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Robert Correll

*Author of Digital SLR Photography
All-in-One For Dummies*



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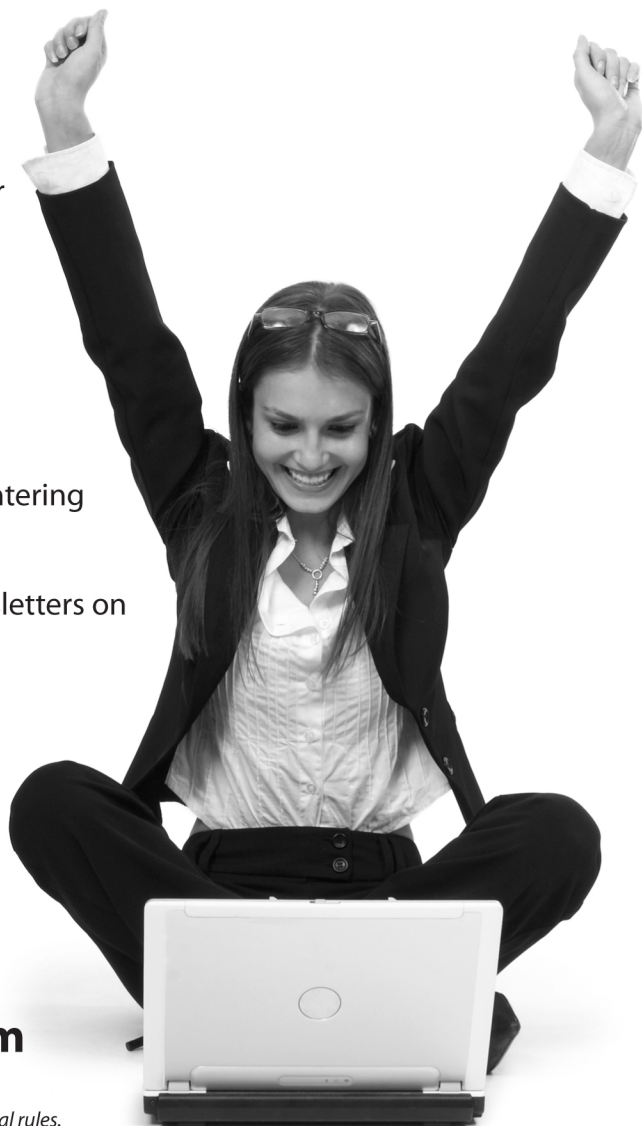
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by **Robert Correll**



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Robert Correll is the author of several books about digital photography and imaging, including *Digital SLR Photography All-in-One For Dummies*. His most recent titles include *Photo Retouching and Restoration Using Corel PaintShop Pro X4*, Third Edition; *HDR Photography Photo Workshop*, Second Edition (with Pete Carr); *Canon EOS Rebel T3/1110D* and *Canon EOS 60D For Dummies* (both with Julie Adair King), and *High Dynamic Range Digital Photography For Dummies*.

When not writing, Robert enjoys family life, photography, playing the guitar, grilling, and recording music. Robert graduated from the United States Air Force Academy and resides in Indiana.

Dedication

To my family.

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Introduction

The story of the Sony A35/A55 begins with two other camera manufacturers, Konica and Minolta. These storied names in camera history merged in 2003, and then decided to leave the camera business in 2006 and focus on other, more business-oriented technologies. They transferred all their camera assets to Sony, which continued developing the Konica Minolta dSLR line under the Sony Alpha brand name. Since that time, Sony has established itself as a serious contender, offering both inexpensive entry-level dSLRs and full-frame professional models.

Today, Sony has upped the technological ante by introducing cameras, including the A35/A55, with translucent mirrors: *dSLT* (digital single-lens translucent) cameras. Traditional dSLRs, like their SLR forefathers, use a reflex mirror to bounce light coming into the lens up into the viewfinder so you can compose the scene and manually focus. Just before the shutter opens to take the photo, the mirror has to flip up out of the way. That's the loud "clunk" you hear when you take a picture with a dSLR and why the mirrors are called reflex mirrors. They move. The translucent mirror in the A35/A55 doesn't have to flip up out of the way when you take a picture. The light bounces off it *and* goes right through it, whether you're framing, focusing, or taking the picture. Having a stable, translucent mirror makes the camera quieter, faster, lighter, and more mechanically reliable.

One other unique feature of the A35/A55 is the electronic viewfinder. Instead of seeing light bounced off a mirror, through a prism, and out the viewfinder, you look at a high-contrast, high-resolution electronic display. The electronic viewfinder functions like its optical counterpart in many ways, but it has some major advantages. You can look at camera menus, view photo and movie playback, check shooting functions, turn on a histogram, and see other displays impossible for normal viewfinders.

About This Book

This book's purpose is to put the right information in your hands so you can take advantage of the technological prowess of your A35/A55. You don't need to know anything about photography before opening these pages. In classic *For Dummies* style, I explain everything in easy-to-understand language and use plenty of color photos to show off the cameras and make the photographic concepts easier to understand.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into four parts. Each one has a particular focus. They flow from what you need to start out to more advanced subjects. You can read the book from start to finish and progress from beginner to advanced user — or you can jump to any section in any chapter and dig right in. Use the table of contents, the index, and the chapter cross-references to jump to sections with related information.

Here's a quick look at what you can find in each part.

Part I: Pictures Worth Keeping, Pronto

This part contains four chapters designed to familiarize you with your A35/A55 and get you started taking pictures and movies as quickly as possible. Chapter 1 is where you get to know your A35/A55. You'll see where all the buttons and dials are, what they do, and how to use them. You find steps for navigating the menu system, the shooting functions, and how to decode the viewfinder and LCD displays. Chapter 2 covers the necessary first settings. You read about the basic shooting modes, other important settings, how to use the flash, how to set picture quality, size, and aspect ratio, as well as which settings make the most sense for you. Chapter 3 is devoted to explaining, in practice, all of the basic shooting modes. Chapter 4 is all about making movies: how to configure the camera, which options are best for you, how to shoot and review them, and how to do some basic editing.

Part II: Playing with Pixels

In this part, you read about what to do after you take a photo. This includes playing back photos on your camera as well as transferring them to your computer. In Chapter 5, you'll see the ins and outs of photo playback. Review pictures, look at the settings you used, change the display to include more or less information, delete photos, rotate photos, set up a slide show, and show off your photos on an HDTV. Chapter 6 is where you read how to transfer what you've stored on your memory card from the camera to a computer. Once there, you can process, print, and share photos and movies.

Part III: Expressing Your Creativity

Part III explains the concepts you need to operate your camera in the more advanced modes, which allows you to make creative decisions on your own. You see how to make exposure and flash decisions in Chapter 7. Use the advanced exposure modes and decide what exposure settings you want to

use to create the photos you like. Change the metering mode, use the histogram, and use other advanced exposure tools on the A35/A55. You also read more about the flash. Chapter 8 is about working with focus and color. Explore the autofocus options, depth of field, and color issues such as setting the right white balance. You also see how to apply creative styles and choose a color space. Chapter 9 is a putting-it-all-together chapter. With this information you can take pictures in advanced exposure modes. Review good general settings, come up with a plan, then photograph portraits, landscapes, close-ups, and more.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

Always a favorite, The Part of Tens concludes the book with two chapters of essential nonessential information. In Chapter 10, you read about how to spruce up your JPEG photos. This isn't mandatory. You can always use the photos as they come out of your camera. However, they aren't always perfect. Some photos can use a little help: remove red-eye, sharpen, or correct brightness and contrast. Chapter 11 concludes the book with a list of interesting features that you might want to check out on a rainy day. These include picture effects for the A35, GPS for the A55, and options like changing the file or folder-naming scheme for both.

Icons Used in This Book

If this isn't your first *For Dummies* book, you may be familiar with the large, round art (aka *icons*) that decorate its margins. If not, here's your very own icon-decoder ring:



Danger is lurking. Pay attention and proceed with caution. You know, as though you were about to open a hatch you shouldn't (Locke) or be so foolish as to be a minor character lecturing people about the dangers of dynamite while wrapping an old stick of it in a shirt on a deserted island (so long, Artz).



This icon should trigger an immediate data download for storage in your brain's long-term memory. The information is something important that rises above the level of a cute tip but not quite to the danger of a warning. As Spock would say, *Remember*.



Here lies helpful information that's likely to make your life easier. It may save you time, effort, or sanity. (Your mileage may vary.) I love tips. If I could, I would make every paragraph a tip.



Some of the information in this book is pretty technical. If it's not necessary for you to understand, it's marked with this icon. Use the information to impress your family and friends. Or skip it completely.

Conventions Used in This Book

I should point out a few other details that will help you use this book:



- ✓ **Margin art:** Small versions of some buttons, onscreen symbols, menu graphics, and other modes or settings appear in the margin next to relevant material. They will look like what you see to the left.
- ✓ **Software menu commands:** In sections that cover software, a series of words connected by an arrow indicates commands you choose from the program menus. For example, if a step tells you, “Choose File→Print,” click the File menu and then click the Print command on the menu.

eCheat Sheet

You can find an electronic version of the famous *For Dummies* Cheat Sheet at <http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/sonyalphasltA35A55>. The Cheat Sheet contains a quick reference to all the buttons, dials, switches, and exposure modes on your camera. Log on, print it out, and tape it to the wall above your desk or bed. If you need to, carry it with you when you're out shooting.

Where to Go from Here

Knowing how to operate a sophisticated camera like the A35/A55 can seem like a daunting task. The camera has quite a few buttons, features, displays, functions, modes, and procedures. In the beginning, you may be assaulted with negative thoughts. (“I will never master this!”) Not only that, but you also want to take great photos. That, after all, is the point of photography.

Don't panic!

Put the camera in Auto or Auto+ mode and concentrate on feeling the camera in your hands. Take pictures. Take lots of pictures! Become *comfortable* with it. If you don't want to use the flash (and it keeps trying to pop up), put the camera in Flash Off mode. Then take more pictures!

The hands-on experience that you accumulate will sink in. I know, because I know. If you practice and don't give up, you'll thirst for more. I've put all the information you need to get started in the book, and more — information that you can grow with as you progress from your current skill level to accomplished photographer. Slap on the back. Graduation ceremony at 11.

Occasionally, we have updates to our technology books. If this book does have technical updates, they will be posted at www.dummies.com/go/sonyalphaA3555updates.

Part I

Pictures Worth Keeping, Pronto

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant

Mona suffered from a rare disorder known as Bluritis, which mostly just affected her appearance in photographs.

©RICHTENNANT

shoot - shutter speed still seems too slow.



Very simply, this part gets you up and running.

It explains all the buttons, bells, and whistles, on your A35/A55. See how to set up the camera, navigate the menus, select shooting modes, choose functions, and decide on photo quality and size. Read all about the basic shooting modes so you can start taking amazing photos right off the bat. See how to use scenes, how to Sweep Shoot your way to panoramas, and how to use the super-fast photo-taking mode. The last chapter covers how to shoot movies in full HD.



Getting to Know Your Camera

In This Chapter

- ▶ Using lenses
 - ▶ Working with batteries and memory cards
 - ▶ Dialing in the viewfinder
 - ▶ Figuring out the displays
 - ▶ Taking care of your baby
-

If you bought a new microwave, you'd need to bone up on some important information to operate it. If you're going to make popcorn, you need to know things like how to program the clock, what buttons to push, and how to read the display. Photography is similar. In fact, half of photography is knowing how to operate your camera.

And the A35 and A55 are complicated cameras. They have lots of buttons, displays, dials, and knobs. You must know how to attach and remove lenses, insert and remove the battery and memory card, and work the menus and shooting functions. Whether you're upgrading from a point-and-shoot camera or cross-grading from an older digital SLR, this chapter has the information you need to start making full use of your microwave.

Comparing the A35 to the A55

Despite being very similar, the cameras have several key differences. I note them here and explain them more fully where appropriate.

- ✓ **LCD monitor:** The A55 sports a fancy tilt/swivel monitor, shown in Figure 1-1, but the A35's monitor is fixed into the body of the camera. The A55's tilt/swivel LCD is covered in this chapter. After that, I treat it as a transparent part of the camera.





Figure 1-1: The A55 can twist and shout.

- **Continuous Advance modes:** Compared to digital SLR cameras in the same general categories, both of these cameras shoot very fast. However, the A35's ultra fast mode is called the Tele-zoom Continuous Priority Advance AE mode, which can shoot up to 7 frames per second. The A55's fast mode is called the Continuous Priority Advance AE mode. It suffers from none of the restrictions as the A35. The photos are full-size and you can record both JPEG and Raw files (with a speed hit, however). These modes are covered more fully in Chapter 3.
- **Global Positioning System (GPS):** The A55 has a built-in GPS system (see Figure 1-2) that provides you with positioning data that you can

embed in the photos. The system relies on the GPS system of satellites that orbit overhead. As such, it works best when you're outside and have a clear line of sight to the heavens. GPS is covered in Chapter 11.

- ✓ **Picture effects:** The A35 has a range of cool picture effects, which are creative filters and processing options such as Pop Color, Retro Color, and Toy Camera. They're with the Scene Selection mode and I cover them in Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Built-in level:** The A55 has a built-in electronic level. This convenient feature tells you if you're lined up with the horizon or not. Aside from warning you that you're tilting, the level also give you a graphical indication if you're pointing the camera up or down.
- ✓ **The Menu and Movie buttons:** The A55 has the Menu and Movie labels printed to the upper left of the buttons. The A35 Menu and Movie labels are printed beneath the buttons, as they were on the A33. Yes, that's pretty picky. This isn't covered elsewhere.



Figure 1-2: That there's a cool-looking GPS symbol.

Know Thy Camera

You need to know your camera: what all the controls are, where they are, and how to work them.

Top controls

The top of the camera (see Figure 1-3) is where the really important controls are located that you may need to access repeatedly or at a moment's notice. The mode dial dominates the top left, while the power switch and shutter button take precedence on the top right.



Figure 1-3: Topside.

Power switch

This one's pretty obvious.



The camera is initially set to enter Power Save mode after 1 minute. Wake it up by pressing the shutter button halfway. Unlike traditional dSLRs, you can't look through the electronic viewfinder and see anything when the power is off.

Mode dial



Aside from the shutter button, the mode dial is probably the most important control on the camera. It's how you select an *exposure mode*. Exposure modes determine how the camera operates and whether it is automatic or manual. Different modes (discussed in Chapter 2) have different creative and practical goals.

Shutter button

The shutter button does more than just take pictures:

- ✓ Press the shutter fully in to take a photo.
- ✓ Press it halfway to start autofocus and metering. It is critical that the camera have time to focus and determine the lighting conditions so that the photo is sharp, clear, and properly lit.



Don't punch at the shutter button.

Finder/LCD button

The A35/A55 is smart enough to know when you're looking through the viewfinder or at the LCD monitor, and they switch the display to the appropriate device. Actually, it uses the eyepiece sensors to sense when your noggin blocks the light and changes to Viewfinder mode.



Press the Finder/LCD button to switch between the viewfinder and LCD monitor. If you use the viewfinder a lot and don't want the LCD monitor on, disable auto switching from Custom menu 1 and use this button to switch back and forth.

D-Range button

This button accesses the A35/A55's contrast compensation system called D-Range Optimizer. Fully covered in Chapter 7, D-Range prevents a loss of data in very bright or dark areas of a scene. You can change the D-Range only in the advanced modes: P, A, S, or M modes (covered in Chapter 7). If you have an A35, you can change the function of the D-Range button from Recording menu 3.

Auto-lock accessory shoe

The accessory shoe (otherwise known as a *hot shoe* because it can make an electrical connection between it and the device attached to it) is where you mount an external flash and other accessories. Slide the accessory on the shoe until it snaps in place. The flash has a release button that you press to remove.

Image sensor position mark

This mark tells you exactly where the image sensor is in the camera body. If you ever set up a shot that requires you to know the precise distance between the focal plane on the sensor and the subject (maybe you're taking a photography class, or maybe you plan to set up a shot at the same distance later), use this mark as a reference point.

Speaker and microphones

Audio comes out of the speaker when you play a movie with sound. The camera also beeps when it establishes autofocus and as the self-timer counts down. Your A35/A55 has two built-in microphones that let you record stereo audio for your movies without having to attach an external stereo microphone (although you can do that).



The mics are close enough to your face that, should you be looking through the viewfinder while recording a movie, they will record your every breath. Figure 1-4 shows the left microphone; both are shown in Figure 1-3.

Rear controls

The rear of the camera, shown in Figure 1-5, has quite a few important controls, not to mention the viewfinder and LCD monitor. Get to know everything well. Many of the controls are dual use. They have a shooting function as well as a playback or menu function.



Figure 1-4: One of the two microphones.

Menu button

Press the Menu button to activate the camera's menu system. This is how you configure the camera and change many of its settings. Menus are covered in this chapter and used throughout the book.



Figure 1-5: Get a load of all that.

Movie button

Rather than have a movie mode, the A35/A55 has a Movie button. Press it to start recording. Press it again to stop recording. It's that simple. Chapter 4 covers shooting movies in more depth.

Exposure/zoom out/image index button



This button has three functions. The first is to adjust exposure compensation in P, A, and S modes; see Chapter 7. The second is to zoom out during photo playback, and the third is to display the Image Index during playback. The latter two functions are covered in Chapter 5.

AE lock/zoom in button

This button locks the auto exposure settings after you've metered the scene, which is helpful when there's a big lighting difference between your subject and the background. For more information, turn to Chapter 7. You can also use this button to zoom in when playing back photos.

Electronic viewfinder

The electronic viewfinder is a versatile piece of equipment. Although you look through it the same way you do traditional digital SLRs', it has many more uses. Eyepiece sensors, just below, detect whether you're looking through the viewfinder.

Diopter-adjustment dial

A small but important dial is nestled in the bottom-right corner of the viewfinder, as pointed out in Figure 1-6. It goes by the super-technical sounding name of *diopter-adjustment dial*. Use this dial to adjust the viewfinder to your eyesight. You'll find instructions on how to do this later in the chapter.



Diopter-adjustment dial

Figure 1-6: Turn the knob to improve your view.

LCD monitor

The LCD monitor has as many functions as the electronic viewfinder. Sony's use of Live view (where you frame the shot based on what you see on the monitor as opposed to looking through the viewfinder) is the best in the business. You can shoot, review, and control the camera from here. The A55 has a tilt/swivel LCD monitor, as I mentioned earlier. It turns, tilts, and swivels.

Light sensor (A55)

The A55's LCD monitor frame has a built-in light sensor that adjusts monitor brightness according to the surrounding light level. You can also adjust the monitor's brightness manually.



Figure 1-7: The sensor helps the monitor stay bright.

Function/image rotation button

The Function (or Fn) button is one you'll use when shooting. It groups a lot of shooting settings together, like autofocus mode, metering mode, and ISO. Press it to gain access to them. The type of functions that you have access to depend on whether you're shooting in an automatic (see Chapter 3) or an advanced mode (see Chapters 7 and 8).

Control button

The five buttons listed in this section are collectively known as the control button. However, this book rarely refers to them as that, instead preferring their individual names.

The outer ring is composed of four buttons — one at each cardinal point. Although they're part of the same circular button, they're considered separate buttons. To press one, simply press that side. The center button is more distinct. Each of the buttons has a shooting purpose and a navigational purpose. The shooting purpose is printed on the back of the camera and is therefore easy to remember. The navigational purpose is also straightforward, once you pair up the direction with the correct side of the button.

✓ *Display/up button:* Press to change the display. Press when you need to go up in a list or menu.

✓ *White balance/right button:* Press the WB button to open the white balance options. It is also the right button.

✓ *ISO/down button:* Press to open the ISO menu. This is also down.

✓ *Drive/left button:* This button opens the drive selection screen. It also navigates left.

✓ *AF/enter button:* Press the AF button as a different way to initiate autofocus. When you're using local AF area, press the AF button to call up the AF area setup screen and choose an area. This button also serves as the enter button. Think of it as a clicking a mouse or pressing Enter or Return on a keyboard. You'll use it when choosing options from menus, on the Function screen, and in other option screens. When you see a circular white button in the menu system that's labeled OK, it refers to this button.



Playback button



This button is single-mindedly focused on playback. Press it to play back photos or movies. Chapter 5 is devoted to playback as a whole. Chapter 4 has a bit more info on movie playback.

Delete/focus magnifier button



Use this button to delete photos or movies. You can see how in Chapter 5. Also, when you enable the focus magnifier with this button (see Setup menu 2), press it to zoom in and refine your focus on the LCD monitor or through the viewfinder.



Access lamp

This light shines when the camera is reading from or writing to the memory card. Don't open the battery/memory card cover when the lamp is lit.

Front gizmos

The front of the camera has a few important controls and the self-timer lamp. Practice identifying the controls so you don't have to turn the camera around to see them. The front left has the first three controls (seen in Figure 1-8): control dial, self-timer lamp, and preview button. The front right of the camera (see Figure 1-9) controls the last three controls: flash pop-up button, lens release button, and the focus mode switch.



Figure 1-8: You'll rarely see this side of your camera.

Control dial

The control dial is just under the power switch, within easy reach of your right index finger. In the basic modes, the control dial doesn't do much. You

can, however, get through menu options and lists quickly by spinning it left or right. (It acts almost like a track ball in that respect.) In advanced exposure modes, use the control dial to turn up or down the shutter speed or f-number.

Self-timer lamp

You can find more on drive modes, including the self-timer, in Chapter 2. The self-timer lamp depends on your setting:

- ✓ 10-second self-timer: Blinks for the first nine seconds and then remains steady for the last second.
- ✓ 2-second self-timer: Lights up but doesn't blink. Goes off just prior to taking the photo.

Preview button

Use the preview button to check the depth of field (see Chapter 7) before taking the photo. You won't notice much of a difference between your normal view and the preview if the f-number is set to produce a large aperture.

Flash pop-up button

Press this button, pointed out in Figure 1-9, to pop the built-in flash.



Lens release button

Press this button all the way in to release the lens. Instructions for attaching and removing lenses are in this chapter.

Focus mode switch

In the absence of the same switch on the lens, this switch switches from auto focus (AF) to manual focus (MF) modes. If you have a lens with the same switch, set this to AF and forget it. For more information, look for the "Changing to manual focus" section in this chapter.

Terminals

All terminals are on the left side of the camera, as shown in Figure 1-10. If you don't need them, you can ignore them.



- ✓ **Remote terminal:** Open the rubber cover and use this terminal to plug in the RM-S1 AM/RM-L1AM remote commander or other Alpha-compatible remote shutter release.
- ✓ **HDMI terminal:** Connect the mini end of an HDMI cable into this terminal to play back your photos and movies on an HDTV with HDMI input.

Chapter 5 has details on connecting your camera to an HDTV. The cable isn't included.

- ✓ **USB terminal:** Use the USB terminal to connect your camera to a computer. The USB cable is included.
- ✓ **Microphone jack:** You can connect an external microphone to your camera with this jack. Doing so disables the on-board microphones. See Chapter 4 for more information about recording audio with movies.



Figure 1-9: This side is functional and attractive.

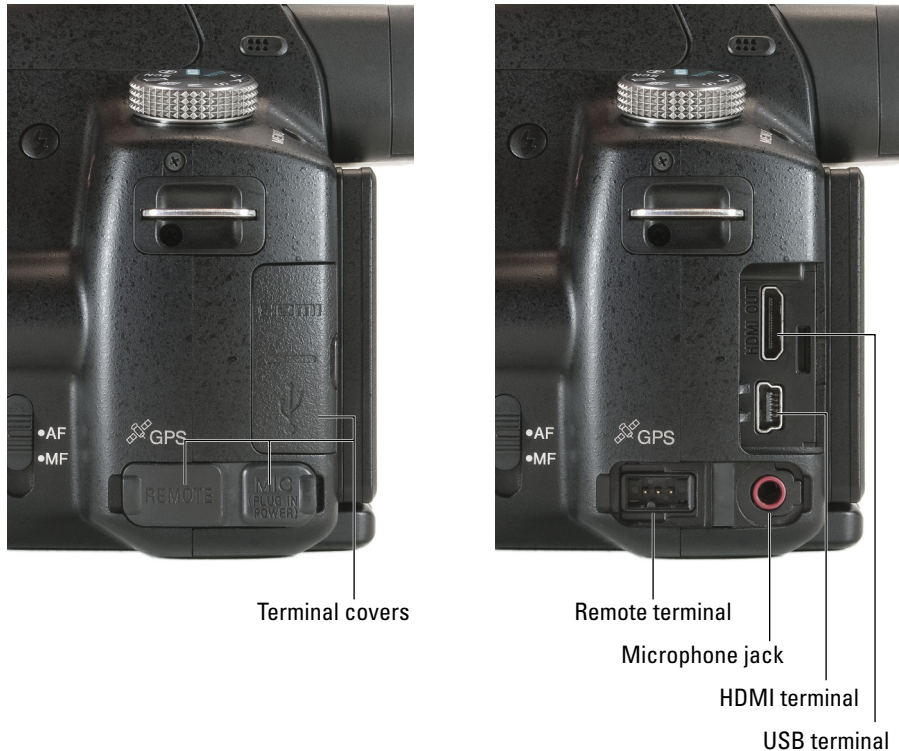


Figure 1-10: The terminals are hidden away underneath rubberish covers.

Underneath it all

The bottom of the camera, shown in Figure 1-11, has a few doors and a place to screw in a tripod or quick mount plate. Otherwise, no controls or displays live here.

- ✓ **Tripod receptacle:** The tripod receptacle is in the bottom-center of the camera.
- ✓ **Battery/memory card cover:** This cover protects the battery and memory card compartment. It's spring-loaded, which means the cover pops open when you slide the release toward the front of the camera.
- ✓ **Connection plate cover:** This small opening enables you to snake a power adapter cord into the battery compartment. The AC-PW20 AC adapter (sold separately), has a battery-sized connecting plate that replaces the battery. The cord connects it to the AC adapter, which plugs into an outlet with an AC power cord.



Figure 1-11: Even the bottom of the camera sports a few important features.

Performing Lens Gymnastics

Until you get used to it, changing lenses makes you feel like you need one more hand than you have. You have to support the camera with one hand and use the other to hold the new lens. That leaves a third to handle other lenses and lens caps. A fourth would be nice so that you didn't have to do everything one-handed. Unless you can grow more hands or use your feet, this takes practice.



Any kit lens, including the Sony 18-55mm lens featured in this book, will be compatible with your camera. The technical name for the Sony's is the *A-mount*. Your camera is also compatible with DT lenses. That means you can use modern lenses specifically designed for smaller sensors or lenses that

can also be used on full-frame cameras (for example, the Sony Alpha 900). Sony's NEX cameras use E-mount lenses, which aren't compatible with Sony's Alpha cameras.

Attaching a lens

Attaching a lens is certainly one of the most rewarding things you can do with a dSLR or SLT camera. After all, being able to use different lenses is one of the things that differentiates these cameras from the crowd. Sony produces lenses that work with APS-C-sized sensors, which are smaller than a 35mm frame of film. They're designated as DT (digital technology) lenses. Figure 1-12 shows the A35 with the lens off. Notice the orange mounting index that looks like a dot. You align the index on the lens with this one when you attach the lens.



When you follow these instructions, the back of the camera will face you. You have to reach around to the front. Same thing if you use a tripod. These steps are written from that perspective. If you hold the camera facing you, reverse the direction you turn the lens and body cap. To attach that lens, follow these steps:

1. Get everything ready and have a plan.

When you're changing a lens, you're exposing the camera's internals. You want to do that as little as possible. It's also a good idea to have a place to stick the lens you're removing. Knowing where you're going to put things like caps, covers, and lenses is a good idea. You'll fiddle with things less that way.



2. Turn off the camera.

It isn't absolutely necessary to power down, but it is good practice unless you need to change lenses lightning fast.

3. Put the camera strap around your neck.

The back of the camera will face you.

4. Rotate the body cap towards the shutter button (clockwise), pull it off, and stick it in your pocket.

Face the camera partially down so it's harder for dust and other debris to get into the camera opening. If you need to remove another lens, refer to the steps for taking off a lens.

5. Remove the rear lens cap or lid from the lens you want to attach.



Figure 1-12: The Alpha mount (A-mount) in all its glory.

- 6. Align the orange mounting index on both the lens and the camera, as shown in Figure 1-13.**
- 7. Gently insert the lens into the camera.**
- 8. Turn the lens toward the mode dial (counterclockwise) until it clicks.**

The click indicates the lens is locked in position. Remember, the camera is facing away from you. If you're looking at the front, rotate the lens clockwise.
- 9. Remove the front lens cap and turn on the camera.**





Turn to lock, once attached

Figure 1-13: Align the indices with decisiveness.

Removing a lens

Removing a lens can feel scarier than attaching one — like you're going to drop something. If you need to, practice while sitting down on your bed. This will give you the peace of mind you need to concentrate.



When you follow these instructions, the back of the camera will face you. These steps are written from that perspective. If you hold the camera *facing* you, reverse the direction you turn the lens and body cap. Follow these steps to remove a lens:

1. Get a grip.

Until you get the hang of it, removing a lens is going to make you feel like you're going to drop something. Get a good grip on things before continuing. These steps are written from the perspective of how you will most likely use the camera, which means it will be in front of you, ready for use.

In the manual, the camera points towards you. This makes it easier to see the illustrations, but not as realistic. Therefore, hold most of the camera's weight with the bottom two fingers of your left hand. Form a shelf for the camera to rest on and place your thumb on the mode dial. This frees your left index finger to press the lens release button.

2. Turn off the camera.

It isn't absolutely necessary to power down, but good practice.

3. Press the lens release button fully in.

Support the camera with your left hand and use your left index finger to press the release button. Cradle the attached lens with your right hand.

Although it is difficult to do, face the camera partially down and away so it's harder for dust and other debris to get into the camera opening. Know how it feels so you aren't always angling the camera up to see it. In fact, after some practice you should be able to do this blindfolded.

4. Twist the lens towards the shutter button (clockwise) until it stops.

Use your right hand to twist and support the lens. When it's free, it can drop out of the camera and fall, so don't let go of it.

5. Pull out the lens and quickly put it somewhere safe.

Don't worry about putting the lens caps on the lens you just took off. While you stop and fiddle with the lens, the camera is open to the world, which includes dust and other bad things.

6. Put on the body cap with your right hand or attach another lens.**7. Put the front and rear lens caps on the lens you removed and put it securely away.**

Changing to manual focus

Your camera's outstanding phase detection auto-focusing system works perfectly in most situations. It may, however, have difficulty focusing on subjects in low light and low contrast situations (hazy, foggy days). The camera simply can't tell what you want to focus on given the circumstances.



The Sony DT 18-55mm F3.5-5.6 SAM lens has a focus mode switch on the side, right in front of the orange mounting index. Not all lenses do. Therefore, the camera has the same switch, just below the lens release button. This redundancy is necessary. If your lens doesn't have the focus mode switch, you would be up switch creek if you wanted to change focus modes. However, this arrangement is confusing. There are two identical switches that appear to do identical things.



The switch on the lens overrides the switch on the camera. Therefore, if you have both switches, keep the switch on the camera set to AF and forget about it. Don't touch it again. Use the switch on the lens to change focus modes. If your lens doesn't have the switch, use the switch on the camera.



Figure 1-14: Set phasers to Manual.

While you can read more about advanced autofocus techniques in Chapter 8, you may need to take control and manually focus. Here's how:

1. Switch the focus mode switch on the lens from AF to MF.

This takes you from auto to manual focus; see Figure 1-14. To change back to auto focus, move the switch on the lens from MF to AF.

2. Look through the viewfinder or at the LCD monitor and rotate the focus ring until your subject is sharp.

If you're using the viewfinder, make sure you've calibrated it to your eyesight using the diopter-adjustment dial. Those steps are in this chapter's section "Adjusting the Electronic Viewfinder to Your Eyesight." If you don't, what looks focused to your eye will actually be out of focus.



The focus ring on the kit lens is at the end, as shown in Figure 1-15. It's pretty small and is smooth, as opposed to the zoom ring. When you zoom in and out, the focus ring extends or retracts with the lens. This can be distracting if you're not expecting it.



Figure 1-15: The focus ring is all the way at the end of this lens.

Try keeping the thumb and index finger of your left hand on the zoom ring to zoom in and out, and use your middle finger and thumb to focus. That way you never lose contact with either ring, and only need to move your thumb back and forth.

Zooming in and out

The Sony kit lens has a zoom ring, which is shown in Figure 1-16. You turn this ring to change the distance between the camera sensor and the rear lens element in the lens, which is known as the *focal length*. This increases the magnification of the lens and decreases the field of view.

Numbers are printed on the kit lens to tell you the lens' current focal length. Take your lens off the camera and carefully look in the rear. Turn



Figure 1-16: The zoom ring is the large, ridged one.



the zoom ring and see what happens. As you turn it toward the smaller focal lengths, the rear lens element gets closer to the opening. This reduces the distance between it at the sensor when it is mounted on the camera. When you turn it towards its maximum focal length, 55mm, the rear lens element retreats inside the lens to increase the distance between it and the image sensor.

Working with Batteries and Memory Cards

Working with batteries and memory cards are important skills that you should quickly master. Memory cards aren't made out of glass. They won't break if you drop them on the carpet. In fact, they are pretty durable. If you treat them with reasonable amount of care, they will last you for as long as you have your camera. If you have protective cases for your cards, use them.



However, do keep in mind these don'ts:

- ✓ Don't bend them.
- ✓ Don't stack heavy objects on them.
- ✓ Don't use them as ninja throwing stars.
- ✓ Don't microwave or bake them.
- ✓ Don't let them sit in the sunlight in your car.
- ✓ Don't go out of your way to magnetize them. Don't put a bunch of memory cards on your person when you go in for an MRI, for example.
- ✓ Don't touch the gold contacts (see Figure 1-17) with your fingers.
- ✓ Use the locking tab to make sure you don't accidentally erase photos.

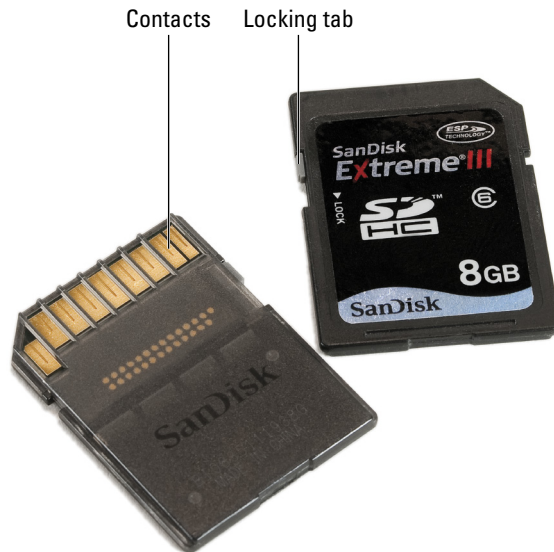


Figure 1-17: SDHC cards relaxing in the studio.



Inserting the battery

The key to putting the battery in your camera is to push the blue lock lever out of the way as you slide in the battery. Don't push down on the lever or you could break it off. Here's how to insert the battery:

1. **Make sure the camera is off.**
2. **Slide the battery/memory card cover lever toward the front of the camera.**

The spring-loaded cover should pop open, as shown in Figure 1-18.

3. **Insert the battery into the camera.**

Orient the battery so the contacts go in first and face the rear of the camera. First, angle in the side of the battery closest to the blue lock lever so it shoves the lever out of the way.

4. **Press the battery all the way in until the blue lever pops out over the battery and it locks in place. See Figure 1-19.**

If the battery doesn't go all the way down, you may have it in incorrectly. Pull it out and double-check the orientation of the contacts.

5. **Close the battery/memory card cover.**

Removing the battery

The key is to press the blue lock lever with your thumb or finger. If you look at the battery compartment when it's empty, you can see the spring that pushes up on the battery. When it's unlocked, it pops right up. Here is how to remove the battery:

1. **Make sure the camera is off.**



Figure 1-18: When you get enough practice, you won't even need to look.



Figure 1-19: The blue lever holds the battery in place.

2. Slide the battery/memory card cover lever toward the front of the camera.

The cover pops open.

3. Carefully use your finger to push the blue lock lever in until the battery pops up.

4. Pull the battery out of the camera.

Put a fresh one in or continue to the next step while you charge it up.

5. Close the battery/memory card cover.



Inserting a memory card

Take care when inserting the memory card into your camera. Make sure it's facing the right direction and that you slide it into its compartment smoothly and straight. Here's how:

1. Make sure the memory card access lamp isn't lit.

See Figure 1-20 for a comparison. If the lamp is shining, a card is in the camera and being used. You can turn off the camera if you want, but you don't have to as long as the lamp is not lit.

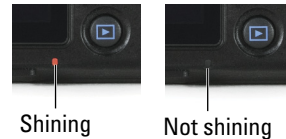


Figure 1-20: The red light indicates card activity.

2. Slide the battery/memory card cover lever toward the *front* of the camera.

The spring-loaded cover should pop open.

3. Insert the memory card into the camera, as shown in Figure 1-21.

If a memory card is already in the camera, remove it according to the next steps.



Figure 1-21: Inserting the memory card.



The end of the card with the contacts goes in first, but SDHC cards are oriented differently than Memory Stick PRO Duo or Memory Stick PRO-HG Duo. SDHC contacts face the front of the camera. Memory Stick contacts face the back of the camera.

4. Press the card all the way in.

You will feel a spring pushing back. Continue to push until you feel or hear a slight pop as the card locks in place. If you don't get the snap, pull the card out and check to see if it's oriented correctly.

5. Close the battery/memory card cover.

Removing the memory card

Removing your memory card is easier than putting it in. Here's how to go about it:

1. As when inserting a card, first make sure the memory card access lamp is not lit.

If it is, wait a moment. You can turn the camera off if you want, but there is no reason to as long as the card isn't being written to.

2. Slide the battery/memory card cover lever toward the front of the camera.

The spring-loaded cover should pop open.

3. Push down on the memory card, then release.

The card will give a bit, which releases the catch (which you can't see), then push up. It should literally spring up a bit.

4. Pull out the card.

At this point, put in a fresh card or leave it empty. When you're done transferring photos, put the card back in the camera. This protects the card, keeps you from spilling beverages on it, makes it harder to lose, and enables you to grab your camera at a moment's notice and start taking more pictures.

5. Close the battery/memory card cover.

Making a Contortionist Proud: The A55 Monitor

The A55 has an adjustable monitor that flips out from the back of the camera and then tilts and swivels. An LCD monitor with Live view gives you the flexibility of shooting when you can't look through the viewfinder, but having an *adjustable* LCD monitor lets you shoot from a number of otherwise impossible positions, such as down low, up high, or even around a corner. The monitor comes stowed, as shown in Figure 1-22. You can use the monitor when it's flipped out from the camera, turned toward you, or turned to the side. It tilts 180 degrees out and rotates 270 degrees.

To pull the monitor out of its storage position, follow these steps:

1. Pull the monitor out from the back of the camera.

See Figure 1-23, where she is carefully pulling it toward herself. You can use your thumb from the side or the top, or pull with your fingers.

2. Rotate the monitor clockwise so the screen faces away from you, as shown in Figure 1-23.

The figure shows the monitor turned half way. Keep twisting it until it stops.

3. Flip the monitor back up, as shown in Figure 1-24.

The monitor ends up facing you and the camera is ready for action.

Adjusting the Electronic Viewfinder to Your Eyesight

This diopter-adjustment dial matches the focus of the viewfinder to your eyesight. If you wear glasses, you should adjust the camera so you can see everything clearly through the viewfinder. Even if your eyesight is perfect, you may need to adjust the camera to match your eyesight.

Here's how to do it:



Figure 1-22: The A55 LCD monitor in its protective position.



Figure 1-23: Tilt and swivel.

1. Turn on the camera.
2. Press the Menu button.

This approach works best with cameras like the A35/A55, that have electronic viewfinders and can display the menu system in the viewfinder. The text in the menu is perfect for checking focus.

3. Support the camera with your left hand.
4. Use your right thumb to turn the diopter-adjustment dial, looking at the text in the menu.



Figure 1-24: Flipping the monitor into position, but now it faces out.

When the text is sharpest, the viewfinder is adjusted to your eyesight. If you go the wrong direction and things get worse, click back the other way to the original position and then continue. If you've gone as far as possible in either direction and you can't see the menu clearly, the camera probably can't adjust to your eyesight. Try switching eyes to see if you can get the other one dialed in.

Managing Menus, Buttons, and Dials







Sometimes you have more than one option for doing things. Try getting to know them all; experiment to find the one that works best for you. If that means you want to look through the viewfinder 63 percent of the time, good. Someone else might love working with the LCD monitor 76 percent of the time.







Navigating menus

The internal menu system give you access to a number of the A35/A55 settings. To launch the menu system, press the Menu button. You'll see the active menu tab at the top of the screen along with the other menu icons. Within each tab, there may be one, two, or three submenus, which are described in Table 1-1.



While all menu tabs are accessible, not every menu line item is available in all exposure modes. For example, you only have access to panorama settings when the Mode dial is set to Sweep Shooting. Other options (noise reduction settings, for example) are not available in the automatic modes, but are accessible when you are in one of the advanced modes (P, A, S, or M).

Table 1-1		Alpha 35/55 Menus
Symbol	Menu Name	Available Functions
 1	Recording menu 1	Photo size, aspect ratio, and quality settings Movie format Size Audio SteadyShot
 2	Recording menu 2	Panorama options Flash control AF illuminator Color Space
 3	Recording menu 3	Noise reduction settings D-Range button programmability (A35)
 1	Custom menu 1	Eye-Start AF Finder/LCD settings AEL Focus hold and focus magnifier button behavior Red-eye reduction Release w/o lens
 2	Custom menu 2	Display options such as grid line and histogram Auto review A few Auto+ options
 1	Playback menu 1	Delete Still/movie select Slide show Image index 3D viewing Protect DPOF printing

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Menu Name</i>	<i>Available Functions</i>
 2	Playback menu 2	Volume Select folder Select date Playback display (auto rotate)
	Memory Card Tool menu	Format, file number, and name options Folder options Recover image DB Display card space
	Clock setup menu	Date, time, and location setup
 1	Setup menu 1	LCD and viewfinder brightness GPS (A55) Power save Help guide display
 2	Setup menu 2	Eye-fi and USB setup Audio settings Cleaning mode Reset default (A55)
 3	Setup menu 3 (A35)	Reset default

The left image in Figure 1-25 shows Recording menu 1. Notice that the Recording menu tab is lit and your page is highlighted. The other menu tabs are grayed out.

The selected line is highlighted (in this case, Image: Size). That tells you at a glance where you are in the menu. Grayed-out menu choices (Movie: Size) aren't available to you right then. This is most likely due to the exposure mode you're in, but not always. You can only change the settings that appear in white.



Press the enter button when a line is highlighted to see the settings associated with that option. Image: Size options are shown in Figure 1-25. Use the up or down arrow buttons to get to your choice. The current setting has a small dot next to it. Your position is indicated by highlighting. Press the enter button to make the change.

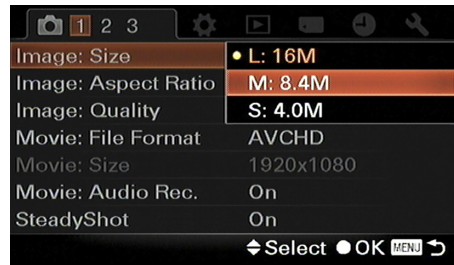


Figure 1-25: Navigating the menu system is like using a computer.



The menu system is important. Remember these techniques:

- ✓ **Navigate:** Use the directional buttons (left, right, up, or down) to move between menus, tabs, and menu options. Use them to highlight options when you see a list or choices like Enter or Cancel. You may also use the control dial to go up and down between the menu options and menus.
- ✓ **Choose:** Press the enter button (labeled AF 3 on the back of the camera and is in the center of the round control button) to lock in your choices.
- ✓ **Exceptions:** Sometimes you're prompted to press the Menu button to continue, rather than the enter button. Pay attention to the prompts at the bottom of the screen.
- ✓ **Cancel:** You can generally press the Menu or playback button, or press the shutter button halfway, to ditch the menu and get back to shooting. Pressing the Function button takes you to the functions for your current exposure mode.

Changing displays

To change displays, whether you're looking through the viewfinder or at the LCD, press the Display (DISP) button. Each time you press it you will cycle to the next available display.

There are several types of display:

- ✔ **Graphic display:** Aside from displaying other parameters (including battery level, shooting mode, and photo quality), this display shows the shutter speed and aperture graphically. The graphic changes depending on the light, if you're in an advanced exposure mode, and your settings. Use this display when you don't need to see the functions and modes. See Figure 1-26.
- ✔ **Recording information on (Live view):** This display, shown in Figure 1-27, shows the camera's many modes to the left and right sides. Here is how you can see the most information; it's a great way to scan settings besides exposure. For example, it's easy to forget the fact that you changed the metering mode to Spot. This is the mode I show most in the book.
- ✔ **Recording information on (viewfinder):** This optional display (off by default) shows you the same information as the previous display, but in a grid (and without the scene itself), as shown in Figure 1-28. You *can't* see this display through the viewfinder — only on the back of the camera. When using it, you must compose your shot using the viewfinder. You can turn on this display from Custom menu 2. Highlight Display Recording Data, press the enter button, and select For Viewfinder.
- ✔ **Recording information off:** This simpler display mode shows only the AF areas and minimal exposure information. See Figure 1-29.



Numeric display of shutter speed and aperture
Graphical display of shutter speed and aperture

Figure 1-26: The graphic display shows you how dynamic exposure can be.



Figure 1-27: This display presents you with the most information.



Figure 1-28: This display, which you have to enable yourself, is a bit of a throwback.



Figure 1-29: A minimalist display.

✓ **Digital level gauge on (A55):** This display shows the digital level, as shown in Figure 1-30. When the camera is level from side to side, the triangles on the sides turn green. When the camera is level from front to back, indicators in the center of the display turn green.

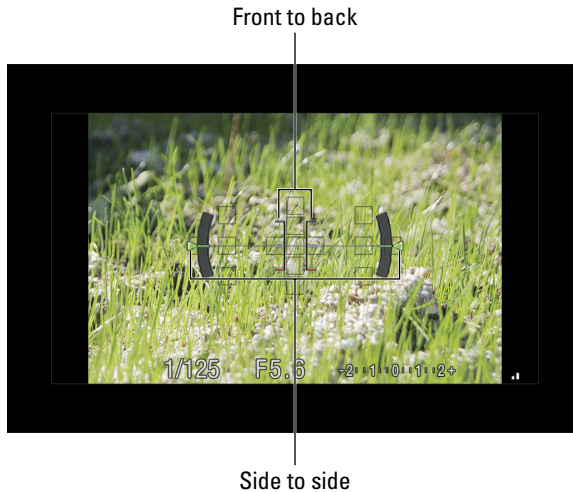


Figure 1-30: Gettin' a little to the left with the level.

Using the Function button

The Function (Fn) button is your portal to features that you will use when photographing: ways to customize each shooting or exposure mode so that you can take the photo *you* want to, given the situation at hand. For example,

if you want the camera to process the photos more vividly, choose the Creative Style function. You can also think of many of the functions as problem solvers. If the flash is too bright, reduce it (if possible) with flash compensation. Table 1-2 summarizes the functions and their effect while telling you what modes they're available in and in what chapter you can find more detailed information.

Table 1-2 What's Your Function?			
Name	Effect	Availability	Chapter
Scene Selection (A55)	When the mode dial is set to Scene, you can select different scenes with the Function button.	Scene Selection	3
Scene Selection/ Picture Effect (A35)	As the A55, but also has your picture effects.	Scene Selection/ Picture Effect	3
Sweep Shooting	Choose between standard and 3D panorama.	Sweep Shooting	3
Drive mode	Change how many photos you can take with the press of the shutter. Includes the self-timer.	All but Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55) and Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35)	2
Flash mode	Sets the flash function. Choose between Auto, Fill Flash, Flash Off, and so forth.	All but Sweep Shooting and Flash Off	2 and 7
Autofocus mode	Change between Continuous, Single, or Automatic Autofocus.	P, A, S, M, Continuous Advance Priority AE (Alpha 55), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (Alpha 35)	8

(continued)

Table 1-2 (continued)

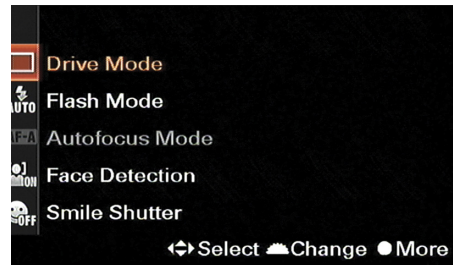
Name	Effect	Availability	Chapter
AF area	Sets the autofocus area.	P, A, S, M, Continuous Advance Priority AE (Alpha 55), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Sweep Shooting	8
Face detection	Enables face detection, which optimizes exposure for people's faces.	Auto, Auto+, Flash Off, P, A, S, M, Scene (A55), Scene/Picture Effect (A35)	2
Smile Shutter	Enables Smile Shutter, which automatically takes a photo when the camera detects a smile.	Auto, Auto+, Flash Off, P, A, S, M, Scene (A55), Scene/Picture Effect (A35)	2
ISO	Changes the sensor sensitivity.	P, A, S, M	7
Metering mode	Changes how the camera evaluates the brightness of a scene.	P, A, S, M, Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Sweep Shooting	7
Flash compensation	Adjusts the flash output either stronger or weaker.	P, A, S, M, Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35)	7

<i>Name</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>Availability</i>	<i>Chapter</i>
White balance	Changes how the camera establishes the color tone of the photos it processes.	P, A, S, M, Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Sweep Shooting	8
DRO/Auto HDR	Enables D-range optimizer or the auto HDR function.	P, A, S, M, Sweep Shooting	7
Creative Style	Changes the processing style you want applied to your JPEGs.	P, A, S, M, Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Sweep Shooting	8

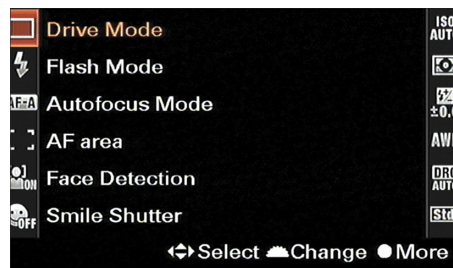
You move around the Function screen much like you do the menu system, but press the Function button to start. Figure 1-31 shows the Function screen in Auto mode. Notice that there are few options. Figure 1-31 also shows the Function screen when the camera is in an advanced exposure mode. In this case, all the options are available.

(Normally, you can see the scene when you access the functions instead of a black screen. That's fine in the real world. When placed in a book, however, it makes this display busy and almost impossible to benefit from. I made the decision, therefore, to remove the distraction by blacking out the outside world showing the functions.)

Use the directional buttons to move up, down, left, and right. Highlight a function and press the enter button



A basic mode



An advanced mode

Figure 1-31: Functions control a number of important shooting functions.

to access its options. Highlight an option with the directional buttons and press the enter button to change the setting; see Figure 1-32. You can also highlight a function and spin the control dial to change the setting.

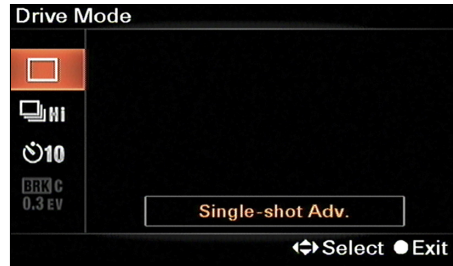


Figure 1-32: Change functions like the menu options or spin the control dial.

Setting Up Your Camera

Check out several menu items before you take the camera out for a spin.

These settings aren't related to photo size or quality; they affect your camera in other ways.



Table 1-3 isn't exhaustive, it does offer a good representation of what you should check. Press the Menu button to access the menu system, then find the tab and specific option.

Table 1-3 Check Settings Before Shooting		
Name	Access	Miscellaneous
Image size and quality	Recording menu 1	Make sure you're shooting the type of photos you intend to.
SteadyShot	Recording menu 1	Make sure it's on if you're shooting handheld.
Color Space	Recording menu 2	Set it to sRGB unless you have reason to change it. More in Chapter 8.
Red-eye reduction	Custom menu 1	Enable it if you're shooting flash photography indoors. Chapter 2 has more.
Grid line	Custom menu 2	Turn them on if you want lines in the viewfinder or on the LCD monitor. Grid lines are in Chapter 2.
Auto review	Custom menu 2	Turn on if you want to see your shots displayed after you take them. See Chapter 5.
Format	Memory Card Tool menu	On first use, format the card via the camera; see Figure 1-33.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Access</i>	<i>Miscellaneous</i>
Date/time setup	Clock setup menu	Affects the photo metadata.
Area setting	Clock setup menu	Affects photo metadata. Remember to change it if you travel. See Figure 1-34.
LCD brightness	Setup menu 1	If necessary, adjust the brightness.
Viewfinder brightness	Setup menu 1	If necessary, adjust the brightness.
GPS settings (A55 only)	Setup menu 1	Turn to Chapter 11.
Power save	Setup menu 1	Time the camera waits to go into a battery-saving mode. See Figure 1-35 and Chapter 11.
Help guide display	Setup menu 1	On by default. If you don't want in-camera hints, turn it off.
Audio signals	Setup menu 2	On by default. If you like hearing beeps when you autofocus, keep the sound on.

