

**Book manuscript written for Colby Skye Photography, Key West, FL.  
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Written by Don McKay – The CopyGUY-DONMACideas!**

# Photographing Our Best Friend or

How to Photograph Dogs (without the bites).

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Congratulations!

You have made up your mind to gird up your loins, strap on your breast plate, slip on your buckler and take up your sword in the courageous desire to take photographs of dogs. If the subject of the photos is your dog, or dogs, then you can forget the armor and sword and get down to the business of getting the world's best images of your beloved companion. On the other hand, if the dog is someone else's pet, you may wish to keep the armor (at least) at hand – at least until you've become an experienced hand at the art of dog photography along with owner-directed customer service.

Welcome to the world of dog photography! In the opinion of many professional photographers, animal photography is often times a pleasure to do, and dog photography can be extremely rewarding, not only for the photographer, but more so for the dog's owner; especially after that time when the dog has departed this world. A powerfully-crafted photograph of a beloved dog can do much to heal an owner's broken heart.

The purpose of this presentation-tutorial is to introduce both the novice (and serious amateur) photographer, and the professional who has no dog photography experience, to the practical method of photographing dogs. The format is broken down into logical progression chapters, which to get the idea across better, is supplemented with photographic examples. In addition, everything presented here has actually been done numerous times by the author. Okay, let's begin....

# Chapter 1 – First Things First

Guess what?! Nearly everyone who owns a dog wants a photograph of their pet.

Guess what?! Nearly everyone who owns a dog cannot take a decent photograph of their beloved pet and faithful companion.

Guess what?! That's where you could come into the picture (sorry!) if you know how to go about dog photography the correct way.

No guessing, now... but ask yourself, 'Do I want to do dog photography as a hobby? Or, do I want to go a step beyond the hobby stage and actually get paid for taking photos of dogs?'

That's right. You can earn money taking photographs of other people's dogs. Actually, if your own dog(s) has the 'just right' face and expression, you can sell your photos to everyone from dog food makers, to greeting card manufacturers, to the guys who make calendars. But, somehow, most likely you already know this.

If you are mainly interested in photographing your own dogs, then you can pursue your craft in a more relaxed atmosphere of your choosing. If you plan on taking photos of other people's dogs with the idea of making some extra pocket money, then subtly-ever-so-subtly you will be crossing over into the realm of Professional Dog Photographer. Really, doesn't that sound pretty spiffy? However, should you become a 'Professional', you will have to assume the air of a professional shooter and see to the comfort and amenities of both dog and owner. We call this part of photography, 'doing business coupled with customer service'.

In a moment will come the technical details, along with the technique, of photographing dogs. But first, let's save you, "Dog Photographer" some time and a great deal of headaches. Before any photography begins, let's 'prep' the model. If the dog

photos are to be finally set into \$150 USD gilt frames, you'll want to make sure the dog looks its best.

Beauty parlor time! Well... if not a doggy *phoo-phoo* salon, you will at least want to make sure the dog's fur is clean and combed, or brushed. It's a fact, the dog's hair will look its best when it's clean, curried and conditioned. If it's a paying customer you're dealing with, make the suggestion that the dog be coiffed before the shooting session. One thing you don't want to see is a bunch of gunk around the dog's eyes, or matted hair anywhere. If the dog salon offers it, have the pet's ears swabbed for mites. Otherwise, you'll end up with lots of photos of a dog scratching its ears. (*Ergo*, what applies to the paying customer's dog is also good for your own dog.)

The next decision you'll have to make is whether to take your dog photos with your household furniture (and rooms) as the impromptu studio, versus setting aside a shooting area that would be exclusively used for your dog photography. Of course, if you photograph for pay, then very likely you'll be going to the pet's home and do your shooting there on location.

Throughout this presentation, notice that both novice and professional viewpoints and suggestions will be made, thus serving as motivation for some readers to venture forth into the world of serious dog photography and to experience the great rewards of this photographic discipline. As for the shooting setting, we're presenting viewpoints from both inside and outdoor photography. For those photographers in the sunny climes, the majority of their work can be done outside. However, for those readers of this paper who live in the rainy climes of the world, there has to be accommodations made to do dog photography either inside the home, or in a studio setting.

If you'd like to advance to a level where you photograph other's dogs, and you want to have a studio for this work, then plan to have:

- a) A space set apart for your lighting equipment, tripod, backgrounds, riser table (to get small dogs up to camera level) and camera equipment;

- b) A separate entrance to your shooting studio that negates clients and their dogs having to trek through your house;
- c) In case a dog client is not up to par with their flea prevention, have vet-recommended flea spray, sanitizers and plenty of disposable wipes at the ready. This is especially important when you're lucky and have two or more dogs waiting to have their pictures taken. When one dog is finished being photographed, sanitize the shooting area before the second dog enters. Oh, did I mention you'll need a waiting area for the pets and their owners? (Have some extra leashes handy in case a dog is carried in by its owner. If two dogs – strangers to each other – are suddenly in close proximity, make sure each dog is leashed, or there may be hell to pay!)
- d) An assortment of various dog grooming brushes, tools, blow drier, hair sprays and eye mucus removal solution, Q-tips. Get some advice on this from a professional groomer. If the client and the shooting session is previously understood to equate to serious, big bucks, you may want to have an business arrangement with a local pet stylist to drop by and prep the dog.
- e) An assortment of various doggie snacks and treats. Keep these closed in sealable plastic containers. The visiting dogs will pick up on all scents, but there's no benefit in driving them nuts with the treats before the shoot. Use treats as needed.
- f) Have a designated outside area where the dog can be taken to relieve itself. Next....

## Chapter 2 – Technical Details

In the preceding chapter, there was a brief mention regarding equipment. Now, let's get deeper into this subject, because other than your ability to 'get the picture', equipment is the most important part of the equation. (That is unless *Lassie* visits your studio, then the world's greatest collie factors right up there in overall importance.)

For this discussion, let's first begin with your lighting situation and equipment. We'll get into THE camera, shortly.

How do you plan on lighting your dog(s)? Want to use sunlight, or do you want to use flash? Or, maybe both? Actually, it's your option, and sometimes up to your budget. If you plan to photograph other people's dogs, however, you must be prepared with sufficient and proper lighting to capture great images of white-hair dogs, black haired dogs and everything else in between. Correctly photographing a solid black haired dog will, initially, put the novice through the ringer. It's amazing what *can't* be seen when a black dog is photographed by someone who doesn't know what they are doing.

If you plan on photographing dogs inside your house and desire to utilize window daylight supplemented with tungsten light (a table lamp, for example), you'll also have the option of your camera's flash capability to fill in any dark shadow areas. Keep in mind, though, such shooting will most likely require longer exposure times and will not be able to clearly record any movement on the dog's part. (Except if the dog's asleep, that is.)

Also, if you plan on using incidental lighting (available lighting), you will need to use a camera tripod; otherwise your images will be either soft focus or blurred with movement.

A better alternative is to photograph the dog with a flash (to stop any action), but to go a step farther and supplement the camera's flash with one or two independent flash

units that can be mounted on adjustable pole stands, or attached to free-standing lamp poles, door edges, bookshelf brackets, or anything else that would take a light-pressure clamp. The ‘off-camera’ flash units (which have their own battery power) will allow you to move your main light source into a position that will allow you to capture the dog’s image without running into the problem of ‘red eye’ (which we’ll discuss later), and will also allow you to come up with creating lighting scenarios that will really impress people.

The best option – whether you shoot for pleasure or profit – is to have a set-aside shooting studio area where you can incorporate the same type of lighting that would be used by a professional photographer; that is, strobe units. Strobe (another word for flash) lights, connected to a separate, dedicated power pack source, are the best solution in capturing professional-looking dog images. The strobe lights offer two distinct advantages to dog illumination: the ability to ‘see into’ and separate the dog’s individual hairs, and the ability to stop the dog’s movements. Strobe units (flash heads) usually offer the photographer the option of decreasing the amount of flash power that’s produced. For example, if you want one-half the amount of light to fall on a dog’s hind quarters, you can manually adjust the flash head accordingly. What this means to you (and to your gushing client) is a super-sharp rendition of the dog’s features, expressions and exquisite hair detail.

Studio flash set-ups have one drawback: individual electrical power cords to each flash head. So, whatever package you decide on, make sure the electrical cords running from the individual flash heads to the main power source are long enough to be out of the way of the main shooting area. Lighting will be discussed further in this paper, and at the end, you will find links to various photographic and lighting sources of supply.

### Next – Choosing THE Right Camera.

Notice how THE camera is capitalized? Well, there’s a reason for that and it’s this: from the outset, you very likely will be using only one camera to do your dog photography and it had better be the right camera for you. It’s a proven fact in digital

photography classes that over half of the students beginning the course will quickly opt for a new and more capable camera by the time the course is done. The main complaints about digital cameras are, they are too small and the control buttons/switches too flimsy. In addition, when taking photos outside, the users can't see the liquid crystal diode screen (LCD) when there's bright sunlight. And, if the digital camera does have a view finder, many users cannot see through the small portal with their bi-focal eyeglasses. Usually, these types of cameras are referred to as "rangefinder" cameras, and in many situations when shooting a subject closer than 30 inches while using the view finder, what the photographer sees is NOT what's actually taken by the camera. There's a term for this and it's called 'parallax error'. Thus, the other option for close-up photography is to use the LCD screen, and as mentioned, the image is nearly impossible to see in sunlight.

To be successful in your dog photography, it is vital that you use a camera that logically functions for you and feels good to you; a camera that allows you to easily operate it and, when viewing the subject dog, you're able to easily see through the viewfinder – eyeglasses or not.

It is recommended that your attention be centered on using a digital camera, especially if you are contemplating going into the dog photo business. Of course, if you presently own a high-quality 35mm film camera, use it. Digital photography, though, is where the world is moving to. It's a luxury for today's photographers to have the ability to instantly see pictures just taken; not have to purchase expensive film and film processing, and to have the ability to digitally enhance and retouch their photographs.

