Git’er done, or something could change (lighting, clouds, etc.) in your pano, which will really mess things up.

(9) **Use a shutter release**, or at the very least a self timer, so you don’t have any camera movement as you’re shooting each segment. Nothing’s worse than one segment that is blurry.
Now, if you followed the rules set out on the previous two pages, the rest is easy:

**Step One:** Open Photoshop and then go under Photoshop’s File menu, under Automate, and choose Photomerge.

**Step Two:** In the resulting dialog, click the Browse button in the center, navigate to your pano photo segments, choose them all, and click Open.

**Step Three:** At the bottom of the Source Files section, make sure the Blend Images Together checkbox is turned on and turn on Vignette Removal. Leave the Layout set to Auto and click OK.

**Step Four:** Photoshop will then stitch the photos together into one seamless panorama (you may need to crop off any transparent areas). If you see a small seam at the top, between two segments, use the Clone Stamp tool (S) to cover it by pressing-and-holding the Option (PC: Alt) key and clicking in a nearby area of sky that looks similar to sample that area. Then, choose a soft-edged brush from the Brush Picker and clone (paint) over the little seam to hide it. If you still have some gaps in the corners, select them, then go under the Edit menu and choose Fill. In the Fill dialog, change the Use pop-up menu to Content-Aware and click OK. Use the Clone Stamp tool to clean up any problems.
If you have Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, there’s a great way to create a fake panorama: crop the photo so it becomes a panorama. Just get the Crop tool (C) and click-and-drag so it selects only the center of your photo, cropping off the top and bottom (as shown above). Then press Return (PC: Enter) and the top and bottom are cropped away, leaving you with a wide panoramic crop of your original photo. Hey, don’t knock it until you’ve tried it.
If you’re shooting landscapes, you’ve probably come back from a shoot more than once and been disappointed that the incredible vista you saw in person didn’t transfer to your photos. It’s really tough to create a 2D photo (which is what still photos are—two-dimensional) that has the depth and feeling of being there. That’s why I recommend one of two things:

(1) **Don’t try to capture it all.** That’s right, use a zoom lens and deliberately capture just a portion of the scene that suggests the whole. These can often be much more powerful than trying to fit everything into one photo, which can lead to a photo without a clear subject, and with distracting images and backgrounds. This is why I often shoot with a 70–200mm lens—to get in tight on a portion of the scene.

(2) **Buy a super-wide-angle lens.** Not a fish-eye lens—a super-wide-angle lens (like a 12mm). If you’re trying to capture it all, a super-wide-angle (sometimes called ultra-wide-angle) lens is often just the trick you need to take in the big picture. My favorite outdoor lens is my 14–24mm zoom lens (which is also a good sports shooting lens, by the way). I must admit, I rarely use the 24mm end, because I use this lens when I’m trying to get “the big picture,” so I use the 14mm end most of the time. You’ll love what it does to clouds, almost giving them a sense of movement along the edges.
When you’re setting up your tripod at some famous landscape location, look at all the other people setting up their tripods. What do they all have in common (take a look at the image on page 65 again)? They’re all standing behind their tripods, right? So, what’s about to happen? They’re all about to take a shot with pretty much the same vantage point and perspective. So, how do you make yours have more impact and stand out? Shoot down low. That’s right—rather than extending the legs of your tripod all the way out, set up your tripod fairly low to the ground, to where you’ll be shooting either sitting down or kneeling down (in some situations you might even want to lay down). This will give you a different perspective and it will accentuate the foreground. These two will often give your images more impact. Remember, if you just do what everybody else is doing, your shots will pretty much look like those of everybody else shooting right beside you. This is one way to tip the scales in your favor.

**Want to Take Things Up a Notch? Shoot Low**

Okay, this one’s an “if all else fails” tip, but if you have a landscape shot that is well composed, and otherwise looks good, but the color is kind of lame, consider converting the image to black and white (using Photoshop, Elements, Lightroom, etc.). This can sometimes save a shot that has a lot going for it photographically, but the color just isn’t compelling. Hey, it’s worth a try.
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Index

1.4x teleconverter, 93, 94
7/8 portraits, 51
8x10" prints, 185
13x19” prints, 186
17x22” prints, 187
500px.com website, 165, 208

