

# Foreword



Nikonian Darrell Young, known to us as Digital Darrell for many years, has consistently been a source of instructional wisdom delivered with a touch of friendly humor. His extensive collection of informative articles has been a valuable resource in the articles knowledge base.... Resources at Nikonians.

This work represents yet another progression in the rapid growth of our international community of photographers from all walks of life, recently exceeding 250,000 members from nearly 150 countries. Providing educational books—such as *Mastering the Nikon D300/D300S*—is a way to confirm our Nikonians vocation in education. Additional ways include: our more than 80 interactive forums, The Nikonian eZine, Nikonians Academy Workshops, Nikonians News Blog, Nikonians podcasts, our Wiki, and eBooks.

Nikonians has earned a reputation as a friendly, reliable, informative, and passionate Nikon user's community thanks in great measure to members like our own Digital Darrell, who have taken the time to share the results of their experiences with Nikon imaging equipment, despite the pressures of their day jobs.

The Nikonians community has long been known as a welcoming worldwide home for Nikon® users, and Darrell's specialty in this community is the ability to share his knowledge in the spirit of a friendly uncle in the comfort of your own living room. He understands the Nikon D300/D300S bodies from the perspective of a professional photographer, a dedicated family man, and a good friend, all at the same time.

This approach is crucial in his delivery of valuable information, because it helps him draw examples of shooting situations that are quickly understood by readers from all walks of life.

We would like to congratulate Darrell for his work on this project which goes much further than just delivering a series of chapters and supporting images. In this, the seventh of the NikoniansPress books, in association with Rocky Nook, Darrell has extended his efforts to include work on the book's final layout. This extra step was inspired in great measure by Darrell's penchant for improving the quality of his books to the benefit of his readers. If you are one of the many satisfied owners of the original *Mastering the Nikon D300* authored by Darrell you will quickly see this is not just a mere update to accommodate the D300S. This book has been redesigned from scratch, based on the lessons learned during the D300 project as well as the subsequent books in this series.

Bo Stahlbrandt (bgs) and J. Ramón Palacios (jrp)

Nikonians Founders

[www.nikonians.org](http://www.nikonians.org)

# Camera Body Reference

**FIG 1 (1–11)**

- 1. Release mode dial lock release
- 2. QUAL button
- 3. WB Button
- 4. ISO Button
- 5. Release mode dial
- 6. Accessory shoe (hot shoe)
- 7. Control panel
- 8. MODE button
- 9. Exposure compensation button
- 10. Shutter-releasebutton
- 11. Power switch

**FIG 2 (12–18)**

- 12. Flash pup-up button
- 13. Flash mode button
- 14. Built-in microphone
- 15. Flash sync terminal (cover)
- 16. Ten-pin remote terminal (cover)
- 17. Lens release button
- 18. Focus-mode selector

**FIG 3 (19–22)**

- 19. Sub-command dial
- 20. AF-assist illuminator
- 21. Depth-of-field preview button
- 22. FN (FUNC.) Button

**FIG 4 (23–32)**

- 23. Connector cover
- 24. Playback button
- 25. Delete button
- 26. Viewfinder eyepiece
- 27. MENU button
- 28. Protect/Help Button (info – D300)
- 29. Thumbnail/Playback zoom out btn.
- 30. Playback zoom in button
- 31. OK button
- 32. Monitor

**FIG 5 (33–46)**

- 33. Diopter adjustment control
- 34. Metering selector
- 35. AE-L/AF-L Button
- 36. AF-ON button
- 37. Main command dial
- 38. Multi Selector
- 39. Multi selector center button (D300S)
- 40. Focus selector lock
- 41. Memory card access lamp
- 42. Memory card slot cover (D300S)
- 43. Speaker
- 44. AF-area mode selector
- 45. Info button (D300S)
- 46. Live view mode button (D300S)

**Note:** Special D300 information on page xvii



FIG 1 – Top of camera (1–11)



FIG 2 – Left front of camera (12–18)



FIG 3 – Right front of camera (19–22)



FIG 4 – Left back of camera (23–32)



FIG 5 – Right back of camera (33–46)



## Colors and Wording Legend

Throughout this book you will be presented with words displayed in two colors along with the use of italics. The two colors are blue and green, and are used as follows.

- The camera's physical features are listed in blue.
- Functions and settings viewed on an LCD screen are in green.
- Textual prompts given by the camera on a screen are in *Italics*.
- On select occasions, *Italics* or ***Bold Italics*** are used for special emphasis.

Here is an example of the colors and italics in use:

Press the **Menu button** to reach the **Setup Menu** and then scroll to the **Format memory card** option by pressing the down arrow on the **Multi Selector**. You will see a message reminding you, *All images on Memory card will be deleted. OK?* Select **Yes** and then press the **OK button**. ***Please make sure you've transferred all your images first!***

## Special D300 Information

The Nikon D300S and D300 are physically different in a few places. The **Info button**, **Memory card slot cover**, and **Multi selector center button** work differently or have different locations. Below is a picture of the back of a D300, with the differences noted. The **Multi Selector** on the D300 does not have the newer style **Multi selector center button** (see FIG 5, number 39). However, it works the same way—by pressing on the middle of the **Multi Selector** with your thumb. In FIG 6 are the locations of the **Info button**, **Multi selector center button**, and **Card slot cover latch**. Use the latch to open the **Memory card slot cover**.



