

Holiday Lighting Tips

- 1) Use a tripod and a remote shutter release.
If you don't have a shutter release, use the timer on your camera.
- 2) Start with an ISO of 400.
Experiment, you may want to go as high as ISO 1600.
- 3) Plan your shots
 - A. Going out and photographing during the 30 minutes after sunset can be a real asset.
The blue light in the sky is beautiful and will be helpful toward a successful image.
You want enough light left in the sky to illuminate the background to an exposure level approximately equal to or slightly under the exposure value of the lights.
 - B. You must also consider the surroundings.
Is the house white or a dark color?
Is there snow on the ground?
- 4) Don't use flash unless you want to light up an object or person nearby.
- 5) White Balance
Experiment, but I like to use "Auto" and shoot in RAW so the white balance can be changed in post.
- 6) Beware of Flicker
With older incandescent lights, this phenomenon is not a problem, but with LED lights, your camera may take the picture while the light is off or dim.
Note: our eyes don't see this happen. To combat this, use a slower shutter speed to allow the light source to capture when the light bulb is illuminated.
Some cameras will do this automatically.
- 7) Be Creative
Use ICM (Intentional Camera Movement) techniques when photographing homes and streets with holiday lights, Christmas trees, and various displays.
Examples of this would be zooming in, zooming out, intentional blur, and doing multiple exposures.

Family Photos in Front of the Christmas Tree

Needed items: Camera, Tripod, Cable Release (recommended), Speedlight/Flash Unit.

1. Set the camera on a tripod

This is very important since we will be dealing with very slow shutter speeds and a high ISO in order to get the lights on the tree to show up beautifully.

2. Without using the flash unit, set the camera to “Manual.”

3. Set the “Aperture” to f/4 or possibly f/5.6 if you need more DOF (Depth of Field) of the subject. Remember: everyone must be in focus.

4. Set the “Shutter Speed” to about 1/25 of a second.
(That is a slow shutter speed!)

5. Adjust or play with your ISO wheel starting at about ISO 400 and up; watching that the tree is somewhat dark, but the tree lights show brightly. If you have a DSLR or a Mirrorless camera, use live view and the histogram. The histogram should be heavily-weighted to the left.

6. Next, turn on your flash unit/speedlight.

Point the flash unit up to the ceiling and slightly to the back. Always hope for a white or light neutral-colored ceiling.

7. Raise the little card on the speedlight to throw a little light forward to light the eyes with a catch light.

- You could also use a diffuser on the flash unit to soften the light.

8. Set the flash to TTL (Nikon) or eTTL (Canon)

I like to adjust my flash to -7. Experiment here to see what you like.

9. Focus on the eye closest to the camera.

10. Press the shutter lease. Bingo! You have a beautiful image...I hope.

If not, make some slight adjustments to your likening.