

HOW TO USE
THE DIGITAL
CAMERA

You Just Bought!



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With Alice J. Andersen

How to Use the Digital Camera You Just Bought

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How to Use the Digital Camera You Just Bought

Introduction

The goals of this book are to uncomplicate how you use your digital camera and to save you time as you learn how to take great digital pictures.

All you need is a hacksaw and some duct tape. Just kidding.

Seriously, a few years ago the CNN web site asked readers to submit ideas for gadgets. I emailed them a doctored photo of a digital camera with all of the buttons removed.

Instead of buttons, there was one dial on the top of the camera with plainly marked settings for pictures to print, pictures to email, flash on, and flash off. I also put a ring around the lens to make it easy to zoom. That was all.

CNN called me the next day to find out how I had come up with this wonderful idea! Where was a camera like this found? Perhaps somewhere in the future, I said.

Some cameras are moving in that direction, but we are not there yet. I'd love to remove all the buttons from your camera and make all the menus go away. But unless a venture capitalist wants to fund a one dial and no buttons "Socha-Flex," don't hold your breath waiting.

What I can do is the next best thing—help you sort out what is very important to know about your camera and how to set it for the best quality pictures.

I'll also explain the settings you will use most often and other important settings you may use occasionally or not at all, depending on the pictures you take.

The idea behind this book is that if you learn the most important—about 20%—of your camera's features, you are far ahead of other users. When that great photo opportunity presents itself, you'll be ready.



This is the “doctored” photo of a simple camera that I sent to CNN.

Mastering these key features will also make you more comfortable if you later choose to learn additional features your camera offers.

The long and winding (digital) road.

Consumer digital cameras have been around for about twelve years. There are already high school students who have never used film!

But when traditional cameras were only a dozen years old, there was no ready-made film! Photographers were still coating sheets of glass with a mixture of eggs whites and poisonous chemicals to make exposures.

Then, before the egg dried, they had to process the images with more noxious chemicals.

So, digital photography is new territory, and we will continue to see a lot of changes. In many ways, digital camera manufacturers are as new at the game as we are.

What features are useful, and which ones are duds, is continually being sorted out. Do you really need a setting to

make your pet's fur look shinier? (I am not making this up; it's a setting on one camera I saw.)

Until camera designers go on a "feature" diet, we are the ones left to sort out all the buttons and menus. Again, we do this by first learning the basics—the stuff that is the most important.

It's easier in small steps.

Some people in the class I teach at a local college have moved from a \$10 disposable film camera to a \$300 digital.

This is like plucking me out of my car and dropping me into the cockpit of a jumbo jet!

So, if you got home with your new camera and suddenly felt overwhelmed, you're not alone! Digital cameras often have at least TEN buttons, and each button does more than one thing, depending on how your camera is set!

All those buttons will start to make sense very soon as we sort them out. And, then, learning the not so necessary features—if you decide to do so—is a whole lot easier.

A few notes on using this book.

Make sure you carefully read the first few chapters, as they explain basic concepts. How to set your camera for the highest image quality possible is especially important.

After that you can jump to chapters that specifically address areas that are confusing to you or are simply of special interest.

Occasionally, you may find a feature in the book that is not in your camera, or vice-versa. But every attempt has been made to include the features found in the majority of cameras in use today.

The PC connection.

While we do address file types and what they mean in this book, we do not attempt to teach you how to run a computer. That is a separate topic, and a whole other book is needed!

But, if you plan to do anything other than have prints made at a lab, and your computer skills are minimal, it is critically important that you learn basic file management.

That way you can locate the files once they are inside your computer and keep them safe for years to come.

There are many noncredit courses, books, and online tutorials that may be of use, if you need to brush up on computer skills. And, eventually, we hope to have a special tutorial called *Where'd My File Go?* that specifically addresses a file saving strategy for all of your photographs.

But, right now, keep in mind that your biggest reward for mastering the basics of your camera is that you will be more confident about getting the shot—even in tricky situations—no matter what digital camera you have.

Oh, yes, one more thing. Be sure to have your instruction manual handy as you read this book. It will help you locate features and buttons specific to your camera model. With this book and your instruction manual, you should be able to find out everything you want to know, so let's get started!

Thank you for reading this book.

Your questions and comments are always welcome.

Write to psion@acpress.com.



The author's first digital image.

It was made with a Commodore 64 computer, a video camera, and a ComputerEyes interface. Circa 1988.