

# Best Settings For Low Light Photos



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# The Best Settings For Low Light Photos

*(Print this page and keep it in your camera bag!)*

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## 1. Set Your Shutter Speed to 1/focal length of your lens\*

**Look at the focal length you have the lens zoomed to and set your shutter speed to 1/focal length\*\* (as close to it as possible).**

*\*This doesn't account for image stabilization which can let you set shutter speeds slower than 1/focal length*

*\*\*Keep in mind that regardless of image stabilization, you don't want to go lower than about 1/30 to avoid motion from subject movement*

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## 2. Set your aperture to the smallest aperture setting

**The smallest aperture setting on the camera will give you the largest aperture opening in the lens, letting in as much light as is possible, helping you to get the best photo possible.**

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## 3. Set Your ISO to bring the exposure indicator to 0\*

**In low light this will mean a higher ISO, which will mean more noise, but sometimes that's the only choice. It's better to have a good, but noisy photo than no photo at all, so don't be afraid to increase the ISO as much as necessary**

*\*Make sure you're pointing the camera at the subject when you do this!*

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## 4. Check your photo

### **Check to make sure the photo is sharp**

If it's not sharp, increase the shutter speed, and also increase the ISO to bring the exposure indicator back to zero *(Make sure you're pointing the camera at the subject when you do this!)*

### **Check the exposure**

Check to see if you want the image brighter or darker. If you do, increase or decrease the ISO as desired to brighten or darken the image until you are satisfied.

# The Provisos

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## 1. Low light situations also tend to have strong color casts

Be sure to adjust your White Balance setting to compensate for the color temperature of the lighting. If you're having trouble getting good white balance, [click here for my video on how to get perfect colors in your photos.](#)

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## 2. Setting the Shutter Speed to 1/focal length doesn't account for Image Stabilization

Image stabilization can help you shoot at shutter speeds slower than 1/focal length and get sharp photos, but you have to test your camera and lenses that have stabilization to find out what the limits are for you.

Test all lenses that have stabilization, and test at various focal lengths, and make sure you take notes so you know your safe shutter speeds when you need them. *(Use the chart on the next page)*

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## 3. Be aware of subject motion

Regardless of image stabilization, or your focal length, you generally have to keep your shutter at 1/30 or faster to avoid blur in your images from subject motion.

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## 3. When you can, use a tripod

With a tripod, you can avoid using high ISO and you don't have to worry about the shutter speed, so when it's appropriate, absolutely use a tripod in low light!

When using a tripod, be sure to use a remote shutter or the self timer to avoid any blur from camera shake due to triggering the shutter.

Additionally, if you have a DSLR, using the mirror lockup feature will also reduce camera shake during long exposures.

# Image Stabilization Testing Notes

*(Print this page and keep it in your bag for reference)*

Write the lens below	Focal Length Tested (write the focal length in the spot below)			
	FL1:	FL2:	FL3:	FL4:
Safe Shutter Speed				

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Safe Shutter Speed				

# Conclusion

I hope you've found this low light settings guide helpful!! Choosing settings in manual mode in low light is just the beginning of taking great photos, and if you'd like to learn more about how to use and take control of your camera so that you can reliably take photos that look exactly the way you want them to, check out my [Guide to Shooting in Manual Mode video course](#).

And then...

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