

**SPYROS HENIADIS**  
GET OUT THERE AND TAKE SOME DAMN PHOTOS!  
[SELFHELPHOTOGRAPHER.COM](http://SELFHELPHOTOGRAPHER.COM)

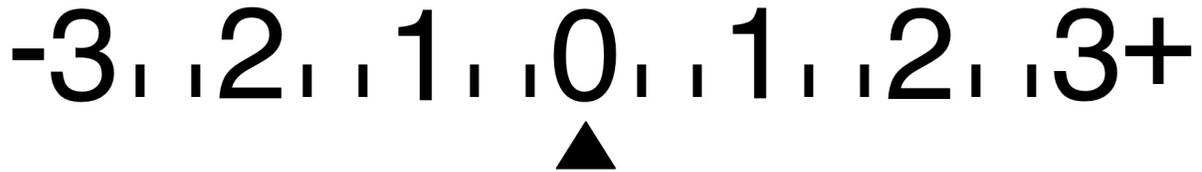
## **GUIDE TO EXPOSURE**

-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3+



# What Is Exposure?

An exposure is the specific amount of light that we capture when we take a photograph, and the exposure indicator tells us what that amount is. It looks like this:



As you can see, there is a 0 in the middle of the indicator with positive and negative values on either side.

The camera calculates the amount of light that will be captured based on the current ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed settings.

When the exposure indicator is pointing at 0 it tells you that, with the current ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed settings, the camera will capture what it thinks is the correct amount of light for the subject you are about to photograph.

If the indicator is pointing at a positive value, such as +2, the camera thinks that the current settings will capture too much light which will result in a photo that is too bright.



If the indicator is pointing at a negative value, such as -2, the camera thinks that the current settings will capture too little light which will result in a photo that is too dark.

I keep saying, "the camera thinks", because what the camera thinks is the correct amount light doesn't always give you the results that you actually want.

For now, because we're just getting started shooting in Manual mode, we're just going to work at getting the exposure indicator to read 0.

You can find the exposure indicator in one of three possible places.

Pretty much every DSLR shows the exposure indicator on the back screen of the camera.



If you have a top LCD SCREEN, you may see the indicator there.

Finally, on all DSLRs, Mirrorless, and advanced point and shoots with viewfinders, you can see the exposure indicator in the viewfinder, typically at the bottom in the info display.



*Take a moment and make sure you can find your exposure indicator.*

Now what we're going to do is go through the process of setting the settings so that the exposure indicator reads 0, and then we'll take some photos.

*WARNING: These photos are going to suck. That's fine. Right now, we're just figuring out how all of this works. Also, your final settings will be different from the example settings given in this exercise.*

Let's get started.

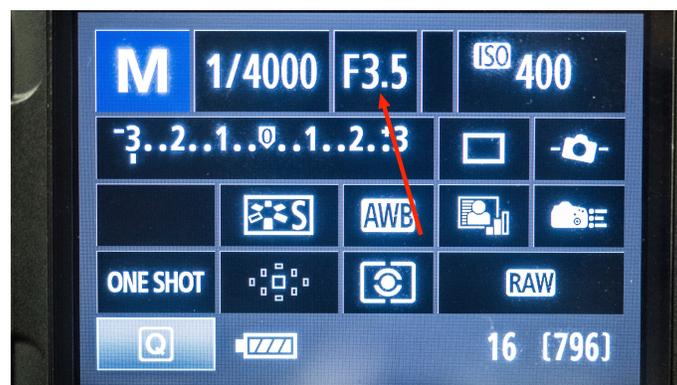
Grab your camera, take off the lens cap, turn it on, and make sure that it's in Manual mode.

First, we're going to set the ISO. To get started, I'd like you to set your ISO setting to 400.



After setting the ISO to 400, we're going to change the Aperture.

Set your Aperture to the lowest number. The lowest Aperture number available to you will vary depending on the lens you are using. If you're using a kit lens that came with your camera, it will probably be something between f3.5 and f5.6.



With the ISO and Aperture set, all that's left is the Shutter Speed but, before we set the Shutter Speed, we need to check the exposure indicator.

When we set the Shutter Speed, we want the exposure indicator to end up on the 0. We need to see what the exposure indicator is reading because that will tell us what we need to do with the Shutter Speed.

*Here I want to make a very important point. When you check your exposure indicator, you must be pointing the camera at the subject you are about to photograph.*

The camera calculates the amount of light based on whatever it sees through the lens. If you point the camera at the floor when you check the exposure indicator, you'll get a reading for what the exposure would be if you took a photo of the floor. This will be a completely different reading from the subject you actually intend to photograph. (Unless you intend to photograph the floor!)

So point the camera at whatever you want to take a photo of and then press the shutter button halfway down to wake up the camera.

Your exposure indicator should look something like this:



Your exposure indicator will likely show something different.

