

The "Must-have" Photography Checklist

...What to Take Before You Leave the House

by
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Introduction

Don't confuse inexperience for ignorance. Nobody begins something at the *expert level*, so you should be congratulated for having the willingness to learn more about taking better digital photographs.

If you want to capture impressive images, you first need to *remember to take everything you need to actually take the shots*.

How many times have you merrily headed out to take pictures of some event -- a family party, or a romp in the woods; only to find you forgot to take some piece of critical equipment?

Or, are you one of those forward-thinkers who have everything you could possibly need already packed in the camera bag? Before you leave the house, you grab your keys, map, and camera bag, and head out confident in the fact that you are finally going to capture that one priceless shot of the family you've always wanted.

Unfortunately, when you get to the event, you discover that your batteries are dead and your memory cards are full of photographs that you want to keep.

As a professional photographer, I can't afford to forget bringing something I need, or to not plan for all contingencies. Therefore, I've developed checklists for what to do before I go out for a shoot.

The balance of this ebook includes some quick and useful tips that can be referenced before you leave the house.

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Enough jabbering, let's see what you need to take with before you leave the house...

Equipment

Whether you have minimal equipment or an entire room full, taking the “right” equipment with you does not mean taking everything.

Regardless what, where, or who you are going to shoot, make sure at least the following basics are covered:

- ☑ Your camera (doesn't get more basic than that).
- ☑ The protective camera bag (if the camera's not in it, put it in).
- ☑ A protective lens filter (often a UV filter).
- ☑ Camera lens cap (for when the camera's not in your bag), to place on the lens filter.
- ☑ Batteries in your camera, as well as the **spare batteries**. And, just for grins, make sure they are fully charged. (If you don't have spare batteries, consider getting some.) Depending upon total use, you may consider rechargeable batteries as an economical option.
- ☑ If you're going to be shooting indoors, take the battery charger and cord.
- ☑ Open the camera and check whether the memory is loaded. **Make sure the camera is OFF when you check, remove, or insert memory!**
- ☑ Then put everything back together, turn on the camera, and see how much memory is available on the memory card. Here's your opportunity to download any images that you want to keep, so they can be deleted from the card.
- ☑ Estimate how much shooting you'll be doing, and take with you **at least twice** that amount of memory. (Nothing is more depressing than having an incredible photo opportunity without enough memory for the photo!)
- ☑ If you haven't packed extra memory cards, do so now. Even if your estimate doesn't indicate you'll need any more than twice what you have in your camera, what do you do if you're 50 miles from a camera store and your card gets damaged or has a failure?
- ☑ Memory card protective case/container.
- ☑ The camera manual, even if you've memorized it (yeah, right).
- ☑ A reference sheet of functions, controls, and explanation of terms (if included from your camera's manufacturer). If not, see if their website has one.

- ☑ External flash, if available. If you don't know what I'm talking about, see if your camera has a [hot shoe](#). If it does, you can attach a more powerful flash to your camera than what is built in. If it does not, ignore this point. And yes, there are times when you want to use the flash, even when outside during the day (an e-Book covering how to take *Stress-free pictures* [can be found here](#)).
- ☑ If you are going on vacation or any extended trip that would consume all your memory, consider purchasing a portable digital storage device
- ☑ A [tripod](#).

This covers the **basic** equipment issues. The next chapter covers equipment that should be considered due to certain environmental factors.

Environmental Factors

Based upon the time of year, weather conditions, and what type of pictures you want to take; will determine what additional equipment and preparation is beneficial.

Hot Conditions

- ☑ Additional batteries (both hot and cold drains batteries more quickly than room temperature).
- ☑ If you have a digital SLR, take a lens hood. This will reduce glare from the sun as well as offer additional protection for your lens. If using a point-and-shoot, you can use a piece of cardboard that keeps direct sunlight off the lens.
- ☑ If going to the beach, bring a dedicated towel or some type of covering to place over your camera and bag contents so it is out of direct sunlight for extended time periods.
- ☑ Take a look at the "specifications" page of your owner's manual. What does it say regarding "Safe Operating Temperatures?" If you use your camera when it's too hot or too cold, you could damage or ruin your precious baby.
- ☑ If you leave your camera in the car for over 30 minutes, keep it **out of direct sunlight**. Even if your camera is placed in the trunk and out of direct sunlight, by remaining in the trunk **for a long time on a very hot day**, you are flirting with disaster.

Cold Conditions

- ☑ Camera bags provide protection from physical damage, not temperature extremes. During very cold conditions, certain “non-intuitive” precautions are suggested...
 - Keep **all** camera batteries in a warm place, such as the inside coat or pants pockets, where your body heat can be used. Batteries drain **very rapidly** in cold conditions.
 - Keep your camera **inside** the car if traveling long distances, rather than in the trunk (assuming your heater works, of course).
- ☑ Moving from one temperature to a drastically different one (example: inside warm car to 10 degrees below zero outside) will often produce fog/condensation on your viewfinder, lens, and/or LCD display.
 - Gently clear the condensation with a high quality lens cloth, if it does not clear on its own after a few minutes.
 - Check with your owner’s manual and/or the manufacturer’s technical support if you plan to be shooting in cold conditions for an extended time period. They should be able to advise you on what’s considered safe and when it’s a gamble the camera may be damaged.

Special Considerations

Most photographers like to continually improve and stretch the envelope. However, this is a very individual thing and should not be forced. Therefore, if you are feeling overwhelmed at this point, this chapter is probably not for you... at least not now.

On the other hand, if you're thinking "so far, so good; what else do you suggest?" then read on.

This checklist contains accessory items to consider, as well as other ideas to produce the best photographs possible.

Check [Best Family Photography Tips](#) for lots of additional tips and resources on many facets of digital photography.

- Consider a [circular polarizer filter](#) for your lens. It will be one of the least expensive accessories you can purchase and you will **LOVE the results**. What will it do, you ask?
 - Make the blue in the sky appear deeper and bluer. Allow you to reflect the image of a mountain off its mountain lake (or any other still body of water)
 - Makes colors (under certain conditions) "jump" off the page with vividness
 - Capture photos involving glass, water, or shiny objects without glare.

Here are [some examples](#).

- Also consider looking into the [neutral density](#) family of filters. If you have ever wanted to capture that "cotton candy" look of flowing water in daylight, you will need neutral density filters and a tripod.
 - If going to a major family event or a small party with friends, being prepared with the right equipment is the first step. Once you begin taking pictures, learning how to achieve [fantastic poses](#) is what produces photographs that are cherished forever.
 - Plan for the event by thinking about who you want to photograph and which poses would be best. Check here for [Photography eBooks](#) you won't find anywhere else.

Summary

Well, that’s it. Hopefully, you’ve seen some things that will not only save you from embarrassment or equipment damage, but can also help you take terrific photographs.

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Keep on shooting.

Robert Bezman
[Best Family Photography Tips](#)

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