

Photography Basics

Jim Harrison

v1.0 2026-01-23

Photography Basics - Lessons

Understanding Your Camera's Basic Functions

Exposure Triangle – Shutter Speed, Aperture and ISO

Shutter Speed – Fast, Slow and In-Between

Aperture and Depth of Field

And ISO and Sensors – Noise, Resolution and Image Quality

Creative Shooting Modes – Manual, Aperture Priority, Shutter Priority and Others

Composition and Creativity

Processing Digital Images

Phone Cameras (Tentative/Optional)

Description

Today's digital cameras' complexity can be daunting. Better understanding your camera's basic features (and some advanced capabilities) will make it a fun tool for capturing good images, and for feeding your creativity.

Whether you are a novice or a more experienced photographer, this hands-on introduction will give you the knowledge to enjoy your camera, make the photographic process satisfying, and improve the quality and impact of your images.

Photography Basics is free for APS Members (and for FBC-D members) Non-members can join for \$35 – individual, or \$50 - family.

Each session will have two or three parts: a short talk covering the topics/concepts (~20-30 minutes), hands-on picture-taking applying your new knowledge (~20-30 minutes), and plenty of time for dialog, feedback, questions and practical problem solving.

First Session: Saturday March 28, 2026

10am

First Baptist Church of Decatur

Instructors – All Master Photographers with APS

Jim Harrison

harrisonje@bellsouth.net

404-849-1424

<https://atlantaphotographic.org/about/master-photographers/post/jim-harrison> , and

<https://pentaxphotogallery.com/jimharrison>

Darryl Neil <https://atlantaphotographic.org/about/master-photographers/post/darryl-neil>

Mike Shaefer <https://atlantaphotographic.org/about/master-photographers/post/mike-shaefer>

Photography Basics – Outline

2023 Jim Harrison

Lesson 1: Understanding Your Camera's Basic Functions

Power ON and Shutter Button + Memory Cards
 Batteries and Charging
 Program/Auto Modes
 Avoiding Over and Under Exposure – “Blinkies” and Histograms
 RAW and JPEG
 Downloading and Organizing Your Images

Reading – Your Camera's Manual

Bring your camera manual to every class! – Paper or Digital.
 Always have your manual available!!

Shooting Assignments – Use your histograms and over/under exposure warnings.
 Shoot RAW + JPEG if possible.
 Shoot 3+ images each of 3 different subjects. Get a “good exposure” of each!
 Share your best images with the class.

Lesson 2: Exposure Triangle – Shutter Speed, Aperture and ISO

How shutter speed, sensitivity (ISO) and f-stops are related
 Understanding Your Camera's Shutter Speeds
 Understanding Your Camera's ISO Range
 What is a f-Stop?
 Understanding Your Camera's/Lens's f-stops

Reading

Exposure Basics - Part 1: Introduction to Exposure by Don Stephens and Jim Harrison
<https://atlantaphotographic.org/apsblog/?permalink=exposure-basics---part-1>

Action Camera Blog: The Exposure Triangle
<https://actioncamera.blog/2017/02/22/the-exposure-triangle/>

Exposure Basics Series
<https://atlantaphotographic.org/about/aps-blog/?search=exposure>
 Please read all three articles now; and re-read them as we go along.

Shooting Assignments – Shoot 3 different subjects, each w/3 different exposure combinations. What works best for each subject?

Lesson 3: Shutter Speed – Fast, Slow and In-Between

Fast to stop action/movement
 Slow to show action/movement (and capture more light)
 In-between for general shooting
 Hand-held shooting
 Tripod shooting

Shooting Assignments

Shoot (handheld) a stationary subject with a big range of shutter speeds.

What is the slowest shutter speed useful to you?

Use a tripod when needed!

Shoot a moving subject (car, walking person, clouds, etc.) with a big range of shutter speeds. What shutter speeds did you pick and why? What shutter speed is best for your subject?

Try panning a moving subject, handheld and tripod (if you have one available).

Lesson 4: Aperture and Depth of Field

Understanding Depth of Field
 Selective Focus
 Hyperfocal Distance

Shooting Assignments – Shoot a scene with subjects/content from ~3-20+ feet distance using the full range of your f-stops. What works best for your subjects? A narrow or wide depth of field? Where did you choose to focus and why?

Resource: Depth of Field Simulator <https://dofsimulator.net/en/>

Reading

Exposure Basics - Part 2: Creative Exposure by Don Stephens and Jim Harrison

<https://atlantaphotographic.org/apsblog/?permalink=exposure-basics---part-2>

and ISO and Sensors – Noise, Resolution and Image Quality

Dynamic Range
 Noise and ISO
 Noise and Sensor Size
 Know Your Camera!

Reading/Information

Photons to Photos Data

<https://www.photonstopotos.net/Charts/PDR.htm>

Shooting Assignments – Shoot a scene with both bright (whites w/detail) and dark (blacks w/detail) subjects using the full range of your camera's ISOs. What is the highest ISO useful for your pictures?

Lesson 5: Creative Shooting Modes

- Shutter Priority
- Aperture Priority
- Manual
- Exposure Compensation
- Metering Modes
- Exposure Bracketing
- High Dynamic Range (HDR)

Shooting Assignments – Shoot 3 subjects, each with a different creative shooting mode. Show & describe your images.

Reading

Exposure Basics - Part 3: Additional Exposure Techniques

<https://atlantaphotographic.org/apsblog/?permalink=part-3---additional-exposure-techniques>

Lesson 6: Composition and Creativity

- What is “Composition?”
- Why is it Important?
- The Influence of Art
 - Background
 - Balance
 - Negative Space
 - Perspective
 - Symmetry
- Approaches to Composition
 - Rule #1 – There Are No Rules!!
 - Centers of Interest & Simplicity
 - “Rule of Thirds” & other guides

- More Approaches to Composition
 - Triangles, Diagonals, Leading Lines & Curves
 - Patterns and Textures
 - Frame in a Frame
 - Complex Compositions

Reading

Composition Series – Five Articles by Jim Harrison and Mike Shaefer

<https://atlantaphotographic.org/about/aps-blog/?search=composition>

Shooting Assignments – Shoot three different subjects using three different composition approaches. Show & describe your images.

Composition Series Articles in order by Jim Harrison and Mike Shaefer

<https://atlantaphotographic.org/apsblog/?permalink=introduction-to-composition>

<https://atlantaphotographic.org/apsblog/?permalink=understanding-composition-from-great-works-of-art---part-two>

<https://atlantaphotographic.org/apsblog/?permalink=understanding-composition-from-great-works-of-art-part-two-continued>

<https://atlantaphotographic.org/apsblog/?permalink=approaches-to-composition---part-3>

<https://atlantaphotographic.org/apsblog/?permalink=approaches-to-composition---part-3-continued>

Lesson 7: Processing, Printing and Displaying Your Images

RAW Processing

Image Editing

Sizing and Sharpening

Printing

Mounting and Display

Free Software Resources

Raw Therapee – Free Cross-Platform Raw Processing Program

<https://www.rawtherapee.com/>

Picture Window Pro 8 – Free Image Editing Software

<https://www.dl-c.com/Downloads.html>

Assignment – Process and Edit three images to show to the class.

Phone Cameras (Optional Lesson - Tentative)

Michelle Simmons Talk