

Exposing the menu

THE CORRECT EXPOSURE IS VITAL FOR A SATISFYING PHOTOGRAPH, BUT HOW CAN CONTROL OF EXPOSURE MAKE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS MORE CREATIVE? USING THE OLYMPUS SP-570 UZ, PERRY LEWIS LOOKS AT THE OPTIONS FOR CREATING MORE INTERESTING IMAGES USING EXPOSURE



THE OLYMPUS SP-570 UZ is one of the range of cameras that Olympus collectively refers to as 'Creative' cameras. This is not just because they have a great set of features; they also allow the user control over many aspects of camera operation. This allows more creative possibilities compared to using a purely automatic camera.

By using the exposure parameters of aperture and shutter speed you can change the look of a photo completely, and on a digital camera you can immediately see the effect – so no excuse for not

experimenting! For example, try using a long exposure when taking photos of children actively playing; it gives a great impression of speed and action. Or try using a large aperture with a telephoto lens setting to take a portrait, making the person stand out from the blurred background.

Photographic exposure is a balancing act; as you change one parameter you will need to change another parameter to keep the balance. This is where careful choice of shutter speed, aperture and ISO are important.

EXPOSURE MODE SELECTION

The exposure modes are set by the mode dial on top of the camera.

AUTO – The AUTO exposure mode is a basic point-and-shoot mode. It controls all aspects of the exposure, leaving you to frame the image and focus. It does not allow override control of any exposure parameter or menu-based function. The LCD does not show the ISO, aperture or shutter speed when taking the picture so it can be difficult to creatively judge what the result of the picture will be.

P – Program exposure mode automatically controls the aperture and shutter speed and shows these values on the LCD, and leaves the user to control the ISO. As with the AUTO mode, the camera varies the exposure to avoid setting a shutter speed that will allow camera shake. If this is not possible it will give a blinking red flash warning symbol on the LCD when the shutter release is lightly pressed. Having the exposure information on the LCD gives some idea of whether the shutter speed and aperture are right for your subject.

A – Aperture Priority. This gives control over aperture and ISO, allowing creative use of the camera's focus range by varying depth of field.




For example, when taking a portrait use a tele lens setting and use a large aperture (small f-number) to blur the background. Compare this to taking a similar shot on wide angle and using AUTO mode. For a landscape use a small aperture (large f-number) to ensure sufficient depth of field to get distant and foreground subjects in focus. To use, set A (APERTURE) on the main mode dial and turn the control dial to set the aperture; the camera automatically

adjusts the shutter speed. Check that the aperture value displayed on the LCD does not turn red, which indicates that you have exceeded the shutter speed range of the camera. If you set an aperture that gives a shutter speed too slow to hand-hold, the red flash warning symbol will blink on the LCD when the shutter release is pressed – note that this warning does not take into account the effect of image stabilisation, so with IS engaged a hand-held photo may be possible without using flash.

S – Shutter Priority. This allows manual control of the shutter speed (and ISO), while the camera automatically controls the aperture. Set the main mode dial to S and turn the control dial to change shutter speeds. Ensure the shutter

speed display on the LCD is in yellow; if it is red you are outside the aperture range of the lens and poor exposure could result.

Being able to control shutter speed gives the ability to freeze or blur movement in the subject. Using a fast shutter speed (1/500th or 1/1000th of a second) will freeze movement. Using a slow speed (1/15th of a second) and panning the camera will give an impression of speed and action in a moving subject. If using a panning technique turn off the image stabilisation (page 3 of the main camera menu), otherwise it will try to compensate for the panning action.

M – Manual Exposure. This gives full manual control over all the exposure parameters; aperture, shutter speed and ISO (Auto ISO cannot be used). The camera meters the light level and gives an indication on the LCD of how far the current settings are from giving a correct exposure. To adjust the exposure press the  button to select shutter speed or aperture. The selected setting is shown in yellow on the LCD, then turn the control dial to adjust. The exposure is correct when the exposure indicator (to the left of the shutter speed reading on the LCD) disappears, at all other times it will give an indication of the exposure difference, up to +/-3 EV (the indication turns red above +/-3 EV).





