

Intentional Camera Movement (ICM) Cheat Sheet

(Everything you need to know on one sheet)

Intentional Camera Movement (ICM) is the creation of a photo using a slow shutter speed whilst you intentionally move the camera. The outcome is that the subject becomes blurred, creating a painterly, abstract style of photo. There are three elements of creation that you need to learn, practice and understand: **shutter speed, subject choice and types of movement**. Any camera and lens are suitable, as long as you can control the shutter speed. I tend to use a small zoom (24 - 70mm full frame equivalent), but longer and shorter lenses will still work. Focus manually and turn off the autofocus to prevent the camera searching for focus during exposure. Also, if you are using a lens that has image stabilization, remember to turn it off.

1. **Shutter Speed** – Anything from ½ second to multi seconds may be suitable for your subject and creative intention. For stationary subjects the time I use most is between 1 and 2 seconds. To achieve such shutter speeds you need to have your camera set in Manual or Shutter Speed priority, and have a method of reducing the light received by the camera. A dull or dark day may require nothing else apart from a low ISO and a narrow Aperture. Aperture is irrelevant to the look of the photo, so you can use it to control the shutter speed. Creating ICM photos on a bright day is possible, but you need to have a Neutral Density (ND) Filter on your lens. ND Filters are identified by a number that relates to the number of stops of light that it will stop the camera receiving. ND Filters are numbered in sequence ND2, ND4, ND8, ND16 and so on. ND2 cuts out 1 stop of light (you receive 1/2 of the light you would have received). ND4 cuts out 2 stops of light (you receive 1/4 of the light you would have received) And so on. The number refers to the fraction of light that you will receive. ND filters come in as a screw on in different lens sizes, or you can use a filter holding system. The former is cheaper, but less adaptable. I use a ND3 – ND7 adjustable screw on filter that fits my small zoom lens.
2. **Subject Choice** – Popular subjects for ICM include landscapes (trees, forests, rivers, land and sea, subjects in the landscape, sunsets/rises), the night sky, city lights, fireworks and human movement. Your choice of subject may influence the type of movement that you employ. Look carefully at your subject, particularly the shapes, colours and lines. These are the elements that you can use to create interesting photos, their framing will suggest the types of movement you could experiment with.
3. **Types of Movement** – There are no rules. A few guidelines, but you can do what you want. Experimentation is everything. However, as I have indicated the shapes, lines and colours of a subject may suggest certain types of movement. For example, landscapes often have horizontal lines and therefore horizontal movement works well. Trees suggest vertical movement. A tripod is useful for a smooth panning movement – particularly vertical or horizontal. However, there are many other types of handheld movement that may work with your subject: circular twists, full rotation, swooping in/out, gentle shake, sharp twist right or left at the end of the exposure, moving the camera in/out and combinations of these movements. It is also interesting to zoom your lens in or out during the exposure.

Find an interesting location, with visual variety. Look for colours, shapes and lines. Consider the impact of the light. Brighter light will leave trails. Experiment with your shutter speed and types of movement. Each photograph is a signpost to the next one. Take lots of photos, but review each one, considering what worked for you and what didn't. You only need to please yourself.