
Shooting the Moon



You want to photograph the moon. Great, here's what you need...

1. A sturdy tripod.
2. A cable release or remote release.
3. A film or digital slr camera.
4. A prime telephoto lens. I suggest an effective focal length of 500mm or more. If you have a 70-300 zoom, attach a teleconverter to it. Be wary of zoom creep, though. It will ruin your photo.
5. Solid ground. Don't set up on a bouncy porch.

And what you need to know...

- Use the lowest ISO possible.
- Shoot in RAW mode if possible.
- A full moon is extremely bright and moving fast. Set your shutter speed to 1/125 sec. minimum. The moon will always motion blur at any shutter speed slower than 1/125th sec., always! The moon moves at 2,288 miles per hour.
- Aperture is not as important as shutter speed, but your lens will produce its best quality at about f8-f11.
- Remove all filters from your lens. You don't need them unless you are doing a daylight shot and they may reduce image quality in this circumstance.
- Use manual focus and focus on infinity.
- Use mirror lock up if you have the option.
- Always use a cable release or remote release. You will shake the camera if you touch it. You can also use a self timer if you set it for 10 seconds.
- Pick a clear night. Plan ahead. Know the weather and know your [moon phases](#).
- A moon that is low in the sky appears slightly larger than one that is high in the sky.
- Use a spot meter to determine exposure. If you do not have that option try ISO100 - 1/125th sec. - f11 as a starting point. Do not trust an average weighted meter or matrix meter. It will lie to you.
- Shoot a half moon instead of a full moon. When the moon is full, the sun's light is shining directly onto it which eliminates shadows. You want shadows, though. They help define the surface of the moon. At half moon, the sun's light is shining from the side, which creates crater-defining shadows.
- Be prepared to do some post processing in order to clean up color noise, do some minor sharpening and make minor exposure adjustments.
- Bracket your exposures. Don't go below 1/125th second.