

How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel

by Rob Taylor - 27 Mar 2013

The explosion of filmmaking since its democratization in 2008 has meant increasingly cheap ways of exploring the possibilities of motion pictures. One of the most popular cameras in recent times for beginners to start shooting on is the Canon Rebel series. Today, I'm going to take a look at the basics of getting your Rebel rolling, and provide some ideas on how to improve and develop those first attempts.

I'm going to be using the Canon T3i/600D as the example camera, but the other recent models in the series are largely identical in operation. Not all of my points are going to be Rebel-specific though, so if you have another DSLR, or a M4/3 camera like an NEX, many of the points will still apply to you, you'll just have to adapt them to your camera.

Canon EOS Rebel T3i. This is the camera I'm using for this article.



Setting Up to Record, Quickly

Ok, first things first, set your mode dial to video. The camera immediately clicks into live view mode, and the default or last-used settings are up. Let's get the on-screen stuff sorted out first. Hit the menu button to go into the video contextual area of the main menu, so you can set your resolution and frame rate on the second tab under "Movie rec. size."

Set Your Resolution and Frame Rate

Usually this is going to be either 1080p24 or 1080p25/30 (25 in PAL-land, 30 in NTSC-land). If you want a cinematic look, go with 24. If you're shooting for TV or just want to get on with it and shoot some video, stick with the other one.



Controlling Your View

Now you can back out of the menu, and hit INFO until you have a comfortable amount of information on screen. Personally, I like to shoot with everything on-screen, including the histogram for continuous checking of exposure levels.

Initial Settings

Now, if you haven't used the

From: photography.tutsplus.com/tutorials/how-to-shoot-video-on-your-canon-rebel--photo-12747
and
dummies.com/how-to/content/choosing-movie-recording-settings-on-a-canon-rebel.navId=810611.html?print=true

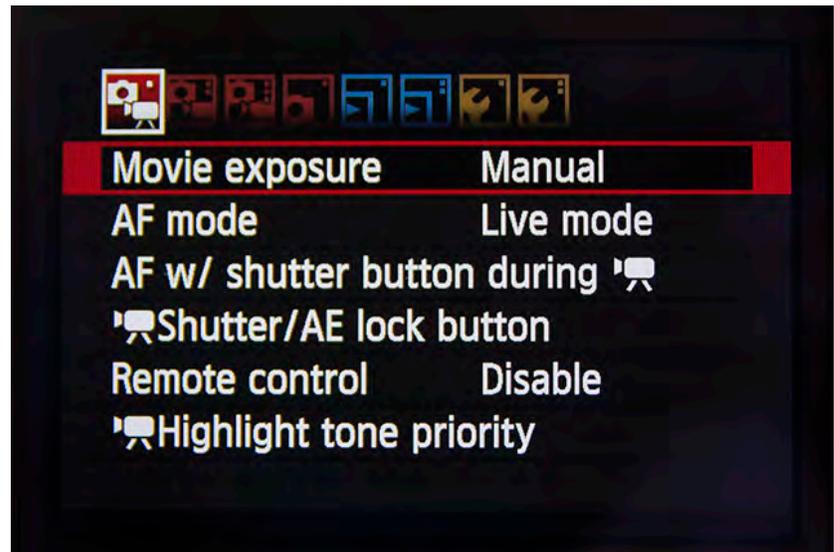
How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel

video mode before, it should be set to auto-exposure in video mode, so you're ready to roll immediately. If it's in manual exposure and you're in 1080p24 or 1080p25, set your shutter speed to 1/50th, and if you're in 1080p30, set it to 1/60th. Then set your aperture and ISO to balance the exposure, and focus the lens (to see the options here, skip to the "Focusing" section below). Everything's set, so hit the Live View button to start and stop recording and you're rolling!

That's all there is to getting started in video, but you didn't come here for a short version of the manual. So what should you be thinking about, and what can you do to improve this first video you just shot? How do you add production quality?

Manually Controlling Exposure

Now that you have the camera set up to shoot, it's time to nail exposure. The trick to good video exposure is to use manual exposure and use the histogram. Unfortunately, Canon haven't decided to put a proper waveform monitor into their DSLRs, so there's a tiny bit of guesswork involved. To set manual exposure, go into the menu and literally the first option is "Movie Exposure." Hit SET, and switch it to "Manual." Hit SET again to confirm the option.



ISO

Now your camera is in fully-manual mode, just like M mode in stills. However, where stills eventually gained auto-everything, video has been fully manual since the birth of cinema, so there are plenty of tools and information out there to help with this part if you're new to manual camera use.