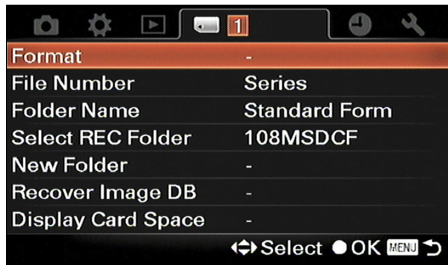


Figure 1-33: Format your memory cards to keep them in tip-top shape.

Reverting to Default Settings

Don't worry for a minute about changing any setting for fear that you'll forget what the initial setting was. If you need to, you can revert the entire camera back to the default settings.

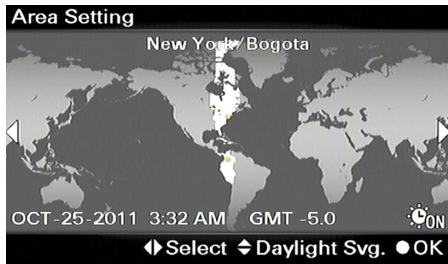
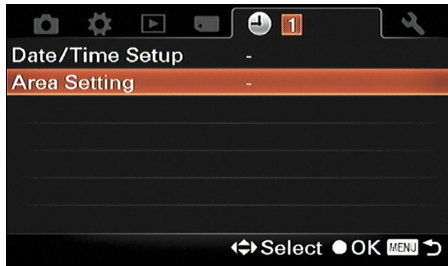


Figure 1-34: Set your area as well as the date and time.

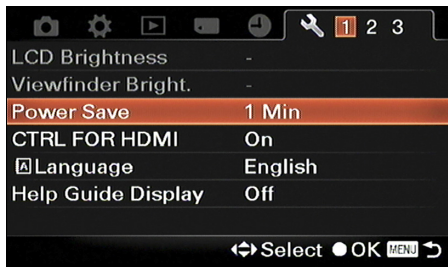


Figure 1-35: Pick a longer Power Save time if you want the camera to stay awake longer.



If you've changed lots of settings, write them down before resetting the camera. That way you can pick and choose the settings you want to keep.

To reset the camera, follow these steps:



1. **Press the Menu button.**
2. **Go to Setup menu 3 (A35) or Setup menu 2 (A55).**
3. **Highlight Reset Default and press the enter button.**

See Figure 1-36.

4. **Highlight Enter and press the enter button.**

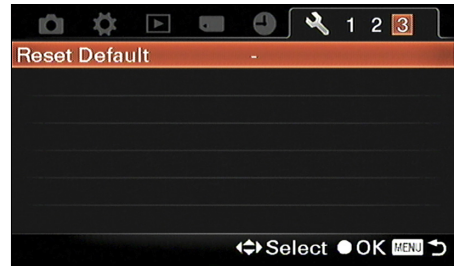


Figure 1-36: Reset the camera to go back to the factory defaults.

Taking Care of Your New Baby

When you buy a camera like the A35/A55, you've made an investment worth protecting. The following sections have tips and techniques that will help you take care of your camera.

Using the body cap

Have the body cap at the ready when you take off a lens and are going to leave it off. The longer it takes you to attach the body cap, the longer dust, moisture, and other contaminants have to make it inside your camera.

Storing and operating the tilt/swivel LCD (A55)

When you aren't using it, keep the tilt/swivel LCD monitor turned in to the camera. Think of this as a safety measure. It will protect the LCD when the camera is in the bag (or indeed anytime you're not using it). The monitor stays cleaner when it faces in.



Be careful when manipulating the tilt-swivel LCD. Your camera isn't a Transformer that you can jerk around, push, pull, and twist into shape.

Setting it down

Are you used to setting down your camera with the lens facing up? Retrain yourself to set it down right-side up. This can be hard when you've taken out the battery or memory card and need to set the camera down temporarily.



If you set your camera down with the lens facing up, the viewfinder will take the brunt of the camera's weight and the rubber may get scratched or worn. Even worse, you risk damaging the LCD monitor on the back of the camera.

Strap

Use a camera strap. It doesn't matter if it came with your camera or if it's a more comfortable model. A strap can offer support, but is also a safety device that help prevents you from dropping your camera. If you're transitioning from a smaller, compact digital camera, a full-sized camera strap will give you peace of mind when you change lenses.



The first thing you should do when taking your camera out of its bag is put on the strap.



Tripod

Tripods are meant to provide stable support for your camera, but they aren't foolproof.

- ✓ Make absolutely sure the camera is firmly attached to the head. If using a quick-release plate, it should be locked in. You shouldn't be able to wiggle or wobble it.
- ✓ Double-check the locking mechanism for each leg when they're extended, as well as the center column.
- ✓ Don't trip over the legs and knock over the tripod.

Camera bag

Camera bags are completely worth it. Buy one large enough to fit your camera and favorite lens (or two) plus a few other accessories, but small enough so that you'll actually use it. The bag protects your investment while it's in your car, or on the bus, train, or plane.

- ✓ Sling bags easy to wear and provide access to the interior at the same time.
- ✓ Backpacks protect your gear while you're on the move.
- ✓ Traditional bags are accessible and have a strap that you can put over your shoulder.

Cleaning the camera



Wipe off your camera with a soft cloth moistened (not dripping) with water. Microfiber cloths are good at removing fingerprints, although soft cotton is more than adequate. Don't use chemicals. Yes, I know it's tempting, but don't.

Cleaning the sensor

You have two ways to clean the camera's sensor: automatically and manually. If you don't want to do it automatically, take it to a professional camera shop so they can clean it. The automatic mode is easy and you should do it if you see dust spots on your photos. Here's how:

1. Start with a fully charged battery.

Don't cheat yourself with this step. Although you won't see a drop in battery percentage remaining, it takes a lot of oomph for the camera to clean the sensor. You get the most oomph with a fully charged battery.

2. Press the Menu button and go to Setup menu 2.

3. Select Cleaning Mode and press the enter button.

See Figure 1-37.

4. Select Enter to confirm and press the enter button again.

The camera vibrates very quickly to clean the sensor. It feels like a cell phone putting out a powerful burst. Don't set the camera down somewhere where it can fall off if the vibration disturbs it. The cleaning doesn't last long, but it is powerful. You don't want it falling off a table.

5. Turn off the camera.

This resets the camera and, when you turn the camera back on, it will be ready for normal operation.

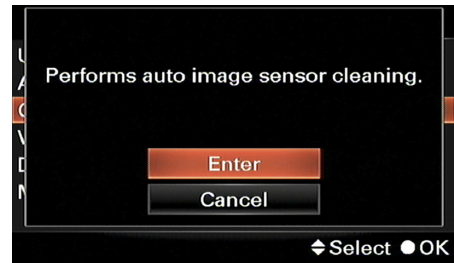
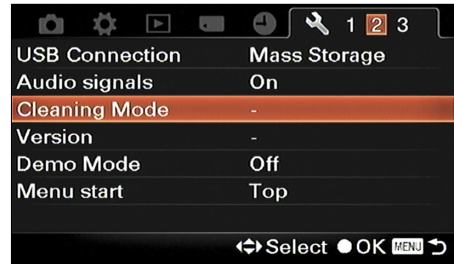


Figure 1-37: Cleaning the camera's sensor.

Setting Up for Snapshots

In This Chapter

- ▶ Choosing a shooting mode
- ▶ Oh, and the drive mode, too
- ▶ Detecting faces
- ▶ Using Smile Shutter
- ▶ Triggering the flash

You've got your A35/A55 out of the box. Fan-tastic. Don't be afraid to run out and take as many photos as you want without knowing anything more than how to turn your camera on and press the shutter button. It's all good. That experience will be valuable and set you on the path of knowing what sorts of things bother you and what you might want to change. This chapter is designed to help you make those initial connections between what you want and how the camera comes set up.

You'll probably be familiar with some of the upcoming information. You might have heard of a few of the shooting modes or understand the general idea of setting photo size and quality. That's good! Each camera is ultimately a unique learning experience, however. Have fun with the options, features, and settings explained in this chapter. There's no test.



Giving It Your Best Shooting Mode






The first thing you should do when preparing to take a photo is choose what mode you want to use.

On the one hand, you can let the camera handle much of the work and make the decisions. On the other hand, you can take complete control of the camera. In between are a plethora of basic shooting and advanced exposure modes that provide different solutions. The choice you make has important ramifications. Without further ado, the A35/A55 modes fall into two broad classifications:

Basic shooting modes

These modes (see Figure 2-1) are oriented towards a shooting condition or purpose. Identify what you want to do, such as automatic shooting or portraiture, and select the appropriate mode based on that. It's like ordering from a menu. Do you want a nice close-up? Choose Macro. Do you want to shoot an automated panorama? Choose Sweep Shooting. The basic shooting modes are listed in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1		Basic Shooting Modes
<i>Icon</i>	<i>Mode Name</i>	<i>Description</i>
—	Auto	Turns the A35/A55 into high-quality point and shoot camera. Use when you're learning about your camera and photography or when you want to relax and have fun.
—	Auto+	Like Auto, only smarter. Senses shooting conditions.
	Flash Off	Like Auto, only the camera can't use the flash.
 	Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35) or Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55)	Continuous Advance Priority AE mode is the camera's fastest frame rate. The A35 zooms in to capture the center of the frame for medium-sized photos. Use this mode to capture a fleeting moment. Read more in Chapter 3.



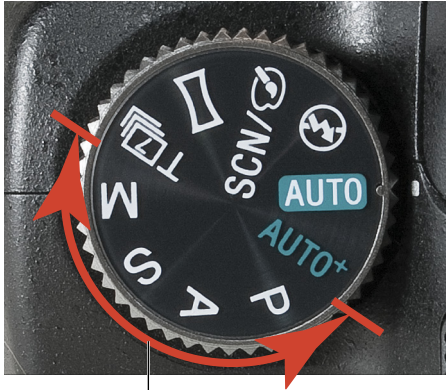
<i>Icon</i>	<i>Mode Name</i>	<i>Description</i>
	Sweep Shooting	Creates panoramas while you press the shutter and pan. Camera stitches the shots together and creates a single file. See Chapter 3.
 SCN	Scene Selection/ Picture Effect (A35) or Scene Selection (A55)	Windows to a number of specific scenes and effects on A35/55. See Chapter 3 for scenes; see Chapter 11 for effects.



Figure 2-1: The basic shooting modes mean to make it easier for you.

Advanced exposure modes

You have to know how the exposure controls work to get the creative outcome you intend with advanced exposure modes. For example, if you want action shots, you have to know that requires a fast shutter speed. You must know that two modes let you set the shutter speed yourself: Shutter Priority and Manual. You then have to choose the mode and enter the exposure settings yourself. Yikes. That's why these modes are covered more in Chapters 7 and 9. See Figure 2-2.



Advanced shooting modes

Figure 2-2: The advanced exposure modes give you much more control.

The advanced exposure modes offer fewer, but more powerful choices. See Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 **Advanced Exposure Modes**

<i>Icon</i>	<i>Mode Name</i>	<i>Description</i>
P	Program Auto	The camera is set on automatic exposure, but you retain control over settings like ISO, Creative Style, and so forth. In other words, you keep some of the creative control while the camera handles the exposure
A	Aperture priority	You set the aperture and the camera determines the other settings needed to arrive at the proper exposure. Good for portraits, landscapes, and close-ups.
S	Shutter speed priority	The same as Aperture priority, only you set the shutter speed instead of the aperture. Good for sports, action, and when you are moving.
M	Manual exposure	You take total control of the camera and make all the exposure and function decisions.



Where's the Movie mode?

If you're looking for something that looks like Movie mode on the mode dial, you won't find it. The A35/A55 don't have a Movie mode. Rather, they have a movie button that you press to start shooting movies. That's pretty cool when

you think of it. Instead of having to spin a dial and land on the right mode, you simply press the Movie button. Movie making is covered in Chapter 4.

Flooring It to Drive Mode



The term *Drive mode* harks back to the days of film, when, if you wanted something faster than a single frame shooting, you had to install a fancy motorized *drive* to speed the film through the camera. Now, of course, motorized drives and film have nothing to do with how fast you can take photos. Instead, it has to do with the number of pixels the camera sensor has and the rate at which data can be read, processed, and stored from them.

The A35/A55 have different drive modes that control what happens when you press the shutter button. You can record a single photo, a series of shots, take a picture after a short delay, and initiate two types of *brackets* (in this case, taking three exposures with slightly different settings). Your options are explained in the following sections.

To change the Drive mode, follow these steps:

1. Press the Drive mode button.

You can also access the Drive mode through the function button.

2. Highlight the Drive mode you want to select, as shown in Figure 2-3.

Notice that not all Drive modes are available in all the basic shooting modes. If you're in an advanced exposure mode, you have total control.

3. Press the enter button.

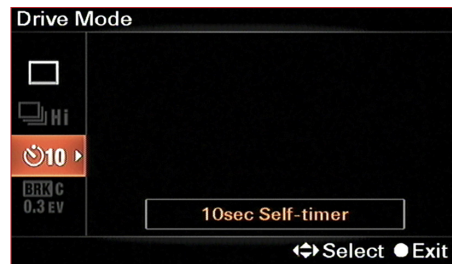


Figure 2-3: Select a Drive mode from those available.

Single-Shot Advance

When you press the shutter button, you take one photo and only one photo. You're like Barney Fife with a single bullet.

Continuous Advance

Continuous Advance is where the action is. Literally. It offers two modes. One is faster than the other.



When shooting continuously, press and hold the shutter button down.

Hi

Aside from choosing Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35) or Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), this is the fastest drive mode you have. On Hi — and given optimum conditions (JPEG only and face detection off, among other things) — the A55 can shoot up to six images per second (also known as frames per second, or fps) and the A35 can shoot five and a half images. The half image gets thrown in for free. Just kidding. Five and a half is an average. It's technically impossible but statistically viable. That's fast. That's blazingly fast for cameras at this level.

Table 2-3 shows how many photos you can rattle off shooting continuously. If speed is the name of your game, set the image quality accordingly.

Table 2-3

Maximum Number of Continuous Shots

<i>Quality</i>	<i>A55</i>	<i>A35</i>
Fine	28	14
Standard	28	18
Raw + JPEG	19	6
Raw	19	6

Lo

Lo is about half as fast as Hi, coming out to 3 images per second for the A55 and 2.5 for the A35. Use Lo when you need to shoot continuously but don't need twice the number of photos clogging up your memory card. This mode is more achievable if you're saving high-quality Raw *and* JPEG photos (two files per photo).

Self-timer



The self-timer comes in two flavors, both of which delay the shutter after you press the shutter button fully.

2-second



You can't run far and pose in two seconds, so don't use this to take self-portraits. Rather, use it to reduce camera shake by giving the camera a moment to stabilize after you've pressed the shutter button. You can use this mode when holding the camera by hand, but I think it makes the most sense when you're using a tripod. In that scenario, you press the shutter button and are able to take your hands completely off the camera for the entire two seconds.

10-second

Use the ten-second timer to photograph yourself solo or with friends, family, teammates, schoolmates, or random passers-by. Figure 2-4 is a photo I took of my boys and me to illustrate the 10-second self-timer. Not only that, but I wanted to show how easy and fun photography can be. I called the kids together and told them I needed their help. I set the camera up on the tripod, chose a basic shooting mode (High Contrast Monochrome Picture Effect available only on the A35), and changed Drive mode to 10-second self-timer. I framed the shot, pressed the shutter button, and ran around to get into the shot. It took about five minutes from start to finish (we even got some Smile Shutter pictures in) and we had a blast.



Figure 2-4: My boys with me, demonstrating the 10-second timer.

Exposure bracket

BRKC Exposure bracketing shoots three photos, each with a different exposure. One is underexposed. Another is right on target. The third is overexposed. Use this Drive mode when one of these applies:

- ✓ You aren't quite sure you're getting the right metering but don't want to stray too far.
- ✓ You want to use the brackets for High Dynamic Range (HDR). See Chapter 9 for more.

You have one option in Exposure Bracket: the desired bracket step. Your choices are +/- 0.3EV and +/- 0.7EV. (EV stands for exposure value; 1EV is the equivalent of one stop, as shown in Chapter 7.) The display shows each bracket as a downward-pointing arrow that disappears when the shot is taken. When shooting, press and hold the shutter button down until the photos are taken. If you let up, the sequence starts over.

White balance bracket

BRKWB White balance brackets work somewhat like exposure brackets, except that white balance is the variable and three photos aren't taken. That's right, only one photo is taken with White Balance Bracket mode. However, the raw data is processed three times, each with a different setting. You have one option with two settings: Lo or Hi. In this case you're determining the white balance shift. To see an example of white balance bracketing, turn to Chapter 8.

I Spy a Face

Face detection identifies faces and alters the normal autofocus routine to ensure faces are kept in focus. The mode also adjusts the exposure, flash settings, and processing routine to make faces look their best. What's more, it may detect up to eight faces! Wow. That's the good news. The bad news, taken from the manual, is that it may miss a face. Or it may think something is a face that isn't. "Crumb," as my wife would say. I'm a bit saltier.

Face detection either works or it doesn't. Here's how:

1. Set the mode dial to a mode that supports face detection.

You can't use face detection in Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Sweep Shooting, or when shooting movies.



2. Press the Function button.

Face detection is always on the left side of the screen, towards the bottom. It is on by default. If face detection is off, highlight Face Detection, as shown in Figure 2-5, and press the enter button.

3. Press the down button to highlight On.

4. Point the camera at someone.

An orange rectangle surrounds the main face, as in Figure 2-6. If the camera detects other faces, or isn't ready to focus on any face, you only see white rectangles. You won't see more than one orange rectangle, regardless. It might bounce around a bit. This indicates the camera is still seeking a dominant face.

5. Press the shutter button halfway or press AF.

If everything works, you will see the orange, and possibly one or more white rectangles turn green, also seen in Figure 2-6.

At times, the face detection rectangle disappears and one or more of the autofocus area boxes turns green. If that happens, release the shutter button and try again, or release the shutter button and press the AF button. If the AF button works, then follow up with the shutter button halfway to meter.

6. Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.

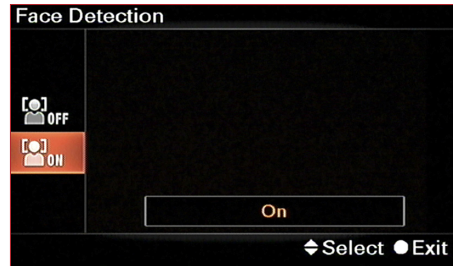
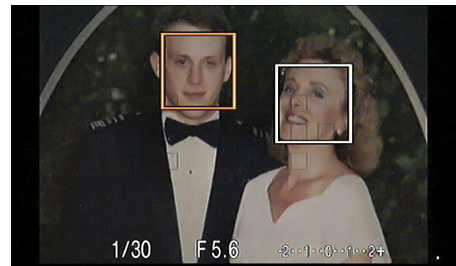
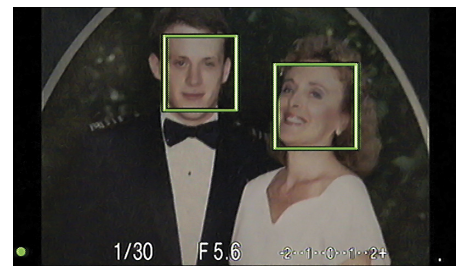


Figure 2-5: Enable face detection if it is off. That is, if you want it on.



Not ready



Ready

Figure 2-6: Face detection is so good it works even when pointed at photos on screens: me with my mom in 1987.



Setting Up for Smiles

Wouldn't it be neat if you could program your camera to detect smiles and automatically take a picture when it sees one? Your wish is Sony's command. The A35 and A55 both have a smile detector. It's called the Smile Shutter, and it comes complete with a sensitivity meter. Despite sounding ridiculous, it works.

Using Smile Shutter

Here's how to use Smile Shutter:

1. Set the Mode dial to a mode that supports Smile Shutter.

You can't use Smile Shutter in Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), or Sweep Shooting.

2. Get everyone ready.

Since you're not in charge of when the camera takes the photo (a practical flaw with this feature), everyone should be ready to have their photo taken. Or not, if you want to make it a bit more spontaneous. If this is going to be a posed shot and you're using a tripod (like I did for this example), compose the shot so everyone is in the frame.

3. Press the Function button.

Smile Shutter is off by default. If it is already on, you can adjust the sensitivity.

4. Highlight Smile Shutter and press the enter button.

5. Use the down button to highlight On, as shown in Figure 2-7.

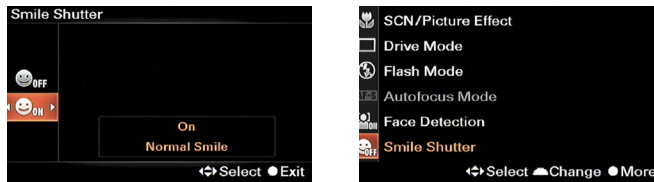


Figure 2-7: Setting up Smile Shutter.

6. Use the left or right buttons to select sensitivity:

- **Slight Smile:** Sandra Bullock, the Mona Lisa, Edward Cullen (at least he smiles more than Bella).

- **Normal Smile:** Han Solo, David Tennant, me (my wife says I'm generally all or nothing, which averages out to Normal).
- **Big Smile:** Tom Cruise, The Joker, Jacob Black (just Google it), Reese Witherspoon, my wife.

The levels reflect the minimum smile that will trigger the shutter. For example, setting the sensitivity to Big Smile will ignore smaller smiles.

7. Press the enter button and . . .

Here's where it gets really interesting. Your mileage may vary between experiences. You may either need to hoof it to get in the shot or have everyone smile bigger so the camera will take the photo. See Figure 2-8.

- *Run!* I used Smile Shutter as a remote shutter button for this example but didn't make it into the shot — the boys were having too much fun already.
- *Smile!* This is where Smile Shutter can be almost like a party game. People smile. The camera thinks. People smile harder. The camera still doesn't take the photo. People grin and make crazy faces. The camera should eventually take the photo.

8. Repeat Steps 3 through 5 to turn off Smile Shutter.

Getting control of yourself

When Smile Shutter is on, it keeps taking pictures as long as someone's smiling. It takes one, then another, then another. It can feel like you've lost control of the camera (because you have), which makes everyone smile. To wrest control back, point the camera away from the smile, then turn off Smile Shutter.



If a Smile Shutter frenzy is reached, you can just turn the camera off. This turns off Smile Shutter, even if you turn the camera right back on again.



Figure 2-8: Having fun with Smile Shutter.

If you're having trouble getting the Smile Shutter to work, try these techniques:

- ✓ **Brute force:** Tell people to smile harder. That's always fun. This trick works with kids longer than it will with adults.
- ✓ **Change the sensitivity:** Set the sensitivity higher. (Go back to Step 2.) If the camera goes off at the slightest sign of a smile, then set the sensitivity lower.
- ✓ **Use face detection:** Press the function button. Face detection should show up right above Smile Shutter.
- ✓ **Combine technologies:** Position a person's face, and therefore their smile, under an AF area.
- ✓ **Say "Ahhh":** Have people smile with their mouths open.
- ✓ **Show teeth:** Tell people to bare their teeth when they smile. (Yes, this is getting ridiculous.)
- ✓ **Uncover:** Have people take off things that are hiding their faces or smiles, such as sunglasses, masks, and helmets.
- ✓ **Take the photo anyway:** Press the shutter button and take the photo yourself.

Easy Bake Flash

This section covers the fundamentals of using the built-in flash in the basic or more automatic modes. There is more to the flash than this, but all you need to get started is here. After you master the basics, turn to Chapter 7 for more advanced information (or Chapter 11 for material on wireless flash).

Changing Flash mode

At the most basic level, you have two choices when it comes to using the flash. You can let the camera decide when and where to pop the flash and fire it or turn the flash off entirely:

- ✓ **Flash Off:** In this mode, the camera is on auto-pilot with the exception of flash control, which you've disabled.
- ✓ **Camera control (mostly):** Whether you're starting out or just don't want to mess with it, letting the camera control the flash is probably the best solution. It makes pretty good decisions. Chapter 3 has more information on the default Flash mode for each of the basic shooting modes and scenes. Some shooting modes disable the flash by default, such as the Landscape scene. In other shooting modes, the flash is set to Auto. If that's the case, the camera pops and fires the flash when necessary. It's



so automatic that you can't even pop the flash by yourself. The camera won't let you.

However, there's a twist. You can take back limited control by changing Flash mode. Do so in any of the basic shooting modes except Sweep Shooting, Flash Off, and the night scenes (Night View, Handheld Twilight, and Night Portrait) by pressing the Function button and changing the Flash mode.

To change the Flash mode, follow these steps:

1. Set the Mode dial to a basic shooting mode that allows you to change the Flash mode.

They are Auto, Auto+, Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Portrait, Sports Action, Macro, Landscape, Sunset, and any of the Picture Effects (A35).

2. Press the Function button.

3. Highlight the Flash mode and press the enter button.

4. Highlight a flash mode.

Available modes have white icons. The others are grayed out. See Figure 2-9. You may be able to choose these settings:

- *Flash Off*: Turns off the flash and keeps it from firing, regardless of the shooting mode you're in.
- *Auto Flash*: Turns control over to the camera.
- *Fill Flash*: Forces the flash to fire.

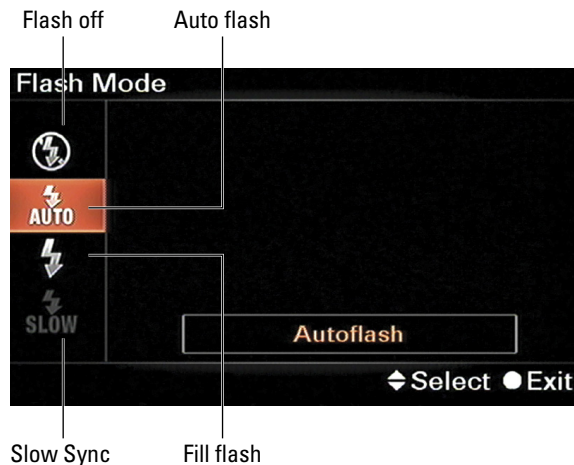


Figure 2-9: Available flash modes have white icons.

Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55) and Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35) modes offer only Fill Flash and the rest of the advanced Flash modes (Slow Sync, Rear Sync, and Wireless Flash). See Chapter 8.

5. Press the enter button to return to shooting.

Or press the Function button to return to the Function screen.



Understanding flash cues

No matter what display you are in, the viewfinder has no flash cues. You have to get them from the LCD monitor. And, wouldn't you know it, only one display shows detailed flash information: recording information (for Live view).

As shown in Figure 2-10, this display shows all the functions on either side of the scene. The Flash mode is on the left side. An orange indicator tells you specific information about the current flash status. If the flash is up, you will see one of the following indicators:

- ✓ *Nothing:* You have to press the shutter button halfway to activate the flash. Until you do, you won't see a flash indicator. You can also press the AEL or AF buttons.



Figure 2-10: The flash is charged and ready to fire.

- ✓ **Flashing:** When the orange flash indicator is blinking, the flash is charging and you can't take the photo. If the AF illuminator fires to get a better focus, the flash indicator may blink once as the flash recharges.
- ✓ **Steadily Lit:** When the orange flash indicator is steadily lit, the flash is ready to fire.

Using red-eye reduction

If you're taking flash photos of people and they have red eyes, consider using the red-eye reduction feature. All you need to do is activate the feature from the menu system. The camera takes care of the rest.



1. Press the Menu button.
2. Go to Custom menu 1.
3. Highlight Red Eye Reduction and press the enter button.
4. Select On (see Figure 2-11) and press the enter button again.

The flash shoots several low-level pre-flashes after you press the shutter button fully but before firing the main burst and taking the photo. Those pre-flashes convince pupils to constrict and therefore reduce the chance of scary orbs.



Although easy to use and enable, consider these factors when using red-eye reduction:

- ✓ **Flash overload:** Warn the person you're photographing that they will see several bursts from the flash and not to move or freak out. Often, as soon as they see the flash, they think you've taken the picture and move.
- ✓ **Steady as she goes:** That goes for you too. When you press the shutter button fully, there will be more of a lag between that time and when the shutter triggers. Try to stay steady during this time.
- ✓ **Software solution:** It's easier to correct red eye before it ever happens. However, if you need to fix it in software, turn to Chapter 10 for instructions.
- ✓ **Pets are less compatible:** Pets don't like flash in the first place, but when you stick a strobe light in front of them, they really don't like it. Chances are, pets will not sit still with red-eye reduction enabled.

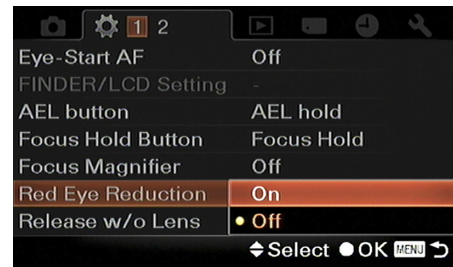


Figure 2-11: Gets the red out.



Choosing a memory card

Tons of different memory cards and sizes out there, from 2GB to 32GB. The idea that you should get the largest possible size is wrong. Choosing one that's right for you depends on how often you shoot, how much, your size and quality options, and how often you transfer photos. The following table shows you how many photos you can fit on different cards, from 2GB to 32GB. The photos are large and have an aspect ratio of 3:2. At 6406, the 32GB wins the size and space war, hands down. However, you may never use that much space. If you shot 100 standard JPEGs a day, it would take you over 2 months to fill up a 32GB card! Chances are, you will transfer the photos off the card well before you fill it up.

My recommendation is to determine the highest quality photos you will take, on average, and figure out how long you need to go without

transferring them. If you like shooting Raw + JPEG and shoot a few hundred photos a day, you will have to transfer once or twice if you use an 8GB card. You can also buy more cards and swap them out. That's pretty reasonable. In that case, a larger card remains largely empty — or, if filled, would only make disasters more disastrous. Would you rather lose 1304 photos or 319?

Smaller cards are fine if you only ever shoot standard JPEGs, and especially if you pick up a couple of cards. (I love backups.) Seriously consider buying larger cards if you work with Raw photos. You only need the *largest* cards if you shoot as much as a serious professional photographer or will be out of contact with civilization for an extended period of time. Even then, you would somehow have to be able to recharge your batteries.

Setting	2GB	4GB	8GB	16GB	32GB
Standard (STD)	386	781	1,587	3,239	6,406
Fine	270	548	1,116	2,279	4,510
Raw + JPEG	74	154	319	657	1,304
Raw	106	220	452	928	1,840

Rustling up a Photo Size, Aspect Ratio, and Quality

You've got a modern-day marvel in your hands. The A35/A55 can take magnificently clear, compelling photos. And let me tell you something more: You can achieve such photos in several sizes, aspect ratios, and qualities.



The thing is, the A35/A55 has no *bad* setting. There are good ones and better ones. Which one you should use depends on your situation. In general, if you plan on printing large copies of your photos, select the highest quality photo possible. If you're going to use them on a computer screen or small prints, even the smaller, lower quality settings are fantastic.

The rest of the section has information on the specific sizes, aspect ratios, and qualities. To change any of the three image parameters, follow these steps:

1. Press the Menu button.
2. Go to Recording menu 1.
3. Highlight the setting you want to change.



These steps apply to Image: Size, Image: Aspect Ratio, and Image: Quality. See Figures 2-12 through 2-14. Remember that there's more information on each of these parameters in the other parts of this section.

4. Use the up or down buttons to select a new setting.
5. Press the enter button.
6. Press the Menu button to exit the menu.

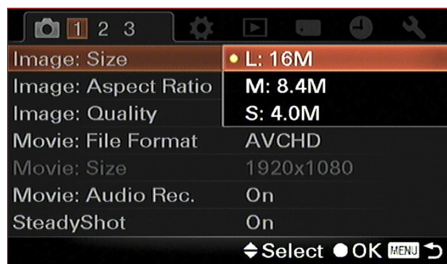
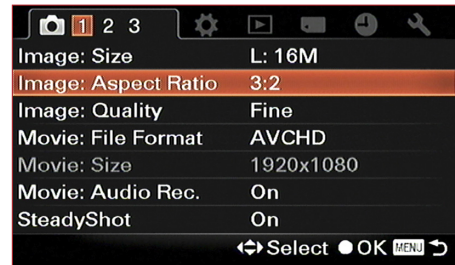


Figure 2-12: Setting the image size.

Figure 2-13: Choosing an aspect ratio.

Changing the image size

The A35/A55 has more photo sizes than you can shake a stick at. They are divided into large, medium, and small, which makes sense, but these sizes have different meanings depending on whether you're referring to a 3:2 versus 16:9 aspect ratio. What's more, panoramas have sizes of their own, divided into standard versus wide, horizontal versus vertical, or 3D versus non-3D.

Table 2-4 shows the standard photo sizes.

It helps to look at the table's two columns: the pixel dimensions (Dimensions) and how large the print could be at a resolution of 300 dpi, which is a high-quality printout (Print@300dpi).



TIP

When you choose a photo size, consider how good it should look set at medium. If you're looking at the photo on a computer monitor, you won't need an exceptionally huge photo. Even the smallest image size (at 3:2 aspect ratio) is larger than most desktop resolutions. Medium offers a good compromise: large desktop size and good-sized printout.



WARNING!

Beware. All of these photo sizes are going to look close to the same when you look at them on your computer monitor because the monitor (or software you're using) scales them to fit.

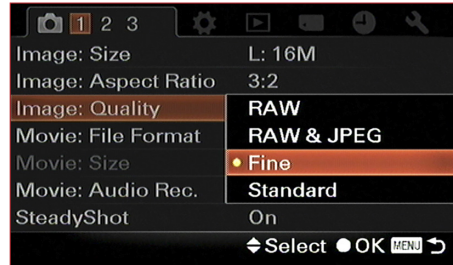


Figure 2-14: Deciding on a quality.

Table 2-4 Image Size (3:2 Aspect Ratio)

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Setting</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Megapixels</i>	<i>Print @ 300dpi</i>
L	Large	4,912 x 3,264	16	16.4 x 10.9 in
M	Medium	3,568 x 2,368	8.4	11.8 x 7.9 in
S	Small	2,448 x 1,624	4.0	8.1 x 5.4 in

Figure 2-15 illustrates the three photo sizes in action. I took these photos of a single subject (in this case, of a funny fish we gave my mom for her kitchen some years back) under controlled conditions. Each size is shown, from small, to medium, to large. The aspect ratio was set to 3:2. At this magnification you can tell a size difference, but not a quality difference. You would have to print out relatively large copies or view them at extreme magnification to discern those types of differences.

Table 2-5 shows the sizes when applied to photos with a 16:9 aspect ratio.

Panorama sizes are listed in Table 2-6. The top line for each setting refers to the size of panoramas shot horizontally. That is, sweeping from the camera's left to right or from its right to left (regardless of how it is oriented to the ground). The second line for each setting refers to vertical panoramas. Those panoramas are taken sweeping from the camera's top to bottom, or from its bottom to top. (If you flip the camera on its side and shoot a vertical panorama from top to bottom, you will actually sweep horizontally across the landscape.)



Figure 2-15: Big, bigger, and biggest.

Table 2-5		Image Size (16:9 Aspect Ratio)		
Symbol	Setting	Dimensions	Megapixels	Print@300dpi
L	Large	4,912 x 2,760	14	16.3 x 9.2 in
M	Medium	3,568 x 2,000	7.1	11.9 x 6.7 in
S	Small	2,448 x 1,376	3.4	8.1 x 4.6 in

Table 2-6 Panorama Sizes		
<i>Setting</i>	<i>Dimensions (Horizontal/Vertical)</i>	<i>Print@300dpi</i>
Standard	8,192 x 1,856	27.3 x 6.2 in
	3,872 x 2,160	12.9 x 7.2 in
Wide	12,416 x 1,856	41.4 x 6.2 in
	5,536 x 2,160	18.4 x 7.2 in

Figure 2-16 shows the difference between a standard versus wide panorama. Both were taken horizontally. The standard panorama used a wide-angle focal length (18mm), which means that even though the photo is smaller, it covers the entire field. The wide panorama allowed me to shoot at 26mm and still cover quite a bit of real estate.



The biggest difference isn't so much the length, though, as the aspect ratio. This affects overall appearance of each panorama. The wide panorama is very narrow while the standard panorama is chunkier. They are, interestingly, the same height: 1856 pixels.

Table 2-7 shows the three available sizes for 3D panoramas. The 16:9 version is the smallest. These have no print size because they must be viewed on a 3D-capable HDTV or monitor.

Table 2-7 3D Panorama Sizes	
<i>Setting</i>	<i>Dimensions (Horizontal)</i>
3D 16:9	1,920 x 1,080
3D Standard	4,912 x 1,080
3D Wide	7,152 x 1,080



Don't let all the numbers scare you away from choosing the right image size for you. Here is what I recommend:

- ✓ **Better safe than sorry:** Choose the largest photo of whatever type you happen to be shooting. This preserves your option to print high-quality photos at 300dpi whether you intended to use them in print when you took them or not. Large photos also give you room to crop without losing too much detail or print resolution.
- ✓ **When to compromise:** If space or speed is more important than ultimate print resolution, then choose medium for each type. You can still view and print high-quality photos. What you lose is being able to print them at larger sizes, and to some degree, visual detail when viewing them magnified.



Standard



Wide

Figure 2-16: Wide and wider.

Picking an aspect ratio

Aspect ratio, unlike size or quality, has more to do with your artistic goals than quality. Here are the aspect ratios you can choose from:

- ✓ **3:2:** This is the standard photo ratio. It represents the same aspect ratio of a 35mm frame of film.
- ✓ **16:9:** This ratio is the same as widescreen movies (we used to call them *Letterbox editions*) and HDTVs.

Figure 2-17 shows the difference between a photo shot at 3:2 versus 16:9.

If you want the wide-screen effect, you can't beat the 16:9 version. You really can't. The thing about it that makes it so compelling is that you don't have to do any more work. The photo is already cropped and saved.

Here are the basic reasons to choose one aspect ratio over the other:

- ✓ **Automatic:** If you want a wide-angle photo and don't want to load a standard image into a photo editor and crop it yourself, choose the 16:9 aspect ratio. It's one and done, baby. You have the finished product as soon as you take the photo.

If you shoot Raw + JPEG or Raw, you still have the Raw file to work with. It remains uncropped. Open the Raw image in Image Data Converter SR, which is explained in Chapter 5. The 16:9 area with the cropped material shaded is displayed, but you can output the entire image to a new JPEG or TIFF and load the photo into a separate photo editor and crop on your own.

- ✓ **Do-it-yourself:** If you want to crop photos yourself, choose either approach. If you go with 3:2, you can do all the work in whatever photo editing application you choose. If you shoot using Raw + JPEG quality, select 16:9 and decide whether to take the JPEG or edit the Raw file yourself later.



3:2



16:9

Figure 2-17: Relaxing on a hot day in 3:2 or 16:9 aspect ratio.

Choosing photo quality

Choosing the quality of the photos you take is just as important as choosing their size. It helps to know a few things about the differences between JPEGs and Raw files before getting to the quality settings.



- ✓ **Raw** files store image data and convert it into digital form. Beyond this, they are unprocessed. Sony uses the three-letter file extension .arw, to identify Raw files created by its digital cameras.
- ✓ **JPEGs** begin life with the same original data as Raw files. The camera processes that data using a set of predefined routines to create the best all-round photo. The processed data is then compressed and saved using the JPEG standard.

Despite what it sounds like, you do have some control over how the camera processes Raw data and converts it into a JPEG. This control takes the form of creative styles. For example, when you select Vivid Creative Style, you're telling the camera to convert the Raw data with greater saturation and contrast.

Aside from the compression issue, using Raw files lets you put off making processing decisions. You have control over exposure, saturation, contrast, noise reduction, and many other parameters. You can undo them if you change your mind, or create several alternatives and choose the one you like best. Using Raw files empowers you to make potentially better artistic decisions than the camera. The downside is having to learn how to process Raw photos, and of course, the extra work it requires.

The quality options follow.

Standard

Standard-quality photos are JPEGs saved with the *lossy* compression scheme. When compared to fine JPEGs, they're tipped a little toward saving space rather than preserving data.



JPEGs use complicated mathematical algorithms that take the photo's original data and change it into something that takes up less space (compression). The problem is, the result isn't an exact copy of the original, and the original can never be resurrected from what's left (*lossy*). Something really close can be, but not the original. It's like breaking an egg for an omelet. It's still an egg, but you can't go back to the original.

The lossiness part can be adjusted, which is why the camera can save a fine or a standard JPEG. High-quality JPEGs like Fine photos lose less data, but they're still not exact copies. And oh, by the way, every time you save a JPEG, the algorithm is reapplied, which means applying lossiness upon lossiness. Now that I've scared you away, I want to bring you back to standard JPEGs.



These photos are astoundingly good. They actually are. Don't be fooled by the fact that they have the *least* quality. It's all relative. Because they aren't the best, standard-quality photos get a bad rap. However, they are still very, very good.

Consider using standard JPEG in these situations:

- ✓ When you want to maximize the number of photos on a memory card or minimize the space storing and archiving them on your computer.
- ✓ When you're taking photos to put on the web. By the time you reduce a 16 megapixel photo down to something you can put on Facebook, no one will be able to tell whether it was a Standard or Fine JPEG.
- ✓ When you need files that are easier to save and store than Raw + JPEG, which means that you can take photos faster.

Fine

Fine is like Standard (a lossy JPEG), but better. Standard JPEGs err towards saving a bit more space than fine JPEGs, but the difference is not like night and day. Given today's cheap storage solutions and fast processors, fine JPEGs don't put that much stress on your system. Therefore, if you want the best possible JPEG the camera can produce, this is it.

Raw

You can abandon JPEGs entirely and store photos in Raw file format. This method preserves the photo's original quality. It also sets the photo to the maximum size. The problem is, you don't have a JPEG and you will have to do all the work of photo processing. If you want a Raw photo, this option is slightly quicker than Raw + JPEG because you're only saving the one file.

Auto HDR isn't possible when photo quality is set to Raw.

Raw + JPEG

This quality setting is the best (or worst, depending on your viewpoint) of both worlds. The camera stores both a fine JPEG and a Raw file. The JPEG is nice to have if you want to browse through the photos and send some off to clients or friends before you do the intense Raw processing. The Raw file is great if you want to do your own processing. The potential downsides are space (two files are larger than one) and time (it takes longer for the camera to process and save them).

Choosing

The tale of the tape, then, is this:

- ✓ **Choose JPEG** if you want a final product coming out of the camera. You don't want to mess with processing the Raw file yourself. You don't need the ultimate in quality and are happy with what the camera produces. You're happy using JPEGs on your computer or putting them online. (You can't upload Raw files to Flickr, Facebook, your blog, or your web page. Don't even think of tweeting them.)
- ✓ **Choose Raw or Raw + JPEG** if you want creative control over your photos and don't mind doing the processing yourself. You want the flexibility of making multiple edits throughout the process. For you, saving storage space and speeding up transfer rates aren't as important as quality.

Don't get too cocky about the superiority of Raw files over JPEGs. Unless you're good at processing Raw files, the JPEGs may look better.



Figures 2-18 through 2-20 illustrate the battle of size and quality with some head-to-head comparisons. Each of the images is a separate photo. I didn't cheat and resize them in software. I shot them in sequence with the same exposure settings and later processed them identically. To be honest, all the images in Figure 2-18 through 2-20 look okay to me.

- ✓ Figure 2-19 compares two large JPEGs. One is Standard quality and one is Fine quality. Can you tell which one is which?
- ✓ Figure 2-20 compares two medium JPEGs at Standard and Fine quality.
- ✓ Figure 2-21 compares two small JPEGs at Fine versus Standard quality.

Now, for one final test. At normal magnifications, the photos essentially looked identical. When you zoom in, there is the chance you'll see differences. Figure 2-21 shows six sections from the previous photos at a higher magnification. It's almost impossible to tell the difference. The large/fine JPEG looks a tiny bit sharper. That's about it. There's no clear *stinker* in the bunch at this size, which is saying a lot.



Large/Standard



Medium/Standard



Small/Standard



Large/Fine



Medium/Fine



Small/Fine

Figure 2-18: Large JPEGs:
Breaker, breaker.

Figure 2-19: Medium JPEGs:
This here's Rubber Duck.

Figure 2-20: Small JPEGs: We
got us a convoy.

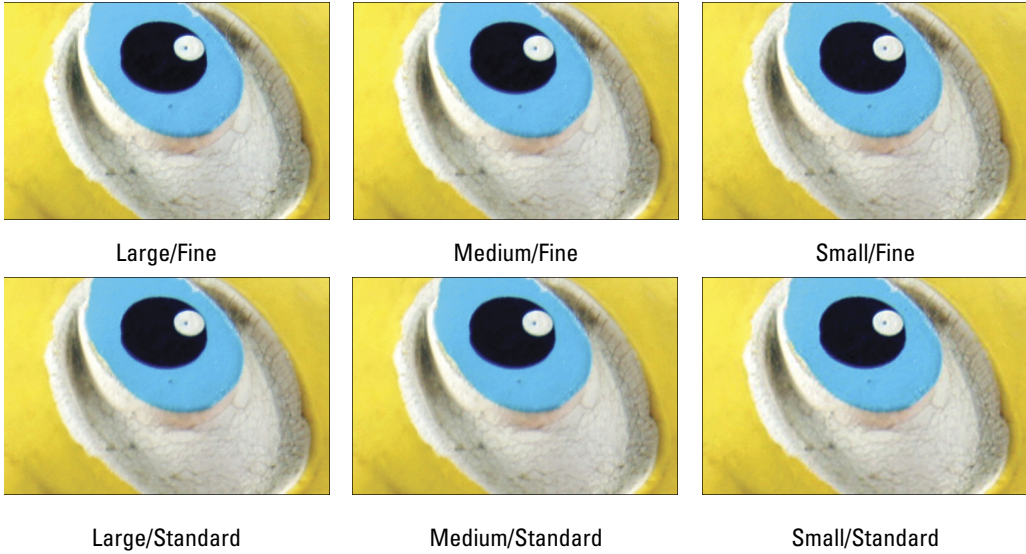


Figure 2-21: Actual quality is very close, no matter what setting you use.

Pointing and Shooting Your Way to Great Pictures

In This Chapter

- ▶ Handling your camera
 - ▶ Using automatic modes
 - ▶ Shooting with scenes
 - ▶ Fantastic panoramas
 - ▶ Super-fast shots
-

Although your A35 or A55 is more than a point-and-shoot camera, it has automatic modes that turn it into a fantastic point-and-shoot camera. The automatic modes work so well that this chapter is devoted to explaining some of them. The three fully automatic modes (Auto, Auto+, and Flash Off) require little to no intervention from you. In addition to them, you can choose from several scenes, which allow you to tell the camera what you're trying to photograph. You can also shoot incredible, automated panoramas without using a computer, and rattle off high-speed bursts of action shots. This chapter can help whether you're a complete novice and need a helping hand so that you can start taking great photos, or you're pretty darn good and want a quick reference to show you what the easier modes are all about.



Hold on Tight



Handling your camera is one of the most important skills you can master as a photographer, even if you're interested only in taking casual photos. If you don't provide a stable platform for the camera, you'll be plagued with poorly composed, often blurry shots. Even though the A35/A55 has an internal camera de-shake-ifier called SteadyShot, excess movement makes it hard to frame the scene the way you want it.

The A35/A55, however, is small enough for someone with small hands to handle without too much trouble. The lens, however, adds weight and bulk.



You'll know if you're moving the camera around too much if you see the camera shake warning icon flashing in the viewfinder or on the LCD monitor. In all modes except Manual and Shutter priority, it warns you to settle down.

Faceplant

In Figure 3-1 I'm holding the camera in a traditional pose, looking through the viewfinder. Try this stance if you're starting out, and modify it to suit your style as you get more experience.



Whether you're shooting vertically or horizontally, keep your knees bent a bit and almost hunch into the camera. It feels like you position it first and then bring your body up to meet it. Stand with your feet apart, as if you're bracing yourself, but don't lock your knees. Keep them a bit springy.

Hold your head close to the camera, pressing your eye into the Eyepiece cup (the hard plastic piece surrounding the Viewfinder). Don't be afraid to use the space just below your eyebrow to help support the camera. Stick the eyepiece cup right in there. However, if that's not comfortable, simply float your eye behind the viewfinder and try to stay still.

Your right hand should be on the grip with your index finger on the shutter button. Curl the lower fingers of your right hand around the grip and use them, in part, to hold onto the camera. That leaves your right thumb and index finger free to work controls on the front, top, or back of the camera.

Your left hand does most of the work of supporting the camera. Notice that I have it under the lens near the body of the camera, with my thumb and index finger on the lens's zoom ring. This hold is optimized for autofocus. If you want to manually focus, your left thumb and index finger should move to the

front of the lens and support it by the focus ring. Your elbows should be reasonably close to your body, with your left elbow almost propped against you. If you keep your arms firm and close, that will stabilize you quite a bit more. The camera strap is there in case of an emergency. When holding the camera like this, it bears no weight.



Figure 3-1: Hold your camera steady.

In Figure 3-2, I'm shooting vertically. The only thing that changes is my right elbow, which I extended up so my right hand could hold the camera.



Figure 3-2: Adjust your arms to reposition the camera.

Keeping your distance

Maybe you'll be more comfortable shooting with Live view (looking at the LCD monitor on the back of the camera). You can see me checking my composition in Figure 3-3.

Hold the camera away from your face so you can see the LCD monitor. When zooming or focusing, move your left hand back to the lens to operate these controls. Your right hand doesn't change at all.



Figure 3-3: Relaxing in Live view.



Shooting in Live view from the LCD monitor is a much more casual setup, with benefits. Aside from comfort, you're able to keep track of what's going on around you better, whether that's kids playing football in your yard or cars going by. You're also able to talk and interact with your subjects better without your face being grafted onto the camera. However, the style has drawbacks. This position is much harder to stabilize than when holding the camera up against your body.

Automatically Taking Great Pictures

Automatic shooting modes help new photographers get into the swing of things. It can take time to learn where all the buttons are and what they do, not to mention figure out the menu system and decipher all the displays. I encourage you to use the auto modes (as well as the scenes in the next section) to become familiar with your camera as you take photos. When you feel like you're ready to step up and take more of the workload yourself, do so. Chapter 7 can ease that transition.



Modes of transportation

The A35 and A55 have three automatic photo-taking modes that make your life ridiculously easy:

- ✓ **Auto:** Probably the mode that needs least explanation. You point the camera. You press the shutter button. The camera figures out how bright the scene is. Simple.
- ✓ **Flash Off:** Auto without the flash. Easy to remember.
- ✓ **Auto+:** Smarter than Auto. The camera senses the shooting conditions, not simply the brightness, and sets the correct exposure. The A35/A55 recognizes these scenes in Auto+ mode:
 - *Night View*
 - *Backlight Portrait*
 - *Backlight*
 - *Handheld Twilight*
 - *Portrait*
 - *Macro*
 - *Landscape*
 - *Tripod Night View*
 - *Night Portrait*

Then the camera uses one of these shooting functions, and notifies you by putting the name in the viewfinder or on the LCD, to keep you out of trouble:

- *Continuous Advance* takes 3 quick photos.
- *Daylight Sync* fires the flash. Otherwise known as *fill flash*.
- *Slow Sync* fires the flash setting but slows the shutter a bit.

- *Slow Shutter* lets you know that the shutter speed is going to be slow. The camera may choose this function when you're shooting dark scenes.
- *Auto HDR* take three shots with different exposures and combines them. Saves the best exposed shot and the combined version. For manual HDR, read Chapter 9.
- *Handheld Twilight (A55 only)* takes six photos and combines them into one shot.



Figure 3-4: Automatic modes on the control dial.

Each of these three automatic modes transfers much of the technical workload of operating your camera to the camera. Instead of *you* having to configure settings and options, the camera senses what needs to be done. Ego is the number one reason people bypass an Auto setting in favor of something more complicated. That's a shame, because no matter how smart or technically driven you are, it can be fun to just take pictures.

Using auto modes

To use Auto, Auto+, or Flash Off modes, and assuming you aren't using a tripod, follow these steps:



1. **Set the mode dial to the automatic mode of your choice: Auto, Auto+, or Flash Off.**

- Choose Auto+ if the lighting conditions are challenging.
- Choose Auto in the case of a normal snapshot.
- Choose Flash Off if you need to keep the flash from firing.

