

More Advanced Exposure - “Exposing to the right”

Let's very quickly recap the basics first. Anyone shooting full manual exposure, the principles are the same you just achieve the same result by using different buttons and dials.

Here we have a *normal* exposure panel as will be shown on your camera's lcd display and possibly within your viewfinder when you half-press the shutter button.



The marker shows that the camera is currently set to a neutral exposure position, ie according to the camera brain, the image will not be under or over exposed. For *some* images this may well be the most appropriate setting.

My own preference certainly was, and in the main still is, to expose images at around 1/3 – 2/3 stops “under. Each dot on the scale represents 1/3 stop so my own would normally be one or two dots to the left.

Fortunately, whilst Nikon and Canon have a disagreement regards the logic of clockwise and up and down in their default settings, when it comes to histograms left is left. I shan't mention that turning a dial right to move something left is less than intuitive.



It would have been normal for my image histogram to look something like this based on being 1/3 – 2/3s under, or “to the left”

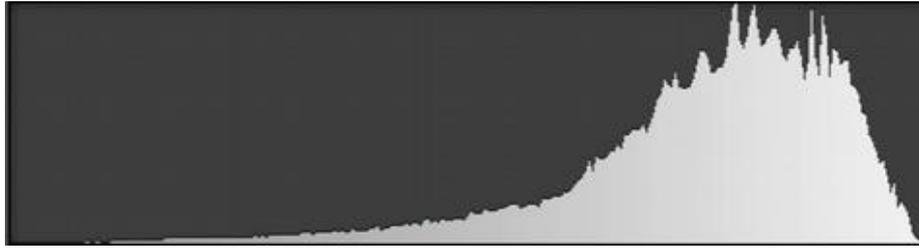
This is however not necessarily the correct technical approach and rather is based upon personal preference for the end image, and the fact that, for any given ISO, under-exposing even marginally *has to give* a slightly faster shutter which can be more important than the exposure. When higher ISOs were more problematic, this was more important than it is today.

Technically speaking this is not actually the way to do it for optimum results.

There is massively more image data held in the upper areas of the exposure (right hand side) than in the lower (left hand side).

So, whilst it may or may not be easily evident to the naked eye (quality of camera etc has to be a factor here) shooting to the left means that I am throwing away lots and lots of image data.

Exposing to the right simply means shooting a slightly brighter image so that more image data is captured.



Even with RAW files, you should still be wary of blowing (over exposing) highlights as, in my opinion, they can become a murky grey in processing if trying to correct them later.

The amplitude (height) of the histogram bars is not important, that is simply a representation of how much of the tone (horizontal scale) so if you see something like this on your camera back then do not panic. What matters is that right hand edge. Here there appears to be no danger in there being masses of data lost off that side.

In my opinion, no matter how good the camera and the processing, over the edge is gone for good.

Exposure compensation is generally very easily adjusted on the fly as long as you do not have an entirely menu-driven camera.

Generally you can assign your rear wheel to the function and as such it becomes intuitive – although that may depend upon how you view clocks.



Anyone shooting full manual will likely not need this but, for those that have recently made the transition;

A brighter image results from any of the following - a higher ISO, a slower shutter, a bigger aperture. For me, as I detest menu driven, touch screen controls, my aperture would be controlled by the top dial and shutter via the back dial. Changing ISO means pressing a button before using the top dial so would only be used if absolutely necessary.

Whilst landscapes etc only generally change fairly slowly, please note that my own photographic interests include wildlife (or mock wildlife) and weddings, looking for a menu means taking the camera away from the face and as such is useless.