I've found that unlike my older 40D, the T3i is fairly amenable to ISO adjustment and it can be used to complete the exposure triangle quite happily. This is especially useful because in video, generally the shutter speed is locked to the closest available shutter speed to the reciprocal of double the frame rate (ie. 1/50th for 24p, 1/60th for 30p) to get the "correct" amount of motion blur.

Aperture

Similarly, aperture is a creative choice about depth of field, so all that's left to adjust once you've set the sensitivity of the camera. When shooting in dim light, ramping the ISO up to 800 or so doesn't tend to significantly impact the look of the video, especially if you

From: photography.tutsplus.com/tutorials/how-to-shoot-video-on-your-canon-rebel--photo-12747
and
dummies.com/how-to/content/choosing-movie-recording-settings-on-a-canon-rebel.navId-810611.html?print=true

How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel

can add a light pass of de-noiser in post-production.

Neutral Density Filters

What about if it's too bright, though? What if you're shooting in broad daylight at 1/50th at f/2? You can't turn the ISO down below 100. This is where neutral density (ND) filters come in. Specifically, variable ND filters. If you're moving the camera into the outside from an indoor location in a single take, they get around the limitations of no aperture



control with modern lenses or clicky iris rings in older lenses, and can save your footage from completely blowing out.

If you're shooting outside, you can usually just set it to maybe four or five stops of ND (the amount you need will depend on the brightness, of course) and shoot away happily at your wide-open settings for the aesthetic you want. Of course, if you want a deeper depth of field to see more of the scene

so you're shooting at f/8 or so, then you may only need a 2x ND on there.

Experimentation is easy with variable NDs, as you don't need to keep stopping to add or remove ND filters as the light changes.

Using the Histogram

Using the histogram on the on-screen display really helps give a more empirical idea of your exposure levels than just guessing from how the video looks. Of course, video isn't RAW, it's baked before the write, so how it looks in-camera will be how it looks on-screen.

This means you *can* use the screen to judge exposure, but I like having a visual indicator of things I may otherwise miss. I generally want the main spike at around 70% brightness to allow headroom for highlights, although some scenes can be tricky. This is where personal judgement and artificial lighting can come in. When in doubt, I just stick by the rule of holding the highlights and letting the shadows fall where they may.



Digital Zoom

From: photography.tutsplus.com/tutorials/how-to-shoot-video-on-your-canon-rebel--photo-12747
and
dummies.com/how-to/content/choosing-movie-recording-settings-on-a-canon-rebel.navId-810611.html?print=true

How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel

Note: You can try this, but Bruce does not recommend it. Try it and see if you like it.



You'll also notice that in the T3i and later, there's a digital zoom option. Most of the time this isn't much use and should be left off, but if you want to extend the range of a long lens, turning the digital zoom on and leaving it zoomed out to 3x (technically 2.7x) essentially gives you a 3x teleconverter built into the camera with no loss of exposure- nor

resolution, as the camera crops into the central 1920x1080 pixels of the sensor.

In fact, because there's no downsampling or pixel binning (throwing away pixel data to reduce processing), the quality of this punched-in video is generally a little sharper and contains less moiré than the normal video settings, and because it's only using the central portion of the lens, even lower-quality lenses will work well.

The disadvantages include the depth-of-field effects of the super-35/APS-C size sensor are significantly reduced, and there won't be full color information because of the mechanics of the Bayer pattern filter. Largely, I'd say it's best used for distance-limited things like wildlife, sports and wedding videography when combined with, say, a 70-200mm lens.

Focusing

As I said, there's no continuous AF while rolling (although the T4i and T5i both have the option, it doesn't work great), so you end up with two options.

Fixed Focus

First, set your focus before shooting and maintain the same camera-to-subject distance at all times. This is most useful for interview-type scenarios, where the subject is sitting and the camera is locked on them.

Manual Focusing

The other option is continual manual focus, regularly used in filmmaking, where frequently both camera and subject are moving around.

As a beginner, you can just use the normal focus

From: photography.tutsplus.com/tutorials/how-to-shoot-video-and-dummies.com/how-to/content/choosing-movie-recording-settings-on-a-canon-rebel-t3i-810611.html?print=true



How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel

ring, or maybe attach a ziptie or jar opener or something to make more precise movements with it. If you continue heavily with the video side of things, you may wish to invest in a follow focus, which is a geared knob that attaches to the side of the lens and grips the focus ring to allow for easy, precise focus pulling without the possibility of jerking the lens.

Checking Your Focus

To check your focus, never zoom in and out with photography lenses. They don't maintain the same focus point throughout their zoom range at any given focus ring setting, and you'll end up with blurry footage. On the Rebel, you can digitally zoom in 5x or 10x with the top-right thumb-control button. This allows critical focus on wherever you put the zoom box on screen. Bear in mind the button is a toggle; it goes 5x, 10x, 0x, in order. You can't punch into 5x and then use the Exposure Lock button to punch back out again.



