
3 WAYS TO Take a Long Exposure

BY KATHLEEN DAVIS

Turn ordinary scenes into magical landscapes. Whether capturing silky waterfalls or the motion of the stars, you must use a tripod and remote shutter release—and avoid windy conditions. Here are three ways to get longer exposures by day or night.

1 Turn down ISO. Higher ISOs mean more noise, and you don't need the greater sensitivity since you'll be leaving the shutter open for a long time. Turn on your camera's noise-reduction setting (if it has one). Long-exposure night shots may still give you a lot of noise even with a low ISO, so you may still need noise-reduction software on the final image.

2 Select a small aperture. If you want to capture light trails (such as car tail lights), try setting your f-stop as high as f/22 to allow for very little light to strike your sensor while still getting a lot of detail in the motion.

3 Use neutral-density filters. A must-have tool for daytime long exposures, an ND filter cuts the light coming through the lens, so you can open your shutter longer even on bright days. Its light-blocking power is described in stops, usually between 3 and 9, so that an exposure you'd ordinarily set to 1/60 sec would be 1/4 sec using a 4-stop ND filter. For really long exposures, stack them up to 13 stops. High-quality ND filters are the most color-neutral, but some inexpensive models can lend a muddy orange cast to color images—if that happens, convert to black-and-white. 