# *Sharper, better photos in just 5 Steps!*

Isn't it disappointing when you think you've captured a great moment on your camera to find out on closer inspection that it's blurry and the quality isn't very good!?
The good news is that there are a few very easy things you can do to make sure this doesn't happen! With just 5 simple changes to your camera settings, you can improve the quality and sharpness of your images right now.

EMILY GRAHAM

PHOTOGRAPHY


# *Let's get started!*

I'm Emily, a London-based family and personal branding photographer.
I turned my love for documenting my own family life into my dream job! I'm 100% self-taught and truly believe that with passion and practice, digital photography is for everyone. I learned through *a lot* of trial and error and absolutely love sharing my shortcuts with other photographers.

## 5 CHANGES YOU CAN MAKE NOW

Your camera menu and controls can feel a little daunting. Getting to know them takes time and practice. Here are 5 things you can adjust in your camera which will immediately give you sharper, better-quality images. All digital cameras are a bit different but essentially work the same way so it's a good idea to have your camera manual with you to look up how to access key menu functions. Alternatively, you can usually search online for the instructions for your make of camera if you don't have a manual.

## 1. FILE SIZE AND FORMAT

Changing the image quality in your camera settings is one of the easiest ways to get high-quality images. If you want to get a bit more serious about your photography and learn to edit your photos with post-production software, then I really recommend shooting in RAW mode rather than JPEG mode. The main difference between a JPEG and a RAW file is its size. RAW files are significantly bigger than JPEG (and any other) image file formats. That's because they contain all the raw image information captured by your digital camera's sensors, completely uncompressed. Depending on the make and version of your camera you will be able to do this in your menu settings. When you find this change the image quality from JPEG to RAW.

## 2. INCREASE YOUR SHUTTER SPEED

You can do this whether you are shooting in full manual or one of the creative auto modes. Working out the correct shutter speed for your shot depends on the creative effect you are going for and what you are taking a picture of.
A fast shutter speed freezes motion and a slow shutter does the opposite. Having a slow shutter of 1/15th of a second for example will introduce motion blur into the image. If something is moving quickly in the picture, then it will appear blurry. Sometimes blur is desirable for creative purposes. Night photographers, for example, use slow shutter speeds to capture light trails left by passing vehicles. A shutter speed that is too slow is often the reason for blurry images. Keep in mind the exposure triangle (look this up if you aren't sure what this is) and that with a faster shutter speed other settings such as ISO and aperture might need to be adjusted to properly expose the image.
As a general rule of thumb, your shutter speed needs to be at least double the focal length of the lens you are shooting with. So if it's a 50mm lens your shutter should be a minimum of 1/100 for example. Below are some of the speeds I use when photographing different subjects

**1/100** This is a relatively slow shutter speed that would be ok for photographing still objects.

**1/250** I would tend to use this one for people who are able to stay very still for portraits like adults or older children.

**1/400** This one is better for portraits of children as it reduces motion blur on the off chance that they might move.

**1/500** This is a relatively fast shutter speed and I wouldn't use anything less than this when photographing toddlers or animals as they don't sit still for very long.

**1/750** If I'm working with children who are on the go or people playing sports I tend not to use anything slower that this speed.

