

Dave Morrow's Camera Technique System for Landscape Photography

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All Courses List

Reference the [Main Courses page](#) to access them all.

Main Courses

- **Level 1 = L1:** [Camera Technique Fundamentals](#)
 - **L1A:** [Composition, Color & Light](#)
 - **L1B:** [Composition Black Belt](#)
- **L2:** [Photo Editing Fundamentals](#)
- **L3:** [Advanced Camera Technique / Sharp Focus Black Belt](#)
- **L4:** [Advanced Photo Editing with Luminosity Masks](#)
 - **L4A:** [Black Belt Blending | Focus Stacking, Dynamic Range & Movement](#)
- **L5:** [Night Sky Photography](#)
- **L6:** [Photo Editing Black Belt I - Creative Control](#)
- **L7:** Specific Skills Courses
 - **L7A:** [Black and White Photography](#)
 - **L7B:** [Long Exposures: Waterfalls, Rivers & Seascapes](#)

Other Courses

- [Creating the Image - In the Field to Final Edit](#)
- [How to Print Your Photos Like a Pro](#)
- [Image Critiques](#)
- [Photo Editing - Start to Finish: All Episodes](#)
- [Plan Like a Pro: Weather & Location Scouting](#)
- [Hiking Equipment & Skills](#)

Camera Technique Framework

1. **SELECT COMPOSITION:** Determine composition. ([L1A](#) & [L1B](#))
2. **LEVEL CAMERA:** Level composition with in-camera level or bubble level. ([L1](#))
3. **SHOOTING MODE:** Aperture Priority Mode & Center Weighted Average Metering. ([L1](#))
4. **FOCUS:** Back Button Focus - Single Point Spot Focus ([L1](#), [L3](#), [L4A](#))
5. **WHITE BALANCE:** Use Kelvin Mode & match live view to actual scene. ([L1](#))
6. **SET BASE ISO:** Usually ISO 100 or ISO 64 on pro model cameras. Either is okay. ([L1](#))
7. **F-STOP:** Determine depth of field & **MINIMUM** F-Stop setting required to achieve it. ([L1](#), [L3](#))
8. **EXPOSURE:** Set image brightness / exposure, using Expose to the Right (ETTR) Method, with exposure compensation (+/-EV). ([L1](#), [L3](#), [L4A](#))
9. **DOES SHUTTER SPEED MATTER FOR THIS SHOT?** Determine if a specific shutter speed value is required for the composition / scene. ([L1](#), [L3](#), [L4A](#), [L7B](#))
 - **IF NO**, Press shutter button, capture the image, proceed to Image Review Framework.
 - **IF LONGER SHUTTER SPEED** is required, decrease ISO or increase f-stop value.
 - **IF SHORTER SHUTTER SPEED** is required, increase ISO to max usable ISO, as found through the max usable ISO test.
 - **IF [MAX ISO IS REACHED](#) & SHORTER SHUTTER SPEED** is still required, decrease exposure (+/-EV) to achieve it or use exposure bracketing technique.

Post Shot Image Review Framework

1. **FOCUS CHECK 1:** Check the Focus Point for sharpness. ([L1](#), [L3](#))
2. **FOCUS CHECK 2:** Check the closest object for sharpness. ([L1](#), [L3](#))
3. **FOCUS CHECK 3:** Check the most distant object for sharpness. ([L1](#), [L3](#))
4. **RGB HISTOGRAM:** Check the RGB histogram to ensure optimal exposure using Expose to the Right (ETTR) Technique. ([L1](#), [L3](#))
5. **COLOR HISTOGRAMS:** Verify highlights are not “clipped” or “blown out” for each color channel. ([L1](#), [L3](#))
6. **IF ANY FAILURES IN STEPS ABOVE:** Repeat Camera Technique Framework.

Camera Technique System Cheat Sheet

The goal of this section is to provide quick access to specific skills, AFTER you have watched the entire course.

L1: Camera Technique Fundamentals Course

Camera Technique Framework - Step by Step

- [Intro to Dave's Camera Technique Framework](#)
- [Tripod Setup](#)
- [Quick Focus & Level Composition](#)
- [Aperture Priority Mode & Center Weighted Average Metering](#)
- [Sharp Focus Basics](#)
- [White Balance / Color Balance Settings](#)
- [Always Start at Base ISO](#)
- [F-Stop Settings](#)
- [Set Exposure: Histogram & Expose to the Right](#)
- [Shutter Speed Settings](#)
- [Post Shot Image Review](#)

Camera Setup, Settings & Photography Equipment

- [Setting Up Your Camera for Landscape Photography](#)
- [Mirror Up & Exposure Delay Timers](#)
- [Need Advice on Cameras, Lenses & Tripods?](#)

Putting It All Together - In the Field Camera Technique

- [Complete Camera Technique Overview](#)
- [Back Button Focus & Hyperfocal Distance](#)
- [Histogram Basics](#)
- [Mastering the Histogram with Expose to the Right \(E.T.T.R\)](#)

- [White Balance, Live View & Exposure Technique](#)
- [ISO & Dynamic Range Test](#)
- [Handheld Shooting Technique for Sharp Images](#)
- [How to Shoot When the Light is Changing Quickly](#)
- [Should You Use Image Stabilization on Your Camera & Lens?](#)

L3: Advanced Camera Technique - Sharp Focus Black Belt Course

Main Course Sections

Each section contains multiple videos. The links are to the first video in each section.

