Digital Photography Just the Steps™ FOR DUMMIES®

2ND EDITION

by Barbara Obermeier

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

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Digital Photography Just the Steps™ For Dummies®, 2nd Edition

Published by
Wiley Publishing, Inc.
111 River Street
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

www.wiley.com

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Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2008927013

ISBN: 978-0-470-27558-0

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to Gary, Kylie, and Lucky.

Author's Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my project editor, Becky Huehls, who did an exceptional job managing this book; Steven Hayes, a most excellent Executive Editor; Michael Sullivan, a great technical editor; Becky Whitney, who made my writing sound even better; and all those in the trenches—the dedicated production staff at Wiley Publishing.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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Welcome to the exciting world of digital photography! Whether digital photography is a new interest of yours or it's your passion, *Digital Photography Just the Steps For Dummies* has something just for you.

About This Book

This book is for those of you who don't want fluff — just the information to get your answers and go back to shooting or editing your photos. The book wasn't written in a linear format, but completing one chapter before you begin another can be helpful. Don't worry: I let you know when that's the case. When you need an explanation or want to get something done, follow these simple steps:

1. **Pick the task.** Check out the table of contents or the index to find what you're looking for.
2. **Find it fast.** This step is easy because tasks are grouped logically into parts and chapters.
3. **Get it done.** Follow the steps, look at the figures, and move on to the next task. No fear, no fuss.

Why You Need This Book

Digital Photography Just the Steps For Dummies gives you just what you want — and nothing more. Why wade through dry user manuals (unless it's absolutely necessary) and 800-plus-page books when all you want is a quick answer to your question or a snappy solution to your problem? Direct steps and figures are all you need, leaving you precious time to go out and *use* that digital camera.

Introduction

Conventions used in this book

- Menu commands use the ➪ symbol. It tells you to click your mouse on the menu command in front of the symbol and then, when the menu choice behind the symbol appears, click it: for example, File➪Save.
- Web site addresses appear in a monospace font to make them easy to identify. Type them exactly as you see them: for example, `www.dummies.com`.
- Because the range of cameras and software is so diverse, I give you only general instructions. When your instructions may be different, consult your user manual.

Look for this icon throughout the text to find helpful insights, explanations of difficult concepts, and ways to save time and trouble.

This book takes you through the world of digital photography from preparation to post production. You start out by examining equipment, proceed to discovering a little about photography, and move on to composition and capture. From there, you find out how to edit and improve those captured images and then to organize, manage, and share your photos.

How This Book Is Organized

Digital Photography Just the Steps For Dummies is divided into three parts.

Part I: Acquiring Digital Photos

This part starts out with brief information on equipment and accessories and photography basics. From there, you find valuable information on composition and capturing specific types of subjects. I round out this part by assisting you in getting your photos from their original source, whether it's your camera or scanner or other means, onto your computer for editing and storage.

Part II: Editing and Enhancing Digital Photos

Trying to capture the perfect image is an ideal worth striving for, but in case you fall short, plenty of tools can help you edit and enhance your photos in postproduction. A popular choice is the inexpensive yet powerful Adobe Photoshop Elements, which is the program I use for the steps in these chapters. If you don't have Elements, don't worry: Many general concepts covered in this part are universally applicable.

