

Fireworks Photography Tips

Fireworks

Public displays are usually best; there are free ones.

Stand at the back for the aerial display or at the front for the Catherine wheels.

Set up in plenty of time and shoot upwind if you can.

Take a torch to see the camera's settings.

Full battery, big empty memory card + spare.

Use a tripod – this is mandatory.

Use a remote release, if you have one. Using the self-timer wastes valuable shooting time.

Use a clean wide-angle lens or standard lens at widest setting; *focus manually at infinity*.

Use a lens hood to keep off the rain and protect the lens.

File type: Raw only, or Raw + JPG.

Turn off the flash.

Turn off Long-exposure noise reduction; otherwise you'll be just waiting half the time.

Use Manual mode.

ISO: 100-400 – something with not too much noise

Aperture: around f8 but anything between f5.6 to f16 may suit you.

Shutter speed: Bulb (with remote release) or 2 to 10 seconds

Bulb: Open the shutter and wait for the firework to peter out before closing.

2-10s: Open as the fireworks are launching.

Don't expose for too long, you can easily overexpose.

White balance: Auto or Cloudy; it doesn't matter for RAW.

Start shooting as soon as the show starts and keep going until the very end.

Recompose to ensure that you are filling the frame. Vertical or horizontal and level horizon.

Including the crowd or scenery often adds to the image.

The last one is always a good one.

Review your pictures in the quieter parts of the sequence, fix things and adjust to taste.

Look at other photographers' work on Flickr and examine the EXIF settings to see how they did it.

Sparklers

Tripod or steady hand held.

Manual mode: 2-10s, f5.6-f8, ISO 100-200, manual focus, try flash on and off.

or Aperture mode: flash on, f5.6-f8, ISO100-400, manual focus

or Night Scene.

Use a dark background. Use a torch to help you focus on the subject before you start. Get the subject to draw shapes. Write backwards or forwards and flip in Photoshop. Try 2nd curtain sync for flash.

Take lots, review and try different settings.

Post-processing

Clean up any noise. Adjust the white balance to sort the colours out. Adjust levels or curves with care. Use layers and various blending modes to overlay bursts.