

WAITING FOR TRAINS

Long Handheld Exposure Guide



LUKE AGBAIMONI
PHOTOGRAPHY

One of the first challenges for my London Underground project (TubeMapper.com), was changing my photography style from technical photos at night, to finding inspired shots during normal day light.

This search for drama and technicality lead to the 'waiting for trains' collection.

I love capturing the moment of the anticipation of the arrival of a train. Photographing this prolonged instance requires skill, timing and luck. Long exposures are usually taken on a tripod, but as these are banned on the London underground I had to perfect a technique of doing these handheld.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

Handheld long exposures are not a precise science. People will experience different results due to camera and your personal ability to hold the camera still. This quick guide is an overview to my methodology, and will hopefully be useful in helping you achieve similar results.



STANCE

A good stance is a good start. Blurry photos are usually caused by your camera shaking, so figuring out a stance that limits your camera shake is key. This stance will vary for everyone, but my most stable handheld position is at waist height with my elbows locked in.

Practice with different stances and see what works for you.



RESTING AND LEANING

If you're unable to hold the camera steady and you can see a perfect surface to rest your camera on, I really recommend doing this. And it's not just horizontal surfaces that are useful either. Leaning against a vertical surface can help control part of your camera shake and increase your ability to capture a longer exposure.



STABILISATION & BURST MODE

Two more camera setting tips. The first is obvious. If your camera or lens has image stabilisation, please activate this as it will help hold the camera steady for slightly longer.

Another useful setting is shooting in burst mode (multiple shots with one press). The reason for this is because when you press the camera, the device will shake a little. However consecutive shots are likely to be sharper since you are no longer pressing any buttons.

Burst mode offers another advantage. Sometimes events unfold in front of you. In the example above the lady was stood still as everyone else moved around her. Keeping the burst mode active allowed me to capture the evolving and capture unpredictable situation.

LUCK, ANTICIPATION & PRACTICE

Keep practicing. I usually capture handheld shots at about a half a second exposure. I find this to be my sweet spot with my camera using a 16-35mm Lens. Discover your own sweet spot by using different speeds. I find 1/3 a second exposure more reliable when it's dark for example. Even shooting at 1/10 of a second can yield great results depending on the subject.