A
about this book, 2, 7
accessories. See camera gear
action photography
burst mode for, 102
freezing motion in, 98, 216
panning motion in, 104
pre-focusing in, 105
See also sports photography
Adams, Ansel, 63, 82
Adler, Lindsay, 195
Adobe Camera Raw. See Camera Raw
Adobe Photoshop. See Photoshop
Adobe Photoshop Book for Digital Photographers, The (Kelby), 181
Adobe Photoshop Elements. See Photoshop Elements
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom. See Photoshop Lightroom
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Book for Digital Photographers, The (Kelby), 181
AI Servo Mode, 216
airplane photography, 219
angles
for flower photography, 24
for mountain photography, 71
aperture priority mode
flower photography and, 25
landscape photography and, 66, 68
nighttime photography and, 173
portrait photography and, 115, 218
sports photography and, 98, 216
aperture setting
car detail shots and, 215
concert shots and, 222
fireworks shots and, 174
landscape photography and, 66, 212
low-light situations and, 39, 99
macro shots and, 225
portrait photography and, 115, 223
sharpness related to, 14
shutter speed and, 101
sports photography and, 101, 216
Apple Aperture, 199
archival-quality inks, 186
arena lighting, 100
Artistic Photo Canvas service, 153
athletes
composing shots of, 110
facial expressions of, 108, 109
See also sports photography
atmospheric effects, 79
auto focus, 85, 105
Auto White Balance, 61, 132

B
B&H Photo, 5
baby portraits, 125
backgrounds
black, 30
blown-out look for, 220
blurred, 101, 104
canvas or muslin, 117
flower photography, 30–31
lighting rule for, 118
outdoor, 53, 118
out-of-focus, 25, 101, 118, 216, 218, 221
portrait photography, 53, 116–118, 218
seamless paper, 116
shower curtain, 31
tip on varying, 53
white, 31
backing up photos, 60, 175
backup batteries, 133
backup memory cards, 59
ballheads, 9
baseball caps, 80
batteries
cold weather shooting and, 133
LCD monitor and life of, 140
beauty dish, 213, 223
beauty style shots, 213, 223
Becker, Larry, 195
BKT button, 141
Black, Dave, 195
black backgrounds
flower photography and, 30
portrait photography and, 116
black-and-white images
landscape photos converted to, 89
papers recommended for, 189
printer recommended for, 186
wedding photos as, 220
black backgrounds
flower photography and, 30
portrait photography and, 116
black-and-white images
landscape photos converted to, 89
papers recommended for, 189
printer recommended for, 186
wedding photos as, 220
black-and-white images
landscape photos converted to, 89
papers recommended for, 189
printer recommended for, 186
wedding photos as, 220
blinking subjects, 49
blown-out background look, 220
blurred images
background blur, 101, 104
dancing people and, 54
low-light situations and, 38
sharpening, 18–19
sports and, 101, 104
wind and, 34
books in this series, 194
border of viewfinder, 150
borderless prints, 185
bracketing, exposure, 141
bridal shots
composing, 218
importance of, 55
lighting, 44
posing, 48
See also wedding photos
Brush Picker (Photoshop), 86
budget considerations, 4
bulb mode, 174
burst mode
hand-held shots and, 20
sports photography and, 102, 104
C
cable release, 10, 11, 85, 174
calibrating your monitor, 190
camera gear
accessories, 3
budget considerations, 4
Gear Finder suggestions, 8, 9, 60, 95
protecting, 79, 134, 138, 139
recommended source for, 5
sports photography and, 92–96
used by author, 193
webpage about, 4
See also specific gear
See also digital cameras
candid shots, 113, 121
Canon cameras, 6
bulb mode on, 174
burst mode on, 102
exposure bracketing on, 141
exposure compensation on, 74, 149
highlight warnings on, 73
Image Stabilization lens, 13
lenses made for, 13, 15, 94
Mirror Lockup feature, 12
sports photography and, 92
sunrise/sunset photos and, 72
zoom button on, 17
Canon Close-Up Lens, 27
canvas backgrounds, 117
car photography, 215
carbon fiber monopods, 95
carbon fiber tripods, 65, 168
children
shooting portraits of, 120, 125
goofy travel photos of, 161
chimping behavior, 140
cityscapes, 38–39
cities
concerns about shooting in, 136
goofy rooftop shots of, 176
showing movement in, 169
times for shooting in, 163
tourist-free shots in, 177
See also urban photography
Clone Stamp tool (Photoshop), 86
close-up shots
  close-up lenses for, 26, 27
  macro lenses for, 26, 225
  zoom lenses for, 25