The major drawback to using film is that the photographer's printing options are fast drying up. While it is true that 'machine prints' are still available from Kodak, Wal-Mart, along with other sources, fine custom enlargement printing is fast disappearing. Truth is, expert professional darkroom color technicians are no longer being trained or needed. Finding a good color printing lab is very hard to do these days. More important, though, is film has it's limitations when it comes to bigger enlargements: film shows its grain. Finer-grained films are less noticeable when blown up to 16 x 20" and larger sizes,

but average-grained color films when enlarged can and will look terrible. Such is not the case with a properly-exposed digital image-enhanced photographic enlargement. In classroom demonstrations, images from both Nikon and Canon high quality digital cameras have been projected to sizes that defy and surpass the capabilities of film. In one instance, a portrait of a Siberian Husky with piercing blue-white eyes was enlarged to where the pupil of the dog's eye was at a diameter measuring 36 inches and there was no "digital grain", or in other words, no pixels showing!

Okay, let's suggest THE camera for you!

There are two brands of digital cameras professional photographers have no hesitations about purchasing and using. They are Nikon and Canon. And, the cameras recommended are not 'rangefinder' cameras, but 'SLR' cameras. SLR stands for single-lens reflex. That means, the image you see through the viewfinder eyepiece, is the image you record. Because the digital Nikon and Canon cameras use no film, what then becomes of importance to you, the photographer, is the cameras' ability to resolve and record an image in the highest number of MEGA-pixels. Remember, film grain is no longer of any concern. Megapixels is the standard of image quality measurement today.

Briefly, the higher the number of megapixels a camera can produce to resolve an image, the better quality the image – which is critically important when a large print is called for. Professional photographers like digital cameras such as Nikon's D 70, 6.1 'Effective Megapixel' format, and Canon's EOS-1D Mark II N with its 8.2 megapixels. These two brands and models are SLR cameras with the ability to use interchangeable lenses – that is, the camera bodies can accept numerous lenses that will better suit the photographic challenge at hand. The two camera models also have the option for the photographer to instantly switch from Autofocus over to Manual Focus. The cameras also have brilliant light metering and exposure systems built in; the systems are so good, that for many photographers setting the camera on 'Automatic' will take care of most of the shots. Oh, yes, can the Nikon D70 and Canon EOS stop the action! Both cameras can

stop the movements of a running dog with an unbelievable 1/8000<sup>th</sup> of a second shutter speed!

These cameras can be somewhat pricy but are well worth the investment if you plan on doing extensive, continuous dog photography. Both Nikon and Canon offer less expensive digital SLR cameras and it is advised that you shop around at some of the recommended store links that are provided at the end of this presentation.

You may choose to purchase a camera over the Internet. Before purchasing, it is suggested that you visit either a quality camera store in your area, or a Best Buy, Circuit City or other electronics stores and “try the cameras on for size.” Pick them up, look through the viewfinder – make sure you can see everything you need to see, get the feel of the camera body and check where the control buttons and shutter release are. Is the camera comfortable for you? Are the buttons and dials where you’d like them to be? Can your fingers easily find and operate the buttons and dials? Can you properly see through the viewfinder with your eyeglasses on? Does the viewfinder have a manual diopter control that will allow you to use the camera without having to wear your eyeglasses? How easy is it to put on and take off lenses? If a camera model that you’re interested in has its zoom lens incorporated into the camera body (non-interchangeable), can you instantly switch over to Manual Focus, if needed? (More about this later.)

Where’s the battery compartment? What kind of batteries does the camera use: rechargeable Nickel-metal hydride (NiMH), rechargeable lithium? Regular AA alkaline? Being that digital camera batteries are always improving, ask how fast it takes to recharge the batteries for the camera you are interested in. Ask the salesman any question that comes to mind. If you get an informative answer, you may wish to consider purchasing your camera at that store. Note: Many times throughout the year, stores like Best Buy will offer outstanding deals on their digital cameras, usually for short periods of time. Double Note: If you’re going out for a serious dog photo session, make sure you have a couple charged batteries in reserve.

When doing photography involving moving subjects – dogs, horses, sports and children – there is one preeminent reason professional photographers choose a digital camera such as the Nikon D 70, or the Canon EOS – the cameras’ ability to take a picture with a fast shutter speed, then quickly record the taken image to flash memory (the camera’s memory card), at the same time recharge the on-camera flash (if used) and then be ready to take and record another image in the blink of an eye. The professional grade Nikon and Canon digital cameras now allow photographers to take images as fast as they could with yesterday’s film cameras.

The ‘lag’ delay exhibited by many economy-priced digital cameras (both rangefinder and SLR models) have a vexing time delay between each image taken; especially when the flash is used. Fact is, the less expensive, compact cameras are slow in the process of taking the picture, recording it to flash memory, while at the same time refreshing the flash exposure system. To compound this lengthy procedure, most ‘shutterbugs’ take their pictures using the LCD screen, and if ever there was something about a camera that would fast draw down the batteries, a continuously-activated LCD display is it.

The bottom line is this: *If you plan on taking photographs of dogs playing, jumping, or running, you are well advised to use a professional grade digital SLR camera if you want to get superior images.*

### Choosing the Right Lenses –

One thing that becomes obvious when examining both the Nikon and Canon digital camera lines is that there are lots of lenses to choose from, and it can be supposed that if you had access to Fort Knox, you’d purchase them all. Well, the fact is, you don’t need dozens of lenses to photograph dogs. Actually, two lenses, or even one will get the job done. You have a choice of fixed focal length lenses such as a 70mm to use for head shots, and a 90mm to use for body shots. Or, you could use a zoom lens that covers both of the fixed focal length lenses and, perhaps offer even more latitude. Oftentimes, it

comes down to economics and the purchase of discrete fixed focal length lenses becomes too expensive. But, there's another reason why some dog photographers prefer a high-quality zoom lens: speed of use while shooting.

If your dog photo subjects are standing at attention, like the good fellows and girls they are, then a fixed focal length lens would definitely do the job. But, what if the dog is active... its head moving about and through numerous poses... or out running in the yard? Do you think you'd have enough time to break loose one lens and bayonet insert another? Unless you've had lots of shooting experience under your belt, chances are you'll miss out on lots of 'perfect' poses, action and expressions. And, there will always be those situations where just a little more or a little less focal length of lens would be nice. As for your choice of a zoom lens, it's not recommended that you use a wide angle format for dog photography unless you're making 'comic' shots for laughs or novelty greeting cards and calendars. [Don't take this the wrong way. There's some big bucks to be made when animals are photographed with extreme 'lens shaping' in an attempt to capture funny human-like looks. Recall seeing the 'big-eyed' dog and cats greeting cards?]

Another reason for choosing a zoom lens is that because you will be using the one lens for most of your shooting, that means you will not be changing lenses. That means you will not be changing lenses during a dusty or rainy shoot, and you then will not be troubled by having dust, or rain, getting inside your camera's body. And, heaven forbid, you were in the process of changing fixed focal length lenses during the excitement of a shoot and you dropped a lens... aaarrggg!! That's tough to take when it's a thousand dollar lens hitting a concrete surface. Been there, done that.

Until you've gained sufficient experience with your dog photography, it is suggested that you acquire first Nikon's 55-200mm f/4-5.6G ED AF-S DX Zoom-Nikkor lens that's been specifically engineered to go onto the Nikon D line of digital camera bodies. This particular lens will give you enough 'throw' variation in zoom capability to cover nearly every dog photo session you'll incur. The beauty of this lens, besides its

superior movement, light weight, compactness, and the famous Nikkor lens glass, is its ability to be quickly switched from Autofocus mode into Manual focus mode. In fact, it's the camera that will take care of this task whenever you want it. Later on, you may wish to complement your 55-200mm lens with its sister lens, the AF-S DX Zoom-Nikkor 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G ED. Yes, there may come a time when you'll want to take photos of things other than dogs and this is the lens that will fill in any gaps.

On the Canon side, the EF 70-200mm f/2.8L USM lens is an excellent choice. This lens is a heavier one than it's Nikkor counterpart, but it's also a faster lens with the f/2.8 aperture. This can be helpful in low light shooting situations, and also to diffuse both background and foreground while rendering the dog in crisp focus.

If cost continues to remain an issue concerning lenses, there's always the third-party lens manufacturers, Tokina and Sigma. These companies make a wide range of excellent quality lenses that fit on the Nikon and Canon bodies. Usually, the cost of these lenses are more economical.

### Let's get down to some shooting: How to Avoid Red-Eye –

You've seen it in both animal and human photographs: the infamous demon eyes! Usually red eyes for people, mostly yellowish eyes for dogs, and turquoise eyes for cats. Sometimes, the colors will shift between subjects, but in the end our photos show dogs, cats or kids with electric, blazing eyes. The kind of eyes one might imagine for space aliens. Whatever... we don't want 'red-eye' in our dog's eyes.

One thing is for sure, and that's when you take your dog photos outdoors, seldom if ever will you incur the red-eye problem. That's because the bright daylight has forced the animal's eye iris to naturally close. And, therein our problem with red-eye: the dog's irises usually are not closed when the photo session is being conducted indoors, and the pupils are full and wide open. It's darker inside and the dog's irises naturally respond by opening to allow more light into the eye. That's okay. Okay, that is, until the moment our

camera flash goes off when the dog is looking directly at the lens. Yup, we end up with a dog with the devil's eyes! The light from the flash literally bounces off the dog's eye retina and comes right back at the camera lens. How to get around the red-eye problem?

Do all your dog photography outdoors. That's the simple solution. Of course, shooting outdoors isn't such a great idea if it's raining on the day of the shoot. So... be prepared to move the photo session indoors... ideally into that studio space previously discussed. If there's no studio available, then choose an appropriate room and use your flash when needed. "When needed" because there may be enough window light available that's sufficient to pull off the shots. (Oh yes, photographers, you WILL be taking many, many exposures with the ultimate goal of capturing that 'just right expression'.)

The key to indoor, flash-assisted, animal photography (this also includes children), is to not have the subjects looking directly at the camera. Nine out of ten times, you will end up with red-eye problems. The challenge is to capture a true representation of the dog's eyes – the same representation that we would normally see when we look at our dog in natural light. If flash must be used for indoor shooting, one trick is to bring into close proximity to the dog a table lamp with its shade removed. This will be bright enough to force the dog's irises to close, and the supplemental flash will negate the warm light cast by the bare tungsten bulb.

