

# How to Shoot in Direct Sunlight

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image by [油姬](#)

Shooting in direct sunlight can lead to images that have high contrast, blown out highlights, lens flare and colors that might even look overly saturated. If you're shooting portraits they can also lead to the 'squint factor'.

So what's a photographer to do?

Here are eleven quick and simple tips at combating the problems that bright sunlight might bring when shooting outdoors:

## 1. Move into the shade



[Photo by neloqua](#)

With some subjects you'll be able to move them (and yourself) into the shade. This is particularly relevant with portraits where your subject is highly portable. Sometimes the simplest solutions are best.

## **2. Make your own shade**

If your subject is not movable (for example if you're shooting macro work with a flower) create your own shade. Use your own shadow, the shadow of someone else or bring an object with you (like an umbrella, a reflector or large sheet of card) to block out the sun.

## **3. Use Fill in Flash**

Most of us were trained to put the sun behind you when taking a photograph so that your subject will be well lit. Shooting into the sun may lead to lens flare or a dark subject – but at times it can improve it drastically – particularly if you use a flash to fill in the shadows that are created by doing so (learn more about using [fill flash](#)).

## **4. Use a Reflector**

Another way to fill in the shadows caused by direct sunlight is to use a reflector. These bounce light up into the face of your subject and are great because they allow you to shoot into the sun – as with when you're using fill in flash.

## **5. Change Your Perspective**



[Photo by code poet](#)

Sometimes moving your subject isn't possible – but moving around it can give a different impact. This might be moving to the other side of the object, shooting from directly above or even getting down low and shooting up. Doing so will change the angle of the sun hitting both your subject and the camera and give your image a completely different feel.

## **6. Use a Lens Hood**

Suffering from lens flare? If your lens came with a lens hood – get it out and use it. If you don't have one – it's not difficult to construct one out of card – or to even use your hand to shield your lens from the sun. Just make sure that your shot is free of your hand or the DIY hood that you're using (learn more about eliminating lens flare).

## **7. Filters**

Sometimes a filter can be handy when shooting in bright sunlight. I try to take a Polarizing filter or Neutral Density (ND) filter with at all times. The polarizing filter will help cut down on reflections and both will cut down the light getting into your camera to let you use slower shutter speeds and smaller apertures if you're looking for more control over these elements of exposure. Polarizing filters have the added bonus of giving you some control over some colors – particularly when you've got a blue sky in your shot (learn more about using filters).

## **8. Play with White Balance Settings**

Many digital cameras come with the ability to choose different white balance settings. While you can make adjustments later on post processing (particularly when shooting in RAW) choosing the right setting at the time of shooting can be worth experimenting with. I personally shoot in RAW and do this later on my computer – but have friends who prefer to do it in camera.

## **9. Metering**

Direct sunlight makes correct metering tricky. In these conditions I generally choose spot metering mode on my DSLR and choose the main subject of the scene that I'm photographing (the focal point) to meter off. Alternatively pick a mid-tone area to meter off if you want everything to be exposed relatively well. Check your shots immediately to see if you need to adjust your technique (your histogram can be handy here) and if you have the luxury of time – take multiple shots metering off different parts of the scene so that you can choose the best one later.

## **10. Pick The Time of Day to Shoot**



Photo by creativesam

For many of us we won't have the luxury of sitting all day long waiting for the perfect light – but if you do, the time of day can dramatically impact your shot. Dawn and Dusk are particularly good times to shoot as the direction and color of the light is often more useable than the direct overhead light of noon.

### **11. Shoot Silhouettes**

'If you can't beat em join em' is a saying that could come into play here. If the bright light of the Sun is causing you a headache – why not use it to your advantage and make your subject into a Silhouette against a bright background (learn more about Photographing Silhouettes

Read more: <http://www.digital-photography-school.com/how-to-shoot-in-direct-sunlight#ixzz1bPTTzjJy>