Part III: Managing and Sharing Your Photos

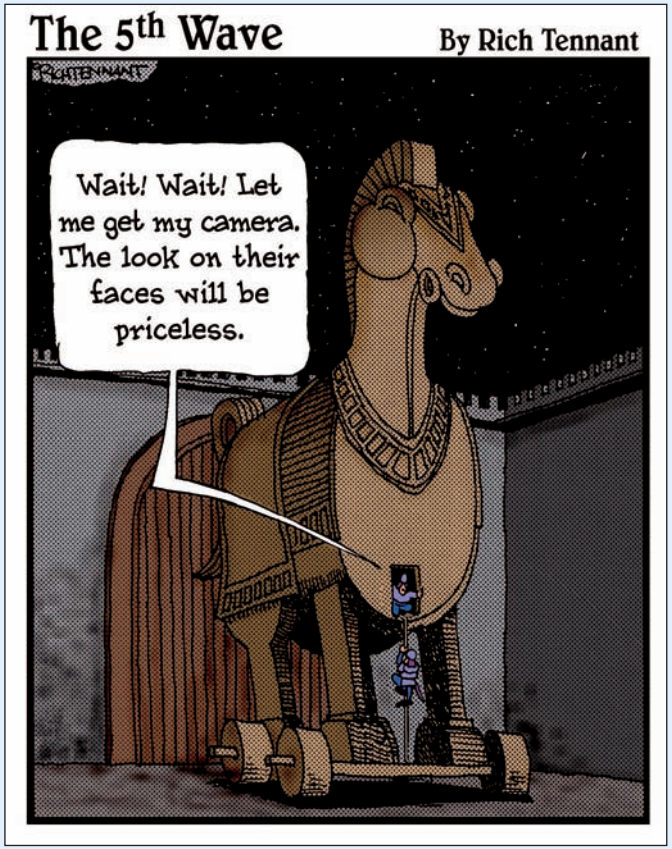
Don't get caught with the digital version of the proverbial shoebox overflowing with photos. Organizing and managing your photos isn't hard, or even that time consuming, if you can embrace it from the get-go and implement it as part of your digital photo workflow.

After you clean up and organize your images, what good are they sitting on your hard drive? Get them out into the world! Share your photos with friends and family in a variety of ways — online sharing sites, CDs, photo books, PDF slide shows, and prints, for example.

Get Ready To . . .

Look over the table of contents or index to find an answer to a burning question about digital photography. If you don't have one yet, get out and shoot! I'll be here waiting for you if you need me when you return.

Part I
Acquiring Digital Photos



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Purchasing a Camera and Accessories

Keeping up with technology is a never-ending story. Just when you think you have a decent handle on it, a new and improved product hits the streets. No worries: Really, the best way to determine which kind of camera you should buy is to first determine your needs. Ask yourself the vital questions listed in the first section of this chapter. What's your budget? How often will you use the camera? What kind of photos will you mostly be taking? And so on. After you determine your needs, take your time researching and then shopping for the right choice. Talk to people, read reviews, and even take a couple models for a test drive. You want to make sure that the investment you make yields the camera that best suits your needs.

Obviously, if you're already a proud and satisfied camera owner, you can skip this chapter and dive right into the topic of your interest.

Get ready to . . .

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Check Out Camera Features

Feature	Description
Size	Your options range from a small (compact) model with limited features and low cost to a large DSLR with professional photography features and a four-figure cost.
Image processor	This type of camera electronics helps color fidelity and overall image quality.
DSLR	The high-quality digital single-lens reflex camera migrated from SLR film cameras. It has detachable lenses and full manual features, as shown in Figure 1-1.
LCD	The liquid crystal display uses, on consumer cameras and some DSLR cameras, a 2 ½- to 3-inch display to frame the subject. Most DSLR cameras use the optical viewfinder to shoot an image.
Sensor cleaning	This higher-end feature vibrates the sensor to remove dust.

Figure 1-1: A digital SLR camera

Feature	*Description*
Output formats	**JPEG:** This lossy, compressed format is the most common format.
	RAW: This higher-end feature saves data directly (unprocessed) from the sensor. It has a significantly larger file size than other formats and is used by professional photographers and graphic designers for maximum image quality and editing flexibility.
	RAW+JPEG: This DSLR feature simultaneously saves an image in both file formats. See Figure 1-2.
	AVI: Most consumer cameras can shoot low-resolution half- or full-VGA, short-duration movies. Not applicable in DSLR cameras.
Power options	**Lithium ion battery pack:** Proprietary, rechargeable, high-performance, costly batteries. **AA alkaline batteries:** Common, easily obtainable battery. **AA NiMh batteries:** Rechargeable, higher-performance AA batteries. **AC adapter**: Optional AC power adapter.
Camera technology	**Exif 2.1:** Stores camera-specific information in addition to JPEG image info. **Exif 2.2:** Adds header with printer info to Exif 2.1 data. **PictBridge:** Uses USB cable to connect camera directly to a supported printer. **PIM:** Uses Proprietary Epson technology equivalent to Exif 2.2.