2. **Set the focus mode switch (on the lens and the body) to AF, as shown in Figure 3-5.**

Not all lenses have a focus mode switch. Figure 3-5 shows the 18-55mm kit lens, which does indeed have one.



The focus mode switch on the lens overrides the switch on the camera. If the camera is set to AF and lens is set to MF, the camera is in manual focus mode — *not* autofocus. If you have both switches, always set the focus mode switch on the camera to AF and then leave it alone. Use the lens switch to switch from manual to auto focus.



Don't use the manual focus ring unless the lens is switched to MF. Otherwise, you could damage your lens. You will feel the camera release the focus ring so that it turns easily when you're in manual focus.

3. **(Optional) Press the Function button to check the mode's settings.**

You can, for the most part, bypass this step and use the default settings. However, even



Figure 3-5: Set focus mode to AF.

the most automatic modes have some settings (see Figure 3-6) you can change:

- *Drive Mode*: This determines how the camera advances to the next photo. Your options are Single-Shot Advance, Continuous Advance (Lo or Hi), and Self-Timer (2 or 10 seconds). These settings are covered more fully in Chapter 2.
- *Flash Mode*: When in Auto+ or Auto modes, lets you control the flash. Options are Flash Off, Autoflash, and Fill Flash. Flash is covered more fully in Chapters 2 and 7.
- *Autofocus Mode*: Shows you the AF mode, and is covered in Chapter 8.
- *Face Detection*: This feature identifies faces in the scene and is covered in Chapter 2.
- *Smile Shutter*: This mode automatically triggers the shutter when it detects a smile in the scene. For more information, turn to Chapter 2.

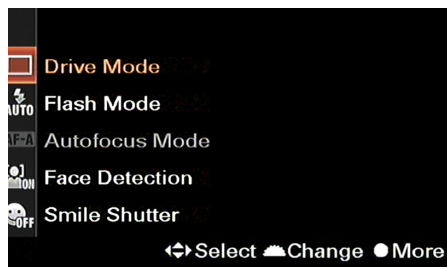


Figure 3-6: Automatic mode Function options.

4. Look through the viewfinder or at the LCD monitor for these indicators.

- Current exposure mode (should be what you set the control dial to in Step 1)
- Battery power (to make sure you aren't running out)
- Image size and quality
- Number of shots left on your card
- SteadyShot scale (how steady you're holding the camera)

Figure 3-7 shows how the LCD monitor works. You won't see the symbols on the left through the viewfinder. In this case, the camera has yet to focus, which means the Autofocus areas remain dark. Face detection frames the faces it can find. The frame is orange in the figure because I haven't focused yet. It will be green when it's focused.



Figure 3-7: Check your mode and status.

You can choose from several display modes (covered more fully in Chapter 1). Each changes the details that appear in the display. Press the Display button to rotate through them.

5. Steady yourself and compose the scene.

Although not technically demanding, this is one of the most important steps in photography. This is where you decide what's in the photo and where it sits in the frame.

6. Zoom in or out using the zoom ring on the lens; see Figure 3-8.

The lens that comes with the A35/A55 can zoom from 18mm to 55mm. Read more on this in Chapter 8.



Zoom ring

Figure 3-8: Zoom in or out using the zoom ring.

7. Press the shutter button halfway to focus and meter.

The focus indicator lights up and reads steady when you're focused, as shown in Figure 3-9. If it's flashing, the camera can't focus. The AF areas and face detection frames turn green. In this case the flash is ready to fire, as shown by the orange indicator beside the Flash mode. (You won't see this through the viewfinder.)

8. Finish composing the scene.

Make sure it looks good right before you take the shot, and adjust, if necessary.

9. Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.

Figure 3-9: Just prior to taking the photo.

Been There, Scene It

Scenes are fantastic time savers. While the camera handles everything for you in Auto+, Auto, and Flash Off modes, they have a significant drawback: They don't know what you're photographing. Your A35/A55 doesn't know if you're taking a photo of a running child or a potted plant. It can't tell if you want a photo of something very close, far away, or at night. These things matter.



Enter scenes. Scenes tell the camera what's happening without detailed settings. It's like a personal chef. You want ribeye (not to be confused with red-eye) but don't know how to cook it. Just submit your order and the chef delivers it. Sounds delicious!

Scene selections

Here's the menu you have to choose from:

- ✓ **Portrait:** Take photos with nicely blurred backgrounds and sharp subjects.
- ✓ **Sports Action:** Optimized to photograph moving subjects with a fast shutter speed. You can also use Sports Action when *you're* moving.
- ✓ **Macro:** A close-up.
- ✓ **Landscape:** Scenic scenes full of scenery, processed to make the colors stand out. Use Landscape mode to photograph cityscapes as well as traditional shots of nature.
- ✓ **Sunset:** You got it. This scene is ideal when photographing sunsets. It brings out the red, orange, and yellow colors well.
- ✓ **Night View:** Think landscape at night with city lights. The point is to leave the scene dark but have something bright in the scene to see.
- ✓ **Handheld Twilight:** Shooting at night without a tripod.
- ✓ **Night Portrait:** Shoot portraits in the dark.

Setting up for scenes

Here's how you can set up your camera to shoot scenes:

1. **Set the mode dial to Scene/Picture Effect (A35) or Scene (A55).**

The A35 is shown in Figure 3-10.

2. **Press up or down on the control button to select a scene.**

See Figure 3-11 for scene labels. The picture effect section (covered in Chapter 11) begins after Night Portrait. If you get that far, press up to get back to the scenes.



Figure 3-10: Choosing scene selection.

3. Press the enter button to lock in your choice.

Press Function if you change your mind and want to choose a new scene. After pressing function, highlight SCN/Picture Effect (shown on an A35 in Figure 3-12) or SCN. Turn the control dial to scroll through the other scenes. Press enter to make the selection.

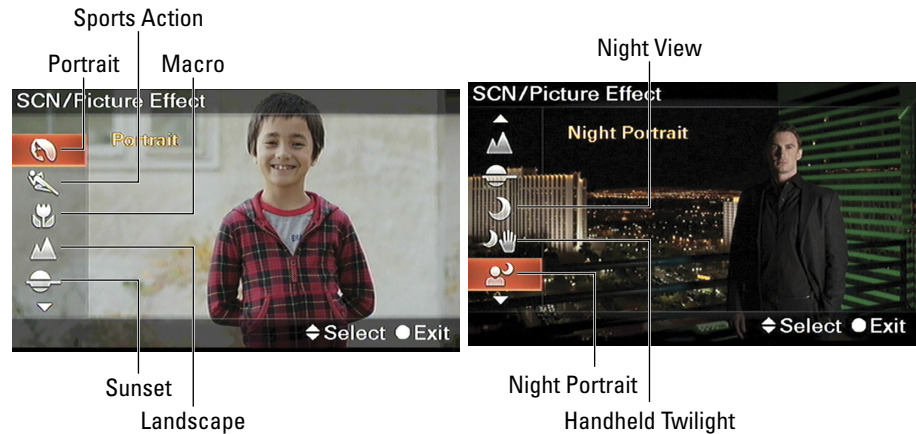


Figure 3-11: Select the scene you want from a range.

4. Compose your shot.

5. (Optional) Press the Function button to customize more.

You can view or change these settings:

- *Drive Mode:* How the camera advances to the next photo. Covered more fully in Chapter 2.
- *Flash Mode:* Flash is covered more fully in Chapters 2 and 7.
- *Autofocus (AF) Mode:* Whether the camera auto focuses continually. Read Chapter 8.
- *Face Detection:* Identifies faces; read Chapter 2.
- *Smile Shutter:* Triggers shutter when it detects a smile. Read Chapter 2.



Although you can't change the AF mode from the function screen, you can press and hold the AF button (the center of the control button) to change to AF-S if you're in another mode. This is great for locking in the focus, but you might run out of fingers quickly if you're trying to press AF, the shutter, and anything else prior to taking the shot.

6. **Focus, meter, and press the shutter button to take the picture.**

Customizing scene settings

Press the Function button to view and alter these camera settings when you're in any scene:

- ✓ **Drive Mode:** Choose Single-Shot Advance (the default), 10-second Self-Timer, or 2-second Self-Timer. In Sports Action, Continuous Advance (Hi or Lo) is the option instead of Single-Shot Advance.
- ✓ **Flash Mode:** Choose between Flash Off (the default) or Fill Flash. In night View, it's set to Slow Sync and can't be changed.
- ✓ **Autofocus Mode:** Set to AF-A (Automatic AF). (In Sports Action scene, it's set to AF-C [Continuous AF]. The camera focuses for as long as you hold the shutter button halfway.)
- ✓ **Face Detection:** Choose On (the default) or Off. (The only option available to change in Handheld Twilight.)
- ✓ **Smile Shutter:** Choose On or Off (the default).

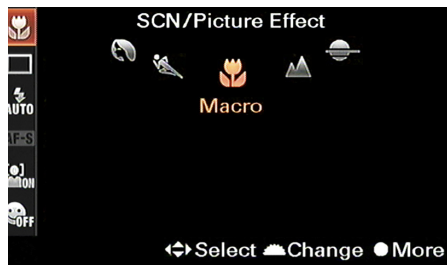
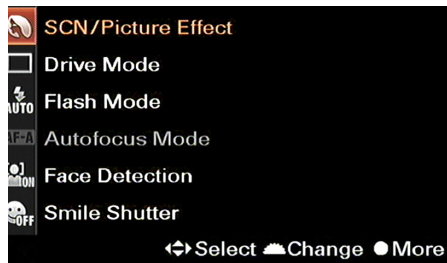


Figure 3-12: Choosing a new scene.

Smile for the birdie: Portrait

Use Portrait scene whenever you want to take a nice photo of someone. Don't let the name intimidate you, though. Shooting a portrait doesn't mean setting up a model in a studio with a nice background and expensive lighting. Nope. You can do that if you want, but you can also use Portrait scene in casual settings. Chapter 9 gives you helpful portrait-shooting tips (whether you're using the scene or making your own settings).

Figure 3-13 is a case in point. My family met up with some friends for dinner and I snapped this photo of their brand new baby daughter expressing her hunger. The background is nicely blurred and the focus is on the youngster. Her skin tones are very nice. This is an ideal application of portrait mode.



Figure 3-13: She's getting hungry!



Chapter 8 covers depth of field in depth. The camera makes blurring the background a priority when in portrait mode. The camera also processes the photo to soften skin tones and make them more appealing, then saves the file as a JPEG. If you set the image quality to Raw, you lose out on the extra processing because the camera does not save a JPEG file. You'll have to do your own processing using Image Data Converter SR (see Chapter 6) or another Raw converter.

Ready, set: Sports Action

The Sports Action scene is ideal for taking photos of, well, sports and action. Think *movement* when you choose this mode. Use this mode if you or your subject is moving. Figure 3-14 shows a football game. Although it doesn't look like it, everyone on the field is running.



Figure 3-14: A great time to use the Sports Action scene.



Keep these things in mind when shooting in Sports Action mode:

- ✓ **Blurring:** You can't control the shutter speed in Sports/Action mode, which means the action might move too quickly for the camera to capture it without blurring. If that's a problem, switch to shutter speed priority mode and set a fast shutter speed. Chapters 7 and 9 have more information on shutter speed and shooting fast action shots yourself.
- ✓ **Kids and pets:** You don't have to be photographing sports to use this scene. This mode excels at capturing blur-free photos of kids and pets around the house or at a party.
- ✓ **Flash and speed:** If the flash keeps popping up and slowing you down, switch to Flash Off mode (from the function menu). Figure 3-15 shows my son tossing a football in the back yard. One image was shot without the flash. The shutter speed was 1/2000 second. That's blazingly fast — so fast that there isn't a hint of blurriness to this photo. The only problem is that the light looks a tad dull. The other image shows what the

photo looks like when the flash is activated. Using the flash makes the lighting look much better. However, the shutter speed had to slow to 1/160 second.

- ✓ **Focus indicator:** In Sports Action mode, the focus indicator has arcs around it to indicate that the focal point moves with the subject and is continually updated.



Flash Off



Flash

Figure 3-15: Two action shots showing the difference between Flash Off and Flash.

Mac daddy: Macro

Stick your camera as close as you can to something (within limits) and take a picture. The *macro* photo looks larger than life. Figure 3-16 shows a classic photo taken in the macro style using the Macro scene. A butterfly landed on



our driveway. I noticed it, yelled to the kids not to squish it, and ran to get the camera. In situations like this, Macro mode is the best choice.

These tips can help you when you're shooting in Macro mode:

- ✓ **In general, use small subjects:** Small things in particular benefit from Macro mode. Large photos of bugs, flowers, and water drops are prime examples.
- ✓ **Minimum focus distance:** Although the scene says Macro, it doesn't change how close you can get to your subject and still focus. That distance is called the *minimum focus*, and depends on the lens. The lens that comes with the A35/A55 has a minimum focus of just under 10 inches (25 centimeters). Figure 3-17 shows four dice sitting on a table. The closest are too near for the lens to focus on. The green die sits at the exact minimum focus distance. The red die is slightly out of focus because of the shallow depth of field that the aperture (f/4.0) and distance create.



Figure 3-16: Your classic bug macro.



Figure 3-17: The dice in front are too close to focus on.

- ✔ **Use Flash Off mode:** If you're shooting within 3.3 feet (1 meter), turn the flash off for best results. If you're inside, use other lighting or open the shades to brighten the room. To find out how to change the flash mode, please turn to Chapter 2.
- ✔ **Be creative:** Macros aren't just about bugs and flowers. I took the camera to a football game hoping to capture some action shots. The girl in front of me had this (see Figure 3-18) unique hat that was impossible to miss. Eventually, I realized I should take a photo *of* it instead of trying to work *around* it. I chose Macro and got close.
- ✔ **Use focus magnifier with manual focus:** You can't change the AF area or select a specific AF point in Macro mode. For best results, switch to manual focus (MF) and turn on the focus magnifier. For more information on how to turn the focus magnifier on and use it, turn to Chapter 8.

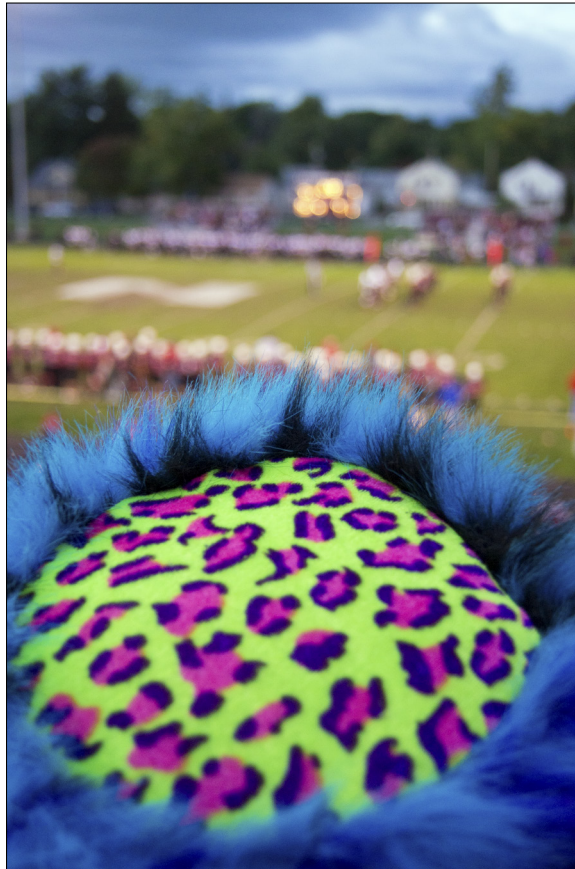


Figure 3-18: Making lemonade out of lemons.

Taking it in: Landscape

Landscape scene captures scenic scenes filled with sumptuous scenery. Use it to take photographs of fields, parks, and other landscapes, as well as scenes with water and city skylines. Think *distance* and *depth* when shooting in Landscape mode.



The camera uses a small aperture so the depth of field is very deep. (See Chapter 7 for more information on depth of field and aperture.) It also processes the colors so they're vivid. Figure 3-19 was taken from Belle Isle looking west at downtown Detroit. You can see the Renaissance Center clearly (it's the tallest building in the scene) and the Ambassador Bridge to its left. The bridge really stands out in the distance. Everything to the left of the bridge is Canada. The scene was photographed using the kit lens at a focal length of 18mm.



Figure 3-19: Seascapes work too.

End of days: Sunset

The Sunset scene captures the warm colors of the sunset, which are full of oranges, reds, and yellows. Figure 3-20 illustrates how mesmerizing sunsets can be. In this case, yellow dominates the scene and casts a glow into the air, on the water, and into the receding trees.



Figure 3-20: The sun and golden hue are beautifully captured using the Sunset scene.



Here are some more helpful pointers when using this mode:

- ✓ **Sunsets are perishable:** Every minute of a sunset is precious, and the nature of the sunset changes from beginning to end. Don't be late and don't wrap things up too quickly.
- ✓ **Sunsets are always to the west:** If you have a scene that looks great but you have to be to the west of it, you can't photograph it and the sun in the same shot. You have to choose one or the other. If you're shooting something (besides the sunset itself) in the west, you get golden light and wonderful shadows.
- ✓ **Flash:** If you want to light something nearby, they must be close enough for the flash to go off. Set Flash mode to Fill-Flash. (Chapter 2 has the information you'll need to change the flash mode.) This won't brighten a skyline, but will let you see nearby people or objects.

Don't need goggles: Night View

Use the Night View scene to capture bright scenes at night like buildings, cities, and other objects that have a range of dark and bright areas.



Think *distance* (like in Landscape mode), *dark*, and *light*. The latter points are important. Night View works best when you're photographing a scene that contrasts with the night. In other words, something has to stand out. You're not capturing the night itself.

Figure 3-21 shows the Cadillac Tower, located in downtown Detroit. This shot was taken well into the evening and shows off how Night View works. The building and lights are bright and visible, yet the sky is dark, as it should be. The shutter speed was relatively long, 1/4 second, and the ISO was elevated to 1600.



Figure 3-21: Downtown Detroit at night is scenic.

Here are some Night View pointers:

- ✓ **Tripod:** If you look at your Night View photos and they are blurry, try using a tripod or rest your camera on something to keep it stable.
- ✓ **Noise reduction:** Night View scenes tend to have higher ISOs than other shots. If there's too much for you, use noise reduction software to reduce the noise in the Raw file (ideally) or a JPEG. Turn to Chapter 6 for more information on working with Raw images and noise reduction.
- ✓ **Be creative:** You can take photos of lots of things using Night View scene. Figure 3-22 shows what a football game in Indiana looks like at night with clouds sweeping in from the north in the fall. The dynamic range of light in this scene is also nicely preserved. The dark regions in the crowd and trees remain dark, while the sky beyond the clouds as well as the action on the field are well lit. Perfect for Night View.



Figure 3-22: Night View does a great job capturing darks and lights at this football game.

A new saga: Handheld Twilight

Use Handheld Twilight scene to photograph night scenes without a tripod. The camera shoots a burst of photos and merges them together, after it does some blur and noise reduction. It's a lot like nighttime High Dynamic Range (HDR) photography in that the burst provides more data but you end up with one final file. Figure 3-23 shows the Michigan Soldiers & Sailors Monument in Campus Martius Park, in downtown Detroit. I didn't use the flash. The only lighting comes from a few floodlights surrounding the monument.



Use these tips and tricks when shooting in Handheld Twilight mode:

- ✓ **Don't freak out:** When you press the shutter all the way, the camera seems to take off. Don't worry. This is how it's supposed to work. You don't even need to keep the shutter button pressed down.
- ✓ **Steady does it:** Although you don't need a tripod to use this scene, it's somewhat unnerving to move around as the camera takes all the photos. Relax and check the picture after the camera processes it. If you moved too much and the photo is too soft or blurry, steady yourself and try again.
- ✓ **JPEG only:** Handheld Twilight scene produces only JPEGs, not Raw files.
- ✓ **Depth of field:** This mode's larger apertures reduce the depth of field. This is more noticeable when shooting close objects, but not a problem at all when shooting from a distance.



Figure 3-23: This statue is well lit because of the lights and mode, not the flash.

Work on your moves: Night Portrait

The Night Portrait scene is best when taking photographs of people at night. The idea is to use the flash to light the subject, but leave the shutter open long enough to brighten the background. Figure 3-24 was taken with a tripod in front of bushes. You can see the orange glow of the twilight in the background through the leaves. Nothing is too bright; nothing is too dark.



Figure 3-24: Night portraits brighten the background too.

Keep these things in mind when shooting in Night Portrait:

- ✓ **Tripod:** Ideally, you'll use a tripod (because the Night Portrait scene lets the shutter stay open longer than during a normal portrait). The shutter speed in Figure 3-24 is 1/6 second, which is far too long to hold still for. (You still have to get your subject to remain still, but at least you've limited the problem to one side of the camera!)
- ✓ **Portrait:** It's still a portrait, so frame up your subject like you would during the day using Portrait mode.

Shooting Sweeping Panoraaaaamas

The A35/A55 has a tremendously cool feature called Sweep Shooting. Instead of manually photographing several frames of a panorama and then using software to stitch them together. Instead of manually photographing several frames and using software to stitch them together, Sweep Shooting handles everything.

All you do is point, shoot, and pan:



1. **Set the mode dial to Sweep Shooting and press enter.**

See Figure 3-25.

2. **Select Sweep Panorama.**

You can choose 3D Sweep Panorama if you have a 3D-compatible TV set.



3. **Choose Panorama Size from Recording menu 2.**

- *Standard:* 3,872 x 2,160 pixels when taken vertically and 9,182 x 1,856 pixels when taken horizontally.
- *Wide:* 5,536 x 2,160 pixels when taken vertically and 12,416 x 1,856 pixels when taken horizontally.

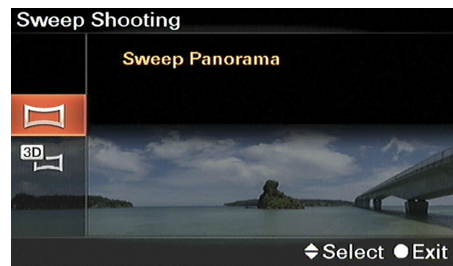


Figure 3-25: Select the mode, then the type.

4. Set Panorama Direction from Recording menu 2: Right, Left, Up, or Down.



This indicates the direction you're supposed to sweep in, assuming you're holding the camera horizontally (landscape orientation). If you hold the camera vertically (portrait orientation) and chose Down, sweep to your right.

Figure 3-26 shows a wide panorama taken with the camera held horizontally (landscape orientation). The other image was taken with the camera held vertically and swept *down* (actually to the right). The first shot is nice and wide; really wide. Proportionately, however, it is very thin. The other shot is a good balance between width and height.



Horizontal



Vertical

Figure 3-26: Shooting creatively with wide panoramas.

5. Frame the scene so you're capturing what you want at the beginning.

A bar in the display shows an area that *won't* be taken. You'll also get an arrow pointing you in the direction you should sweep.

6. Press the shutter button fully and sweep the camera slowly in the direction you set in Step 4.

You don't have to keep holding the shutter button down. Once you press it, you're off and running until the end of the program. Also, the shooting display shows a guidance bar that tells you how far you have to go. The real awesomeness of this feature is that when you're done taking the photo, you're done. No extra computer work is required.

The menu's sweep directions assume that you're holding the camera horizontally. If you're holding vertically (with the right side up or down), or upside down, you have to adjust your actual sweep accordingly.



Keep some tips and tricks in mind while shooting panoramas:



- ✓ **JPEG only:** Because of the shooting and processing demands placed upon the camera, Sweep Shooting produces only JPEGs. You don't get a Raw file.
- ✓ **Panorama only:** When shooting panoramas manually, you photograph each section and move the camera to take the next shot. When you're finished shooting the individual sections, you load them into a program on your computer that can stitch them together. That's a lot of work, but because you have the sections of the panorama in hand, you can try different fixes when things don't line up right. (When they do, the panorama looks seamless.) This often involves choosing a different layout, such as Perspective, Cylindrical, or Spherical. Sweep Shooting doesn't let you fix anything. If there's something wrong with the panorama, you're stuck with it.
- ✓ **Straight and level:** It can be hard to pan without tilting the camera. Pay attention to the indicators in the viewfinder, on the LCD, and in the scene. See Figure 3-27.



Figure 3-27: It's sometimes hard to stay level even when you have such obvious visual cues.

- ✓ **Stitching problems:** Sweep Shooting is awesome most of the time, but when it's off, it's off. Figure 3-28 shows a wide shot of Lake St. Clair. The camera had trouble with the waterline. It jumps up and down throughout the scene. Try shooting from a different orientation.



Figure 3-28: The water was really choppy!



- ✓ **Keep at it:** It can be hard to center your subjects. The series of photos in Figure 3-29 show my attempts to get all my boys in one shot. I cropped one's head in the first, overreacted and short-changed another in the second. The third is just right.
- ✓ **Zoom and inspect:** The moral of this story is that you need to zoom in and inspect your panoramas before moving on. It's easy to see if they aren't level. The problems come into play when you look at a small thumbnail of a huge panorama on the back of your camera. You can't possibly tell if there are stitching problems without zooming in and panning around. (See Chapter 5 for information on reviewing photos.)



In 3D

3D panoramas are saved as two files. The first is a standard JPEG. It's not 3D, which means you can look at it on your camera, computer, or a non-3D TV. The second file has additional data

in it to make the image look three dimensional. This file is saved with the same name but ends in .mpo. For the 3D effect to work, you must have both files.

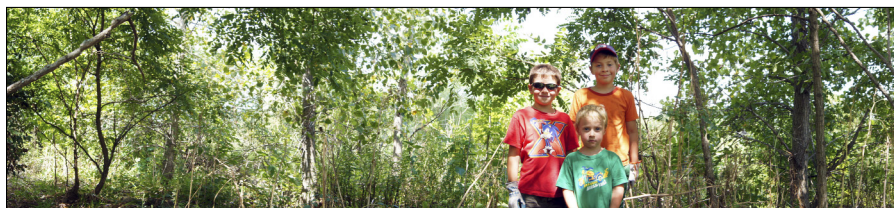
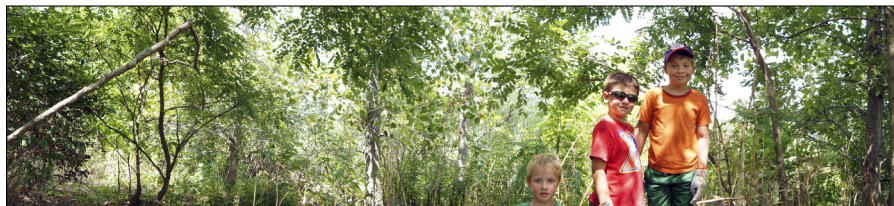


Figure 3-29: You often have to keep trying to get it right.

You have some control over some of the camera's settings when in Sweep Shooting mode. Press the Function button to change some settings:

- ✓ **Sweep Shooting:** Choose Sweep Panorama (default) or 3D Sweep Panorama.
- ✓ **AF Area:** Choose Wide (default), Spot, or Local. Determines how the focal point's chosen in the scene. These settings are covered in Chapter 7.
- ✓ **Metering Mode:** Choose Multi-segment (the default), Center Weighted, or Spot. Determines how the camera evaluates brightness.
- ✓ **White Balance:** Choose Auto, Daylight, Shade, or Cloudy. White balance is covered in detail in Chapter 8.
- ✓ **Creative Style:** Choose Standard, Vivid, Landscape, or Black and White. Creative Styles are covered in Chapter 8.

Rapid Fire

Both the A35 and A55 have a special high-speed mode called Continuous Advance Priority AE. This means the drive is set to rattle off photos as fast as possible. If you're using the A55, the image size isn't reduced, but you don't get the cool tele-zoom feature, either.



Unlike the A55, however, the A35's Continuous Advance Priority AE mode shoots with something called *tele-zoom*. That means the camera digitally (as opposed to optically, which would involve using the lens) zooms in by 1.4x to the center of the frame. The image size is automatically set to M (Medium, or 3568x2368 pixels) and the aspect ratio is set to 3:2 (as opposed to 16:9).

It's really easy to shoot in Continuous Advance Priority AE (tele-zoom for the A35) mode. Here's how:

1. Set the mode dial:

- **On an A35, choose Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE.** Notice the T beside the symbol, as well as the max frame rate printed right on the Mode dial. See Figure 3-30.
- **On an A55, choose Continuous Advance Priority.** This has the max frame rate on the mode dial. That's a helpful way to remember what this mode does.





A35



A55

Figure 3-30: Set the mode dial to your version of Continuous Advance Priority AE.

2. Press the shutter button halfway.

Doing that starts autofocus and metering. Alternatively, manually focus.

If you're using the A35, you can control the aperture and ISO if you're in AF-S or manual focus mode. The A55 lets you change the aperture when in AF-S or manual focus.

3. Press the shutter button fully to begin shooting.

4. Hold down the shutter to continue.

Figure 3-31 shows a range of shots taken during my son's baseball game. (FYI: He has good form and got a hit.) The camera set the shutter speed to 1/500 second, the aperture to f/5.6, and the ISO to 1000.

5. Release the button to stop shooting.

The speed you can get depends on the size and quality of the photos and whether you're saving Raw files in addition to JPEGs (with A55) or JPEGs only (with A35). Anything that makes the camera work harder will slow you down. The A55 can shoot a maximum number of 10 frames per second (fps), and the A35 shoots 7 fps.



Figure 3-31: It's more than just action; you see the entire sequence.



Keep these tips in mind as you go out and take your own high-speed shots:

- ✓ **Subjects:** You don't have to stick to shooting sporting events in Continuous Advance Priority AE (tele-zoom or otherwise). Use the mode to photograph someone opening a present or blowing out the candles on their cake. Photograph pets or children as they play.
- ✓ **Timing is everything:** If you can't press the shutter button once at precisely the right time, choose Continuous Advance Priority AE and shoot continuously. You stand a much better chance of capturing the perfect moment (or, as in the case of Figure 3-32, several perfect moments).
- ✓ **Flash:** You can pop the flash to go off, but then you'll capture many fewer frames. Your mileage may vary.
- ✓ **Space and time:** You'll use lots of memory card space when shooting so many photos, especially if you shoot Raw and JPEG together with the A55. The A35 saves space because the photos are tele-zoomed, which means they're smaller, and you can't save Raw photos. In addition, you'll spend more time reviewing your photos to pick out the best.

- ✔ **Focus indicator:** It indicates that the focal point moves with the subject and is continually updated.



Figure 3-32: Kids and high-speed photography go well together.

Here are the changes you can make by pressing the Function button:

- ✔ **Flash Mode:** Choose Fill-Flash (default), Slow Sync, Rear Sync, or Wireless. These options are only implemented when you pop the flash. Otherwise, the flash is off.
- ✔ **Autofocus Mode:** Choose AF-C (Continuous AF) or AF-S (Single-Shot AF). You might choose AF-S when photographing a person who isn't moving around. For example, you can use Continuous Advance Priority mode to photograph a baby's changing expressions (I wish I'd this when ours were that young), but you don't need continuous autofocus because they aren't running around the yard yet. That comes later.

- ✓ **AF Area:** Choose Wide (the default), Spot, or Local. These settings are covered in Chapter 7.
- ✓ **ISO:** Set to Auto. If you're using the A35, you can change the ISO if in AF-S or manual focus.
- ✓ **Metering Mode:** This determines how the camera evaluates the brightness of the scene. The options are Multi-segment (the default), Center weighted, and Spot.
- ✓ **Flash Compensation:** Set to 0, but can be changed. Read Chapter 9 for details.
- ✓ **White Balance:** Set to Auto, but can be changed to match the conditions you're in. White balance is covered in detail in Chapter 8.
- ✓ **DRO/Auto HDR:** Set to DRO: Auto by default. You may select a level or disable the D-Range Optimizer.
- ✓ **Creative Style:** Choose Standard, Vivid, Landscape, or Black and White. Creative Styles are covered in Chapter 8.

Cannes-Do Movie Making

In This Chapter

- ▶ Setting up your camera to shoot movies
 - ▶ Playing movies back on the camera
 - ▶ Editing basics
 - ▶ Making movie discs
-

Lately, everyone is able to shoot movies with a compact digital camera, cell phone, and game device. It seems as if everything but wristwatches shoot HD video. Digital SLR manufacturers came to this trend late, but manufacturers have realized that the dSLR (and now the dLST) make good video platforms and have jumped in with both feet. Today, you can shoot high-def movies of amazing quality with cameras like the A35/A55.

Some movie-shooting techniques are different from photo shooting. Exposure is handled automatically. You don't have to choose a mode. Your job centers around holding still, maintaining the composition, and possibly focusing. Those differences, and the fact that movie-making is a really unique aspect of the camera, make an entire chapter devoted to making movies necessary.

Making Some Movie Decisions

Before you press the Movie button, sort through and choose a few things:

- ✓ Movie type
- ✓ Size
- ✓ Audio: Yay or nay
- ✓ External microphone: Yay or nay



Choosing a movie type

Choose a movie type that matches what you will be eventually watching on: an HDTV or on your computer. The A35/A55 has two types of movies: AVCHD and MP4. Each is optimized to be seen on different devices, HDTV and computer monitors, respectively. With the MP4, you also get a few different sizes, so you can shoot high-quality or more of a standard quality.



If you plan on shooting high-def movies a lot, consider investing in Memory Stick PRO Duo or Memory Stick PRO-HG Duo cards rather than SDHC or SDXC. The Memory Stick PRO-HG, in particular, is optimized for the data rates required to shoot HD video (up to 50MB/s maximum transfer speed compared to a 30MB/s for a representative class 10 SDHC card).

To select a movie type, follow these steps:

1. Press the Menu button.
2. Go to Recording menu 1.
3. Highlight the Movie: File Format option and press the enter button.

See Figure 4-1.

4. Select AVHD or MP4 and press the enter button.

- *AVCHD*: Think of AVCHD as Full HD, because it is. AVCHD movies come in one size on the A35/A55: 1,920x1,080. They are also shot at 50 or 60 frames per second, depending on the where you bought your camera. You can tell what your camera supports by looking for 50i or 60i on label affixed to the bottom of the camera. Choose this option (marked as FH) when you want Full HD video and high-quality audio, and if you want to create your own HD video discs. The files will be large, but the movies will look good when played on an HDTV or computer.

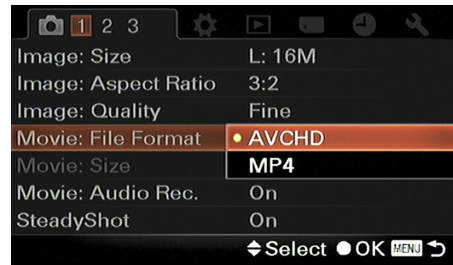


Figure 4-1: Set the format based on what you're going to do with the final product.

- **MP4:** MP4 videos are based on Apple's QuickTime video format specification and are better suited to playing back on computers and over the Internet. They are high-quality, but not in the same league as AVCHD. The A35/A55 has two types of MP4 movies to choose from: 1080 and VGA. You'll choose between the two in the next section.

5. Press Menu to exit the menu system.

Selecting a movie size

Selecting a movie size is important if you've chosen the MP4 movie type. That means you can shoot the quality of video that fits your output and transmission goals. AVCHD movies have a fixed size. Not everything, of course, has to be the highest quality possible. Realize that some compromises are worth it, depending on you and your goals.

To select an MP4 movie size, follow these steps:

- 1. Press the Menu button.**
- 2. Go to Recording menu 1.**
- 3. Highlight Movie: Size and press the enter button.**
- 4. Select 1080 or VGA and press the enter button.**

If you chose the AVCHD file format, you have no options and can't continue. The default, and only, size for your movie is FH (1920x1080).

See Figure 4-2.

If you've chosen MP4 as your file format, the options are:

- **1080:** These movies are sized at 1,440x1,080 pixels. This is considered high-def, but not as large as the AVCHD movies (which are full HD). Choose 1080 when you want a high-quality HD video for use on your computer, the Internet, or an HD TV.



Figure 4-2: MP4 movies have two sizes.



Unfortunately, if you shoot an MP4 movie in 1080, you can't use Sony's PMB software to create a standard or high-def video disc. You can share the movie online (and in the process convert it), but you must use other software to burn a disc.

- **VGA:** VGA movies are 640x480 pixels. This is considered standard definition. Choose VGA when you're doing a project for your boss and you just don't care. (You know I'm kidding.) Choose VGA when you know you won't need to view the movie on an HDTV and don't need the hassle of working with such a huge file.

5. Press Menu to exit the menu system.

Figure 4-3 shows all three movie formats together so you can compare their size. You'll notice that the AVCHD and the MP4: 1080 format appear to be the same size. They are. This is because the MP4: 1080 movie's pixels aren't square to begin with. They're 1.3333 times as wide as they are tall. When displayed, they stretch to fill 1,920x1,080, which is the same size as AVCHD.

Setting up audio

Setting up audio is easy. You simply have to decide whether you want it on or off, then whether or not you want to connect an external microphone to your camera (that's in the next section).



AVCHD



MP4: 1080



MP4: VGA

Figure 4-3: Lava never looked so good.

To turn audio recording on or off, follow these steps:



1. **Press the Menu button.**
2. **Go to Recording menu 1.**
3. **Highlight Movie: Audio Recording, as shown in Figure 4-4, and press the enter button.**
4. **Select On to turn Audio Recording on.**

By default it's on. Choose Off to disable it.

5. **Press Menu to exit.**

Connecting and using an external stereo microphone

If you want higher-quality audio, you should seriously consider buying and connecting an external stereo microphone. Although the internal stereo microphone is very good, it is just too close to the camera and the photographer. Any extraneous lens, camera, or photographer noise will be recorded.

If you want to mount a microphone on the Auto-Lock Accessory shoe, make sure you get one that is compatible with Sony's hardware. Not all camera manufacturers use the same type of shoe. More specifically, if a microphone says it's compatible with Canon and Nikon digital SLRs, it *will not be compatible* with the A35/A55 accessory shoe unless you buy additional hardware like the Seagull SC-5 hot shoe adapter to standard flash shoe.

Thankfully, Sony has just such a microphone: the ECM-ALST1 Alpha Compact Stereo Microphone. It will fit just fine.

1. **Set up the microphone.**

Depending on the microphone, mount the microphone on the camera, on a stand, pin it to a person's clothes, or use a microphone boom (like in the movies).

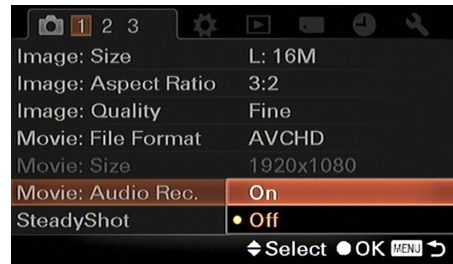


Figure 4-4: Don't forget to turn on audio recording (like I have).

2. Pull open the rubber external microphone jack cover.
3. Plug the 3.5mm (1/8-inch) stereo microphone plug into the microphone jack, as shown in Figure 4-5.

You can tell a stereo cable from a monophonic microphone cable because there will be three separate areas on the plug. They are called the tip, ring, and sleeve. By convention, the tip and the ring carry the left and right audio channels respectively, while the sleeve carries the ground.

4. Ensure you're set up to record audio by enabling audio recording.

When you get to shooting, consider adding these techniques to your repertoire:



Microphone jack

Figure 4-5: Plug the external microphone in here.

- ✓ **Test:** Shoot a few test movies to check audio levels. You have to do this by ear. There are no fancy audio meters or gauges on the A35/A55. If you hear distortion or the sound is too loud, back the microphone away from the sound source, if possible, or tell them to be a bit quieter.
- ✓ **Put some distance between the camera and the microphone:** Your best bet to keep extraneous sounds from being recorded is to use a stereo microphone mounted on a separate stand or boom, protected by a wind shield. You'll be running a longer cord if that is the case, so be careful not to trip over it.



Yelling, “Action!” Versus Saying “Cheese”

Technically, shooting movies isn't a challenge. You don't have to change modes or figure out the exposure. At the most basic level, you simply point the camera at your subject and press the Movie button. However, it's not all peaches and cream. You can't run around with your A35/A55 and act like a

high-def Steadicam operator. You have to pay attention to the focus using a small 3-inch LCD monitor or viewfinder. You have to hope the camera doesn't overheat. The upcoming sections address the differences between shooting movies and still photos, and steps to follow to shoot relatively static versus dynamic movies.

Making the transition to movie-think

Before you begin, study these differences and similarities between shooting movies and taking still photos.

You can start recording a movie at any time, in any mode. Figure 4-6 is a frame from a movie I took out on the driveway as we were going out Trick or Treating. No setup. No prep-time. Just start shooting and have fun with it! The aperture and shutter speed are automatically adjusted. You can't control them once the filming starts.



Figure 4-6: Impromptu movies are fun!

Settings that apply to movies

There are several settings that are applied to the movie when you start shooting. If you're creative with them, you can set the camera up before you shoot the movie and use them to great effect. Even if you're not creative, use them for the same reason you would when taking a still photo. For example, you would use White Balance to make sure the colors are rendered correctly by the camera.

The settings that apply are:

- ✔ **White balance:** You can set the White Balance yourself or choose Auto. Don't leave White Balance set to something funky like Cloudy if you're shooting outside on a sunny day. On the creative side, you can shoot movies with a White Balance that skews the colors dramatically. Be warned, though, that you can't undo this. For more information White Balance, turn to Chapter 8.
- ✔ **Creative Style:** Set the Creative Style to process your movies without having to use a computer. In particular, settings like Vivid (enhanced colors and contrast) and Black and White (no color) give you powerful creative options. Figure 4-7 shows a frame from a black and white movie I shot of an old movie camera. Using a Creative Style is a great way to make interesting movies. For more information on Creative Style, turn to Chapter 8.
- ✔ **Exposure compensation:** If you're not happy with the exposure, use Exposure compensation to adjust it up or down. You can also use this creatively. Chapter 8 has more information on Exposure compensation.
- ✔ **AF area:** Set the AF area you want the camera to use when autofocusing. Wide (the default) is the automatic setting. Spot forces the camera to use the center AF area. Local enables you to choose one on your own, even on the fly. Turn to Chapter 8 for more information on setting the AF area.
- ✔ **Metering mode:** This setting controls how the camera evaluates the scene's brightness. Multi-segment (the default) analyzes the entire scene. Center weighted uses the entire screen, but weighs the center more. Spot uses a small metering circle in the center. Center weighted and Spot work well when you're dealing with single subjects like people and not expansive landscapes. These modes will keep backlit subjects from being too dark. They will also work with front-lit subjects. Turn to Chapter 7 for more information on metering modes.



Figure 4-7: Shooting in black and white saves a lot of editing time.

- ✓ **Picture effect (A35):** You can apply a Picture Effect (see Chapter 11) to the movie as you shoot it. Toy Camera is particularly cool, but they are all very interesting to experiment with.
- ✓ **Focus:** There are, as with still photography, two ways to focus when shooting movies:
 - *Manual:* Of course, you can always change focus when you have set the camera to Manual focus.
 - *AF:* When set to AF, the camera continues to focus according to the AF area you have chosen. If you set AF area to Local, you can change the AF area during shooting.

For more information on focusing, refer to Chapters 1 and 7.

Don't do this stuff

Do keep these don'ts in mind when you're shooting:

- ✓ **Make noise:** Be careful not to make noise when shooting. The internal stereo microphone will surely pick it up. It may even be picked up even by an external mic.
- ✓ **Crank the heat:** Heat is a major problem to avoid when shooting movies. So much so that there are copious warnings that shooting for a long time will raise the temperature of the camera high enough that it will turn off automatically. When the overheating warning light comes on, stop shooting the movie. It might help to turn off the camera and take an extended break, or put the camera in a cool, dry place.



Picking a Genre



These tips don't fit in the other categories, but are still helpful:

- ✓ **Short clips:** Shoot short clips instead of long takes. Delete the bad ones. Keep the good ones. Later, trim to specific scenes and combine into larger videos later.
- ✓ **Rerecord audio:** Record a scratch track while you're shooting the movie, but replace it with rerecorded audio in editing. Yes, that's a bit more complicated than normal, but it's possible with today's sophisticated editing programs and a little elbow grease. Unfortunately, I can't tell you exactly how to do this given the space constraints of a single bullet point in a small section in one chapter of this book.

- ✓ **Bloopers:** Everyone loves bloopers. Keep them and use them as DVD extras.
- ✓ **No audio:** Sometimes, no audio is better. Do you want people to hear you yelling at your kids as they fight over presents they just opened? Even if you record it, you may be better off using a music track.
- ✓ **Family get-togethers:** This just in from my wife. She says that using your camera to film family members during a family reunion would be a great idea. Have everyone drop by the camera, one at a time or with their immediate family unit, and tell who they are and how they are related to you.

Sitting still

The easiest type of movie to shoot with your A35/A55 is a movie under controlled conditions where you aren't running around worrying about tripping. Approach this type of movie differently than one you're moving around shooting. Consider the following.

Tripod

Use a tripod whenever possible when shooting movies that are stationary. If your subject is moving (but not enough to put you in the next section), you may need to shoot handheld or get a nice pan/tilt tripod head that you can use to smoothly follow the action.

Lighting

Creative license notwithstanding, movies where you are giving a review, telling a story, or explaining something benefit from good lighting.

- ✓ Turn on lamps and overheads.
- ✓ Bring in extra lights.
- ✓ Open the curtains.



If outdoors, shoot with the sun behind or to the side of you. It should shine toward or across your subject.

Background

This may be the most challenging aspect of filming a movie of a stationary subject. Set your camera up to show off a pleasing area of your home, a nicely decorated wall, window (although that can mess with the exposure), or somewhere outside that looks like a good movie backdrop. Figure 4-8 shows a nice-looking fence that I tend to use when I want to photograph my family. In this frame, my two older boys are talking about dressing up as Doctor Who (the 11th and 10th from left to right) for Halloween.



Figure 4-8: Doctors who?

You may be able to point the camera down at something. If so, a nice table or cloth will work. It doesn't have to be perfect. Keep it natural, but you may need to clean and position things in or out of frame to remove distractions or add interest.

Focus

Manual focus works fantastically when shooting static movies. Use the Zoom Magnifier feature to zoom in and nail it. Once you have your focus, don't move it. You'll be very pleased not to hear any auto focusing sounds when you play your movie back, and you will appreciate things not moving in and out of focus.

Wide-angle

When shooting general home movies inside, wide-angle lenses work well. They keep you from feeling claustrophobic and capture more action. If you are filming a single person, use a normal or zoomed in focal length (28mm or more).

Using a stunt double

Shooting movies with a digital SLR or SLT isn't like carrying around a small compact digital camera. It's heavier, has a longer lens, gets hotter, and is harder to keep in focus.

That doesn't mean it's impossible, but it has an entirely different feeling. It pays, therefore, to approach shooting dynamic scenes with the A35/A55 differently than you would a stationary movie.

Here are some ideas:

- ✔ **Use AF:** It can be very hard to keep a good manual focus on a moving subject, especially when you're also moving. Figure 4-9 shows my youngest running around as I try to focus on him. It's hard! If you don't want the focus wandering (the camera changes the AF area it wants to focus on), select Spot or Local.



Figure 4-9: He's quite fast.

- ✔ **Metering:** Use Multi-segment or Center weighted metering when you and the subject are moving. If you're standing still (but not so still to make it a static setup), you can use Center weighted without too much trouble. Spot is hard to use unless you can keep the center of the frame zeroed in on the subject with precision.
- ✔ **Monopod:** You may be able to use a monopod (a tripod with only one leg) and shoot action movies, especially if you're standing on the sidelines.
- ✔ **Zoom:** When shooting action, go for it and zoom in, as shown in Figure 4-10. You may have to practice to get the hang of keeping people in the frame and in focus, but it will look better than a wide-angle shot of something really small running around a huge soccer field.



Figure 4-10: He's the center of attention at this range.

Pressing the Movie Button

Once all the preparations are made, the file format is set, you've decided whether or not to record audio, and you've thought through how to approach shooting the movie you want (static or stationary), it's time to shoot the movie.

Here's how in the short version. The explanations for each step follow.

1. **Get everything ready.**
2. **Press the Movie button to start recording.**
3. **Adjust exposure.**
4. **Keep an eye on some important indicators.**
5. **Press the Movie button to stop recording.**



Get everything ready

I said that, yes, but it's important. This includes the following:

- ✓ Clean the lens.
- ✓ Set the camera's movie options.
- ✓ Set audio options.
- ✓ Set controls like white balance, focus mode, AF area, metering mode, and the like. Leave no stone unturned. If you forget something and then remember it 10 minutes into the movie, you're in a quandary. And that's putting it nicely to get past the editor.
- ✓ Mount the camera on a tripod (if desired).
- ✓ Get the lighting, background, and other location-specific aspects ready.
- ✓ Prepare your subjects, if necessary. In parent-speak, that means telling the kids to stand still, stop messing with your clothing, and saying, "No, you cannot go to the bathroom. No, you can't have juice!"
- ✓ Make sure you have a full battery. Have more than one if possible.
- ✓ Have an adequate supply of clean memory cards.
- ✓ Press AF to initiate autofocus and get it in the ballpark (it will have to focus again when you start shooting, but it will be close), or manually focus. If you're shooting a static scene and manually focusing, take advantage of the focus magnifier option to zoom in and get a perfect manual focus. (See Chapters 3 and 7 for more information on this feature.)



You know, you can just run out and shoot a movie if you want. All this prep work is only if you want it. If you'd rather be spontaneous, go for it!

Press the Movie button to record

When recording, the display looks like Figure 4-11. The indicators indicate:

- ✓ *Memory card:* This shows that your memory card is in the camera.
- ✓ *Time remaining:* How much recording time you have left.
- ✓ *Movie size:* You'll see FH, 1080, or VGA.
- ✓ *Remaining battery:* The amount of charge left in the battery as a percentage, compared to a full charge.
- ✓ *No Audio:* If you aren't recording audio, you will see an indicator.
- ✓ *Focus area:* If in AF, the current focus area shows green if you're in focus. If AF area is set to Local, you can change the focus area by pressing the AF button and then using the up, down, left, or right buttons to change the area. Press AF again to lock the new area.
- ✓ *Recording:* REC appears in red when you're recording.
- ✓ *Elapsed time:* How long you've been recording, in minutes and seconds.
- ✓ *Focus indicator:* The green focus indicator lights up and stays steady if focus is good and not changing.
 - If you see a solid green dot in the center of steady arcs, focus is good and tracking.
 - If the green dot disappears but the arcs remain, the camera is trying to find the focus.
 - If everything disappears and then the green dot flashes, the camera cannot focus. Houston, you have a problem.
- ✓ *EV scale:* The current exposure compensation. If you press the Display (DISP) button, the shooting functions are shown on either side of the screen. If you press Display again, everything disappears except the recording indicator, elapsed time, and the EV scale.

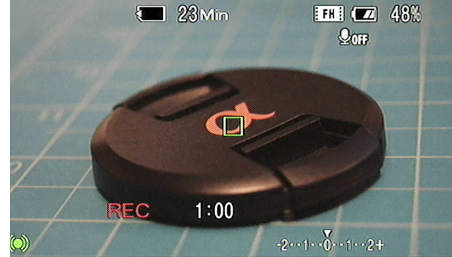


Figure 4-11: The standard display when shooting a movie.





Adjust exposure

You can adjust exposure compensation while recording a movie. To do so, press the exposure button and rotate the mode dial. Rotate the dial to the right to increase the exposure compensation. Rotate to the left to decrease the exposure compensation. The display changes to reflect what you're doing, and the amount of exposure compensation is also shown on the EV scale.



Keep track

Watch the following:

- ✓ Overheating warning indicator (and stop shooting if it comes on)
- ✓ Battery level
- ✓ Time elapsed
- ✓ Time remaining
- ✓ Focus

If you're manually focusing and moving, you'll have to focus on the fly. If you're using AF, make sure you're pointing at the right spot in the scene to focus on.

Stop recording

Relax and take a deep breath. Shooting a movie takes longer than shooting a photo. On average, many thousands of times longer. As a result, the concentration required can be very demanding. Press the Movie button again to stop recording.

Enjoying the Show: Movie Playback

After you've shot a movie, you might want to play it back on the camera to preview them. This section shows you how to do just that. Before you get to it, you should know that Chapter 5 has a lot of information that relates to playing back photos and working with movies on your A35/A55. Before, during, or after you read this section, flip over and take a look.



If you aren't done shooting, though, don't spend too much time reviewing your movies in-camera. Not only does it use battery power, extensive movie playback raises the camera's internal temperature, which is a bad thing.

Watching movies

To play back movies, follow these steps:



1. Press the Menu button and go to Playback menu 1.
2. Highlight Still/Movie Select and press the enter button.
3. Select Movie and press the enter button.

