

Shooting Modes

Shooting Modes

My camera has a full automatic mode and the camera takes care of everything why should I use anything else?

The two common reasons are the camera does not always get the settings right and there are times when the photos you want to take are more creative.

This is when understanding your cameras shooting modes will help you take better quality photos.

Most cameras these days have five main shooting modes and I will try and explain what they are when best to use.

Firstly locate the dial (normally on top of the camera) which will have a combination of letters and symbols on it. What letters and symbols are actually displayed can vary from camera to camera. Though variations occur the dial as a minimum normally includes the four letters P, A (or AV), S (or TV) and M and the obligatory Auto.

The three main zones are Creative, Basic and Image (presets)

Creative Zone

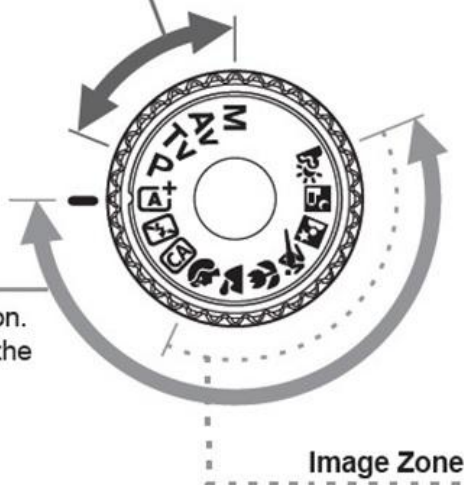
These modes give you more control for shooting various subjects.

- P** : Program AE
- Tv** : Shutter-priority AE
- Av** : Aperture-priority AE
- M** : Manual exposure

Basic Zone

All you do is press the shutter button. The camera sets everything to suit the subject or scene.

- A+** : Scene Intelligent Auto
- [Flash Off]** : Flash Off
- CA** : Creative Auto



- [Portrait Icon]** : Portrait
- [Landscape Icon]** : Landscape
- [Close-up Icon]** : Close-up
- [Sports Icon]** : Sports
- [Night Portrait Icon]** : Night Portrait
- [Handheld Night Scene Icon]** : Handheld Night Scene
- [HDR Backlight Control Icon]** : HDR Backlight Control

Image Zone (Pre-sets)

The Image zone has presets for most common types of photographs taken such as portrait, landscapes etc.

Selecting each of these presets will change how the camera focuses and processes the images and may also alter the shutter speed and lens aperture settings. Some of the changes from one preset to another can be very subtle.

Below details what settings are changed and why. Note, this can all be achieved in manual mode also.

Portrait mode:

This sets a lens aperture that's wider than normal to blur backgrounds, and adjusts the image processing for a softer, more flattering result.

Landscape mode:	Using this mode will boost colours, contrast and outlines.
No flash mode:	This disables the flash so it won't fire, even in dim lighting. This avoids embarrassment in theatres and museums.
Sports mode:	This mode's high shutter speeds will freeze action. The focusing is usually switched to Continuous mode or Predictive Autofocus, where available.
Close-up mode:	The settings in this mode depend on the camera. Some will switch to Centre-spot focussing.
Night portrait mode:	This mode uses flash to illuminate your subject, but this is balanced against the background lighting to produce a natural looking result.

Auto Mode

As its name suggest Auto mode will set everything for you to suite the lighting conditions that you have to work with i.e. aperture size, shutter speed, white balance and ISO. If need be it will also pop up the flash when needed.

When you are first starting photography this is a good mode to use until you get to know your camera and practice composition.

It is also useful for action snaps where you do not have time to set everything.

Program Mode

This mode is similar to auto mode in that the camera still controls most of the functions. However, you can alter ISO, white balance and flash settings. The program mode is the first step to creating creative images and is invaluable to beginners in exploring what features your camera possesses.

Aperture Mode

This is represented as A or AV on your cameras mode dial and gives you control over the aperture (f-stop).




This allows you to control both the amount of light that enters through the lens and the resulting Depth of Field (DoF).

Shallow depth of field is good for isolating portrait subjects sharply against a blurred background, while large depth of field is good for close-ups and landscapes, where you want everything sharp.



Shutter Priority

This is represented as S or TV on your camera's mode dial and gives you control over whether subjects in motion are blurred or frozen or whether or not you want to use long exposures.

	<p>A slightly longer shutter speed results in the water splashes leaving a “trail” of water.</p>
<p>If the shutter speed was longer still it may have resulted in camera shake without the use of a tripod.</p>	<p>With a tripod, a longer shutter speed would have produced a “milky” water image where just the fountain itself would have been in sharp focus.</p>
<p>Making the shutter speed as fast as possible freezes all movement.</p>	
<p>If the shutter speed required means that the image is under exposed you will have to increase the ISO setting to make the camera's sensor more sensitive to light.</p>	
<p>However, raising the ISO lessens the quality of the image so only raise the ISO as much as needed.</p>	
	<p>To make movement even more blurred you will need to decrease the shutter speed as far as possible and as a minimum you will probably need a tripod to avoid camera shake.</p>
	<p>If the shutter speed needs to be decreased more this will result in the image being over exposed.</p>
	<p>To overcome this you could decrease the ISO as low as possible. If this is still not sufficient you may need to use a ND (Neutral Density) filter.</p>

In this mode you control the shutter speed and the camera will set the appropriate aperture for you.

This mode is especially useful in sport and wildlife photography.

Manual Mode

This is represented as M on your camera's mode dial and gives you complete control over all the camera's functions.

In this mode you adjust all the camera settings to suit lighting conditions and other factors. However, using manual mode requires a good understanding of the relationships between different functions -- in particular of the relationship between shutter speed and aperture.

Safe shutter speeds

No one can hold a camera perfectly still, and the slower the shutter speed, the greater the risk of blurring from camera shake.

The image below was taken with the camera hand held and at night.

Additionally, the long focal length increased camera shake.

Checking the image on the back of the camera will let you see if the image has camera shake.



If so you need to raise the shutter speed by changing either the shutter speed, the aperture and \ or the ISO setting

Conclusion

Some people consider it amateurish to use pre determined settings. However, when first learning photography it is best to get the picture than miss the opportunity.

Also, sometimes you just do not have the time to adjust everything manually.

Once you have an image you are happy with and have time try some of the non-auto modes mentioned above .

If in doubt, use Auto camera mode, then adjust the settings manually. Auto settings can be a useful starting point.