

5 useful tips for winter photography

Rik Fairlie



(Credit: Rik Fairlie)

It's been mighty cold here in New York this week. So for those of you who plan to snap outdoors this weekend, here are a few tips (and links) for photography in wintry conditions.

First, one of the most troublesome issues when shooting in the cold is condensation caused by temperature changes, especially when you return to toasty places like your home or the ski lodge. You should always warm the camera slowly. One way to do this is to leave your camera in its camera bag for a couple of hours; it will warm more slowly and prevent condensation. If you don't have a camera bag, put it in a zip-lock bag.



(Credit: Rik Fairlie)

Another worry with cold-weather photography is battery life. Cold temperature zaps the life from batteries, so it's a good idea to carry spares in pants pockets (close to your body is best,

so the batteries stay warm). And you can keep the battery in your camera warm by wrapping a small hand warmer around the section of the camera that contains the batteries. Hand warmers don't get that hot and won't damage your camera. But they will prolong battery life.

When shooting in deep snow, keep your tripod legs together. If you jam the tripod deep into the snow, it will push the legs apart so far that they might break. Just open the legs slightly, and the snow will further spread them as you push down.

If you're shooting snowboarders in cloudy weather, boost your ISO to stop the action. For partly cloudy days, try an ISO setting of 200. If it's really overcast, bump it up to 400 (but I wouldn't go any further than that). If you have a D.S.L.R., use a fast lens with an aperture of 2.8 or wider.

Make sure that you adjust your settings so that the snow is truly white, rather than gray or bluish. Meter pure white with your camera's spot-metering to get an accurate reading, then open up two stops. If conditions are sunny and the snow is in shadow, open up to one stop. Experiment with these settings until you get snow that is the right color.

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