



Getting Started: *Taking a Photo*

All digital cameras have a straightforward “auto mode” that will suit most scenes – this is the best place to start with your camera. Once you’ve got the hang of that, there are a few special settings that it’s really worth knowing about – they can make a big difference to your photos.

“Automatic Mode” does everything for you


The easiest setting for taking photos is “automatic mode” (or “auto mode”).

This is where your camera automatically decides what settings it needs:

- where to focus
- whether you need the flash
- the shutter speed
- the aperture size (this controls how much light is let in)

Auto mode is ideal while you’re learning because it means you can take great pictures from day one, without having to learn all the technical stuff.



This mode usually has the symbol  or the letter “A”. Yours might be on a dial, like this:



If your camera doesn’t have a dial, you’ll get to “Auto mode” through a menu. Ideally I’d like to be able to tell you exactly where it is on *your* camera – but sadly each camera does it differently! So go for your camera’s instruction manual – most of them tell you this right at the start.

Confusingly, some cameras have a “Program mode” instead, which lets you change more of the settings than “auto” – but if you leave everything as it is, the camera will work the settings out for itself. In effect “program mode” behaves just like “auto mode” unless you tell it otherwise!




You can override some settings though

The downside of “auto mode” is that the camera isn’t human and so it sometimes won’t choose the best setting for a particular scene.

For example, sometimes you might want to choose whether the flash goes off – maybe you’re taking a photo through a window and don’t want the flash to reflect off the glass. *(There’s more about this on p43-45.)*



Don’t worry – in “auto mode” you can usually choose to override the flash settings.

Usually there’s a button with this symbol , that you press to cycle through the following options:






-  flash is automatic
-  force the flash on
-  force the flash off
-  automatic flash with “red-eye reduction”
-  force the flash on with “red-eye reduction”



Photo Editing Basics: *Light/Dark*

Here's how to make overexposed or underexposed photos look a little bit better.

You can lighten or darken photos with the software

This photo hasn't come out brilliantly – it's a little bit underexposed and the shadows are too dark for my liking.

I'd like to lighten it up a bit. I'll show you how to make the photo brighter, using the PhotoPlus software.

Although these bits look almost totally black, the camera will have picked up some detail. I'm going to see if I can use the software to bring out that detail.

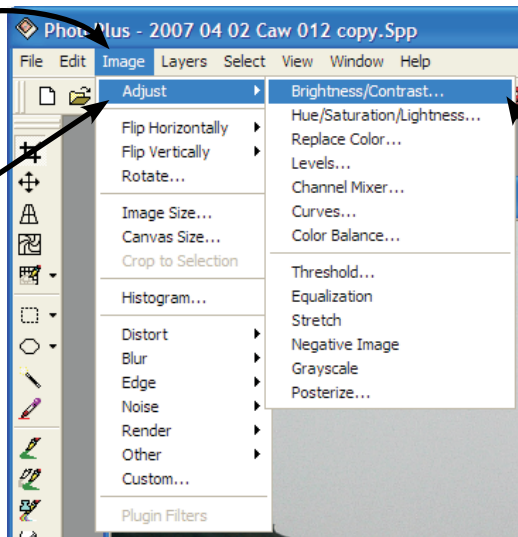
It's easier to bring out detail in an underexposed photo than in an overexposed photo.



To lighten and darken, use the Image menu

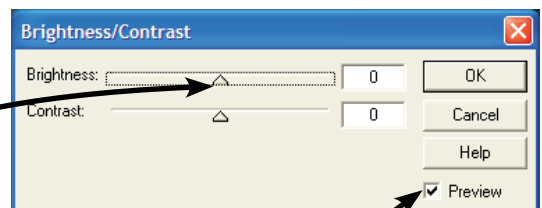
1 Click on "Image" up in the top-right corner.

2 A drop-down menu appears. Click on "Adjust", right at the top of the menu.



3 Another drop-down menu appears. Click on "Brightness/Contrast", which is also right at the top.

4 This Brightness/Contrast box shows up in the middle of your photo. Adjust brightness by clicking on the "Brightness" slider, holding your mouse button down and dragging the slider. You can see the effect of your adjustments on the photo as you move the slider.



Make sure this box is ticked, or you won't be able to see the effect of your adjustments.