“A good photograph is knowing where to stand.”  — Ansel Adams
What I’ll be discussing tonight:

- About me
- Inspiration
- Planning & execution
- Why use filters?
- Getting started
- Reading your Histogram
- Filters explained
- References + more
- Post processing demo
About me

- Photography my weekend/after hours hobby
- Interest in photography began post high school now 8+ years and love it
- Design/IT background before photography
- Given a hand-me-down Canon DSLR (300D)
- Passion grew quickly from there!
- Self-taught through on-line tutorials, photography magazines, advice from other photographers
- Had a joint exhibition a few years ago in St Kilda
- Love to get away from the hustle & bustle!
Inspiration

- Main photography interests lie in Landscape & Seascape photography
- Love to travel be it locally or overseas
- Inspired by many photographers but especially Australia’s Peter Eastway & Christian Fletcher
- Love to shoot in the golden light hours but also late at night or middle of the day can be magic!
Planning & execution

- I almost always have a plan before I head out shooting especially with land & seascapes
- Check sunrise / sunset times, forecast & tides if travelling to the coast
- Aim for quality over quantity
- If I come away with one great shot I’m happy!
- If you have a smartphone make the TPE app your friend
- To be able to capture what I want to show I use filters!
Why use filters?

- Unfortunately cameras cannot capture the tonal range that our eyes see.
- Whatever medium we use, digital or film, our photos can fail to appear like our memories of the original scene. Filters help combat this!
- I would argue they are most important piece of photographic equipment in my arsenal, my tripod being the second, camera 3rd.
- We can use filters to:
  - Balance the exposure between a bright sky and a dark foreground (ND-grad)
  - Add saturation and reduce glare (Polariser)
  - Lengthen exposure times by reducing light (ND)
  - Warm, exaggerate, enhance mood, add drama
  - Reduce excessive amounts of time in post production
  - Limitation? Our imagination!
Getting started

- There are many choices out there but like anything quality comes at a price
- Cheaper systems are available from brands such as Cokin
- Severely limited when stacking multiple filters i.e. colour casts
- Below are some examples of this! Creativity can suffer as a result
A few years ago I upgraded to LEE Filters and haven’t looked back

Wide range of filters available to suit different camera systems

Can stack up to 3 filters in succession + a circular polariser

Foundation Kit a good start, sets available with holder, suitable ring and a few graduated filters to get started

Approx $100-$150 AUD for holder and 77mm ring (exc. Filters)

Filters around $130-$150 AUD each, Polariser a lot more!
Using Filters

- I always shoot in fully manual mode so I can control shutter speed, aperture and ISO
- The difference in light between the sky and foreground will determine which strength filter I’m going to use
- Generally speaking during the day I’ll use a 0.3 ND Grad (1 stop), warmer afternoon light with higher contrast a 0.6 ND Grad (2 stop) & sunset with greater differences in light 0.9 ND Grads (3 stop) become the go to
- I don’t use any fancy metering methods, I’ll use the basic through the lens method and constantly refer to my histogram to ensure highlights & shadows aren’t being clipped
- Tripod a must when shooting longer exposures – anything slower than 1/25th if you have a steady hand!
- Disadvantages? Expensive, can be fiddly to setup, require a better understanding of your camera settings, vignetting can occur, requires more maintenance
Understanding your Histogram is an extremely important part of owning a DSLR.

- It will tell you if your image is correctly exposed, or under/over exposed.
- In simplest terms a graphic representation of the tonal range within your image.
- Shadows left, midtones in the centre, highlights on the right.
- Low key? All the way to the left.
- High key? All the way to the right.
- Low contrast? Stacked in the centre.
- High contrast? Spread out wide.
- The ideal histogram will depend on your subject matter and what you want to convey in your image.
The ideal Histogram for this scene looks a little like this!