FIG 6 – D300 control differences



# Basic Camera Setup



Apples – Courtesy of Neale Dyster (*Digitwized*)



Congratulations! You've purchased, or are about to purchase, Nikon's flagship DX format camera—the Nikon D300 or D300S.

While no digital camera is inexpensive, the D300/D300S provides passionate photographers a genuine professional-level camera at an attractive price. It is weather and dust sealed with a magnesium-alloy body and frame and a rubberized coating that makes it strong and reliable for years of faithful service.

The 12+ megapixel imaging sensor and supporting Nikon Scene Recognition System allows you to take complete creative control of the scene in front of your lens. The camera has advanced firmware that does things like automatic chromatic aberration reduction and full color optimization via selectable Picture Controls so that you can create the best pictures you've ever made.

This book will explore your incredibly feature-rich camera in great detail, using everyday language. We'll cover virtually every button, dial, switch, and setting, giving you how, when, and why information so that you can become a master of your new, powerful imaging instrument. Your passion for excellent photography can be fully expressed with your new Nikon. Let's take control of it!

Since many people appreciate additional reference points for research, I've included appropriate Nikon User's Manual page references under the sub-headings throughout the book. Using these manual references is *entirely optional* and not necessary for complete understanding of your camera. However, many people, myself included, enjoy having a different perspective on things they are learning.

As you study your new camera, keep the Nikon User's Manual handy. My addition of the manual's page reference numbers should provide some extra clarity, if you need it. If you still have difficulty understanding a specific function or setting, please feel free to get in touch with me by using the contact link at [www.YoungImaging.com](http://www.YoungImaging.com). I'll do my best to help guide you as you fully master your new Nikon D300 or D300S.

## D300S and D300 Reference Material

The two cameras covered in this book are very similar. However, there are distinct differences in certain areas. For instance, both cameras have somewhat different button locations, completely different [Memory card slot cover](#) styles, dissimilar features on the [Release mode dial](#), and distinctive cable connection points under the [Connector cover](#).





Since we'll be using button, dial, and switch names all over this book, it's important that you learn their locations on the camera body. The **Camera Body Reference** section at the beginning of this book contains large pictures showing the locations and names of the external camera controls as well as other important technical information. Please find this section and look through it. Then come back here to continue.

Leave a bookmark in the section pertaining to your camera so that you'll have an easy reference point for control locations. Throughout this book, I'll say things like "Use the [Thumbnail/playback zoom out button](#) to change the number of images viewed on the [Monitor](#)." You'll need to know where to find the [Thumbnail/playback zoom out button](#) and the [Monitor](#). The **Camera Body Reference** section provides that information and should be your guide.

I won't constantly refer to the reference section, as I'd have to do so literally hundreds of times and it would quickly get tiring to read the extra, unnecessary text. Instead, I'll use Nikon's official name for the controls, as found in the user's manual. If you're unsure of a button, dial, or switch location, simply use the reference images specific to your camera to find its location. I may slip in a reminder of this from time to time.



To keep from having to type D300 or D300S, or even D300/D300S, and wasting book space, I'll refer to both cameras as D300(S) unless I am talking about a feature specific to one camera type.

### First-Time DSLR Users

Surprisingly, quite a few brand-new digital single lens reflex (DSLR) users are buying these advanced cameras. Even new users appreciate the robust high quality of the D300(S).

If you are a first-time DSLR user, please download the document titled **Initial Hardware Considerations**, from our downloadable resources web page. The web address is <http://rockynook.com/NikonD300S>. This document contains some very basic information for first-time users, such as battery insertion and lens attachment steps. If you've used other Nikon DSLRs in the past, I'm sure you know how to work with those items, so I didn't want to make you read through very basic information that you may not need. However, new users need to know how to charge and insert the battery, format and insert a memory card, install a lens for the first time, and





understand the controls on a lens. The downloadable resources provide that information in a graphical and easily understandable way.

The upcoming material is best read with camera in hand, ready for configuration. There are literally hundreds of things to configure on this professional-level camera. In this chapter, I'll give a new user of the D300(S) camera a place to start. Later, as you progress through this book, we'll look at all the buttons, switches, dials, and menu settings in detail.

Each menu in the camera has its own chapter or section. Plus, there is additional information on how to “put it all together” in chapters like **Metering, Exposure Modes, and Histogram**; **White Balance**; **Multi-CAM 3500DX Autofocus**; and **Speedlight Flash Photography**. And, since the D300S has the new **D-Movie** mode, we'll cover that in its own chapter, called **Live View and D-Movie Modes**.