cloudy days
  flower photography and, 28
  landscape photography and, 83

Cloudy white balance, 72, 84, 212, 221
cold weather shooting, 133
collapsible reflectors, 127
color balance filters, 97
color cast, 132
color management, 190, 191
color profiles, 191
colors
  bold/vivid in urban shots, 164
  capturing richness of, 77
combining photos, 173
CompactFlash cards, 60
composing
  airplane shots, 219
  beauty style shots, 213, 223
  bridal shots, 51, 218
  car detail shots, 215
  concert shots, 222
  flower shots, 25
  food shots, 221
  formal shots, 51, 52, 218
  jewelry shots, 225
  landscapes, 67, 89, 212
  nighttime building shots, 217
  portraits, 51, 121, 122, 213, 223
  sports shots, 110, 216
  urban shots, 217
  water shots, 214
  wedding shots, 51, 52, 218, 220

crop tool (Photoshop), 87
cropping
  fake panoramas, 87
  sports photos, 107
crowd shots, 161
custom white balance, 132

darkening filters, 68, 69
Datacolor Spyder4ELITE calibrator, 190
dawn
  landscape photography at, 64, 67, 68
  urban and travel shots at, 163
Daylight white balance, 61
Death Grip, 21
deleting photos, 148
depth of field
  background blur and, 101, 222
  macro lenses and, 26, 225
  sports photography and, 101
details
  urban photography, 166
  wedding photography, 56
Dewis, Glyn, 195
Dfine 2.0 plug-in, 41
diffused lighting, 32, 41–42, 124
digital cameras
  accessories for, 3
  backup batteries for, 133
  buying considerations, 157, 198
  cable release for, 10, 11
  conserving batteries in, 140
  cost related to features of, 198
  deleting photos on, 148
  experimenting with, 151
  film cameras vs., 145, 146, 151
  hand-holding, 13, 20–21
  LCD monitors on, 140, 147, 150
  megapixels in, 184
  mirror lock-up on, 12
  most popular, 6
  pop-up flash on, 142
  program mode on, 160
  protecting from weather, 79, 134
  quick zoom settings on, 17
  rain gear for, 79, 134
  red-eye reduction mode on, 142
  self-timer on, 11
  viewfinder borders on, 150
  zoom button on, 17
Digital Photography Book series, 194

digital photos
  backing up, 60, 175
  combining, 173
  deleting, 148
  film photos vs., 146
  off-site storage of, 175
  organizing with Lightroom, 183
  portfolios created from, 208
  poster-sized prints of, 153
  printing, 185–191, 204
  recipes for shooting, 211–225
  requirements for taking good, 207
  selling online, 192
  sharpening, 18–19
  underexposed vs. overexposed, 155
directional lighting, 42
double exposures, 173
double level, 82
dusk
  airplane photography at, 219
  landscape photography at, 64, 68
  urban and travel shots at, 163
  water shots at, 214
dusty weather, 134

e
  edge darkening, 224
  edit-as-you-go method, 148
electronic cable release, 11

Elements. See Photoshop Elements

Epson papers, 188–189, 191
Epson printers, 185–187
  Epson Artisan 50 printer, 185
  Epson Stylus Photo R3000 printer, 186
  Epson Stylus Pro 3880 printer, 187

equipment/gear. See camera gear; Scott’s gear finder
Eraser tool (Photoshop), 54
event photography, 222
Excel, Laurie, 205
EXIF data, 14
experimenting, 151
exposure bracketing, 141

exposure compensation control, 74, 149, 201

Exposure Delay Mode, 12
external flash units, 42, 142
external hard drives, 60, 175
Eyedropper tool (Photoshop), 83
eyes
  focusing on, 50, 119, 218
  positioning in the frame, 121
  preventing blinking of, 49

F
facial expressions, 108, 109
fake panoramas, 87
fast lenses, 39, 40, 99
fill flash, 43
film cameras, 145, 146, 151
film speed, 16
  See also ISO setting
filters
  close-up, 26
  color balance, 97
  neutral density gradient, 81
  polarizing, 69, 77
  stop-down, 68
  UV, 139

filters (Photoshop)
  Motion Blur, 54
  Unsharp Mask, 18, 19

fireworks, 174
flash
  diffused light with, 41–42
  directional light with, 42
  exposure compensation for, 43
  external flash units, 42, 142
  fill light using, 43
  outdoor shots with, 43
  red eye and, 142
  white balance for, 61
flash diffusers, 41
flash exposure compensation, 43
Flash white balance setting, 61