LIGHT METERING PATTERNS

The way that the camera measures the available light can greatly affect the exposure. To set the metering mode using the menu press MENU, select CAMERA MENU and press OK, use the ∇ button to scroll down to page 2 of the menu and select METERING, press OK and make your selection and press OK to set, then press MENU or lightly press the shutter release to exit the menu.

The metering mode can also be set using the control panel. To bring up the control panel press \square , the live image will swap to the viewfinder and the control panel will appear on the rear LCD (pressing OK also brings up the control panel, in which case the display reverts to live view when OK is pressed to set the mode). To select the metering mode press OK and use the scroll buttons to highlight the light metering mode, then use the control dial to select the mode and press OK to set. Any of the menu items shown on the control panel can be quickly changed in this way. The control panel function on page 2 of the SETUP menu must be ON to use the control panel.



ESP – Electro Selective Pattern metering uses several distinct areas covering the entire sensor to meter the light falling on different areas of the image. It then compensates for difficult subjects

such as backlit objects and large areas of sky. ESP is the only metering pattern allowed with Shadow Adjustment or Face Detection modes.

Spot metering uses only the area covered by the AF target mark. When using AEL (see below) the central area of the frame should be aimed at a mid-tone area of the picture to take a reading. If the spot reading is taken from a white or black subject the reading will be under- or overexposed.

Centre-weighted metering meters from the whole frame but concentrates most of the reading on the central area, the area where your main subject is likely to be. Unlike ESP, centre-weighted metering does not automatically compensate for difficult lighting, giving more consistently repeatable results.



EXPOSURE CONTROLS

AEL/AFL – The Auto Exposure/Auto Focus Lock can be used to lock the exposure, focus or both, independently of the shutter release – handy if you wish to expose and focus on different parts of the subject. Set the parameter that you want the button to control via page 5 of the main SETUP menu. To use, aim the camera at your preferred subject (for exposure or focus) and press the **AEL/AFL** button to lock the setting (a green \square or \square warning appears on the LCD). Now redirect the camera for focus or exposure respectively and half press and hold the shutter release to lock that setting, now reframe the shot and fully press the shutter release to take the picture. Note that the exposure or focus remain locked until the AEL/AFL

button is pressed a second time, so cancel it after taking the shot.

Histogram – A histogram is a graphical representation of the tones in a picture, ranging from black on the left of the graph to white on the right. The aim is to have a good spread of peaks left to right; if the peaks are all

bunched to the left (the blue box) the picture will probably be underexposed, if to the right (red box), overexposed. The SP-570UZ also has a Direct Histogram mode, where areas of the live view picture are coloured blue or red to respectively

warn of under- or overexposure. To use the histogram, set the camera to enable the histogram mode (OFF, ON or Direct) on page 4 of the main SETUP menu. To activate the histogram in shooting mode press the DISP button repeatedly until the histogram appears.

Exposure Compensation allows fine adjustment of the exposure in cases where the subject may cause the metering to over- or underexpose. Used with the histogram it can be a very effective way of metering for difficult subjects. The effects of exposure compensation can be seen on the LCD. To use press the \square button and turn the control dial to adjust. The compensation value is displayed in yellow while adjusting, then press \square or OK to set. Exposure compensation is not available in Manual exposure mode.



ISO

ISO governs how the sensor reacts to light – the amount of sensor image amplification. Low ISOs give better image quality but require longer exposures. High ISOs give faster exposures but image quality can suffer. Fortunately the SP-570UZ has Bright Capture technology that improves high ISO image quality. As it's possible to change ISO from shot to shot, it gives some flexibility to change shutter speeds and apertures to suit the subject.

The ISO setting is controlled directly from the control panel or via page 1 of the main camera menu.

AUTO – sets an appropriate ISO according to the available light.

HIGH ISO AUTO – allows higher automatic ISO values than normal Auto ISO.

MANUAL ISO – settings of 64, 100, 200, 400, 800, 1600 at full 10 megapixel resolution and ISO 3200 and 6400 at a reduced 5 megapixel resolution.

The auto ISO modes cannot be used with Manual Exposure and ISOs 3200 and 6400 cannot be used with FINE ZOOM and DIGITAL ZOOM.

