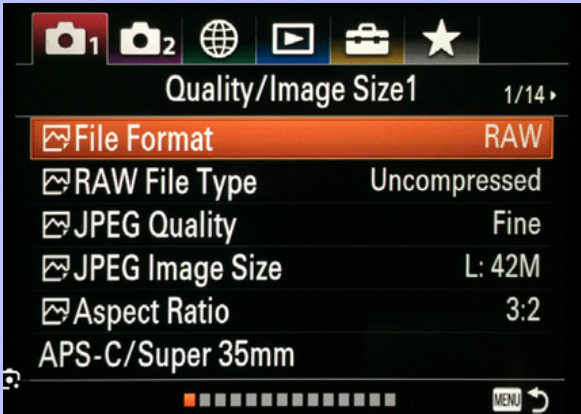


KEY CAMERA MENU SETTINGS CHEAT SHEET

One of the hardest things for beginner photographers are the huge number of camera settings available in most camera menu systems. Fortunately there are only a small number that really matter when you're starting out. This is a run down of some of the most useful.

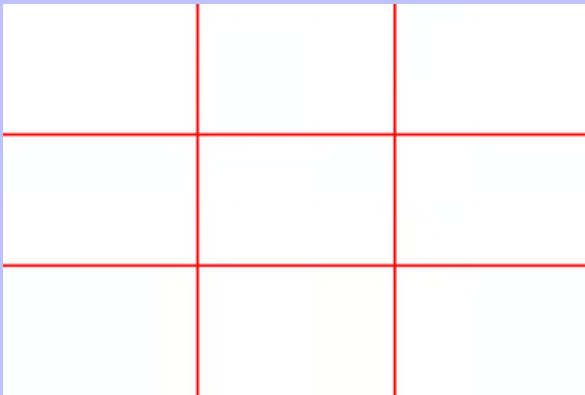
FILE FORMAT



This is where you choose the format of the files saved to your camera.

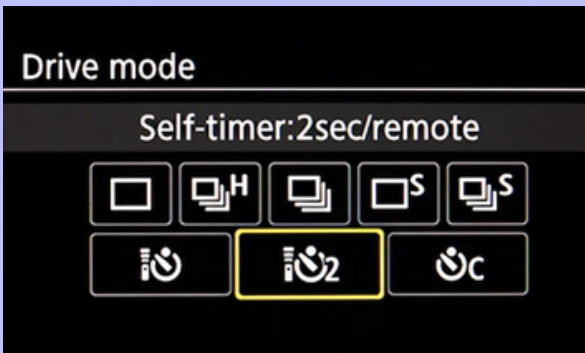
- JPEG - these are smaller files which can be used straight away but data is lost when they are created
- RAW - these are the raw data from the camera and best if you want to post process your images, but they can be very large and can't be used without processing them

GRID LINES



Most cameras allow you to superimpose a grid on both your viewfinder and your camera's back screen. This allows you to better compose your photos using the rule of thirds.

DRIVE MODE



This controls various ways of controlling the shutter:

- Single shot – one press of the shutter takes one photo (perfect for landscapes and other scenes that don't change rapidly)
- Continuous – holding the shutter button takes multiple shots (perfect for wildlife and sports)
- Delay – after pressing the shutter there is a delay before the photo is taken. A 2 second delay is perfect for long exposure shots to prevent camera movement when you press the shutter.
- You may also have HDR / Bracketing options for taking multiple exposures with one shutter press

FOCUS MODE

This defines whether your camera focusses once and keeps that focus point until you press the shutter (perfect for landscapes) or whether your camera tries to track a moving object and keep it in focus until you press the shutter (perfect for wildlife and sports shots).

FOCUS AREA

This specifies WHERE your camera will focus. Most people are used to using a fully automatic focus, where the camera decides where to focus, but it is far better to understand how you can better control where you want the point of focus to be.

WHITE BALANCE

White balance is effectively the 'colour' of the light (e.g. white in the middle of a summer's day and a golden orange just before sunset) and can significantly change the overall look of the image. Modern cameras are pretty good at detecting the colour of the light and setting the white balance appropriately, so it's fine to set this to 'auto' and leave it to the camera. White balance can easily be changed in post processing as long as the file format is RAW (not Jpeg).

CREATIVE STYLE

This setting ONLY applies if you shoot Jpeg, as it is effectively telling your camera what post-processing to apply to the image.

- Landscape - this usually boosts the contrast and saturation to improve the look of landscapes
- Portrait - this often applies better skin colours
- Sunset - this often adjusts the white balance to boost the colours of sunset.

STEADY SHOT

This generally just has an 'on' or 'off' setting. When it's on, the camera will try and adjust for small movements of the camera by the user to avoid motion blur. This is most useful when taking photos in poor light, when shutter slower speeds are needed and camera shake might cause your photos to blur.

MONITOR BRIGHTNESS

This allows you to set the brightness of your screen, so that (for example) you can see the screen clearly on a sunny day. Obviously the brighter you set this, the more quickly you will use up your battery!

CLEANING MODE

If you have a camera with a touch screen, this allows you to turn off the touch sensitivity. Personally I find it annoying as I keep touching it with my nose when I look through the view finder and changing the point of focus, so I always leave mine turned off!

FORMAT

This will wipe the contents of your memory card (so make sure your photos are backed up somewhere before you do this!). It is good practice to occasionally wipe your memory card clean by formatting it, as this can help prevent card errors.

PEAKING

Some cameras have a functionality called 'focus peaking'. When activated, this highlights areas which are in focus with a faint coloured outline. This is extremely helpful in ensuring your subject is in focus, especially when using a shallow depth of field. If your camera has this, the setting allows you to turn it on and off, and also change the colour used for the outlines.

FACE REGISTRATION

Some (generally more expensive) cameras have a functionality whereby you can register faces in order of priority. Essentially this means that not only will your camera identify faces and potentially ensure that they are in focus, but if there are multiple people in the frame you can specify an order of priority (e.g. at a wedding, you can ensure that if you are using a shallow depth of field and someone is standing just behind the bride, the camera will ensure that the brides face is prioritised in terms of achieving focus)

ZEBRA

Some (mirrorless) cameras allow you to switch on this feature which shows any over-exposed areas with coloured hatching, so that you can identify and correct overexposure before you take the photo (DSLR's will only show you over exposed areas AFTER you've taken the photos). This is very useful to make sure you are not over exposing areas of the sky.

