



38 Digital & Film Reminders for Increased Photography Happiness

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When you follow this advice, you will find that your film and digital photography will be much more enjoyable and a little easier. Remember it's not about the type of camera you use, but the results that matter!

Film

1. Always hand-check your film at the airport. You have the right to request that it not go through the walk-through x-rays. The effects of these x-rays are cumulative. NEVER put any film (exposed or unexposed) in your checked baggage.
2. If you find yourself in low-light situations, you can push the ASA of your film by at least two stops comfortably (i.e. ASA 100 can be pushed two stops to ASA 400), but remember to mark the finished role "400" and take it to a lab that can handle this.
3. Use rechargeable 'AA' Nickel-Metal Hydride (NiMH) Batteries. Each one can last for 500 charges and offers a considerable cost savings. Purchase one set for your camera and one spare set (minimum of 2,000 mAh).
4. Get your film or negatives scanned at the time of developing WITHOUT prints. This saves you throwing away most of the printers and will allow you to print the ones you want.

Digital

5. Consider purchasing four, 512MB flash memory cards and not one, 2GB card. You wouldn't want all of your images on one card if (and when) it breaks.
6. Purchase a camera that has at least 8x optical zoom (4x for compact cameras) and ignore the digital zoom. If you have the budget, consider purchasing a digital camera that can accept film lenses for increased image quality.
7. The two main memory cards are sD (secure digital) and CFII (Compact Flash). I don't recommend purchasing another type since they are not the standard. Best is SanDisk Ultra II
8. Make sure that your camera has a USB 2.0 or iEEE (Firewire) port for fast downloads to your computer and definitely use a portable card reader for much faster downloads.
9. All you need for 4x6 to 8x10 photographs is a 5MP (megapixel) camera. If you have a little extra in your budget, you can go for 6-8MP.
10. Also look for a camera that allows you to get an optional wide angle and telephoto lens. It will increase your versatility (i.e. I'm recommending a DSLR with separate lenses).
11. Photograph with the lowest ISO (ASA) possible and the images on the highest quality for maximum quality and versatility. The highest quality files that can be captured are usually in JPEG FINE, TIFF or RAW mode.
12. Practice Custom White Balance when possible.
13. See #3 above under Film.

Scanner

14. If you have lots of slides and negatives to scan, I recommend that you purchase a dedicated slide and film scanner. The quality will be better and it will scan much faster than a flatbed scanner. A minimum of 4,000 dpi is recommended. Digital ICE software is a requirement here!
15. If you want one scanner that does it all, then purchase a flatbed scanner that has at least 2,400 dpi. If it comes with Digital ICE (software that removes dust and scratches) that would be a plus! However, I don't think you'll be happy with the slide/negative scans.
16. Always scan in TIFF mode for capturing the highest amount of data. You can always convert to JPEG later.
17. The best slide and negative scanner is the Nikon Coolscan V ED.

Computer

18. You will want your monitor resolution to be at least 1280 x 1024 since this will give you the ability to see your photographs in greater detail (for manipulation later).
19. Due to the sizes of digital, you will want a computer that has the following:
 - a. A Writeable DVD (preferred) for backing up your images for the short term
 - b. At least 1GB of RAM
 - c. A 100 GB hard drive minimum and one backup hard drive (usually 250 GB min)
 - d. At least 2, USB 2.0 ports and 1, iEEE port
 - e. A separate digital card reader to free up your digital camera and allow faster downloads.



Calibration

20. Get in the habit of practicing color management in your workflow so that the colors you saw before you took your photograph will be the colors you get when you print your finished output.
21. I recommend a separate monitor calibration system such as the Pantone Huey that allows you to achieve highly accurate readings. However, if you can't afford this, then keep resetting your monitor's color display approximately each month through your computer's control panel.

Software

22. I don't recommend any other package for image manipulation except for Adobe Photoshop. It comes in three flavors (low, medium and high), Adobe LE, Adobe Photoshop Elements 5.0 and Adobe CS-3 (I still use CS-2).
23. When you are printing your images in Photoshop or any other package, you will want a minimum resolution of 300 ppi (pixels per inch).
24. The best color profile is Adobe RGB (1998) since this preserves the highest color gamut. However, when you are working with a service bureau, they like the images to have an sRGB color profile.
25. Be careful as to how much you crop your images, if you crop too much, you'll waste precious pixels and wind up with an image that is too grainy (i.e. a lower number of MP).
26. You'll need a software package that gives you the ability to organize your photographs into a database. This is very important for tracking, retrieval and organization. The best one for this is iView Media Pro.

Service Bureaus

27. Consider using a service bureau for reproducing dozens of 4x6 or larger photographs. You can often get each one for less than 12 cents each.
28. Check out different bureaus such as Shutterfly.com or snapfish.com, etc. The quality of each lab is different and you should test them for the best results.

Printers

29. If you are making lots of prints at your home or office, I recommend a dedicated photographic printer. It will be cheaper in the long run and you will be using the printer for that which it is intended (photographs) and not text.
30. Make sure that your printer has separate ink tanks (at least 6-8) so that you only pay for and use the inks needed.
31. Dye-based inks are the standard type at the low end. They won't last very long and are not recommended for archival or museum quality work. However, if you simply want to print photos of family and friends, then these printers (often under \$80) are all that you will need. The best brands are Canon, Hewlett Packard and Epson.
32. Pigment-based inks provide for greater longevity and when produced on the manufacturer's paper, will give you photographs that last for over 200 years. This is much better than a traditional photo lab. Look to Epson (the R series) and Canon.
33. Stick with the manufacturer's inks. 3rd party inks might clog the print head and may violate your warranty.

Paper

34. Use the manufacturer's paper first. It will give the best results and allow you to achieve the best longevity with either dye or pigment-based inks.
35. Use the proper printer and paper profiles in your print driver on your computer. This will ensure that you will be getting the photograph that you want in the colors that you see on your monitor.
36. Your photographs will only be properly protected either under glass or in a plastic (acid free) sleeve. If they are exposed in the open, then they won't last as long as the manufacturer's rating.

Backup

37. Always backup your original file first. Never work on an original file. I always make a second copy of my original file in case my computer has problems.
38. Make a copy of your 'priceless' digital images and store them in different location than your home or office. It will give you peace of mind and allow you to preserve precious memories.

Keep learning! Due to the advances of technology and imagination, you will need to stay involved or you will risk falling behind. Keep an open mind when trying to maximize the potential of your digital workflow. Above all, have fun! For more information, please see <http://www.digitalphotoinstitute.com> .