You'll see the first frame of a movie. This may not be the only movie on the memory card. Use the left or right button to get to the movie you want to play back.

You can also view more than one movie thumbnail at a time if you're using the image index. Press zoom out to view the index, as shown in Figure 4-12. See Chapter 5 for more information on how to configure the index.



Single view



Index view

Figure 4-12: Single or index view.

4. Prepare for playback.

Press Display to turn off the text overlay to focus solely on the movie. For an explanation of each piece of information, please see the following section in this chapter.

5. Press enter to begin playback.

The display changes subtly to playback mode. You can see the playback bar and counter shown in Figure 4-13. Playback mode shows the current transport setting (play, pause, rewind, and so forth). The playback bar shows you where you are in the movie. The counter shows the current playback position in terms of time: hours, then minutes, then seconds.



Figure 4-13: The movie playback controls.

6. To control movie playback, press the appropriate button.

- *Pause/resume*: Press the enter button to pause; press enter again to resume.
- *Fast-forward*: Press the right button.
- *Fast-rewind*: Press the left button.
- *Slow-forward*: Pause first, then rotate the control dial to the right. (One click is all you need to initiate slow-forward; it doesn't go frame by frame according to your spin.) Resist the urge to rotate the control dial to the left to stop slow-forward. You'll switch to slow-reverse if you do. Instead, press the enter button to pause.
- *Slow-reverse*: Pause first, then rotate the control dial to the left.
- *Display*: Press the Display button to change the display during playback.



7. To control sound, press the down button.

Use the up or down buttons to adjust the level. If you don't want to miss playback, pause first, then set the sound level. If you need to hear the sound to adjust it, keep playing. When you press down, the other playback information is hidden and a volume slider appears, as shown in Figure 4-15.

When the movie is finished, the clip resets to the beginning.

If you want to see it again, press the enter button. If you want to see another movie, press zoom out to see the image index or use the left or right buttons to scroll through the movies on your card.



Figure 4-14: Adjusting the volume (as the boys sing to Guitar Hero).

Movie metadata

When the camera enters playback mode for movies. The screen shows you the first frame from a movie and several bits of information. This information shows when the movie isn't playing:

- ✓ *Memory card:* This icon shows that a memory card is inserted.
- ✓ *Movie icon:* Reminds you that you're seeing a movie and not a still photo.
- ✓ *Recording date:* Shows the year, month, and day that you shot the movie.
- ✓ *Movie file format:* You may see AVCHD or MP4, depending on what movie type you recorded.
- ✓ *Movie size:* Possible sizes are FH (for AVCHD), 1080, and VGA (both for MP4 movies). The pixel dimensions work out to 1,920x1,080 (FH), 1,440x1,080 (1080), or 640x480 (VGA).
- ✓ *Battery remaining:* The percentage of power remaining in the battery. If you plan on shooting more, keep tabs on this so you don't run out of power.



- ✓ *Movie time*: The running length of the movie clip.
- ✓ *Recording data and time*: Once again, the recording date — this time with the time.
- ✓ *Movie number/total number of movies*: Shows you what number this movie is out of the total on the card.

Movie Making Using Picture Motion Browser (Windows)

If you're using Windows, Sony Picture Motion Browser has a few rudimentary movie editing options. Namely, you can trim movies from the beginning and from the end, and you can save individual movie frames as JPEGs. That might not sound like a lot of options, isolating moments from clips and saving them to new files means you can create other movies or projects. If you have a long enough clip, you can save any number of smaller clips from it and create separate files to join again later. Edit out the parts you want to keep, then work with them separately.

Editing AVCHD or MP4

To trim an already-imported AVCHD or MP4 movie (see Chapter 6 for more information on importing files), follow these steps:

- 1. Launch PMB.**
- 2. Locate and select the movie you want to trim using the Calendar or Index view.**

For more information on working in PMB's different views, please turn to Chapter 10.

- 3. Select Manipulate ⇄ Edit ⇄ Trim Video.**
- 4. Preview the movie to identify the portion you want to save.**

Use the controls labeled in Figure 4-15.

- *Play/Pause*: Start or pause playback.
- *Step Backward*: Move back a single frame.



- *Step Forward*: Go forward a single frame.
- *Timeline Cursor/Scrubber*: Where you are in the video. Drag the scrubber to the left and right to quickly preview that portion of the clip. You can drag the timeline cursor to the point where you want to start playback. Note the time of the clip as well as your current position: Hour:Minute:Second:Frame.

5. Drag the IN point flag to where you want the beginning of the clip.

See Figure 4-16.



6. Drag the OUT point flag to where you want the end of the clip.

You may use the buttons for precise control. Click Set IN Point to place the IN point to the current position. Likewise with clicking Set OUT Point. When using the buttons, it's important to use the playback controls to move to the exact frames you want to set. Then, press the buttons. That sets the end points and moves the flags to their appropriate positions. Do them one at a time. You can also use the controls to the right to check out frames just before and after the end points.

7. Select Save Edited Video.

This opens the Save Video dialog box.

8. Type a new file name and press Save.

You can't change the file type. Trimming and saving clips preserves their original format. To export video to another format, choose Manipulate ⇨ Convert ⇨ Convert to WMV and click Save. Or, you can convert the video when you share it.

Instead of pressing Save, press Cancel if you decide to return to the Video Trimming dialog box.

9. Close the Video Trimming dialog box.

The clips you saved are put in the same folder as the original. You can see them in the browser with a special blue icon in the bottom left.

Combining AVCHD clips

To combine AVCHD clips into one movie, follow these steps:

1. Launch PMB.

This method launches the Combine Videos routine and then adds clips. It's a good way to find clips that may not be in the same folder.

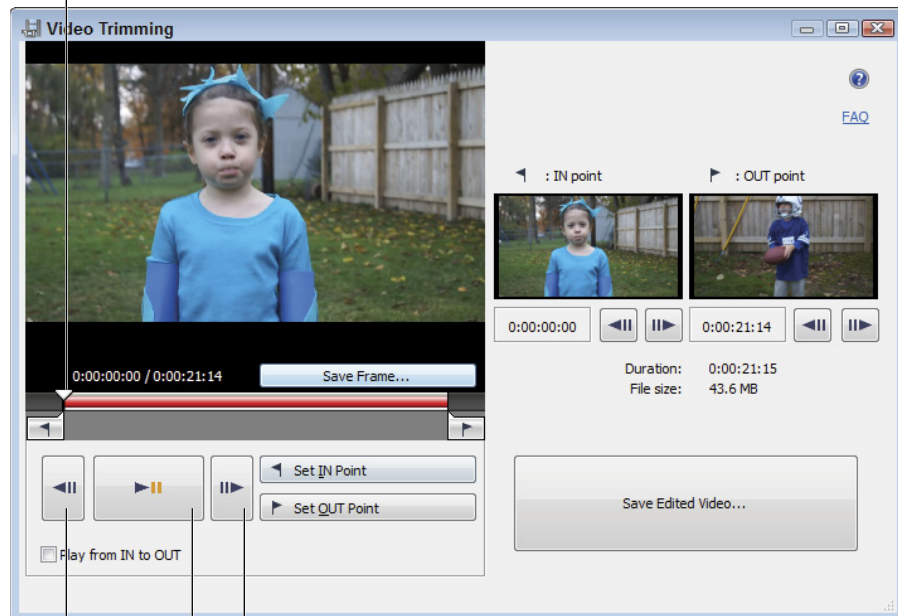
If you would rather work in a single folder, you can select the clips first (after having moved them to a single folder, or using the folder where they were all saved), then launch Combine Videos.

2. Select Manipulate ⇄ Edit ⇄ Combine Videos.

The Video Combining dialog box opens.

3. Choose the movies you want to combine using PMB's Calendar or Index view.

Timeline cursor/scrubber



Step backward

Step forward

Play/Pause

Figure 4-15: Previewing a video to trim.



4. Drag and drop the clips onto the Video Combining dialog box shown in Figure 4-17.

If you drag and drop them collectively, they're alphabetical. If you drag and drop them one at a time, they show up as you dropped them.

5. Click and drag a clip to reorder it.

A black bar shows you where the movie will go; see Figure 4-17. Drop the clip to move it.

6. Uncheck movies to take them out of the combined clip.

7. Press Combine to wrap it up.

The movies are combined and saved in the same location as the *first* video in the clip. If you change your mind, press Cancel.

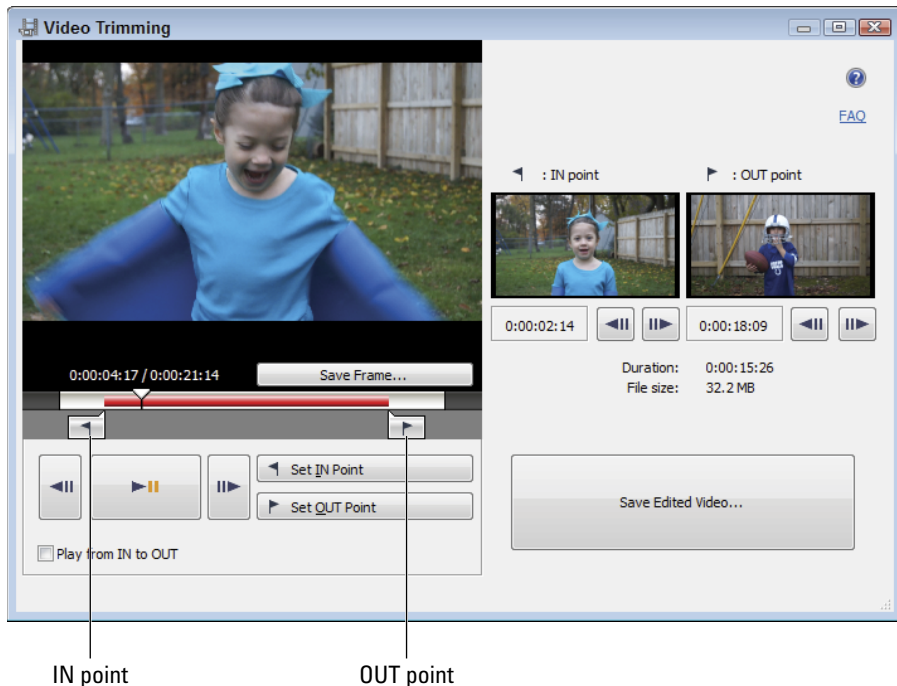
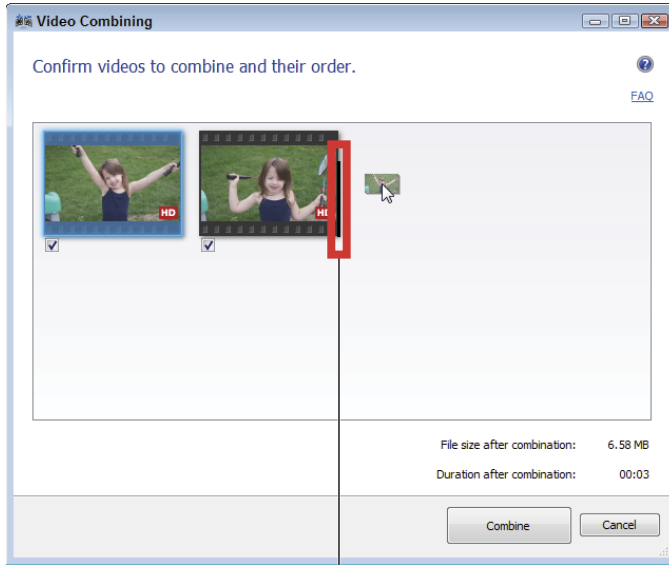


Figure 4-16: Selecting the new beginning and end points.



Insert bar

Figure 4-17: Dragging and dropping to reorder.

Part II

Playing with Pixels

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"My God! I've gained 9 pixels!"

photography is about more than taking pictures. In particular, digital photography enables you to immediately confirm that the composition, focus, exposure, and color are what you want them to be. After that, rather than take film to be developed, you transfer the files from the camera's memory card to a computer. This part covers these important aspects of modern digital photography.



Getting More from Picture Playback

In This Chapter

- ▶ Setting image review
 - ▶ Configuring playback options
 - ▶ Setting up a slide show
 - ▶ Showing off on HDV
-

Playing back photos and movies on the camera is such a beneficial aspect of digital photography. It means that you can check the focus, color, composition, and exposure before you take the next photo. You can also rotate photos, protect or delete pictures and movies, set photos to automatically print (using a DPOF-compatible printer), and check each photo's histogram. Your A35/A55 playback features give you access to these powerful features. Which means, of course, another aspect of your camera that you can master.

Knowing What to Press

Familiarize yourself with Figure 5-1 before you get started, and use it later to jog your memory. This figure shows all the relevant playback buttons used in this chapter. If you're using the A55, you have to position the LCD monitor so that it's comfortable to see while you work the playback (and other) controls.





Figure 5-1: Playback central.

Both cameras share the ingenious electronic viewfinder, however. While you may not realize it at first, being able to look through the viewfinder, work the menus, and review photos is a fundamental transformation in how digital SLRs operate. This means you don't always have to take the camera away from your eye (should you be using the viewfinder) to look at the back of the camera.



On bright days when the LCD is harder to see, the viewfinder makes a great playback backup.

Thank You Very Much-o Mr. Auto Review

You can review a photo (not movies) immediately after you take it. That feature is called auto review, but it's disabled by default. You have good reason to enable auto review, but also reason to leave it disabled. The test is this:



- ✓ **Yes indeedy doodly:** If you find yourself pressing the playback button every time you take a photo, whether to check focus, brightness, or cuteness, enable auto review.
- ✓ **No thanks:** If you have auto review enabled and find yourself continuously pressing the shutter button halfway to get back to taking photos, either reduce playback time or turn it off. You can always press the playback button to review specific photos rather than all of them.

To enable auto review, follow these steps:

1. Press the Menu button.

Figure 5-1 shows all the buttons used in this chapter.



2. Go to Custom menu 2.

3. Highlight Auto Review and press enter.

4. Highlight a time and press enter.



Figure 5-2: Enable and set auto review timing.

The times, shown in Figure 5-2, are 2, 5, or 10 seconds. This is how long the camera shows the photo before returning to shooting. Choosing Off disables auto review.

Setting a Few Playback Options

You can set a few important playback options before you ever press the playback button. For example, you can be in Still or Movie mode. This choice affects what you can do. For example, if you choose movie, you can't decide to delete photos until you change back to viewing photos.

REMEMBER



Because options change according to your choices, several of the steps in following sections refer back to this section and ask that you check to make sure you're in the right mode. If you aren't, you may not see the same options. For example, if you're playing back movies, the rotate button is rendered useless.

Choosing between photos or movies

REMEMBER



This option is critically important. Just about every playback feature works with both photos and movies, but not both at the same time. That means you have to choose one or the other. Once you choose, that choice is locked in until you change it.

To change playback between photos and movies, follow these steps:

1. **Press the Menu button.**
2. **Go to Playback menu 1.**
3. **Highlight Still/Movie Select and press enter.**
4. **Highlight Still or Movie.**



- The options are shown in Figure 5-3.
5. **Press the enter button to lock in the choice.**

Remember, the rest of this chapter lists playback features that work with still photos or movies. Choose what type of file you want to work with by following the steps in this section.

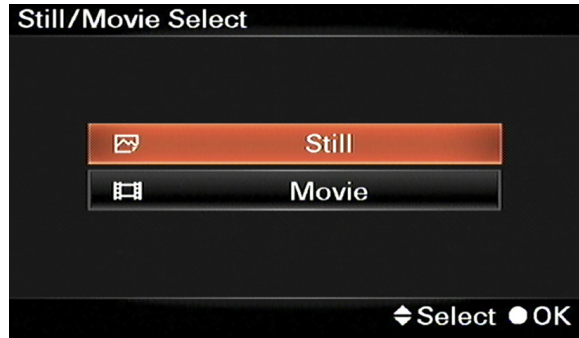


Figure 5-3: Select Still (photos) or Movie for playback.

Selecting photo folders

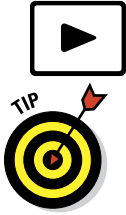
REMEMBER



You can choose in which folder to start playback. Your choice also affects where *still photo* (not movie) playback starts when choosing to do things like delete or protect photos.

To select a folder, follow these steps

1. **Set the playback mode to Still.**
2. **Press the Menu button.**
3. **Go to Playback menu 2.**
4. **Highlight Select Folder and press enter.**



Remember, this option doesn't work if you're in movie playback mode. If the Select Folder choice is grayed out and unavailable, go to Playback menu 1, highlight Still/Movie Select, press enter, and choose Still. Return to Playback menu 2 and then retry Step 4 of this list.

5. **Use the up and down buttons to select a folder from those available.**

See Figure 5-4. Thumbnails remind you of what is in each folder.

6. **Press enter to lock in your folder choice.**
7. **Press enter again to enter playback.**

Or, press Menu to return to the menu system.



Chosen folder

Figure 5-4: Select a photo folder.

Selecting movie dates

Selecting by date is the movie equivalent of selecting by folder. This sets the start date for movie playback.

Follow these steps to select the date:

1. **Press the Menu button.**
2. **Go to Playback menu 2.**
3. **Highlight Select Date.**





This menu option is unavailable if you're in Still mode. If that happens, go to Playback menu 1, highlight Still/Movie Select, press enter, and choose Movie. Return to Playback menu 2 and then retry this step.

4. **Use the up and down buttons to select a date.**

Figure 5-5 shows the thumbnails of each movie and the chosen date.



Chosen date

Figure 5-5: Select a movie date.

5. **Press enter to finish.**
6. **Press Menu to return to the menu system.**
7. **Jump to Step 2 in the following section's steps.**

Playing Back Photos (and Lots More)

This section has a lot of information, from initiating photo playback to viewing an image index, zooming in and out, panning to and fro, rotating, protecting, and setting the print order. Get right to it.

Playback basics

Follow these easy steps to play back photos or movies:

1. **Set playback options as described in this chapter's section, "Setting a Few Playback Options."**

For example, to review movies, set Still/Movie Select to Movie. Choose Still to review photos. You may also choose a date (for movies) or folder to start in (for photos).



2. **Press the playback button.**

Each photo is shown, one at a time, on the LCD monitor. Check out Figure 5-6. You also can see it in the viewfinder. Figure 5-1 points out the playback button and viewfinder.

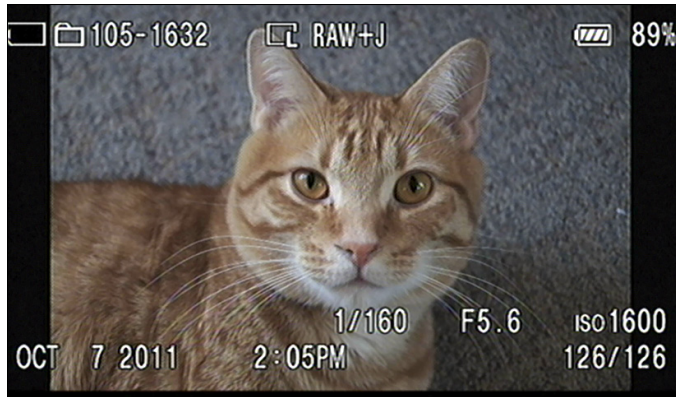


Figure 5-6: Images in the LCD monitor during playback may appear closer than they are.

3. (Optional) Rotate, zoom in, zoom out, or pan photos; play movies; or delete photos or movies.

In other words, there's a lot more you can do with photos than simply look at them. If you're reviewing movies, you can play or delete them. Movie playback is covered in Chapter 4.

4. If you're looking at a normal (not 3D) panorama, press enter to automatically scroll.

Press enter again to pause. Press playback to return to normal viewing.



Playing Position

Figure 5-7: Scrolling, scrolling, scrolling . . . a panorama.

5. **Press the left or right arrow buttons to go forward or back one photo.**

Alternatively, you can spin the control dial to advance or retreat.

6. **(Optional) To switch the recording data display, press the Display button.**

Pressing DISP changes the type of information you see when the photo or movie is playing back. More on this later.



7. **To stop playback, press the playback button.**

Alternatively, you can press the shutter button halfway to return to shooting or press the Menu button to enter the menu system.

Displaying an image index

It is sometimes helpful to see several thumbnails of photos or movies. That helps you quickly scan different shots and choose the one you want.

Configuring the index

To configure the image index, follow these steps:

1. **Press the Menu button.**
2. **Go to Playback menu 1.**
3. **Highlight Image Index and press enter.**



You'll see two options, as shown in Figure 5-8.

4. **Highlight the number of photos you want displayed on a single page and press enter.**

If you choose 6 images, you will see the index shown on the left of Figure 5-9. If you choose 12 images, you'll see more than that onscreen.

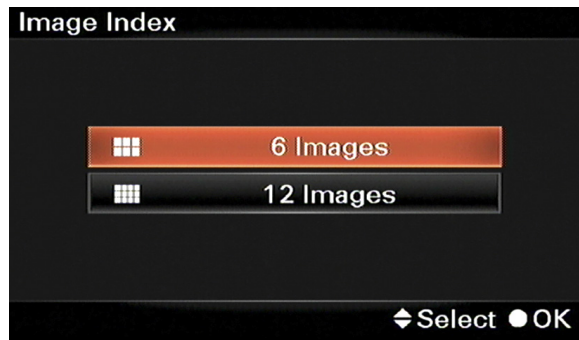


Figure 5-8: Configuring the image index.

At this point, you've configured the index and need not review any photos or movies. However, the index is automatically shown. Press the playback button or press the shutter halfway to get back to other business.

5. If you like, move around the index and choose a photo or movie.

Use the up, down, left, or right buttons to move between photos. An orange box surrounds the currently selected photo or movie. To view a photo or movie full screen, highlight it and press enter. To return to the index, press zoom out until you see the index.



Two tabs appear on the left. The top tab is for still photos. The bottom tab selects movies. To select a different tab, keep pressing the left arrow button until the current tab is highlighted (see Figure 5-10), then use the up or down arrow to highlight the other tab. Press the enter button to make the change.



Figure 5-9: Choose the size that works for you.

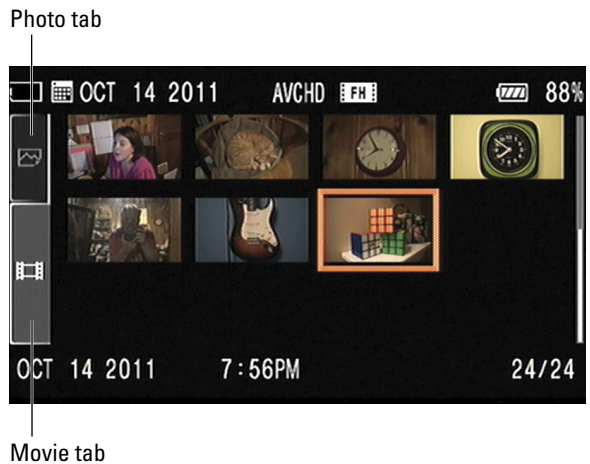


Figure 5-10: Switch from Photo to Movie tabs.

6. Press the shutter halfway to return to normal operation.

Returning to the index

Once you configure the image index, it's easy to get back to it:



1. Press the playback button.

You'll see photos or movies shown full screen. Don't panic. It works this way.



2. Press the zoom out button when the photo is shown full screen.

Now you'll see the index.

3. Use the index as shown previously.

Zooming and panning

Zooming in, also known as enlarging, is really helpful when you're reviewing photos. Getting close lets you see if pictures are in focus, whether details are visible, or if the photo is perfectly framed. *Panning*, or moving the view (whether from side to side or up and down), helps you see the specific area of the photo you want once you've zoomed in. The following sections provide some zooming and panning pointers. Figure 5-1 points out the zoom in and zoom out buttons.

Zoom in

Press the zoom in (AEL) button to get a closer look. Press zoom in again to increase the magnification, up to 6. (Unfortunately, it doesn't go all the way to 11.) Figure 5-11 shows the normal view and the final zoom level. Figure 5-12 gives you mid-zoom labels. Arrows along the four sides show that you can pan in that direction. If there is no arrow, you've reached the edge. Look at the thumbnail at the bottom left; a tiny red rectangle indicates your current view.



Normal view



Final zoom level

Figure 5-11: Strato-zooming.

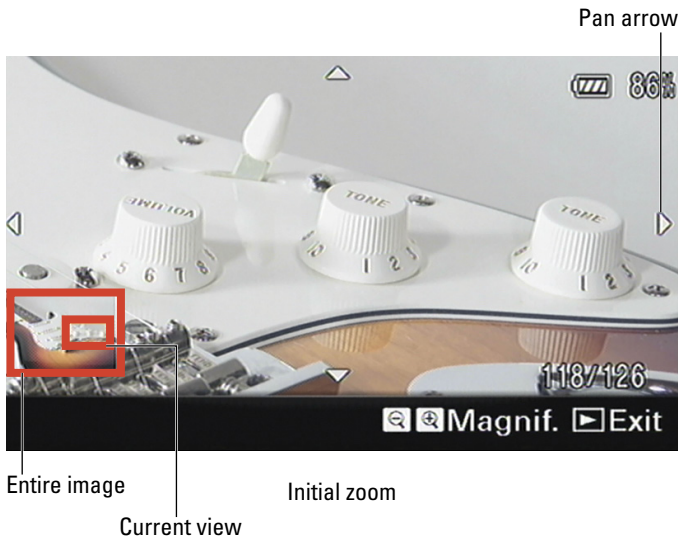


Figure 5-12: Pan every which way.

You can zoom in and compare several photos to each other at the same magnification. To do so, follow these steps:



1. **Press the playback button.**
2. **Use the left or right button to find the first photo you want to view.**
3. **Press the zoom in button.**
Press zoom in again to increase the magnification once more, and again to reach the maximum magnification.
4. **Press the left or right buttons to the spot in the photo you want to compare.**
5. **Spin the control dial to switch back and forth between photos.**



Figure 5-13: Comparing lighting effects on a green die.

Figure 5-13 compares two photos with different lighting.

Zoom out



Press the zoom out button. FYI: You can magnify up to 6 levels, but each time you press zoom out doesn't match the same levels. In fact, you go through many more magnification levels when you zoom out. The moral of that story is that you have more control when zooming out. Therefore, zoom in beyond what you need and then fine-tune your view by zooming out.

Pan

Use the left, right, up, or down arrow buttons to pan. Use the arrow buttons as you zoom to move around the photo or pan afterward — your choice.

Normal



To return to normal playback, press the playback button. Press and hold any of the buttons (zoom in, zoom out, or the arrows) to speed up the action. You don't have to press and release, then press and release each step.

Rotating photos

Pictures have an up and a down to them based on how you hold the camera. If you hold the camera horizontally, the photos are in *landscape orientation*. If you hold it vertically, the photos are in *portrait orientation*. That can be confusing because the two terms, portrait and landscape, have other very specific photography-related connotations to them. Namely, when you take a portrait of someone or photograph a landscape.



The camera knows how it is being held and flags each photo with the appropriate orientation. This information is stored in the photo's properties and is used to automatically rotate it in the camera and by software that reads that flag.

You can, however, turn off automatic rotation. I know what you're thinking. Why in the world would you ever want to turn it off? I can think of at least one very practical reason: Vertical photos are automatically rotated when you play back. The photo is right-side up, but it gets shrunk to fit on the monitor. It looks much smaller than an unrotated photo. If you don't automatically rotate, you may have to turn your head or the camera, but the photos are much larger.

To turn off automatic image rotation during playback, follow along:

- 1. Press the Menu button.**

Figure 5-1 shows all the buttons used in this chapter.

- 2. Go to Playback menu 2.**

- 3. Choose Playback Display and press enter.**

- 4. Choose one of the options:**

- **Auto Rotate**
- **Manually Rotate** (This option's disabled when the camera's connected to an HDTV.)

Regardless of the ifs (you're in Auto Rotate mode and the camera didn't sense the orientation correctly), whens (you're in Manual Rotate mode and want to rotate the photo), or whys (maybe you like rotating photos upside down to flag them for some purpose), follow these steps if you want to rotate a photo yourself:



1. Press the playback button and go to the photo you want to rotate.

Figure 5-14 first shows a running fountain photographed during the Golden Hour. Auto rotate has been turned off for this example.

2. Press the Function (rotate) button.

Rotate mode activates, as shown in the next part of Figure 5-14. Press the left or right buttons to move between photos if you need to.

3. Press the enter button once to rotate the photo 90 degrees counter-clockwise.

The first 90-degree turn is shown in the last part of Figure 5-14. Each time you press the enter button, the photo moves another 90 degrees. So, if a picture is upside down and you want it right-side up, press enter twice. The photo plays back this way even if you turn off the camera.



Auto rotate off



Auto rotate activated



90-degree rotation

Figure 5-14: Manually rotating a photo.

4. Press the left or right buttons to scroll through the photos in the current folder.

Follow the instructions in Step 3 to rotate more photos.



5. Press playback to return to playback mode.

Protecting photos and movies

Protect photos and movies that you don't want to accidentally delete from your memory card. You can also protect files that you want to flag for one reason or another. Think of it as a sneaky way to tag photos in your camera.



First, set the playback mode to Still Image or Movie. The option is in Playback menu 1, shown earlier. Here's how to protect your photos and movies:

1. After making your choice, press the Menu button.

Figure 5-1 shows all the buttons used in this chapter.



2. Go to Playback menu 1.
3. Highlight Protect and press enter.

4. Select an option:

- **Multiple Images** protects one or more photos/movies. If you choose this option (see Figure 5-15), continue to the next step.
- **Cancel All Images/Movies** cancels the protected status on *all* your photos/movies. If you choose this option, highlight Enter and press the enter button. You're done.



5. Press the enter button when the image or movie is onscreen.

A large green key is in the center of the photo or movie's thumbnail to show you its protected status; see Figure 5-16. A smaller key shows up in the top of the display data during playback. However, if you return to

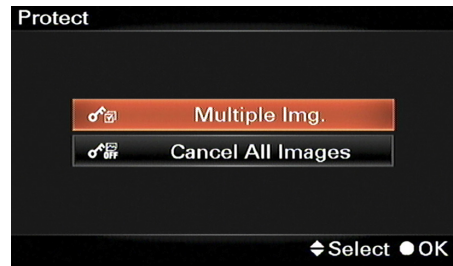
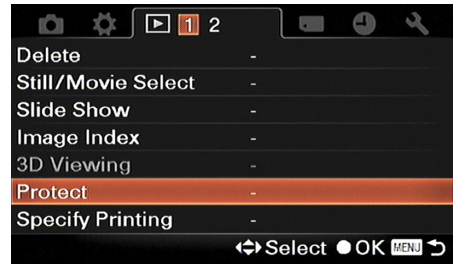


Figure 5-15: Protecting photos.

your photo or movies later to protect more, a white key lets you know (in a large way) that you've already protected the photo or movie in question.

6. Press the left or right buttons to scroll.



Protect photos/movies as you did in Step 6. To unprotect photos/movies, follow the same steps but mark protected photos or movies to toggle off the key. The white key will turn gray, as shown in Figure 5-17, indicating that you want to unprotect it.

7. Press Menu to quit.

8. Highlight Enter and press the enter button.

With that, you've saved the status of all the photos or movies you have protected.



Figure 5-16: Marking a photo for protection.



Figure 5-17: Unprotecting a photo.

DPOF a doo-wop printing

If you have a printer that's compatible with Digital Print Order Format (DPOF), you can specify which photos to print, in what quantity, and whether to put the date on them.

You tag photos with DPOF data just like you would when you're protecting them. Here's how:

1. Press the Menu button.

Figure 5-1 shows all the buttons used in this chapter.

2. Go to Playback menu 1.

3. Select Specify Printing and press enter.

A Specify Printing screen appears, as shown in Figure 5-18. If all the options look the way you want them to, there's no need to change. Skip Step 4.



4. (Optional) Highlight an option and press enter; then choose a setting and press enter.

You can change these DPOF setup options:

- *Multiple Images* is the correct mode if you want to specify DPOF on selected photos.
- *Cancel All* clears DPOF data from all photos. Use this after you've printed and are done.
- *Date Imprint* puts the date on the photo. Choose On or Off.



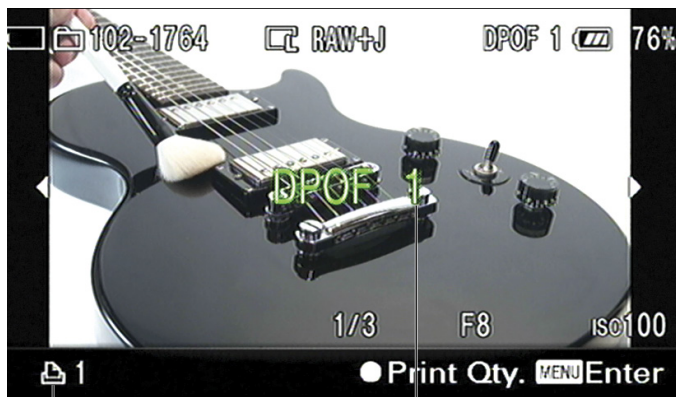
Figure 5-18: Specifying DPOF printing.

5. Highlight Enter and press the enter button to continue.

- If DPOF setup was set to *Multiple Images*, continue to the next step.
- If DPOF setup was set to *Cancel All*, confirm your decision by highlighting Enter, then press the enter button. You're done.

6. Select photos you want to print and press enter.

The first time you press enter, the photo is tagged with a green DPOF indication and the number 1 (as shown in Figure 5-19). A print icon appears at the bottom left of the display and shows you how many total copies you have marked to print, including this and every other photo. The number corresponds to the number of copies you want. Press enter to increase Print Quantity up to 9. When you get to 9, pressing enter rolls the count back to 0 and takes the photo out of the DPOF lineup.



Print icon

Number of copies

Figure 5-19: Flagging a photo to print one copy, and then more copies.



7. Press Menu to quit.
8. Highlight Enter to save the data to file.

If you press Cancel, you wind up back at Photo Playback mode, where you can select or deselect more photos from DPOF. To stop the entire operation without saving anything, press the playback button.

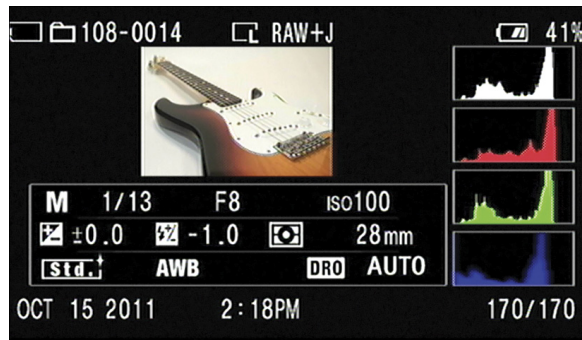
Decoding Picture Data

When you play back photos, you can change how the display looks and what type of information is shown by pressing the Display (DISP) button. Keep pressing it to cycle through the three display modes shown in Figure 5-20:

- ✓ **With Recording Data**
- ✓ **Histogram**
- ✓ **No Recording Data**
(The photo appears by its lonesome, with no additional information.)



With Recording Data



Histogram



No Recording Data

Figure 5-20: Press the Display button to cycle the displays.

With Recording Data display

Yes, the default display has a goofy name. Important recording data such as the file name, folder, remaining battery, date taken, and so forth are displayed at the same time as the photo. It gets a little cluttered at times. If you can't see the information clearly on the LCD screen, look through the viewfinder.

The display called With Recording Data has the best of both worlds, as shown in Figure 5-21. The photo is shown full screen and several bits of information help you remember what happened:

- ✓ **Memory card indicator:** Memory Stick Pro Duo and SDHC cards have an icon that looks like a small memory card. Eye-Fi cards display an Eye-Fi status indicator.
- ✓ **Still photo:** The folder icon indicates you are looking at a still photo.
- ✓ **Folder/file name:** Three digits before the dash indicate the folder that the photo's stored in. The last four digits (after the dash) are the file number.
- ✓ **Photo size and quality:** Pretty self-explanatory.

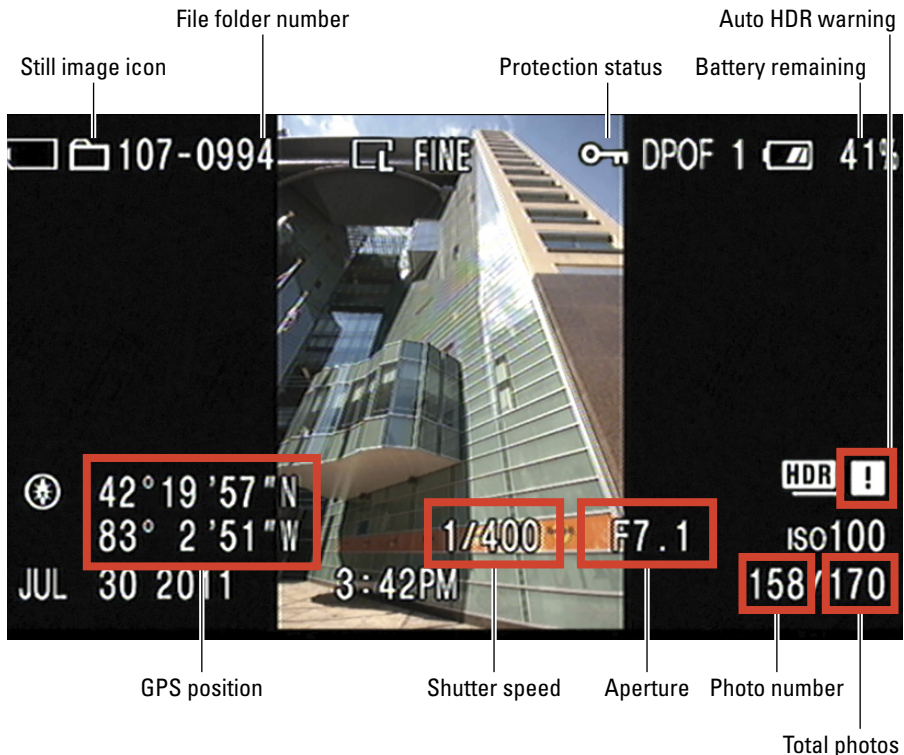


Figure 5-21: This display balances the photo and a wealth of information.

- ✓ **Protection and printing status, plus battery level:** A key appears if the photo is protected. If the photo is part of a DPOF print run, that and the number of copies are shown. Finally, the battery level reminds you that power is precious.
- ✓ **GPS location information:** If you took the photo with an A55 with GPS enabled, the latitude and longitude are displayed.
- ✓ **Auto HDR:** An Auto HDR indicator reminds you that the photo you're looking at is an automatic High Definition Range shot.
- ✓ **Shutter speed, aperture, ISO:** The exposure settings are shown. Chapter 7 explains the settings in more detail.
- ✓ **Date and time:** The year, month, day, and time that you took the photo are displayed.
- ✓ **Photo number/total photos:** Displayed in the bottom right, this fractional number shows you two things: the current photo number and the total number of photos on the memory card.
- ✓ **Play:** If the photo is a panorama, you're reminded that you can press the enter button to automatically scroll. This reminder doesn't show up in other display modes, although automatic scrolling still works.

Histogram display

This display shrinks the photo to make room for lots of metadata and a *histogram* (a graph of the photo's brightness). In addition, pixels blink if they're at the minimum or maximum brightness. See Chapter 10 for more on histograms. Figure 5-22 gives you an overview of the display. Figures 5-23 through 5-25 break down what's on each row.

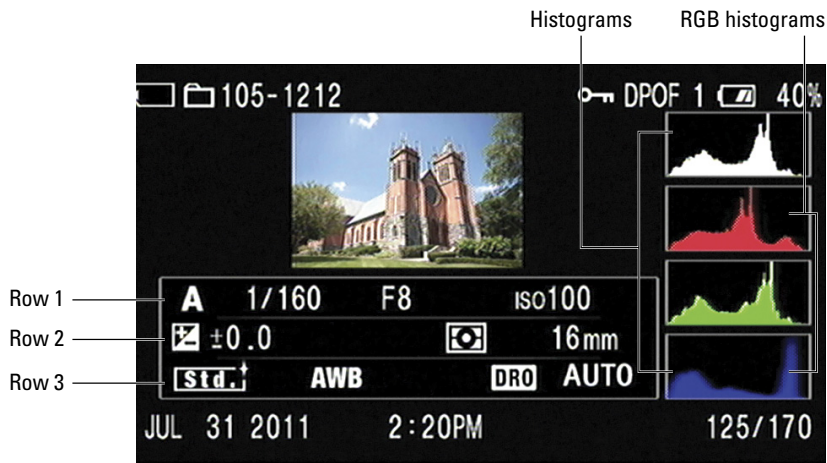


Figure 5-22: This display features histograms.

Letting Go of Bad Photos and Movies

You don't have to leave bad photos or movies on your memory card. They take up space on the card and, if you leave them on during the transfer process, they will take up space on your computer. Delete the bad ones. Keep the good ones.



One word of caution: When you delete a photo or movie from your memory card, it's gone. Chances are, you can't recover it. If you're afraid of deleting good photos or movies, protect them as shown earlier in this chapter. You can't delete protected photos.

Deleting a single file

You have a few ways to delete a single photo or movie. First, if you have auto review set up when you take photos, follow these steps:



1. Press the delete button during auto review if you don't like the photo you just took.
2. Highlight Delete to confirm your choice, as shown in Figure 5-26.
Highlight Cancel if you've changed your mind and want to keep the picture.
3. Press enter to delete the photo.

To delete a photo or movie while playing it back, follow these steps:

1. Go to Playback menu 1 and set Playback mode to Still or Movie.

These steps use photos to illustrate the point.

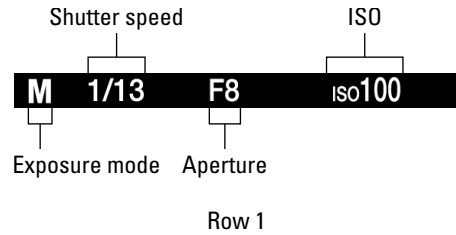


Figure 5-23: This row contains basic exposure information.

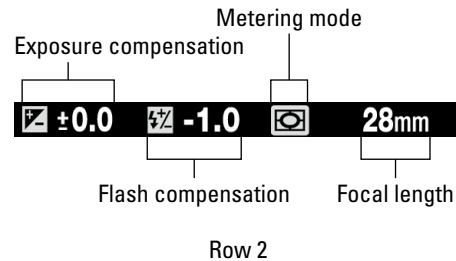


Figure 5-24: This row contains compensation information, metering, and focal length.

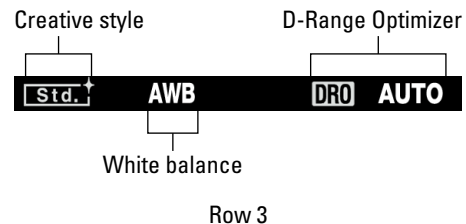


Figure 5-25: The last row contains style, white balance, and DRO information.

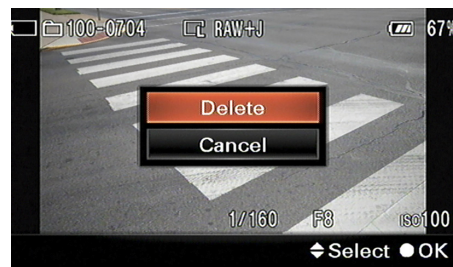


Figure 5-26: Deleting the crosswalk.



2. Press the playback button and go to the photo you want to delete.
3. Press the delete button.
4. Choose Delete.
5. Press enter to delete the photo.

Deleting more than one photo or movie

Even good photographers take bad photos, especially if they're rapidly moving and shooting. The great thing about digital photography is that you don't have to hold back. Shoot, shoot, and shoot. If you get a handful of great photos out of a session, keep them and delete the rest. The same thing applies to movies. Here's how to delete more than one photo from your memory card:

1. Go to Playback menu 1 and set Playback mode to Still Image or Movie.
2. When done, press the Menu button.

Figure 5-1 shows all the buttons used in this chapter.



3. Go to Playback menu 1.
4. Highlight Delete and press enter.
5. Select the Multiple Images option and press enter.
6. Use the left and right arrows to select the photos you want to delete.
7. Press enter.

A trash can appears in the center of the photo, like you see in Figure 5-27.

8. Return to Step 5 and keep marking photos until you're done.
9. Press the Menu button to finish marking photos.
10. Select Delete.
11. Press enter to delete the photos.



Figure 5-27: Preparing to delete a photo.

Deleting all the photos in a folder

You can delete all the photos in a folder:

1. **Make sure the folder from which you want to delete is the currently selected folder; see Figure 5-28.**

If you have more than one still image folder on the card, you should confirm that it's chosen (or select a new one). The Select REC Folder option is in Memory Card Tool menu 1. When you select that option, you're given the chance to select a new folder.

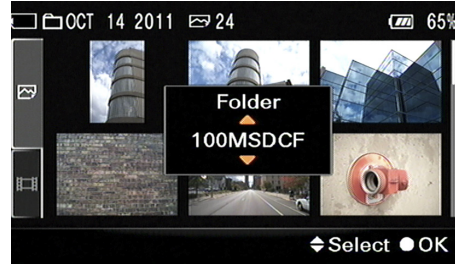


Figure 5-28: Select a folder first.

2. **Go to the Playback menu 1 and set Playback mode to Still.**
3. **Press the Menu button.**

Figure 5-1 shows all the buttons used in this chapter.



4. **Go to Playback menu 1.**
5. **Highlight Delete.**
6. **Choose All in Folder, shown in Figure 5-29.**
7. **Confirm by selecting Delete.**

If this isn't the folder you want to delete, select Cancel, press the enter button, return to Memory Card Tool menu 1, and choose Recording Folder.

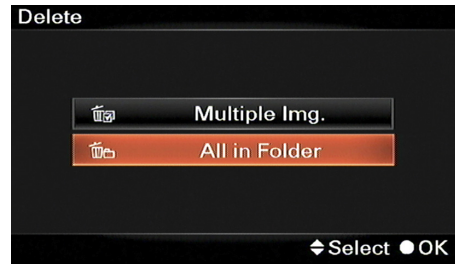


Figure 5-29: Deleting everything in the folder.

Deleting movies by date

You can delete movies by the date you took them. If you have taken movies on more than one date and you want to be selective about which day's movies you want to delete, you must choose the date first:

1. Go to the Playback menu 1 and set Playback mode to Movie.
2. Go to the Playback menu 2 and select a date.

These steps are outlined in detail in the “Selecting movie dates” section above.

3. Press the Menu button.

Figure 5-1 shows all the buttons used in this chapter.



Figure 5-30: Deleting by date.



4. Go to Playback menu 1.
5. Select Delete and press enter.
6. Select All in Date Rng, as shown in Figure 5-30.
7. Choose Delete.

Setting Up Slide Shows

Slide show is a fancy, old-fashioned name for automatic playback. The camera shows you the photos you have identified by certain criteria. That way you don't have to constantly press the arrow buttons to go to the next photo or movie. It's a great finger saver.



As with some other playback options, the slide show type depends on whether you have the camera set to play back still images or movies.

1. Go to the Playback menu 1 and set Playback mode to Still or Movie.

If you start a slide show and realize you're viewing the wrong type of file, return to Playback menu 1 and set the correct type up.

2. Press the Menu button.

Figure 5-1 shows all the buttons used in this chapter.



3. Go to Playback menu 1 and choose Slide Show.
4. Press the enter button.

An options screen like the one in Figure 5-31 appears. You'll see the left image if you are viewing still photos, or the right image if you have set the camera up to play back movies.

5. (Optional) Use the up button to select an option and press the enter button.

Highlight the value of your choice and press the enter button.

Options for still photos:

- *Repeat*: Whether to repeat the slide show, once it finishes. Options are On or Off (default).
- *Interval*: How long to display each photo. Options are 1, 3, 5, 10, or 30 seconds. The default is 3 seconds.
- *Image Type*: Whether to play all or 3D photos only. Options are All (default) or Display 3D Only. The latter option only works if the camera's connected to a 3D-compatible TV.

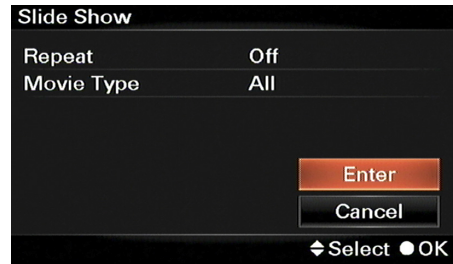
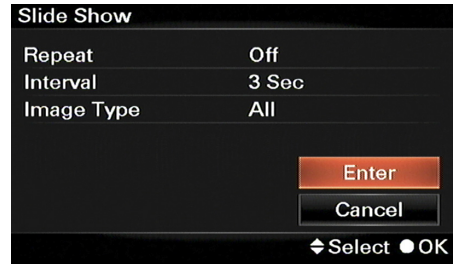


Figure 5-31: Setting up options for photos or movies.

Options for movies:

- *Repeat*: This option is the same as for still photos. Options are On or Off (default).
- *Movie Type*: Allows you to see movies by type. Options are All (default), AVCHD, or MP4.

6. Highlight enter and press enter to start the show.

Or highlight Cancel to opt out altogether.

While the slide show runs, you'll see some information over what's being shown. Still photos display the information as shown on the left side of Figure 5-32; movies display the information shown on the right side of Figure 5-32.

- Press the Display button to toggle the information on or off.
- Control movie volume with the up or down arrows.
- To skip ahead or back, press the left or right buttons.
- To cancel the show, press enter.



Still photo



Movie

Figure 5-32: Slide shows in action.

Viewing Playback on an HDTV



If you have an HDTV (or computer monitor) with an HDMI input, you can connect your A35/A55 to it and look at photos and movies on the TV instead of the 3-inch LCD monitor on the back of the camera.

Being compatible

If you have a Sony PhotoTV HD-compatible device or 3D-compatible TV, you're in for more fun. The PhotoTV HD excels at displaying the high-quality

photos you've taken with your A35/A55. Sony has optimized it (when connected to a camera) to be able to display the colors, tones, and resolution of photos. If you connect your camera to a 3D TV, you can play back 3D Sweep Panoramas. On other TVs, they look normal.



Talk to a salesperson before you buy so you can confirm the specifications of the TV you're interested in.

That's the good news. The iffy news is this:

- ✓ **If you have an older HDTV**, your HDMI input may be out of reach on the backside of the TV. If that's the case, you'll probably have to crawl, shimmy, shake, and wiggle to be able to access it.
- ✓ **If your set only has one HDMI input port** and it's already connected to your cable or satellite box, you'll have to disconnect your cable service from the HDMI port to connect the camera. It's possible (unfortunately, I know from experience), but not very convenient.

HDMI cable

The HDMI cable you need to connect your camera to your TV doesn't come with your camera. It probably didn't come with your TV, either. While it would be nice if it were included, you get to choose the color, length, and brand yourself. Think ahead and pick one up before you really need it.



Before you walk into an electronics store or visit an online retailer, make sure of what you need. The terminal on your camera is an *HDMI miniterminal*. It's smaller than a standard Type A HDMI terminal. Its smaller size makes it possible to fit it on the side of your camera. Your TV probably requires the large Type A HDMI connector, but you should confirm that prior to purchasing a cable. Figure 5-33 shows both ends of the HDMI cable I use. The Type C mini connector that fits in the A35/A55 is on the left and the larger Type A HDMI connector that fits in my HDTV is on the right. There is one smaller type of HDMI connector, called the Type D micro connector.

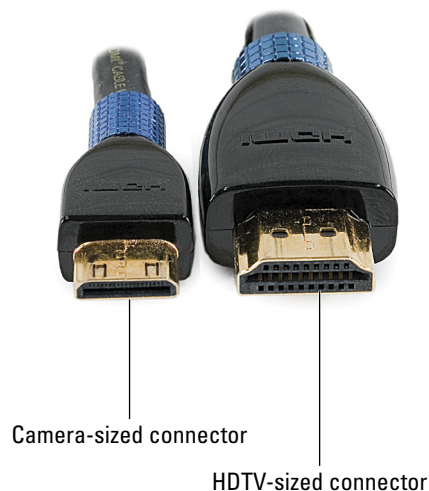


Figure 5-33: HDMI connectors side by side.

Connecting camera to TV

Once you have your HDMI cable, follow these steps to connect your camera to an HDTV:



1. Turn everything off.

This protects the sensitive electronics in the TV and your camera. It also makes sure the video system activates after the connection is made.

2. Open the rubber terminal cover on the left side of your camera.

Beneath it you'll see two terminals, as shown in Figure 5-34. The HDMI terminal is the one you want. It's above the USB terminal and is conveniently labeled HDMI Out.

3. Connect the small end of an HDMI cable to the HDMI terminal on your camera.

Be careful to insert the end of the cable straight into the receptacle. Do not twist, turn, or force the end into the camera.