- [Sharp Focus Technique 1: Hyperfocal Distance Focusing Technique](#)
- [Sharp Focus Technique 2: 1/3 Focusing Technique](#)
- [Sharp Focus Technique 3: Center of Attention Focusing Technique](#)

Troubleshooting Sharp Focus & F.A.Q

- [Focal Point Is Out of Focus](#)
- [Foreground is Out of Focus](#)
- [Background is Out of Focus](#)
- [Editing Tools to Fix Out of Focus Images](#)
- [Potential Reasons Why Your Images Aren't Sharp](#)
- [Handheld Photos & Sharp Focus](#)
- [How to Focus & Shoot when the Light is Changing Quickly](#)
- [Image Stabilization Features - Should You Use Them?](#)

Specialized Camera Techniques

- [Exposing for Bright Colors](#)
- [Live View Tips for Shooting Dark Scenes](#)
- [Fast Shutter Speeds for Sharper Focus](#)

- [Shooting in Windy Conditions](#)
- [What To Do When the Light is Bad?](#)

L4A: Black Belt Blending | Focus Stacking, Dynamic Range & Movement

The Black Belt Blending Course pulls the advanced skills from across all of my courses into one location so you can easily access them. This list links to specific skills after you have watched the entire course, from start to finish.

L4A: [Black Belt Blending | Focus Stacking, Dynamic Range & Movement](#)

- **[FOCUS STACKING for DEPTH OF FIELD](#)**
 - [Basics of Automated Focus Stack Technique](#)
 - [Manual Focus Stack Technique](#) [Wide Angle Lens w/ Flowers]
 - [Automated Focus Stack](#) [Wide Angle Lens w/ Ferns]
 - [Automated Focus Stack](#) [Telephoto Lens in the Forest]
- **[EXPOSURE BLENDING for HIGH DYNAMIC RANGE](#)**
 - [Test Your Camera - How Many Exposures Do You Need for Dynamic Range?](#)
 - [Exposure Blending Basics](#)
 - [2 Exposure Blend](#) [Low - Medium Dynamic Range Scenes]
 - [3 Exposure Blend](#) [High Dynamic Range Scenes]
 - [Super RAW Exposure Blend](#) [Extreme Dynamic Range Scenes]
- **[TIME BLENDING for DYNAMIC SCENES](#)**
 - [Basics](#)
 - [Light Blending](#)
 - [Cloud Blending](#)
 - [Clouds & Water Blending](#)
 - [Rain Spot Removal](#)
 - [Light Painting for Night Sky Photography](#)
 - [Rivers & Streams Movement](#)
 - [Waterfalls Movement](#)

- [Star Trails Blending](#)
- **[ADVANCED BLENDING TECHNIQUES](#)**
 - [Mountain Sunset Over Alpine Stream](#) [Focus + Time Blend]
 - [Ocean Sunset with Huge Waves](#) [Focus + Exposure + Time Blend]
 - [Mountain Sunset w/ Fog](#) [Focus + Exposure + Time Blend]
 - [Milky Way](#) [Focus + Exposure + Time Blend]
- **OTHER BLENDING TECHNIQUES**
 - [Pano Camera Technique with Tripod](#)
 - [Pano Handheld Camera Technique](#)
 - [Pano Editing](#)
 - [Pano Selfie Action Shot](#)
 - [Milky Way Pano Technique](#)
 - [Perspective Blending](#)

L7A: Long Exposures: Waterfalls, Rivers & Seascapes

The links below go to the first video in each section.

- [Step 1: Select the Right Photography Equipment](#)
- [Step 2: Find the Best Locations](#)
- [Step 3: Find for the Best Weather](#)
- [Step 4: Camera Technique for Long Exposures](#)
- [Step 5: Optimize Your Shutter Speed for the Scene](#)
- [Step 6: Photo Editing for Long Exposure Photography](#)

Camera Technique Steps for Shooting Without Live View

Without live view you will still do the exact steps I'm doing in the following videos, except when focusing & dialing in the exposure.