Congratulations, again! If you are in the process of taking dog photos indoors, you've just discovered the single amazing feature of your digital camera: the ability to present the image so you can immediately see what you've just taken. Yes, check your initial images at the beginning of the photo session so you can spot, and correct, any lighting, setting and composition problems. More about flash in a bit.

### Setting Your Camera for Dark versus Light Dogs –

Okay... it comes down to a simple question: How much detail do you want to see in the dog's hair?

Show a photo of a Black Labrador Retriever where the image comes off as nothing more than a lump of coal, and you'll be showing your friends (or clients) the fruits of bad photography. To the opposite, show a photo of a West Highland White Terrier and the little lassie looks like a bright blob of a white thing that has two raisins where its eyes should be, likewise, you'll have produced an inferior photographic image.

Here's the benchmark goal that we animal photographers always want to strive for: We want to see hair. We want to see spots. We want to see the texture of the dog's hair. We want to see the dog as we would normally see it standing directly in front of us.

Indoors... outdoors... it matters not; we want to capture an image of the dog so that its owner immediately grasps our photographic creation of their pet in a way that's best summarized as: "It looks just like him." "She's marvelous! Oh, look! You've captured her eyes!" When you hear comments like those, believe it fellow photographers, you've made the team.

As a novice animal photographer (this advice applies to every type of animal photographer) it is your job to show the true representation of the animal, and in order to do that, you must control the amount of light striking the subject, while at the same time having your digital camera set and ready to capture the animal's physical details. And here again, the ability of your digital camera to quickly show you shots just taken, will allow you to take 'just right' exposures of any dog. Again, how much hair detail do you want to show? Well, now, you've got the ability to check test shots and to arrange and correct your lighting until you get exactly what you are looking for.

Dark dogs, more light. Light dogs, less light. That's about as simple as it gets.

"Whoa, there!" You've realized that your camera will try and capture an overall 'averaged' scene exposure when photographing either a black or white dog. You say,

“The scene will come out well exposed overall, but the dog comes out too bright or too dark. What do I do?”

Purposely, two specific digital cameras have been recommended in this writing, and one of the reasons for the recommendation is the ability of both to brilliantly and selectively meter the photo scene. Both the Nikon and Canon cameras can be set up to compensate for the extremes between dark and light dogs. If you, or your client, want to see the absolute best hair and color representation of the dog, then it’s your job to expose for just that. Go to both the Nikon and Canon websites ([www.nikon.com](http://www.nikon.com) – [www.canon.com](http://www.canon.com)) and check out the exposure technical specifics for these cameras. You will be amazed.

“Well, what if the background goes too light or too dark? What do I do then?”

If possible, or appropriate, bring in supplemental lighting, or in the case of a dark dog, bring in what’s called *scrims* (sheets of foam board or card board) that can be used to block sunlight and throw a shadow into the too-bright back and foregrounds. If the dog’s hair needs supplemental brightening, use a white foam board to bounce light back into the hair. [If you’ve got someone who can act as your shooting assistant – grab ‘em and put them to work.] But, if the action is underway, and the dog is jumping over the International Space Station in order to catch a Frisbee, you won’t have spare time to finesse the lighting situation. Zoom in on to the dog’s pelt and let your Nikon, or Canon, sense and lock down the perfect exposure on the dog. Upon reading your camera’s instruction manual, you will have noted that your camera has the ability to meter the subject and then compensate for adverse lighting so as to render the dog’s complexion as it appears to your eye. And, when placed in their ‘sports action’ modes, both cameras will then perfectly expose for light, color and stop action, if desired.

“If desired.” Sometimes within the realm of ‘creative photography’ we don’t always want to freeze the action. Here’s a rule of thumb used by professionals: When the shot the client is looking for is ‘in the can’ (movie lingo there), then get creative and take

experimental, extra shots. Show some blur action, that is assuming the dog is in a running and jumping frame of mind. You're the photographer... now, go create something the client's never before seen.

### Setting your Camera up for Indoor or Outdoor Photography –

Because indoor dog photography often involves using ambient (continuous) light that, in most cases, is insufficient to render a good image, the savvy photographer will rely on the primary tool that separates the amateur from the advanced shooter: the camera tripod.

Unless a photographer can boast a heart rate of 40 beats-per-minute or less, it is almost impossible to hand-hold a camera for an indoor shot and get a razor-sharp image. Fact is, when shooting indoors, and because there's less intense light, the digital camera is going to slow down its exposure-making process in order to records a properly-exposed shot. Even if you are young and steady, if your digital camera is forced to resort to a long exposure ( one half second or more ) and you are hand-holding the camera, very likely the resulting shot will be blurry, or at best, 'soft focus'. What happens is that your heart beat subtly vibrates your body and that vibration finds its way into your camera while it is recording a long exposure. Result: soft focus images. Remedy: Use a tripod.

Use of a tripod is also recommended for outdoor dog photography if you've designated a shooting area where the dog 'hits the mark' and poses. This is what we call a controlled setting and are reasonably assured the dog will remain within the boundaries of the shooting area. For a formal show-pose shooting, take some shots using a tripod. Later when you use your Nikon, or Canon, image editor and blow up the digital images – both tripod acquired and hand-held – look at the difference in sharpness. [Image Editors will be discussed later.]

The secret to successful indoor and outdoor photography is to take setting and location test shots. Sometimes it's better to let your sophisticated digital camera 'figure out the situation' for you, and the best way to quickly answer all your questions – and remove doubts – is to take test shots; ideally, before the photographic subject arrives. Here's a tip: Get hold of a good-sized black, and tan, and white stuffed teddy bear and use them as 'stand-ins' for the real thing. If Mrs. Johnson is bringing over 'Tony' her Golden Lab, get your set-up ready to go by having your tan teddy bear standing in. The color of the teddy bear is in the same ball park as 'Tony', and the bear's got hair. Believe it, the test shots along with the resulting optimal camera settings will do the job when it comes to 'Tony's' actual shooting session.

As long as you are controlling the setting and the subject, take the time before the 'client' arrives and study the background scene. Is there a hotdog vendor's truck parked in the background directly in your camera lens' light of sight. Surely, it will be a distraction when the photos are later viewed. See if you can change the background. Is there garbage laying about, or lawn furniture in the picture frame, or anything else that is visually objectionable? Move it, clear it out, clean it up. Make for a nice-looking background. This applies both to indoor and out-of-doors photography. Don't take an indoor portrait of the dog and have in the line-of-sight background a television blazing.

[As you advance in your dog (and perhaps other animal) photography, you may wish to do what the professionals do to 'control the background'. The 'pros' often buy a background. Using extended poles, and cross-bar supports, the professional will use a combination of seamless background paper (available in 4-foot, 9-foot and 15-foot rolls) that they pull down like a window shade. The paper rolls come in a myriad of colors and textures, and can solve a host of visual background problems. Going farther, the professional also purchases a hand-painted canvas background to project a natural setting. An example would be a painted background of the Swiss Alps that would be used when photographing a St. Bernard or a Pyrenean Mountain Dog. Years ago, the cost of the hand-painted backgrounds would be high. Today, thanks to wide area inkjet printing on fabric, the cost has come down.]

Setting up your camera for outdoor lighting is relatively easy. You use the world's largest continuously-firing flash (the Sun) and shoot away.

When shooting dogs inside – say in your living room – now, things are different and more challenging when it comes to lighting. If it's a daylight shot, there will be light from the windows, and there may be nearby lamp light, and if you have to use 'fill flash' to open up a dark area on the subject that you find objectionable, you'll be contending with three different colorations of light. The window daylight may be bright and sunny, or if the sky is overcast with storm clouds, the light will be tending towards the ultraviolet (bluish) range. The nearby table lamp will either be a warm yellow light (or possibly a pasty-green color if screw-in florescent bulbs are used). Then there's the camera flash. It's supposed to be a true rendition of the sun's light at 2:00 p.m. on a bright, cloudless day.

[If you have a shooting studio with strobe flash as the main lighting source, the color temperature of the light will be 5500-degrees Kelvin. A Kelvin is a unit of thermodynamic temperature. For example, a table lamp tungsten bulb ranges around 2800 Kelvin; a photo studio tungsten bulb is 3200 Kelvin; a florescent bulb is anywhere from 3600 to 5200 Kelvin; an on-camera flash rates in at 5500 Kelvin, and sunlight ranges from 3200 – 4200 K from sunrise to about 10 a.m.; 4200 to 6600 K from 10 a.m. to around 2 p.m.; and back to 4200 – 3200 K at sunset. These numbers are based on the time of year, and a clear sky. When the sky is overcast in November, for example, the color temperature can range up to 10,000 K, and when photographed, produce very blue images. Fortunately, today's superior digital cameras give us the ability to compensate for aberrant lighting coloration. Cool! In the old days, we had to use different color lens filters to correct off-colored light for the film being used. Different films recorded light, and colored light, in unique and distinct renditions. With our new Nikons and Canons, we are able to make a 'White Balance' adjustment and have the camera compensate for the differences of color temperatures. Real cool!]

Before getting in to the use of flash for both outdoor and indoor dog photo sessions, it is judicious at this point of the presentation to discuss a photographer's liability. If you are interested in photographing your own pet, exclusively, then you are liable to yourself only. If you plan on doing pet photography as a business where you'll not only do location shooting as well as shooting in your studio, you need to be protected against law suits.

When you enter another's home to photograph their pet, it is recommended you first contact your insurance agent and get bonded. This will protect you financially in case you're in a client's house, you step back while shooting, and in the process knock over a table on which sat the client's Ming Dynasty vase. Or, worse, a day after the shoot, the client accuses you for the disappearance of said vase. Need we say more? Get some protection.

Also, there's the situation where you are photographing the client's dog in your studio, or on your property, and the animal is somehow injured. Was it due to your negligence? A pure accident? Don't know... but someone's going to have to pay the vet bill. Make sure your homeowner's, or business, insurance will cover and protect you.

