

Winter Photography: Shooting in Cold & Snowy Conditions

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Agenda

Winter Photography: Shooting in Cold & Snowy Conditions

- Clothing
- Camera Equipment Essentials
- Equipment Issues
 - Snowy Weather
 - Cold Weather
- Image Making
 - Shooting a Snowy Scene
 - Shooting a Snowy Scene with Falling Snow
- Editing Snowy Images in Lightroom

Clothing & Equipment

Winter Photography

Clothing – you must keep warm

- Have a good outer coat
 - Rated for the cold temperatures you will experience
 - Flexible with freedom to move
- Dress in layers
 - Don't forget thermal underwear
 - Outer layer of coat and pants should be waterproof
 - Use a hood plus a cap and/or hat
- Protect your neck and face
 - Scarf
 - Balaclava (problematic if you wear eyeglasses)

Clothing & Equipment

Winter Photography

Clothing

- Protect your hands
 - Gloves and/or mittens are essential
 - Flexible, yet insulated
 - Consider fingerless gloves/mittens or ones with finger caps
 - Use hand warmers (chemical warmers work great and are convenient to use)
- Protect your feet
 - Thick Socks
 - Two pair
 - Consider electric socks
 - Thermal boots
 - Consider chemical toe warmers

Clothing & Equipment

Winter Photography

Equipment Essentials

- Camera
 - Built to function in wet and cold weather
- Lens cap & hood
- Batteries – lots of them
 - Battery holders
- Filters
 - UV & polarizer
- Microfiber lens cloths – lots of them

Clothing & Equipment

Winter Photography

Equipment Essentials

- Rain cover or plastic bags
- Tripod
- Remote trigger
- Waterproof camera bag
- Waterproof carry sack

Equipment Issues

Winter Photography

Snow

- Camera Should be Water Resistant
- Consider a Camera Rain Cover
- Keep Water Droplets Off Your Lens
 - Use a UV filter
 - Use your lens hood
 - Use microfiber lens cloths liberally
- When not Shooting
 - Use your lens cap and/or point your camera lens down
 - Use your camera bag or a waterproof carry sack
 - Don't use your coat to protect your camera
 - May warm the camera too quickly and trigger condensation (more later)

Equipment Issues

Winter Photography

Cold

- Confirm Your Camera is Rated for Cold Weather
- Batteries
 - Batteries drain quickly in the cold
 - Keep fully charged spares next to your body
 - Once depleted in the cold, a battery may regain some power as it warms
- Frost May Accumulate on Your Camera
 - Wipe it off with a microfiber cloth
 - Don't use your breath (more later)

Equipment Issues

Winter Photography

Cold

- Tripods
 - Carbon fiber tripods get brittle in extremely cold temperatures
 - Do not jam fully extended legs against the ground or into the snow, they may crack or break
 - Tripods exposed to extreme cold for long periods can accumulate frost inside the legs
 - Collapse tripod carefully and warm,
 - Once tripod warms to room temp, fully extend the legs to drain any accumulated water
 - Wipe dry all surfaces and store

Equipment Issues

Winter Photography

Temperature Transitions

- Going from **Warm** to **Cold** Conditions – *No Problem*
- Going from **Cold** to **Warm** Conditions – *Not So Easy*
 - Condensation – *the bane of shooting in the cold*
 - When warm air hits a cold object, moisture forms as condensation (fog)
 - Any camera component may fog with sudden temperature change
 - Breathing directly on your viewfinder or rear viewing screen may cause it to fog
 - If external components (e.g. viewfinder, front lens, rear screen) fog
 - Wipe with a microfiber cloth
 - Don't use your breath, the condensation could turn the fog to a thin layer of ice
 - If internal elements (e.g. lens, mirrors, sensor) fog
 - Do not remove the lens, just let the camera warm, the fog will dissipate, eventually

Equipment Issues

Winter Photography

Temperature Transitions

- Going From **Cold** to **Warm** Conditions (cont'd)
 - Condensation (con't)
 - Extreme cold conditions (below zero)
 - Camera must be exposed to the cold for the entire shooting session
 - When finally finished, *but while still in the cold*, wrap the camera in an absorbent cloth, put it in your camera bag and seal the bag
 - Bring the closed bag into a warm environment and let it come to room temperature - 2+ hours
 - The bag may now be opened and the camera removed safely