4. Connect the other end of the HDMI cable to your television.

5. Turn on the TV.

6. Switch TV input to the HDMI port.

You'll have to look at your TV manual to figure this one out, but if you lost that long ago, try pressing your remote's Input button and scrolling through the choices, looking for HDMI.

7. Turn on your camera.

The LCD on the back of the camera doesn't turn on because the camera is routing the signal to the TV through the HDMI Out port.



HDMI terminal

Figure 5-34: Use the top (HDMI) terminal, Luke.



8. Review photos, zoom in and out, protect, delete, or switch to viewing movies for playback.

In other words, go to town! Figure 5-1 shows all the buttons you use to do all these wonderful actions.

If your TV supports Bravia Sync, you can use the TV remote to control the camera. Once you've connected everything and turned on the TV and camera, press the Sync Menu button on the TV remote.

Becoming Your Own Photo Lab

In This Chapter

- ▶ Reviewing what you need to get started
- ▶ Transferring photos from camera to computer
- ▶ Processing Raw files
- ▶ Printing your photos
- ▶ Sharing your photos and videos

Taking photos with your A35/A55 is the obvious part of digital photography. Take pictures. Critique yourself. Take more pictures. Repeat and rinse. In fact, most of this book is dedicated to that aspect of using your A35/A55. However: This chapter focuses on a different, but very important, aspect of digital photography. You become your own photo lab. I explain how to *transfer* (or download) files from your camera or memory card to a computer, as well as how to manage, edit, print, and share your work.

While this chapter shows you the ropes, it can't possibly cover every contingency and every possible application. There are just too many! As such, it focuses on using the software Sony distributes with your camera. You'll know what's available, what it does, the basics of how to use it, and where you might want to look for other software.

Getting the Party Started

The good news is that if you're a Windows user, everything you need to transfer your photo files, view and organize them, and then edit, print, and share them with the world comes in the same box that your camera came in. You don't have to go to a store or get online to buy anything else.





Sony's Picture Motion Browser is for Windows only. You have to use a third-party application if you want to edit your JPEG photos or videos if you do not have Windows. Sony recommends using iPhoto to work with JPEGs and iMovie to work with your movies.

Sony software

The Sony software CD that shipped with your A35/A55 camera comes with some very helpful applications. The first two are compatible with Windows and Macintosh.

- ✓ **Image Data Lightbox SR** is mainly a photo viewing program (see Figure 6-1). Use this program if you need to compare several shots against each other, rate them, sort, possibly send Raw photos to Image Data Converter SR, and choose the best ones to print or share.
- ✓ **Image Data Converter SR** is Sony's Raw editor and converter. It has lots of Raw editing tools. Most of the editing tools are disabled when you load JPEGs.

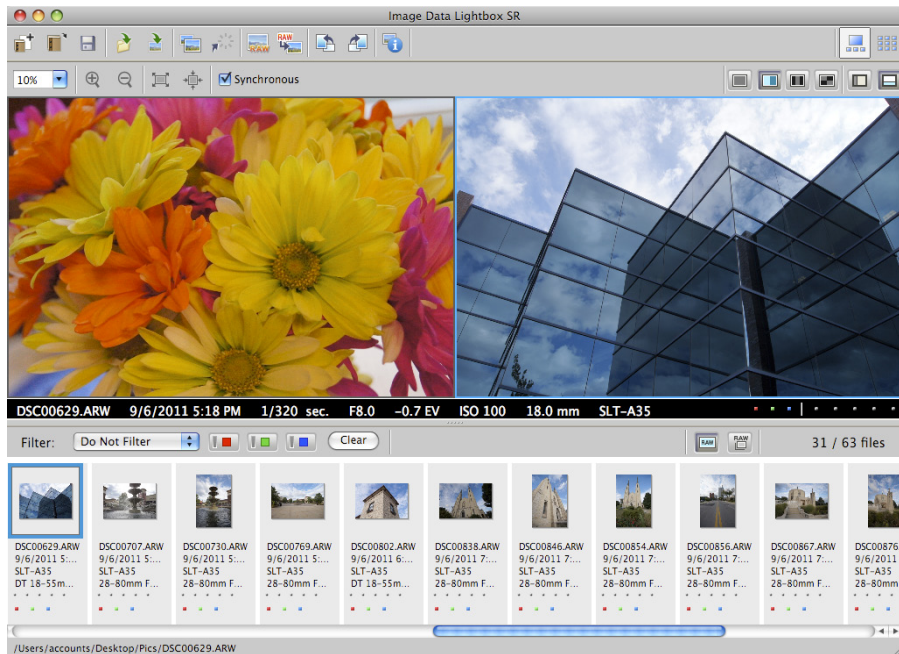


Figure 6-1: Image Data Lightbox SR acts like a lightbox.

- ✔ **Picture Motion Browser (PMB)** isn't compatible with Macintosh computers. PMB automatically imports photos and videos from your camera, memory card, or disc for you to view, manage, print, and share. PMB also has JPEG editing tools. Video editing using PBM is covered more fully in Chapter 4.

Other photo editors and organizers

The software that Sony ships with your camera is functional and you paid for it when you bought your camera. However, those applications aren't the only ones around, nor are they necessarily the best. You can look into alternatives. The main options are discussed here.

- ✔ **Adobe Photoshop Elements**, for Macintosh and Windows, is a toned-down version of Photoshop that's much less expensive and easier to use. Check out www.adobe.com.
- ✔ **Adobe Photoshop Lightroom**, for both Macintosh and Windows, is an amazing program that professional photographers use to organize their collections and develop their Raw photos. Go online at www.adobe.com.

If all you want to do is brighten a few photos and print them out, or play with panoramas, Photoshop Elements is Adobe's simpler and cheaper photo editor. Go to www.adobe.com.

- ✔ **Apple iPhoto** is for Macintosh only. The components of iLife (iPhoto, iMovie, iDVD, and GarageBand) perfectly complement your A35/A55. Visit www.apple.com.
- ✔ **Apple Aperture**, for Macintosh only, it isn't a graphics program. Expect to be able to organize, rate, edit, and process every photo you take. Check it out at www.apple.com.
- ✔ **Corel PaintShop Pro** is for Windows only. There's quite a bit to play with and have fun with here. PaintShop Pro Ultimate has additional goodies. Go to www.corel.com.



Video software

Some of these programs are professional-level applications and downright expensive. I included them so you know what's available and can compare. Shop around. Compare applications with the features you need. The best way to save money is to avoid paying for things you don't need. Within a general category, price isn't always the best gauge of quality.

- ✔ **Adobe Premier Elements** (Mac/Win) is Adobe's entry-level video editing software. Visit www.adobe.com.

WARNING!



- ✓ **Apple iMovie** (Mac only) comes standard on most Macintosh computers. For Mac users who don't have access to Sony PMB, this is the best, cheapest way to do something with the movies you shoot with your A35/A55. Visit www.apple.com.
- ✓ **Corel VideoStudio** has several video editing applications to choose from. All are Windows only. VideoStudio Express is an inexpensive alternate to Sony's PMB. Visit www.corel.com.
- ✓ **Pinnacle**, a division of Avid, offers reasonably priced HD video-editing solutions, all for Windows only. Studio HD is the entry-level product. Visit www.pinnaclesys.com.

Transferring Photos and Movies to Your Computer

Transferring (also known as *downloading*) photos and movies to your computer is a very simple process. You have several methods to choose from, though, which can make it seem more complicated than it is. Each method uses a different approach to hook things up and may require hardware that you don't have. Each approach also has its own pros and cons.

- ✓ **Direct USB connection:** Setting up a direct connection between your camera and computer (see Figure 6-2 for an example) is the most straightforward and easiest method. *Upside:* The only thing you need, besides your camera, is the USB cable that was provided and came in the same box as the camera.

Don't use any USB cord that isn't exactly compatible with your computer and camera.

Downsides:

- Your camera has to be on. If your battery is low and you have no backup, recharge the battery a bit so your camera won't turn off in the middle of a transfer.
- When you put your camera on a table and connect it to a computer with a cord that can be snagged, tripped on, pulled, or yanked (by you, your kids, your cats, or your dogs), you risk pulling the camera off the table. That will ruin your day.



Figure 6-2: Take care to secure your camera when it is connected to a computer.

WARNING!



WARNING!



✓ **External USB card reader:** External USB card readers take the camera out of the transfer equation. The reader plugs into your computer, as shown in Figure 6-3. You feed a memory card into it and it handles the transfer. *Upsides:* You don't have to use your camera's battery and you don't have to worry about running out in the middle of the transfer. You aren't endangering your camera. Also, if the card reader goes bad or you break it, you can replace it quickly and cheaply.

Downsides:

- You need a card reader for each type of memory card you have (for example, the A35/A55 can use either Memory Stick PRO Duo or SD cards, and other cameras may use different types), or buy one that supports multiple card types. That requires you to think ahead to buy the right equipment to support your photography.



Figure 6-3: Card readers that support different card types are very helpful.

- They can litter your desktop or fall off, forcing you to get on your hands and knees and look behind the computer to retrieve them.
- If you have multiple computers to transfer files to, you must either buy more card readers or walk the one you have back and forth.

✓ **Built-in card reader:** Some computers and printers have built-in card readers. New iMac desktop computers, MacBook Air, and MacBook Pro notebooks have built-in SD card readers that are compatible with your A35/A55 SDHC memory cards. If you own a Windows computer, it might have come with an internal card reader. If not, you can (if you don't want to, contact a local computer nerd) install an internal card reader. *Upsides:* They aren't as slippery as portable card readers sometimes are, and can't fall off your desk. You also won't forget to take it with you (should you be using a laptop).

Downsides:

- Internal card readers aren't portable (unless you're using a portable computer).
- Internal card readers aren't as easy to upgrade or repair as the type you plug in.

✓ **Wireless memory card technology:** Eye-Fi (www.eyefi.com) wirelessly transfers photos and movies from your camera to your computer. *Upsides:* It's portable, doesn't tie you down, doesn't require additional hardware (beyond the memory card), is cool, and effectively gives you an unlimited amount of storage while you shoot.

Downsides:

- Eye-Fi cards use your camera's battery to transfer, are slower than the other methods, and require that you be in a wireless network for everything to operate.
- Software installation, setup, and configuration are required.
- You must buy the right type of card.
- Not all Eye-Fi cards transfer Raw photos.
- Using Eye-Fi locks you into the Eye-Fi Center, which is software that enables Eye-Fi. It organizes your photos much like Sony's PMB. For more information on setting up an Eye-Fi card, turn to Chapter 11.



Sony recommends minimum system requirements to connect your camera to the computer with the supplied USB cable. Also, Sony lists detailed system requirements to run their software. If you bought your computer before 2005, check with Sony's support pages (www.sony.com) to see if they have plans to support your system. If all else fails, if your computer can use a card reader, you'll be able to transfer photos to it, whether or not Sony lists your OS as supported.

Making a direct connection

To make a direct connection between your A35/A55 and computer, follow these steps:

1. **Power up your computer and camera.**
2. **Check the camera's battery level.**

If your battery is above 10 percent, you probably have enough battery power.

If your battery power is low before you connect your camera to your computer, take the battery out and recharge it. If you have a backup battery that's already charged, simply swap them.

Alternatively, if you have the AC-PW20 AC adapter, just plug the camera into a wall outlet. You'll have to buy the adapter separately. If you shoot a lot of photos in a studio (at home or elsewhere), this is a good accessory to pick up.

3. **Connect the larger end of the USB cable to your computer.**

You may want to connect the USB cable to the back of your computer and leave it plugged in. In which case, secure the cable to the desk so it doesn't fall off when not in use. In this scenario, the cable is always connected to the computer.

4. **Connect the small end of the supplied USB cable to your A35/A55 USB port, shown in Figure 6-4.**

The first time you make this connection, your computer may take a moment to introduce itself to the camera and vice versa.



Figure 6-4: Insert the small end of the USB cable into the bottom port.

Using a card reader

If you prefer to use a card reader to transfer your photos and videos, follow these steps:

1. **Power up your computer.**
2. **Connect the card reader, if necessary, to the computer, using the correct USB cable.**

If your card reader is always plugged in, or you're using a device with a built-in reader, you can ignore this step.

3. **Remove the memory card from your A35/A55, as shown in Figure 6-5.**

If necessary, turn off the power to conserve the battery.

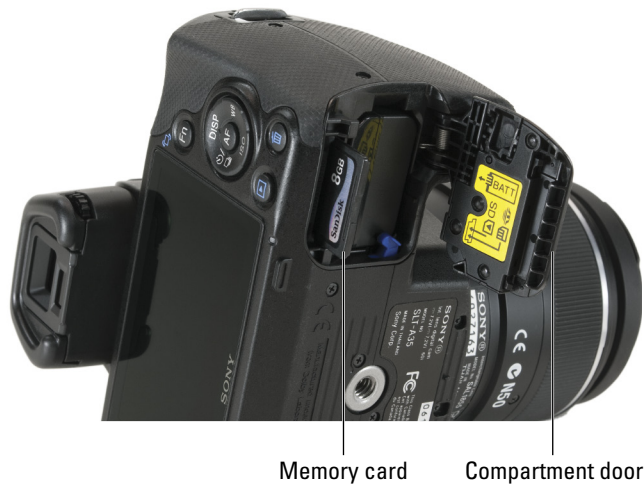


Figure 6-5: Be gentle when extracting the card. It isn't brain surgery, but darn close.

4. **Insert it into the correct slot in your card reader.**

Make sure you know which side of the card goes up. If using a card reader that supports more than one type of card, always insert the card into the correct slot for its type. Some card readers with multiple slots have helpful labels that keep the confusion to a minimum.



Importing files using Picture Motion Browser

This section only applies to Windows-based computers. Macintosh users can use iPhoto or transfer photos manually.

To import files using PMB, follow these steps:

1. Follow the steps in this chapter's "Making a direct connection" section.

The Import Media Files to PMB dialog box appears.

You can change the import method here. Click Change to open another dialog box and choose a setting:

- Import all Media Files
- Import Only Media Files That Have Not Been Imported
- Select Media Files to Import



Check the Delete Imported Media Files from the Device or Media box if you want PMB to get rid of the files after transfer. This saves you from having to delete them by using the camera.

If this dialog box doesn't appear, run PMB, select Tools⇨Settings, and choose the Import tab. Make sure the Import with PMB When a Device Is Connected option is checked. Close the dialog box by selecting OK and reconnect your camera or reinsert a memory card.

2. Select Import.

A new dialog box appears, as shown in Figure 6-6. Click the Stop button if you want to call off the dogs.

When the transfer is complete, you can see the folder and files you've just imported. PMB looks for faces in pictures and creates expanded thumbnails for movies. You can turn this off within PMB by choosing Tools⇨Settings. Then choose the Content Analysis tab.

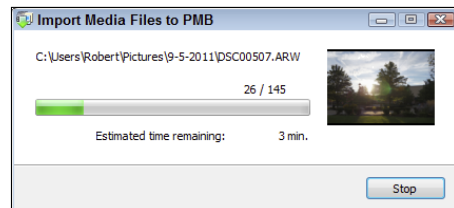


Figure 6-6: Progress bars are just cool.

Manually transferring photos and MP4 videos

You should be able to transfer your photos and videos to a computer yourself. This skill keeps you up and running when you don't have the right Sony software installed, can't install it (Macs, for the time being), are moving or changing computers, or are using someone else's machine.

If you use a Windows computer, follow these steps:

1. Connect your camera to your computer or insert your media card.

If you're connecting your camera to the computer, use the steps in the section named "Making a direct connection" earlier in this chapter. If you're using a card reader, follow the "Using with a card reader" steps.

2. If an automated transfer program pops up, cancel it.

Sometimes other applications have photo transfer programs running in the background and you may not know it.

3. If AutoPlay is set to ask you, select Open Folder to View Files.

The option is shown in Figure 6-7. You can change AutoPlay settings in Windows 7 by opening the Control Panel, selecting the Hardware and Sound category, and then clicking AutoPlay. Set Pictures either to Ask Me Every Time or Open Folder to View Files to simplify things when manually transferring files.

4. Find the folders you want to copy.

Pay attention to just these folders: DCIM and MP_ROOT. Ignore everything else. To find your photos, look for something like DCIM\101MSDCF or DCIM\10210913. To find your MP4 movies, look for something like this: MP_ROOT/100ANV01.



5. Drag and drop the folders to your hard drive.

Sony doesn't recommend manually copying AVCHD movies. Use PMB Import tool or another HD-aware video editing package if you're using Windows.



6. Rename and reorganize as you see fit.

For example, you can name the folder according to the date of the latest photo or movie, the date you're transferring, or the camera name and date.

7. Turn off your camera.

8. Unplug your camera and, if you like, your card reader from the computer.

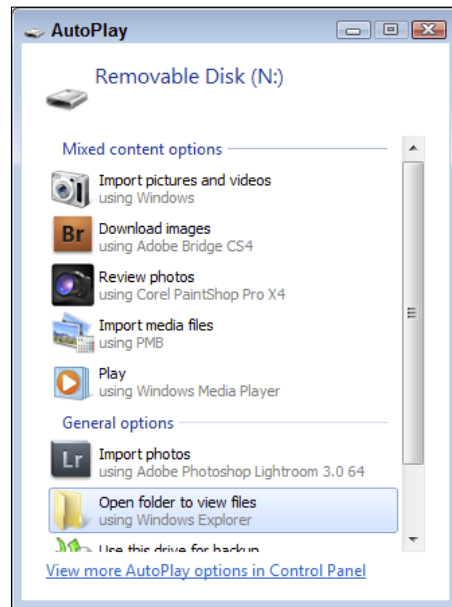


Figure 6-7: Choosing a Windows AutoPlay behavior.

Manually transferring photos and MP4 videos on a Mac

Mac users should use iMovie to transfer AVCHD movies. Follow these steps if you're running a Macintosh computer:

- 1. Connect your camera to your computer or insert your media card.**

If you're connecting your camera to the computer, use the steps found earlier in this chapter's "Making a direct connection." If you're using a card reader, follow the "Using with a card reader" steps. Either way, an icon representing your camera or the card reader shows up on the desktop.

- 2. Double-click the camera/drive icon.**

- 3. Find the folders you want to copy.**

Here's where it gets unnecessarily complicated. The two folders you must pay attention to are named DCIM and MP_ROOT. Ignore everything else. To locate your photos, look for something like DCIM/101MSDCF or DCIM/10210913. To find movies, look for this structure: MP_ROOT/100ANV01.

- 4. Drag and drop the folders to your hard drive.**

Sony doesn't recommend copying AVCHD movies manually. Use iMovie or another HD-aware app if you're using a Mac.

- 5. Rename and reorganize as you see fit.**

For example, you can name the folder according to the date of the latest photo or movie, the date you are transferring the photos and movies, or the name of the camera and date.

- 6. Drag the camera or drive folder to the Trash.**

- 7. Turn off your camera.**

- 8. Unplug your camera and, if you like, your card reader from the computer.**



Working with Raw Files

If you use the Raw file format, you're taking on additional responsibility for your photos. Yes, that is daunting. But if you can use a computer and your camera, you can figure out how to work with your Raw photos. To review the differences between Raw and JPEGs, take a moment and review Chapter 2.



Ultimately you just have to decide whether using Raw files is worth it in terms of time and discernable photo quality.

You have several ways to convert Raw files into something like a JPEG (to put on your Facebook page, for example). All the methods use a program that can view, edit, and convert Raw files. Check out the section titled “Other photo editors and organizers” earlier in this chapter. However, Sony Image Data Converter SR is the easiest approach. It comes on the CD that came with your camera. You’ve already paid for it and for any upgrades Sony makes available.

To process Raw files in Image Data Converter SR, follow these steps:

1. **Download the photos to your computer.**
2. **Start Image Data Converter SR.**
3. **Choose File⇨Open.**



If Image Data Converter SR is installed and the .arw files are correctly associated with it, you can double-click any .arw file to open it in Image Data Converter SR.

4. **(Optional) Adjust the image using the controls in the palettes.**



The palettes are on the right side of the program window. Click the triangle or double-click the palette name (for example, Brightness). Double-click the title bar of the floating palette to dock it. Click the control to the right of the name to toggle between floating and docked.

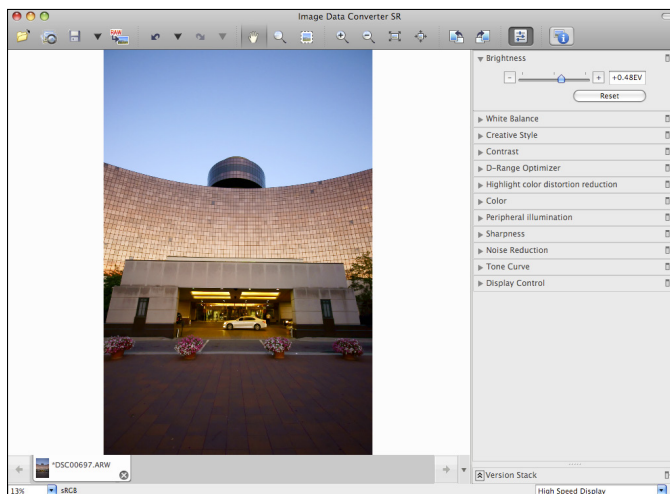


Figure 6-8: Increasing brightness in Image Data Converter SR.

5. Save your photo as Raw or as another format.

- *Raw*: Click the Save or Save As icons on the toolbar. Your adjustments are applied and saved, but not permanently.
- *Another Format (JPEG or TIFF)*: To save your Raw file as a JPEG or TIFF, click the Output icon on the toolbar. You can't edit the product as a Raw file thereafter.

6. If outputting a JPEG or TIFF, choose your file options.

You have more to decide when you save as a JPEG or TIFF. The important options are:

- *File Name (PC)/Export As (Mac)*
- *Save as Type (PC)/File Type (Mac)*
- *Compression*: Only applies if you've selected JPEG as a file type. Compression levels range from 1 (high quality) to 4 (high compression).
- *Color Space*: Read more on color space in Chapter 8.
- *Bit Depth*: If you're saving a TIFF, choose 8 bits per color channel or 16 bits per color channel.
- *Portion to Save*: Choose between the entire image or a 16:9 "widescreen" swath.
- *Width and Height*: Changing these values resizes the output file to the dimensions you enter.

7. Choose the folder where you want to save the file.**8. Click Save to save the file.**

A progress box shows you the status of the save. It disappears when the work is done.

9. Close the Raw file.

If you made any changes to the Raw file, you're asked to save it. The problem is, you can't change the name or location if you click Yes when it asks you. If you want those options, click Cancel and save the file yourself. Otherwise, click Yes to save and overwrite the Raw file. Select No to close the file without keeping the changes.

If you don't want to save your Raw files but do want to keep the settings, choose Edit→Image Processing Settings→Save. You can apply them to other Raw images whenever you want.



Preparing to Print Your Photos

Printing high-quality photos in the comfort of your own home, apartment, room, or recreational vehicle has never been easier. Seriously. If you bought a fancy all-in-one printer, scanner, faxer, with wet bar and hot towel dispenser, you're set. If you bought an entry-level color ink jet printer that has no bells and whistles and cost less than \$100, you're still set.

It's just downright hard *not* to get good prints nowadays.

However, if you've never done it before, printing photos can still be a bit daunting. This section walks you through what you need, how to print using the Sony software that came with your A35/A55, and offers more advanced information in case you decide to print from another program.

Getting a printer

You need a printer. Any one of them will do, really. Shop online or go to a store that sells them and get a demo in person. They're all pretty good and will print your photos with a quality level that was unheard of several years ago.

The main differences between printers are in the following areas.



✓ Printer type:

- **Standard printers** need no further explanation. They print.
- **Photo printers** specialize in printing digital pictures, exactly like the ones you take with your A35/A55. Well, not every photo. Specialized photo printers aren't often compatible with Raw files.
- **All-in-one printers** are also scanners, faxers, and copiers. Take care to buy a printer with the same card capability as your A35/A55. (Thankfully, SDHC cards are supported by most printers.)

✓ **Printing technology:** Inkjet and laser are your technological choices. You get more life out of a standard toner cartridge than you do an inkjet cartridge.

✓ **Print quality:** Even today's most basic printers have high enough resolution to print very good photos. Up to a point, the more you spend, the greater resolution and higher quality you will get.

✓ **Extra features:** Holy cow. Today, you can get a printer that does about everything except make cappuccino for you.

- ✓ **Connectivity:** Wireless printing is becoming the new standard among consumer printers. Visit your printer manufacturer's website for more information on their wireless printer requirements and capabilities.
- ✓ **Compatibility:** Major printer manufacturers support the major operating systems: Windows, Macintosh, and often Linux or other Unix flavors.



The important thing, aside from confirming overall compatibility, is to make sure you're running a supported operating system. If you're running Windows 7 64-bit, look for specific support for that version. If you recently upgraded to the latest version of Mac OS X, look on the box or online to make sure the OS is supported.



Getting supplies

Always get the ink your printer recommends, especially if you plan to print high-quality photos. Even more importantly, always get photo paper if you plan on printing photos. It makes the world of difference.

Photo paper comes in different types, from high gloss to matte (think paint finishes). Higher quality versions resist fading and will last longer than standard photo papers. Choosing the right finish is also important.

Choosing a paper size

You can buy papers in different sizes. Aside from choosing the size that fits your needs (an 8 x 10 print won't fit in your wallet or purse), you need to know that each paper size has a slightly different aspect ratio. That *aspect ratio* (the ratio of a photo's length to width) may not be the same as your original photo. When they don't match, be prepared to cut off portions of the paper where the photo doesn't print, or lose portions of the photo to areas where there is no paper. For example, Figure 6-9 shows what portions of the photo you'd lose if you print a standard photo with a 3:2 aspect ratio on 5 x 7 or 8.5 x 11-inch paper.

Clearly, you're going to have to think outside the 4 x 6 box when it comes to printing panoramas. Choose the largest size your printer can handle and then cut off the areas that don't print. Most likely, you'll end up with a panorama print that's 11 inches wide, and appropriately high. If you want something larger, get in touch with a local commercial printer and ask them about printing larger sizes. They may even cut the print to size for you.



Make sure your printer supports borderless printing.

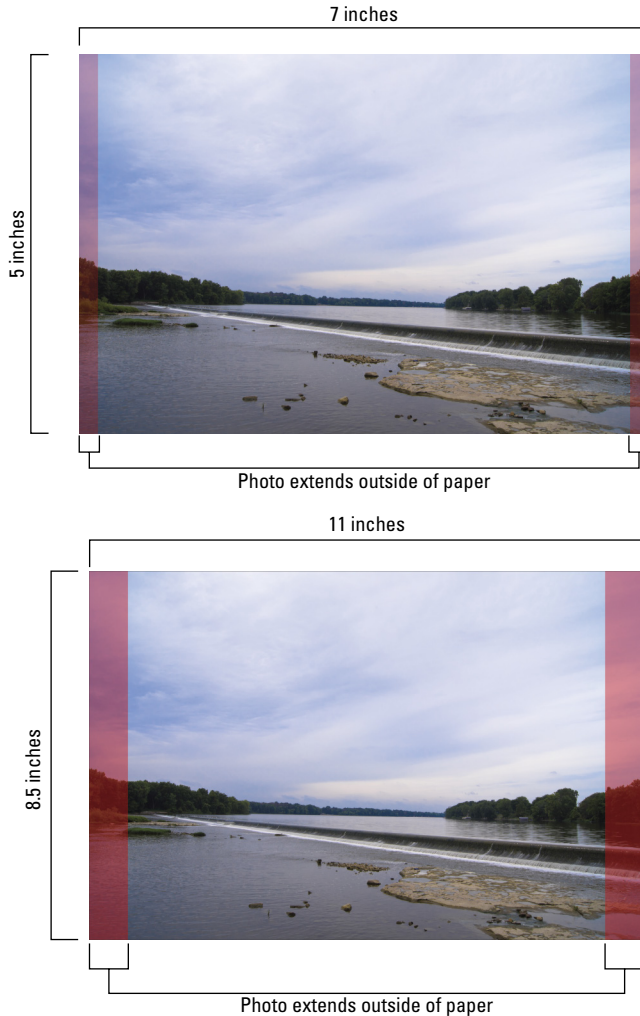


Figure 6-9: When the photo fits vertically, it runs off the ends of these paper sizes.

Printing from the Sony software

You can't change a photo's *resolution* (how many of the pixels should be printed per inch or centimeter) or print size using the Sony software. Not being able to change the print size could be more of an issue for you. If you must resize a file, do it from Picture Motion Browser (Windows) or iPhoto (Mac). These methods are covered in the next section.

- ✓ **Paper size:** Choose a reasonable one. If you print a large A35/A55 photo on 4 x 6 inch paper, the effective photo dpi is over 800. That's plenty!
- ✓ **Photo size:** A smaller image prints at a lower quality. At 4 x 6 inches, you won't notice a difference.

PMB printing

To print from Picture Motion Browser (Windows only), follow these steps:

- 1. Launch Picture Motion Browser.**

Enter Calendar or Index view.

- 2. Select one or more photos to print.**

You must select JPEGs. You can't print Raw files from PMB.

- 3. Select File→Print.**

The Print dialog box appears, as shown in Figure 6-10.

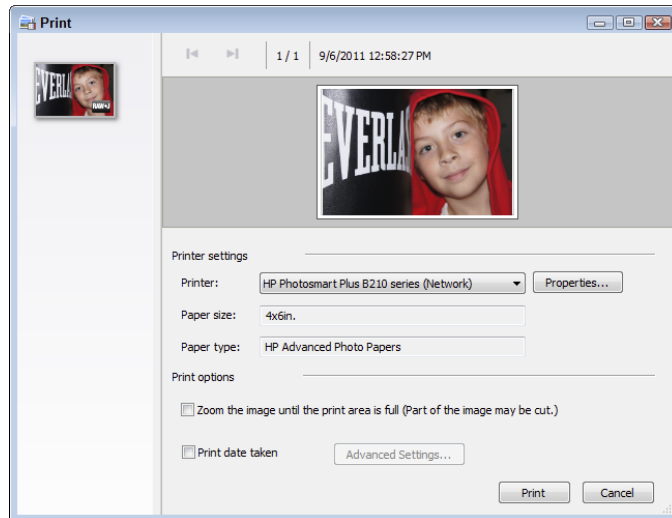


Figure 6-10: Printing a single photo from Picture Motion Browser.

- 4. Select options from the Print dialog box.**

- 5. Click Print.**

If you don't want to print, press Cancel.

Image Data Lightbox SR printing

When printing from Image Data Lightbox SR on either a Mac or in Windows, follow these steps:

1. Launch Image Data Lightbox SR.

If the photo you want to print isn't in the current collection, load the right collection by choosing File⇨Open Collection.

2. Select a photo to print.

You can't select more than one photo in Image Data Lightbox SR. You may select and print JPEGs or Raw files.

3. Select File⇨Print.

The Print dialog box appears, as shown in Figure 6-11.

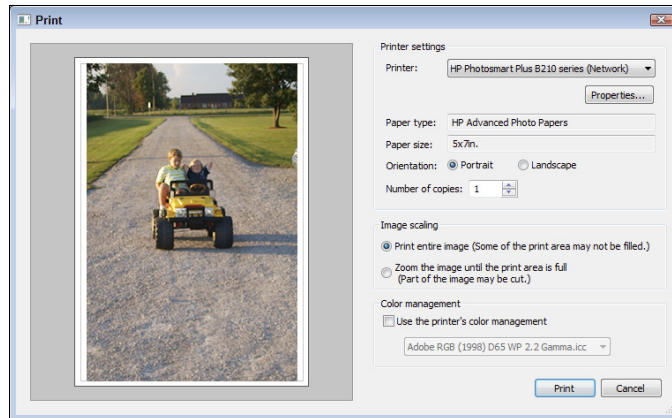


Figure 6-11: Printing is easy from Image Data Lightbox SR.

4. Select options from the Print dialog box.

Examine and change the print settings using the Print dialog box. It's organized into sections.

Zoom the Image fits the entire sheet of paper. Beware of choosing this if you're printing a panorama if Orientation is set to Portrait.

5. Click Print.

If you change your mind, press Cancel.



Image Data Converter SR printing

If you're an advanced user who wants to process Raw photos, you'll get a lot of mileage from the program. When using Image Data Converter SR, print with these steps:

- 1. Launch Image Data Converter SR.**
- 2. Load the photo(s) that you want to edit and print into Image Data Converter SR.**

Read Chapter 10 for steps to send photos to the program.

- 3. If necessary, select a photo from the Image switch tab to print.**

Click the thumbnail to switch to a photo. You only have to worry about this when you have more than one file open.

- 4. Select File⇨Print.**

The Print dialog box appears.

- 5. Select options from the Print dialog box.**

Be careful when you're printing a landscape-oriented photo if the Orientation setting is set to Portrait and if Zoom the Image is enabled.

- 6. To print, press Print.**

If the colors look off, come back and check Use the Printer's Color Management option, and then choose the correct color profile for your printer.



Picture Motion Browser only lets you print JPEGs. If you need to print a Raw image, use Image Data Lightbox SR or Image Data Converter SR.

Part III

Expressing Your Creativity

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant

THE GLACIER MOVEMENT PROJECT
UPDATE THEIR WEBSITE

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Camera ready? Wait a minute, hold it. Ready? Wait for the action...steady...steady...not yet...eeeasy. Hold it. Okay, stay focused. Ready? Not yet...steeady...eeeasy...



In the advanced exposure modes, you take control of the settings that affect depth of field, motion, noise level, lighting, color, and style. Not only that, you choose flash, autofocus, and metering modes, as well as control other advanced features.



Making Exposure and Flash Decisions

In This Chapter

- ▶ Using advanced exposure modes
 - ▶ Working with ISO
 - ▶ Locking down exposure
 - ▶ Using advanced dynamic range features
 - ▶ Working with the built-in flash
-

I remember the days when I started learning about my camera's advanced exposure modes. I looked at several sources and took plenty of notes. (I still have them in a Notepad file.) I read about exposure, aperture, shutter speed, and ISO, and in the end I was still left wondering how I was supposed to decide what to do? That's what this chapter is about: giving you enough information about exposure and how your A35/A55 works to choose the exposure control effects, and side effects, that work for you. I want to share some of the answers that I was looking for.

Making Big Decisions

Your job is to control *how much* light makes it into the camera and *how* you allow it to enter (quickly or slowly, among other things). As you decide the “how” part, you can express a good deal of creativity. Each exposure tool has its own effects and side effects. You can make these creative decisions on your own when you're working in the advanced exposure modes. When taken as a whole, the camera's auto exposure system determines the total amount of light necessary to take each photo. Even in Manual mode, the camera suggests what the proper exposure is.





My advice is to trust the camera to work out how much light it needs. On the whole, it does a great job. When it doesn't, the tools in this chapter correct that. In the meantime, your task is to decide on the exposure settings that yield the side effects that match your creative or practical desires.

Describing the exposure controls

Whether you use them for “how” or “how much,” your camera has only three exposure controls: aperture, shutter speed, and ISO.

Aperture

Very generally, an *aperture* is an opening. In photography, an aperture is the area of the lens that allows light to pass through and continue into the camera.



- ✓ Larger apertures let in more light per unit of time. Larger apertures produce photos with a very shallow depth of field.
- ✓ Smaller apertures let in less light over the same time. Smaller apertures keep things in focus better by producing comparably deeper depths of field.



Think of aperture as a depth-of-field knob. Turn it one way and depth of field increases. Turn it the other way and it decreases.

Shutter speed

Your camera's *focal plane shutter* blocks light and keeps the sensor in the dark until you press the shutter button. The focal plane shutter is just in front of the sensor and behind the mirror, as shown in Figure 7-1. When you press the shutter button, the shutter opens to let light through for a discrete amount of time (unless you are in Bulb mode), and then closes. The elapsed time that the shutter is open is called the *shutter speed*.

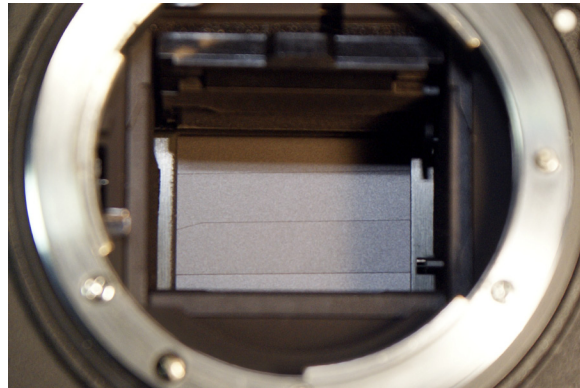


Figure 7-1: If you look carefully, you can see the leaves of the shutter.



- ✓ Fast shutter speeds capture and freeze moving objects.
- ✓ Slow shutter speeds blur moving objects like water or lights.



Think of shutter speed as a blur knob. Turn it one way and you minimize or eliminate motion blur. Turn it the other way and you allow it. The exception is when you're shooting a motionless subject with the camera mounted on a tripod. In this situation, you have pretty much eliminated this side effect.

ISO

Technically, *ISO* doesn't directly control light flow like shutter speed and aperture. Rather, *ISO* (also known as *ISO sensitivity*) controls the camera's sensitivity to light. This alters how much light you need to gather over a certain amount of time, and thus the exposure.

You can think of *ISO* as the camera's volume knob. Setting a high *ISO* means the camera gathers less light. You can adjust a digital camera's *ISO* sensitivity between each shot.



Increased *ISO* levels generate more noise than low *ISO* levels.

Making creative decisions

Creatively, first decide what effect you want (see the following subsections), and then choose the advanced exposure mode that allows you to control it. Those modes, explained in more detail later, are listed here:

- ✓ P (Program Auto)
- ✓ A (Aperture priority)
- ✓ S (Shutter priority)
- ✓ M (Manual)



Rule out Program Auto because it doesn't allow you to alter the aperture or shutter speed. Although Manual mode is always an option, Aperture and Shutter priority modes are the most convenient. They allow you direct control over the exposure control of your choice while handling the other exposure elements automatically.

Depth of field

The *depth of field* (DOF) in a photo is the area that appears to be sharply in focus. The areas outside this area are out of focus. Call that the *bokeh*. Although DOF also depends on other factors (such as the distance to the subject and the lens' focal length), the aperture is the only exposure control that affects DOF.

You want a shallow depth of field when shooting

- ✓ Portraits
- ✓ Some action shots
- ✓ Close-ups

A nice bokeh separates the subject from the rest of the photo and makes it the center of attention. Figure 7-2 illustrates the creative use of depth of field in a portrait of my son. Notice that the background is pleasingly out of focus. That's on purpose and made possible in part by an f-number of $f/5.6$. If you look closely, you can see that his far shoulder is out of the depth of field.



Figure 7-2: Shallow depths of field make portraits look even better.

On the other hand, you want a deep depth of field when shooting

- ✓ Landscapes
- ✓ Cityscapes
- ✓ Landmarks
- ✓ When you want everything to be in focus



You can safely follow these aperture guidelines:

- ✓ Large apertures are those with an f-number of 5.6 and below. (Smaller f-numbers have larger apertures.) Use these f-numbers when you want to limit the depth of field at normal distances. Bigger apertures admit more light (increasing the exposure).
- ✓ Good general-purpose apertures range from $f/8$ to $f/11$. When shooting close-ups, they have shallow depth of fields. At standard distances they have what you would call a *normal* depth of field. At long distances (landscape), they produce very large depths of field.
- ✓ Small apertures are those with an f-number of $f/16$ and above. Use them when you want a reasonable depth of field for macro work and very large depths of field at other distances. Smaller apertures admit less light.

Depth of field is also covered in Chapter 8.

Blur

Movement — yours or the subject's — causes motion blur. To minimize this type of blur, increase the shutter speed. The shutter speed you need to use depends on the speed of the subject and the relative direction of motion.



You can safely follow these shutter speed guidelines:

- ✓ Use slow shutter speeds (how slow depends on the subject's speed) to intentionally blur movement. Figure 7-3 shows two views of a fountain in downtown Detroit. The shot that froze the water (no pun intended) was taken at $1/80$ second. The example where the water looks misty and ethereal (the blur I was after) was taken at 1.0 second. To capture motion blur without camera shake at slow shutter speeds ($1/30$ second and longer), stabilize the camera on a tripod or some other support.
- ✓ Shutter speeds around $1/250$ second capture people moving around and being active without blur. That includes kids and pets. If your subject is moving faster, use a shorter shutter speed (unless you want the blur).

- ✓ To produce sharp sports and action shots, increase the shutter speed to between 1/250 and 1/500 second.
- ✓ Racing and other very fast activities might require 1/1000, 1/2000, or 1/4000 second shutter speeds to freeze the action. Figure 7-4 shows two of my boys playing football; I shot the photo at 1/2000 second. (I made this look cross processed, which has more contrast than normal and is tinted with greens and yellows, because I like being randomly creative.)



1/80 second



1 second

Figure 7-3: Shutter speeds can be creative at both ends of the spectrum.

You may run into problems when you want to shoot with a very fast shutter speed but need to use the flash. The Flash Sync speed for the A35/A55 is 1/160 second. That's not blazingly fast. If you need something faster, invest in an external flash and mount it on the accessory shoe. You can then use the flash's high-speed sync feature (enabled from the flash, not the camera). For



Figure 7-4: Capture action with fast shutter speeds.

example, the Sony HVL-F58AM and HVL-F43AM flash both support high-speed sync up to the faster camera shutter speed. In this case, that's 1/4000 second.

Noise

Because noise is often an undesirable effect, this creative goal is usually expressed as a negative. In other words, your goal is probably to minimize all possible noise, or perhaps limit it to a certain level. On the other hand, you may have no other way to take a photo in dim light sans flash other than to raise the ISO. In these cases, the necessity of getting the right exposure will override your desire to limit the noise level in the photo.

The A35/A55 have impressive ISO ranges, starting at ISO 100 and reaching to ISO 12800. Auto ISO in P, A, and S modes works from ISO 100 to ISO 1600. Limiting ISO is one of the most challenging aspects of digital photography. However, having access to ISO 12800 feels miraculous because it gives you the ability to take pictures that are normally impossible.



When controlling the noise level is your creative goal, ISO is your most important exposure control. You can safely follow these shutter speed guidelines:

- ✓ Generally speaking, use ISO 100 when outside in the daylight.
- ✓ If necessary, go to ISO 400 when shooting action.
- ✓ Inside, ISO values go through the roof, even when using a wide aperture and slow shutter speed. It's darker than you think in there!

On the other hand, noise *can* look like film grain, especially when you take a black and white photo like the one in Figure 7-5. I took this shot in a corner of our kitchen at night, without a flash, using the B&W creative style. (See Chapter 8 for more about creative styles.) The ISO was set to 1600. It looks good, even if it's a bit noisy!



Figure 7-5: ISO can double as grain in a pinch.



You don't get something for nothing. Every exposure decision you make affects the other two exposure controls. For example, if you reduce the aperture to increase the depth of field, that lets in less light. You may need to offset that by using a longer shutter speed or higher ISO.

Shooting in different conditions

Sometimes the practical necessity of getting the right exposure takes precedence over any artistic goals. You may find this true in these extreme conditions:

- ✓ **Low light:** ISO tends to make up the difference in low light, and is why the A35/A55 is such a good low-light camera. Both have high maximum ISOs (12800) and good noise levels well up into that range.
- ✓ **Bright light:** The A35/A55 has a maximum shutter speed of 1/4000 second. That's fast, but it may not be fast enough in very bright conditions when you have a wide aperture. Your only alternative to reduce the exposure at that point is to use an ND filter, which is akin to putting a pair of sunglasses on the camera.
- ✓ **Movement:** If you or your subject are moving and you want a clear photo, you have to dial in a fast shutter speed. It's essentially impossible to shoot a fast subject with a very small aperture at low ISOs in anything other than very bright conditions. This means that you should increase the aperture and raise the ISO, if necessary.

Dialing in Advanced Exposure Modes

Your A35/A55 has four advanced exposure modes:

- ✓ P (Program Auto)
- ✓ A (Aperture priority)
- ✓ S (Shutter priority)
- ✓ M (Manual)

These modes give you much more control over the camera than the basic shooting modes. In the end, though, they have the same purpose: to enable you to take the photos you want of the subjects that you choose.

Using Program Auto

Program Auto is a first step towards total manual control. Turn the mode dial to P and press the Display button to see all the powerful shooting functions that are hidden from you in the basic exposure modes. These include ISO, metering mode, flash compensation, white balance, D-range optimization, and Creative Style. See Figure 7-6.



However — and this is a big however — you don't have any more control over aperture or shutter speed than you did in the basic modes. In Program Auto mode you can't make creative depth-of-field decisions or skew the camera's shutter speed toward crisp action or fuzzy water shots.

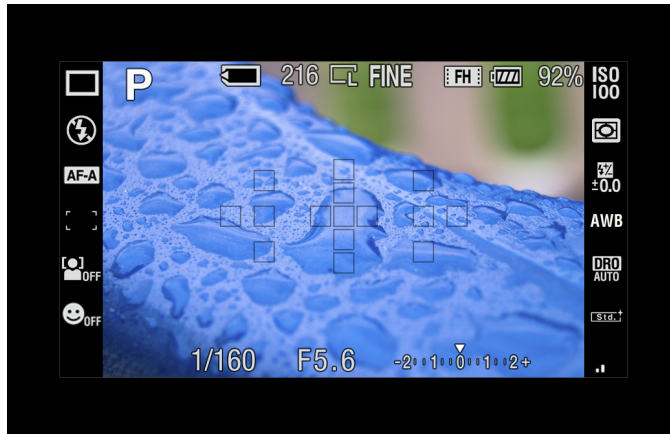


Figure 7-6: Enough shooting functions to satisfy the hardcore enthusiast.

Program Auto is valuable if you don't need to control the aperture or shutter speed, but you're ready to exercise more control over the shooting functions. To use Program Auto mode, follow these steps:

1. **Set the mode dial to P, as shown in Figure 7-7.**
2. **Press the Function button and review the shooting functions.**

Make sure things like the metering mode, AF mode, flash, and Creative Style are set correctly.

It stinks to start shooting and then realize something was incorrectly set.

3. **Press the shutter button halfway to autofocus and meter.**

If manually focusing, do so now.

4. **Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.**

5. **(Optional) Review your photo.**

If necessary, press the playback button to review your photo. Look for over- or underexposed areas. If things look off, adjust the metering method or use exposure correction to adjust the exposure.



Figure 7-7: P stands for Program Auto.



Using Aperture priority mode

In Aperture priority mode, your primary decision is choosing the aperture. The camera sets the shutter speed (and possibly the ISO if you've left it on Auto).



Most people use Aperture priority mode to shoot portraits, landscapes, and close-ups because it gives you creative control over the depth of field. To use the mode, follow these steps:

1. **Set the mode dial to A, as shown in Figure 7-8.**
2. **Press the Function button and review the shooting functions.**
3. **Spin the control dial to set the aperture.**

This is the big deal — the reason you're in Aperture priority mode. Have fun and enjoy it! Choose aperture (through the f-number) based on your creative desires. Spin the Control dial left to decrease the f-number, or right to increase it. The shutter speed dynamically adjusts to account for the size of the aperture and make the exposure work. Refer back to Figure 1-8 to see where the control dial is on your camera.



Figure 7-8: A is for Aperture priority.

Remember, lower f-numbers, such as $f/5.6$, increase the size of the aperture and higher numbers, such as $f/22$, decrease it.

4. **Press the shutter button halfway to autofocus and meter.**
Or manually focus.
5. **Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.**
6. **(Optional) Review your photo.**

If necessary, press the playback button. Look for over- or underexposed areas. If things look off, adjust the metering method or use exposure correction to adjust the exposure.



Using Shutter speed priority mode

Shutter speed priority is just like Aperture priority, but you've isolated shutter speed (not aperture).



Use Shutter priority for sports, action, and when you're moving. Follow these steps:

1. **Set the mode dial to S, as shown in Figure 7-9.**
2. **Press the Function button and review the shooting functions.**
3. **Spin the control dial to set the shutter speed.**

Set the shutter speed according to your creative desires and the necessity of capturing action. Spin the control dial left to increase the time (slower shutter speeds), or right to decrease it (faster shutter speeds). The f-number adjusts to compensate.

4. **Press the shutter button half-way to autofocus and meter.**
5. **Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.**
6. **(Optional) Review your photo.**

Or manually focus.

If necessary, press the playback button. Look for over- or underexposed areas. If things look off, adjust the metering method or use exposure correction to adjust the exposure.



Figure 7-9: S stands for Shutter speed priority.

Taking total control with Manual exposure mode

In Manual exposure mode, you have total control of the camera. Although the camera indicates what the correct exposure is, you have to set the aperture, shutter speed, and ISO to make it happen. The EV scale changes as you make aperture and shutter speed adjustments. The standard value pointer moves to the left or right, depending on whether you're decreasing or increasing the exposure.

To use Manual exposure mode, follow these steps:

1. **Set the mode dial to M, as shown in Figure 7-10.**

2. **Press the Function button to review the shooting functions and set the ISO.**

You can't put ISO on Auto when you're in Manual mode. Set your ISO to the noise level that you're willing to live with now, recognizing that you may have to increase it later. ISO 100 is the lowest.

3. **Press the shutter button halfway to meter, then release.**



I think it's helpful to have an idea of what settings will work in Manual mode before you start spinning the dials. Metering now puts that data in the camera. You'll see the EV scale adjust to your inputs.



Figure 7-10: Manual mode is the camera's most advanced mode.

4. **Spin the control dial to set the shutter speed.**

Spin it left to increase the time (slower shutter speeds), or right to decrease it (faster shutter speeds). As you spin the dial, the EV scale changes to read the current exposure.



5. **Press and hold the Exposure button and spin the control dial to adjust the aperture.**

Spin it left to decrease the f-number; spin it right to increase it.

6. **Confirm the exposure.**

If you want to shoot the exposure that the camera suggests, set the combination of shutter speed and aperture so the Standard value reads 0 EV. If the caret moves to the left, the exposure is less than the camera's calculated optimum exposure. If the caret moves to the right, the camera thinks you will overexpose the photo. When the caret is centered, the exposure controls will produce a photo at 0.0 EV.



If you risk underexposing the photo and can't adjust the shutter speed or aperture any further to let in more light, increase the ISO.

7. **Press the shutter button halfway to autofocus.**

Or manually focus.

8. **Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.**

9. Review your photo.

If necessary, press the playback button. Look for over- or underexposed areas. If things look off, adjust the shutter speed, aperture, or ISO. You can't use exposure correction in Manual mode.

Hi Ho, Hi Ho, to ISO You Go



Even though ISO doesn't have its own advanced exposure mode, try to control it as you would aperture and shutter speed. ISO is so important a contributor to exposure that you should elevate it to first-tier status, even if most of the time you're trying to limit it.

Selecting an ISO

In the automatic shooting modes, your ISO is largely set for you. In advanced exposure modes, you can set the ISO to a specific value. In all but Manual mode, you can also leave it on Auto.

To select an ISO, follow these steps:

1. Press the ISO button.

This calls up the ISO screen shown in Figure 7-11.

You can also access ISO anytime from the shooting function screen by pressing the Function button.

2. Highlight the ISO you want.

Use the up or down buttons, or spin the control dial.

When in P, A, or S modes, selecting Auto gives partial control over ISO to the camera.

It chooses values up to ISO 1600 automatically, but doesn't go past ISO 1600. If you need more than that, you have to select it yourself. Also, if Image Quality is set to Standard or Fine (in other words, JPEGs only), ISO Auto is an option. See the next section for more information on this feature.

Don't confuse Auto with ISO Auto. The top option on the ISO display, ISO Auto, is multi-frame noise reduction. Auto, the next option, is the automatic mode where the camera chooses the ISO for you.

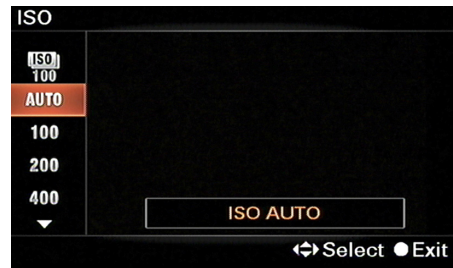


Figure 7-11: Remember, ISO is about sensor-tivity.



3. Press the enter button to exit.

Or press the Function button to get to the shooting display.

Using multi-frame noise reduction



Multi-frame noise reduction is a fairly interesting option that shoots several images, combines them, and then spits out a single, low-noise photo. Use it when you're shooting a still subject and need a higher ISO and want a single JPEG (not Raw) with a low noise level.

To use multi-frame noise reduction, follow these steps:

1. Press the Menu button and go to Recording menu 1.



2. Change Image Quality to Fine or Standard; then press the enter button.

3. Press the ISO button.

4. Highlight ISO (the top option).

5. Press the right button to select an ISO sensitivity.

Press the right button to scroll through the settings. Go backward by pressing the left button or keep pressing right if you're like Hamm in *Toy Story 2* and you "gotta go around the horn."

