

Shooting Modes

Understanding shooting modes is probably the first thing you learn in photography. As you buy different cameras you'll see different modes. In general the following are the most important to know about, along with when and where to use them.

Auto Mode

For complete beginners, emergency use or if you don't have time to pick settings.

Ideal for: starting out, emergencies

P - Program Auto

Allows you to shoot with the exposure adjusted automatically (both the shutter speed and the aperture value (F value)). Also you can select various settings using the menu.

Ideal for: Learning settings, tricky exposures

A - Aperture Priority

Allows MANUAL setting of aperture with all other settings on AUTO. A default for many street photographers who work in constant changes of light.

Ideal for: Constantly changing lights, out & about

S - Shutter Priority

Dedicated to fast moving objects. Most settings stay on auto whilst you set the speed you want to capture at. When A isn't enough use S and deal with high ISO in post.

Ideal for: Sports, fireworks, birds, low light

M - Full Manual

The ultimate place to shoot with full control over all settings. Individual settings (e.g. ISO) can still be set to AUTO for those working fast.

Ideal for: Getting it right when time permits

Memory Recall (1,2)

Often used for photographers who have regular settings. It will recall ALL settings that including focus area, shooting modes and even memory card selection.

Ideal for: Recalling extensive custom setups

Movie Mode

If your camera can shoot movies then you'll need to learn a further set of rules to shoot effectively (e.g shutter speed is 2x FPS).

Ideal for: Shooting video

SCN - Scene Selection

If your camera has 'scene' settings then only used if in a hurry. On many cameras they have separate icons, on more expensive cameras they can have a more 'intelligent' response and help guide you a little.

Ideal for: Emergencies, learning settings



Other modes to master

Drive Modes



Single - The normal shooting mode. One image is shot when the shutter button is pressed.



Continuous - multiple shots, sometimes available at different speeds from Low to Hi+



Remote - sometime from a physical remote or smartphone. Varies in usability across cameras.



Timer - Not just for selfies, timers are a key part of long exposure photography, can be tricky to master



Bracketed - One press gives you multiple shots at different brackets (exposures). For stacking images.

Focus Modes

DM

DMF

AF-S

AF-C

AF-A

The two modes on most cameras are MANUAL (DM) and AF (Autofocus, usually in different flavours). AF-S is the most popular.

A third DMF (Direct Manual) allows you to combine the two - used in macrophotography.

Meter Modes



Most cameras have several metering modes. They evaluate the lightest and darkest points hitting the sensor. They vary a little depending on brand.



Spot metering is the most popular as it only focuses on one thing, usually what's in focus, but other modes like centre-weighted or 'matrix' modes focus on much wider areas.

