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# Photography: Correcting the exposure



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Given that your camera's light sensor reduces the dominant brightness in the scene to a "middle grey", how can you tell your camera that the subject is darker or lighter? In **A**, **S** or **M** mode, your camera offers a precise way to do so using the exposure scale. By moving the cursor up or down on the scale, you can specify that the scene should be brighter or darker.

## Handy tips

- How you move the cursor depends on the selected mode.
- Each number up or down on the scale means twice as much (or less) light.

## 1. A (Aperture Priority) mode

Semi-automatic mode: you control the diaphragm aperture and exposure; the camera calculates the shutter speed required to obtain the aforementioned "middle grey".

- The further towards +1... +2, etc that that you move the cursor, the more overexposed, i.e. brighter, the image will be, and the slower the shutter speed set by your camera.
- The further towards ? 1... ? 2, the more underexposed, i.e. darker, the picture will be, and hence the higher the shutter speed.

**Note:** this mode gives you priority control **over the depth** of field, which is extremely useful when you wish to make a subject stand out from their surroundings, especially for portraits, or

indeed landscapes.

## 2. S (Shutter Priority) mode

Semi-automatic mode: you control the shutter speed. As in A mode, you move the cursor up and down the exposure scale, allowing you to overexpose or underexpose the image: the camera sets a smaller or larger aperture accordingly.

- Crucial when trying to freeze a moving subject or produce a controlled blur effect.

## 3. M (Manual) mode



The camera is set to Aperture Priority mode (A or Av)  
On the picture in the middle, the aperture (2) is set to  $f/3.5$ . The shutter speed (1) is set for a mid grey, located half way up the scale (3)

For a darker subject, as in the picture on the left, rotate the dial (or tap the pad) on the rear of the camera to move the cursor towards the negative end of the scale. In this case, it is lowered by one stop, i.e. becomes dark. The shutter speed will therefore be doubled, meaning that half as much light hits the sensor.

For a brighter subject, as in the picture on the right, rotate the dial (or tap the pad) on the rear of the camera to move the cursor towards the positive end of the scale. In this case, it is raised by one stop, i.e. becomes bright as middle grey. The shutter speed is halved, meaning that twice as much light hits the sensor.

Using the exposure scale for total aperture and speed control By changing one or the other of the values you will see the indicator moving on the scale which will show whether the area being measured will be darker than medium grey (going towards -) or lighter (towards +) .

## 4. Exposure compensation parameters for different subjects

The following table is a guide to the exposure settings to use for ISO 100.

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Camera settings</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Skier on a brightly lit slope	f/5.6 at 1/1000	High shutter speed to freeze the
White sandy beach, snowy landscape	f/16 at 1/125	Small aperture, giving a large d
Children running over white sand	f/8 at 1/500	High shutter speed to freeze the
Outdoor amateurs ports in sunny weather	f/5.6 at 1/250	If the shutter speed is too low to freeze try with f/4 at 1/500
The moon at night	f/8 at 1/250	
People outdoors in sunny weather	f/8 at 1/125	
People in overcast weather	f/4 at 1/125	A moderate burst of flash may imp
People taken against the light	f/5.6 at 1/125	A moderate burst of flash may imp
Lit street at night	f/2.8 at 1/15	
<b>Exposure compensation (A and S modes)</b>		
Person against a white wall	+ 1.5 EV on the scale	The larger the subject appears in compensation require
Close-up portrait of a face, white skin.	+ 1 EV	
Close-up portrait of a face, coloured skin.	0-0.5 EV	With lighter non-white skin, stic
Close-up portrait of a face, coloured skin.	-0.5 to -1 EV	

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## See also

### Photography: Exposure and light metering modes



All digital cameras have a built-in light meter or "exposure meter".

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### Photography: Colour balance



The light falling on a scene always has a predominant colour, such as yellow in the case of the sun, or an orangey hue in the case of tungsten bulbs, blue in the case of a cloudy sky or green in the presence of neon lighting.

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