Your options are:

- *Auto*: Leave it on Auto to let the camera choose the ISO sensitivity.
- *ISO 100 through 12800*: This range represents your camera's normal ISO sensitivity range.
- *ISO 25600*: That's right, you can choose an ISO sensitivity beyond the single-shot range of your camera. That is awesome.

6. Compose the shot, meter, and so forth.

7. Press and hold the shutter button until the shooting stops.

The camera will fire off several shots. Do your best to hold steady.

8. Release the shutter button and review the photo.



Figure 7-12 and Figure 7-13 show some results for comparison. I shot both examples with only a light from the right — no flash. In Figure 7-12, I set the camera to use ISO 12800, the camera's maximum ISO. In Figure 7-13, I enabled multi-frame noise reduction and set it to 12800 to see a direct comparison. As you can see from the close-ups, multi-frame noise reduction produced a better photo.



Figure 7-12: Shot at ISO 12800.



Figure 7-13: Shot at ISO 12800 and with multi-frame noise reduction on.

Metering Methodology

Measuring the amount of light in a scene is called *metering*. The camera senses direct light as well as reflected light, determines the intensity, and calculates the exposure. Strong light, such as the sun, is very intense. Weak or low light, such as a dark room, is not.



Most scenes are a combination of strong and weak light, and can be very complex. As such, it's helpful to know how to use two of the A35/A55 tools:

- ✓ Different metering modes
- ✓ Histogram

Meter types

The A35/A55 has three distinct metering modes that let you adjust to different lighting conditions.

Multi-segment

Multi-segment metering is the default. The mode separates the scene into areas and then evaluates the exposure based on everything in the frame. No area is left out. See Figure 7-14.



Use multi-segment metering unless you have a reason to change it. It's the best mode for general photography.

Center weighted

Although this mode takes into account light intensity across the entire frame, as the name suggests, it gives greater importance to the center of the frame. Figure 7-14 also illustrates the center-weighted method.



Use center-weighted mode on bright areas that you want to keep from blowing out. In other words, if you're shooting a high-contrast scene and want to preserve details in the highlights, switch to center-weighted mode, point the camera at the bright area, meter, recompose, and take the photo. Center-weighted metering also works for dark subjects that are larger in the frame. You can expose mostly for them if you choose this mode.

Spot

Spot mode (also in Figure 7-14) is a special type of metering that evaluates the brightness in the spot metering circle in the middle of the frame. It leaves out all else.



Use spot mode in high-contrast scenes to make sure your subject (and not the background) isn't over- or underexposed. Good examples are when someone is in front of windows, with their back to the sun, or other objects are in shadow against a bright background. Center the object you want metered under the spot metering circle, press the shutter button halfway, and recompose. Use the AEL button to lock in the exposure.

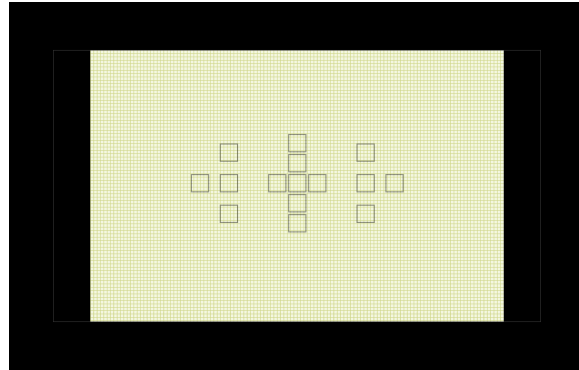
By using spot mode, you've decided that you're willing to accept a certain amount of blown highlights. In other words, you may not get a good exposure as a whole and ensure that your subjects are bright. To be honest, there may be no other way to take the photo.

Changing metering mode

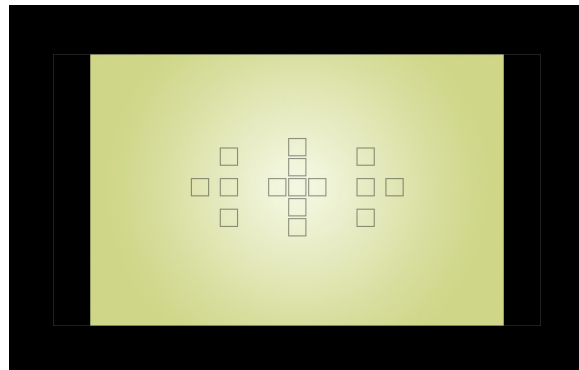
To change the metering mode, follow these steps:

1. **Set the mode dial to an appropriate mode.**

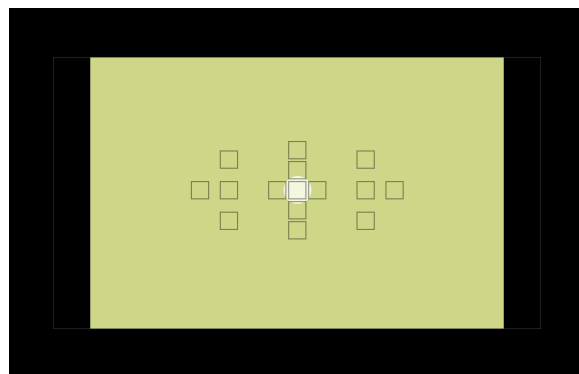
You can change metering mode in P, A, S, M, Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), and Sweep Shooting modes.



Multi-segment



Center weighted



Spot

Figure 7-14: Three distinct metering modes exist.

2. Press the Function button.
3. Highlight Metering Mode and press the enter button.
4. Highlight a new mode.
5. Press enter to return to shooting.

Or press the Function button to return to the shooting function display.

Now, in case you're wondering, this actually *does* work. Figure 7-15 shows three shots of my son outside on the driveway.

✓ For the first shot, I used multi-segment metering. The bright sky and reflections off the tree and other background objects dominate the scene, pushing up the exposure. He looks too dark.

✓ In the second, I used center-weighted metering. This tells the camera to pay more attention to what's in the middle than on the edges, which is a good description of the problem with the first shot. The result is *much* better. He's lit as if I used the flash (I didn't). That's because his face played a more important role in determining the exposure.



Multi-segment



Center weighted



Spot

Figure 7-15: Seeing the metering modes in action.

- ✓ In the last shot, I used spot metering. I located him under the spot metering circle in the viewfinder. Although he looks very good, the overall photo comes close to being too bright. That's because the edges weren't considered when the camera evaluated the exposure.

Using the Histogram

If you want to stay on top of your scene's brightness before you shoot, turn on the histogram. This histogram is similar to the luminance histogram that you can see in Playback mode, but with one big difference: This histogram is live. As a result, you can change the exposure using exposure correction.

Here's how to turn on exposure correction:



1. **Press the Menu button.**
2. **Go to Custom menu 2.**
3. **Select Histogram and press the enter button.**
4. **Choose On.**
5. **Press the enter button to lock in your choice.**

The histogram appears in the viewfinder and on the LCD monitor. If you can't see it, press Display until it turns on. See Chapter 10 for more information about histograms.

Locking the Exposure

When you're working with high-contrast scenes, it's often useful to lock the exposure into the camera. This lets you point and meter a specific area, then use that for the overall exposure. The AEL (auto exposure lock) button is shown in Figure 7-16.

To use auto exposure lock (AE lock), follow these steps:

1. **Choose an exposure mode that allows AE lock.**

Trick step! You can use AE lock in any exposure mode, including the basic exposure modes. The only mode where it doesn't make sense is Manual exposure mode, although you can still press the button.

2. **(Optional) Change to spot metering mode.**



This more precisely identifies the spot in the scene that you want to lock the exposure on. Use the other metering modes if you're turned one direction and need to shoot with the same exposure in another, such as when using Sweep Shooting or shooting a manual panorama.

3. Make sure you can see the area you want to meter.

In other words, focus.

4. Press and hold the AEL button.

The AE lock mark appears, as shown in Figure 7-17.

5. While pressing the AEL button, press the shutter button halfway to focus.

6. Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.



Figure 7-16: Press and hold AEL to lock exposure.

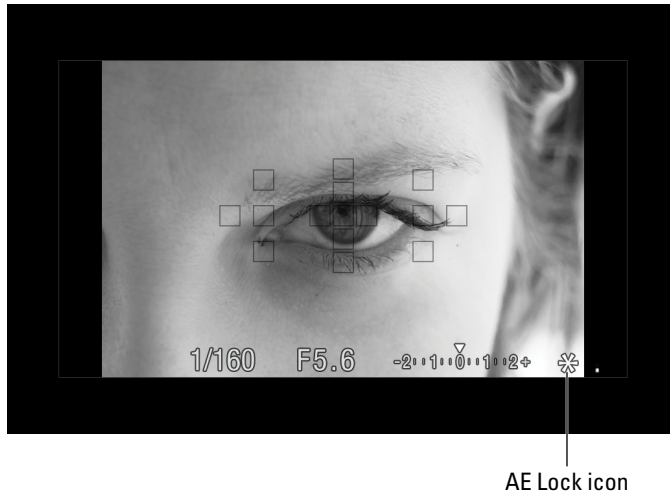


Figure 7-17: No really: Press and hold AEL to lock exposure.

Using Exposure Compensation

Sometimes the camera gets the exposure right, but the photo just doesn't look like you want it to. Your eyes are the ultimate judge. Whether for aesthetic or artistic reasons, use exposure compensation to dial in exposure corrections when you aren't in Manual mode.



Before you use exposure compensation, take a few test photos and review them by pressing the playback button. Zoom in to look closely at the bright and dark areas, and see whether you need to tone down or brighten up the image. Then follow these steps:

- 1. Enter a compatible exposure mode.**

You can use exposure compensation in P, A, S, Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), and Sweep Shooting modes.

- 2. Press the shutter button halfway to meter the scene, then release.**

If you're in autofocus, this step also focuses.

- 3. Press the exposure button, shown in Figure 7-18.**

Despite what your instincts may tell you, you *don't* have to hold the exposure button down.



Exposure button

Figure 7-18: Press the exposure button to enable exposure compensation.



4. Rotate the control dial to increase or decrease the exposure.

The control dial is pointed out back in Figure 1-8.

- Turn the control dial to the left to decrease the exposure (darken the image). The compensation amount is a negative orange number above the EV index, as shown in Figure 7-19.
- Turn the control dial to the right to increase the exposure (lighten the image). The compensation amount is a positive orange number above the EV index.



Figure 7-19: Shutter speed changes when you use exposure compensation.

Each click of the control dial changes the compensation amount by a third of an EV, up to +/- 2.0 EV.

5. Press the shutter button halfway to meter again and focus.
6. Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.

Dynamic Range or Bust

The world is a pretty dynamic place. The sun is an incredibly bright light source, and shadows are great at hiding things. When you put them together in the same photo, the camera has to choose between making one look good over the other. This dynamism has created the current enthusiasm with high dynamic range (HDR) photography and spurred developments such as the D-range optimizer.

Processing photos with the D-range optimizer

The D-range optimizer produces JPEGs with more balanced highlights and shadows. Although the D-range optimizer automatically applies when you're shooting in many of the basic shooting modes, you can disable (or configure) it when you're working in an advanced exposure mode.

To change the D-range optimizer settings, follow these steps:

1. **Select a compatible exposure mode.**

The D-range optimizer works with P, A, S, M, and Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), or Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55).

2. **Press the D-range button.**

The DRO/Auto HDR screen opens. To turn off the D-range optimizer, highlight DRO Off. I discuss the other option, HDR Auto, in the next section.

3. **Highlight DRO Auto, as shown in Figure 7-20.**

Auto is the default camera setting. If you're satisfied, press the enter button and stop here. If you want to select a strength, continue.

4. **Use the left or right buttons to set the DRO level.**

The D-range optimizer has six processing levels. Choose anything from Lv1 (weak) to Lv5 (strong).



Figure 7-20: Accessing DRO levels.

5. **Frame, meter, and take your photos.**
6. **Review them to see if the highlights and shadows are processed to suit your taste.**

Figure 7-21 shows a scene shot with different D-range optimizer settings. It was a bright afternoon with a good range of highlights (sky and bush) and shadows (tree and shadows on the ground).

- ✓ Off looks the worst of the three. The sky pushes the exposure up, making the highlights too bright. There are no dark shadows.
- ✓ Lv1 is probably the best setting. The sky is a nice blue. The shadows look dark, as they should. Everything feels right in this photo. The highlights and shadows are well balanced.
- ✓ Lv5 is too strong for this scene. The contrast is affected because the shadows were lightened too much. The sky is about the same as Lv1.

Using Auto HDR

Auto HDR is another way to deal with high-contrast scenes that have a large dynamic range. Rather than shoot a single photo and process it differently (as in the case of D-range optimizer), Auto HDR shoots several photos with different settings and merges them into a single shot.

To use Auto HDR, follow these steps:

1. **Press the Menu button and go to Recording menu 1.**
2. **Set Image Quality to Fine or Standard.**
3. **Select a compatible exposure mode.**

Auto HDR works only in P, A, S, or M modes.

4. **Press the D-range button.**
This displays the DRO/Auto HDR screen.
5. **Use the up or down buttons to select HDR Auto.**
6. **Use the left or right buttons to set the HDR level.**

You can leave it on Auto if you like. The camera handles all the details for you. Otherwise, select one of six exposure levels, ranging from 1.0 EV to 6.0 EV. When shooting HDR, the smaller differences capture a smaller dynamic range. On the other hand, the HDR image will look more realistic.

7. Compose the scene.

8. Press the shutter button to start the process.



There's no need to hold down the shutter button. The camera shoots continuously, regardless. As with other multi-exposure techniques, try to remain still and keep the camera steady as it shoots. If necessary, get a tripod.

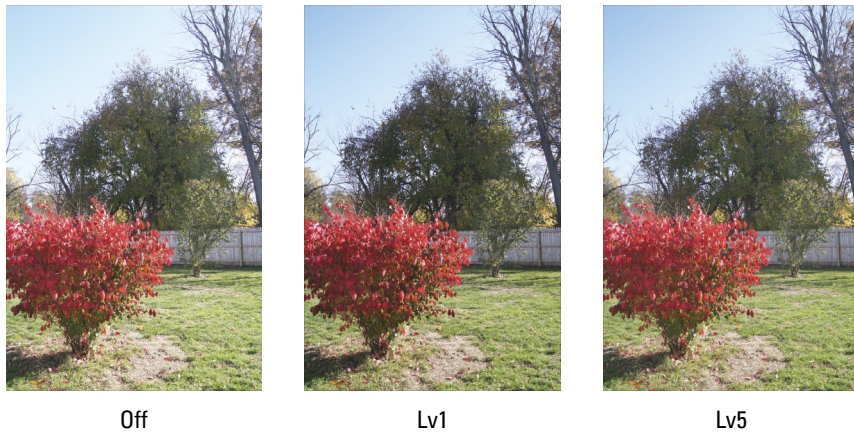


Figure 7-21: The D-range optimizer processes only JPEG files.

Figure 7-22 shows an example of Auto HDR. It's the same scene shown in Figure 2-21, so you can compare the D-range optimizer to Auto HDR. In this case, the 3EV exposure-level difference is a nice balance between the bright sky and the dark areas. When pushed to 6EV, the difference is too great and looks unrealistic.



3 EV



6 EV

Figure 7-22: Auto HDR only works when you have the image quality set to Fine or Standard.

Exposure bracketing and HDR photography

Although now primarily for HDR photography, auto exposure bracketing (AEB) began years ago on film cameras. Getting the right exposure was much trickier then, and you couldn't immediately play the photo back to inspect it. Shooting exposure brackets covered your exposure bases. You could take three photos and chose the best one when you developed the film. You can use it the same way today, but more people use bracketing for HDR photography.

Chapter 9 has a more extensive section on shooting HDR. This section shows the exposure bracketing feature.

To shoot auto exposure brackets, follow these steps:

- 1. Enter an appropriate exposure mode.**

Exposure bracketing works only in P, A, S, or M modes.

- 2. Press the drive button.**

- 3. Select Exposure Bracket.**

- 4. Use the left or right button to select 0.3.**

The larger step (0.7 EV) shoots brackets that cover a larger dynamic range and are best suited for HDR. Choose the smaller step if you're covering your exposure bases.





5. Frame and focus.

6. Press and hold the shutter button to start shooting.

You have to hold down the shutter button when you're shooting exposure brackets. The A35/A55 is fast enough to shoot brackets handheld, but if the shutter speed is slow, you may need to use a tripod.

7. Transfer your photos to a computer.

8. Process the brackets in HDR software or choose the best single exposure.

This part of the process is covered briefly in Chapter 9. Figure 7-23 presents a final image taken with an EV difference of 0.7EV. The statue is of James Scott and is on Belle Isle, within view of Detroit.



Figure 7-23: The Architect in HDR.

Controlling the Built-in Flash

Using the flash in an advanced exposure mode doesn't have to be frightening. Armed with the information in this section, you can start shooting good flash photography in no time.

Setting the flash control method

Because the flash contributes so much to the exposure, there has to be a way to integrate it with the exposure settings. Enter flash control.

Flash control comes in two types:

- ✓ **ADI flash** is the best, most accurate flash control method. Advanced Distance Integration takes into account the distance from the camera to the subject, as well as other metering information. This method is supposed to prevent harsh reflections. ADI flash only works with lenses that provide distance information to the camera (which includes all Sony lenses).

Using any sort of flash diffuser, bounce flash, ND filter, or macro lens will throw off ADI flash. Switch to pre-flash TTL on those cases.

- ✓ **Pre-flash TTL** is the next best thing to ADI. Through the Lens (TTL) flash uses pre-flash metering to figure out how strong the flash should fire. Because pre-flash TTL doesn't use distance information, it's more likely to create strong reflections off close subjects.



Setting advanced flash modes

The basic flash options — Flash Off, Auto Flash, and Fill-Flash — aren't available in the advanced exposure modes (P, A, S, or M), Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), or Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55) Basic Shooting mode. They're covered more fully in Chapter 3.

When you're in those modes, you keep the built-in flash closed to turn off the flash; raise the flash to enable it. There is no Auto Flash equivalent in the advanced exposure modes.

Advanced flash modes

The more advanced flash modes follow:



- ✓ **Slow Sync** tries to balance the light between the foreground and background better than normal flash.
- ✓ **Rear Sync**, also known as Rear Curtain or 2nd Curtain, freezes moving objects at the end of their movement rather than flashing first.
- ✓ **Wireless** enables the built-in flash to act as a wireless master. Set up your compatible wireless slave flash unit off the camera and have fun with different setups and lighting effects. Chapter 11 has a section on shooting wireless flash if you want more information.

Setting flash mode

To set the flash mode, follow these steps:

1. **Press the Function button.**
2. **Highlight Flash Mode and press the enter button.**
3. **Use the up or down buttons to select a flash mode.**
4. **Press the enter button to exit.**

Or press the Function button to return to the shooting function.

Using the built-in flash

Using the built-in flash is surprisingly easy, but I want to put this section in as a shout-out to the guys at United Flash Button Operators Local 523. See Chapter 2 for more information and tips for working with flash.

To use the flash, follow these steps:

1. **Press the flash pop-up button shown in Figure 7-24.**
The flash pops up, as shown in Figure 7-25.
2. **Press the Function button and review the Flash mode.**
Make sure it's what you want. Select Fill-Flash for normal flash use.
3. **Compose and take the photo.**
4. **Review the shot.**

If the flash looks too weak or too strong, consider adjusting its strength, as described in the next section.



Figure 7-24: Push this button . . .



Adjusting the flash strength

You know, sometimes firing off the flash at full strength makes things — especially people — look harshly lit. Plus, it casts obnoxious shadows. On the other hand, you may be in a large room with your subject farther away; you may need more flash strength than the camera wants to give you. Flash compensation can help you in both of these situations.

To adjust the flash's strength, follow these steps:

- 1. Enter a compatible shooting mode.**

Flash compensation works in P, A, S, M, Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), and Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55).

- 2. Press the Function button to call up the shooting functions.**

- 3. Highlight Flash Compensation and press the enter button.**

- 4. Decrease or increase the flash compensation.**

Spin the control dial to the left to decrease flash compensation. Spin it right to increase flash compensation. Press the left or right buttons to decrease or increase. Negative numbers (measured in EV) decrease the strength of the flash. Positive numbers increase the strength of the flash. See Figure 7-26.

- 5. Press the enter button to return to shooting.**

Or press the Function button to go back to the shooting function display.



Figure 7-25: ... to make this happen.

Trying flash compensation

Try flash compensation when you take a photo and the flash is too bright (like 0.0 EV in Figure 7-27). I dialed back the flash strength by -1.0 EV and took another shot. Awesome.



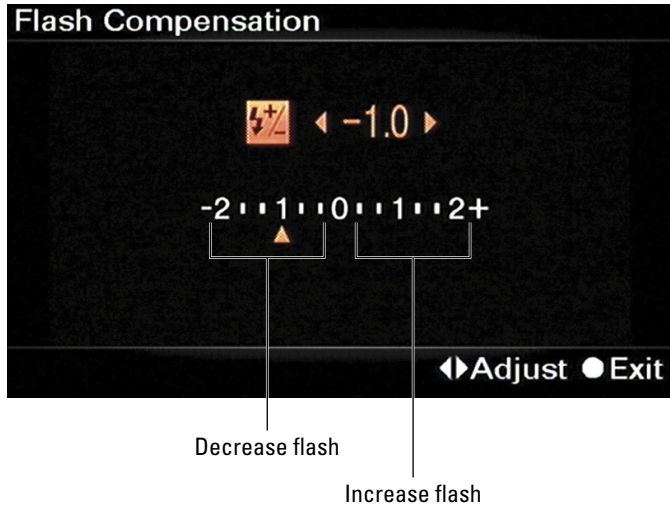


Figure 7-26: Dialing in flash compensation.

Do you want a fantastic (albeit advanced) reason to use flash compensation? You can treat the built-in flash as if it has a manual mode (and in essence, manually shoot with an effect similar to Slow Sync).

Here's how:

1. **Choose M on the mode dial.**
2. **Meter the scene by pressing the shutter button halfway.**
3. **Set ISO, aperture, and shutter speed to expose the background nicely.**

Look carefully at the scene on the monitor or through the viewfinder. If the background is too dark, change the exposure controls to brighten it. If the background's too light, reduce the exposure.

Make sure you have a shutter speed that's fast enough so you can hold the camera without shaking.

4. **Take a test shot and review it.**

Look to see if the background is nice and the exposure is correct. If not, go back to Step 3 and make adjustments.





5. Press the flash pop-up button.

6. Fire a test shot with your subject in view.

Ignore what the EV scale says. This shot serves as the baseline flash-strength shot. You will surely need to adjust it.

7. Review the photo to evaluate the foreground exposure.

If it's too strong, reduce flash compensation. If it isn't strong enough, increase it.

8. Pat yourself on the back and take the final photo.

If the exposure looks nicely balanced, you have the information you need to take flash photos in this situation with brighter backgrounds and nicely lit, natural-looking subjects. Unless the lighting or your distance to the subject changes dramatically, you can keep taking photos without changing any of the controls.



0.0 EV



-1.0 EV

Figure 7-27: In this case, the softer flash resulted in a much better photo.

Designing with Focus and Color

In This Chapter

- ▶ Working with autofocus
 - ▶ Controlling the depth of field
 - ▶ Setting the white balance
 - ▶ Using Creative Styles
 - ▶ Choosing a color space
-

Photography is a whole lot of fun for so many different reasons. By using focus and color, you can create photos that match your ever-expanding vision. In this chapter you see how to use different aspects of the A35/A55's autofocus and how to shrink or expand a shot's depth of field. You read about light and how it affects the appearance of photos, as well as how to correct that by setting the white balance. You delve into Creative Styles, which are processing options built right into your camera. Finally, you read about color space, which are color profiles embedded into JPEGs that tell things how to display the colors correctly.

That's a lot. It's fun. It's important. When you begin to experiment with focus and color, you expand your horizons as a photographer into new and exciting territory. Have fun!



Getting Autofocus to Behave




Autofocus can sometimes act like an unruly puppy. You have to be able to control it to get the most out of it. Don't let the technical nature of these sections scare you off. It can be a bit dry sometimes. However, there's no substitute for being able to focus on what you want. To ensure that you get what you want out of autofocus, you must know about the different options and how to use them.

Understanding AF indicators

Your camera tells you what's happening as it focuses. Look for the AF indicator in the bottom left display, as shown in Figure 8-1, in addition to the green AF area indicators (which tell you focus is confirmed in those areas). The focus indicator at the bottom left of the screen signifies the current focus status. Check out Table 8-1.



Figure 8-1: The green dot and green squares tell you that auto focus has been successful.

Table 8-1		Autofocus Indicators
<i>Icon</i>	<i>What It Means</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
	Focused and ready	Lit, steady, and accompanied by a beep. The areas used to focus turn green; others disappear. Face detection frames in focus are green. You're good to shoot.
	Focused and tracking	Lit and steady. Arcs appear around it. Focus is confirmed, but not locked. No beep, but the AF area turns green and follows it as long as the camera has it locked. You're good to shoot.
	Tracking but not focused	The indicator isn't on but the arcs are lit. The camera is trying to focus on a moving subject. You can't take a photo until the camera focuses.
—	Focus failure	Flashing (or absent) green light means the camera can't focus. You can't take a photo. Release the shutter button and try again.

Changing Autofocus mode

When your subject has as much get-up-and-go as my three boys, the AF system has to constantly update the focus. But you don't need to constantly update the focus for a potted plant. It's not going anywhere. In fact, if the AF system keeps trying to refocus on it, it might lock on one part for a moment and then choose a different part. You don't want that.

AF modes

Autofocus modes to the rescue. The autofocus system has two modes for different types of subject behavior, and it has a smart mode that can figure things out on its own. Change among them to keep up to speed with what you're shooting. Table 8-2 explains the modes.

Table 8-2

Autofocus Modes

<i>Icon</i>	<i>Mode Name</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Best Use</i>
AF-S	Single-shot AF	Focus is locked when you keep the shutter button pressed halfway. If you release the shutter button, the camera refocuses when you press it again. Focus also locks when you press the AF button.	Still shots, close-ups, portraits, and landscapes
AF-C	Continuous AF	Focused when you press the shutter button halfway; keeps updating focus. Focus-lock doesn't work in AF-C mode when you use the shutter button. Switch to AF-A, AF-C, or Manual focus if you need to lock the focus.	Sports and action
AF-A	Automatic AF	Switches between AF-S and AF-C, depending on motion.	General-purpose

The default AF mode for the advanced exposure modes is Automatic AF. You have to change it yourself if you want to use a different mode. The mode varies when you're in a basic shooting mode. For example, when you set Scene to Sports Action, the mode is automatically set to AF-C. However, for Auto mode the setting's AF-A.

Changing AF modes

To change the AF mode, follow these steps:

1. **Press the Function button.**
2. **Highlight AF mode and press the enter button.**
3. **Use the up or down buttons to select the AF mode.**

Choose between AF-S, AF-C, or AF-A.

4. **Press the enter button to exit.**

Selecting AF areas

It can be frustrating when you want the camera to focus on one part of the scene and it somehow feels compelled to focus on another. You can stop that by changing how the camera decides on which AF area to use. You can go so far as to have the camera focus on one of 15 areas.

Table 8-3 reveals the focus area modes. Astute readers (that means you) will recognize that there is no difference between choosing Spot and using Local with the center AF area selected. Figure 8-2 compares the three areas.

Table 8-3		AF Modes
<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Best Use</i>
Wide	The camera chooses an AF area and uses it to focus.	Best all-around AF area (unless you're getting bad results).
Spot	Locks the AF area to the center area. Spot is great for shots where your subject will reliably be in the center of the frame.	Static close-ups, some action shots. (Focus on the player under the center AF area; Spot keeps the other players from stealing the AF when they're closer.)
Local	Your subject can be in a number of places in the frame and good focus can be had.	Precise control over which of the AF areas the camera uses. Keep the camera from focusing on part of the frame. (Shooting through a fence is an example. Choose an AF area on your subject, not the fence.)

To change the AF area, follow these steps:

- 1. Press the Function button.**
- 2. Highlight AF area and press the enter button.**
- 3. Use the up or down buttons to select the AF area of your choice.**

Choose between Wide, Spot, or Local.

- 4. Press the enter button to exit.**

If you chose Local, you see an AF area setup screen like the one in Figure 8-3. Use the left, right, up, or down buttons to choose a different AF area. The selected area is a bright orange box.

Go back to the Local area setup screen later by pressing the AF button. In the other two modes (Wide and Spot), the AF button autofocuses.

5. Focus and shoot.

- You're using Wide: Point and shoot.
- You're using Spot: Place the subject under the center AF area and press the Shutter button halfway to focus.
- You're using Local: Make sure you have selected the AF area you want, place the subject under the AF area and press the Shutter button halfway to focus. If necessary, change the AF area and try again.

Locking on target

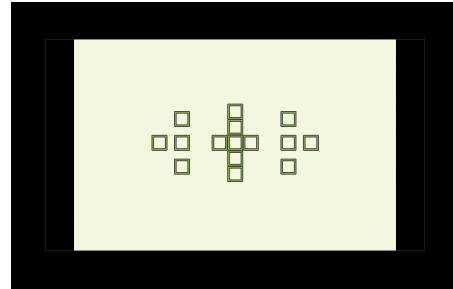
If you want to creatively compose your shots and ensure the camera focuses on what you want it to, use focus-lock. Traditionally, this happens when you're taking someone's portrait. You focus on them, lock it down, then recompose the shot so they aren't in the exact center of the photo.



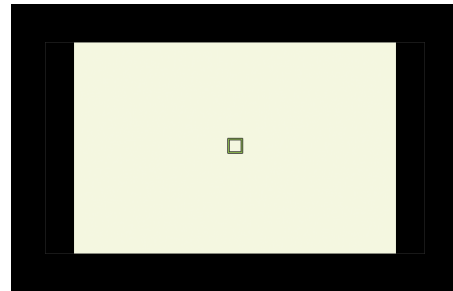
Pictures look better when things are balanced by the Rule of Thirds. Divide the photo into a three-by-three grid and place faces (and other subjects) along lines or at intersections.

Focus-lock doesn't work with AF-C. The feature works best when you have a shallow depth of field resulting from any of these three scenarios:

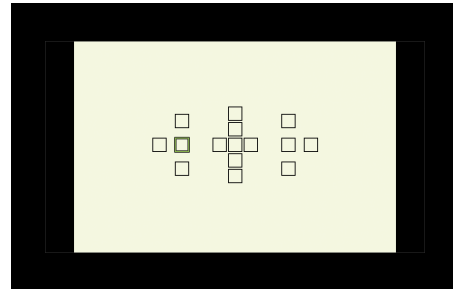
- ✓ You've got a wide open aperture.
- ✓ You're close to the subject.
- ✓ You're zoomed in.



Wide



Spot



Local

Figure 8-2: Comparing the three different focus area modes.

To use focus-lock, follow these steps:

1. **Press the Function button to make sure you're in AF-S or AF-A mode.**

If the option to change the AF mode is grayed out (and you're not in a basic shooting mode), you're in Manual focus.

2. **Put the subject under an AF area. See Figure 8-3.**

3. **Press the shutter button *halfway*; hold it there when focus is established.**

This establishes the autofocus and meters. You'll see one or more green AF boxes light up and you'll hear a beep (unless you've turned that off): success!

If you have trouble using the shutter button to lock the focus, try using the AF button instead. Press it now and hold it to lock the focus. In Step 5, while still holding the AF button in, press the shutter button halfway to meter, wait a moment, then press it fully to take the photo.



4. **Frame the photo.**

This is the magic of focus-lock. While the shutter button is held halfway, the camera won't refocus (unless in AF-C mode). You can compose the shot any way you wish and know that your subject is still in focus. Figure 8-4 shows my off-center but focused subject.

You can't get away with everything, however. If you move closer or farther away from your subject and take the photo, it will be out of focus whether you locked it or not.

5. **Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.**

Alternatively, use AF areas and select an off-center focus area. That may work better than focus-lock when the camera is on a tripod.

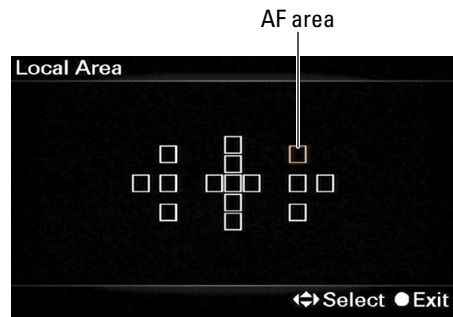
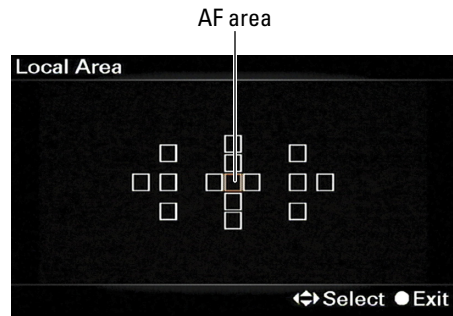


Figure 8-3: Selecting a specific AF area.



Figure 8-4: Lock the focus and recompose your shot.

Using the focus magnifier

Sometimes it helps to magnify your view so you can check the focus before taking the photo. You can use focus magnifier

- ✓ As you manually focus to dial in the best focus possible.
- ✓ After you auto focus to double-check the clarity of the autofocus.



It works best when the camera is mounted on a tripod. There's very little point in magnifying the scene to check the precise focus if you're going to be moving around.

Enabling focus magnifier

The focus magnifier is off by default, which means you have to enable it first. Here's how:



- 1. Press the Menu button.**
- 2. Go to Custom menu 1.**
- 3. Highlight Focus Magnifier and press the enter button.**
- 4. Select On.**

If it's already on and you want to turn it off, select Off.

- 5. Press the enter button.**



Using focus magnifier

If you turn on focus magnifier, the delete button becomes a focus magnifier button when you're shooting. Here's how you use it:

- 1. If using autofocus, press the shutter halfway to establish focus.**

The focus magnifier works a little differently if you're using autofocus. The point is to zoom in and check the focus. You can't do anything about it, though, when zoomed in. If you press another button, the view returns to normal. You can change the AF area or switch to manual focus.

Note: If you're focusing manually, start at Step 2.



- 2. When you're ready, press the focus magnifier (delete) button.**

An orange frame is superimposed on the scene, as shown in Figure 8-5. The frame is the area you'll see when you press the zoom magnifier button again. I chose a sparse setting and positioned a single block back and to the left so you can see how powerful the focus magnifier is. From a distance, the block is small. You'd have little chance of successfully manually focusing on it.

- 3. Use the up, down, left, and right buttons to move the frame where you want to see close up.**

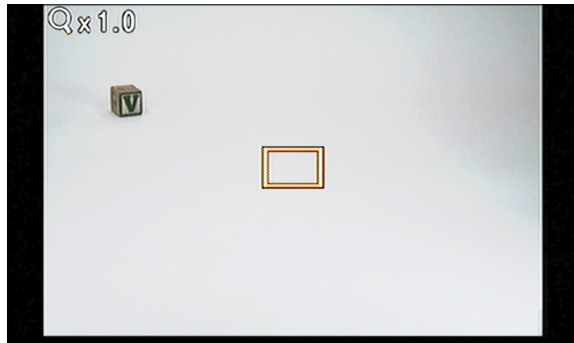


Figure 8-5: Positioning the magnification frame.

- 4. Press the focus magnifier (delete) button again.**

The image gets bigger on the LCD or in the viewfinder, as shown in Figure 8-6. Pressing the focus magnifier button again (this is the third time) increases the magnification again (also in Figure 8-6). Pressing the button a fourth time cycles back to the normal view, without the frame.

5. If manually focusing, adjust the focus to perfection.

I'm not cheating, per se, but I focused both photos in Figure 8-6 so you could see the results of the magnification better. Yours might be blurrier and won't sharpen up until this step.

6. Press the shutter button to take the photo.

The view goes back to normal just before the shutter activates.

Putting it all together

Getting good results with the autofocus system isn't hard, especially when you understand what all the modes do. Table 8-4 shows the combinations of settings that I suggest, depending on the circumstance.

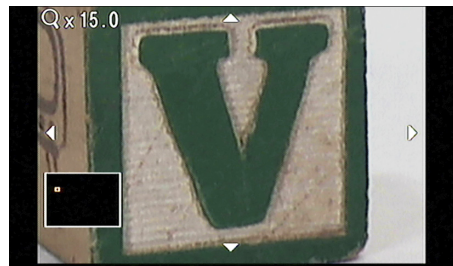
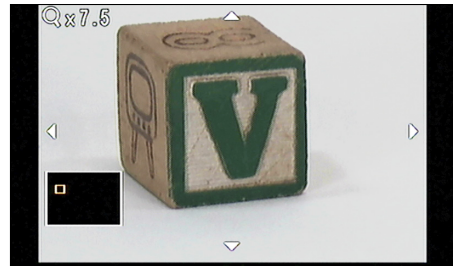


Figure 8-6: Zooming in.

Table 8-4 Suggested Mode Combinations

<i>Mode</i>	<i>Best Use</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
AF-A and Wide AF area	General purpose. Wide AF is best when your main subject isn't behind something that may grab the focus. Choose Spot or Local if the camera needs help IDing the specific subject you want from other competing objects in the scene.	Point and shoot.
AF-S, Local AF, and focus magnifier (if necessary)	For still subjects. Consider using focus magnifier, which is most effective when you're using a tripod with an inanimate subject.	Gives the most control over the autofocus system. AF-S allows focus lock, if necessary. Local AF lets you choose the AF area to use.

Mode	Best Use	Explanation
AF-C, your choice of AF area	For moving subjects.	Tracks the target. The AF area is optional. Wide AF area works if your subject is isolated or in front of everything else. Choose Local or Spot AF if the camera can't figure out which soccer player you want to focus on. Place the moving subject under the AF area when focusing.

Controlling Depth of Field

Depth of field is a complicated name that refers to a photographic effect that is very simple. It is the depth of the area that looks like it's in focus. Depth of field is an astounding, important creative component of photography. On one hand, you can have the camera take photos where most everything looks like it's in focus. Landscapes are a good example. On the other hand, you can take pictures where only a thin slice of the photo is sharp. Portraits and close-ups are good examples of this. Everything in front of and everything behind what you've focused on gets blurred — but it's not a *bad* out of focus. Depending on the lens, this area (called the *bokeh*) can be incredibly beautiful.

Figures 8-7 through 8-9 illustrate not only how thin you can make the depth of field, but that you can move it back and forth.

- ✓ In Figure 8-7, focus is on the black and white cat. The wooden cat to the right isn't that far away, but it's out of the depth of field. Despite this, you can make out some details of the wooden cat. The elephant in the background is almost unrecognizable.



Figure 8-7: Focusing on the nearest object.

- ✔ Focus is on the wooden cat in Figure 8-8. The black and white cat is now partially blurred. Remember, something can be *in front of* your prime subject and be out of the depth of field. The elephant looks like an elephant now.
- ✔ In Figure 8-9, the elephant looks clear but the cats are blurred. Depth of field powerfully directs your attention.



Figure 8-8: The depth of field is about a single-cat wide.

Affecting DOF

Chapter 7 talks about these DOF elements in detail. You can control three main factors that affect depth of field:

- ✔ **Aperture:** Very simply, the larger the aperture in the lens, the shallower the depth of field will be. Conversely, the smaller the aperture, the deeper the depth of field will be.
- ✔ **Focal length:** The longer the focal length, the shallower the depth of field. By comparison, shorter focal lengths create wider depths of field.
- ✔ **Distance:** Distance is the factor that everyone forgets about. When you're close to the subject, the depth of field is smaller than when you are far away.



Figure 8-9: Managing the depth of field by focusing on the farthest object.

Working with DOF

Here are some pointers for working with depth of field:

- ✔ **Use basic shooting modes:** Several of the modes optimize the camera's settings to produce either a shallow or deep depth of field. Choose the one that matches your creative vision:
 - *Shallow depth of field:* Portrait, close-up
 - *Deep depth of field:* Landscape

See Chapter 7 for more about depth of field.

- ✓ **Or use advanced exposure modes:** Choose Manual or Aperture priority modes to gain maximum control over the depth of field.
- ✓ **Shallow and artistic:** If you're in Aperture priority mode, open the aperture up (use a low f-number) and let the camera set the shutter speed and ISO. Step close and zoom into the subject to make the depth of field even shallower.
- ✓ **Go deep:** Set Aperture priority mode and close the aperture down (between f/8 and f/22). Use a wider-angle lens (28mm or less) and step back from the subject.



Previewing the depth of field

If you want to preview the depth of field, focus and press the preview button shown in Figure 8-10.

Believe it or not, when you look through the viewfinder or at the LCD, you often don't see what the photo will look like when you press the shutter button.

Try this experiment:

1. Choose Aperture priority mode and set the aperture to something ridiculously small, like f/32.
2. Set the focal length of the kit lens to around 35mm.
3. Turn the camera around and point it at your face so you can see the aperture.
4. Press the shutter button half-way so the camera meters and focuses.
5. Wait a moment.
6. As you carefully look at the lens, press the shutter button fully.



Figure 8-10: The preview button is right under the lens.

You'll see the aperture shrink to f/32 and the camera will take the picture. The aperture stays wide open when you frame and focus your shot (see the left side of Figure 8-11) so as much light as possible makes it into the camera for you to see. When you take the picture, the aperture shrinks according to the f-number you have it set at (see the right image in Figure 8-11). That's why you don't see the same thing *before* versus *after*.



Figure 8-11: The aperture changes to the actual f-number when you shoot.



The effect is essentially one-way, though. What I mean is that if you have the aperture opened up as large as possible, the “before you take the photo aperture” is close to or the same as what it will be when you take the photo. In that case, what you see before you take the photo is close to what you will see in the actual photo. The lens quickly sets the aperture to the value that you (or the camera, if it’s in an automatic mode) have set, which enables you to evaluate the actual depth of field. Some noise may show up in the display in dim lighting. As the aperture shrinks, the camera brightens the image so you can see what’s going on. The result is noise.

Shedding Light on White Balance



Just when you thought it couldn’t get any more complicated, it does. I won’t blame you for completely ignoring this section if you want to. Leave the White Balance setting on Auto and control other aspects of your camera. When you need or want to start adjusting your white balance, come back here.









Brain, meet conundrum: Light and color get all tangled together. If a pure white light reflects off a white shirt, the shirt looks white. If a yellow light reflects off the same shirt, the shirt looks white to your eyes, but isn’t. It’s closer to yellow. Your brain works it out so things look the way they should. If they don’t, you probably don’t even notice it. These aren’t the droids you’re looking for. Your mind plays Jedi tricks on you. A white shirt, then,

isn't always white. Sometimes it is bluer or greener or yellower, depending on the light. But your eyes see it, and in collusion with your brain, quite happily report, "That's a white shirt!" So it *looks the same to you*, but isn't.

Your camera, for better or worse, doesn't act that way. Your A35/A55 might see an off-white shirt or a dingy yellow shirt. You get a dingy dose of reality when you look at your photo and see a white shirt looking very yellow. Change white balance to adjust the camera's reaction to light of different color temperatures so that the photo it records is closer to what you see with your eyes and what you expect with your mind.


Changing the white balance

Thankfully, changing the white balance on your A35/A55 is easier than reading about the science behind it. The trick is identifying the scene's actual light and setting white balance to reflect that. Going from one bad setting to another isn't going to do you any good. Table 8-5 shows white balance settings.

Table 8-5		White Balance Settings
Icon	Setting Option	Explanation
AWB	AWB	Auto. The camera tries to automatically identify the light source and correct the color.
	Daylight	Bright light from the sun. At noon, daylight is very white and shouldn't cast any color on objects.
	Shade	Bluer light than direct sunlight.
	Cloudy	Similar to the Shade setting.
	Incandescent	Bulbs with glowing filaments. These tend to be reddish, although soft white incandescent bulbs are very yellow.
	Fluorescent	Fluorescent lights glow with a greenish tint.
WB 	Flash	Use this setting if the flash is the predominant light source.

(continued)

Table 8-5 (continued)

<i>Icon</i>	<i>Setting Option</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
—	Color Temperature	Use left or right arrows to select a specific temperature. Check a light's package for color temperature.
—	Color Filter	Some color casts go from green to magenta. Apply a green (G) or magenta (M) filter. Add magenta if the scene looks green, and vice versa.
	Custom	Choose Custom to set white balance to a previously measured color temperature; choose Set to record it. See the following section in this chapter.

To change the white balance, follow these steps:

1. Select a compatible mode.

You can control white balance when in P, A, S, M, Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), and Sweep Shooting modes.

2. Press the white balance (WB) button.

The White Balance screen appears.

3. Select a white balance setting and press the enter button.

Your choices are explained in Table 8-5.

4. When necessary, tweak the preset White Balance setting.

When a preset is highlighted, adjust it three steps in either direction by pressing the left or right buttons. The number changes beside the preset. See Figure 8-12.

- Positive numbers decrease the color temperature and make the scene look yellow (good to counteract blue).
- Negative numbers increase it and make the scene look bluer (good to counteracting yellow).

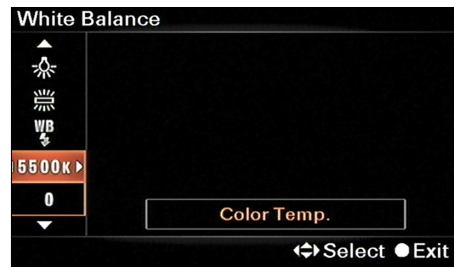


Figure 8-12: Setting a specific color temperature.

The exceptions are Fluorescent (can go from +2 to -1), Temperature (degrees Kelvin), and Color Filter (nine steps each of Green and Magenta).

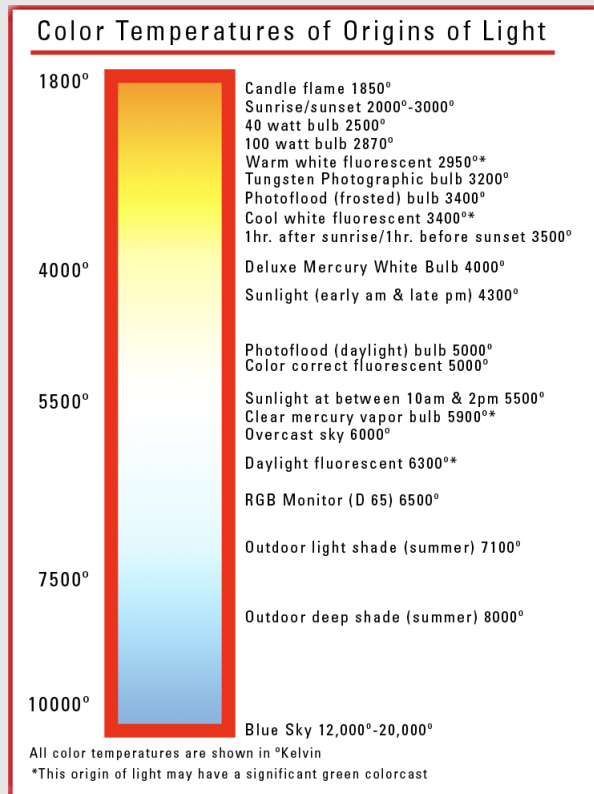


Taking your color temperature

Light has a temperature, but it's not what you think. Scientists have decided that a light's *color temperature* is the surface temperature an idealized light bulb reaches when emitting light of that color. Light is energy, after all, and the light bulb heats up. (The light bulb is far more complicated than I am letting on, but my wife has prohibited me from trying to explain it. I'll just say that it's called a *black body* and it's pretend.) Someone who was probably wearing a white lab coat went to a lot of trouble and measured the color temperatures of a range of

lights. The figure in this sidebar shows how they stack up, from low to high.

Notice that each color temperature is related to a temperature and has a color. That makes sense. The temperature is measured in degrees Kelvin. Hot colors are blue. Mid-range colors are light blue, white, and yellowish. Cooler colors are red. The colors are the opposite of what you would expect. We tend to think in terms of *red hot* and *cool blue*. So then, color temperature is a way of describing light. You can use the actual temperature in degrees Kelvin (or K), or name the type of light.





Creating a custom white balance setting

Creating a custom white balance setting is a good idea if you're working with JPEGs but not with Raw files. (It's easy to correct color imbalances in Raw files during processing.) Once the JPEG is created and saved by the camera, however, color problems are harder to solve without affecting other aspects of the photo.

The truth is, setting a custom white balance isn't a bad idea anytime you're working in a location where you plan on taking lots of photos. Yes, even if you're saving Raw files (in addition to or in place of JPEGs). You'll save yourself a lot of processing time by getting the white balance right the first time.

It's pretty easy to do. Here's how:

1. Select a compatible mode.

You can set a custom white balance in P, A, S, M, Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55), and Sweep Shooting modes.

2. Press the white balance (WB) button.

3. Highlight Custom and press the right button.

The option becomes Custom Setup, as shown in Figure 8-13.

4. Press the enter button.

The camera is ready, as in Figure 8-14.

5. Frame the scene to fill the center AF area with something white.

Don't worry how it looks. You aren't going to submit this photo to *National Geographic*.

6. Press the shutter button fully.

You will hear the shutter opening and closing, and a moment later the measured color temperature and color filter appear. See Figure 8-14.

7. Press the enter button.

White Balance is set to the custom value you just measured.

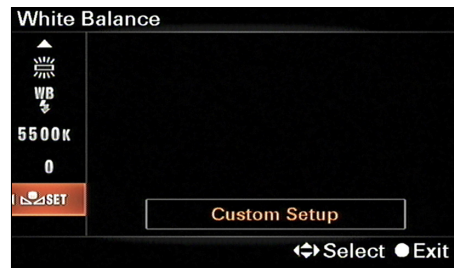


Figure 8-13: Preparing to set a custom white balance.



8. Take your pictures.

The camera holds onto the white balance setting until you change the setting. To recall this setting, choose Custom White Balance setting (rather than setting it).

Shooting white balance brackets

If you're not sure about the correct white balance and want to be able to choose from a few options, rather than shooting them one at a time, try shooting *white balance brackets*. You take one photo and the camera puts in all the work of processing the photo three times: two with different white balances, and one with the white balance you chose.

Here's how it works:

1. Select a compatible shooting mode.

You can shoot white balance brackets in P, A, S, or M.

2. Select a white balance that you think matches the scene.

You can choose Auto if you like, but then you have no idea where the camera is starting from.

3. Press the drive button.

4. Press the up or down buttons to highlight White Balance Bracket.

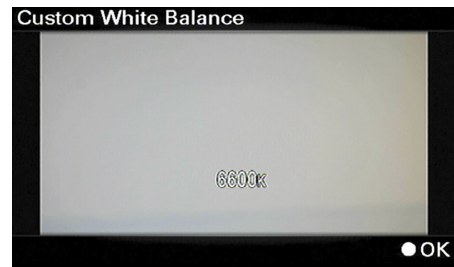
5. Press the left or right buttons to select Lo or High.

The camera can change the color temperature by a little or a lot, depending on which you choose.

6. Press enter to return to shooting.



Camera ready



Measured color temperature

Figure 8-14: Have something white handy to measure with.



7. Focus, frame, and shoot.

The camera takes one photo and processes it with three different temperatures, saving the result as three JPEG files. Figure 8-15 shows a result. In this example you can see three distinctly different outcomes. One is blue, one is natural-looking, and one is yellow. You may see three different shades, depending on your white balance setting and the lighting. The point is, you can go into it without knowing the perfect white balance setting. The camera gives you a few options to choose from.



Using Creative Styles

Creative styles are a type of in-camera processing option. I love them because they make it possible to creatively push photos in different directions without having to be a photo-retouching expert. Figure 8-16 shows the different creative styles applied to size photos of a pineapple we recently bought to eat and a sponge I had laying around. Table 8-7 explains the six creative styles.

Figure 8-15: Process three; choose the best one.



Creative styles are available in all the advanced exposure modes, as well as Continuous Advance Exposure AE (A55), Tele-Zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), and Sweep Shooting modes. The processing is applied to the Raw data and saved as a JPEG.

Table 8-7

Creative Styles

<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>
Standard	Your basic photo. Optimized for good all-round appearance. Not bad at all.
Vivid	Increases the saturation and contrast to add pop.
Portrait	Presents people in softer light by reducing the photo's sharpness.
Landscape	Elevates saturation, contrast, and sharpness.
Sunset	Use when you're shooting into or in the sunset. This style emphasizes the reddish orange colors.
Black & White	Desaturates the photo to present a classic black-and-white photo.

Selecting a style

Selecting a creative style is easy. Here's how you do it:

1. Enter an appropriate shooting mode.

You can use creative styles in the following modes: P, A, S, M, Continuous Advance Exposure AE (A55), Tele-Zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35), and Sweep Shooting.