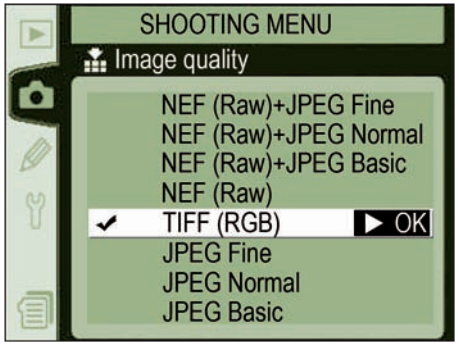

Figure 1-2: Output formats on the image quality menu.

Another feature to investigate is the camera-to-computer image transfer, which performs transfers using a supplied cable. Older cameras may use slow-speed USB 1. High-speed USB is the transfer method on on newer models. A few models also support WiFi.

Examine Image-Capture Features

Feature	Description
Resolution	Ranges from 6 to 14 megapixels (and climbing) and is based on CCD/CMOS sensor capabilities. The bigger-is-better concept lets you create larger prints without observable pixilation. A 14.2MP camera is shown in Figure 1-3.
Image stabilization	Compensates for camera shake. Very useful when not using a tripod.
Frames per second	The speed at which a camera can shoot an image. DSLR cameras are significantly faster than consumer cameras. Important when capturing a moving subject.
Modes	A popular feature for fixed, automatic camera operations. Modes include Macro, Burst, Portrait, Landscape, Sports, Stitch Assist, and Special Scenes. Select Manual mode to focus manually and set the shutter speed, aperture, ISO, and white balance.
Face detection	A type of camera electronics that automatically detects faces and corrects for face focus.
Red-eye reduction	Corrects red-eye by employing a preflash.

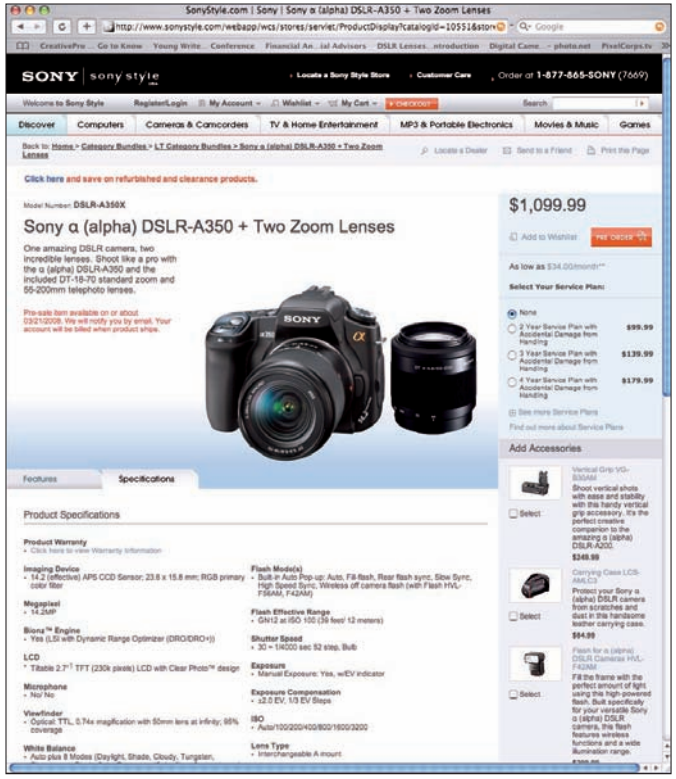

Figure 1-3: Product specs for a digital SLR camera

Determine Your Needs

Before you start looking at cameras, ask yourself these important questions to determine your needs:

