

Welcome to the sunset month. According to several of our professional customers, November is our best photographic sunset month of the year. Unlike many other subjects, we get one each and every day. Sometimes vibrant, sometimes bland, each day's is different. When thinking about sunset pictures, first decide if your picture will be of the sunset, lit by the sunset, or a subject in front of the sunset.

Start with the most basic question: what will this picture be of? What will be the subject? Let's look at the three scenarios listed above.

If you are taking a picture of the sunset, those of you with automatic, point and shoot cameras will be at a disadvantage. When you point your camera at the sunset, the automatic light meter (electric eye) will read the intensity of the overall scene. As you look towards the sun, you will see the dark (shaded) side of everything between you and the sun. The camera's exposure system will take a reading of the overall scene, the very bright sun, the bright sky, and the very dark shadows. It will try to give the best overall exposure for your picture, but will overexpose the sunset while trying to get detail on the shadowed area, and underexpose the shadows while trying to record the sunset. Your subject exhibits high contrast, which is very bright highlights and very dark shadows. This contrast cannot be handled by any automatic camera. You have to override the automation.

One solution is to use the meter lock/focus lock button on your camera. This is also known as the shutter release, shutter button, or "clicker" When you depress this button part way, the exposure and focus are both locked in until the picture is taken or you lift your finger, whichever comes first. Walk to a place where all you can see is the sunset (no buildings, trees, people, etc.) look through the viewfinder towards the sun, and push the button partway down. A light will appear in the viewfinder when you have done this. Do not be concerned with what color the light is. **DO NOT LIFT YOUR FINGER!** Walk back to your original location, frame the subject and take the picture. After you hear the camera fire, it is OK to release your finger. If you want to take another similar picture, repeat the entire procedure.

If you can adjust your camera manually, be sure you are at a shutter speed you can hold steady, and carefully take your meter reading. If you had the foresight to bring an 18% grey card, use it. Underexposure will add impact to clouds colored by the sun's rays, but may well silhouette any foreground.

If you are shooting a subject lit by the sunset a major concern is to support the camera steadily. The sun is never at its apparent brightness at sunset, and a tripod with a remote release (or self timer) is all but essential. The long shadows and reddish highlights will again be somewhat difficult to expose for, but not as difficult as shooting into the sun.

Photographing a subject with the sun behind it is easier, even with an auto everything camera. If your subject is within flash range, just use the flash (keep in mind that extending your auto snapshot camera's zoom will drastically reduce your maximum flash distance). Almost all but the simplest auto cameras have a backlight button, switch or mode. Use this if your subject is beyond flash range. This is not going to give as good an image as a flash, but it usually does a pretty good job with color print films. If you can manually adjust your camera, eliminate the sun itself from your meter reading and stick with that exposure, or overexpose by 1, 1.5, or 2 f/stops beyond the meter's reading. If at all possible use your flash. With more sophisticated equipment, you can always place the flash closer to your subject and use a cable or wireless control to synchronize the flash with your shutter.

Many of you have seen our new computerization. This will be beneficial to us all. Among its capabilities are learning how you like your pictures – glossy, matte, bordered, 5x7 vs. 4x6 and so on. All you'll have to do is bring us your film and ID card, let us do a quick scan and you're on your way. When your photos are ready, the system can notify you (easiest via e-mail). Most of you are already getting free gifts via our punch cards. These credits will be tracked to your own account and be automatically updated. Equipment repairs will be smoother. We've been saving for this for quite awhile, so don't expect any price increases because of our new system.

The Photo Summit also has a new digital print station for making 4x6 prints from your digital memory cards in just seconds. Along with Madison PhotoPlus's wide carriage Epson printer, we can now make you prints, enlargements and posters from your digital camera's memory card.

Avoid the last minute rush ordering photo holiday cards. Our Kodak cards are running 5-6 days, and our custom printed cards are taking 3-4 days. Cards can be made from 35mm, 120, prints, slides or digital files.

It has been our experience this fall that products have been hard to get. Manufacturers and other suppliers are constantly out of stock on most merchandise. Please consider getting your major gifts earlier than usual. Staple products such as film, batteries, frames, etc. are in good supply, and should remain so.

Have a very happy and healthy Thanksgiving.

Lynne & Jerry

