

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