

PHOTOGRAPHING CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

- EQUIPMENT

Camera – preferably one with adjustable exposures.
Fairly fast film or digital speed setting, such as ISO 200 or 400.
Tripod.
Cable release or self timer.
Flashlight.
Extra camera batteries.

- COLD WEATHER NOTES

Keep spare batteries warm, since cold weather kills batteries.

Try not to change film indoors until the camera has warmed up to room temperature, or condensation will appear inside the camera.

If possible, advance film slowly to prevent static discharge inside the camera. This can appear as lightning-like streaks on the film.

- PHOTOGRAPHY TECHNIQUES

It is essential to hold the camera steady unless trying for an intentionally blurred special effect. Therefore, use a tripod or set the camera on a solid object. Taking the photo with a cable release, or using the self timer, also helps to keep the camera steady.

Point and shoot cameras will have uncertain results. Most select their own exposures, and many will force a flash to go off. Shut off the flash if possible. All you can do with a point and shoot is try it and see what happens.

Very fast ISO is usually not necessary, unless you are trying to record details of the building as well as the Christmas lights. A better way to record building details is to take the photo at dusk when there is still enough light to see the building, but it is dark enough for the lights to show up well.

- EXPOSURE

A wide range of exposure will get good results, so it is best to experiment, record the exposure used, and see what you like best.

Try to avoid very long exposures, since this can cause a shift in color of the film. For those who are interested in the technical aspects, this is called “reciprocity failure”. Kodak film tends to turn purple, and Fuji green.

- SUGGESTED EXPOSURES for cameras capable of manual settings. Also, try the camera on Automatic and see what happens.

ISO	64	100	200	400	800	1600
time-fstop	½ sec-f3.5	½ sec -f4	¼ sec - f4	⅛ sec - f4	1/15 sec -f4	1/30 sec -f4
time-fstop	1 sec -f4	1 sec- f5.6	1 sec - f8	1 sec - f11	1 sec- f 16	1 sec- f22
time-fstop	2 sec -f5.6	2 sec - f8	2 sec - f11	2 sec - f16	2 sec- f 22	
time-fstop	4 sec -f8	4 sec - f11	4 sec - f16	4 sec - f22		

- SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

Try mixing flash with your normal exposure for the lights. Use the flash to illuminate an interesting foreground object.

If you have a zoom lens, zoom during a long exposure. This creates streaks instead of stationary lights to create an abstract photo.

“Pan” the camera during a long exposure. That is, move the camera steadily in one chosen direction. This creates an intentional blur of the lights for an abstract photo.