A Straightforward Guide To What Shutter Speed Does

When you're new to the world of photography and trying to get your bearings on all of the terminology and desperately trying to figure out all of the settings on your brand new and very expensive camera, you'll no doubt find yourself asking "**what does shutter speed do**?"

Well, very simply put, shutter speed is literally the amount of time that the shutter is open and allowing light to come in through your iris. It has hundreds of applications and makes such a difference in all of your work that it's very important to understand how to use it properly and get the very best images that you can.

The speed is seconds

As you go through all of the adjustments you're going to be seeing numbers that don't make a whole lot of sense without the proper context. Values such as 1/100, 1/60 or 1/8 all have real world meanings that are very simple to get once you know the secret.

That secret is simply that all of those numbers are the fractions of seconds that your shutter is going to remain open. If you set it for 1/100, it's simply going to be open for one hundredth of a second. If it's set to 1/8, then it will stay open for one eighth of a second. That may seem like a very short amount of time, which it is, but a lot can happen during it.

One of the most important things to consider when setting your shutter speed is whether you're going handheld or on a tripod.

Your hands will never stop moving no matter how steady you're trying to hold yourself. Even you pulse will cause your camera to bounce around and every tiny fraction of an inch in movement will translate to motion blur in your image.

The faster the shutter speed, the more you're cutting down on this. If you're going to be going handheld all day, you should never set your speed at anything longer than 1/60. This is pretty much the limit of noticeable motion blur and should be thought of as a hard line never to cross.

Blur in subjects

Chances are pretty good that now you're asking yourself "what does shutter speed do to the subject?" It turns out that the shutter speed setting is one of the most important creative tools in your photography arsenal.

With a just a few tiny adjustments, you can bring individual water droplets into crystal clarity by using a very short speed, or leave it open longer to create long streaks of light from passing cars or even capture the motion of the stars themselves.

Most cameras out there will have settings to leave your shutter open for at least a full thirty seconds and the vast majority will also have a manual setting for you to choose your own length of time. It will take a whole lot of practice and refinement, but with a simple shutter button and a tripod you can leave it open for as long as you want and walk away with stunning photographs that will awe anyone who looks at them.

What Does Shutter Speed Do – It Affects Everything

Every single aspect of your image is going to be effected by the shutter speed that you choose. While the aperture affects

the amount of light, the shutter speed will change how long it’s allowed to pass through.

The two will work hand in hand and both must be considered when creating your image. It’s important to always keep in mind that the aperture decides what the depth of field will be, so you’ll always be trying to balance everything out along the backdrop of the ISO setting in an elegant dance.

The best thing to do is figure out the size of the depth of field that you want first, then work around that, although you’ll quickly find that this method won’t always work best for you.

If you really want to see the wings of a bird in flight without any kind of motion blur at all, your first stop is going to be setting yourself up with the fasted ISO setting you can manage along with the fastest shutter speed, followed by the aperture.

The importance of these three setting will change, but they must always be considered with each other if you want truly impressive images.

Question everything

The best way to go about figuring the best shutter speeds for different photographs is simply to experiment. It’s nothing like the intuitiveness of composure or the readiness of equipment management. Shutter speed is simply something that you’ll have to try over and over again until you get it right. As long as you love photography, then you’ll certainly end up coming to love what shutter speed can do for you.