- Shot with my Lee Big Stopper (10 stop) and 0.6 ND Grad
Overexposed Histogram

- Overexposed sky without ND Grad, note clipped highlights
- Big stopper only
What happens when you use an ND Grad that’s too strong

E.g. using a 0.9 instead of a 0.6 in afternoon light
ND Graduated filters

- Probably the most essential filters used in Landscape Photography & even in post production.
- Neutral Density – Colour neutral
- Graduated – reduces the amount of light entering the lens gradually in both hard and soft. Hard ideal for seascapes with flat horizon, soft when obstacles enter the scene!
- Remember to line up the filter with the horizon!
ND Graduated filter example

- Left with no filter, right with 0.9 ND Grad Hard edge
An essential item in my repertoire of filters

They reduce the amount of light entering the scene evenly

Typically used to extend shutter speeds for creativity

Allow you to use a relatively friendly aperture for long exposures e.g. f11 without going up to f22 and losing image sharpness (diffraction)

Interesting effects on people, water, cars, foliage or clouds

A sturdy tripod is a must here!

Like the Grad available in 0.3 (1 stop), 0.6 (2 stop) & 0.9 (3 stop)

Easily combined with Graduated filters to balance sky and lengthen exposure
An example of combining both ND Graduated & ND filter
- Canon 5d mk III, 17mm, f11, 0.6 seconds, ISO 160
- Lee 0.9 Pro Glass ND & 0.6 ND Graduated Filters
ND filter example

- Left with 0.9 ND Grad hard, right with 0.9 ND as well
The Big Stopper

- An ND Filter on steroids! Reduces the amount of light entering the lens by 10 stops
- Currently my favourite filter in my arsenal
- Ideal for capturing 30+ second exposures in bright daylight or at sunset well into 3+ minutes and beyond
- Requires full manual control and a shutter release if shooting for longer than 30 seconds (Bulb)
- Must manual focus and compose before attaching the filter to the holder
- Ideally you’ll have a full frame body as noise is enhanced in longer exposures
- Alternative in low light? The new Little Stopper – 6 stops
- Disadvantages? Manual everything, must be patient, at sunset you can have only one or two shots before the colour is gone especially in winter, blue cast
# The Big Stopper vs. Little Stopper

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<th>Normal Shutter Speed</th>
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- **Broad daylight**
- **Late afternoon**
- **Sunsets**
The Big Stopper

- Left image – 0.3 ND Grad, dull with no sense of drama (1/10th second)
- Right image – 0.3 ND Grad with Lee Big Stopper (74 seconds)
- Exactly the same ISO, focal length and aperture used (f13 @ ISO 100)
- Post processing example will come later on in Lightroom
Big Stopper examples

- Big Stopper, 0.6 ND Grad Hard – 86 seconds @ f11, ISO 200
Big Stopper examples

- Big Stopper, 0.3 ND Grad Soft – 48 seconds @ f14, ISO 100
Polarising Filter

- Reduces the amount of reflected light passing through your camera’s sensor. Circular Polarisers ideal for DSLR cameras
- Their results cannot be replicated in post production
- Their effect is strongest at 90 degrees to the sun
- Polarisers will:
  - Make skies appear deeper, great for puffy white clouds!
  - Reduce glare on water and other surfaces
  - Reduce contrast between land & sky
  - Increase saturation and add ‘punch’
  - Like ND filters a Polariser will reduce light entering the lens often by 2-3 stops

- Disadvantages?
  - Expensive - $400AUD+ !!
  - Longer exposures required, right angle to the sun required for max effect
  - Fiddly setup, not ideal for panoramas or extreme wide angles.
Polariser examples

- Useful in waterfall photography
- Left without polariser, right at full effect. 6 seconds vs 10 seconds
- Here the polariser has reduced glare, added saturation, and reduced the contrast difference between the darker and brighter parts of the image
Polariser examples

- Big Stopper, Polariser, 0.3 ND Grad soft – 115 seconds @ f14, ISO 160
Polariser examples

- Polariser only – 1/2th second @ f13, ISO 100
What’s wrong with this picture?
No filters?
Other filters..

- Warm up filters – available in coral
- Sunset Filters – super warm
- Reverse grad filters – darker on the horizon
- Infrared filters – block certain wavelengths of light
- Black & White filters
If you want to learn more about anything I’ve covered check out:

- Inspiring professionals book – Landscape Photographer’s guide to using filters
- LEE Filters website - [http://www.leefilters.com/](http://www.leefilters.com/)

More from me:

- [http://www.redbubble.com/people/Alistair35](http://www.redbubble.com/people/Alistair35) - On-line virtual store

Social Media

- Instagram @alwilsonpics
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Thank you!