Flexible Program Mode, 160
florents, 33
flower photography, 23–35
  backgrounds for, 30–31
  best times for, 28
  black background for, 30
  close-up view for, 35
  composing shots in, 25
  fake rain for, 29
  getting flowers for, 33
  lighting for, 32
  macro lenses and, 26
  non-typical angles for, 24
  printer paper for, 189
  white background for, 31
  wind and, 34
  zoom lenses and, 25
flowing water, 68
Fluorescent white balance, 97, 132
focal length, 114
focus
  for flowers, 25
  for group shots, 50
  for portraits, 50, 119
  for sports photos, 105, 216
fog, shooting in, 79
Fong, Gary, 41
food photography, 221
forest scenes, 69
formal portraits, 45–53
  backgrounds for, 53
  blinking subjects in, 49
  bridal shots and, 44, 48, 55
  composing, 51, 52, 218
  framing, 52
  popular format for, 47
  posing people for, 48
  positioning camera for, 51
  shooting sequence for, 46
  where to focus for, 50
Fortney, Bill, 67, 72, 106, 134, 167, 168
framing portraits, 52, 122
freezing motion, 34, 98, 216, 222
frosted shower curtain, 124
f-stop, 14, 39, 115
  See also aperture setting
full-length portraits, 51
G
gaffer’s tape, 154
Gary Fong’s Lightsphere Collapsible, 41
gear/equipment. See camera gear;
  Scott’s gear finder
getting “the shot”, 160, 211–225
Getty Images, 192
glass. See lenses
Golf Digest magazine, 209
government buildings, 135, 136
gray backgrounds, 116
Grid, The talk show, 195
Grimes, Joel, 195
group photos
  wedding photos as, 47, 48, 50
  where to focus for, 50
H
hand-held shots
  continuous shooting mode for, 20
  low-light situations and, 38–39
  shutter priority mode for, 16
  tricks for steadying, 21
  VR or IS lenses for, 13
hard drives, 60, 175
head and shoulders shots, 51
high vantage point, 57
high-contrast look, 220
highlight warnings, 73, 74, 149
histograms, 205
horizon line, 70, 82
horizontal orientation, 106, 203
I
Image Stabilization (IS) lenses, 13
images/photos. See digital photos
Incandescent white balance, 61, 97, 132
inclines, shooting on, 137
indoor lighting
  for portraits, 124, 213, 223
  for sports photography, 97, 99, 100
  for weddings, 38, 41–42
instant creative feedback, 147
Internet resources. See web resources

ISO setting
- concert photography and, 222
- landscape photography and, 212
- sports photography and, 99, 216
- studio portraits and, 213
- travel moments and, 224
- tripod shots and, 16
- wedding photography and, 38

iStockphoto website, 192

J

jewelry photography, 225
Johnson, Stephen, 67

JPEG format
- preset white balance and, 61
- RAW format vs., 103, 180
- sports photography and, 103

K

kelbytraining.com website, 4, 173
kelbytv.com website, 195
Kloskowski, Matt, 181, 195
knee pads, 25, 219

L

landmarks, 172
landscape photography, 63–89
- aperture priority mode and, 66, 68
- atmospheric effects and, 79
- black-and-white images from, 89
- cloudy days and, 83
- color richness in, 77
- composing shots in, 67, 89, 212
- dawn and dusk for, 64, 67
- exposure compensation and, 74
- fake panoramas from cropping, 87
- forest scenes in, 69
- golden rule of, 64
- highlight warnings and, 73, 74
- horizon line in, 70, 82
- lens flare and, 80
- lighting for, 64, 68
- low perspective for, 89
- masters of, 67
- mountain shots in, 71
- neutral density gradient filter and, 81
- non-typical angles for, 71, 76
- panoramas and, 84–87
- polarizing filters and, 69, 77
- printer papers for, 189
- showing size in, 75
- shutter priority mode and, 68
- silky water effect in, 68, 69
- skies in, 70
- sunrises and sunsets in, 72
- tripods used for, 65, 68, 76, 84
- water shots in, 67, 68
- weather considerations, 78, 83
- wide-angle lenses and, 88