It may be on the “+” side or, if you're lucky with your settings and subject, it could actually be at “0”.

In this example, the exposure indicator looks like it is -3 which tells us that the camera wants more light but this is actually telling us something different. Because this is a picture, what you can't see is that the exposure indicator is blinking.

What that blinking means is that the exposure indicator can't display the actual exposure reading. (On some cameras, the little pointer will turn into an arrow. On most cameras, it will

blink to indicate that it can't give you a precise reading. On this camera, the pointer doesn't change but it does blink.)

When you see this it means that, at the current settings, the exposure is beyond what can be displayed on the exposure indicator. In other words, the reading is something like -6, -10, or -50, depending on the situation.

Every camera's exposure indicator has a display limit. On the camera in this example, the limit is +3 and -3. Your camera will have its own limit. Regardless of the limit, when you are beyond the limits of the exposure indicator your camera will give you an indication of that.

Right now, the important thing to recognize is that the exposure indicator is giving a negative reading in this example. This means that, at the current Shutter Speed, the camera will not get enough light for the photo and the photo will be too dark.

That means we need to turn up the volume on the Shutter Speed setting to get more light for the photo.

In this example, the Shutter Speed is currently set to 1/4000 which means that for this camera, the Shutter Speed volume control is turned all the way down, letting in the least amount of light.

What you are seeing on your camera will be different, but here's what's important to understand.

*If the exposure indicator is showing a negative value, the camera needs more light. If the exposure indicator is showing a positive value, the camera needs less light.*

Either way, unless your exposure indicator is at 0, you will need to change the Shutter Speed to let in more (or less) light.

Before you start changing it, press the shutter button halfway down to wake up the camera. If you don't do that, you won't see anything happening on the exposure indicator when you start changing the Shutter Speed.

Even with the camera awake, you won't see any changes on the exposure indicator right away if your exposure indicator is off the charts when you start changing the Shutter Speed.

This happens because your exposure is so far off the charts that a big change in the Shutter Speed is required before it will start to show up on the exposure indicator.

For example, if I'm at -20 and I change the Shutter Speed to 1/1600, that's a pretty big change from 1/4000, but I might still be at -10. The exposure indicator only goes to -3 so it's going to

keep showing that it's off the charts (and will also keep blinking). I've made a change, just not enough of a change.

So don't freak out if you don't see anything happening right away. As long as you pressed the shutter button halfway to wake up the camera, all you need to do is keep changing your Shutter Speed until you start to see your exposure indicator moving.

If you haven't done it already, half press your shutter button to wake up the camera, point it at the subject you want to photograph, and then change your Shutter Speed until your exposure indicator reads 0.



In this example, I started at 1/4000. I had to go to 1/60 to get to a zero exposure.



One thing you may notice as you get near 0 is that the exposure indicator keeps jumping around instead of staying exactly on 0.

This is normal. When it's active, the camera is constantly evaluating the exposure and giving you a new reading of the scene. When you're hand holding the camera, the tiny movements from you changing the settings or just holding the camera will cause the camera to re-calculate the exposure with those movements.

Don't keep trying to get it to 0, because every change will just cause it to bounce around more as the camera moves. As long as it stays near 0, go ahead and take your shot.

Now you should have taken a photo, and it's entirely possible that the photo is all blurry.

If it's blurry, that's fine. Remember, we knew we'd be taking crappy photos for this exercise.

Here's the photo that I took for the example.



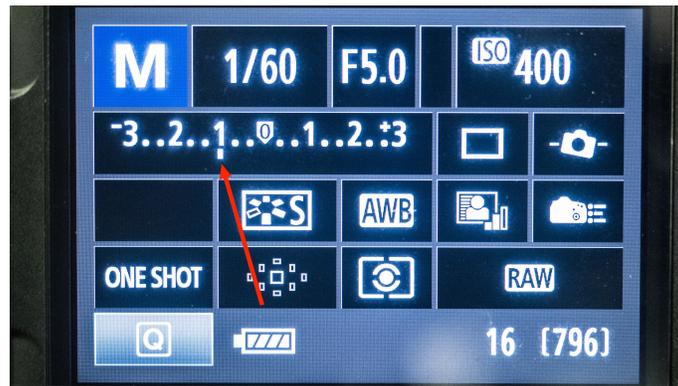
Now you're going to take another photo, but you're going to change a setting first.

I want you to change the Aperture by three clicks of the control to make the Aperture number larger.



If you were at f3.5, you should end at f5. If your lowest Aperture setting was different, just change it by three clicks. Remember to half press the shutter button first to wake up the camera.

Now point your camera at the same subject you photographed before, and look at your exposure indicator. It should be reading around -1.



It may not be exactly -1, but it should be close to it. This is because we changed the Aperture, and as a result, we changed how much light would be captured, giving us a new exposure reading.

Go ahead and take the photo. It should be noticeably darker than the first photo.

