

Reasons to use a Tripod



Free Your Hands

Using a tripod leaves you to have your hands free, making it easier to adjust your lens, camera settings and composition. You can also set the camera up and move away from its position, which means you can capture shy animals or position your tripod where you may not want to stand such as in a pool of water that sits in front of a waterfall.

Panning

If you want to create a sense of speed when capturing action shots such as cars racing around a track or bikes speeding around a course you will want your sharp subject to be set against a blurred background. To do this you need to pan your camera, following the subject as they move through your frame and although you can do this hand-held, some photographers find it easier to use a tripod or monopod to help them capture the perfect pan. Monopods can move with the turn of your body while if you choose to use a tripod, a pan or ball head will make the task easier. Tripods are available that feature a built-in remote shutter release on the handle so you don't need to move your hands off the head to fire the shutter.

Time-Lapse Photography

Time-lapse photography is all about capturing a sequence of shots a few seconds, minutes, hours or even days apart. These shots are then combined to form a series of images that can be played back as a short video. As any movement of the camera will cause your final piece to appear jaunty you will need a support for your camera.

Longer Exposures

If you are planning to take photos at sunset or in the evening, you'll need to use slower shutter speeds so enough light can reach the sensor for the image to expose correctly. However, working with slower speeds hand-held can mean shake will blur your shot. A tripod will help reduce this and keep your hands free to hold a cup of tea when you're using really long exposures to capture evening shots such as light trails!

Do not think you just need your tripod in the evening though as to turn the movement of waterfalls, rivers and waves into smooth, dry ice-like textures, you will need slower shutter speeds.

Straight Horizons

Most tripods feature spirit levels that will show you if your tripod's straight and you can also buy spirit levels which can be clipped to your camera's hot shoe. There are occasions where the spirit level will say the tripod's wonky yet your eye tells you the horizon is straight so do use your own judgment in these situations. Tripods also make it easier to adjust the position of your camera, which in turn will move where the horizon sits in your shot.

Panoramas

Panoramas are created by stitching a series of shots together (either in camera or during postproduction) that you have captured by moving your camera from one side of the frame to the other, allowing for a little overlap between each frame. A tripod will keep your shots steady and level, which means they will be easier to stitch together if you are doing it manually.

Self Portraits

Working with your arm out stretched so you can be in frame isn't practical and won't produce award-winning shots any time soon. For this reason it's important to have a support so you can frame up, ensuring your horizon is straight if out on location, before you take your shot. The same goes for group shots at parties, weddings and other gatherings you attend where you want to be in frame. It also means you can shoot self-portraits in the studio, leaving the camera framed-up on the spot you want to position yourself in once you have set the camera up.

Close up shots

Taking photos of small objects close-up can require a lot of skill, and minor movements will be crucial to a perfect image. Using a tripod will noticeably reduce unwanted movement of the camera.

When you need to be creative

Last but not least, a tripod can really help by making you slow down and think about the shot you are taking and getting the framing right. With a tripod, you can also get your camera into places you sometimes can't. Using a tripod, you can get to new higher or lower angles that you would not be able to reach as easily if working hand-held. For example, macro and flower photography is easier if you have a tripod where the centre column can be moved from zero to 180-degree angles. You can then use your camera facing the ground or at 90-degrees if you are shooting into a flowerbed. Some tripods also have special low lever legs and macro arms that mean you can position the camera at almost ground level.