Live view allows you to see exactly what your final image will look like, with the selected settings, prior to actually taking the shot. Without live view you will simply have to take a few extra practice shots to dial in your exposure & focus, using the following steps:

1. Focus through the eyepiece viewfinder. You can still use single point back button autofocus, or manually focus at the required locations within the image. Both are taught in the following videos.
2. From here continue with the same steps as I show in the videos, until it's time to dial in the exposure / image brightness.
3. Take your first shot with exposure set at 0EV, also known as 0 Exposure Compensation (Controlled with +/-EV Button / covered in videos).
4. Upon taking the 0EV shot, review your RGB and color channel histograms & determine if you need to darken or brighten the exposure, to match my Expose to the Right Technique, taught in the videos.
5. Increase or decrease your exposure using the (+/- EV button) until your shot is exposed to the right without "blowing out" or "clipping" any highlights in any of the RGB or color channels histograms. This may take a few practice shots to dial in.

Camera Settings & Setup Guide

There are many different cameras on the market.

I can't provide the exact settings for each. Some cameras may not provide as many of the choices that my camera has. Some may provide more.

Most camera brands have setting names that are close to the same. This will allow you to use the info I have provided, and some research, to set up your camera correctly.

Learning your camera settings and the setup that works best for you is crucial to becoming the best photographer you can be. If you don't understand the tools of your craft, it will be impossible to improve.

This will take you a few hours of testing and experimenting if you have not done it before! Using the information below, and a Google Search including your camera make and model will lead you in the correct direction.

Reference the [Camera Setup & Settings Video](#), for in-depth instruction.

Camera Settings for Shooting

MY CAMERA: Nikon D810. I've added the Nikon D810 menu values for the settings below, in (). They will look something like (a5) or (b6) for example. Other Nikon Cameras may have close to the same settings.

Exposure Delay Mode: 3 Second Timer (d4)

Mirror Up Mode: ON. I use mirror up mode with exposure delay, which gives me the combination of mirror up mode and a 3 second timer.

SOUNDS & BEEPS OFF: I have all sound & beeps turned off on my camera. We are guests in the natural landscape. Please respect the quiet:)

Aperture Priority Mode: Used for all landscape shots where there is enough light for the camera to meter the scene. This is 95% of my shots. I cover this in the videos.

Manual Mode: Used for late twilight or night sky shots where the camera can not meter the scene. This is the other 5% of my shots.

White Balance / Color Balance Settings: I use Kelvin Mode, designated by "K", for all my images. I cover this in the videos.

Metering Mode: Center Weighted Average (b6). The camera SHOULD NOT meter the focus point, only the center of the composition. This will keep your exposure from constantly changing when you move your focus point.

Shooting Menu

Primary Memory Card Slot: CF Card

Secondary Memory Card Slot: SD Card which backs up the CF card. You may not have two memory card slots. If you do, have one backup the other. This is the best failsafe method for shooting.

Image Quality: RAW, Uncompressed, 14-bit. Use the highest bit depth possible. You didn't buy a nice camera to compress the RAW file and throw away information:)

Vignette Control: Normal

Long Exposure & High ISO Noise Reduction: OFF You can't apply noise reduction to RAW files in camera. These settings are only applied to the JPEG review file. They do nothing to the actual RAW file.

This will only waste battery life if it's on. Apply noise reduction in post processing as required.

Picture Control

Usually these choices are denoted as Standard, Vivid, Landscape, Portrait, Flat, Neutral.

I keep mine on FLAT or NEUTRAL. Both are very close to the same.

You will want to cycle through yours and choose the setting with the least amount of color & contrast.

These settings only apply to the JPEG rendering of your RAW file on the back of the camera screen, on image review.

These settings don't actually change the RAW file in any way.

The camera displays a JPEG file and JPEG histogram when you review your images.

By using FLAT or NEUTRAL, the histogram & photo you see on the back of your camera will be as close as possible to the actual RAW file histogram you will see on your computer.

If you decide to use LANDSCAPE or VIVID, the histogram and JPEG shown on your camera will give you an inaccurate representation of the RAW file that's actually been recorded on your memory card. DON'T DO THIS!

Color Space: Adobe RGB Most cameras are set to sRGB nominally. Don't use this setting.

Using Adobe RGB does not change the RAW file, but it does provide the most accurate representation of the RAW file on your camera's RGB JPEG histogram.

Focus Settings

Single Point Spot Focus: (AF-S, Wide on D810) Sometimes this is called single point autofocus or single point focus.

The goal is to have a single small focus box which you can move around manually, then autofocus on this selected area with your focus button.

For landscape photography, you never want the camera to guess where you want to focus.

Autofocus Activation: Back Button Only (AF-ON ONLY , Setting a4 on the Nikon D810)

The goal is not to have the focus button and your shutter button as one & the same. If the focus button is controlled by any back button on your camera this is fine as well.

Just make sure your focus button IS NOT ON THE SHUTTER BUTTON!

AF-S Priority Selection: Release (a2) This ensures that your camera does not wait to take the image when you press the shutter button