## Using A Flash –

An on-camera flash, or an independent standing flash unit, used either for indoor or outdoor shooting, can be a problem solver when it comes to dissolving dark shadow areas on the dog. The trick to using supplemental flash is to reign in its full power so that in the photograph it does not appear that the flash provided the main source of light, but that the flash just 'opened up' the shadows. Thanks to the marvelous technology incorporated in the Nikon and Canon digital cameras – and in combination with the use of the proprietary Nikon and Canon add-on flash heads – the 'just right' amount of fill flash light will be achieved. How? The camera bodies sense the scene and instantaneously regulate the pre-prescribed amount of light produced by the flash unit. You've really got to love technology. In the old days of flash photography, all this

business had to be figured out with external, hand-held light meters and calculators. Oh, the wasted time of it all!

Remember, you never want your flash to overpower the lighting scene; but to supplement it. The last thing you'll ever want to see in your photographs is the dog's shadow on the background, a shadow caused by a too-intense flash burst.

### Photographing in Natural Light –

There's a couple overriding reasons why it may be preferable to photograph a client's dog inside the house. One may be that the animal is too infirmed to easily move about. Or, the dog may be frightened about being separated from its owner and both owner and dog prefer an inside setting. Whatever the case, try to capitalize on a nice, cozy room setting that is well lit by a window.

A setting where the dog alone, or being held by its owner, or sitting alongside a seated owner, can be a striking shot if properly lit. It would be a good idea to test fire a couple of supplemental flash bursts and see how the dog reacts. If the dog is unfazed, then you've got another lighting tool at your disposal. If the dog, on the other hand, lunges for your throat, then you'd be best advised to use only available light.

One professional photographer was tasked with the assignment of photographing various AKC breeds of dogs in a studio setting. A particular huge bulldog, 'Mac' the official mascot for Mack Trucks took exception every time the studio flash units fired. With each exposure, 'Mac' barked, growled, lunged and tried to bite the lens off the photographer's Hasselblad®. The photographer got 'the shot', but suffice to say it was not a prolonged shooting session.

If the sky is overcast, natural window light used in dog portraiture will be a softer light that produces subtle shadows on the dog. If the sunlight is hard and bright, the resulting window light will vibrantly illuminate the dog's hair, but at the same time,

cause hard, dark shadowing on or around the animal. Whether or not you, the photographer, are creative enough to use natural light and natural shadows to your advantage is going to depend how much you desire to perfect your skills. If done correctly, dramatic shadows on a posing dog (or cat) can result in dynamically striking photos. It's your job as a creative, artistic photographer, to put together both subject and available light to capture with your camera the delicate interplay between light and shadows – or as the Italian masters so aptly called it, *chiaroscuro*. To produce the highest quality photographs – any kind of photographs – you must grasp the concept of what light means to the overall scheme of things. After all, the word photography comes from a combination of two Greek words: *photos* (light) and *graphos* (writing). That's exactly what you and your camera are doing – writing and recording with light.

It's in natural light where most animal photographers do their work. Dogs and cats can be handled both in an indoor or outdoor settings, but should you desire to move on to large animals, such as prize cattle and horses, then the majority of your shooting will take place in natural light. Which brings us to....

### Capturing Motion –

Unless your name is Dr. Harold Edgerton, and you just happen to be the inventor of, and user of, multi-strobe action flash photography, it's likely you'll be doing your dog action photography outdoors. Nothing stops an animal's motion like good ol' sun light. On a bright sunny day, and using your D 70 or EOS camera, you'll be able to stop the fastest running, highest jumping, trick-doing dog ever created. With shutter speeds of up to 1/8000<sup>th</sup> second, your digital camera will stop the action – freeze the action – of any living thing that moves. The trick is to get the moving dog in the right spot at the right time so you can capture the right action. No getting around it, this takes practice and the refinement of skills on the part of the photographer.

The photographer has to first observe what the dog is going to do, then have the motions repeated and in the observation process sense a pattern to the dog's motions.

Does the dog repeat its steps? Does the dog always jump at the same time, and does the dog always 'telegraph' with its body just before jumping, or running, or running an obstacle course? (This advice also applies when photographing rider-less horses.) Take note whether the dog responds to its owner's hand commands, whistle commands or short vocal commands. See what the dog does when it hears or sees the command. Does the dog respond dramatically, photographically, with an interesting or exciting move?

A situation where whistle commands are paramount is in watching a Border Collie work a flock of sheep. The dog's master commands entirely with whistles. The Border Collie (arguably the world's most intelligent dog) responds immediately and dashes to and fro keeping the sheep in formation. When the flock settles down, the Border Collie, itself, hunkers down on its belly and eagle-eyes the flock in anticipation of break-away sheep. When the sheep begin to move, the Collie is right there to keep them in formation. But it's the dog's master with his whistle commands who tells the dog when to move the sheep and to where. If you are the photographer at such an event, you will have to get to know how the dog thinks, reacts and moves to the whistle commands. Once you've got the pattern down, you will then get the action shots. With the Border Collie, the dog doesn't have to be actually running to show motion. One look at the face of a hunkered down Border Collie and you'll see plenty of facial expressions just begging for a photograph to be taken.

Capturing a dog's motions when using an 'economical' digital camera is extremely difficult and, if a great shot is taken, it's a lucky day for the photographer. Luck shots are nice, but a true photographer is not well served relying on luck. A serious dog photographer relies on the predictable and the planned. After all, your life is not long enough for you to come home with a camera-full of 'lucky' shots. Great dog action shots are not going to happen with an amateur digital camera.

There is one feature, though, shared by both the economical and the higher-priced digital cameras and that something called 'sequential' or 'continual motion' exposures. Depending on the capability of the individual camera models, the photographer has the

option to select an exposure burst mode; that is, while depressing the shutter button, the camera will go through from four to twelve sequential exposures; again depending on the model and type of digital camera. This type of exposure control is not distinctly new to digital cameras. During the halcyon days of film photography in the early 1990's, the advanced 35mm camera models for both Nikon and Canon had the ability to 'burst' expose in order to capture not only action, but to also bracket (or automatically adjust exposure *f-stop* values) exposures – a process vital to capturing the 'just right' exposure with the chrome, or slide, films.

With today's new digital cameras, such as the Nikon D 70, the photographer has the option of choosing continuous shooting at 3 frames-per-second for a total of 144 consecutive shots! 'Holy action photography, Batman! That'll stop a running dog in its best form!'

So, with the burst – or continuous shooting – exposure mode cameras, the novice dog-action photographer should be able to initially 'make do' until they perfect their skills. Even though the issue of paying for film and processing is no longer with us when we use a digital camera, continuous burst exposure shooting is a poor substitute for a photographer's acquired skills. The photographer has to quickly sense the dog's activity motions and be able to quickly and efficiently capture the prize-winning exposures. After all, what's a photographer to do if all of a sudden the dog becomes tired, quits running around and just flops down? Let's just say the photographer very likely missed the shot.

The advice here is for the photographer to get into the tempo of the dog... get in harmony with the dog... anticipate what the dog is going to do and then be ready to instinctively aim the camera and unconsciously press the shutter release.

## Chapter 3 – Positioning Yourself and the Camera

### Getting down and dirty –

There's a truism to this business: When going to photograph animals, don't wear a Brooks Brothers' suit or a Versace gown. That advice is especially true with dogs because they almost always jump up excitedly onto your leg (or even higher) and can very quickly slice your garments with their nails. And, not to mention the mud on their paws getting all over your clothes.

Get yourself some 'dog-photography' work clothes. And, while you're at it, get some protective shoes. Sharp dog nails can easily pierce flimsy shoes, and also, wouldn't it be nice to be able to walk in mud and water without worrying about ruining a good pair of shoes? Keep in mind, though, the clothes you choose to wear while shooting must allow you plenty of stretch room and should also have the 'photographer's best friend', that is, plenty of pockets. Can never have too many pockets. Pockets carry extra batteries, lens cleaning solution and wipes, extra flash memory cards and, very important, pockets carry doggie treats. Pockets are good.

There was a great dog shot where the view we saw was the dog's underside as it sailed overhead. That's correct – the dog jumped over the photographer and the picture was snapped at twelve o'clock high. The photographer laid on the ground and the dog jumped over him from the photographer's head to feet. The photographer dressed for the occasion by wearing coveralls. This may sound crazy, but you'll take better dog photographs if you dress appropriately for the session. Also, you'd be well advised to have a container of pop-up hand cleaning disposable towels to use so that you don't soil your camera. You can also take along a terry cloth towel with which to keep your hands dry as you shoot. Good photo sessions sometimes evoke perspiration.

## Try shooting from the Hip –

We've got you into your 'down and dirty' shooting clothes, now let's get down on the dog's level and see what they're up to. Whoops! Hold on a second. There's something we've got to discuss here when it comes to photographing different sized dogs. Do you think it's good photography to photograph a Chihuahua on the ground while you are standing upright? Nah. Not the greatest angle for such a small dog.

What you can do is get down on your knees, bending, try to meet the dog eye-to-eye. Well, what if it hurts to get on your knees, what next? Answer: Raise the dog. Get the small dog up into its owner's arms, snuggling, and hopefully, the owner will have an attractive face. Otherwise, place small dogs on to a bench, table, or another platform that's available. The smart shooter invests in a light-weight set-up table on which to place and pose smaller dogs. This is a great option that allows the photographer the ability to get down below the small dog for some outstanding camera angles. The use of such a set-up table comes in handy, also, when shooting indoors and in your studio. 'Mac' the bulldog was photographed in a studio while positioned on a three-foot high adjustable table.

If you're taking shots of a dog that's too big to be placed on an elevated surface, yet you want to get the lower angle shots, again, you're going to have to get down to the dog's level. Seriously, it's suggested that you exercise regularly when not actually doing photography, otherwise you will certainly feel the sore muscles and aching joints after working out on a dog photo mission.

