

Multiple Exposure Cheat Sheet

(Everything you need to know on one sheet)

Multiple Exposure is the layering of several exposures on top of each other in camera, to create one photo. Many digital cameras offer a method of creating Multiple Exposures. The number of potential exposures that can be layered together varies by manufacturer, but most are between 2 and 9 exposures.

There are four common modes of Multiple Exposure. These are Additive, Average, Bright and Dark. Not all digital cameras offer all four modes. Once you lock in a mode, this cannot be changed until the final combined exposure is accepted.

Many cameras ask you to accept each exposure before moving onto the next. The photo in camera is then overlaid on the viewscreen/finder (in a reduced opacity) as you compose the next exposure. Some cameras allow you to choose a photo from your memory card to be part of the final exposure. These are the four common modes.

Additive: Each exposure is added to the last. Each time you add an exposure the final photo gets brighter. Colours get brighter and whiter as each exposure is added. The more exposures that are layered, the closer you will get to a final, all white photo. *Tip* – Lower the exposure compensation by at least 2/3 of a stop for each exposure. This will reduce the brightening effect. Play with different reductions in exposure compensation to create the effect you desire.

Average: Offered in most digital cameras. This mode shares the exposure evenly between the number of exposures layered together. For example, if you take 4 exposures the final photo will be split 25% between each exposure.

Bright: This mode favours bright pixels over dark pixels. Colours may also lose some saturation. For example, if part of your first exposure is in shadow and the next exposure has white clouds in the same section, the clouds will show in the final photo. In this way this mode closely resembles film double exposure. *Tip* – Experiment by lowering the exposure compensation by 2/3 of a stop for each exposure.

Dark: This mode is the opposite of Bright mode, and favours dark pixels over bright pixels. Colours may become more saturated. For example, if part of your first exposure is in shadow and the next exposure has white clouds in the same section, the shadow will show in the final photo, obliterating the clouds. *Tip* – Experiment by raising the exposure compensation by 2/3 of a stop for each exposure.

Creative Multiple Exposure

Creating photos using multiple exposure is an exploration. Experimentation is the order of the day. However, the key principles of Photography Composition still apply. Balance, Subject/Background, Point of View and Simplicity are key composition themes that must be considered as you layer each exposure. Also relevant are the 7 Elements of Visual Design: Colour, Line, Shape, Form, Pattern, Texture and Space.

After those considerations there is also space to play with Intentional Camera Movement, extreme White Balance Settings and defocussing the lens. Each of these creative features can be used separately or they can be combined, in one exposure or changing for each exposure. The possibilities are infinite.

Digital Cameras offering the 4 common Multiple Exposure Modes

- Fuji X-T4 and X-Pro3.
- Nikon D7000 and above + Z series.
- Canon 5D Mk3 and above, Canon EOS R5, EOS R6 and EOS-1D X Mark III.