1. How much money is in my budget?
2. How often will I use my camera? Will I take occasional family photos or become a proficient amateur photographer?
3. What kind of photography am I interested in? Will I shoot landscapes, portraits, my child's soccer games, and other fast-moving subjects?
4. What kind of lighting will I typically work with — outdoors, indoors, or both? What about weather conditions?
5. Which is the most critical criteria — portability (when you need it small, like the camera shown in Figure 1-4) or feature rich?
6. Will I print photos, and will I want to print large photos?
7. Can I use my existing equipment, which makes compatibility important?
8. Am I willing to learn a little about photography so that I can use a more manual mode?

Figure 1-4: Portability is an important consideration

If possible, test a camera before plunking down your hard-earned dollars. Some camera stores rent cameras for a daily fee. If you happen to have a friend or family member with a digital camera you're interested in, that's all the better. Also, make sure to talk to people who have digital cameras and read reviews in magazines and on Web sites like `www.dpreview.com`.

Understand Resolution

Number of Megapixels	Image Size in Pixel Dimensions*	Approximate Print Size at 300 dpi
2	1600 x 1200	4 x 6
3	2048 x 1536	5 x 7
4	2464 x 1632	5 x 8
6	3008 x 2000	7 x 10
8	3264 x 2448	8 x 11
10	3872 x 2592	9 x 13
12	4290 x 2800	9 x 14
16	4920 x 3264	10 x 16

* Pixel dimensions may vary depending on the camera model.

A megapixel is one million pixels and is the unit measurement for the number of pixels a digital camera can capture. Pixel is short for picture element, the smallest element in a digital image. The more pixels in an image, the bigger you can print the image, as shown in Figure 1-5.

Figure 1-5: Differences in resolution affect the size of good-quality prints
Purestocke

Choose the Right Camera

Style	Cost	Description
Compact	$125 to $300	Easily slips into shirt pocket or small purse. Uses fixed lens and internal flash. Strict auto-functionality. Some models have image stabilization. Good ultracompact cameras are now entering the market.
Point and shoot	$200 to $400	Provides better performance than compact style, but larger. Uses fixed lens and internal flash. Most models have powerful image processors and image stabilization.
Prosumer	$300 to $600	Has the power of a DSLR with the convenience of a point-and-shoot model. Usually has a fixed, high-range zoom lens with some lens attachment or external flash interchangeability options. Select manual or multiple auto modes. Can shoot images as RAW files.
DSLR	$600 to $5000	Aimed for serious hobbyists and professional photographers looking for a mid-level camera, as shown in Figure 1-6. Purchase as a camera system. Extensive interchangeable lens and external flash options. Shoots both RAW and JPEG file formats simultaneously.

Some newer DSLR models allow the image to be framed in the LCD display. If this is a desirable feature for you, look for it in the camera specifications.

