

Orchid Photography 101

by Sue Birnbaum – February 2017

Much of this information is based from “Beginning Orchid Photography – Getting the Best Results” by Matthew Gore: <https://www.bhphotovideo.com/.../beginning-orchid-photography-how-get-best-results>. Photos by Matthew Gore:



Orchid Photography Basics

1. Stay Steady – use a **tripod** to prevent blurry images
2. Use an effective **background**
3. **Lighting** is everything – sources of lighting and their effect on your images
4. Check your **White Balance** setting
5. Consider using a **self-timer** to minimize camera shake during image exposure
6. Be creative and try shooting at different angles
7. **Composition** – the “Rule of Thirds” (this info was not included in Matt Gore’s article)

Tripods

1. Can use a make-shift tripod by putting your camera on a stack of books

Vanguard Table Top Digital Camera Tripod



Gorillapod by Joby.com



Background

1. Background shouldn’t distract from your orchid
2. Use plain background such as cloth (black velvet works well because it doesn’t reflect light), curtain, mat board, sheet, etc.
3. Generally, a light-colored orchid looks best against a dark background and a vice-versa.
4. Place your background object 1-2 feet behind your orchid; this puts your background out of focus and makes it darker.

Lighting is Everything!

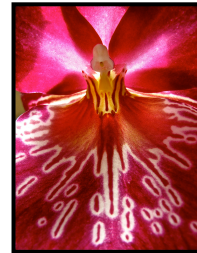
1. Photography literally means “writing with light”: Photo = light, graphy = writing.
2. Use a diffuse (not direct) light source
3. Use sunlight when possible because it a “natural” source that leads to natural colors
4. The larger the light source relative to the subject, the softer and more diffuse the light will be.

Lighting Suggestions:

- A big light source (500 watt halogen work-light - ~\$25 from home improvement store).
Point the light in the opposite direction of your orchid, towards a large light-colored wall so

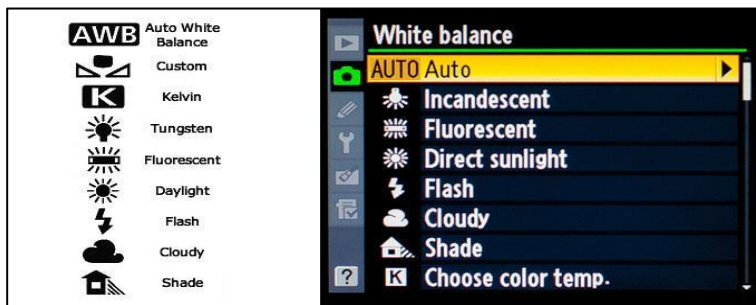
the light will be reflected from the wall onto your orchid and not shining direct harsh light onto your orchid.

- Use a mirror to reflect light coming in from a window or a lamp onto your orchid
- A light box can be made inexpensively with a cardboard box and see-through material like interfacing or light cotton. You shine your light sources from outside the box onto the material and this will even-out the light hitting your orchid.
- Try **backlighting**: light passes through your orchid toward the camera. This achieves a distinctive image and color saturation and shows the internal structure of your flower.



White Balance Setting

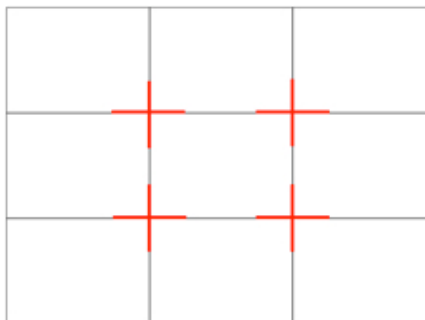
- White balance setting on your camera is for making white areas white (not grey or muddy): this will give your image natural-looking colors.
- Normally, the “AWB” (Average White Balance) setting on your camera will obtain the correct white balance and natural colors in your photo. Your setting can be found in the main menu. Here are some of the icons you can choose from:



If you are shooting under fluorescent lighting (a yellow-green light), you may want to change your white balance setting to “fluorescent”. The camera will then use a blue filter to compensate for the yellow green to make the colors more natural. If you are shooting on a cloudy day, you could choose “cloudy” setting so the camera will use a red filter to warm the colors of the image.

The “Rule of Thirds” for composition (from article “Rule of Thirds” by Darren Rowse)

- Studies have shown that the viewer’s eyes naturally go to the areas of intersection of lines dividing an image into thirds vertically and horizontally. The center of the phalaenopsis in the following photo is at the top right intersection of lines.



The theory is that if you place points of interest in the intersections or along the lines that your photo becomes more balanced and will enable a viewer of the image to interact with it more naturally.

