

Night Photography Tips
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Many people put their cameras away once the sun has set. Yet, shooting at night, particularly in downtown urban areas, can yield photos with dramatic lighting and composition. To enhance colors and lighting, try shooting during or just after rain has fallen. The wet streets and sidewalks will act as reflectors, evening out the lighting and filling in shadows. It will also allow you to use smaller f-stops or higher shutter speeds. While hand-held shooting is possible with fast, prime lenses or with higher ISOs, a good tripod is required to use most "street zooms." This is particularly true with fixed-lens digicams whose performances can really suffer at higher ISO settings. Lacking a tripod you can brace your camera against a sign post, the side of a building, or on a railing.

To protect your equipment from wet weather, try cutting a small hole in a plastic trash bag and forcing it gently over the barrel of your lens. This will allow you to operate the camera controls while offering protection to your gear. If this low-tech solution worries you, there are a number of inexpensive commercial products designed to protect cameras in wet weather while allowing access to the controls.

Most modern cameras, both digital and film, have multi-segment metering that is extremely accurate in most lighting conditions. However, some night scenes will fool even the best meters. Digital cameras have an advantage here. View your shots on the LCD screen, and adjust your exposure accordingly for subsequent shots. If shooting film, bracketing several exposures will greatly increase your chances of getting a good photo.

Unless you are shooting in an area where a number of people are present, take someone with you for safety's sake.