Equipment Issues

Winter Photography

Temperature Transitions

- Going from **Cold** to **Warm** Conditions (cont'd)
 - Types of shooting sessions
 - Multiple short (\pm 30 minutes) sessions - typically in and out of heated vehicles
 - Temperature transitions not great since vehicles are heated but cool
 - Try not to put the camera under you coat
 - Single or multiple extended (more than 1 hour) sessions
 - Avoid temperature transitions
 - If you can, leave your camera in the cold until finished

Making an Image

Winter Photography

Shooting a Snowy Scene

- White Balance
 - Camera meters interpret snow as grey and the image tends to look blue
 - Try White Balance set to Shade
 - Try White Balance set to 6,500 kelvin
 - Use exposure compensation (+.3 to +2.0 stops depending on the scene)
 - Use ISO, Aperture and Shutter Speed to increase exposure and shift histogram to the right
- Metering
 - Matrix or evaluative metering is fine
 - Consider spot metering on sunny days
- Focus
 - Autofocus struggles when everything is white
 - Use a contrast point in the composition to help autofocus, or
 - Use manual focus

Making an Image

Winter Photography

Shooting a Snowy Scene

- Shoot Raw
 - Shoot Raw to maximize available pixel information
 - No matter how skillful you are, White Balance inaccuracies and detail loss are inevitable in the final unedited image
 - Raw files offer the greatest chance to correct the image in post
 - Avoid shooting JPG - Too much snow detail is unrecoverable
- Lens Hood
 - Use it, secondary reflections from the snow may cause flare and make the image hazy
- Polarizing Filter
 - Helpful in bright sunlight to reduce snow reflections
- Flash
 - Flash will warm an image
 - Use prudently, it sometimes causes overexposure

Making an Image

Winter Photography

Shooting a Snowy Scene with Falling Snow

- It's darn difficult - you're wet and cold and it's overcast, snowing and the wind is blowing
- Unequivocally, falling snow tests the mettle of even great photographers
- However, it's a great opportunity for compositional creativity
- Everything already described about *Shooting a Snowy Scene* still applies, plus
 - Focus Considerations
 - Falling snow pulls the focus point – Compositionally, do you want the snow in focus or do you want items in the snowy scene?
 - Falling snow may look like blotches, they may strengthen or detract from the image
 - Aperture Considerations
 - Larger apertures allow more light but result in narrower depth of field, beware

Making an Image

Winter Photography

Shooting a Snowy Scene with Falling Snow (continued)

- Shutter Speed Considerations
 - Use fast shutter speeds to see big snowflakes ($> 1/250^{\text{th}}$ sec)
 - Use slow shutter speeds to minimize snow flake blotches
 - However, slow shutter speeds could result in foggy streaks
- ISO
 - Overcast skies and less light accompany snow storms – you may need higher ISOs
- Focal Length Considerations
 - The telephoto lens “compression effect” adds intensity to a snowy scene

Making an Image

Winter Photography

Compositional Hints:

- Consider Aperture Priority Mode
 - Allows depth-of-field creativity in difficult shooting conditions
- Watch the Light
 - Overcast skies allow for close-up shooting
 - Bright snow reflects sun and acts as a secondary light source – watch contrast
 - Consider shooting mornings and evenings and with the sun to your back
- Use Color and/or Contrast in the image to Improve its Composition
 - Snow images can be boring
 - Add a color or contrasting element may enhance the image
 - Find an interesting foreground element

Editing Snowy Images in Lightroom

Winter Photography

1. Select the *Color Profile*
2. Adjust the *White Balance*
3. Set the *White* and *Black Points*
4. Adjust *Tone*
 1. Exposure and Contrast
 2. Highlights
 3. Shadows
 4. Revisit White and Black Points if you need to do so
5. Adjust *Presence*
 1. Clarity & Dehaze
 2. Vibrance & Saturation
6. *Adjust HSL*, if necessary
7. Correct Noise Reduction, if necessary
8. Sharpen Image

Shoot Snowy Scenes in any Weather

Don't be a *wimp*,
just get out there

Thank You