Here's something you may find handy... if you have a smaller dog posed on a raised surface, and the dog is laid back and hardly moves, you may wish to use a tripod for some of the shots. Again, you'll be amazed at the sharpness. But, as the situation most surely will call for you to be taking your dog photos while hand-holding the camera. Tripods are great for formal poses, but when it comes to capturing candid shots of a dog,

set aside the tripod and break the camera loose and free. Now, you can really compose great photos.

## Composition –

Composition – or the lack of it – tells the world whether the photographer knows what they are doing. Composition is a key component of a well-taken photograph. Composition is the placement of the subject in the proper esthetic position within the framework dimensions of the photograph. A dog, for example, is captured running right to left across a field. If the photographer waits until the dog is approaching the left edge of the camera viewfinder frame, chances are good that when the shutter is released, some of the dog will be out of frame on the left side. Instead, what's called for here is for the photographer to swing and move along with the dog as it runs, while all the while keeping the dog in the right one-third of the viewfinder.

What the photographer will end up with is an image that visually affords running space for the dog as it heads for the left edge of the picture. This is composition. The photographer is giving visual room for the dog to advance toward. When this photo is placed into a frame, it will be pleasing to the viewer's eye because the dog will visually have room in which to run.

Moving, or not moving, a dog's photo image will be more dramatic, pleasing, or just plain logical if it is properly composed within the viewfinder's frame. Admittedly, sometimes a bad composing at the time of exposure can be corrected if there's enough space around the running dog to allow for cropping. But, that's a band-aid approach to photography. The proficient dog photographer should strive to properly frame and compose the shot in the camera viewfinder and not have to rely on cropping to save the photo.

But, what if you, or a client is looking for 'something different' with their dog's photo? What do you do?

## Break the Rules! –

Take your camera and pull out all the stops! Who says the dogs in your photos always have to be positioned on the horizontal or vertical planes? Why not tip and tilt the camera and have the dog's head and body entering diagonally from the left and/or right? And, were you aware that some of the special effect features of the better quality digital cameras will let you shoot photos not only in color, but in black and white, and in sepia and other color tones. Some cameras are packing their internal software with all kinds of special effects to allow photographers more freedom of creative expression. So, why not try some of these effects out on the dogs? I wouldn't advise doing an entire shoot exclusively with special effects, but it's always worth while to experiment after you've taken the 'keeper' shots.

Thanks to the LCD viewer on the back of our digital cameras, we are able to place the camera into positions previously unknown to animal photographers. We now can put a camera on the ground in front of a reclining dog and, thanks to the LCD viewer, we can stoop over, or kneel or lay down and position the camera for composition. Just try doing this using an old, conventional SLR 35mm camera. You'd have to be Gumby to pull it off. Stretch your creative photographic mind for ideas and experiments. Your client will love you for it.

Something else you or your client may want to do, and that's dress up the dog in a costume. Cliché as such shots may be considered, nevertheless, anyone who views a cute dog in a costume gets a laugh, or at least smiles. If Mrs. Johnson thinks that her little Coquette looks soooo cute in a costume, and Mrs. Johnson is willing to pay good money to see her little dog dressed accordingly, then it's well worth your time and effort to dress the dog. Remember, there's no accounting for a client's taste, so don't let it become an impediment to your future success as a dog photographer. Just go with the flow and along the way, collect the dough.

## Chapter 4 – Ready Set... SIT STILL!!!!!!

### How to Handle a Dog that ISn't your Own –

We're going to assume here that when photographing your own dog, you have perfect control of the situation and that the dog is absolutely perfect and always 'hits the mark'. Yeah... right.

How you handle your personal pet during a shooting session is going to be a lot different as to how you handle someone else's dog. Your dog may actually obey your commands and in the process, make the photo session into something enjoyable, resulting in lots of great shots.

The client's dog, however, may be the opposite of your dog, and in disposition and attitude just may be the spawn of hell. Controlling an uncooperative – and sometimes aggressive – dog is serious business and, really, no time to clown around or attempt humor on your part. When photographing a client's dog, you must adopt and maintain a cordial, yet professional comportment. After all, if you are doing this for money, you don't have the rest of the day to devote to wrestling with a hostile or uncooperative subject. You just may have another dog and its master cooling their heels in your waiting area.

The professional photographer mentioned earlier who photographed 'Mac' had to also photograph fifty other AKC recognized breeds. What the photographer did was to allow a single new dog full run of the photo studio. Each dog (save the Irish Wolfhound) spent up to five to ten minutes sniffing out the place. The photographer chatted with the dog's owner while letting the dog go about its business. The process accomplished two things right off: the dog became used to the studio, the photographer's scent, and the noise emitted by the strobe flash power packs (they buzzed), and, the photographer sized

up the dog's owner as to whether the person could prove helpful during the shooting session.

If your photo subject is a show or breeding dog, chances are the owner will want to remain with the dog. (In the opinion of the owner, the dog may be too valuable to be let out of sight.) And, being that the dog comes from a show background, its owner can keep the animal under control during the shoot with subtle verbal commands or hand commands.

To become a great dog photographer, one must know how to communicate with the species. Usually, the less said, the better. Dogs will make eye contact with you and if they sense kindness coupled with firmness, you'll have a good photographic subject. If the dog hasn't had a previous opportunity to give you a 'sniff-over' let it do so. Hold out the back of your hand to the dog and let it sniff it. Make all your movements slow yet deliberate. Pet the dog with a sure hand, making sure not to touch any sensitive areas around the head. Check with the dog's owner if there any trigger points, or other issues, you should be aware of: Do loud noises unnerve the dog and set it off barking? Can the dog be touched and positioned without the photographer having to fear being snapped at or bitten? If the dog is sensitive to having a human other than its owner touch it, then it's best to have the owner position and calm the dog. It will be the photographer's job then to be at the ready, focused and poised to take some great photographs. If different head positions are desired of the dog, the photographer can resort to positioning his or her hand in such a way the dog will follow it with its eyes; and/or, an intriguing sound; but not too loud. And, a noise maker can come in handy.

If after a few minutes of initial exposures you sense that the dog is still up tight, you may want to take a quick break and allow the dog to be walked to a designated relieving area, and then promptly returned to the shooting area. Keep conversation at a minimum during the shoot; don't distract the dog. If the dog responds well, offer a treat, but first get the owner's permission.

In the case of a hostile, or do-nothing dog (such as a Bloodhound), you may want to enlist the services of an assistant. Again as an example, say Mrs. Johnson wants her other dog, the volatile 'Mlle Paniche' photographed and because of the known reputation of Mlle Paniche, no other photographer in town is willing to do the job. You, on the other hand, will do the job, but you're asking \$600. Mrs. Johnson gladly agrees to pay the fee. A wise move on your part would be to hire your good friend, the professional dog trainer, for the shooting session. When in doubt, bring in the professional. That way, you can concentrate on your photography and not have to worry about calling 911: "Photographer down!"

Okay, so far, so good. But what if the dog's owner is an idiot and becomes counterproductive during the shoot? What then?

### Leave the 'Jerk' Owners Behind –

A photographer would rather try and pull his/her own wisdom teeth than have to be subjected to a dog owner who will not shut up either before, during or after the shoot session... especially during the session.

This kind of owner is also one who has least control over the dog when it's in public. For the record, a dog is a mirror image of its owner's psyche. If the owner is a mean person, the dog will follow suit. If the owner is over fed, very likely so too will be the dog. If the owner is a loving and nice person, very likely the dog will be of the same disposition. If the owner cannot stop talking... guess who will not stop barking?

Sometimes we run into this type of client. They're in the studio while the shooting is taking place. The photographer is attempting to communicate with the dog and tries to position the animal. In a flash, the dog's owner has swept into the shooting scene and physically positions the dog. The photographer says something to the dog, and it's immediately repeated by the owner who just happens to be standing on the other side of

the studio, which causes the dog to look away from the camera. The photographer requests that the owner not say anything, or make any noises. Yet, as soon the photographer speaks to the dog, the owner chimes in. Now, the dog is totally confused, gets up and walks off the set.

If the photographer senses that the dog would be cooperative without the owner being present, the object then is to get the owner out of the studio. The photographer should express concern to the dog's owner ... that the dog is distracted and confused. The photographer then looks at his/her wrist watch and makes the declaration that time is being wasted and that another dog is expected shortly. If the owner has any brains at all, and can be reassured that the photographer will not harm the dog, the owner will be encouraged to leave the studio and have a seat in the waiting area. Otherwise, the owner is informed that they will have to pay for the photographer's time whether a picture is taken or not. Only the densest owner would fail to get the point.

If a photographer's assistant is available, this usually goes a long way in calming the apprehensions of the owner. Perhaps not an actual assistant, but if the photographer has a friend or spouse handy, that person can keep the dog's owner occupied and distracted long enough to get the shot done.

### Calming the Dog –

Soothing words, slow movements and gentle touching on the part of the photographer can go a long way in calming a dog. Just take some time to allow the dog and the photographer to become acquainted. One photographer used to shut the studio door, then lay down on the floor. Within minutes, the dog would come alongside and lay down. After that, it was usually a situation where the photographer would only have to snap his fingers, point, and the dog would position itself. Soft, kind words from the photographer sealed the deal. Also, some of the munchies in the photographer's pocket helped.

## Food for Thought –

Have you ever watched a trained dog act on television? Did you notice that every time the dog did a trick, the trainer rewarded the little performer with a treat? You, the budding dog photographer, can do the same thing with some of your models. With the right dog, the reward-reinforcement method can go a long way in getting outstanding photographic images. To repeat, though, if the dog's handler does not want you to feed the dog anything, then don't force the issue. In a situation where the dog's owner opts to remain away from the studio, first check to see if it is all right to reward with treats.

Don't go overboard feeding the cooperative dog treats. It won't take the dog too long to figure out that you've got the munchies in your pocket and just as quickly, the dog will leave the shooting area and park its nose in your pocket. Now, to be candid about this, the dog had the location of the treats figured out when it first entered the studio. If you, however, keep reaching for your pocket during the shoot, the dog will figure 'why sit here when I can go directly to the source and get more treats faster?' You'll end up with a new best friend, but you won't get your photographs.