2. Press the Function button.

3. Highlight Creative Style and press the enter button.

4. Press up or down to select a style on the left.

Or spin the control dial.

5. Press the Enter button to lock the change in and return to shooting.

Press the Function button to go back to the function display and make more changes.



Fine-tuning style

When you're selecting a creative style, keep these moves in mind:

- ✓ Press the right button to go to the three parameters.
- ✓ Press up or down to increase or decrease the setting, up to three steps.

- ✓ Press right or left to switch between the parameters.
- ✓ Press the enter button to return to shooting.

You can alter a style when you select it. A creative style has three tweakable parameters.



Standard



Vivid



Portrait



Landscape



Sunset



Black & White

Figure 8-16: Who lives in a pineapple under the sea?

Contrast

Increasing contrast strengthens the difference between shadows and highlights in a photo (think bright, sunny day with deep shadows). Decreasing contrast reduces this distinction, resulting in a mid-tone-heavy photo (think foggy day with no shadows).

- ✓ To increase a photo's overall impact, increase contrast. Be careful of increasing it so much that you turn highlights white and shadows black. In that case, you lose precious detail.
- ✓ To mellow or age a photo, decrease contrast. Try decreasing contrast when shooting a naturally high-contrast scene. This rescues details that might be lost.

Saturation

Increasing saturation strengthens the colors. (Turn up the heat, baby.) Decreasing saturation removes the color from a photo, subduing it.

- ✓ To mimic an aged color photo, decrease saturation.
- ✓ To add pizzazz, increase saturation.

Sharpness

As a whole, sharpness adjustments aren't as visible as the other two unless you zoom in or enlarge the photo. Chapter 10 has a few examples of photos with increased sharpness.

- ✓ Increase sharpness to add definition to a photo.
- ✓ Decrease sharpness to reduce definition.

Color Space Wars: sRGB versus Adobe RGB

Lots has been written about the differences between the sRGB and Adobe RGB color spaces and which one you should assign to photos. To be honest, it's mostly a bunch of hooley.



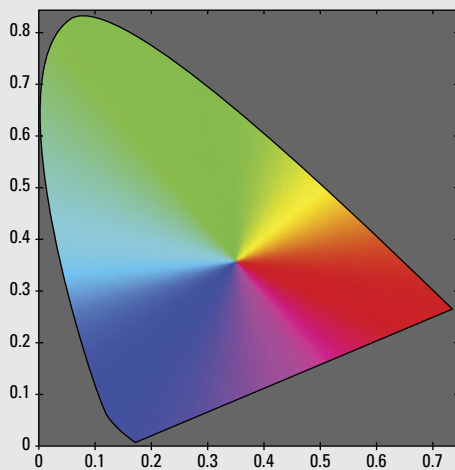
Choose sRGB and don't worry about it. Check out the sidebar if you need a bit more convincing (or you're the really curious type).



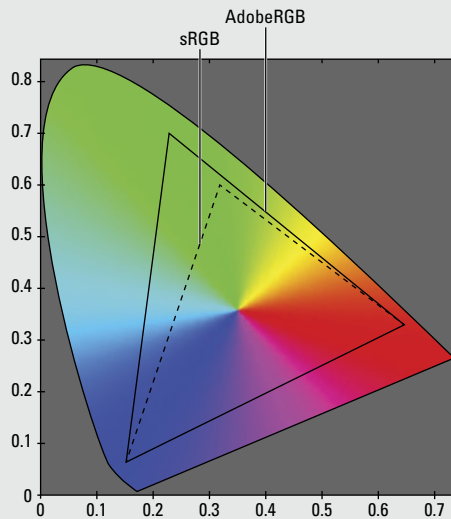
RGB wars

Being able to choose a color space is like giving you the option of choosing between putting a DVD disc in a DVD player or a Blu-ray disc in a DVD player. The DVD will work, despite being technically inferior to the Blu-ray disc, but the Blu-ray disc won't work. So, whatcha going to choose? The DVD. Still not convinced? Okay, I'll keep going.

Your eyes, to put it mildly, can perceive an incredibly large number of colors. By itself, that's no big deal. By charting those colors on a two-dimensional graph known as a CIE x,y Chromaticity Diagram (see the figure) you see reds, greens, blues, and the colors that connect them (at one luminosity; it is actually far more complicated than this). This is the big enchilada. It's the most we can see.



CIE Chromaticity Chart
These are the colors you see.



These are the colors each
color space can represent.

When you introduce computers and other digital devices, however, it gets messy. There have to be ways to map the world's colors into a system that can be read and understood not by humans, but by the technologies that we use. (That's a sly way of defining a *color space*.) That way, when you photograph a red banner, it looks red on the back of the camera

or computer monitor. A color space translates between color data in a photo and the device you're looking at to produce the colors that you expect.

Here's the problem: sRGB and AdobeRGB are both inadequate to the task at hand. Neither can describe the entire color space that we can see with our eyes (in fact, none that we have

invented to so far). Each color space is a subset of the total color space that we can see.

Now, it infuriates people who want things perfect that sRGB does a worse job of defining colors than AdobeRGB. It does. There's no contest when you look at the chart. However, due to the mysterious way the world works, sRGB has become the de facto color space standard. It's ubiquitous. In fact, what makes it so powerful is that devices that have no color management

capabilities at all assume everything is defined in sRGB and reproduce sRGB photos perfectly.

The problem with using AdobeRGB is that you can't guarantee that any device you send your photo to will reproduce the colors that have been assigned correctly. When you see JPEGs with embedded AdobeRGB color spaces on web browsers that *don't* read the color space or render it correctly look odd (at best) and possibly really goofy.

Ultimately, you have to choose between color spaces based on this criteria:

- ✓ **Compatibility:** sRGB is compatible with everything you'll likely view, edit, or print your photos on.
- ✓ **Range:** AdobeRGB defines a wider color space and is technically better than sRGB, but there's no guarantee you'll ever be able to see it reproduced.



It breaks my heart to tell you this, because if there was ever someone who wanted things to work "right," it's me, but you should choose sRGB and feel good about it. The relative difference isn't so large that you throw up when you see an sRGB-defined photo. You've been seeing them for years. (If you shoot Raw photos, ignore all this until you decide to process and save your file as a TIFF or JPEG. Then you have to assign a color profile. Choose wisely.)

Despite everything I've said, I encourage you to experiment with color space if you want. To change the color space, follow these steps:

1. Press the Menu button.

Interestingly enough, you can change the Color Space in any shooting mode.



2. Go to Recording menu 2.

3. Highlight Color Space and press the enter button.

4. Use the up or down buttons to select an option.

5. Press the enter button to make the change.

Picture Perfect Photo Recipes

In This Chapter

- ▶ Shooting great portraits
- ▶ Capturing breathtaking landscapes
- ▶ Freezing sports and action
- ▶ Shooting close-ups
- ▶ Trying out High Dynamic Range (HDR) photography

Sometimes things have to get worse to get better. You see, the more you know about your A35/A55 and how to take photos with it, the more you'll want to move it away from Auto. You'll want to set things yourself — things like aperture to blur the background and shutter speed to capture action without blurring. When you stop using Auto and create your own settings, your photos are going to get worse. Don't worry. With practice, they'll get better again. This chapter helps make the transition less painful.

Solid Settings for all Occasions

It pays to know what settings you should use in general situations. Table 9-1 has settings, when you should change them, and the chapter that has more detailed information. You can get to some of the settings by pressing a dedicated button (for example, the Drive button), you also can change the shooting functions by pressing the Function button. Some settings, such as image quality, can only be changed from the menu system.





Use these recipes for taking good photos in any situation. Try them out and learn when and where to break the rules. The rest of the chapter talks about how best to shoot specific types of subjects.

Table 9-1 Settings Cheat Sheet

<i>Option</i>	<i>Recommended Setting</i>	<i>See This Chapter</i>
Exposure mode	A, S, or M	2
Quality	Fine or Raw+JPEG	2
Size	Large	2
Flash mode	As required	2
Drive mode	Action photos, Continuous	2
	Others, Single	
AF mode	General purpose, AF-A	8
	Still subjects, AF-S	
	Moving subjects, AF-C	
AF Area	Still subjects, Local	8
	Moving subjects, Wide	
ISO	Generally, 100-400	7
	Auto in low light	
White Balance	Auto	8
DRO	Auto	7
Picture Style	Standard	2
Face Detection	On, although optional	2
Smile Shutter	Off	2
Metering Mode	Multi-segment	7

The settings appear on the camera several ways. Figures 9-1 and 9-2 show two variations. Figure 9-1 is the recording information display that shows up on the back of the camera when you've configured it for live view. Figure 9-2 shows the same information when the camera is configured for viewfinder. It appears on the LCD when you are not looking through the viewfinder. Both displays show the same information, formatted differently.

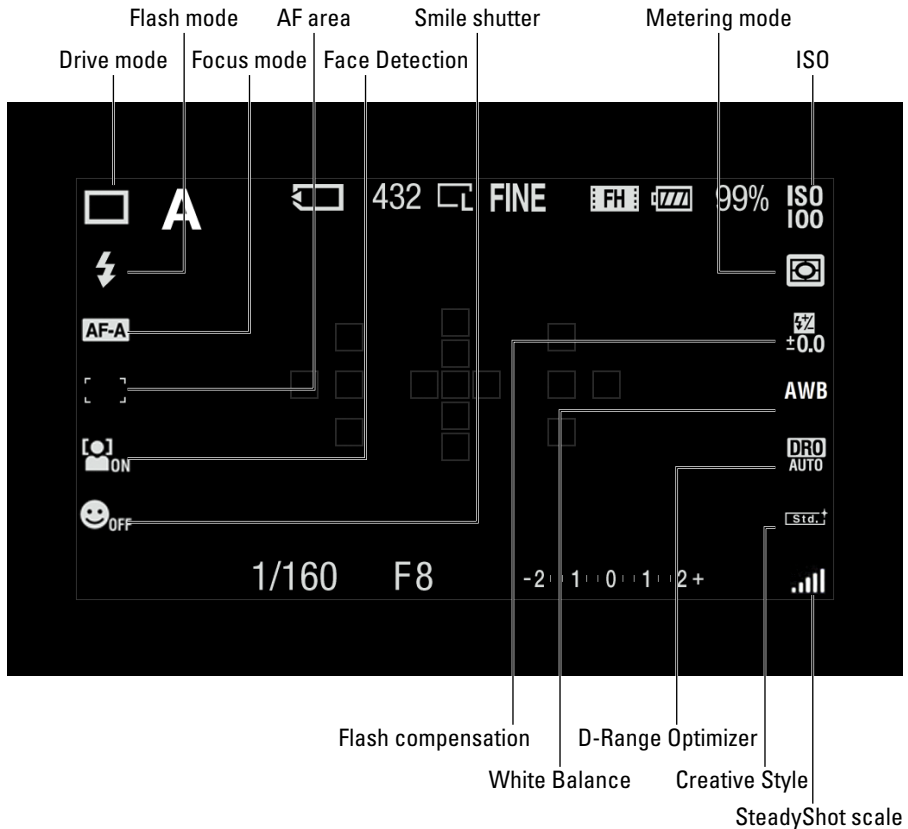


Figure 9-1: Settings via live view.

Astute observers will notice that P mode is missing from the table. The problem with P (program auto) is that you don't get to choose a specific aperture or shutter speed. As such, it's not a bad automatic mode if you want to control aspects of the camera, such as the white balance or metering mode, but leave the exposure decisions to the camera.

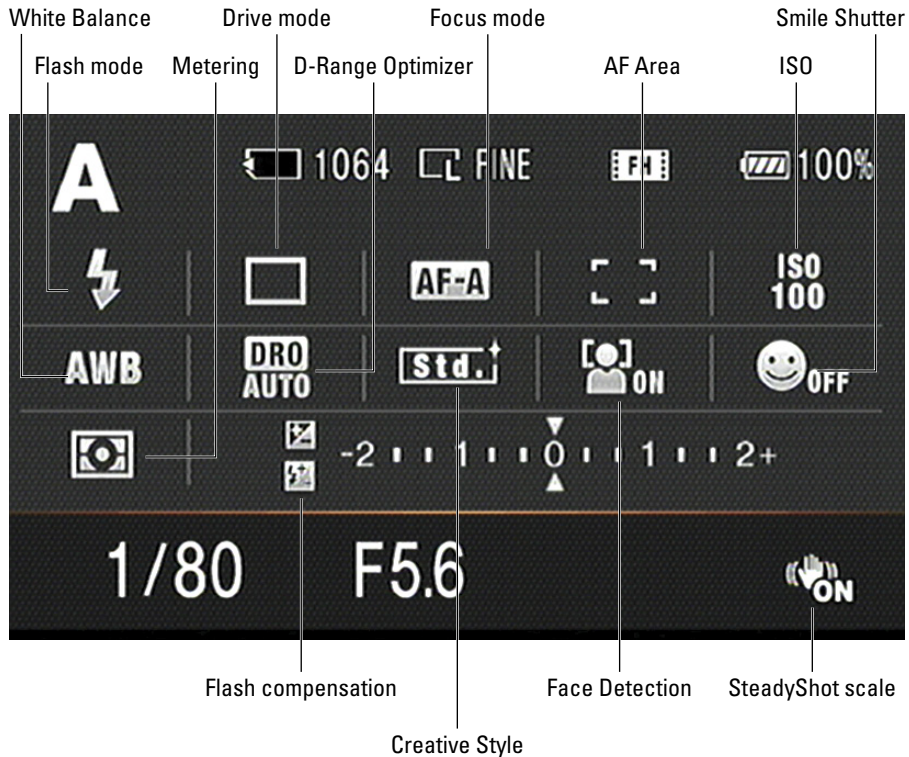


Figure 9-2: An optional way to view settings.

Developing a Shooting Strategy

Successful photo shoots (even if you're just planning on a walk down the street) depend, in part, on good preparation. The worst time to deal with confusion, dead batteries, or an incorrect set up is when you're trying to take pictures.



What's more, having a pre-shooting strategy routine will keep you from missing settings that you've changed and then forgot to change back.

Prepare beforehand

Commit some prep time to the following *before* you go out with your camera:

- ✓ **Battery:** Batteries are the life blood of digital SLRs. Unfortunately, you can't pop into the corner convenience store to buy more. You have to be prepared.



Buy more than one battery if you shoot a lot. Maybe several. Always have one in the charger so you can pop a fresh battery in the camera at a moment's notice. If you go on a trip, take the charger(s) with you. If you're using an external flash, take extra batteries with you.

- ✓ *Lenses:* Clean your lens before packing up. Don't wait until you're on location where it might be windy, dusty, or wet. Make sure the lens caps (front and rear, if applicable) are on securely.

- ✓ *Memory cards:* Have at least one backup. If you're going to shoot a lot, especially rapid-fire continuous shooting or brackets for High Dynamic Range Photography, buy more than one extra. Make sure all photos and movies are transferred to your computer, then format the memory cards using your camera before you pack them up.

If you shoot movies, consider buying several extra cards. You may even want to keep photos on a separate card than your HD movies.



- ✓ *Camera settings:* It's frustrating when you've got the camera set up to shoot action shots one day and accidentally leave things that way when you go out to shoot landscapes. It's even more frustrating when your camera's set up to save Standard JPEGs and you find out too late that you forgot to change that to Raw+J.

Reset the main functions to their defaults by going to Setup menu 3 and choosing the Reset Default option. After you do that, change the settings that you prefer to customize one at a time. For example, you might reset everything and then change the Image Size and Quality options from their default of Large/Fine to Raw+J (for Raw plus JPEG).

- ✓ *Packing list:* Whether you have an actual list or not, know what goes in your camera bag and check that everything is there before you leave.

- ✓ *Set goals:* Have a good general idea of what you want to accomplish. Categorize these ideas into camera-oriented groupings like wide-angle landscapes, the sunset, close-ups, action shots, portraits, or casual shots of the family.



Double-check battery level and memory card

Getting to where you want to take photos may mean stepping outside where you live or driving across town. When you're there,

- ✓ Get your camera out.
- ✓ Put the lens on (if necessary).
- ✓ Make any other connections (such as flash or tripod).
- ✓ Power on.

- ✓ Check the battery power (so you don't immediately have to swap out).
- ✓ Make sure your memory card is empty and ready for action. (But you did this before you left home, right?)



If you get to your shoot location and photos are on the memory card, replace it with one you know has been emptied. This is especially important if you've mounted the camera on a tripod. Although the battery/memory card cover is to the side of the tripod receptacle, it's a hassle to change memory cards when the camera is mounted on a tripod.

Establish specific goals for the shoot

Now that you are on location, take the general ideas you developed earlier and get specific. The following questions are examples of what you might ask yourself:

- ✓ What about this event or location do you want to showcase?
- ✓ What angle looks best?
- ✓ Where is the light coming from?

Set the mode dial and main exposure parameter

The first camera-related decision you need to make is what Exposure mode to use. Refer back to Table 9-1 and the following sections for help choosing.

- ✓ If you entered A priority mode, choose an aperture now and set it using the control dial.
- ✓ If you entered S priority mode, choose a shutter speed and set it now.



After you meter the scene, you can change settings if the camera can't take the photo.

Configure the camera

Set the Mode dial first. (If you're in an Auto mode, some of these options aren't available.)

1. Run through the menus by pressing Menu.

You can't change these menu items anywhere else. Although these options (shown in Figure 9-3) aren't the only changes you can make now, they do impact the photo:

- *Image Parameters:* Choose image size, quality, and aspect ratio.

- *SteadyShot*: Make sure SteadyShot is on if shooting handheld. You can turn it off if you're using a tripod.
- *Noise Reduction*: If you want to disable long exposure or high ISO noise reduction, do so now.

2. Check the functions by pressing the Function button.

You may already know if you want to change settings. For example, you may want to change Drive from Single Advance to Continuous. If so, do that now. The names of the functions appear beside them when you have selected an option in that column. Figure 9-4 shows the functions.

3. Choose a display mode by pressing the Display button.

4. If you know you want to use the built-in flash, pop it now.
5. Use the focus switch on the lens (if you have one) to switch to manual focus.

If your lens lacks this switch, use the one on the front of the camera.

Meter and autofocus

Press the shutter button halfway to initiate metering and establish autofocus. Don't stab at the button — press it smoothly. Practice a bit to know what halfway feels like, and how much more pressure causes the camera to take a photo. If you're focusing manually, use the focus ring.

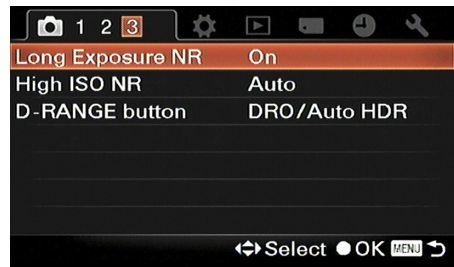
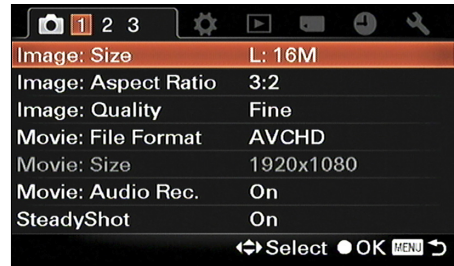


Figure 9-3: Check to make sure you have menu options set up.

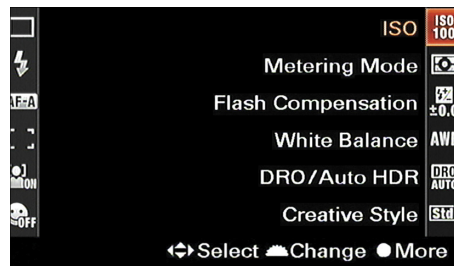
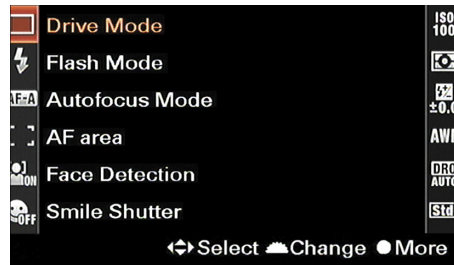


Figure 9-4: Changing settings via the Function button.



If you use a remote shutter release, it will feel different than the camera. Know your equipment and what to expect.

Compose the scene

Zoom in or out, if necessary. Look through the viewfinder or at the LCD screen and frame the scene. Remember to focus before this step. Otherwise, you'll be looking at blobs and vague shapes. You want to see what you're seeing, even if you have to refocus after. If you have a zoom lens, use the ring to zoom in or out. If not, physically move toward or away from your subject.

Adjust exposure and shoot

At this point you need to

- 1. Make any changes to the main exposure settings.**

Those settings include ISO, shutter speed, and aperture.

- 2. Press the shutter button fully to take the photo.**

- 3. Press the playback button to review your photo.**



Check to see that it's in focus, well-lit, and framed the way you want it. If necessary, use the zoom in or zoom out buttons to look closely at the photo, and the left, right, up, or down buttons to pan.



Correct problems

Correcting problems is an important step. If you identify problems when you review a shot, make the changes to the camera (if possible) to correct them.

For example, you may be taking a portrait of someone with strong back-lighting. If you left the metering mode set to Multi-segment, the light may overpower the person's face and leave them in shadow. Change the metering mode to Center Weighted or Spot to see if you can get the camera to correctly expose their face. You may also need to use the exposure compensation button, or change the flash intensity by using flash compensation. If the problem lies with you, such as a tilted photo, note what you did and correct it in the next photo.

Popping Out Portraits

If you're like me, you love taking photos of your family, friends, and pets. This section is full of information that will help you shoot nice portraits versus casual snapshots.



A *portrait* is a photo where the subject takes center stage. In other words, the subject dominates the frame and is the reason you're taking the photo. The setting may be casual or formal, and the photo may be planned or taken at the spur of the moment. Additionally, portraits separate the subject from the background by purposefully softening the background while keeping the subject in sharp focus.

Portrait shooting is one of the most rewarding aspects of photography because they tend to picture us at our best. The A35/A55 has a few automatic modes that you can use to take portraits: Auto+, Auto, and Portrait. At night, try the Night Portrait scene.

Trade tips

Figure 9-5 shows a nice portrait of my wife standing in front of the back fence. This photo represents what you want out of a portrait:

- ✓ It's staged, but not too formal.
- ✓ The subject is well lit and sharply focused.
- ✓ The background is pleasingly blurred.
- ✓ The noise level is very low.



Although shooting portraits is relatively easy, you might benefit from these pointers when shooting in Portrait mode:

- ✓ **Get close:** Don't be afraid to zoom in. You don't have to do this for every photo, but it places the focus of attention squarely on the subject and removes distractions.
- ✓ **Vary your height:** When photographing kids, kneel down and get on their level. The same thing goes for pets.
- ✓ **Flash:** Don't forget about the flash, especially when taking photos outside during the day. Yes, during the day. Set the Flash mode to Fill Flash to brighten people's faces and remove shadows.
- ✓ **Background:** What's happening in the background? Nothing ruins a good portrait faster than a messy room, power lines, or other distractions. If working inside is too restrictive, go outside and stand your subject in front of a nice bush or fence, or take them to the park. The possibilities are endless.



Figure 9-5: Portraits bring out the best of people.

Shooting manually

In Figure 9-5, the camera was set to Aperture mode and the aperture was set to $f/3.2$ (I was using a more capable lens than the standard kit lens). The combination of the wide aperture, the distance to the fence, and the focal length (70mm) takes the fence and trees out of focus.

You'll find a number of ways and suggestions for shooting portraits. You can lean on these general principles, however:

✓ **Mode:** Set mode dial to Aperture priority. This lets you control the aperture, and therefore, the depth of field. If you want total control, choose Manual mode.

✓ **Aperture:** Dial the lowest possible f-number for the largest aperture to minimize the depth of field.

If you have a higher quality lens, with a maximum aperture of something like $f/1.4$, you may need to set the aperture smaller than the largest it's capable of. If you don't, the freckle on someone's face may be in focus but the hair follicle just behind it may be out of focus because the depth of field is microscopically small. If that's the case, choose something like $f/2.8$, $f/3.2$, or larger.

✓ **Focal length:** Choose a longer focal length to accentuate the subject and create a shallow depth of field. The focal length lets you stand farther back. If you're using the 18-55mm kit lens, the most you have is 55mm. That's not ideal, but it isn't terrible, either.

Lenses that have at least 70mm are more suited to portraits, and some photographers like using 85mm to 105mm lenses.



✓ **Background:** If you've set a reasonably low f-number, the background will be a pleasing blur. If you want it softened even more, try zooming in, moving closer to the subject, or moving your subject away from the background.

✓ **Flash:** Whether you use the flash depends mostly on where you are.

- *Inside:* Try to avoid using the flash. It can bounce off your subject's face, be too bright, and cause reflections and it tends to leave the background too dark. For example, Figure 9-6 illustrates a flash-free shot taken inside with light from the window hitting the subject on his left side. It's a nice-looking photo, but a distracting shadow is on the side of his face. That's not always good. (But have confidence in what looks good. The Picture People aren't going to confiscate your camera if you do it another way.)

Pop the flash and experiment with flash compensation. Dial the strength of the flash down to -1.0 or -2.0.



Flash free



Flash reduced by -1



Full-strength flash

Figure 9-6: Flash Off is often the best choice inside, but not always.

Figure 9-6 also shows him with the flash compensation set to -1.0. However, this setting doesn't even light his face. In the last part of Figure 9-6, the same scene was taken with full-strength flash. Despite what the rules say, it's the best of the three. The light is more even across his face, although it's a bit brighter on one side. The light also helps separate him from the rest of the scene.

- *Outside:* If you're shooting outside, pop the flash to add fill light to people's faces. Figure 9-7 shows the youngster outside in front of the bushes. One of the photos was taken without the flash. Although the light is good, he appears darker than the background. I took the other with the flash.



No flash



With flash

Figure 9-7: Using the flash outside often makes people look better.

Good Bye, City Life

Landscape photos can take your breath away with their color and detail. There is a sense of depth and breadth to landscape photos that snapshots of your back yard don't offer. Figure 9-8 shows a landscape shot taken on Lake St. Clair, from the Grosse Point area of Michigan.



The goal of landscape photos, barring exceptions for creative framing and subjects, is to emphasize the size of the scene. You do this by maximizing the depth of field. You do that by standing back from what you're photographing and using a moderately small aperture, such as $f/8$.

Landscapes are fun to shoot. When you go out to shoot them, keep these things in mind:

- ✓ **Time:** The time of day matters. You'll get more aesthetically pleasing results right after sunrise or an hour or so before sunset. These times are called the *golden hour* because the light is softer and prettier.
- ✓ **Direction:** Think whether you'll be shooting into, away from, or across from the sun. Direction, along with time, determines whether some of your landscape will be in shadow, silhouetted, or brightly lit.
- ✓ **Weather:** Landscapes in particular benefit from how the changing weather changes the scene. Not every season will produce a photo with the same look. Snow, rain, heat, fall colors, wind, and other factors all affect your photos in different ways.
- ✓ **Wide angle works best:** Don't zoom in when shooting landscapes. In fact, zoom out as far as you can. If you don't have a lens capable of wide angles (below 24mm or so), try sweep shooting to capture as much scenery as possible. See Chapter 3 for more on sweep shooting.

Tripods aren't just for taking photos with long shutter speeds. This shot was taken using a tripod, and the shutter speed was quick: $1/320$ second. The tripod allowed me to carefully think about how the scene was composed. Tripods also help you take steady brackets for High Dynamic Range (HDR) photography, discussed later in this chapter.



This is but one example of a scenic landscape. There are as many others as there are landscapes. If you want to use an automated mode to shoot landscapes, use Auto+, Auto, or the Landscape scene. You can also achieve good results shooting landscapes by using Sweep Shooting to photography panoramas. Exceptions exist, but keep these general tips and tricks in mind when taking landscape photos:



Figure 9-8: Landscapes often showcase breadth, depth, or scale.

- ✓ **Mode:** Set the mode dial to Aperture priority or Manual priority. This gives you control over the aperture, which gives you control over the depth of field.
- ✓ **Aperture:** Set the f-number anywhere from f/8 to f/22 to create photos with a large depth of field.
- ✓ **ISO:** Rarely do you need to raise ISO when shooting landscapes. Put it at 100 and don't let it rise except when you can't set the shutter speed and aperture to the values you want.
- ✓ **Light and time:** Noon is rarely the best time to take photos outdoors. Rather, go out during the morning or evening hours. (The scene in Figure 9-9 was taken looking east as the sun was setting in the west.) During these times, the light hits the sides of buildings and trees. Shooting away from the sun means shadows are cast away from you. The light is really nice: softer than at midday and more appealing.
- ✓ **Clouds:** When possible, shoot landscapes when the skies are partly cloudy (not hazy or overcast though). Clouds make the sky more interesting, as seen in Figure 9-9. In that case, they were interesting enough to be featured in the top two-thirds of the frame.
- ✓ **Sunsets:** Sunsets are a subset of landscape photography. They're challenging because of the bright sun, which tends to cast everything in silhouette. Figure 9-10 shows a High Dynamic Range image of a sunset

taken over the Maumee River in Ohio. I used nine exposures to capture every part of the scene with a different exposure. The shots were combined and processed so that the brightness of the sun didn't wash out the sky and details in the rest of the photo.



Figure 9-9: The light is amazing just before sunset.



Figure 9-10: Use a small aperture when shooting directly into the sun.



Regardless of whether you're shooting brackets for HDR, set the aperture very small (Figure 9-10 was taken at $f/22$) to create the star effects shown here. Larger apertures make the sun look all blobby.

Give Me Park Avenue

Cityscapes, buildings, and other facets of urban life can be just as compelling as landscapes and nature. Most times, your goal should be to take photos with a good depth of field and low noise level that show off the building, city, or activity in question. Figure 9-11 shows a classic city shot of Detroit's Renaissance Center taken from several blocks away on Brush Street. The buildings in the foreground act like canyon walls as they lead your eye to the main subject. The depth of field provided by an aperture of $f/8$ ensures everything looks sharp and clear. The light was bright enough to allow an ISO of 100 and a shutter speed of $1/60$ second — perfect for handheld photography.



Figure 9-11: Some cityscapes evoke the same feelings as landscapes.

You can use Auto, Auto+, or Landscape mode to shoot building and cities. At night, use Night View or Handheld Twilight.

You have a lot of other ways to shoot cities and buildings. Although no one recipe satisfies all circumstances, keep these tips in mind:

- ✓ **Mode:** Choose Aperture priority to control depth of field. If you're moving and can't stop to stabilize yourself (maybe you're on a downtown rail or shuttle system), select Shutter priority.
- ✓ **ISO:** As with landscapes, try to keep ISO low. ISO will climb, however, when you take photos at night and if you need to raise it due to motion in the scene. Raising ISO lets you speed up shutter speed.

- ✔ **Looking at:** When you're featuring a tall building and you're far enough away, you can shoot more or less directly at it. The building will look natural. Foreground objects, like the trees at the bottom and top right of the scene, help frame the building and give a feeling of the distance.
- ✔ **Looking up:** When you're close to a building, it's best to look up and live with the fact that there will be vertical distortion in the scene. In other words, the building seems to lean away from you. You can often fix these problems when they aren't too pronounced, but not with the tools Sony provides. This is more of a job for Photoshop. Figure 9-12 shows a close-up shot of the entrance to the Compuware World Headquarters building, also located in downtown Detroit. There's really no other way to photograph a tall building from this close. The recipe for shots like this is to walk up, zoom out, point up, and snap the photo.

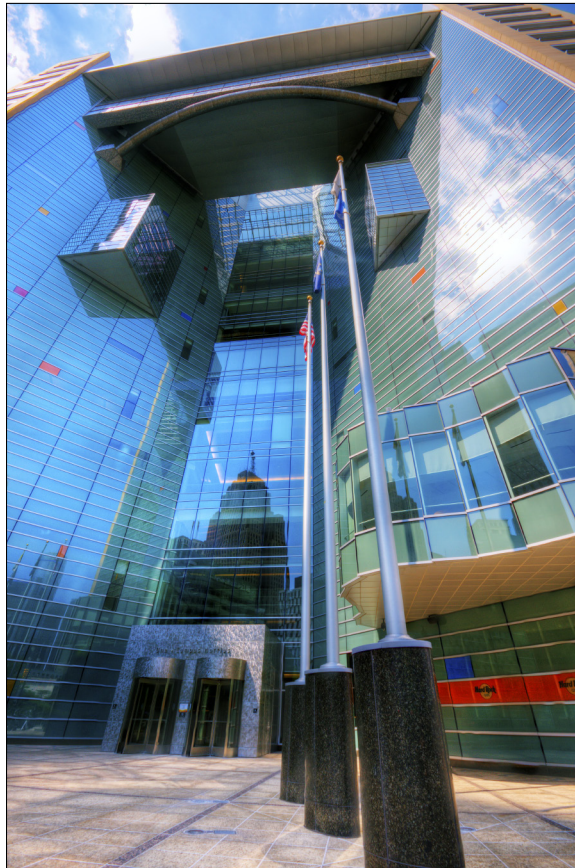


Figure 9-12: Look up to capture tall buildings.

- ✔ **Get out and walk:** Cities are alive. Find where the people are and get over there to take photos. Figure 9-13 shows a street scene near the Greektown Casino-Hotel in Detroit. The street is full of cars and people, going about their daily lives. They may live there, work there, or be visitors, like we were.



Figure 9-13: This area is a hive of activity.

- ✔ **Night scenes:** Cities and buildings are fun to photograph at night. Choose buildings with interesting light sources, spotlights, or street lights. Use a tripod when you can, which lets you lengthen the exposure time without blurring. Much like sunsets, use small apertures (in the order of $f/22$) to create star effects in bright lights.
- ✔ **Metering:** Be prepared to switch metering mode to Spot or Center if you're focusing on a building and the sky is interfering.
- ✔ **Tripod:** Use a tripod when the shutter speed is slow. Because tripods can be cumbersome to carry, feel free to shoot handheld as long as the shutter speed is above 1/30 second. (Your mileage may vary, but you get the idea.)

Freeze Frame Moments

Action shots are all about speed. Your subjects are moving, often rapidly, across your field of view, towards you, or away from you. No matter how you slice it, you have to capture a moving object as quickly and clearly as you can. Figure 9-14 shows a plane on its way to land at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport. We were leaving our hotel, which was directly in

the landing pattern. The kids loved seeing the planes, and the noise wasn't bad at all. This plane was flying across my field of view, but the shutter speed, at 1/250 second, was fast enough to freeze it.



The best two automated modes to capture action (or avoid blurring) with are Sports Action and Continuous Advance Priority AE (A55) or Tele-zoom Continuous Advance Priority AE (A35). Keep these tips in mind as you take your action shots:



Figure 9-14: You don't always need 1/1000 second to freeze action.

- ✓ **Mode:** Set the exposure mode to Shutter priority or Manual priority.
- ✓ **Shutter speed:** In general, 1/80 second is fast enough to capture some action, but you'll want to choose speeds (if you can) upwards of 1/250 to 1/500 second. On bright days with a wide aperture, you may be able to shoot at 1/1000 second or faster. Those speeds are fast enough to capture virtually anything without blurring.
- ✓ **ISO:** When shooting action shots, expect the ISO to climb. You may set it there yourself or rely on the ISO: Auto setting to take care of it. Figure 9-15 shows the balancing act of ISO versus shutter speed and aperture in action. I was at a football game when I took this shot from well up in the stands. It would be nice to have a faster shutter speed, but the action is fairly well frozen and looks nice even from a distance.



Figure 9-15: Be prepared for higher ISOs when shooting in low light with fast shutter speeds.



Getting the right exposure in situations like this is hard because of the night and need for fast shutter speeds. The solution is to set a moderate shutter speed (1/80 second in this instance), open the lens up, and raise the ISO. (This was taken at ISO 3200.)

- ✓ **Brighter is better:** Because of the premium that sports and action photography place on fast shutter speeds, the brighter the scene, the better. This means you'll often find the best conditions during bright days. Figure 9-16 shows this in action. In this case, I was photographing the river using techniques appropriate to landscape photography when some people came by. I was in Manual mode and had the aperture set to $f/22$. At 1/250 second, the shutter speed was fast enough to capture the action.



Figure 9-16: Bright conditions enable fast shutter speeds and small apertures.

- ✓ **Fast is relative:** You don't have to dial in shutter speeds of 1/2000 second or faster to catch all the action. You may want a bit of motion blur in some photos. At other times, you may want to completely freeze the action.
- ✓ **Not just sports:** As you can see from the photos, Shutter mode isn't just useful for sports. Photograph kids, pets, people, and anything else that's moving when you don't want excessive blurring.
- ✓ **Autofocus mode:** Set the AF mode to AF-C, which stands for Continuous AF, to keep the camera actively focusing for as long as you have the shutter button pressed at least halfway. This is pretty important for moving subjects.

✓ **Flash:** Use fill flash when necessary. Be aware that you'll run up against the camera's *sync speed* — the fastest you can set the shutter and use the flash. For the A35/A55, sync speed is 1/160 second, which may not be fast enough. Using the flash also limits your burst speed. Figure 9-17 is a photo of two of my boys riding toward me (almost over me) in a toy truck. The sun was setting to the left and their faces were a bit dark. I popped the flash, which limited my fastest shutter speed to 1/160 second, and took the photo.



Figure 9-17: Fill flash limits shutter speed, but is sometimes necessary.

So Close You Can Touch It

Give someone a camera and they will, sooner or later, want to stick it really close to something and take a picture. It's only natural. I do it. You do it. The question is, how should you set up the camera to take close-ups? *Close-ups* are any photo where the subject dominates the frame. You don't necessarily have to be close to what you're photographing (that's what telephoto lenses are for), but it has to appear large. Macros are a special type of close-up photos that captures an object close to life size on the camera's sensor.

Figure 9-18 shows an example of the type of close-up you might want to photograph. Nice shots that feature a product or object will help you sell your wares on sites like Etsy and eBay. They should be clear, well-lit, have minimal noise, and have an unobtrusive background.



Figure 9-18: Posed close-ups don't have to be a hassle.

You don't need a studio to take nice close-ups. I straightened up a small corner of our kitchen before lunch one day and set this horse on a rolling cart beside the stove. I didn't use extra lighting or other special studio tricks. The overhead light was on and there was light coming in from the window to the left. The one odd thing I did do was go downstairs and bring up a piece of wood paneling to put behind the cart. The yellow wall, normally very photogenic, clashed with the horse. The paneling offered better contrast.



When taking close-ups, follow these steps:

1. Set up your camera on your tripod.

You need it to shoot close-ups like this because of longer shutter speed times. You don't want to blur the photo.

2. Set your mode to Manual.

Manual mode gives you total control over exposure.

3. Choose an aperture.

Setting a large aperture results in a shallow depth of field. At close distances, it can sometimes be too shallow. Try $f/5.6$ or $f/8$ to begin with. Adjust the aperture accordingly after taking a few test shots if the depth of field looks too shallow or not shallow enough.

4. Set the ISO to 100 and leave it there.

That's your noise reduction.

Although you can switch metering mode to Spot or Center weighted, unless there is a large difference between the light in the room and one on the subject, Multi-segment works fine.

5. Dial in the shutter speed.

- Spin the control dial left to increase the exposure and move the marker to the right.
- Spin the control dial right to decrease the exposure and move the marker to the left.

When it's above 0EV, the exposure is what the camera suggests. You've just set the camera up to take a photo that is generally well exposed. The next part takes a bit of practice.

6. Pop the flash to enable fill flash.**7. Take a test photo.****8. Press the Playback button and review the photo.**

If necessary, zoom in and then pan using the arrow buttons. Look to see if the flash is too bright. You want something that illuminates the subject but doesn't overwhelm it and create dark shadows.

9. If necessary, press the Function button and turn flash compensation down.**10. Take another test photo and adjust as necessary.**

Adjust shutter speed or flash compensation to balance the foreground with the background. The settings ended up being $1/2$ second shutter speed, $f/5.6$, ISO 100, and flash compensation $-1.0EV$. I set the tripod back from the horse and zoomed in to use the longest focal length of the kit lens, 55mm.



The best automated mode to shoot close-ups is the Macro scene. Here are some other technical pointers to consider when taking close-ups:

- ✓ **Mode:** Set mode dial to Aperture priority or Manual priority. Manual mode is helpful when shooting close-ups for fun or for an Etsy account or eBay listing.
- ✓ **Aperture:** Set the aperture low ($f/5.6$ or lower) to create a limited depth of field when the subject is on the same linear plane as the background. A small aperture is less important when the subject is very close to the camera and the background is farther away. Around $f/8$ will do nicely.



Set the aperture very small, from $f/11$ to $f/22$, when the distance is very close and you want the depth of field to be large enough to cover your subject. Too large an aperture puts the front half of your subject in focus and makes the back half blurry.

Figure 9-19 is some grass I planted in our backyard. I go out to check it every day. You can tell from the figure that it's coming along nicely. The secret to this shot was to get down on the ground and use a wide aperture, $f/5.6$, for the kit lens. The aperture and close distance helped create the shallow depth of field. The fact that the camera is on the same level as the grass gives the photo depth. If you stood over it and looked down, the entire patch you took would be in focus. The shallow depth of field and perspective make the photo more interesting.

- ✓ **ISO:** For handheld close-ups, expect ISO to go up so you can achieve a blur-free shot. For studio close-ups, set ISO to 100 if possible, and only raise it if you must.



Figure 9-19: The shallow depth of field makes this close-up more interesting.

✔ **Focus:** When possible, manually focus close-up shots. You have total control that way. Use the zoom magnifier, if necessary. However, in some situations (especially handheld) you may need to use autofocus. Switch the AF area to Spot to use the center AF area exclusively, or choose Local and set the AF area. Frame your shot by placing the precise point you want in focus under the AF area and take the photo.

✔ **Flash:** You'll want the flash off for most close-ups. If you need extra light, turn on the overhead, go outside when it's sunny, or bring in small, inexpensive flood lamps with daylight (not soft white) bulbs. Figure 9-20 shows what happens when you use the flash on something very close: unattractive and distracting glare of the flash reflecting off the globe and back to the camera. The other photo in Figure 9-20 was taken with a wide aperture ($f/5.6$), high ISO (ISO 1600), a relatively slow shutter speed (1/20 second), and no flash. The depth of field is so shallow at this distance that the center of America is in focus but the northern and southern states are blurry.

✔ **Tripod:** A tripod is recommended for table-top close-ups. It frees you to set the shutter speed long enough to counter dim light and a low ISO.

✔ **Background:** The background doesn't have to be anything fancy, but it should look nice when blurred and be unobtrusive. Figure 9-21 is a whimsical close-up of a variegated acorn squash. Notice the background? The squash stands out nicely from it, even though both are predominately green. This is caused by a shallow depth of field. When holding something so closely, as compared to the distance the background is at, you don't have to set the aperture as wide to achieve the same separation effect. This was taken at $f/8$, and nicely creates the limited depth of field and the subject-background separation you should be looking for in close-ups.



Close flash



No flash

Figure 9-20: Flash often creates terrible reflections in close-ups.



Figure 9-21: Some backgrounds are right underneath you.

Exploring HDR Photography

I can't show you all the ins and outs of High Dynamic Range (HDR) photography. However, I can relay enough about it so you can decide if it's something you want to try. HDR photography is very rewarding and no more difficult than the other types of photography once you get the hang of it.



HDR is a term that describes a discipline of photography that uses more than one photograph to push the light-capturing capability of the camera beyond what is possible in a single photograph. These additional photos are called *exposure brackets*. The bracketed photos are framed identically (or nearly so) but exposed differently. The most common practice is to take three photos: one underexposed, one correctly exposed, and one overexposed. That's why they are called *exposure brackets*. You "bracket" the ideal exposure with other photos. Figure 9-22 shows three exposure brackets of a single scene.

After the brackets are photographed, you use special HDR software to combine them into an HDR image, which you convert to a TIFF or JPEG. That process is called *tone mapping*, and is similar in theory to converting a Raw photo into a JPEG or TIFF. You are able to make decisions using a bunch of information to distill the photo down to a format that has less information. Specifically, you're able to change the relative brightness, darkness, and detail across the scene. In the end, you end up with one photograph that was created with light captured by three or more photos. Figure 9-23 shows a finished HDR image.



Photomatix Pro (www.hdrsoft.com) is one of the leading HDR applications available today.



Correct exposure



Overexposed



Underexposed

Figure 9-22: HDR uses exposure brackets to capture more detail than one photo can.



Figure 9-23: The final result is a magnificent combination of shadows and highlights: HDR.



Technically, you can shoot HDR in Manual exposure mode by setting the aperture and then adjusting the shutter speed by regular increments. You're the one who has to make the adjustments and take the photos.

You can also use the A35/A55's automatic exposure bracket feature. This Drive mode makes the exposure changes and takes the photos in rapid sequence. For more information on automatic exposure bracketing, please turn to Chapter 7.

Figure 9-24 illustrates another HDR example. This one was taken of a fountain enthusiastically shooting water upwards. No matter. The combined effect is as if a single photo was taken with a longer shutter speed. The water looks smooth rather than freeze frame.



Figure 9-24: HDR is great for many types of scenes.



You can use the auto HDR function to create images without having to mess with more than one exposure or additional software. The A35/A55 takes multiple shots and combines them into one photo by itself. To access the option, press the D-range button and choose Auto HDR. When shooting brackets for HDR, there's no need to have the D-range optimizer on. No one will come arrest you, though, if you forget to turn it off. Similarly, you should turn off SteadyShot when using a tripod.

Part IV

The Part of Tens





As a reader, one of the things I like the most about Parts of Tens chapters is that they're easily digested. This particular PoT shows you several easy ways to spruce up your photos using the free software that shipped with your camera, whether you're on Windows or using a Macintosh. You find techniques for correcting brightness and contrast problems, strengthening colors, removing red-eye, sharpening things up, and more. You also get an introduction to ten camera features worth investigating, from GPS (A55) to picture effects (A35), to wireless flash and customization features.



Ten Easy Ways to Spruce Up Your Photos

In This Chapter

- ▶ Removing red eye
 - ▶ Brightening things up
 - ▶ Making things automatic
 - ▶ Working with shadows and highlights
-

Go ahead and delete those hopelessly overexposed, noisy, or embarrassing photos. You know — the ones that you’ll never want to show off to your friends and family. Use the Delete button on the back of the camera to send such pictures back from whence they came before they take over your computer. You don’t need to waste time with them. This chapter shows how to use some of the tools in Sony’s Picture Motion Browser (PMB) and Apple’s iPhoto to spruce up your already-pretty-good-but-something-may-be-slightly-off JPEGs.

Working with PMB or iPhoto

Sony Picture Motion Browser (PMB) and Apple iPhoto are the simplest, least expensive ways to do some minor photo retouching. Both organize your photos and have a suite of effective JPEG-only editing tools. Neither are hard to figure out, and both are pretty good at what they do. The following sections introduce the basics of working with files in Sony PMB and Apple iPhoto.



They call it Picture Motion Browser

PMB lets you import, organize, and edit photos and videos. Unlike the other two applications that come with your camera (Image Data Lightbox SR and Image Data Converter, both of which are summarized in the Sony Software section of Chapter 6), PMB can edit JPEGs.

Here, then, are some tasks you'll need to do quite often.

Launching PMB

The fastest way to launch PMB is to double-click the PMB icon. The program starts in your last view, whether Calendar or Index. On the other hand, you can start the program with PMB Launcher, which presents you with the task-based dialog box. Select View from the list of options on the left and then choose either Calendar or Index View to run the program.

De-cluttering

If you shoot Raw+JPEG, PBM shows both thumbnails in both Calendar and Index views. This makes it hard to navigate and figure out which photo you want to edit.



When you have both file formats for photos and want to see the JPEGs only in PMB, choose View→Show JPEG for Raw+JPEG.

Using Calendar view

The Calendar view organizes your collection by date. Figure 10-1 shows an entire year. The Calendar is located on the left side of the screen and works like you might expect. Click a year or month to see the calendar appear in the main window. Dates with photo thumbnails have pictures of movies associated with them. Click a date to see the photos you took on that date, based on their EXIF data. Use the vertical scroll bar to the right, if present, to browse up and down.

Working in Index view

The Index view (see Figure 10-2) organizes by import folder rather than by date. A folder hierarchy appears on the left in this view. Click a folder name to show the photos and movies in the folder, as well as any subfolders. Folders with hollow triangles beside them indicate they can be expanded. Click the triangle to view the subfolders. Select the folder to view only the photos within that folder (and any potential sub-subfolders). Black triangles show folders that you can collapse. Click to reverse the process.

Calendar view



Figure 10-1: Organizing by date with Calendar view.

Index view

Selected folder name

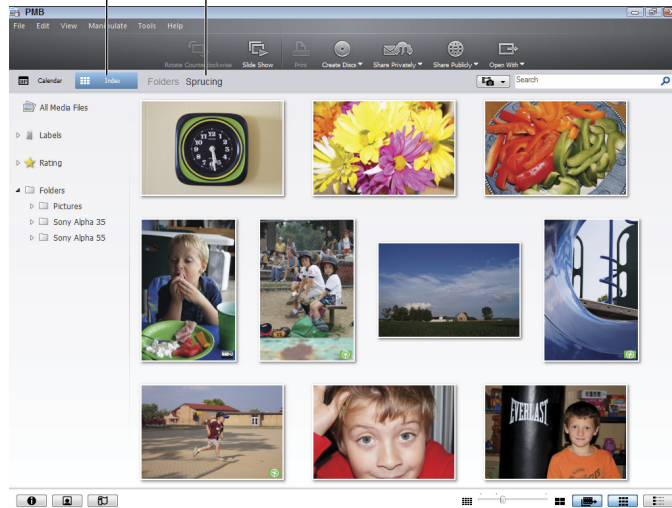


Figure 10-2: Index view organizes by folder.

Previewing photos

In PMB, Preview is where you edit your JPEG photos. It's not the most obvious name. To enter Preview mode, double-click a photo or choose Manipulate⇨Edit⇨Preview menu. A series of buttons should appear on the right side of the screen in the Edit Palette. Thumbnails are on the left side of the screen. Click a thumbnail to change the photo shown in the Preview area. If you've made any changes and haven't saved the photo, you'll be prompted to Save, Save As, Do Not Save, or Cancel when you try to switch to a new photo.

Using the Edit Palette

The Edit Palette has buttons you'll use to spruce up your photos. The buttons are also available under the Media Control menu when you're in Preview mode.

- ✓ **Reveal the Edit Palette** by clicking the Show Edit Palette button in the bottom-right corner of the window. The buttons are this chapter's main subject.
- ✓ **Cancel edits** by pressing Reset, providing you haven't saved your changes yet. Pressing Reset also resets the view.
- ✓ **To preserve your edits**, click Save or Save As buttons at the bottom of the Edit Palette.

Zooming

You can zoom in to inspect details as you browse in Preview mode, or after you select an editing button. Some functions, like red-eye reduction, kick you back to the original view, which means that you may have to zoom back in.

- ✓ **To zoom in or out**, use the Preview slider. Drag the slider left or right, click somewhere along the line, or click the plus or minus magnifiers.
- ✓ **To see the entire photo**, click the Fit to Window icon. Or, right-click in the Preview window and select Actual Size or Fit to Window.

Panning

To pan around a photo that you've zoomed in on, click and drag in the Preview window. This works (mostly) whether you've selected an adjustment or not. However, there are two exceptions: Red-Eye Reduction and Crop Image. When you're using those edits, you can't pan with the mouse. You must use the horizontal and vertical scrollbars to the bottom and right of the image.

Saving your work

Use the Save or Save As buttons at the bottom of the Edit Palette to save the adjustments you've made to your photos.



Choosing Save overwrites the original photo, which means that your changes are made, whether you like them or not. You get one warning, which you can (inexplicably) turn off. Unless you have a backup or the Raw file (in addition to the JPEG you're editing), overwriting the original locks in your changes forever. If that's okay with you, then don't worry about it. If not, *always have a backup file or use Save As.*

Choosing Save As lets you save a copy of the JPEG with a new name. Although, technically, repeatedly saving a JPEG file will degrade it, you'd have to save your JPEGs many times to make a practical difference. I stopped at about 15, compared the before and after photos, and saw no difference.

iPhoto a go-go

Apple iPhoto is a powerful little photo organizing and editing application that lets you edit JPEGs on your Macintosh.

Working with events and photos

When you first start iPhoto, you import photos into the iPhoto Library. Photos are collected into events, which are sorted by the date of the earliest picture. Events aren't limited to a single date. One event could span a year or more.

- ✓ **To browse through large thumbnails of events** (as shown in Figure 10-3), click Events. That option is in the Library section on the left.
- ✓ **To open an event**, double-click it. It expands to take up the screen and shows you thumbnails of all the photos associated with it.
- ✓ **To return to the Events view**, click All Events.
- ✓ **To name an event**, click its name. When the title changes to a text entry box, type a new one.
- ✓ **To see a list of events**, rather than large thumbnails, click Photo (from the Library list on the left). Now events are smaller but show more information. Click the triangle beside the event name to expand or collapse each event. This shows an event's thumbnails, as shown in Figure 10-3.

