



Top Ten Photography Jargon Busters

What they're called - what they do – and a link to a video which explains all.

1. **Aperture / f stops** - it's an iris in your lens you can make larger or smaller and it's measured in f stops. The bigger the f number is the smaller the aperture is. A big aperture lets in lots of light and a small one less light. Aperture also controls how deep into an image you can get sharpness. A small aperture = the most sharpness you can get and a big aperture = less sharpness. This is called Depth of Field - more on that later.
<http://www.photographycourses.biz/Aperture.html>
2. **Shutter** - like a window shutter, it opens and closes letting in more or less light depending on how long you leave it open. Shutter speed numbers on your camera that have a " after them are whole seconds - 15" is 15 seconds. Numbers without it are fractions of a second - 15 is 1/15th of a second. Slow speeds let in more light whilst fast ones let in less. Use fast shutter speeds to freeze motion and slow ones to blur it.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/shutter_speed.html
3. **Aperture Priority / AV** - in this mode you choose an aperture to get the depth of sharpness (known as Depth of Field) you need to make the image look how you want, and the camera sets a shutter speed to get the correct exposure.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/aperture_priority.html
4. **Shutter Priority / TV** - In this mode you get to choose a shutter speed and the camera finds you the aperture it needs to get the correct exposure. Because there are only a few apertures to choose from there will be times when the camera can't make this work because there's simply too much or too little light available. For example, if it's a dull day and you say you want a 2000th second to freeze the movement of someone riding a bicycle, your camera won't have a wide enough aperture to let in enough light to get the correct exposure and the camera will either refuse to take the shot or it'll come out too dark. The only option you have is to increase your ISO.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/shutter_priority.html
5. **ISO** - This is how sensitive your camera's sensor is to light. The higher ISO number you set the more sensitive it becomes so you can use faster shutter speeds or smaller apertures. BUT there's a cost. The higher you set your ISO the grainier your images become, the colours are less bright and you might even start to see weird little speckles of colour called noise. There's no rule about which ISO is the right one - you have to choose between image quality and possibly not getting an image at all. If neither you nor your subject is moving you can always use a tripod to keep the camera steady so there's no fuzziness (called camera shake) and combine it with a low ISO for best image quality.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/iso_speed.html

6. **Camera Shake** - When you get a picture where nothing is sharp it's probably caused by camera shake and you're most likely to get it on dull days with a long lens. Camera shake is caused by tiny movements of the camera whilst the shutter is open. This movement blurs the image. Longer the lenses magnify these movements and that's why they suffer more from camera shake than shorter ones. To avoid camera shake you must make sure your shutter speed is at least as fast as the focal length you've zoomed your lens to. You do this by increasing your ISO speed and / or widening your aperture until the shutter speed is fast enough. The best way to avoid camera shake is to use a sturdy tripod.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/camera_shake.html

7. **Focal Length** - This is often confused with f number but they are completely different things. Focal length is a measure of magnification or how 'zoomed in' your lens is and it's expressed in mms. There's no 'correct' focal length, you set it according to how much 'zoom' you need to make the picture look how you want it to. To find out what focal length you're using first compose the shot and zoom to where you need to. Then look at the barrel of your lens to see which of the numbers written on the zoom ring lines up with the white dot on the barrel of the lens.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/focal_length.html

8. **Wide Lens** - this is a lens with a short focal length which could be anywhere from 8mm to about 30mm. The lower the number the wider the lens. In the case of a wide angle zoom lens it might be something like 10-20mm. A wide lens gets more into the picture is great for big scenes in landscape photography and interiors when showing an entire room. To fill the frame with a subject such as a person or a house you need to be very close or they'll appear tiny in the image. Wide lenses are also known as 'Short' lenses because of their low focal length.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/wide_angle_photography.html

9. **Medium or Standard Lens** - Lenses of around 50mm up to 100mm are known as standard, mid range or medium lenses because their focal length is neither wide or long. A medium range zoom lens would typically have a focal length ranging between 18mm and 70mm. When using a mid range lens at about 50mm you're seeing the world in roughly the same way we see it with our eyes.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/medium_lens.html

10. **Long Lens** - A lens with a focal length capability of more than 100mm is generally termed as being a long lens. Probably the most common long zoom lens would have a range from 70mm up to 200mm. Long lenses magnify more powerfully so they're great for bringing far off things in closer, but they're brilliant for isolating things like flowers or someone's face in a portrait because they're the opposite of wide lenses in that they have a narrow field of view - a bit like looking down a cardboard tube.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/long_lens_technique.html

11. **Depth of Field** - this is how deep into an image sharpness extends. If you are shooting a portrait you might want a shallow depth of field so only the subject is sharp and everything in front and behind them is soft and fuzzy. If you're taking a landscape you would probably want everything in your picture to be sharp so you'd want a large depth of field so that everything from just in front of the camera all the way to the horizon is sharp. Depth of Field is mostly controlled with your aperture setting. A small aperture means maximum depth of field and a wide aperture means minimum depth of field. **IMPORTANT:** Different focal length lens have different depth of field capabilities. A short or wide lens always has much more depth of field than a long lens - making it good for front to back sharpness. A long lens will always have much less depth of field which makes them perfect for creating fuzzy backgrounds.
http://www.photographycourses.biz/depth_of_field.html

12. **White Balance** – This is where you tell your camera the colour of the light you're shooting in so your colours are accurate. The colour of light around us is always changing. It's redder in the morning and evening, on cloudy days it's blue / grey and sunny days yellow orange, shade is bluer than sunshine and in your front room at night it's almost certainly deep dark yellow. Your white balance setting compensates for this. On a cloudy day choose the cloudy setting and the camera will add some yellow / orange to the picture to counteract the blue grey. If your subject's in sunshine choose the sun setting etc... Auto white balance is usually pretty accurate but it can be inconsistent so if colour accuracy is important to you I suggest setting it yourself. http://www.photographycourses.biz/setting_white_balance.html

Yes we know there are 12 not 10 – we're better at taking pictures than counting...

Hope it helps...

Mike Jayne

