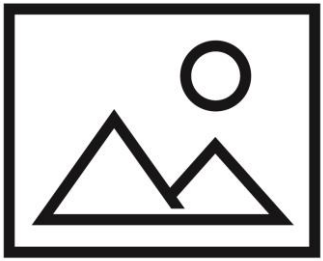
Drive Modes

In this tutorial, we will take a look at the main drive modes on your camera and when to use them. We will also cover the timer settings and other tools such as remote shutter and mirror lock up. These can all be used to ensure the highest quality photographs possible.

There are two main drive modes you can use when taking photographs: single shot and continuous or burst mode.

Single Shot

Now pay close attention to this. It gets complicated. In single shot drive mode, you **press the shutter once** and the **camera takes a single shot**. I need to go lie down to recover after that.



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This is the basic drive mode most photographers use most of the time. One click, one shot - simple as that.

Continuous/Burst

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In continuous or burst mode, **you press down the shutter** but this time you **keep it pressed**. Your camera **will keep taking photographs until you take your finger off the shutter** or the buffer/memory becomes full.

There are often two continuous/burst drive modes: low and high. In high continuous/burst drive mode, the camera will take the photographs faster. The maximum speed it can take consecutive photos and amount of photos it can take at a time depend on a number of factors:

- The shutter speed used

- The camera's buffer/memory size
- The file size of the photograph
- The speed of the memory card

Continuous/burst drive is particularly useful in wildlife and sports photography. If you start shooting the moment a player takes a shot in a football match, the camera will keep taking photographs until the ball is in the back of the net or if I am playing, stuck in a bush several metres to the left or right of the goal.

Continuous/burst drive used to capture a skateboarder jumping off a kerb.

You can also use continuous/burst drive when you want to capture a series of images documenting a particular moment. You often see this in (bad) movies when private investigators take a series of photos in quick succession to catch their target in the act of cheating on a partner or some other nefarious activity.

For this photograph, I used continuous/burst drive to capture the exact moment the lemon landed in the water.

Timers

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All digital cameras come equipped with several timer options: usually a **10 second and 2 second timer**. The 10 second timer can be useful when you want to include yourself in a family or group photo for example.

Once you press the shutter, you then have 10 seconds to get into the frame yourself before the shot is taken. Usain Bolt only needs to use the 2 second timer to do the same.

Personally, I use the **2 second timer** whenever I am taking a **long exposure shot using a tripod**. Even pressing the shutter can be enough to cause camera shake and ruin your photograph. By using

the 2 second timer, your camera has a chance to settle again after you press the shutter.

I often combine this with the **auto exposure bracketing tool that** I covered in the tutorial on aperture priority, shutter priority and manual modes.

Once the 2 second timer is activated, I press the shutter and the camera then takes all three bracketed photos one after the other. I however, only need to press the shutter button once.

I can then merge these three shots in post processing to achieve a better exposure with less clipped shadows or blown highlights. Take a look at the example below.

In this case I used the 2 second timer combined with auto exposure bracketing to take these three bracketed shots of the Charles Bridge in Prague. I then blended them together to create the final image you see below.

-2 Exposure

0 Exposure

+2 Exposure

Charles Bridge - Prague

Shutter Release Cable / Remote Control

Another way of avoiding camera shake is to use a shutter release cable or remote control to take your photo. This avoids touching your camera at all when taking the shot. The shutter release cable simply attaches to your camera via a wire.

The remote control activates the shutter completely wirelessly.

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Shutter Release Cable

Some cameras even come with an accompanying **smartphone app that allows you to control your camera from your phone**.

Not only can you control the shutter button from your phone, you can even see a live view of what your camera sees. You may even be able to focus and change the exposure settings such as

aperture and shutter speed remotely from your phone.

My dad had a box brownie camera that didn't even have a viewfinder! You just pointed it in the general direction of your subject and hoped for the best! Camera technology sure has come on a bit since then. If ten years ago, someone had told me cameras would soon be able to fly on remote controlled drones, I'd have said they were crazy!

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Box Brownie Camera / Drone Camera

I wonder what amazing technological advances are coming next: a camera that makes phone calls? That would be so cool. We can always dream I guess.

Mirror Lock Up

When you press the shutter button, the mirror in your camera lifts up to allow the light that enters the lens to reach your sensor. Even this tiny movement can be enough to cause camera shake. By activating mirror lock up, **the mirror is moved out of the way and locked into the "up" position**.

You can then take your shot as normal although you will no longer be able to see scene through your viewfinder.

Silent Shutter / Quiet Mode

Many cameras have a silent shutter or quiet mode for those times you need to be more discreet, at a wedding for example.

We now move away from the technical aspects of photography and on to the more creative side of things. The next tutorial is the first in a series on composition.