USE THE RIGHT SETTINGS FOR PRO-QUALITY IMAGES

MASTER COMPOSITION FOR MORE BALANCED PICTURES

MAKE EXTRA TWEAKS FOR PERFECT RESULTS EVERY TIME

ACHIEVE PRECISE FOCUS FOR PIN-SHARP PHOTOGRAPHS
How to master composition for more balanced pictures

- CHOOSE A FOCAL POINT
  To help anchor the viewer's eye, ensure you have a very clear point of interest in the background. This might be a tree, windmill, lighthouse, or mountain. It usually works best if the focal point is surrounded by lots of negative space so that it stands out.

- LOOK FOR LEAD-IN LINES
  This commonly-used compositional device is a signpost that helps direct the viewer from the corner of the frame towards the focal point. Feel free to use any object within your scene to do this, but the most common lead-in lines are fences, paths, roads, railway lines, clouds and rock formations.

- USE THE RULE-OF-THIRDS
  Imagine your frame is split into nine equal rectangles by two vertical and two horizontal lines. Place your horizon on one of the two horizontal lines for a more balanced image. You can also try placing upright objects, like a tree or lighthouse, along a vertical line.

- LEVEL YOUR HORIZON
  It’s important to ensure that your horizon is perfectly straight, or you risk your shot looking amateurish. You can use the spirit level on your tripod to do this, or better still, activate your camera’s virtual horizon by pressing the info button while in Live View. A level horizon is especially important for coastal landscapes.

- EXPERT TIP TRY S-CURVES
  According to photographic theory, the most effective lead-in lines start from the bottom left corner of the image. And don’t feel the line has be straight – S-curves are also very effective.

How to achieve precise focus for pin-sharp photographs

- SELECT SINGLE-POINT AF
  For this technique you’ll want to activate a single autofocus point so that you can easily focus on a very specific area of your frame. To do this, press the Info button on the back of your camera then scroll to the AF options. On some bodies the system is different, in which case check your manual.

- SET YOUR FOCUS POINT
  Now you have just one focus point active, half-press the shutter button while looking through the viewfinder or the rear LCD (if using Live View), and you should see it illuminated in red. Use the D-pad to nudge this up so it sits one-third of the way up the frame. Half-press the shutter to focus.

- CHECK YOUR SHOTS
  It can sometimes be hard to tell if your shots are pin-sharp, so it’s important to inspect them close up. You can do this in Live View before you shoot by zooming in with the Magnify buttons on the rear of the camera, or you can do it afterwards by pressing the Review button then zooming in.

- EXPERT TIP TURN OFF VR
  Most Nikon lenses have Vibration Reduction, which reduces the risk of camera shake when working handheld. However, when shooting from a tripod it should be turned off as it can reduce sharpness.

How to use the right settings for pro-quality images

- ACTIVATE LIVE VIEW
  Pressing the LV button on the back of your camera will allow you to compose your shot using the rear LCD. You may prefer this to using the viewfinder.

- SET YOUR APERTURE
  Select an aperture of f/16 for a large depth-of-field. This will ensure your extreme foreground and background are both sharp.

- CHOOSE A LOW ISO
  When shooting landscapes from a tripod, always work at ISO 100, as this produces the least digital noise.

- WORK IN JPEG
  To keep things simple, we suggest working in JPEG rather than RAW, as this will allow you to upload your shots without having to edit them first.

- SET WHITE BALANCE
  In normal daylight conditions, Auto white balance is very accurate, so it’s fine to leave your camera in this setting.

- USE PICTURE CONTROL
  Choose the ‘Landscape’ Picture Control preset for more vivid blues and greens.

- SELECT SELF-TIMER
  So that you don’t knock the camera as you press the shutter, it’s best to activate Self-Timer mode. In the menu you can change this to a 2-second delay.

How to make extra tweaks for perfect results every time

- TOO BRIGHT OR DARK
  Your camera will make an intelligent guess at a correct exposure, but it doesn’t always get it right, so you can tweak it using the Exposure Compensation button. It’s often impossible to expose the entire scene correctly, in which case concentrate on getting the sky right.

- FOREGROUND BLURRED
  If you have an object close to the end of the lens, it may not appear perfectly sharp, even at f/16. In this case, adjust your aperture to f/22, although this will make your image slightly softer overall. You could also try moving your focus point a couple of extra clicks closer to the bottom of the frame.

- CAMER A WON'T FOCUS
  If your camera is struggling to focus, this is likely because your focus point is covering an area of particularly low contrast. The simplest solution is to use the D-pad to nudge the focus point to a different part of the frame. If your lens still won’t focus, make sure the lens’ AF switch is on.

- IMAGE SLIGHTLY BLURRY
  If shooting in low light, you may notice your shutter speed is quite slow, so any camera movement can cause blur. If it’s windy, use your body to shield the camera, or lower the tripod for extra stability. Also activate Self-Timer mode so your hand doesn’t move the camera as the exposure starts.

- CHOOSE A LOW ISO
  When shooting landscapes from a tripod, always work at ISO 100, as this produces the least digital noise.

- EXPERT TIP INVEST IN ND GRADS
  If you start shooting landscapes regularly, why not invest in some graduated neutral density filters, such as Cokin’s ND grad kit. These help reduce the light intensity of the sky for a better overall exposure.

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- SELECT SELF-TIMER
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- EXPERT TIP WORK IN GOLDEN HOUR
  Shooting at the start and end of the day when the light is low will give you a slow shutter speed, which will allow moving objects in the frame to blur. This can look really attractive. This time of day also produces soft, golden light.

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