## Patience –

By this point in your reading, you must have picked up on the fact that a dog photographer needs to be blessed with the virtues of patience and cordiality. If you are an 'Alpha' personality, or impatient, or just plain tightly wound, animal photography may not be the profession for you. Heck, for a high-strung person, animal photography would even be a lousy hobby. Yet....

It has not escaped our attention that some photographers when they are on the job exhibit certain characteristics that prove without a doubt they are charm school drop-outs. And yet... when the same person is tasked with getting images of an intelligent, great-looking, just-plain-wonderful dog, the photographer's disposition suddenly changes for the better and, believe it or not, medical research has proven that the photographer's

blood pressure has decreased. You read correctly. Medical science has proven when a person is in petting distance of a pet – especially a dog – that person will feel much better for the experience, their blood pressure drops, their stress level drops and in non-scientific terms, the person just ‘chills out’.

When a photo session begins, which is precisely at the moment the photographer and the dog meet for the first time, a mutually-beneficial chemistry begins to develop between the two. If the dog senses the photographer means it no harm, and after a couple minutes further senses the photographer to be a good person, the dog will then be mellow. Likewise, the same principle applies to the photographer who, after realizing the dog is friendly and intellectually responsive, will loosen up and begin to harmonize with the animal. It’s basically two fellow creatures getting onto the same wavelength.

Advice to dog photographers: Play it cool, man. Don’t freak out. If a dog doesn’t respond to your posing ‘suggestions’, perhaps it’s because your communication skills are insufficient and you need to have a meeting of the minds with the dog. Go with the flow, and have an enjoyable time with your new-found friend. You’ll be a better person, and photographer, for the experience.

Often, there’s an unexpected reward that may come the photographer’s way if the dog’s owner senses the photographer to be a kind, gentle and deserving person. Yes, deserving. It is not so unusual when there’s a strong bonding between dog and photographer, and the dog’s owner sees what’s taking place, for the owner to make a marvelous gesture to the photographer. It is not unheard of for a photographer to be offered a gift from the dog owner: “Oh, you seem like such a kind person, and you get along so well with my Miss Scarlet, how would you like one of her puppies from her next litter?” When the photographer receives sentiments and offerings like this, the photographer suddenly realizes they are a player in the best hobby, or profession, going: pet photography!

## Depth of Field –

All right, you can put away your tear-dampened handkerchiefs for now, and let's get back to business and more of the technical stuff.

As highly developed and technologically marvelous as our Nikon and Canon digital cameras are, there are some situations where the auto-focus capabilities of the camera system fall short. With most larger and proportionately slower-moving dogs, our cameras' automatic focusing ability is more than sufficient in delivering a razor-sharp image. It's with the smaller, active dogs where focus problems can arise.

When an animal photographer hears their camera's auto-focus system continually racing to keep a moving subject in focus, it is not unusual for the photographer to switch off the auto-focus capability and rely solely on Manual Focus. (This is primarily the rule for those photographers whose specialty is extreme Macro – close-up – photography such as insects, and biological specimens.) It is well known among the sports-action photographic crowd that manual focus will allow the photographer to center their attention exclusively on the activity on the basketball court, tennis court or, as would be the case with equestrian events, on the dressage or steeplechase areas. In the pre-historic film days, news photographers covering boxing matches would set their lens aperture and shutter speeds and leave them alone for the entire match. Using ISO 400 Tri-X black and white film, the photographer would set the shutter speed at 1/400<sup>th</sup> second at f/8 and would have the entire boxing ring in focus and would get perfect exposures every time.

Here's where we're going with this. If a dog is restrained to a designated shooting area, the photographer can then take the camera off auto-focus and manually set the camera lens's *f-stop* (aperture) to a number that will then establish a focus-free zone, or area, for shooting. Once the *f-stop* number is correctly set, the dog being photographed can move about in a zone that we call the depth of field and the dog will remain in sharp focus. If you need to get a better idea as to what *f-stop* actually means and how it can be used as a photographic tool, we recommend you visit here:

<http://www.donaldnealmckay.com/mainSections/big-question.htm> where you will find the shortest, yet most inclusive, presentation on the subject.

In keeping in line with any professionally-prepared photographic treatise, let's take a moment here and slightly digress. It is imperative that you learn how to get either your Nikon or Canon digital camera out of its automatic mode and into a purely manual mode. There are times when a manually set and controlled exposure will be superior to one that is taken in full automatic mode. As your skills as a dog photographer improve with experience, your natural creative ability and appetites will compel you to experiment with your camera equipment, as you will also later on, with your digital image editor. (More about that later.)

So, do yourself a big favor and read your instruction manual. Yes, pick it up – while at the same time having your camera handy – and go through that part of the manual that explains how to set the camera to the various shooting modes. We've found that many of those new to the world of digital photography attempt to read and assimilate the entire camera manual, and sometimes even, a separate interchangeable lens manual. The end result is that they most assuredly become confused, frustrated and disheartened. The advice you'll receive here regarding instruction manuals is to always have it handy when on a photo shoot and refer to it when a situation arises where you do not understand what to do. Or, as we'd say in medicine lingo: Use as needed.

By setting our camera on manual mode, we're immediately going to receive two benefits, and they are:

Without the camera always auto-focusing as our dog moves about, the camera's batteries aren't being continually drained at the higher rate;

Second, oftentimes as the camera and lens are continually auto-focusing, there's a mechanical sound emitted. It may not seem much to us, but of course, to our dog friend the noise can be distracting, bothersome and in some instances, a trigger. It's been

observed that sometimes when a dog picks up on the sound of a camera at the moment of the shutter release, and either an on-camera flash – or studio flash – fires, the dog associates the two phenomena and picks that moment to turn away, or break from the pose.

We've seen similar to this with humans who do not like having a camera flash go off in their face, and when these subjects see the 'pre-flash' flicker, they'll instinctively cast their eyes aside or down. Dogs can pick up on these same 'triggers' and react the same as their human counterparts. Setting your camera to manual mode will sometimes be the solution to the trigger problem.

What's more important to us, the photographer, about using the manual mode and pre-setting the *f-stop* on our lens is that if the dog is moving about in its posing, or staging, area – and remains within this area – we can completely concentrate through our viewfinder as we track and shoot the dog's actions and movements. The photographer becomes oblivious to the workings of both camera and lens and concentrates on the dog and the dog only. And, here's what we get out of all the pre-prep and manual settings: pictures that will always have the dog in focus. And, here's a side benefit we get out of pre-setting our lens: the photographer can also control the focus of the background.

If you, the photographer, desire a background that does not compete in color or detail with the dog being photographed, by pre-setting your lens to a more open aperture, you will render the background either totally out of focus, or somewhere in between being sharp or being soft or outright blurry. We never want the background in the picture to visually 'fight' with our dog. We don't want backgrounds to visually overpower our subject dog. If we cannot remove the dog to a different shooting location, and we are vexed by a wild and colorful – or just plain ugly – background, then at least we can control the depth of field and minimize the visual effect of the background. Later on, if you've not yet done so, now is as good a time as any to investigate using a digital image editing software program. With these programs, you will have the ability to subdue

unsightly background, or just plain remove and replace them. We'll talk more about image editors in the section, "Sharing Your Photos," and we'll make recommendations.

Here comes an objection! A photographer in the audience says that he doesn't want to manual focus, that he wants to keep his camera in the auto-focus mode just in case the dog breaks outside the designated shooting area and while doing so, presents a wonderful pose or action shot. Can he still control the depth of field and yet have auto-focus? Yes, he can.

Back to the instruction manual you go, and look under the topic of 'Aperture Priority' setting for the camera. When your camera is placed into the aperture priority mode (usually designated by the "A" letter – but check your manual because your camera may indicate differently), the camera 'tells' the lens not to open nor close its internal iris setting (or *f-stop*). Be aware that the aperture setting is separate from shutter speed settings. The aperture priority setting maintains a constant camera lens *f-stop* opening throughout the shooting session and if more exposure time is needed for the camera to record a quality image, the camera's electronic shutter will compensate by slowing down.

To repeat, once the camera is placed in Aperture Priority mode, and the lens is manually adjusted (or the camera's controls are set) for a desired *f-stop*, only a certain depth of field (or image area) will be in focus; and should a cloud roll by at the time of shutter release, the camera will automatically adjust its shutter speed.

This is where the instant show and tell feature of the digital camera comes into play and the reason for you to test shoot. Make sure before the actual photo session that you've taken your test shots using a 'stand-in' (remember the stuffed teddy bears?) and determine whether the camera-lens setting combination is giving you what you want. If not, make adjustments to your settings.

With the newer digital camera lenses – especially those manufactured by the same people who made the camera body – the camera, itself, will electronically control the

lenses' aperture setting. There's nothing more the photographer has to do other than dial in the Aperture shooting mode on their camera, select a shooting *f-stop* setting, and that's it! With digital cameras in the Nikon line, like the D 70, many of the cameras are able to mount the older Nikkor A/I lenses used previously on 35mm manual and automatic film cameras. Some of the older lenses have to be manually set by the photographer to the desired *f-stop*, and that's done with the lens' aperture ring. Which ever lens you end up using, test shoot, test shoot, test shoot!

A shallow depth of field, combined with good scene composition can prove to be an imaginative way to capture a dog's image. Try it and have fun.

Question: "Well, what if the dog subject is playing and jumping and moving fast... how do I stop the action and yet control the depth of field?"

Answer: Set the camera over to "Shutter Priority" mode. This will allow you to set the camera shutter speed as you see fit and, in turn, so that the camera will be able to record a pixel-quality image, the lens will be made to compensate for available light by either opening its iris, or closing it. Here's another rule of photography: If the shutter speed is slow, the lens aperture will close down. If the shutter speed is set high (faster), the lens aperture will open wide. Therein is another way for you to control the depth of field.

Say your subject dog is out on a field catching a Frisbee thrown by its owner, and the dog is on a tear. Like man, that dog is fast! It's a Golden Retriever and its hair is magnificently flowing in the bright sunlight. The catches are high off the ground and the dog is acrobatic when making the catches. Great stuff!