Use a cable release, remote shutter release, or self-timer for clearer images

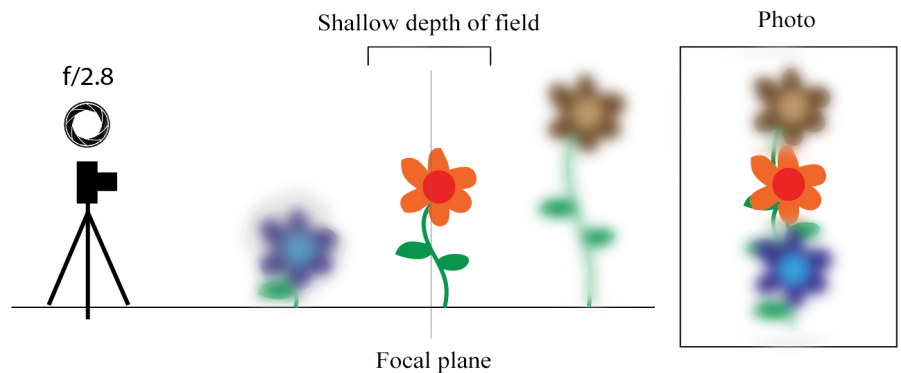
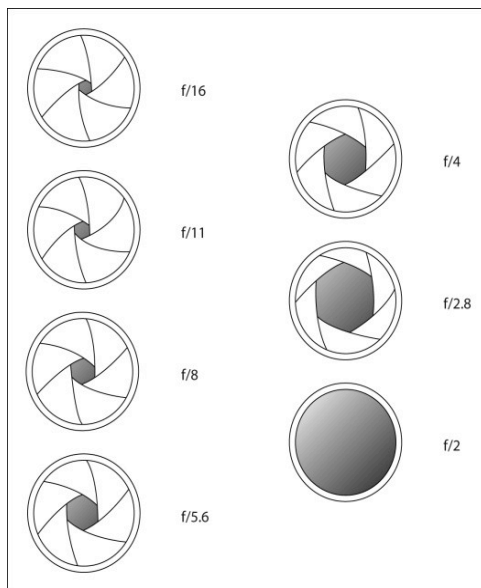
- Reduces the amount of camera movement that comes from pushing the button
- a remote control shutter release sends a signal to the camera's remote control sensor
- self-timer is found in the drive mode on your camera

Try shooting different angles and compositions

- shoot your orchid from the back, side, close-up, with backgrounds that you can blur out with the macro lens setting

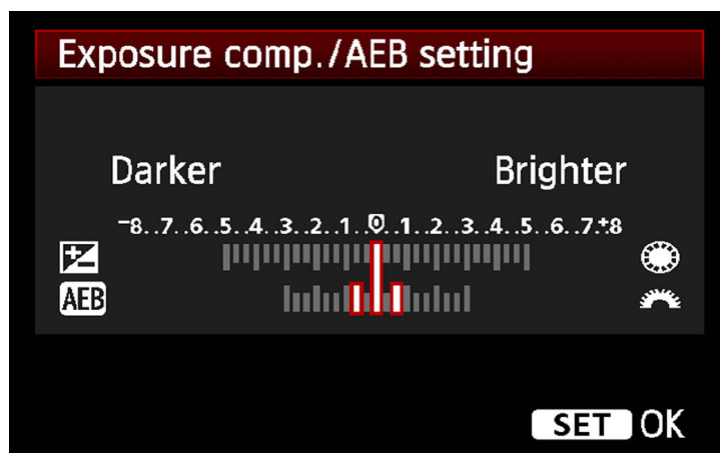
Use a smaller aperture (lens opening).

- Use f11 instead of f5.6.
- Avoid the smallest and largest apertures (f16 and f2)
- Smaller apertures will put more of your image in focus because more depth of field is in focus



Use exposure compensation setting

- If you use a black background, the camera sees the black and wants to add too much exposure to your photo which could blow out your highlights. So you need to reduce the exposure by 1 – 2 stops using exposure compensation
- if you use a white background, the opposite true: you may need to add extra exposure
- take a test image: check the image on your playback, if the image looks too dark, add one stop of exposure, then re-take the photo and re-check the exposure.



Resources

Beginning Orchid Photography: How to get the best results

By Matthew Gore

www.bhphotovideo.com/

Orchid Photography 101: How to photograph orchids

By web page "Orchids Made Easy"

www.orchidsmadeeasy.com/orchid-photography/

"Rule of Thirds" by Darren Rowse

From web page Digital Photography School

<http://digital-photography-school.com/rule-of-thirds/>

3 proven flower lighting techniques for beautiful macro photography

- Which flashes will help you capture the best shots

By Allen Rokach with Anne Millman

www.adorama.com/