Blue for playback, white for shooting. Note there is no "zoom out" button while shooting.

Auto Focusing Tip

A little trick to help with focusing on the T3i before shooting if you're not in too much of a hurry is to put the lens on AF, move the focus box over your subject, and half-depress the shutter button. This method is a little slow, but accurate. If you're not comfortable with manual focus, this is the easiest way to focus.



You can even do it while recording, although you'll lose a few seconds of video while it brightens the scene and the lens hunts back and forth. In order to focus this way you'll need to enable "AF w/ shutter button during video" which is on the first tab of the menu. As long as the subject is mostly static, it should be ok. With moving

our-canon-rebel--photo-12747

on-a-canon-rebel.navId-

810611.html?print=true

How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel

subjects, manual focus is a necessity.

Audio

Audio is without a doubt the most overlooked aspect of videography and filmmaking, despite it being 50% of the final product. If you want good sound, turn the audio levels to manual by going into the menu, then going into "Sound recording" on the second tab.

Manually Control Sound Levels

Change the "Sound rec." option to "Manual," so that you can set the appropriate audio levels for your recording environment. When this is on "Auto" the camera tends to ramp the levels up and down, making the audio sound strange.

Bear in mind that you can only change the actual volume level in this menu by using the "Rec. level" menu option; ensure your audio isn't clipping before every take by altering the levels so that the loudest sounds in your scene only reach the "-12dB" marker.



Using a Microphone

If you're serious about video, you need good audio, and the only way to get that is by ditching the internal mic and plugging in an external microphone such as the Rode VideoMic, currently starting around \$150. This may seem expensive, but unless you're just making home videos, it makes no sense to spend \$700 on a camera to create nice-



looking video, but the only thing the audience perceives is tinny, crackly, fading audio from the built-in mic.

The problem with this setup is that there's no headphone socket for you to monitor audio while shooting, so you just have to keep an eye on the audio levels meter in the

r-canon-rebel--photo-12747

a-canon-rebel.navId-

How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel

Sound Recording options screen of the main menu before each take and hope that it's coming out ok.

Using an External Recorder

If you're really serious about audio, use the built-in mic (or a cheap external one) to get what's known as scratch audio, used really only for timing because it's recorded in sync with the video. Then use a more expensive mic (the Videomic would be fine) and external audio recorder like the Zoom H4n (which *does* have a headphone socket) to get the "real" audio.



This audio-only track can then be synced up in the edit to the scratch audio from the camera (this is partially what the "clack" from a slate is for, too). It will sound much better, and your audience's ears will thank you! This setup is used by most filmmakers, who often have separate camera and sound people to ensure both are getting recorded properly.

White Balance and Picture Style

There are two final options that you should be aware of before I sign off; white balance and picture style. White balance should be manual in video, especially if you're shooting multiple clips and editing them together. It's important to maintain consistency between shots. If you're just doing single-take videos like vlogs and home movies, it's slightly less imperative, but best practice is to manually set white balance before every take.



To change white balance, just hit the "Q" (for "Quick Menu") button in live view and scroll down to the second option. You can scroll left and right here, or you can hit SET to see all the options for WB. This menu will also allow you to change the recording size and picture style without going into the main menu.

Picture styles are important in video because DSLR video isn't RAW, and can't be pushed and pulled all over the place. If you're shooting to edit and color grade, the best built-in picture style to use is a custom variant of "Faithful" with -4 Contrast and -2 Saturation. The raw video will look quite flat and dull, but you'll have a little bit more dynamic range to use when grading.

From: photography.tutsplus.com/tutorials/how-to-shoot-video-on-your-canon-rebel--photo-12747
and
dummies.com/how-to/content/choosing-movie-recording-settings-on-a-canon-rebel.navId-810611.html?print=true

How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel

There is also a picture style available from Technicolor called "Cinestyle" for Canon DSLRs which can be saved to your camera's internal memory and will give you the maximum dynamic range possible.

If you're just going to use the raw videos straight out of camera, then I'd recommend the Faithful style. I've found that the video looks naturally good in this style without being too contrasty or having horrible sharpness artifacts. I never recommend turning up the sharpness from zero on any HDSLR, as it will increase the effects of moiré and aliasing. Sharpening can be added in post if/when necessary.



Time to Start Making Movies

Well, I hope you've enjoyed this little dip into the waters of basic Rebel filmmaking, and now know the important menu options you should be using and why while shooting. I've glossed over a number of other menu options, because they're not really applicable to getting to grips with shooting, but are more personal preferences.

