

3...2...1....ACTION!

Reasons To Capture Motion

Beginning photographers have likely seen captivating photographs that capture motion which they'd like to duplicate. There are several ways to accomplish this and each has a slightly different goal. Sometimes, there is a need to blur certain elements in the image while focusing sharply on a few subjects in the foreground. Other times, you may want to freeze or blur everything. The direction you take depends upon your objective for your photograph.

A lot of photographers capture motion simply to convey that an object is moving. But, there are other reasons to so. Movement can communicate mood. Trees rustling in the wind suggest serenity while throngs of people on a busy city block imply harried activity.

You can also use motion to eliminate elements in a scene that may serve as distractions to the viewer. For example, you may want to photograph a person standing on a sidewalk corner as cars move behind him. By blurring everything but your primary subject (i.e. the man on the corner), you can eliminate potential distractions and focus the viewer's attention.

Techniques For Capturing Motion

The shutter speed that you use while photographing a scene plays a key role in capturing motion in your image. The faster the shutter speed, the sharper the focus on your subject. On the other hand, a slower shutter speed will blur a moving object. There are two main approaches (we'll discuss a couple of alternatives in a moment).

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1. Blurred Subject With Background In Focus



Let's assume you're photographing a speeding train against a wall of trees in the background. You can blur the train while leaving the trees in focus. Doing so would instantly communicate to the viewer that the train is moving quickly. To accomplish this, you would use a **slow shutter speed**. (It's also important to **use a tripod**. That way, your camera remains steady.) You'll often see this technique used in nighttime photographs with car headlights cutting through the image.

**IMAGE 1: Car at night. Slow shutter speed. Tripod or highly stable raised surface.
Other possibilities: use a timer for stabilizing.
Record your settings for your portfolio!**



2. Blurred Background With Subject In Focus

This second technique keeps your photograph's subject in sharp focus while the background is blurred. Using our train example, the train would be in focus and the wall of trees would be blurred, thereby conveying the train's movement. Similar to the first method, you need to use a slow shutter speed. However, instead of using a tripod, you'll be panning your camera along the directional path of your subject.

**IMAGE 2: Fast movement in background (behind your focused subject).
Slow shutter speed. Stabilized camera. Conscious crisp focus on subject.
You may need to bracket this option.
Record your settings for your portfolio!**

3. Panning with Subject



Most beginning photographers are trained to “secure” their cameras. That is, your camera should remain as still as possible for certain types of shots. By contrast, panning requires that you move your camera with your subject. Specifically, you’ll be matching your subject’s rate of movement and the direction in which it is traveling.

In our train example, assume the man on the bike is moving from east to west. In that case, you’ll need to pan your camera along the same direction, matching the speed of the bike. The best results occur when you have a clear view of the moving object and ample room to swivel your camera along a parallel axis to it.

Panning effectively can be difficult. You can practice and perfect your technique by photographing athletes who move quickly (for example, basketball players). Try to capture their facial expressions while blurring everything in the background. It will take some time to get it right, but once you do, the technique can be a valuable addition to your repertoire.

**IMAGE 3: Movement of subject and other objects/subjects nearby
Slow shutter speed. Pan with main focus in same direction, same speed.
This will take many attempts to get the hang of it!
Record your settings for your portfolio!**

4. Freezing the Entire Field of Vision

You can also freeze the entire field of vision or blur everything. Freezing the entire scene can give your photographs a unique look, especially if the objects strongly imply movement. For example, consider a bird that is flying in front of a waterfall. Both imply motion to the viewer. Freezing the entire scene captures that motion in a single moment and can produce a breathtaking image. You should use a shutter speed of at least 1/1000th of a second for this type of shot.



Blurring everything produces the best results when the scene offers bright, contrasting colors or varying shades on the grayscale. In most cases, capturing motion in this manner is done purely for artistic purposes.

IMAGE 4: Blurring everything that is moving
Shutter speed 1/1000 min.
Record your settings for your portfolio!

4. Continuous Shooting Feature

Using the continuous shooting feature on your camera, you can capture a series of shots and join them together in the post processing stage to create the effect shown above. You can also assemble a series of your motion sequence shots into a flip book – it's the same concept! You can display the images side by side to give your viewer the sense of sequential motion and frozen motion.



IMAGE 5: Fast shutter speed. Motion captured *in a sequence of 5 images*.
Camera setting – motion sequence
Consider using every 2nd or 3rd shot if there is minimal difference between them.
Record your settings for your portfolio!

5. Frozen Motion

Keeping a very fast shutter speed you can capture a moving subject, even one that is moving rapidly and freeze it in its surroundings. Using a tripod and learning to anticipate your subjects' movement is key to achieving a crisp shot.



**IMAGE 6: Focused on a moving object.
Fast shutter speed.
Record your settings for your portfolio!**