

# Digital Camera Policies and Guidelines

29 June 2007

Digital cameras must be returned in the same condition as it was received, along with ALL accessories. It is the user's responsibility to remove any and all personal data from the camera before the return date. The Collaboratory cannot ensure the integrity of any images that remain on the camera after return.

## **Guidelines**

### *Stay out of jail! (Developing Countries)*

1. Caution! Never take photos near police or military personnel, government buildings, or airports unless you are absolutely sure it will not be a problem. Do not take cameras into government buildings or airports. Such photos could easily land you in jail. If you do not know, assume it will be a problem.
2. Generally speaking, you should ask permission before taking photos of a stranger. (Some may ask you to pay for the privilege). You can also flip the LCD screen out so that it faces up, allowing you to discretely compose and shoot. To most bystanders it will appear as though you are adjusting the settings. This works in public settings so long as you are not too close to anyone in your composition.

### *Equipment Setup*

1. Lower resolution photos will NOT be useful for presentations, newsletters, etc.
2. Set the LCD display to "bright." This does use up the battery faster, but in bright sunlight it is the only way you will be able to see to set up your shots.

### *Shot Selection*

1. The most important photos are the ones that tell our story. They will include team members, local friends/clients, and recognizable project equipment and activities. Also important are shots of interaction with host friends, both local people and missionaries.
2. Don't be afraid to set the camera on wide angle and move in close! The zoom is great for photos of individuals or groups of people, but tends to crop surroundings that tell the story. A wide angle setting will capture the surroundings but make people unrecognizably small if you are too far away. Whether you are using wide angles, or telephoto, get close and fill the image with the subject.
3. Use the rule of thirds to position the subject. Imagine two horizontal and two vertical lines that divide the screen on the LCD display into thirds. Position the subject at one of the four intersections of these lines. Usually it is best not to center the subject like a bulls-eye (but in art, rules are meant to be broken).
4. Position a moving subject so that it has some space to move into the frame of the photograph. A subject moving from left to right, for example, is best placed at the top-left or bottom-left markers from the rule of thirds.
5. This is digital photography. Take plenty of shots with different exposure, lighting, and zoom settings. You can always edit out the duds later.

### *Lighting*

1. Use diffuse natural light whenever possible: early/late in the day, cloudy days, shade, window light, etc. The absolute best light for photos is during the 1-2 hours after sunrise or before sunset.
2. When you must take photos under direct overhead sunlight, use a fill flash to eliminate the heaviest shading on people's faces. Set the flash, not the exposure, to -1 f-stop. (Each f-stop doubles/halves the light exposure. If you don't like the result at -1, experiment.) A full flash is likely to wash out all the shadows leaving you with a flat and uninteresting result.

3. Learn to use the spot metering, especially to set exposure on people in hard, overhead sunlight. The human eye can see variations in illumination of +/-6 f-stops, but the camera can only see +/-3 f-stops. This means that in hard overhead light, some regions of your image will be white and others black. Spot metering allows you to fix the “center” of your exposure (on a face, for example).

#### *Focus/Exposure*

1. Learn to use the focus block. Aim the center of the viewfinder (assuming you have not set an off-center auto-focus) at the spot where you want optimum focus, depress the shutter halfway to lock in the focus, and then recompose before you depress the shutter the rest of the way to complete exposure.
2. Learn to use program auto exposure (P) to let the camera choose a shutter speed and aperture (you still control the flash); shutter priority (Tv) to set the shutter speed (for motion) and let the camera choose aperture; aperture priority (Av) to set the aperture (for large or small depth of field) and let the camera choose aperture.
  - a. A large f-stop (small aperture) will give you a large depth of field, so things in front of and behind the focal plane will be in focus.
  - b. A small f-stop (large aperture) will give you a small depth of field. This is good for portraits, when you want an uninteresting or unwanted background to be out of focus.
  - c. In low light, you can maximize the shutter speed by setting the smallest f-stop in Av mode.
3. The green “auto” setting and everything counterclockwise from there does all the thinking for you. Use these settings only in emergencies, when you don’t have time to set up your own exposure, flash, etc.

#### *Camera Care*

1. Use a clean soft cosmetic brush to brush dust from the camera lens. (Do not use a brush that has been used to apply cosmetics.)
2. Do not use cloths, tissues, or fluids to clean the camera lens unless absolutely necessary. If necessary, use only cloths, tissues, and fluids made for cleaning camera lenses. Anything else is likely to have some small particles on it that will scratch the lens.

#### *Protecting Film*

1. If you are using a film camera, know that luggage is exposed to hard x-rays that will ruin film. Place all film in a lead film bag, and make sure that it is hand inspected or exposed only to the soft x-rays used in the belt type inspection machines that you pass your carry-on luggage through. If security agents take carry-on items for inspection in a different machine, ask if you may remove film. The lead foil bag will only protect film from soft x-rays.

#### **The undersigned agrees to...**

1. prepare to use the camera effectively and safely by **READING** the users guide and supplemental Collaboratory camera guidelines.
2. shoot and store only the highest resolution JPG photos suitable for use in newsletters and magazines.
3. use only the cosmetic brush to gently clean the lens, LCD, and camera.
4. remove and **CHARGE** the battery before returning the camera for storage.
5. take personal responsibility to return the camera and **ALL** accessories in the condition they were received.
6. remove all images from the camera’s memory before returning it.

