

## Your Camera's Settings: P mode

<http://www.digital-photo-secrets.com/tip/993/your-cameras-settings-p-mode/>

Do you own a digital SLR and wonder what its "P" mode does? If you've been using automatic settings your entire life, and you aren't quite ready to learn everything you need to know about manual photography, this mode will come in handy. Your camera's "P" mode has a lot to teach you. In this article, we'll show you why.



In Automatic mode, (usually marked with a green rectangle) your camera chooses all your camera's settings. The "P" in P mode stands for Programmed Automatic. It's a shooting mode that's halfway between automatic and manual. When you shoot in P mode, you only get to control a few settings. You can choose whether to use flash or not, your ISO speed, exposure compensation and white balance. Your camera will adjust the other settings to make sure your image is correctly exposed. Don't worry if you don't know what some these are yet. We'll explain them as we go along.

### Use P mode to learn which shooting settings your camera automatically picks

When you're in P mode, your camera will show you which aperture and shutter speed settings it has decided to use for your picture. This can be really helpful when you don't know much about manual settings. Instead of guessing which aperture and shutter combination will work in manual mode, you can shoot in P mode for a little while, take some notes, and then use the same settings in manual mode. You'll get the same picture!

When in P mode, your camera won't always "guess" the right combination to get exactly what you want, but it's definitely a nice starting point. Once you switch over to manual mode, you can make some tiny adjustments to get the picture you want. Work from your starting point and keep experimenting until you get an image you like.

Remember that as you increase your shutter speed, the image will get darker. As you decrease your shutter speed, the image will get brighter and possibly more blurry. Your aperture controls how much light gets into your camera. When it's low, you're letting in a lot of light, and most of your scene will be out of focus. When it's high, you're letting in less light, and your scene will be mostly in focus.

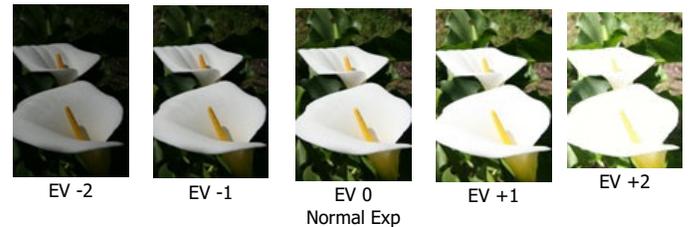
### P is a great intermediate step

P mode has a few settings that give you a little more control than automatic mode. You can adjust what is known as the exposure compensation. What exactly does this do? In a nutshell, your camera makes your images brighter or darker by adjusting the aperture and shutter speed for you. All you need to do is give it an exposure compensation value.

Start off by switching to P mode and taking a picture of something you see. Next, look at the picture on your LCD and determine whether it's too bright or too dark. If it's fine, keep it. But if it isn't quite right, it's time to adjust your exposure

compensation.

You can change your exposure compensation on most SLRs by holding down the (+/-) button on the top and sliding the dial on the back to the left or right. These instructions might not hold for all digital cameras, but it's a sure bet for most of them. If you don't know how to adjust your exposure compensation, just look it up in your manual.



As you can expect, an increase in exposure compensation will give you a brighter picture, and a decrease will give you a darker picture. Keep playing with these settings and taking pictures until you like what you see. All the while, continue to pay attention to the way a change in the exposure compensation will change the aperture and shutter speeds the camera automatically picks. Now you're learning how to take pictures with the ultimate goal – manual mode!

### P mode also lets you adjust your camera's ISO speed

Sometimes there just isn't enough light in a scene. Usually this is because you're shooting at night, or indoors with low light. When you're shooting in P mode, you will sometimes encounter these situations and you want a brighter image without resorting to the use of a flash. There's nothing wrong with using your camera's onboard flash in moderation, but it often overpowers everything else in the image and makes your subjects a lot less colorful.

Thankfully, you can increase the brightness images by increasing your camera's ISO speed. To do this, switch over to P mode and go to your camera's main menu. From there, you can pick a higher ISO setting (larger number) that will make your images brighter.



Don't go overboard and pick the largest ISO possible. Subtlety is key. Your camera's ISO speed controls the rate at which your sensor picks up the light information it gets from your lens. If you increase it too much, your images will start to look grainy. Keep experimenting. What I do is increase it by one setting position each photo until I get an image I like. I almost never use the highest ISO setting, as it produces a very grainy image (called noise) on my camera.

So, if you haven't strayed from automatic mode just yet, P mode could serve as a bridge to bigger and better things. This is the time to start paying attention to your camera's shutter speed and aperture settings. That way, you'll move into manual mode knowing exactly where to start.