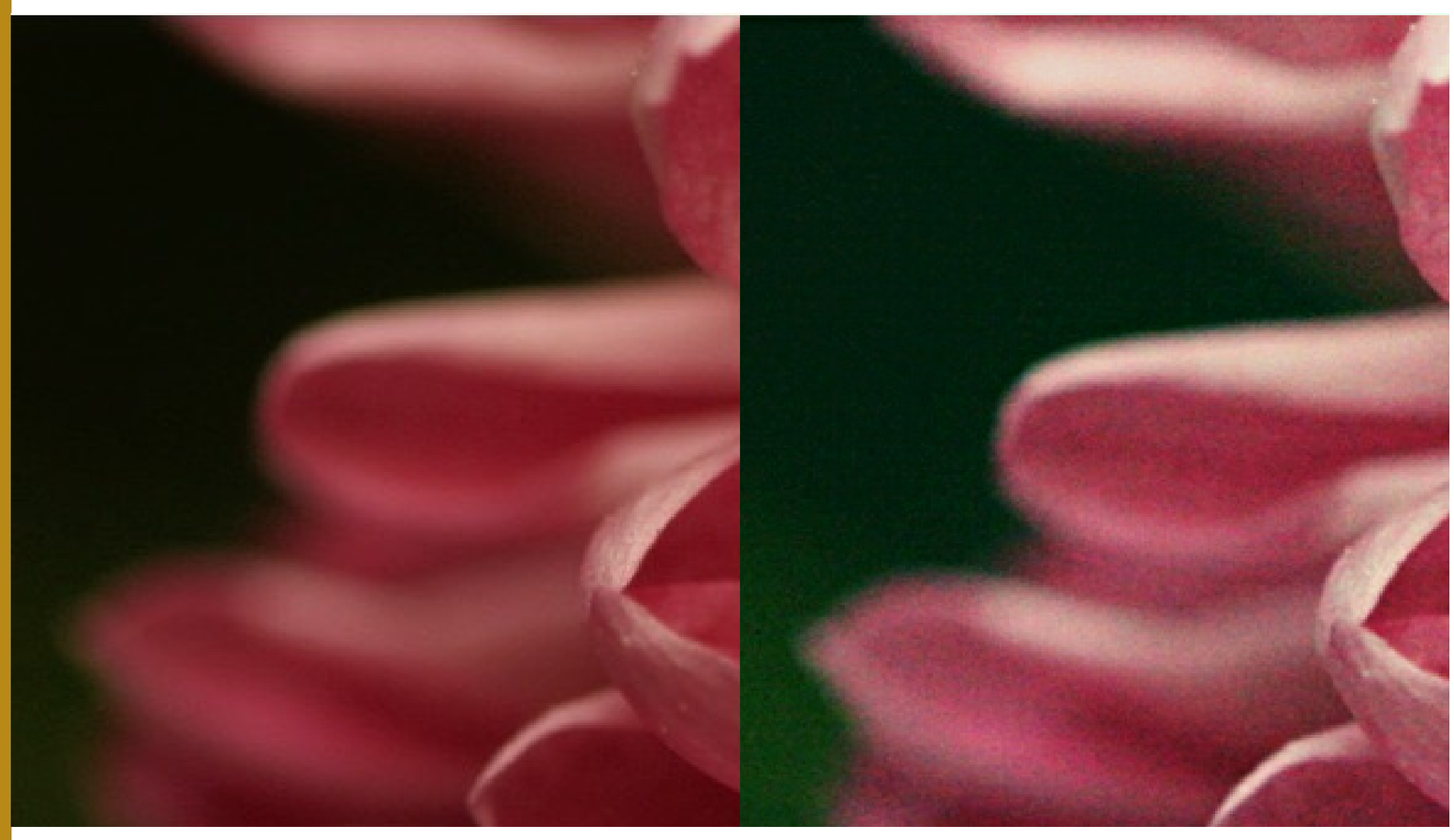
## 3. WHITE BALANCE

Changing the white balance can help your camera adjust the colour temperature of the scene, based on what kind of light you're shooting in - whether you're out in the daylight, in the shade, under clouds, or indoors with lamps, etc. But to keep things simple, all you need to do is set your white balance to auto.

# 4. LEARN HOW TO USE YOUR ISO

In the days of film cameras, the film was sold in various ISOs. A high ISO film, like 800, or even 3200, was very sensitive to light, so good at capturing images in low-light situations. But unfortunately, the trade-off was that the pictures would be grainy. For better quality images, photographers stuck to an ISO of 100 or lower.

Digital cameras also have an ISO setting which allows us to set how sensitive the camera's sensor is to light. By changing the ISO setting, we can make the sensor more sensitive to light thus making the image brighter. But just like with film, the trade-off is that as the ISO is increased the grainier and lower quality the image will look.  Remember that every camera will be very different as far as how to make adjustments but it’s really important to know where your controls are for setting ISO and to practice changing it for different lighting situations.



The image on the left has an ISO of 200 and the one on the right has an ISO of 2000. It's easy to see how grainy the image taken with a higher ISO is.

# 5. FOCUS MODE

Your camera will probably have 3 main auto-focus modes which work to help you focus on a subject. Choosing the right one for the subject you are photographing can really make a difference.

**One shot:** As the name suggests this helps your camera focus for one shot. You would typically shoot in this mode with a subject that’s not moving as the camera will only focus once when you depress the shutter button halfway.

**AI Servo / AF-C:** Photographers often refer to this as continuous focus. It focuses when you partially depress the shutter but still monitors movement in the frame, making any necessary adjustments for you between the shots, without the need to remove your finger from the shutter button. This mode is useful for shooting a moving subject.

**AI Focus:** This mode is useful when you’re shooting still objects that are likely to move without much notice, such as animals or children!

Getting to know these functions in your own camera and knowing when to use them will really improve the sharpness and quality of your images. You can look up how to change these on your camera in your manual or online.

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