laptop computers, 175

large-format printing, 187

LCD monitor
- battery life and, 140
- blinkies in, 73, 74, 149
- border of image shown in, 150
- comparing with computer monitor, 182
- instant creative feedback using, 147
- viewing shots in, 17, 43, 147, 150
- zooming in on, 17, 147

lens flare, 80, 138

lens hood
- protecting lenses with, 138
- securing to your lens, 154

lenses
- close-up, 26, 27
- dusty weather and, 134
- fast, 39, 40, 99
- Image Stabilization, 13
- macro, 26, 225
- portrait photography, 114
- protecting, 79, 134, 138, 139
- quality considerations, 15
- sharpest aperture on, 14
- sports photography, 92, 93–94
- Vibration Reduction, 13
- wedding photography, 39, 40, 218, 220

See also telephoto lenses; wide-angle lenses; zoom lenses
light
diffused, 41–42, 124
directional, 42
natural, 31, 32, 44, 124, 127–129
soft, 41–42, 124, 129

lighting
for airplane shots, 219
for backgrounds, 118
for beauty style shots, 213, 223
for car shots, 215
for concert shots, 222
for flower shots, 32
for food shots, 221
for indoor sports, 97, 100
for landscapes, 64, 68, 212
for portraits, 123–124, 127–129, 142, 213, 223
for still water shots, 214
for wedding photos, 41–44, 218, 220

Lightroom. See Photoshop Lightroom
Lightsphere Collapsible diffuser, 41

Lipovetsky, Joel, 21

low-light photography
fast lenses and, 39
hand-held shots and, 13, 38
ISO setting and, 16, 38, 99
sporting events and, 99
VR or IS lenses and, 13

See also nighttime photography
low-perspective shots, 89, 215, 219

M
macro lenses, 26, 225
Magic Wand tool (Photoshop), 83
Maisel, Jay, 3
managing your photos, 183
Manfrotto Pro Photo Vest, 93
manual mode
consideration about, 202
fireworks shots and, 174
nighttime shots and, 217
panoramas and, 85
Mautner, Cliff, 195
McNally, Joe, 64, 195, 205
megapixels, 184

memory cards
backing up, 60, 175
card holder system for, 156
deleting photos from, 148
preventing erasure of, 156
RAW format and, 152, 180
size considerations for, 152
sports photos and, 92
wedding photos and, 59, 60, 152

Micro Apollo Softbox, 41
mirror lock-up, 12
models, hiring, 162
monitor calibration, 190
monopods, 92, 95, 171
moon photos, 173
motion
blurring, 54
freezing, 34, 98, 216, 222
panning, 104
Motion Blur filter (Photoshop), 54
motion trails, 169
mountain shots, 71
mounting board, 31
Mpix.com photo lab, 153
Muench, David, 67
multiple exposures, 173
museum photography, 135
muslin backgrounds, 117

N
National Geographic Traveler, 159
natural light
for flowers, 31, 32
for food shots, 221
for portraits, 124, 127–129, 218
for wedding photos, 44, 218

See also sunlight
neutral density gradient filter, 81
neutral gray card, 132
newborn babies, 125

nighttime photography
building shots and, 217
including the moon in, 173
manual mode for, 217
sporting events and, 99, 100
urban motion trails and, 169

See also low-light photography
The Digital Photography Book, Part 1
INDEX

Nik Software
- Dfine 2.0 plugin, 41
- Snapseed app, 175

Nikon cameras, 6
- bulb mode on, 174
- burst mode on, 102
- Canon Close-Up Lens and, 27
- exposure bracketing on, 141
- exposure compensation on, 74, 149
- Exposure Delay mode on, 12
- highlight warnings on, 73
- lenses made for, 94
- program mode on, 160
- sports photography and, 92
- sunrise/sunset photos and, 72
- Vibration Reduction lens, 13
- Virtual Horizon feature, 82
- zoom button on, 17

noise
- ISO setting and, 38, 39, 99
- software for reducing, 222
- underexposed photos and, 155

Notre Dame Cathedral, 166

O

off-site storage, 175
old people in travel photos, 161
online resources. See web resources
open shade, 123, 163, 164
organizing photos, 183
Outdoor Photographer, 211
outdoor shots
- backgrounds for, 53, 118
- flash used for, 43
- flower photography and, 34
- portraits as, 53, 118, 123, 218
- weather considerations for, 78
- wedding photos as, 43, 53
- white balance for, 61
- wide-angle lenses for, 88
- windy days and, 34
out-of-focus backgrounds, 25, 101, 118, 216, 218, 221
overcast days
- flower photography and, 28
- landscape photography and, 83
overexposed photos, 155