Okay, let's set up our camera so that we can definitely stop all the dog's actions, while at the same time, we want to soften, or blur out, the background. We just want the dog to be in focus; everything else in the foreground and in the background can be out of focus. Test shots tell us that if we set our camera to Shutter Priority mode, and set the

shutter speed to 1/2000 second, we come close to freezing the dog's jump and some of its hair, and the background is a bit too distinct. Next, if we set the shutter speed to 1/4000 second, the dog's jumping motion is completely frozen, as is all the flying hair. Yet, the background image is still a bit too distinct. So, we set our Nikon D 70 to 1/8000 second, and the test shots show our flying dog to be perfectly rendered and frozen in action, while the background is now perfectly out of focus and no longer a visual distraction. In fact, we see that the dog looks three-dimensional. Cool!

Learning how to control the depth-of-field – either through the use of Aperture Priority *f-stop* settings, or through the Shutter Priority shutter-speed-to-lens-setting relationship – is the sign that you are a 'professional' at dog photography. Control your depth of field and you control the overall mood of the photographic image.

### How Close Do I Get? –

What's the matter? You afraid of little Phoofy? Aw, she won't bite you.

Biting has little to do with the mission at hand. If the dog tells you that it doesn't want you to get too close with the camera, then resort to using the full capabilities of your zoom lens. The fact is, though, sometimes there's a great dog shot waiting if the photographer would only move in on the animal and take some 'up close and personal' exposures. The closer a moving dog is to the camera, the shutter is going to have to move faster to stop the action and in so doing, the lens will open wider to bring in enough light to record a quality image. If the camera is set to the fully automatic mode, the camera will automatically take care of these settings for you and stop the action while, at the same time, rendering an out-of-focus background.

When a dog sticks its nose on the lens' front glass element, the finely-tuned focusing sensors in your digital camera will center on the tip of the dog's nose and prompt the camera's computer to instantly set the shutter speed to stop the action, while at the same time bring in enough light from the lens with the adjustment of the aperture.

This all adds up to some great shots of dogs. Again... how close you want to get to the dog is entirely up to you, but here's some advice from one of the greatest action photojournalists ever, Robert Capa:

“If your pictures seem not good enough, chances are you weren't close enough.”

Bob Capa believed in what he preached and became the first photojournalist to die in combat action in Vietnam.

Get up close with your dog model. Get personal. Show us some unadulterated doggie personality.

“Eye” Told You So –

On average, a cat's eyes will not reveal much in the way of their personality. A dog's eyes, however, tell us an awful lot about the 'person' who's behind those eyes. Show a dog's eyes in a photograph and immediately the viewer will see that the dog is either nice, aggressive, dumb or intelligent. But mainly, the person looking at a dog's eyes will see that there's a powerful amount of love inside that animal. And, what makes it pleasantly interesting for the human viewer is to look into a dog's eyes while at the same time pondering the eternal question, “I wonder what the dog is thinking?” Or, coming to the perhaps uncomfortable conclusion: “The way the dog is looking at me, I think he definitely knows what the score is.”

It is your job, as dog photographer, to capture the personality that's mirrored in those eyes. Go on, move in close as you can comfortably get (for the both of you) and snap away. Talk to the dog in soft tones and click away as its expression changes. Try to get some shots where the eye is fully illuminated with light – then partially illuminated – and then some with a shadow covering a good portion of the eyeball. Believe it... this exercise will end up producing some outstanding images. The interesting thing about the extreme close-up shots of dogs is that what you end up showing to a client will very

likely be a view they've never before seen of their pet. Your camera lens will be able to focus at a much closer distance to the dog's eye than can the owner's unaided eye. So, there's a good chance that the owner has never seen a true close-up of their dog's eyes.

### Noise Distraction –

There are times when the photographer would like to clear the entire shooting area of all other people and pets and be alone in the shooting area with the dog being photographed.

During an outdoor shoot, the dog can be continually distracted by other dogs' barking, or by humans making loud noises. With an indoor shoot, the dog will pick up on every sound throughout the building, pick up on other animals close by, and pick up on the letter carrier delivering the mail. In both settings, chances are your photo model is going to chime in with its own barking.

To minimize noise distraction during an outdoor shoot, see if you can take the dog to an isolated area of a fenced-in yard, a park, field or beach. This should help, as the dog will then be more responsive to your commands; but be advised to take as many shots as you can and as fast as you can. Then again, you may be blessed with a dog who could care less about what the other dogs in the neighborhood are doing and look at you with an expression that says, "Let's get on with this."

If during an indoor shoot the dog becomes distracted by a certain noise, or noises, see what you can do to suppress them. Let the dog settle down, everybody act cool, and then when you think the dog is ready and attentive, proceed with the session. Interior noises can often be canceled out by playing a recording of transcendental background mood music that's soothing to both dog and owner. And, again, have some doggie treats at the ready to distract and diffuse the dog's curious attention.

## Chapter 5 – Sharing Your Photos –

### Image Editing –

Again, congratulations are in order! You have now taken your dog photographs and you've come up with great images. But... unless you happen to be the world's greatest photographer, chances are all your photos are not perfect. You may need some help in fixing things in the image you didn't see at the time it was taken. If you're doing dog photography for money, you'll need to be able to correct image problems.

Welcome to the world of digital image editing (read that as, 'retouching,' 'cropping' and 'correcting'). In the old days of photography, it was commonplace to have a printed photograph be spirited over to a professional retouching artist to remove dust specs in the print and blemishes from the subject matter. If the photographer was using a transparency-based film (big slide format), there usually were artisans available who could work on a photographic transparency and through the use of dyes, sharp-pointed tools, acids and good old Vaseline<sup>®</sup>, correct problems.

Those days are gone. Today, it is the photographer, or an assistant, who is the 'retouch artist' of this day and age. Instead of using dyes, pencils and Vaseline<sup>®</sup>, today's photographers use computer-based software programs that not only allow us to fix any problem, but also allow us to go further and create photo-graphic works of art.

Of the software tools available on the market, the one-ton gorilla in the room is Adobe's Photoshop CS2 application. It is the world-wide standard tool for the photographic and graphic printing industries. There is no better tool to improve a photographic image, but it is costly – ranging in around \$700 USD. And then, there's the learning curve; for most mortals, it's brutal. Photoshop is a professional's tool and should be left to the professionals. Before the average photographer gets to the point of having

mastered Photoshop, he/she will have spent more time working at a computer than working behind a camera viewfinder, and that's not where we want to be.

Instead, you might want to take another look at that CD that came with your new digital camera. Please don't say that you threw out the camera box or misplaced the CD?!!

[Always keep the packaging your camera comes in. If you have to send the camera to its manufacturer for repairs, the original package is the best protection. If you have to return a new out-of-box-failure (DOA) camera to the store where it was purchased, the store will not accept the camera without its original packaging. The store is otherwise left to think the camera was stolen. Yeah, keep all receipts.]

Chances are the CD that came with your camera has an image editor application. In Nikon's case, the included program is called "Capture NX" and very likely this image editor will satisfy most of your needs. You can correct color with it, correct brightness and contrast, crop, tilt, and do a fair amount of actual image retouching and correction. The nice thing is that Capture NX was scripted by the same people who designed and built the Nikon camera. And, did we mention, the program came with the camera... it's FREE!

With some digital camera models, included in the packaging will be a version of Adobe Photoshop that's been 'watered' down for general public use. It's called, Adobe Photoshop Elements and it does a good job. Other camera manufacturers may include a program that's extremely popular because of its ease of use: Corel's Paint Shop Pro. Either of these image editors should take care of most of your digital needs and allow you to produce finished image files that can be either printed or transformed into the appropriate image file formats for printing, for the Internet and for web site pages.

If, for some reason your camera did not come with any kind of image editor, you can find Photoshop Elements and/or Paint Shop Pro on Ebay or at Amazon.com. In either

case, both Adobe and Corel allow the full programs to be downloaded for a free month's trial.

Thanks to the Internet, we can do all sorts of things with our just-taken dog photographs; like get prints made, and upload our images to our own web site, or send them to our photo blogging site(s), or send them to Aunt Millie as an e-mail attachment or just send them over to our desktop printer, or even to a professional print house. It's amazing what can be done and where our images can be delivered.

Guess what we can't do? We can't send our 'native' Nikon and Canon image files to the world wide community and expect them to be viewable or usable. In fact, unless we are connected to the Internet via broadband connection (T-1, T-3, DSL, or cable) there's a good chance we can't even *transmit* our image files. Many of our ISP (Internet Service Providers) will not allow large data files – over 10 Mb, for example – to be transmitted via e-mail. This is especially true for telephone dial-up connections.

This usually comes as a shock to those new to digital photography, but with some digital cameras set to the highest quality picture mode, each native image can range in at 5.5 to 10 Mb *per image!* No matter what digital camera we're using, the standard image recording format is known as JPEG. With our more sophisticated Nikon and Canon cameras, we have the option also of recording the images in the RAW format. Professional and commercial photographers use RAW images.

RAW is just that: an 'unprocessed' raw digital image that, when brought down into an image editor, can be manipulated for the ultimate in color, saturation, brightness, contrast and sharpness. Each camera has its own proprietary RAW formats, as there is no universally decodable standard as exists with the JPEG format. Each newer version photo image editor program, (Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro) has the ability to access, open and work with the RAW formats from the various camera manufacturers.

So, what's this JPEG thing? The JPEG format is a child of the Internet, answering the need of 'How do we transport a realistic representation of a data-large photographic quality image over a slow-moving Internet transmission? In 1988, a group of brains called the **Joint Photographic Experts Group** got together and came up with a magnificent mathematical formulation that would allow our camera's native image files to be compressed in both data volume and physical dimension size and be transported over the world wide web and viewed as if looking at the original camera image. You can find more information on RAW and JPEG by visiting [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org).

Photoshop Elements, Paint Shop Pro and Capture NX enable us the life-saving ability to get into our photo images and fix them. And, before we can transmit our photos up to any website, or include it as an e-mail attachment, we have to convert the native, uncompressed JPEG camera image into a 'compressed' .jpeg image that's been re-sized to fit better on a computer monitor. Unless you've got deep pockets to pay someone else to do this work for you, you will have to master an image editor of your choosing to some degree of proficiency. But, once you've messed around with one of these editors, you'll have a blast!

