

CLEVELAND PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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School of Photography Frequently Asked Questions

THANK YOU for your interest! This sheet has been designed to answer the most commonly-asked questions regarding the Cleveland Photographic Society's School of Photography programs. While we think you'll find what you're looking for here, please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any additional questions:

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I'm a beginning photographer - will I be in over my head? Our courses are designed to cater to beginning to intermediate-level photographers. We start slow and with the basics in order to create a level playing field, then ramp things up from there. No previous photography or photo editing experience is necessary to take our classes - and newbies are always welcome!

I know the basics but want to take my skills to the next level - will I be disappointed? Even seasoned photographers and photo editors benefit from both a review of the fundamentals and the advanced tips and tricks our classes provide. Unless you're already an expert, you'll find plenty to learn.

Your courses sound great, but its hard to commit to so many weeks. What happens if I need to miss a class or two? CPS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Because our primary emphasis in teaching these classes is to help photographers achieve their goals, we are not happy until you've learned what you came to learn. While its always best to attend all classes, we fully recognize that people have busy lives and that its hard to attend each week. Because of this, we have developed a three-part strategy to meet the needs of our students:

-- Initial class sessions in all of our courses are crucial to setting the stage for future learning. We ask all students to ensure that they can attend the first class or two in all of our programs and will discourage you from enrolling if you can't. Once that foundation is laid, however, the remaining classes are designed in a modular, standalone style - so that missing a class one week does not mean you'll be hopelessly lost when you return.

-- All students receive a disc at the first class session that contains all of the class notes for the entire course. In the case of our Fundamentals course, all presentations as well as handouts, homework assignments, etc. are included on the disc. For our

Editing classes, you'll receive detailed step-by-step instructions that will allow you to duplicate each lesson, as well as the photos we use in our demonstrations. Referring to the class notes will help you gain a feel for what took place in class while you were gone and can help you catch-up on what you missed.

-- Perhaps the thing that sets CPS classes apart from ANY other course you'll find is our 'student for life' policy. Simply stated, once you enroll in a CPS course you are welcome to return at any point in the future to take any class you may have missed or any class you'd like to hear again - **up to and including the entire course** - at any time the course is offered in the future. There is no advance registration required and absolutely no additional cost - just find the date on our calendar and show up. It really IS that simple.

What kind of camera do I need in order to get the most out of the Fundamentals class? In order to gain value from your investment, you'll need to have a camera that allows you to shoot in Manual mode, meaning that you can control the camera's aperture and shutter. All dSLR (interchangeable lens) cameras will permit this and so will many of the more advanced compact cameras on the market today. If you have a question about whether your camera will offer the flexibility needed, please feel free to contact us with the make and model of your camera. We won't take your money if your camera won't allow you to take full advantage of our course.

I don't have a camera yet. Where do I start? Call or write to us and we'll be glad to help. We're not selling anything so we'll do our best to ask you a few simple questions and then provide a list of cameras for you to investigate, based on your interests and price range. And once you've had a chance to take a look, we'll be glad to answer your questions and help you find the camera that's right for YOU.

What else do I need to buy in order to take your classes? For the Fundamentals class, you'll need a camera as described above - but not much else. In fact, we encourage you **NOT** to buy a bunch of equipment until you've completed our class because we'll help you define the types of photos you want to take and provide you with resources that will help you become an informed buyer. For our Editing classes, you'll need to own a computer and the current version of Photoshop Elements or Adobe Lightroom. If you have an older version of the software, contact us and we'll tell you honestly if your version will work. We'll also make you aware of any discounts or sales that we know about that might help save you some money.

How are classes taught? What should I expect? Classes are taught in lecture style but we provide plenty of opportunities for you to receive one-on-one assistance. In Fundamentals, we begin the course with small group sessions - broken-out by YOUR camera model - that discuss the primary camera features you'll need to know in order to get the most out of the classes. The Editing and Lightroom classes are taught in a demonstration format, and the class notes disc will provide you step-by-step instructions to allow you to practice the lessons at home. In all of our classes, CPS members are available at all times to help you with YOUR questions and issues, both before and after class and during break periods, providing you with personalized assistance to meet your needs.

Do I bring my camera and/or computer to each class? For the Fundamentals classes, we encourage you to bring your camera and your Users Manual (full version) to every class. Some sessions include hands-on practice opportunities but its always best to be able to check your camera to ensure you understand the settings as they relate to your specific camera model. For our Editing and Lightroom classes, you are welcome to bring a laptop to class but it is not necessary to do so. In fact, we will ask you NOT to try to complete each lesson along with us because you will more than likely not be able to maintain our pace and will fall behind.

Do I need to take your classes in any particular order? Can I take more than one class at the same time? None of our classes require a previous class as a prerequisite. While most people prefer to take the Fundamentals class and then either or both of the Editing/Lightroom classes, many students simply take the classes in the order that best suits their schedules. Many people do choose to take more than one class at the same time, but we strongly suggest that you have enough free time in your schedule to allow not only for class attendance but also enough time to practice what you've learned each week.

How often are classes taught? Each of our courses is taught three times each year, alternating between weeknight and Saturday offerings to accommodate varying schedules and student availability. Course dates are always listed on the Club Calendar section and enrollment information for the current session is available in the Schools section of our website: www.clevelandphoto.org

My schedule is so disjointed that I can't commit to a full class. Do you offer one-on-one instruction? Because of our flexible attendance policies and the incredible value our scheduled classes represent, we feel our courses can meet the needs of most students and we therefore do not offer one-on-one instruction opportunities. Some of our instructors do take on private students on occasion, however. If this is the best option for you, please contact us and we'll place you in contact with them. *Please be advised that any arrangement you make for private instruction will be between you and the instructor and CPS will not be affiliated or responsible in any way.*

Okay, I'm sold! How do I enroll and how far in advance do I need to sign-up? Visit the School page of our website for enrollment materials for the current class session. You can download an enrollment form and mail it to us with your check or register online using PayPal. Note that you do NOT need a PayPal account in order to use this service. Since many classes fill up well in advance, we suggest registering at least a month ahead of the start date in order to ensure you're not closed out.

Can I give one of your classes as a gift? YES! Many people find that the gift of a CPS class makes the perfect gift for that someone who's hard to buy for. If you mail in your registration, please indicate that the enrollment is a gift and provide both your contact info and that of the recipient. If you register online, check the 'Is this a gift?' box and provide the recipient's information in the 'additional information' section on PayPal, or contact us. We'll assume it's a surprise and will contact only you until you tell us its okay to contact the recipient. Upon request, we'll even send you a gift certificate that you can wrap and present!