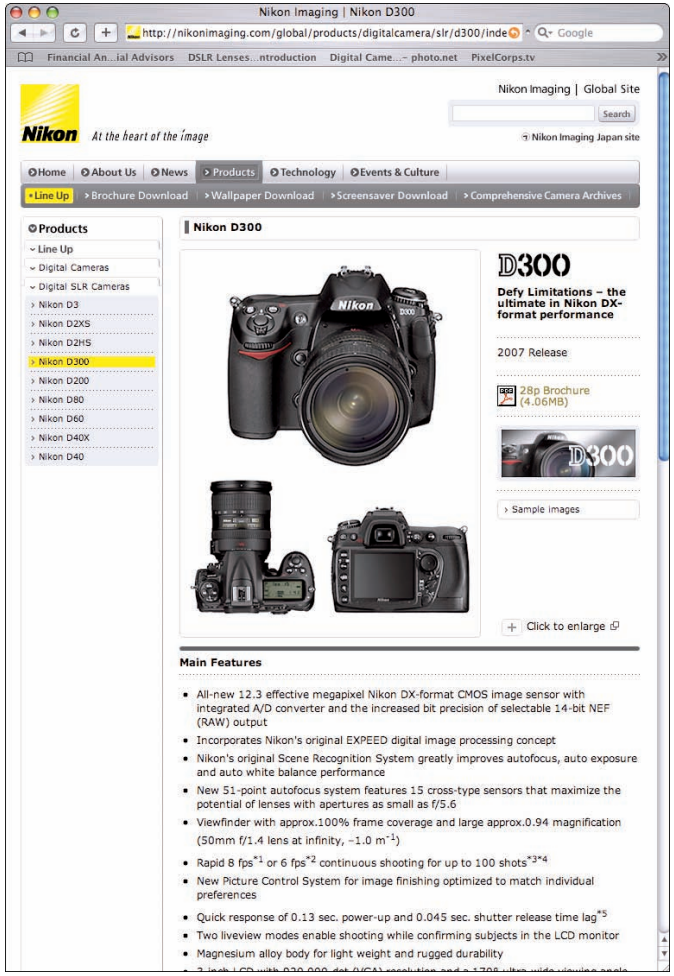

Figure 1-6: Choose a camera according to your needs and your budget

Evaluate Lenses

Feature	Focal Length	Comments
Focal length	N/A	The distance between the optical center of the lens and the CCD/CMOS chip. Determines the area of image coverage. Expressed in millimeters. Various lenses are shown in Figure 1-7.
Wide angle	14 to 35mm	A prosumer/DSLR lens that shoots a wide area in a tight space. May produce distortion.
Normal	28 to 50mm	A DSLR lens; for full-frame sensor cameras, 50mm is considered normal. For a small-sensor cameras, like Canon EOS or Nikon D series, 28 to 35mm is normal.
Telephoto	100 to 400mm	A prosumer/DSLR lens that shoot subjects at a distance.
Macro	N/A	A prosumer/DSLR lens that shoots subjects up close. On consumer cameras, select a mode for close-up shots.
Zoom	N/A	Variable optical focal length, from wide angle to normal to telephoto. Non-DSLR cameras also zoom digitally; avoid digital zoom to preserve image quality.

Figure 1-7: Lenses are valuable accessories
istockphoto.com

Filters screw to the end of prosumer/DSLR lenses to protect the lens, filter out UV light (UV), reduce water or glass reflections (polarizing), or obtain a wider dynamic range (graduated neutral density). For details on using filters, see Chapter 3.

In any discussion about using lenses with DSLR cameras you must consider the complex concept of the crop factor. *Crop factor* is a ratio used to compensate for the fact that digital image sensors are smaller than the 35mm film frame. Therefore, if you take a photo with the same lens on a digital camera and a film camera, the digital camera shows a smaller area of the image. And, when you use a lens on a camera with a smaller sensor, the lens has a larger equivalent size. For example, a 50mm lens on a camera with a crop factor of 1.6 creates an equivalent lens of 80mm.

Look at Zooms

Type	Factor	Comments
Optical	3x to 18x	Uses the lens mechanism to change the focal length of the lens, allowing you to zoom closer to or farther away from the subject. Non-DSLR camera specs express zoom as a value of X. A 10X zoom is roughly equivalent to a zoom factor of 28 to 200mm.
		Compact and point-and-shoot camera lenses typically cannot be replaced. Prosumer cameras have limited lens interchangeability options, but usually have a built-in lens that can't be replaced. DSLR cameras have a wide variety of zoom lens options. A DSLR with a zoom lens is shown in Figure 1-8.
Digital	3x to 6x	Not applicable to DSLR cameras. Uses camera electronics to zoom closer to or farther away from the subject, after reaching your camera's optical zoom limits. Selects a portion of your digital image and magnifies it while reducing image resolution and adding noise. Easily observable in your LCD display while zooming. Avoid using digital zoom to preserve image quality. Move closer to your subject, if possible. Consider purchasing a telephoto zoom lens.

Figure 1-8: A DSLR with zoom lens
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