That's about it for the basics of getting started in video on your Rebel. As ever, if you have any questions or comments, hit up the comments below. Happy shooting!

How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel



Choosing Movie Recording Settings on a Canon Rebel T3 Series Camera

By **Julie Adair King** from **Canon EOS Rebel T3i / 600D For Dummies**



After you set the Mode dial to Movie on your Canon EOS Rebel T3 or Canon EOS Rebel T3i camera, you can monitor the most critical recording settings via the Shooting Settings screen. If you don't see the same type of data on your monitor, press the Info button to cycle through different display styles. In Movie mode, you can access the same display options as for regular Live View shooting, with the exception of the one that adds the histogram.

To view the maximum amount of shooting data on your Canon EOS Rebel T3, press the Disp button to cycle to this display. On a Canon EOS Rebel T3i, the shooting data is displayed like this.

The following list offers some other insights into a few of the screen symbols.

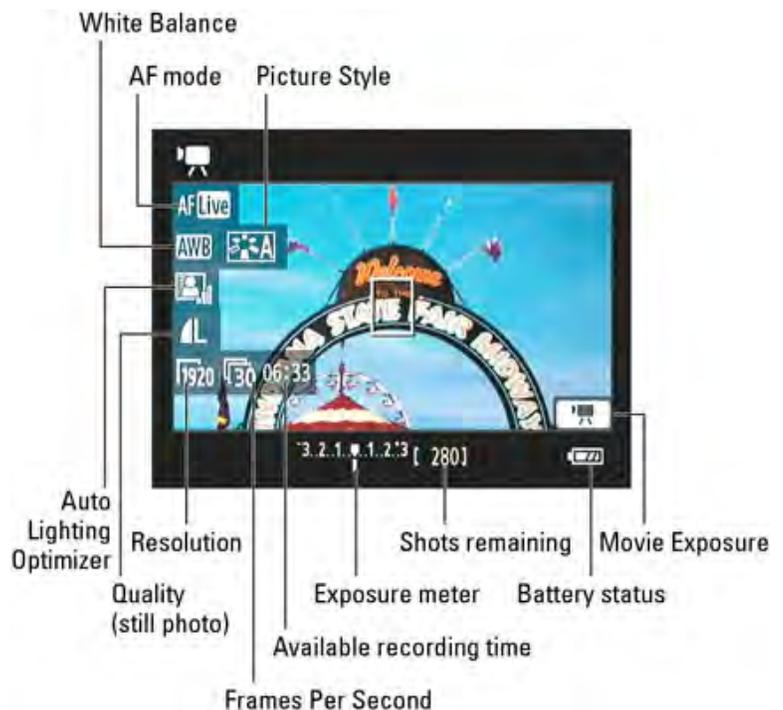
The shots-remaining and Quality settings on the T3i model relate only to still shots you capture during a recording session.

By default, the camera controls the aperture, shutter speed, and ISO for you.

With autoexposure, the exposure meter indicates the amount of Exposure Compensation.

Exposure Compensation enables you to request that the camera adjust the brightness of your next recording (on the T3 model) or recording or still shot (on the T3i). If the little white bar under the meter is at the center position, no compensation has been applied.

You can press the AE Lock button to disable automatic exposure adjustment at any time. When you use autoexposure, the camera adjusts exposure during the recording as



From: photography.tutsplus.com/tutorials/how-to-shoot-video-on-your-canon-rebel--photo-12747
and
dummies.com/how-to/content/choosing-movie-recording-settings-on-a-canon-rebel.navId-810611.html?print=true

How to Shoot Video on Your Canon Rebel

needed. If you prefer to use the same settings throughout the recording — or to lock in the current settings during the recording — you can use AE (autoexposure) Lock. Just press the AE Lock button. A little asterisk appears in the lower-left corner of the screen, to the left of the exposure meter. To cancel AE Lock during recording, press the AF Point Selection button.

Autofocus options: Again, you can use either manual focusing or one of the three available Live View autofocus options. As with Live View still photography, you see a symbol representing the currently selected AF mode even if you set the lens to the MF position for manual focusing.

To adjust recording options, you can go two routes:

Movie Menus 1, 2, and 3: When you set the Mode dial to Movie, you also access three menus of options.

Quick Control screen: You can also adjust some recording options via the Quick Control screen. The icons running down the left side of the screen represent these settings. Most are the same as for Live View still photography: AF mode, Picture Style, White Balance and Auto Lighting Optimizer on the Canon EOS Rebel T3. The T3i model adds the Quality icon, which affects only still pictures that you shoot during a recording, to that list. With the T3i, you also can change the Movie Recording Size, which affects resolution (frame size) and frames per second (fps) and enable or disable digital zoom.

Copyright © 2015 & Trademark by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.