Now I want you to change another setting. Change your ISO setting from 400 to 1600.

Then point the camera at your subject again and check your exposure indicator. You may need to press the shutter button halfway to wake up the camera.

Now it should be reading around +1.

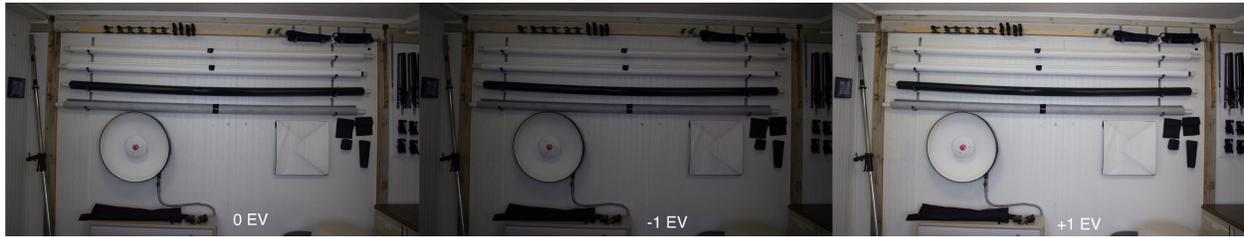
Again, we changed a volume control. We changed the amount of light that would be captured which resulted in a new exposure reading.

If you haven't taken the photo yet, go ahead and take it. It should be noticeably brighter than both of the previous photos.

Now it's time to change the settings one more time to get back to 0.

Point your camera at the subject, press the shutter button halfway down to wake up the camera, and then change your Shutter Speed to give you a 0 reading on the exposure indicator.

Now, let's take a moment to compare those photos. The first photo was taken with the exposure indicator reading 0. This is called an exposure value of 0 (0 EV).



The second photo was taken with an exposure value of -1 (-1 EV). This photo is darker than the first. If we were to actually measure how much darker, we would discover that it is twice as dark as the first photo.

The third photo was taken with an exposure value of +1 (+1 EV). This photo is brighter than the first. If we measured it, we would discover that it is twice as bright as the first photo. (It's four times as bright as the -1 EV photo.)

This is valuable information because now we have a unit of measurement to work with. The way the camera calculates how much light you need for an exposure value of 0 is kind of arbitrary. With the exposure indicator, we can see when we're at 0 but we never actually know how much light we're recording.

The good thing is that we don't really need to know how much light we're recording.

What we do need to know is how much the amount of light changes when we change our settings.

We know that going one step up the exposure indicator makes the image twice as bright, and going one step down the exposure indicator makes the image twice as dark. That change of twice as bright or twice as dark is called a Stop.

*A Stop is how we measure the change in the amount of light captured when we change our settings. A one stop change makes the image either twice as bright or twice as dark.*

Our exposure indicator measures light in stops.

When you are out shooting photos, you can use this knowledge to decide how and when you'll change your settings based on how you want the photo to look.

Let me show you an example. Let's say that you're taking a photo of a scene.

You set your settings to get a 0 EV and the photo looks like this:



And when you look at the photo, you think, “Well, the camera thinks this is correct, but I think it’s too dark. I’d like this to be about twice as bright.”

You know that, in order to make the photo twice as bright, you need to increase the amount of light captured for the photo by one stop.

Since you started with an exposure value of 0 (0 EV), you know that you need to change at least one of your settings (ISO, Aperture, or Shutter Speed) to give you an exposure value of +1 (+1 EV).



If that still wasn’t bright enough, you could make it twice as bright again by changing at least one of your settings (ISO, Aperture, or Shutter Speed) to give you an exposure value of +2 (+2 EV).



*An important thing to understand is that there is no right answer for how bright or dark any given photo should be. As the photographer, that is entirely up to you to decide based on what you want your final photo to look like. Now you have the power and knowledge to make that choice.*

This is how you use the exposure indicator to “see” what an image will look like before you even take it and make adjustments to your settings to save you time and trouble when out taking photos!

## Conclusion

I am excited to help you in your your photography journey, and I am really looking forward to seeing what you can do with your camera, but using your camera for amazing photos is much more than just setting your exposure indicator to 0, so if you want to truly master your camera and use it to take amazing photos that will match the vision you see in your mind, check out my [Guide to Shooting in Manual Mode](#).

The Guide expands upon what we've covered in this book, and much more, including:

- How cameras work, including more in depth explanations of ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed
- Exactly how to change your ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed settings
- An in depth look at exactly how changing ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed will change your photos
- Exactly how to get Shallow Depth of Field when you want it
- The secret to my I Am Shooting method, which will help you choose the right settings for the photo you want to take every single time
- How to take sharp photos and avoid those crappy blurry photos we never want to take
- and much more...

[Go check it out](#), and then...

**GET OUT THERE  
AND TAKE  
SOME DAMN  
PHOTOS!**