



Elliott Erwitt, *New York*, 2000

Erwitt is well known for his witty takes on dog and human interaction. Successful candid photographs require a quick eye for detail and rapid composition decisions. Here, Erwitt uses what may be his most important creative tool: his own feet. By positioning himself in front of the stairs and crouching to make sure the camera was at head level—for both human and dog—he was best able to create this humorous optical illusion. © Elliott Erwitt; courtesy of Magnum Photos.

1

Beginnings

This manual is a basic guide to black-and-white photography, covering all the points taught in a typical introductory class. It starts at the beginning, assuming you know little or nothing about photography, and guides you through using your camera, developing film, and making and finishing prints.

Although there is much to learn, it's not all that difficult. Modern films and printing papers are easy to work with and today's cameras offer a considerable amount of automation, all of which make the job easier. Automation is not fool-proof, however. A camera can't know exactly what the subject looks like and how you want to photograph it. Much can go wrong, even in the most automated cameras, for example, film that doesn't load properly, autofocus that's off the mark, or inaccurate meter readings. And, of course, there's always user error. The more you understand about how everything works, the fewer problems you will encounter along the way and the more control you'll be able to bring to the process, even when working with your camera on automatic mode.



35 mm SLR camera

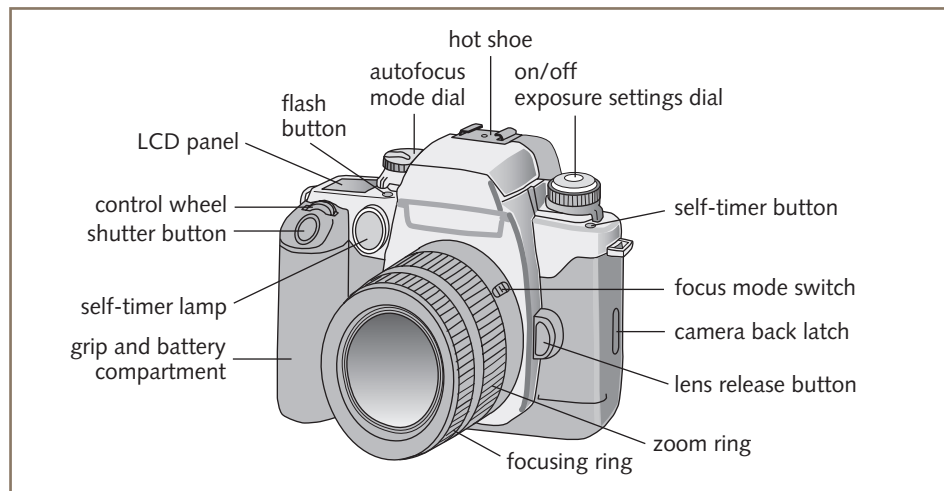
To get the most from this book, you'll need a reasonably sophisticated camera, preferably one that works manually as well as automatically. Don't worry if you don't have a top-of-the-line model; you can make great pictures using very basic equipment. Photographic equipment varies somewhat in design and usage from one camera system to another, so keep your manufacturer's instructional manuals handy to supplement the information in this text for details specific to your equipment.

To make the best use of the sections on developing film and making prints, you will need access to a darkroom. Both in the darkroom and when taking pictures, refer to your equipment as you read the instructions. It will make understanding the process much easier.

Getting Started

SLR: pages 11–14

Here are some very general instructions and tips on getting started with your camera, assuming it is a 35mm **single-lens-reflex (SLR)** camera, a commonly used model. Later chapters cover these points and other types of cameras in far greater detail.

Automatic Camera: Front View

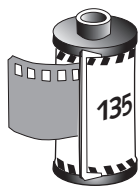
Check the battery and turn on the camera. Your camera needs one or more batteries to operate. Different models take batteries of different sizes. If your camera is new, it probably comes packaged with the needed battery or batteries. If you haven't used it for a while, you may need new batteries. At any rate, you'll need replacements after shooting about 25–50 rolls of 35mm, 36-exposure film, depending on the camera model and other factors; for instance, the more automation you use, the more battery power you'll drain. Some cameras have a battery power indicator, usually displayed on an LCD screen. It's a good idea to bring extra batteries with you when you are photographing, just in case you need them.

Automated cameras usually have a power switch or button that you must turn on to operate the camera. Keeping the power on drains battery power, so switch off the camera when you're not using it. Manually operated cameras are often ready for use all the time, without having to be turned on.

Choosing and loading film. There are many different films available for black-and-white photography. The most important difference among these films is their relative **film speed**, how sensitive they are to light. Every film has an **ISO** number that rates its sensitivity; the higher the ISO number, the more light-sensitive the film. You'll usually need a high-speed film (ISO 400 or higher) if you are photographing indoors or in a low-light situation (without a flash) to best capture what little light there is. You can generally use a medium- or slow-speed film (ISO 200 or lower) in bright light outdoors or with a flash, when there is plenty of light to expose the film adequately.

Thirty-five-millimeter film is packaged in a cylindrical cassette with the **leader**, the tapered end of the film, sticking out. To load the cassette into your camera,

*Film speed and ISO:
pages 23–24*



35mm film cassette

first swing open the back of the camera, usually by sliding or twisting a switch on the side of the camera or by lifting a knob on the top left side.

The camera back has two chambers; usually the left chamber is empty and the right chamber contains a **take-up spool**, to wind the film as it advances out of the cassette. You insert the film cassette in the empty chamber with the extended spool end down. Then, pull the film leader to uncover enough film to reach the right chamber of the camera's interior. Don't pull out more film than you have to.

Loading Film

