

How to Create a Time Lapse Video

By: Hilary Igl

Landscape photography, check. Portrait photography, check. Wedding photography, check.

What else is out there to do with still photography?

Making time lapse videos—it's a simple and fun way to show a passage of time that can show off your creativity without needing much more gear to do so.

To get started you'll need a DSLR camera with the capability to shoot in full manual mode and an interval timer.

“Most Nikon DSLR cameras have built in interval timers, however, not a single Canon model DSLR has one,” Mike, a sales representative from B&H Foto & Electronics Corp. in New York, said. “Without one built in, you have to buy an external timer compatible with your camera model.”

External interval timers are available online between \$100 and \$200 (here's one from B&H for Canon model http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/749292-REG/Vello_RCW_C2_Wireless_ShutterBoss_Timer_Remote.html).

You can shoot a time lapse without an interval timer, but this means that you will have to take the pictures manually.

You'll also need a tripod, a large capacity memory card, an interesting location or subject matter, and the access to photography and video editing software (I will explain the editing process in Adobe Lightroom and Premier Pro).

Choosing where to shoot a time lapse is important, but it's more important once you get to the location. After finding an initial location, take time to choose where you will set up your

camera and your shot. This simple step is often overlooked, but it will help to separate your time lapse video from the rest.

Before you continue, you have to decide what file format you want to shoot in. I always photograph in RAW unless the memory cards I have with me don't have enough room to handle the RAW file size from my Nikon D800.

Set your camera to your desired file format and make sure it is on full manual mode. Full manual mode will help avoid light flicker in your photos. If you are unable to shoot in full manual mode, there are several de-flickering programs available online.

After framing your shot, set up your tripod and take a sample photo. To avoid unnatural movement (ex: from trees moving from wind) in my videos, I like to set the shutter speed to a longer exposure to get a slight motion blur. From there I choose my aperture and adjust my white balance accordingly.

Going into the project, I have a rough estimate of how long I would like the video to be after I put it together. This will sometimes depend on the size of your memory card and how much time you have to take photos.

To get a fluid, natural looking video, you will want a video that plays back at 24 frames per second (fps). To calculate this, you will take the number of seconds you want your video to be times 24 fps.

If you want to make a ten second video, multiply 24 by 10 (240). This means you will want to take 240 photographs for 10 seconds of video.

How often your camera takes a picture will be based on what your subject is and what kind of style you are going for. This is all about trial and error (and again, how much time you have to take pictures).

My D800, like many other DSLR cameras, has a built in interval timer that takes photos automatically according to the settings I entered.

For a time lapse video of clouds I created last week, I set my camera to shoot 350 pictures. One picture every 10 seconds. My end result was a 14 second video at 24 frames per second.

Now it's time to wait and let your camera do the work...

After your camera has finished taking all of the pictures, it's time to import the images into your chosen editing software. This may take a while, so more patience is required for this step. I use Lightroom because I can easily develop a preset to apply to all of the images at once. This makes the process faster and much less tedious rather than having to apply the preset to each photo individually.

What kind of preset you chose to apply to your photos is based on personal preference. Usually, I only add more contrast and add warmth by adjusting the white balance.

Upon satisfaction with your preset, save it with a distinguishable name. Switch Lightroom to grid view while in the library. Select all of the photos and click the drop down menu called "saved preset" in the quick develop panel. Scroll down and find your saved preset. Click on it to apply the edit to your selected photos.

With your photos selected, export the files as DNG files. This file format is Adobe's version of RAW and will make transferring the files into Adobe Premiere Pro much easier while retaining the same image quality. When the export window appears, you will want to export with a custom-name sequence. To do this, look under the file naming section of the exporting window and click on the "rename to" box (it will have a check mark once it is selected). Click the drop down menu next to the "rename to" box and select "custom-name sequence."

Save your files to a folder specifically for your time lapse pictures and export.

Next, import your photos into Adobe Premiere Pro by clicking “file” import. You will open the folder that your photos are in and select the first image icon. In the bottom left-hand corner there will be a box and the words “image sequence.” Check mark the box, click import and all of the photos for your time lapse will be imported into Premier Pro.

From here the process can be very simple, or very complicated. You have the option of adding titles, sound, and other countless effects.

Once you have completed editing in Premiere Pro, export media to the format you want. The formatting will depend on what you will be doing with the video. The most common format is H.264, which will allow you to upload the video to websites like YouTube, Facebook or Vimeo.

After exporting, you’re finished and ready to make your next time lapse video!

Time lapse photography has become more and more popular over the last few years. There are tons of example videos to watch online and many photographers offer tips to improve your skills. Keep in mind that part of the fun in time lapse photography is that no matter how many time lapse videos there are out there, no two will ever be the same. Happy photographing!

Quote:

B&H Foto \$ Electronics Corp.

Sales Rep. Mike (was unable to give me his last name for security reasons)

800.606.6969

Ext. 1 for product information

Ext. 1 for photography equipment

Informative Sources:

Alan Steadman

“4 Things to Consider When Making Time Lapse Photographs”

<http://petapixel.com/2013/07/10/4-things-to-consider-when-making-time-lapse-photographs/>

Vincent Laforet

“Canon Digital Learning Center- The Basics of Time Lapse Photography”

<http://vimeo.com/60694676>