P

panning, 54, 104
panoramas, 84–87
- creating fake, 87
- Photomerge feature and, 84, 86
- tips for shooting, 84–86
paper
- color profiles for, 191
- printer, 188–189, 191
- seamless background, 116
Paris Opera House, 177
people photography. See portraits
permits, tripod, 135
perspectives
- flower photography, 24
- low-perspective shots, 89, 215, 219
- mountain photography, 71
Peterson, Moose, 27, 67, 195, 205
photo labs, 153
photo shoots, 2
photo vest, 93
photography
- flower, 23–35
- landscape, 63–89
- low-light, 13, 16
- portrait, 113–129
- sports, 91–111
- travel, 159–177
- urban, 159–177
- wedding, 37–61
See also digital photos
Photography Tips and Tricks show, 195
photojournalism, 56
Photomerge feature (Photoshop), 84, 86
Photoshop
- Camera Raw and, 132, 155, 181
- cloning images in, 86
- color management system in, 191
- combining photos in, 173
- creative use of, 155
- cropping photos in, 87
- Dfine 2.0 plugin for, 41
- EXIF data viewed in, 14
- Lightroom compared to, 183
- motion blur added in, 54
- Photomerge feature in, 84, 86
- processing RAW photos in, 132, 155, 181
removing red eye in, 143
resource for learning about, 181
sharpening photos in, 18–19, 199
tonal adjustments in, 83
Photoshop Elements, 18–19, 87, 143, 181, 199
Photoshop Elements Book for Digital Photographers, The (Kelby & Kloskowski), 181
Photoshop Lightroom, 143, 181, 182, 183, 199
polarizing filters, 69, 77
pop-up flash, 142
portfolios, 208
portraits, 113–129
aperture setting for, 115, 218
backgrounds for, 53, 116–118, 218
beauty style shots as, 213, 223
camera position for, 120
composing, 51, 121, 122, 213, 223
d focal length for, 114
focusing for, 119
framing shots for, 52, 122
lenses recommended for, 114, 218
lighting for, 123–124, 127–129, 142, 213, 223
of newborn babies, 125
outdoor, 53, 118, 123, 218
positioning subjects for, 121
printer paper for, 189
red eye in, 142–143
reflectors used for, 127–129
studio setup for, 213
sunsets and, 126
Unsharp Mask settings for, 18
wedding, 45–53
See also formal portraits
Post Crop Vignetting option, 224
poster-sized prints, 153
practice, importance of, 209
pre-focusing action shots, 105
preset white balance, 61
printers
color management system of, 191
recommendations for, 185–187
printing, 185–191
8x10" prints, 185
13x19" prints, 186
17x22" prints, 187
black-and-white, 186
borderless, 185
color profiles for, 191
importance of, 204
large-format, 187
megapixels related to, 184
monitor calibration for, 190
paper recommended for, 188–189
poster-sized, 153
professional photographers
equipment used by, 3, 81, 91, 92
local models hired by, 162
problem avoidance tips of, 131–143
quality of photos shared by, 200
Professional Photographers of America (PPA), 162
profiles, color, 191
program mode, 160
Q
quick zoom settings, 17
R
rain
flower shots after, 28
landscape shots and, 78
protecting gear from, 79, 134
simulating, 29
See also weather considerations
RAW format
advantages of shooting in, 180
exposure bracketing and, 141
JPEG format vs., 103, 180
memory cards and, 152, 180
Photoshop processing and, 132, 155, 181
resources for learning about, 181
sports photography and, 103
white balance and, 61, 97, 132
RAW+JPEG option, 103
reception, wedding, 54
recipes, photo, 211–225
red eye
  avoiding, 142
  removing, 143
Red Eye tool (Photoshop), 143
reflections
  filter for reducing, 69, 77
  water shots and, 67, 214
reflector s, 42, 127–129
  aiming at subjects, 128
  benefits of using, 127
  improving flat light with, 129
  positioning for softer light, 129
release forms, 162
resized photos, 19
resolution adjustments, 19
resources
  books in this series, 194
  RAW photo processing info, 181
  weekly talk shows, 195
See also web resources
rooftop city shots, 176