## Shoot Now Camera Configuration

This chapter is devoted to the first-time use of the camera. There are certain settings that must be set up immediately and others that should be configured as soon as possible. I'm not going to go into detail on all possible settings in this chapter. That is reserved for the individual chapters covering the various menus and functions.

Instead, in list form, I'll refer you chapter sections showing the screens and menus used to set each function that should be configured *before* using the camera for the first time. Later chapters will cover virtually all camera settings.

### Accessing the Camera Menus

To access the various configurable menus in the D300(S), you'll use the **MENU button** found on the back of the camera at the top left of the **Monitor**. Please remember the location of this button since it will be used constantly in this book. I'll not mention that you need to press the **MENU button** to get into the camera menus again. Otherwise, I would be repeating something over and over, unnecessarily.

There are six primary menu systems found in the camera, and this book has a chapter devoted to each one. Let's take a brief look at the opening screens of the six menus, shown in FIG 1 (on page 6).

You get to these six menus by pressing the **MENU button** and scrolling up or down with the **Multi Selector**. A selector bar with tiny icons appears on the left side of the **Monitor** when you press the **MENU button**. You can see it at the left of each of the menus in FIG 1. As you scroll up or down in the selector bar, you'll see each menu appear—one at a time—to the right of the bar. The name at the top of the menu will help you figure out which one you're currently using.



FIG 1 - Six primary camera menus (optional Recent Settings menu not shown)

The six menus that are found under the D300(S) menu system are, in order, as follows (see FIG 1):

1. Playback Menu
2. Shooting Menu
3. Custom Setting Menu
4. Setup Menu
5. Retouch Menu
6. My Menu or Recent Settings

Notice that the sixth menu called **My Menu** can be toggled with an alternate menu called **Recent Settings**, a seventh menu. These two menus can't be active at the same time.

The menu called **My Menu** is much more functional for most people, so I showed it in the list of menus in FIG 1. The chapter titled **My Menu and Recent Settings** covers both of them in detail so you can choose which you want to appear most of the time on your camera. **My Menu** allows you to add the most-used menu items from any of the other menus to your own personal menu, while **Recent Settings** shows you the latest 20 menu items you've changed.

Following is a list of functions that you may want to configure first. These set up the basic parameters for camera usage. Each function listed is covered in great detail on the page number listed at the end of the reference. Please refer to the listed function and its page number, then turn there and fully configure the function. Afterward, return here and move on to the next function. When you are done, your camera will be ready for use. Place a bookmark here since you'll be referring back to this chapter for each configuration item:



## Camera Functions for Initial Configuration

### Setup Menu

- Time zone and date (D300S) or World time (D300) – See page 230
- Format memory card – See page 221
- LCD brightness – See page 224
- Language – See page 233
- Auto image rotation – See page 236
- Copyright information (D300S only) – See page 245

### Shooting Menu

- Primary slot selection (D300S Only) – See page 48
- Secondary slot function (D300S Only) – See page 49
- Image quality – See page 50
- Image size – See page 60
- JPEG compression – See page 61
- White balance – See page 68
- Set Picture Control – See page 70
- Color space – See page 88
- Active D-Lighting – See page 90
- ISO sensitivity settings – See page 97

### Playback Menu

- Image review – See page 28
- Rotate tall – See page 31

### Custom Setting Menu

- AF-C priority selection – See page 121
- AF-S priority selection – See page 122
- Dynamic AF area – See page 124
- Viewfinder grid display – See page 157
- File number sequence – See page 163

### Two Additional Functions

In addition to the camera functions listed above, it is important to understand and configure the two following functions. The D300(S) has four **Shooting menu banks** and four **Custom settings banks**. These individual banks can be used to completely change how the camera works, by simply switching banks.

The configuration you have just completed, by using the functions list above, was installed into only one of each of these two bank types. You can do this same



configuration in all four **Shooting menu banks** and **Custom setting banks**. When you are done, you can give each one a different name and switch between them at will. This allows you to configure your camera for different styles of shooting and switch between each style in a few seconds. Full descriptions are found in the following chapter locations:

- **Shooting menu bank** (on the **Shooting Menu**) – See page 39
- **Custom setting bank** (on the **Custom Setting Menu**) – See page 117

## My Personal Camera Setting Recommendations

All through the book I offer my own personal recommendations as to settings and how to use them. Look for the paragraph(s) starting with **My Recommendation** at the end of most chapter sections. These are suggestions based upon my own personal shooting style and experience with Nikon cameras. You may eventually decide to configure things in a different way, according to your own needs and style. However, these recommendations are good starting points while you become familiar with the camera.



FIG 2 - 1982 World's Fair site in 2010. Shown are the Sunsphere and Ampitheater. Knoxville, TN USA. Nikon D300 and a Sigma 18-50mm f/2.8 EX HSM lens. F8 at 1/125s, 200 ISO, Matrix meter.