

Basic Digital Photography: Taking Action Shots

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Personal photography has gone through a sort of mini evolution in the past 20 years as digital cameras have become popular. With the ability to take huge numbers of pictures, save them on computer, and share them over the internet, the cost of film and developing are no longer limiting factors. Although group photographs, portraits, celebrations, and vacations are still common images, personal photography now captures more impromptu and daily types of events. Photographs of fast moving action are more common as well as people are able to experiment to obtain the type of images they want without fear of "ruining" a shot that requires more skill to take. Capturing action can be challenging for a beginning photographer and requires quite a bit of practice to master. The following outlines a few pointers that can get the novice started off on the right foot.



1. When trying to obtain shots of action, the photographer can use one of two approaches:

* Follow subjects with the camera as they wait for action to happen.

* Focus the camera on a particular spot where action is anticipated and wait for it to happen. An example would be focusing on the basketball goal or 1st base. When using this method it is often best to observe through the Optical Viewfinder and keep both eyes open so that it is easy to anticipate shots as action approaches.

2. Reduce lag time and latency:

* Shutter lag is the delay between the time the shutter button is pressed and the time when the camera actually takes the picture. During this lag time the camera is setting the exposure and focus. Shutter lag is particularly problematic when trying to capture action shots. One way of decreasing shutter lag is to press the shutter button halfway down, hold it, and then press the button down completely when ready to take the shot. This process allows the camera to perform some of the focusing function prior to taking the shot thereby reducing the shutter lag time.

* Latency is the time it takes the digital camera to write/store images before the next shot can be taken. To reduce latency, a photographer should use flash cards with fast write times. In some instances, a lower resolution setting can be used for the shot so that the camera has less information to process and store, but this technique of reducing latency must be used carefully as image quality can be compromised.



3. Follow the action; this is known as "**panning**". Panning involves tracking the motion of the subject horizontally to capture the movement as it goes side to side. As the photographer moves in the same direction as the motion, a slower shutter speed is often used to allow the subject to be focused and the background to blur demonstrating the

action that is occurring. Panning is not necessary for all action shots but is one method of demonstrating the movement while keeping the subject in focus. The process of panning involves the following:

- * Tracking is initiated prior to taking the shot.
- * The shot is taken by squeezing the shutter button to avoid any downward movement of the camera.
- * Tracking of the movement continues for 1-2 seconds after the shot is taken.

4. Use Burst Mode when wanting to capture a series of movements. Many digital cameras offer a Burst Mode which allows the user to capture a sequence of shots. The camera tends to set the focus and exposure on the first shot and then take remaining shots with these same settings. This allows the camera to take the shots in a more rapid sequence.

5. Action shots can be taken from any angle. However, staying parallel to the action generally produces the best demonstration of movement and allows the photographer to pan if desired.

6. Shutter speed reminder. A faster shutter speed generally freezes action to help eliminate blurring, however a somewhat slower shutter speed can better demonstrate movement by allowing some blurring of the arms, legs, and feet as the subject moves. The type of shot desired is what dictates the appropriate shutter speed to use.

7. Practice, practice, practice. Beginners can anticipate their action shots will not meet their expectations initially. Practice is necessary and will require many shots to be taken. However, with the ability to delete images on digital cameras, practice is only an investment in time.