Throughout all this, you can access the helpful tools at the bottom of the screen.

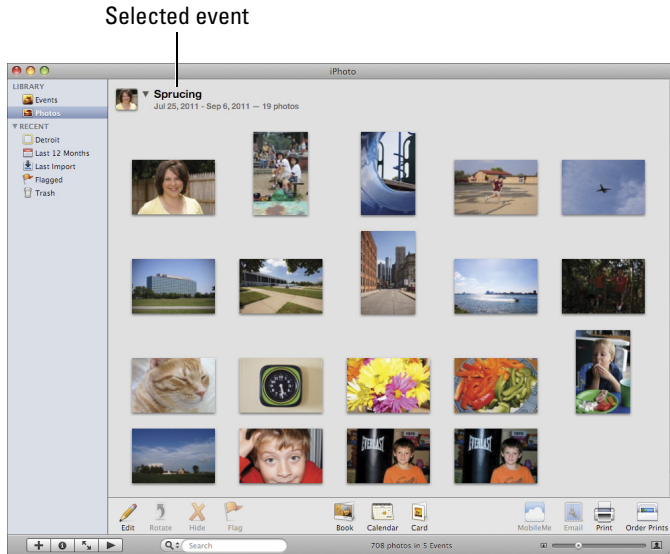


Figure 10-3: Expanding thumbnails for an event in Photos view.

Viewing individual photos

To see an individual photo, open the event. Double-click the thumbnail of the photo you want to see larger. Click the photo to return to thumbnails.

Editing photos

If you're currently viewing the photo in large form, simply click Edit. Otherwise, follow along:

1. **Click the photo thumbnail.**
2. **Click the Edit button at the bottom of the screen.**

Working in Full Screen mode

To enter Full Screen mode (seen in Figure 10-4), select View⇧Full Screen. The Full Screen mode lays out differently than normal windowed mode. The event's thumbnails now appear in a strip at the top of the screen, just beneath the menu. If they disappear, move your mouse to the top of the screen to bring them (and the menu) back. When you're done working in Full Screen, press Esc.



There is no Edit mode to go to when you're in Full Screen. You're already there.



Figure 10-4: Moving up to Full Screen.

Saving

You don't have the option to save photos in iPhoto. They're automatically saved when you press Done in the Editing window. Your only file options are to duplicate (Photos⇨Duplicate) or export (File⇨Export) the photo. Duplicate keeps the new file in iPhoto and places it in the same event. This is a good option if you want to experiment with edits and would like to revert to your original (delete the modified one and rename the duplicate, then start over by duplicating it again if you need to). Export saves the file to your system.

Taking the Red Out



TIP

If you find yourself having to correct several shots with red-eye, make sure you have enabled red-eye reduction. To do so, press the Menu button and go to Custom menu 1. Select Red Eye Reduction and select On. You may also want to turn off the flash or turn up the lights in the room.

Fix red-eye in PMB

Fix red-eye with these steps:

1. Launch the Picture Motion Browser (PMB) to navigate to your photo.

The preceding sections explain how to get there.

2. Double-click the photo to enter Preview mode.

The name Preview mode is confusing and says nothing about being able to edit your JPEGs within PBM. Soldier on!

3. If you can't see the Edit Palette, press the Show Edit Palette button.

The list of editing options appears on the right side of the screen.

4. Press the Red-Eye Reduction button.

5. Zoom in on one or both eyes.

Be careful not to click in the image as you position your view. Clicking applies Red-Eye Reduction to that location, which you'll have to undo. Use the horizontal and vertical scroll bars beside the photo to position the cursor.

6. Click in the red part of the eye, as shown in Figure 10-5.

If necessary, press Undo and click again in a different part of the eye. You may also click again to try and get rid of all the red.

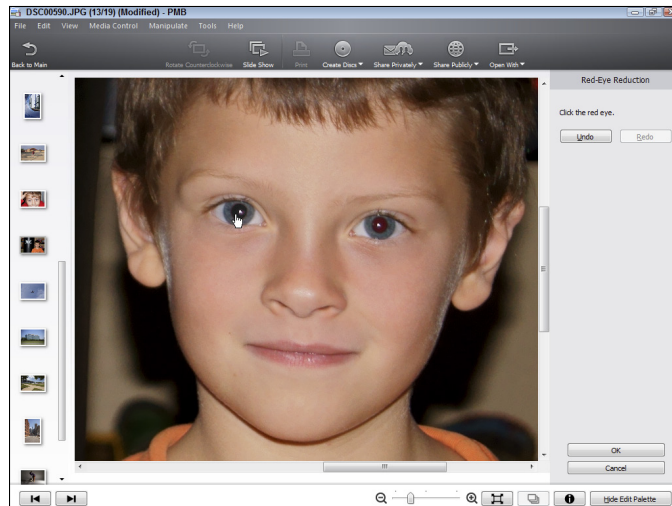


Figure 10-5: Remove red-eye with a click.

7. Press OK to finish.

If you click Cancel instead, you get kicked back to the Preview screen so you can make adjustments, save the results, or quit.

8. Choose Save (or choose Save As to create a copy).

If you choose the latter, you will be able to enter a new file name when you save the photo.

9. Press the Back to Main button or double-click another thumbnail.

Fix red-eye in iPhoto

If you're using iPhoto, remove red eye using the following steps:

1. Launch iPhoto and go to your photo.

This chapter's "iPhoto a go-go" explains how to do this.

2. Double-click the photo and press Edit.

These examples illustrate Edit mode rather than Full Screen.

3. Click the Red-Eye button at the bottom of the screen.**4. Zoom in to see the details of one or both eyes.**

Be careful not to click in the image as you position your view. Clicking applies red-eye reduction to that location, which you'll have to undo using the Edit⇨Undo menu. Use the horizontal and vertical scroll bars beside the photo to position it.

5. Click in the red part of the eye to correct it, as shown in Figure 10-6.

If necessary, press Undo and click again in a different part of the eye.

6. Press the tool to return to Edit mode, then choose another tool if you want.

You can still undo everything at this point by selecting Edit⇨Undo.

7. Press Done to finish and save the file.

Once you press Done, you're done. There's no more undoing! When you press Done, you return to the event and the photo is saved.





Figure 10-6: Getting the red out with iPhoto.

Lopping Off to Crop

Even professional photographers crop their photos. *Cropping* in PMB is the digital equivalent of using scissors to trim the photo and keeping only what you want. Cropping also lets you choose a completely new *aspect ratio*. That means if you have a normal photo and want the crop to have the same ratio of length to width, you can. Alternatively, you can crop it so that the new file is square, or widescreen, or anything in between.

Cropping in PMB

Here's how to crop a photo in PMB:

1. **Launch the Picture Motion Browser (PMB) and go to your photo.**
2. **Double-click the photo to enter Preview mode.**
3. **Press the Crop Image button.**
4. **Select an aspect ratio from the drop-down list.**
5. **Resize the crop rectangle by dragging.**

This is the fun of cropping.

6. Click OK.

Or click Cancel to go back to the Preview window.

Cropping in iPhoto

To crop in iPhoto, follow these steps:

1. Launch iPhoto and navigate to your photo, as explained in the earlier section.**2. Double-click the photo to view it, then press Edit.****3. Press the Crop button at the bottom of the screen.**

The tool appears, in the form of a crop box and controls.

4. Select crop options.

If you want the freedom to crop the photo with the aspect ratio of your own choosing, make sure Constrain is unchecked. Otherwise, choose an aspect ratio from the drop-down list.

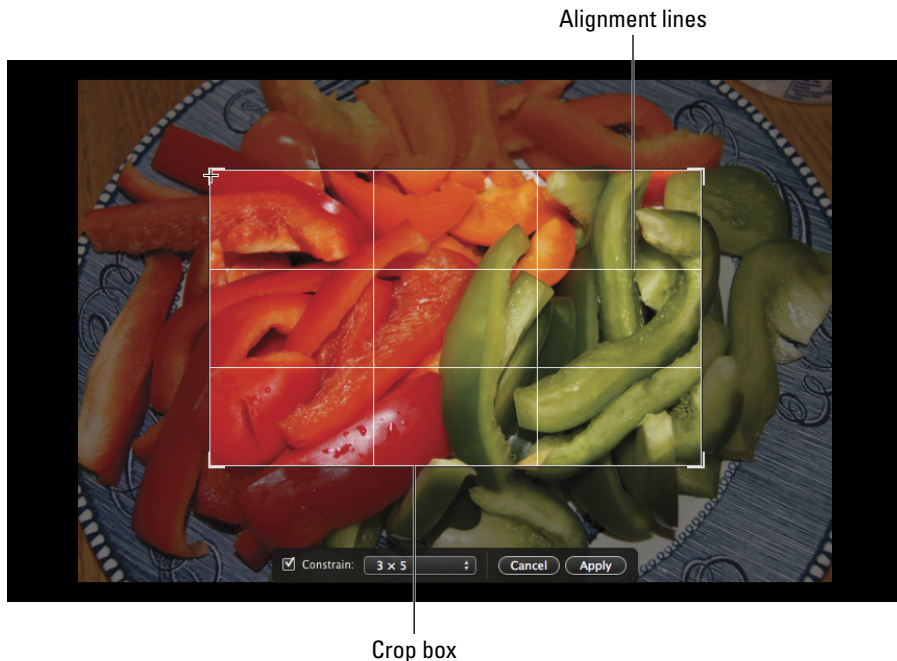
5. Drag the crop box (shown in Figure 10-7) to resize and position.

Figure 10-7: The alignment lines help you line things up.

6. Click Apply to complete the crop.

Or you can choose Cancel to bail out.

7. Choose another tool if you want.

You can still undo the crop at this point by selecting Edit⇨Undo.

8. Press Done to finish and save the file.

Testing the Auto Waters

I'm a big fan of automatic corrections, but you have to know when to use them and when to do things manually. Both PMB and iPhoto have automatic corrections. PMB calls it Autocorrect; iPhoto calls it Enhance.



It's hard to predict whether auto corrections will work wonders. Try using it, but know that you don't have to accept the results. You may be able to tweak the brightness, contrast, or color yourself and do a better job, or do nothing.

Autocorrect in PMB

Trying autocorrect in PMB is easy:

1. Launch the Picture Motion Browser (PMB) and go to your photo.

Instructions for doing that are in this chapter's section titled "They call it Picture Motion Browser."

2. Double-click the photo to enter Preview mode, as shown in Figure 10-8.**3. Press the Autocorrect button.**

PMB corrects the photo automatically.

Autocorrect in iPhoto

To enhance a photo automatically in iPhoto, follow these steps:

1. Launch iPhoto and go to your photo.

Instructions for doing that are in this chapter's section titled "iPhoto a go-go."

2. Double-click the photo and click Edit.**3. Click Enhance.**

If you like the change, continue. If not, choose Edit⇨Undo.

4. Click Done.



Figure 10-8: Autocorrect brightens this photo of a field in Indiana.

Tweaking Brightness and Contrast

Making subtle adjustments to brightness and contrast can make a world of difference for many photos. Take a good photo and make it better. That's fun! You also can rescue some photos with severe brightness and contrast problems. Keep an open mind and don't spend too much time fussing over it.



If you can quickly apply adjustments that help, then you're doing well. Just don't expect every photo to work out.

Brightness in PMB

To adjust brightness or contrast in PMB, follow these steps:

1. Launch the PMB and go to your photo.

Instructions for doing that are in this chapter's section titled "They call it Picture Motion Browser."

2. Double-click the photo to enter Preview mode.

3. Click the Brightness button.

4. Make your adjustments to the following four areas: Dark Areas, Entire Image, Light Areas, and Contrast.

Their options are pretty self-explanatory, but require some creativity.

- *Increasing brightness:* To brighten a photo, increase the values up to 100. Figure 10-9 was shot in Aperture priority mode and with an aperture to f/22. The ISO was fixed at 100 and I used the flash. The adjusted version isn't perfect, but it's a lot better than the original.



Before

- *Decreasing brightness:* To darken a photo, decrease the values down to -100 in the Dark Areas, Entire Image, or Light Areas so they're negative. Again, the combination and level depends on the photo.
- *Changing contrast:* To increase contrast, set Contrast to a positive number. To decrease, set it to a negative number. For Figure 10-10 I raised



After

Figure 10-9: Brightening a dark photo.

the ISO and disabled the flash. The lack of contrast is partially a side effect of the ambient lighting in the room. The After version of Figure 10-10 shows the result.



Before

5. Press OK to finish or Cancel to abort.

Brightness in iPhoto

To alter a photo's brightness or contrast in iPhoto, follow these steps:

1. Launch iPhoto and navigate to your photo, as explained in the earlier section.

Instructions for doing that are in this chapter's section titled "iPhoto a go-go."

2. Double-click the photo and choose Edit.
3. Press Adjust.

This brings up the Adjust window.



After

Figure 10-10: Increasing contrast to strengthen the photo.

4. Drag the appropriate sliders to change the photo.

These sliders alter brightness and contrast:

- *Levels*: Drag the dark level slider upwards to darken the photo. Drag the light level slider down to lighten the photo. Drag the balance back and forth to establish where the contrast looks best.
- *Exposure*: Drag exposure to the right (positive numbers appear to the right of the slider) to brighten a photo. Drag it to the left (negative numbers) to darken it.
- *Contrast*: Drag to the right to increase it. Drag it to the left to decrease it.

5. Click the Close box.

If you like the change, continue. If not, choose Edit↔Undo.

6. Press Done.

Saturating Colors

Color saturation describes color intensity, from none (which is a shade of gray) to full strength. Contrast saturation with *hue* describes the color's shade. For example, royal blue, navy blue, light blue, or cyan are different hues of blue. Lightness is a third characteristic of color.

Saturation in PMB

To adjust a photo's saturation in Picture Motion browser, follow these steps:

- 1. Launch PMB and go to your photo.**
- 2. Double-click the photo to enter Preview mode.**
- 3. Press Saturation.**
- 4. Adjust the saturation up or down.**

Playing with color saturation can yield disastrous results, so be careful. What works well for inanimate objects, landscapes, and pets, often makes people look really funky.

- *Increasing saturation*: Figure 10-11 shows a scene from a local playground.
- *Decreasing saturation*: Negative numbers indicate how much you're desaturating the photo. You can make a photo black and white.

- 5. Press OK to accept the changes.**





Figure 10-11: Adding some pop with saturation.

Saturation in iPhoto

To increase or decrease a photo's saturation in iPhoto, follow these steps:

- 1. Launch iPhoto and go to your photo.**
- 2. Double-click the photo to view it and then click Edit.**
- 3. Press Adjust.**

This opens the Adjust Palette.

- 4. Drag the Saturation slider up or down.**

Dragging up increases the color intensity. Dragging down decreases it. If you make a mistake and want to start over, press Reset.

- 5. Shut the window by clicking the Close box.**

If you like the change, continue. If not, choose Edit↩Undo.

- 6. Click Done.**

Demystifying the Tone Curve in PMB

The tone curve is probably the nerdiest photo-tweaking tool in PMB. Despite that, it has its strengths. With it, you can alter a photo's brightness and contrast as a whole and by color channel. See what I mean? Nerdy.

While you can safely avoid using the tone curve in most situations, it is sometimes the best tool for the job. To use it, gird your loins and follow these steps:

- 1. Launch PMB and go to your photo.**
- 2. Double-click the photo to enter Preview mode.**
- 3. Choose the Tone Curve button.**

The controls appear on the right side of the screen.

At the top, a drop-down list has RGB selected (brightness for all colors). From here you can access each of the three color channels: R (Red), G (Green), and B (Blue). Below the list is a histogram, which charts the photo's overall brightness (gray graph) at the same time it shows you the brightness of each color channel (in red, green, and blue). The graph for the channel you choose (RGB, R, G, or B) comes to the front and a diagonal line appears across the histogram.

- 4. Select a channel from the drop-down list.**
- 5. Click and drag in the histogram to draw a new tone curve.**

The line is like a rubber band. To brighten a photo, drag the line upwards. To darken a photo, drag the line in. To increase contrast, draw an *s-curve* (it looks like the letter S) like the one in Figure 10-12.

- 6. If necessary, select another channel from the drop-down list and repeat Step 5.**

Figure 10-12 shows a photo that has a green color cast to it. It's possible to remove this by increasing the brightness in the R (Red) and B (Blue) channels.

- 7. Choose OK to save your changes.**

Or click Cancel to abort.

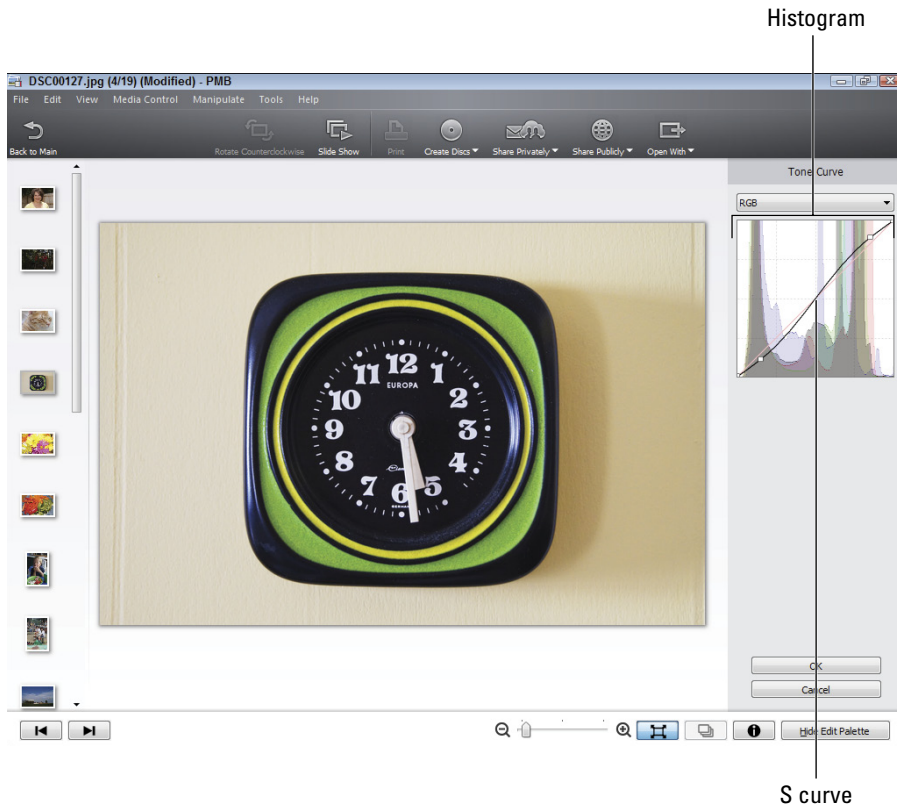


Figure 10-12: It's time to increase the contrast.

Rescuing Shadows and Highlights in iPhoto

iPhoto has a powerful, simple way to darken bright highlights or brighten shadowy areas. These controls are in the Adjust window and they're called, naturally enough, Highlights and Shadows.

These controls are best for rescuing detail, although they have an effect on the photo's brightness. To use them, follow these steps:

1. **Launch iPhoto and go to your photo.**

2. **Double-click the photo to view it and click Edit.**

3. **Press Adjust.**

This brings up the Adjust Palette.

4. **Drag a slider up to the point where you see details in the problem areas.**

- Drag Highlights up to rescue detail in the bright areas. Clouds and the sky are notoriously hard to expose correctly.
- Drag Shadows up to rescue details in dark areas. Look in the shadows carefully to look for changes.



If you make a mistake and want to start over, press Reset.

5. **When you're finished, click the Close box.**

If you like the change, continue. If not, choose Edit↔Undo.

6. **Click Done.**

Looking Sharp(er)



Sharpening doesn't work for very blurry or unfocused photos. If a photo is a bit *soft* (not in sharp focus), try sharpening it. Don't overdo it, though, or you'll bring out the worst in it (most likely, sharp and crystal clear noise).

Sharpening in PMB

Here's how:

1. **Launch PMB and go to your photo.**
2. **Double-click the photo to enter Preview mode.**
3. **Choose the Sharpness button.**
4. **Enter a new value.**

The greater the number, the more PMB sharpens the photo. Figure 10-13 shows my youngest playing t-ball. He's in relatively good focus, but appears slightly soft. This can be the result of an inexpensive lens (high-quality lenses are often able to produce very sharp photos at many apertures) or other factors, such as movement.

5. **Press OK to save your change.**

Press Cancel to start over.



Soft



Sharpened

Figure 10-13: Sharpening helps correct softness, not out-of-control blurriness.

Sharpening in iPhoto

To sharpen a picture in iPhoto, follow these steps:

1. **Launch iPhoto and go to your photo.**
2. **Double-click the photo to view it, then click Edit.**
3. **Press Adjust.**
4. **Drag Sharpness up until you reach the strength you're after.**

Figure 10-14 shows the result of increasing Sharpness to 0.64 in iPhoto. Too sharp.

If you make a mistake and want to start over, press Reset.



Figure 10-14: Too sharp in iPhoto.

5. **When you're finished, choose the Close box.**

If you like the change, continue. If not, choose Edit→Undo.

6. **Press Done.**

More Editing Tricks

Picture Motion Browser and iPhoto both offer more features than I can address in this chapter, but a few more are explored in the following sections.

Dating your photo in PMB

To insert the date on a photo, follow these steps:

1. **Launch PMB and go to your photo.**
2. **Double-click the photo to enter Preview mode.**
3. **Click the Insert Date button.**

You're presented with options.

4. **Choose Format, Color, and Position.**

Figure 10-15 shows the date applied to the top left of downtown Detroit from Belle Isle. It was nice of the jet skiers to provide interesting action in the foreground!

5. **Choose OK to insert the date.**



Figure 10-15: Putting the date on a memorable photo.

Other iPhoto goodies

iPhoto has other goodies up its sleeve. Experiment with them and have some fun!

- ✔ **Straighten:** If your photo is a bit out of kilter, straighten it. Drag the Straighten slider to angle the photo one way or the other. Look for things that should be straight or level and use them as a guide. Line them up with the yellow guides.

- ✔ **Retouch:** Retouch lets you remove blemishes. Select Retouch when in Edit mode and then click the blemish you want to remove. Presto! It'll disappear. If not, try adjusting the size of the tool upwards to cover it (the Retouch tool pulls in material around it and copies it over the center). If it is too large and you're bringing in material that doesn't match the area around the spot, reduce it.
- ✔ **Effects:** Select Effect to get access to nine special effects that you can apply, ranging from B & W (black and white), Sepia (aged and yellow), Antique (aged with a different tint), Fade Color, Original (to compare with), to Boost Color, Matte, Vignette, and Edge Blur.
- ✔ **Temperature and Tint:** If colors are off, adjust the temperature and tint. Adjusting temperature changes a photo from blue to yellow-orange. Tint adjusts the amount of green or purple in the photo.

Ten Camera Features Worth Investigating

In This Chapter

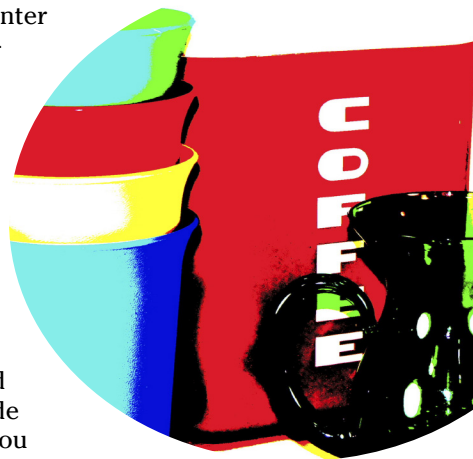
- ▶ Changing the folder-naming format
- ▶ Disabling the AF illuminator
- ▶ Reworking Power Save mode
- ▶ Changing noise reduction settings

The A35 and A55 are fantastic cameras with a lot of extra features worth investigating. The material in this chapter isn't strictly necessary, but it can be very helpful and downright interesting sometimes.

By the way, this chapter makes extensive use of the enter button. It's labeled AF on the camera and is the circular button in the center of the control button on the back of the camera. You'll also use the outer control button to go up, down, left, and right within menus and to make selections.

Shooting with Picture Effect (A35)

The A35 has a number of interesting effects organized into a Picture Effect mode. The effects are on the Mode dial; see Figure 11-1. Each effect is unique and gives you ways to make your images and videos pop. That's right, the effects aren't restricted to still photos. Feel free to use them when shooting movies! When you put the camera in Picture Effect mode, it automatically sets the right exposure and makes aperture, ISO, and shutter speed



(when shooting stills) decisions for you. The effect also overrides any creative style, such as Standard or Vivid, that you've enabled in the menu. (To review creative styles, please turn to Chapter 8.) When you take the photo, the effect is applied to the Raw data and saved as a JPEG.



If you set the image quality to Raw or Raw+J, Picture Effect mode overrides those settings and creates a JPEG set to Fine quality. It *doesn't* save a Raw file. Picture Effect mode produces only JPEGs.

Picking an effect, any effect

You get to choose from these effects:

✓ Posterization

(Color): In graphic terms, *posterization* creates abrupt changes in tone with no or very little gradient using a limited color palette. This particular effect (see Figure 11-1) creates a wildly posterized photo and replaces the normal color palette with primary colors. These photos look like something out of a graphic novel.



Figure 11-1: Posterization effects are wild and crazy.

- ✓ **Posterization (B/W):** This effect creates an effect similar to Posterization (Color) but in black and white. Photos taken with this effect look like pen and ink drawings.
- ✓ **Pop Color:** This effect adds zing to colors.
- ✓ **Retro Photo:** This option reduces contrast color, creating a photo that looks aged, complete with subtle sepia tones.
- ✓ **Partial Color (Red, Green, Blue, or Yellow):** This special effect is fantastic for singling out and showing specific colors while converting everything else to black and white. See Figure 11-2.



Figure 11-2: These effects let only a single color show through.

- ✓ **High-Key:** High-key photos are bright, happy, and softer than normal photos.
- ✓ **High Contrast Monochrome:** This effect creates a black-and-white photo that has more contrast than normal.
- ✓ **Toy Camera:** This effect simulates what the photo would look like if you took it with a really cheap camera. The colors are bright but the corners are shaded (*vignetted*).

Changing Picture Effect mode

To use Picture Effect mode, follow these steps:

1. Set the mode dial to Scene/Picture Effect.
2. Press up or down on the control button to select a mode.

First you'll see the scenes. Don't worry. Just scroll down past the scenes. The first picture effect is Posterization (Color).

3. Press enter to lock in your choice.

If you change your mind and want to choose a different picture effect (either before or after you take a photo), press the Function button and highlight SCN/Picture Effect. Turn the main dial to scroll through the other settings.

4. Press enter to lock in your choice.**5. Take the picture.**

Making the AEL Button Your Own

Locking the camera's auto exposure is handy when you're photographing something that's backlit. The problem is, holding the button down while you recompose the shot can be a pain, especially if you want to lock the exposure. Thankfully, the engineers at Sony have come up with a solution. You can change the AEL button's behavior so you can press it once and it stays activated until you press the button again.

To change how the AEL button works, follow these easy steps:

1. Press the Menu button and go to Custom menu 1.**2. Highlight the AEL button option and press enter.****3. Highlight your choice using up or down on the control button.**

You have the following options:

- *AEL Hold*: This option requires that you press and hold the AEL button down to lock the exposure.
- *AEL Toggle*: Ah, yes. This option eases your workload. Your fingers will thank you.

Remember to press the AEL button again to reset the exposure.

**4. Press enter to finish.**

Navigating the GPS (A55)

The A55 has global positioning system (GPS). When you enable it, GPS records the location of every photo you take in each photo's EXIF metadata.

To take advantage of GPS, you have to make sure it's on. Follow these steps to get it running:



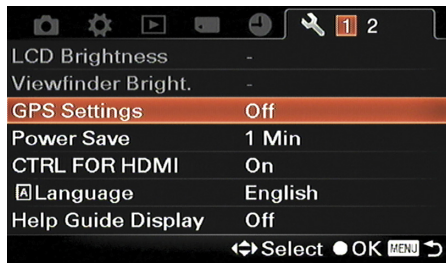
1. **Press the Menu button and go to Setup menu 1.**
2. **Highlight GPS Settings and press enter.**
This puts you in the GPS Settings menu. See Figure 11-3.
3. **Highlight GPS On/Off and press enter again.**
4. **Highlight On or Off.**
5. **Press enter to finish.**



Navigation uses *triangulation*. If you can determine your bearing to two points a known distance apart using a compass, you can draw a line from each point toward your location. You're located where the lines cross on the map.

The ideal location to receive GPS data is outside, in the open. If you get good data, the camera can calculate its location with quite a bit of precision. The problem with GPS, however, is getting the data. You won't receive a good satellite signal in many areas — most notably, between tall buildings, in trees, tunnels, in some buildings, underground, and near electronic devices that generate competing radio signals on the same frequency.

Thankfully, the camera tells you its status through a series of handy symbols shown in Table 11-1. They tell you what sort of reception you're getting and whether there are any problems.



Step 2








Step 3



Step 4

Figure 11-3: Navigating through the GPS menu to turn it on.

Table 11-1 A55 GPS Iconography

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Message</i>
None	Your GPS is off. Turn it on if you want to use it.
	You aren't getting any location information. Move to an open area to see if you can get a signal.
	The camera is getting location information but needs a minute to figure out where you are.
	The camera has your location and it will be recorded, but the information may be out-of-date. If you want to update your position, get out in the open.
	Jackpot! The camera has a good position and will record that. The bars indicate signal strength.
	The symbol you don't want to see. Reboot by turning the GPS off, then back on again.



If you're having trouble getting a signal, even in the open, try GPS Assist Data. You can use GPS Assist Data by plugging your camera into a Windows computer with Picture Motion Browser installed. (See Chapter 6 for a summary and Chapter 10 for more information on Picture Motion Browser.) The software should recognize your A55 and automatically update the GPS Assist Data. If you like, you can run the routine from the PMB Launcher. The GPS choice is in the list.

These tips will help you get a good GPS location:

- ✓ Be in a location with good satellite reception. Surprise there, huh?
- ✓ Keep still. Don't move back and forth between areas.
- ✓ Pay attention to the GPS status indicators.
- ✓ Wait for your camera to update.
- ✓ Use GPS Assist Data.

PMB isn't available for the Mac. Several homebrewed applications are available. Search online for **sony mac gps assist**.



If you're moving around a lot, purposefully wait for the camera to get updated data. If you don't, the camera is likely to use data from its last known good position, which may be miles off.

Changing the File Numbering Scheme

By default, your A35/A55 begins numbering image files at 0001 and continues until it reaches 9999. After you take your 9999th picture, the number rolls over to 0001.

You can change this behavior if you like. Here's how:



1. Press the Menu button and go to Memory Card Tool menu 1.

2. Highlight File Number and press enter.

3. Select Series or Reset.

- *Series*: Filenames are numbered from 0001 to 9999 no matter what folder they're in or how many times you remove, replace, or format the memory card.
- *Reset*: Resets the file number counter back to 0001 according to the following criteria:
 - When you change the folder format. (See this chapter's "Changing the Folder-Naming Format.")
 - When you've deleted all the photos in the folder.
 - When you take out the memory card and replace it.
 - When you format the memory card.

4. Press enter to finish.

Changing the Folder-Naming Format

Your A35/A55 creates folders (and then subfolders) to hold pictures. These subfolders are normally named according to the standard form naming scheme, which consists of an automatically generated three-digit number and then the letters *MSDCF*. They look like this: 100MSDCF. When you need another subfolder, the number is simply incremented, like this: 101MSDCF.

If this naming system doesn't strike your fancy, use date form folders, which are named according to this setup:

- ✓ A 3-digit number
- ✓ The last number of the current year (Remember to set your date and time correctly, as described in the manual. Chapter 1 has information on setting your area.)

- ✓ A two-digit number representing the month
- ✓ Another two-digit number representing the day

Get your decoder rings out. This is odd only because you're not used to seeing dates displayed in this format. If you took some photos on August 5, 2011, the folder name would be 10010805. The folder number is 100. The last number of the year is 1. The month and day are 08 and 05, respectively.



Movies are always stored in their own folders. MP4 movie folders are named by tacking ANV01 to a folder number. Those files look like this: DCIM\MP_ROOT\100ANV01. AVCHD movies are in an AVCHD folder, but the folders and files within it are best left alone.

The long and the short of it is that if you're interested in managing your photos by date on your memory card, then date form folders are for you. Here's how to make it happen:



1. Press the Menu button and go to Memory Card Tool menu 1.
2. Highlight Folder Name and press enter.

In Figure 11-4, you can see the empty Select REC Folder field. The card had just been formatted and no photos had been taken. If you've already started taking photos, an initial 100 folder (at least) will exist when you change to date form.

3. Select either Standard Form or Date Form.
4. Press enter to lock in your changes.

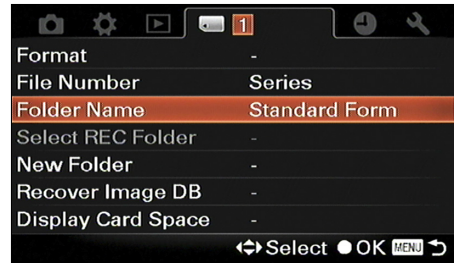


Figure 11-4: Changing the folder naming scheme.

86ing the AF Illuminator

When the light is dim or the contrast isn't great enough for the camera to discern details, your camera may not be able to autofocus. The backup plan is for the camera to use its built-in flash and finish focusing. This is called AF (autofocus) illumination.

This is called AF (autofocus) illumination.

The AF Illuminator is a great idea if you don't mind the flash needed to auto-focus. Sometimes you may want to turn it off.

Two bits to remember about auto flash:



- ✓ If you're in Auto+, Auto, or a Scene mode, the built-in flash automatically pops up. When you're in an advanced shooting mode (P, A, S, or M), you have to pop up the built-in flash yourself.
- ✓ Switching to manual focus doesn't turn the AF Illuminator off. When you're in an automatic mode or have the flash up in an advanced mode, it will still fire.

Try this out: at night, get your camera and go into a dark room and see if the camera can focus on something across the room. If the lights are dim enough, it won't. Change shooting mode between Auto and A to see how the camera reacts. Pop the flash in A mode. Evaluate the strength of the AF Illuminator flash firsthand.

To turn the AF Illuminator off, follow these easy steps:



- 1. Press the Menu button and go to Recording menu 2.**
- 2. Highlight the AF Illuminator option and press enter.**
- 3. Highlight Off.**

Choose Auto to turn it back on.

- 4. Press enter to finish.**

Now you're free to shoot in low light and use manual focus without the AF Illuminator going off.

You should be aware of this fine print concerning the AF Illuminator:

- ✓ It won't work when the autofocus mode is set to AF-C.
- ✓ The AF Illuminator won't fire when the subject is moving and you're in AF-A autofocus mode.
- ✓ If you have a telephoto lens of 300mm or larger, the AF Illuminator may not work.
- ✓ When you have an external flash mounted on top of your A35/A55, the external flash fires its AF Illuminator when necessary.
- ✓ The AF Illuminator won't work when you're in Smile Shutter mode.

Flashing without Wires



If you haven't had a chance to play around with wireless flash, let me encourage you. You do need the right equipment, though. Thankfully, the list of things you need is short.

Aside from your A35/A55, all you need is a compatible wireless flash.

I recommend Sony units because they play nice with Sony cameras. Of the three Sony flash units currently available, the HVL-F58AM and HVL-F43AM offer wireless capabilities. Their cost-conscious model, the HVL-F20AM, is a nice upgrade from the built-in flash, but can't act as a *wireless slave* (a flash that waits for another flash or controller to tell it when to fire). Other companies (Metz, Neewer, Bower, and Sigma, for example) make flashes compatible with the Sony wireless flash system.

When shopping, make sure you look at models that are

- ✓ Designed for Sony DSLRs (as opposed to Canon, Nikon, and others)
- ✓ Capable of acting as wireless slaves.

Taking the flash off the camera gives you a lot of lighting flexibility and can produce better results (especially in studio-type situations) than the pop-up unit or a flash mounted in the hot shoe.

Once you have the flash, setting it up is easy:

- 1. Slide the external flash onto the camera's auto-lock accessory shoe (aka *hot shoe*).**

Yes, that's weird. The first step of getting your remote, wireless flash operating in wireless mode is to mount it on the camera. It works, though.

- 2. Press the Function button.**

See Figure 11-5. For more information on using the Function button, have a look at Chapter 1. For more information on using the built-in flash, please see Chapter 2. More advanced flash coverage is in Chapter 7.

- 3. Using the control button, highlight the Flash Mode option and press enter.**



4. With the control button, highlight the wireless flash icon.

Taking this step configures the two flashes to act as a wireless flash commander and slave unit.

5. Press enter to exit and lock in your changes.

6. Remove the flash unit from your camera.

You can position it now or after the next step.



7. Press the flash pop-up button.

Raising the built-in flash prepares it to act as the wireless flash commander. It will flash when you take a photo. That flash, however, isn't meant to light the scene. That flash is what triggers the wireless unit.

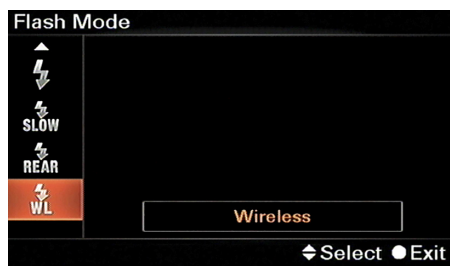
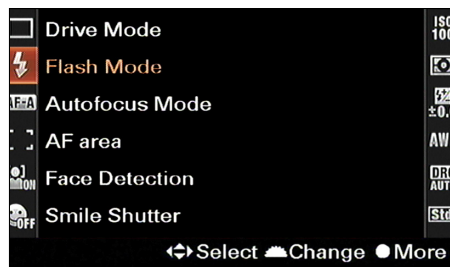


Figure 11-5: Access wireless flash under Flash Mode on the Function screen.

With everything set up between the camera and wireless flash, you can position the flash where you want it. Mini-stands, which often come with the flash, are handy ways to move the flash around. Place the flash on the floor or on a table. The stand supports the flash so it doesn't fall over. I have done this many times.

Figure 11-6 shows a small still life of a wooden vase with flowers and a polar bear. The image that I shot with the built-in flash is well lit. The polar bear, vase, and flowers look fine. The flowers and vase, however, cast a distracting shadow onto the white background. The wireless flash photo in Figure 11-6 was shot with the flash sitting on the table to the right, 20 inches away from the vase. In this case, the point was to cast a shadow to the left (as opposed to the rear) and reveal the complex but pleasing shape of the vase, flowers, and bear. This type of shot is impossible with the in-camera flash or with a flash mounted on the hot shoe.



Consult your flash's manual for specific placement guidelines and other limitations.



Pop-up Flash



Wireless Flash

Figure 11-6: The polar bear is undoubtedly evaluating the difference between pop-up and wireless flash.

Wireless flash also opens the door to other professional setups. You can mount the flash on a lighting stand, and with an umbrella adapter, use a soft box or umbrella to diffuse the light from the flash. You'll look like a professional photographer in a studio. (Don't let the idea of setting up an external flash with an umbrella intimidate you. Once you have the wireless flash, the hard part is over. Grab your stand, umbrella, and flash, and set it up in your living room to take photos of your kids opening presents. It produces good results and is very easy to pull off.)



If you put your A35/A55 in wireless flash mode, don't forget return to normal when you're done. Otherwise, you'll wonder why your flash photos are dark to the point of illegibility. (Trust me, I know from experience.) The pop-up flash doesn't put out anywhere near the amount of light in wireless mode that it does in normal operation.

Reconfiguring Power Save Mode

Your A35/A55 saves power by taking a coffee break every minute, provided you aren't pressing buttons. Power Save mode is written into the camera's contract, but you can renegotiate. The cost of making the camera pay attention longer is the additional drain of battery power.



To break out of Power Save mode, press the shutter button halfway.

To change the amount of time the camera waits to enter Power Save mode, follow these steps (no lawyer required):



1. **Press the Menu button and go to Setup menu 1.**
2. **Highlight the Power Save option and press enter.**
3. **Highlight the time that should pass before Power Save mode comes on.**

These options are available:

- 30 Min
- 5 Min
- 1 Min
- 20 Sec
- 10 Sec

No matter what setting you choose, the camera enters Power Save mode after 30 minutes when you've connected it to a TV or the drive mode is set to Remote Cdr. (Remote Cdr stands for Remote Commander, and is a drive mode that lets you shoot with a wireless remote.)

4. **Press enter to set the time.**

Turning It Down to 10: Noise Reduction Settings

If your A35/55 decides to perform noise reduction while you're ready to take more photos, it may feel like the camera has gone on an extended coffee break. Believe it or not, it's actually trying to help.



Automated noise reduction kicks in after you take a photo with a long exposure time (1 or more seconds) or when the ISO is high (1600 or more). For more information on ISO, which determines the camera's sensitivity to light, please turn to Chapter 7.

After you take the shot, the camera takes over and cleans up the photo. The problem is, you can't take another photo while this is happening. You have to wait it out.

What are you to do? Take control of the noise reduction settings before you get frustrated.

1. Set the exposure mode to P, A, S, or M.

You can't turn off noise reduction when in Auto+, Auto, Flash Off, Scene Selection, where long exposure NR is on, or Sweep shooting and Continuous Priority AE modes, where it is off by default. High ISO NR is always on in the basic shooting modes.



2. Press the Menu button and go to Recording menu 3.

3. Highlight the type of noise reduction you want to adjust, and then press enter.

Choose from two types of noise reduction:

- *Long Exposure NR*: Controls the amount of noise reduction the camera applies to exposures of one second or longer. The amount applied is equal to the exposure duration, which means if you took a two-second exposure, noise reduction is processed for two seconds.
- *High ISO NR*: Controls the amount of noise reduction applied after you take a photo with a high ISO.

4. Choose a setting.

The setting depends on the type of noise reduction you're adjusting. Long exposure NR has two options:

- *On*: This setting enables long exposure NR and puts the emphasis on photo quality.
- *Off*: This setting disables noise reduction for photos taken with long exposures, which lets you get back to shooting quicker.

High ISO NR has two options:

- *Auto*: Think *quality*. You're making the camera aware that your priority is photo quality. The caveat here is that if you're in continuous shooting or continuous bracketing modes, you get weak high ISO NR, even if you set it to Auto.
- *Weak*: Think *speed*. Noise reduction is applied, but it doesn't take as long and removes less noise. You can't select Weak when you have the exposure mode set to Auto, Auto+, Sweep Panorama, or a scene.

5. Press enter to finish the process.

In-camera noise reduction is a good choice to make, provided you aren't in a rush and can wait for the camera to process the shot. However, you should think about turning it off (or weakening it, in the case of high ISO) if you would rather handle noise reduction in your favorite photo editor. If you have a third-party noise reduction filter such as Noiseware (www.imagenomic.com), Noise Ninja (www.picturecode.com), or Neat Image (www.neatimage.com) for Photoshop, you can tweak noise settings to try and get better results than the camera.



Turning noise reduction on and off has some fine print:

- ✓ **You can't turn on long exposure noise reduction when the camera is in certain modes, even if you turn on the setting.** Those exposure modes include Sweep Panorama, Continuous Advance Priority AE, Continuous Shooting, Continuous Bracketing, Hand-held Twilight (a scene), and when the ISO is set to Multi-Frame NR. The good news is that when you're in any of those modes, you don't have to worry about turning off noise reduction to improve the frame rate of the camera; it's already off.
- ✓ **You can't turn on noise reduction for Raw photos.** JPEGs only, if you please.
- ✓ **You can't turn off noise reduction when you're in an automatic mode.** Auto modes include Auto, Auto+, or a scene. In these cases, you get long exposure NR whether you want it or not.

1 Spy an Eye-Fi Memory Card

Your A35/A55 is compatible with Eye-Fi cards, which are memory cards that let you wirelessly transfer photos and movies from your camera to a computer.

However, consider a few things before jumping into the Eye-Fi pool:

- ✓ **Time and trouble.** It takes more time, trouble, and money to buy an Eye-Fi card compared to a standard memory card for your camera. You have to get the right one, install Eye-Fi software on your computer, and register for a free Eye-Fi account. Youch.
- ✓ **Battery power.** When you're transferring photos from your camera to a computer, you're draining the batteries. Consider whether it's worth using anything that sucks extra battery power.
- ✓ **Speed.** Eye-Fi transfer speeds, although not as slow smoke signals, aren't as fast as a card reader or a USB connection.

WARNING!



If you take the Eye-Fi plunge, get the right card. Not all Eye-Fi cards transfer Raw photos. If you need one that does, make sure to get the right model. At the moment, out of the three card types suitable for digital photography, only the Pro X2 transfers Raw photos wirelessly. The others support JPEGs and movies only. If you shoot JPEGs only, you're good to go if you buy one of the cheaper varieties — either the Connect X2 or Mobile X2. Just pop the Eye-Fi card into your camera and start taking photos. (If you want to format the card in your camera, make sure you first transfer any Eye-Fi information you want to keep off the card.)

REMEMBER



You can't configure your Eye-Fi card to act in Endless Memory mode. Turn off that mode from the Eye-Fi Center.

By default, your A35/A55 will enable the card. If not, follow these steps after inserting an Eye-Fi card into your camera. (See Chapter 1 if you need help doing that.)



1. Press the Menu button and go to Setup menu 2.
2. Highlight the Upload Settings option and press enter.

You won't see this option unless an Eye-Fi card is inserted in the camera.

3. Choose On.

Choose Off if you need to disable the connection. See Figure 11-7.

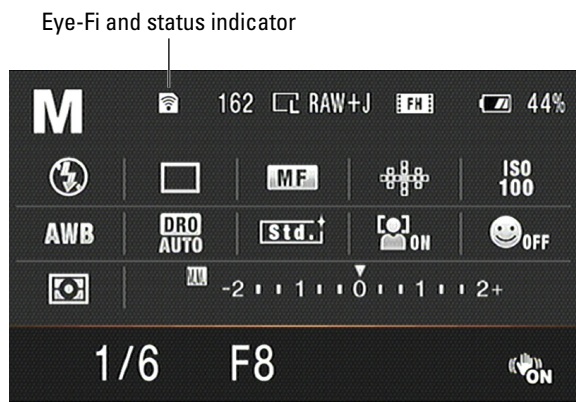


Figure 11-7: An Eye-Fi symbol replaces the normal memory card.



Turning *off* the Eye-Fi connection is important if you take the camera on a plane or are in an area that prohibits you from trying to establish a wireless connection. Protect yourself and your camera by following any posted rules about wireless devices.

4. Press enter to finish.

You see an Eye-Fi status indicator on the monitor (see Figure 11-7) that shows connection and transfer status. This icon takes the place of the normal memory card symbol.

Any of six Eye-Fi status indicators may appear on your LCD screen or through the viewfinder. Table 11-2 shows you.

Table 11-2 Eye-Fi Status Indicators		
<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Message</i>
	Standby	The card is in your camera, but you're not taking photos and nothing's being uploaded.
	Upload Standby	You're connected and uploading, but waiting on something.
	Connecting	The card is connecting to your wireless network.
	Uploading	The card is transferring photos or movies to your computer.
	Error	You've got a problem. Pull the card out of your camera and reinsert it, or turn off the camera and then turn it on again. If that doesn't work, your card may be damaged. Insert it in the drive it came with to see if Eye-Fi Center recognizes it. If not, it's probably toast.
	Off	You've switched the upload settings to Off from Setup menu 2.

Control transfer settings from within Eye-Fi Center on your computer. Figure 11-8 shows the options enabled for uploading photos to a computer. The right side of Figure 11-9 shows the Transfer Mode tab active with the Selective Transfer options displayed.

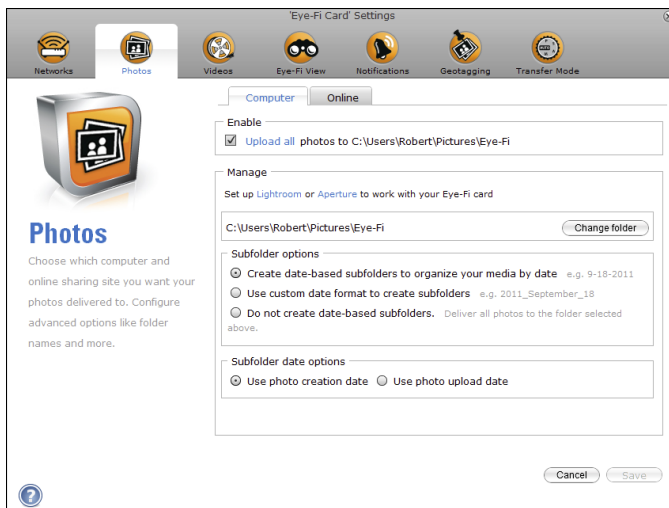


Figure 11-8: Control photo and transfer settings from your computer.

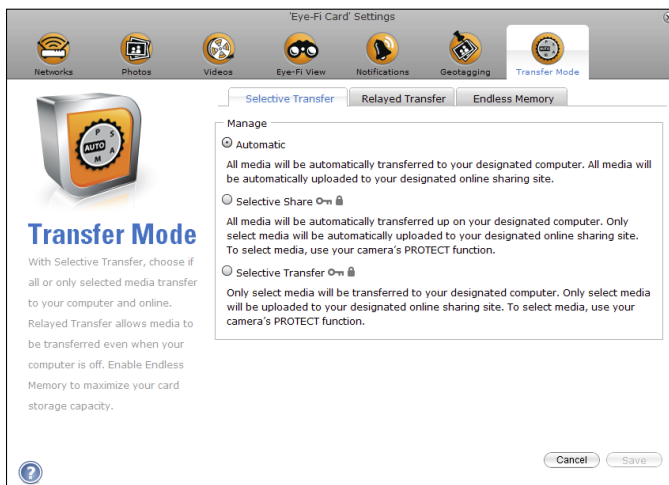


Figure 11-9: The Transfer Mode tab is ready.

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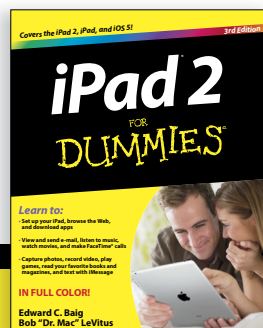
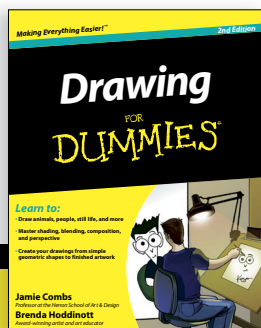
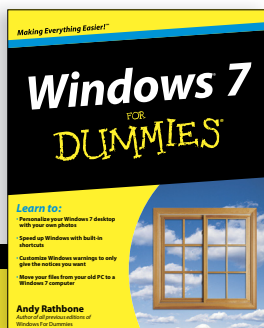
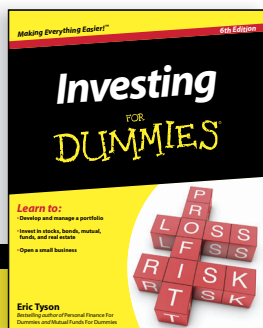
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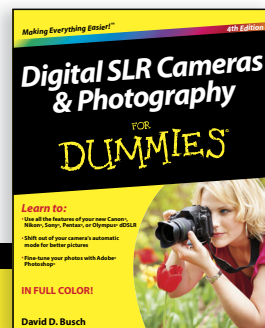
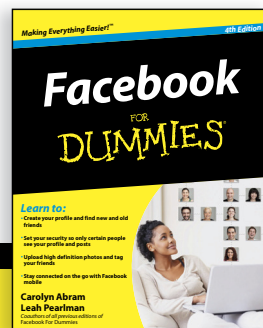
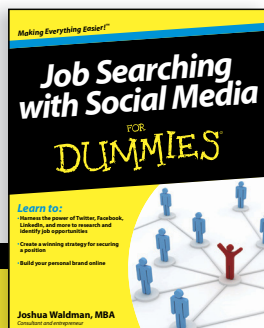
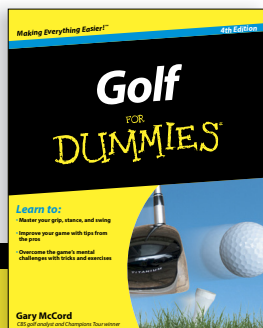
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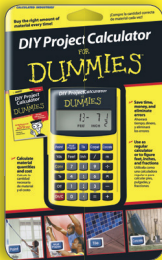
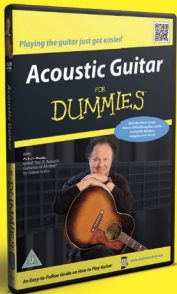
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