S
Sanho HyperDrive, 60
scale, showing, 75
Scott’s gear finder
  for ballheads, 9
  for hard drives, 60
  for monopods, 95
  for tripods, 8
See also camera gear
seamless backgrounds, 116
seeing-the-wind trick, 34
self timer, 11, 85
Shade white balance, 221
shadows
  directional light and, 42
  fill flash used for, 43
  noise appearing in, 155
  outdoor portraits and, 123
sharp photos, 8–21
  after-the-fact sharpening for, 18, 199
  aperture setting and, 14
  cable release and, 10, 11
  continuous shooting mode and, 20
  hand-held cameras and, 13, 20–21
  importance of, 1
  IS lenses and, 13
  ISO setting and, 16
  lens quality and, 15
  mirror lock-up and, 12
  Photoshop tips for, 18–19
  self timer and, 11
  tack sharp shots as, 1, 8
  tripods and, 8
  VR lenses and, 13
  zooming to check for, 17
Shaw, John, 67, 76
sheer curtains, 124
shower curtains, 31, 32, 124
shutter priority mode
  flower photography and, 34
  hand-held shots and, 16
  landscape photography and, 68
  urban photography and, 169
shutter release, 11, 85
shutter speed
  aperture setting and, 101
  camera shake and, 16
  fireworks shots and, 174
  freezing motion with, 34
  motion trails and, 169
  silky water effect and, 69
  sports photography and, 98, 104, 216
Shutterbug magazine, 211
signs, shooting, 168
silky water effect, 68, 69
simplicity, 170
size
  print, and megapixels, 184
  showing scale and, 75
skies
  horizon line and, 70
  neutral density gradient filter and, 81
  Photoshop adjustments, 83
  pre-storm, 78
  sunset portraits and, 126
SLR cameras, 6
Snapseed app, 175
soft light, 41–42, 124, 129, 223
softbox, 213
Sony cameras, 6
sports photography, 91–111
  aperture setting for, 101, 216
  blurring backgrounds in, 101, 104, 216
  burst mode for, 102, 104
  camera gear for, 92–96
  composing shots in, 110, 216
  facial expressions in, 108, 109
  getting the shot in, 111
  indoor, 97, 99, 100
  ISO setting for, 99, 216
  learning the game for, 111
  lenses for, 92, 93–94, 216
  monopods for, 95
  nighttime, 99
  panning motion in, 104
  pre-focusing shots in, 105
  professional, 91, 92
  RAW vs. JPEG format for, 103
  shutter speed for, 98, 104, 216
  stadium lighting and, 100
  story-telling with, 109
  tripods and, 95
  vertical vs. horizontal, 106
  white balance for, 97

See also action photography

spray bottles, 29
Spyder4ELITE color calibrator, 190
squarespace.com website, 208
stadium lighting, 100
standing portraits, 51
stock photos, 192
stop-down filter, 68
story-telling angle, 109
strip bank, 215
studio lighting, 124, 213
studio portraits, 213
sunlight
  diffusing, 32
  fill flash and, 43
  reflectors and, 127

See also natural light

sunny days, 28
sunrises, 72, 212
sunsets
  portraits and, 126
  trick for warmer, 72
  water shots and, 214

super-sharpening settings, 18
super-wide-angle lenses, 77, 88
sweeping landscape shots, 212
sweet spot, 14
symbols used in book, 4

T

tablet computers, 175
tack sharp photos, 1, 8
teleconverters, 93, 94
telephoto lenses
  moon photography and, 173
  portrait photography and, 114, 218
  quality considerations, 15
  sports photography and, 92, 93, 216

textured backgrounds, 117
textured paper, 189
TFP (Time for Prints), 162
Think Tank Photo belt system, 93
timer, self, 11
tonal adjustments, 83
tourist-free shots, 177
touristy landmarks, 172
Travel + Leisure magazine, 159
travel photography, 159–177
  backing up, 175
  bold/vivid colors in, 164
  capturing details in, 166
  children and old people in, 161
  crowd shots in, 161
  famous landmarks in, 172
  fireworks in, 174
  getting “the shot” in, 160, 224
  hiring models for, 162
  including the moon in, 173
  laptops or tablets for, 175
  monopods used in, 171
  presenting different views in, 167, 172
  printer papers for, 189
  rooftop shots in, 176
  showing movement in, 169
  sign shots in, 168
  simplicity in, 170
  times for shooting, 163
  tourist-free shots in, 177
  Unsharp Mask settings for, 18
  web resource on, 165
INDEX