Now that you have your 'corrected' and 'improved' digital dog images, what are you going to do with them?

### Photo Blogging and Web Sites –

All right! Let's get ready to rumble! Let's show the world your smashing dog shots! "Now, just how do I do that...?" It's easy.

Have you heard of 'blogs'? Well, there's a good one at [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com) where you can sign up and upload your photos as if you had your own web site. Check it out. You'll find like accommodations offered by Google, Yahoo, and to a less formal arena, Myspace and YouTube. With a blog, you and your visitors and friends will have an opportunity to live chat in virtual message mode. Is there a need to share your photos

with numerous family members? Send them to your blog and save on a ton of printing and mailing costs. Double cool!!

If you would like to have your dog photos displayed in a more professional manner than on a blog portal, then you should consider your own web site. Your own web presence, with your exclusive domain name, *ie.* [mygreatestdogshots.com](http://mygreatestdogshots.com), is today's best method of selling *ANYTHING* on line. With your web site displaying your full dog photos portfolio, viewers around the globe can drop in and look over your work, and if you are set up to do so, you can sell your photos right then and there. A professional-looking and well-designed photographic web site is the best portfolio (and resumé) going. It is so much easier for a prospective client, or employer, to just click on a hyperlink and be immediately brought into your exclusive photographic viewing salon.

If you want to have a web presence right away, visit [www.godaddy.com](http://www.godaddy.com) and you'll find everything you need, along with excellent instructions as to what to do. And, really, you will not be able to beat the cost anywhere, while getting the quality of service and storage space capacity.

Here's a tip for you: If you come up with a unique and 'catchy' domain name (yes, GoDaddy has a home page domain name search tool ready to go), but a name that can be made to sound the same, only with a different spelling, our advice is for you to purchase all the sound, and spell-alike variations of your exclusive domain name. It will not cost very much to do this, and if you desire, you can lock up your domain names for 10 years. You only need to use one of them, but GoDaddy can make it so that when any of the other names are typed into the browser URL window, they are all directed to your primary domain name site. What we're doing here is protecting your domain name and web presence from being 'stolen by association'. An example of this would be [Youtube.com](http://Youtube.com) and [U-Tube.com](http://U-Tube.com).

To physically construct your web site, you have the following options:

- a) Use the tools provided by the web hosting company, such as GoDaddy.

- b) Have someone else build it and maintain it for you, or
- c) Do it yourself.

The 'Have someone else build it and maintain it for you' can be costly if you go about it the wrong way. Let's be realistic here, there are web site builders who are all too willing to pick the pockets of someone inexperienced in web technology and lingo. You can visit sites like [www.guru.com](http://www.guru.com) and [www.elance.com](http://www.elance.com) and you can post your job request there and have qualified web site builders bid to do your job. This can be quite economical.

The 'Do it yourself' option is usually the most gratifying, but only if you like working with a computer web editor and graphics applications. Otherwise, revert back to the second option. If you are interested in investigating and trying out a web site editor, here's a FREE one: HTML-kit which can be found at [www.chami.com](http://www.chami.com). HTML-kit is a primarily code-based editor and requires the user to know the hypertext mark-up language. Other web site building editors, fortunately, offer a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) graphic design interface that allows the user to build web pages in the same way as they would put together a Microsoft Word document. One of these products. Microsoft Front Page 2003 lets the user drag and drop images and blocks of type by clicking and dragging with the mouse cursor. Adobe's Dreamweaver is another similar product. Check them out. Try them out. Have fun!

### E-mailing Your Photos –

Want to send your latest, greatest dog photo to someone and use your e-mail to do it? Okay, let's just say that you want to include the photo in the body of your typed e-mail message so that it's basically a good-quality viewable picture. Use your image editor to size and compress the original image. A good size for viewing a quality photograph on a 17" monitor is between 600 and 700 pixels wide, at a resolution of 72 or 96 pixels. You don't need any more pixel data depth than 72 – 96 because most computer monitors do not have any higher resolutions. After being resized and moderately JPEG (.jpeg)

compressed, the resulting image will 'weigh in' around 65Kilobytes. Downloading via a DSL, or cable, connection such a .jpeg will appear faster than you can blink your eye.

Depending on which e-mail application we are using, special attention has to be given as to whether you can embed a .jpeg within the text body of the e-mail, or whether the graphic has to be a separate 'attachment'. Check with your e-mail host and see what they recommend. Most corporations use Microsoft Outlook. Because of companies' fears of e-mail viruses, worms and other malware, often times a company's network systems administrator will set up network precautions that will block any attachments coming along with the main e-mail message. The recipient would never receive your dog photo.

There's a light weight version of MS Outlook that's included with the Internet Explorer browser and it's called Outlook Express. Strangely, though, this program can effortlessly embed a .jpeg within the body of the text message and seems to be able to get through many firewalls (network safeguards to block intrusion).

If you have to send a full, uncompressed camera file to someone for reasons other than simple e-mail viewing, it is recommended that you use a file compression application such as Winzip, which will compress the image file into a smaller package without taking away any digital data and allow the 'Zip' file to be attached to an e-mail message without having to worry about the image file itself being damaged or breaking up during Internet transmission. Zip files are the best way to transmit large, or complex, files over the Internet. You can check out Winzip at [www.ipswitch.com](http://www.ipswitch.com).

### Ready to Print? –

Printing your dog photos can be done in three ways, depending on your needs.

The first way of getting prints is to do it yourself. Once you get the knack of things, you can produce some pretty good prints right at home. Alas, though, we often are

faced with disappointment when we print our own photos, as they don't look anything like the pictures we see on our computer monitor. Yeah, that is a bummer.

Trouble is, when we view our photos on a computer monitor, we're looking at an electronic-digital representation of our camera image. Usually, the images appear bright and colorful. Then we send the pictures over to our 'XYZ' printer and the colors look terrible and there's no life at all to the prints. Here's the secret to the solution: Learn to use your image editor, then make sure you have a good-quality Epson or Hewlett-Packard printer; either ink-jet or laser color. Next is a most critical step for non-headache printing: always use the same brand ink and the same brand paper until 'forever'; do not change this combination. If you need to print on various paper surfaces – glossy, plain, plastic, matte or heavy texture – you are going to have to take the time and experiment to get the optimum results. Once you've made all the necessary adjustments to your image (using the image editor), writing down the color and brightness settings for a typically exposed image will save you the trouble of 're-inventing the wheel' later down the road. Keep good notes and you'll do just fine.

Some printer software, such as Epson, is so in tune with the needs of digital photographers, that it can automatically compensate and adjust the image, along with adjusting the printer, to produce a good quality image on a prescribed paper surface. Some of the higher end printers use up to eight discrete ink colors to achieve the best possible printed images. Epson and H-P also have small, portable printers that accept your camera's digital flash memory card and give you prints on the spot. This can be very handy if you are photographing a dog on location and you want to give its owner a nice gift.

The second way of getting your prints is have an outlet like FedEx-Kinkos, or CVS, or Wal-Mart do it for you. With this option, you can either walk in with your digital image files (ideally on a CD or a DVD) and either print them yourself using the store's equipment, or letting the store photo personnel do it. The main benefit of this method is relative speed of turnover and cost-per-print.

The third way of getting prints is to do it over the Internet with an enterprise like [www.shutterfly.com](http://www.shutterfly.com) or [www.ofoto.com](http://www.ofoto.com) or any other service that you find listed after a Google search. If it is inconvenient for you to run your images to a store outlet, then this option is your answer. You sign up and join the service (usually receiving the first 15 prints free), and you will be directed how to upload your images; this is done automatically through the services' interfaces where a COPY will be made of your original dog photos. We stress 'COPY' because some folks are under the misimpression that their original dog photo file will be snatched from their hard drive and forever gone! No folks, such is not the case.

You'll receive your finished prints in the mail and you'll also find that the cost-per-print is far more economical than printing the images at home. An additional benefit of letting a service outlet print your photos is that they can do two things for your print which you cannot do at home: print onto fabric, and print large-sized images; some going as wide as 60" and as long as 30 feet or more. FedEx-Kinko produces very nice, crisp images onto canvas, and then can take the canvas-image and cover it with a glaze finish so that it looks like a painting. Nice! Imagine, if you will, a 20" x 30" print of your best dog shot on canvas and glazed for \$40 USD. The same kind of service offering holds true for Shutterfly and Ofoto.

You are advised, therefore, to select the printing outlet that satisfies your quality needs, does so in a timely manner, spares you wasted time trying to finesse prints through your home printer, and does all this economically. After all, you want to become an accomplished dog photographer and the only way you are going to get to that point is to shoot, shoot, and shoot; not be stuck in the office trying to make prints. Find the easiest printing path and then take it.

Good shooting and good luck!

###

## Sources of supply, information and equipment –

Cameras, lenses, flash memory:

[www.nikon.com](http://www.nikon.com)  
[www.canon.com](http://www.canon.com)  
[www.bhphotovideo.com](http://www.bhphotovideo.com)  
[www.adorama.com](http://www.adorama.com)  
[www.digitaletailer.com](http://www.digitaletailer.com)  
[www.newegg.com](http://www.newegg.com)  
[www.cdw.com](http://www.cdw.com)  
[www.bestbuy.com](http://www.bestbuy.com)

Lighting equipment:

[www.bhphotovideo.com](http://www.bhphotovideo.com)  
[www.adorama.com](http://www.adorama.com)

Image editors; web editors-authoring tools:

[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com) (Photoshop and Photoshop Elements)  
[www.corel.com](http://www.corel.com) (Paint Shop Pro)  
[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com) (Microsoft Office – Front Page web authoring tool)  
[www.chami.com](http://www.chami.com) (HTML-kit web editor)  
[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com) (Dreamweaver web authoring tool)

ZIP file tool:

[www.ipswitch.com](http://www.ipswitch.com) (WinZip)

Web hosting services:

[www.godaddy.com](http://www.godaddy.com)  
[www.123ehost.com](http://www.123ehost.com)