**tripods**
- alternatives to using, 16, 21
- ballheads for, 9
- carbon fiber, 65
- cost considerations, 8
- fireworks shots and, 174
- inclines and, 137
- ISO setting and, 16
- landscape photography and, 65, 68, 76, 84
- macro lenses and, 26
- monopods vs., 95, 171
- motion trails and, 169
- multiple exposures and, 173
- panoramas and, 84
- permits for using, 135
- portraits and, 120
- sports photography and, 95
- stable shooting with, 137
- substitutes for, 21
- tack sharp photos and, 8
- VR or IS feature and, 13
- weight and quality of, 168

**Tungsten white balance**, 97

**two-element close-up dipters**, 26

**two-light studio setup**, 213

**U**

**UltraChrome K3 inks**, 186

**ultra-wide-angle lenses**, 88

**underexposed photos**, 155

**Unsharp Mask filter (Photoshop)**, 18, 199

**urban photography**, 159–177
- bold/vivid colors in, 164
- capturing details in, 166
- composing shots in, 217
- famous landmarks in, 172
- fireworks in, 174
- getting “the shot” in, 160, 224
- including the moon in, 173
- monopods used in, 171
- presenting different views in, 167, 172
- printer papers for, 189
- rooftop shots in, 176
- showing movement in, 169
- sign shots in, 168
- simplicity in, 170
- times for shooting, 163
- tourist-free shots in, 177
- Unsharp Mask settings for, 18
- web resource on, 165

**See also** travel photography

**UV filters**, 139

**V**

**Versace, Vincent**, 30, 146, 205

**vertical orientation**, 106

**Vibration Reduction (VR) lenses**, 13

**viewfinder borders**, 150

**Virtual Horizon feature**, 82

**W**

**Wallace, Tim**, 215

**water shots**
- composing, 214
- printer paper for, 189
- shooting at dawn, 67
- silky effect in, 68, 69

**waterfalls**, 68, 69

**weather considerations**
- backup batteries and, 133
- cold weather shooting and, 133
- dusty environments and, 134
- landscape photos and, 78, 83

**See also** rain

**web images**, 18, 19, 203

**web resources**
- camera gear, 4
- kelbytraining.com, 4, 173
- online photo labs, 153
- photo models, 162
- stock photography, 192
- travel photography, 165
- weekly talk shows, 195

**wedding photos**, 37–61
- backgrounds for, 53, 218, 220
- backing up, 60
- black and white, 220
- bouquet/garter toss, 58
- bridal shots, 44, 48, 55, 218
- church interiors, 38, 58
- composing, 51, 52, 218
- details in, 56
Dfine 2.0 plugin for, 41
flash used for, 41–43
formal portraits, 45–53, 218
high vantage point for, 57
ISO settings for, 38
lenses for, 39, 40, 218, 220
lighting conditions for, 38, 41–44, 218, 220
low-light situations for, 38–39
memory cards for, 59, 60, 152
number of shots for, 59
outdoor shots, 43, 53, 218
popular format for, 47
posing people for, 48
reception photos, 54
ring photos, 225
soft light for, 41–42
white balance for, 61
wide-angle lens for, 58

Westcott collapsible reflector, 127
Westcott Micro Apollo Softbox, 41

white backgrounds
flower photography and, 31
portrait photography and, 116, 213, 223

white balance
Auto White Balance, 61, 132
avoiding problems with, 132
experimenting with, 214
indoor sports and, 97
JPEG format and, 61
panoramas and, 84
presets for, 61
RAW format and, 61, 97, 132
sunrises/sunsets and, 72
wedding photos and, 61

wide-angle lenses
airplane photography and, 219
landscape photography and, 88, 212
moon included in photos using, 173
polarizing filters and, 77
sports photography and, 93
wedding photography and, 58

wind, shooting flowers in, 34

window light
indoor portraits using, 124
wedding shots using, 44, 220

Woods, Tiger, 3

Z
Ziser, David, 125
zoom button, 17
zoom lenses
  close-up lens added to, 26, 27
  concert shots and, 222
  fireworks shots and, 174
  flower photography and, 25
  landscape photography and, 88
  moon included in photos using, 173
  portrait photography and, 114
  quality considerations, 15
  sports photography and, 93, 94
zooming the LCD monitor, 17, 147