PHOTOGRAPHY FAST TRACK

WORKSHOP SERIES: SHUTTER SPEED RULES

SHUTTER SPEED RULES

BLURRY PHOTOS?

One of the things I hear most often is that photographers get SO frustrated when their images aren't sharp. I totally understand this - because I used to get SO mad at myself whenever I had to throw away an image that just wasn't sharp enough. There are a few reasons why your photos might be turning out a little blurry, but one of the main reasons is because of something called a slow shutter speed.

My first shutter speed was too slow at 1/100, and resulted in motion blur. So when I increased the speed to 1/250, I was able to get a sharper image:

SHUTTER SPEED RULES

WHAT SHUTTER SPEED SHOULD YOU USE?

The faster the shutter is, the more the camera is able to stop motion. But the slower it is, the more blurry the pictures become whenever there is movement. So what should your shutter speed be, then? Let's start with this formula below.

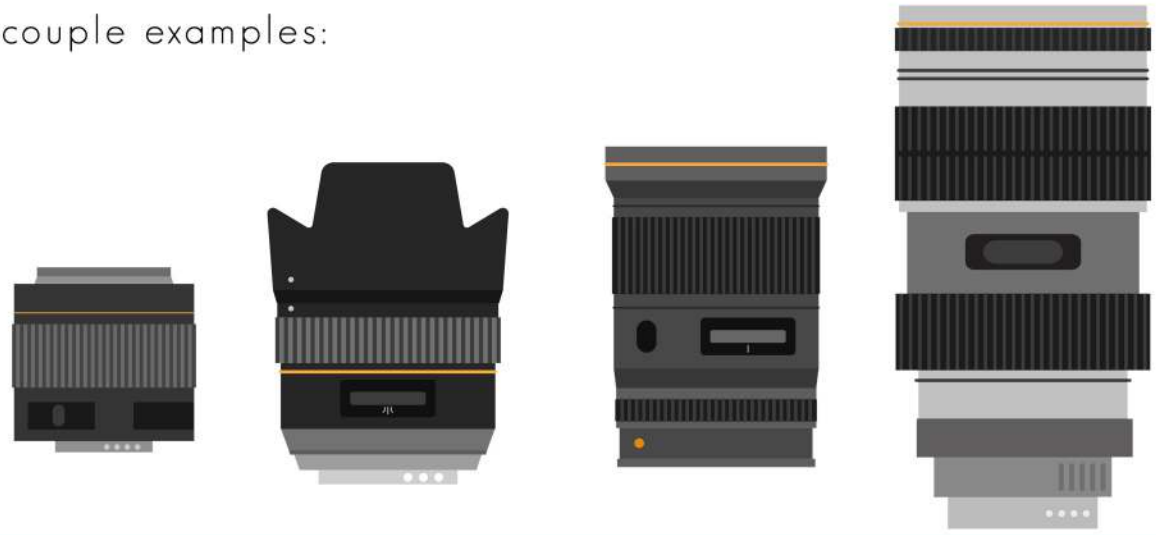
FOCAL LENGTH FORMULA

Here's the standard 'formula' in the photography world that tells you the SLOWEST shutter speed you should have when you're holding your camera:

MINIMUM SHUTTER SPEED = 1 / YOUR FOCAL LENGTH*

So that means that, for example, if I'm shooting with a lens that is 50mm, the slowest I can have my shutter is 1/50th of a second. If I have a lens that is 200mm, then I don't want to have a shutter any slower than 1/200.

Here's a chart with a couple examples:



FOCAL LENGTH:	50MM LENS:	24-70MM LENS:	100MM LENS:	70-200MM LENS:
SHUTTER SPEED:	1/50	1/70	1/100	1/200

*NOTE: IF YOU HAVE A CROP SENSOR CAMERA, THIS RULE CHANGES!

MINIMUM SHUTTER SPEED = 1 / YOUR FOCAL LENGTH X 1.5

SHUTTER SPEED RULES

KIMBERLEE'S SHUTTER SPEED RULES:

The focal length formula can be helpful at times, however, this rule is really only for when you're shooting STILL objects. I usually take photos of people - whether it's my kids at home, or my photography clients - and because I HATE blurry photos so much, I decided to create my OWN rules for photographing people, just to be sure that I am in the 'safe zone' and don't end up with a lot of movement blur to my pictures.

FIND WHAT WORKS FOR YOU:

As you get more comfortable and experienced with shooting, you will find what shutter speeds work best for you, too. You may feel comfortable shooting at different speeds than what I share here. But these are just MY rules, and what I've found works best for me.

SHUTTER SPEED RULES

1/1000	**SPORTS/BIKES** When there is a lot of movement in my scene and I want to freeze that motion, I don't usually let my shutter go any slower than 1/1000th of a second. This works well for things like fast sports or kids riding a bike.	
1/500	**KIDS RUNNING** A 'safe zone' speed for me when kids are moving quickly / running - is 1/500th of a second. Any slower than that and there might be blur.	
1/400	**TODDLERS ON THE MOVE** I want my shutter speed to be nice and quick when I'm following a toddler who is fast-moving. 1/400 ensures that I can get sharp images in this case.	
1/250	**PORTRAITS OF KIDS** Kids tend to have more movement and don't always sit still. So in this case, I like to keep my shutter speed at 1/250 -- no slower -- or I'll be worried that the images won't be as sharp as I'd like.	
1/160	**PEOPLE WHO STAY STILL** The slowest I will go with my shutter is 1/160th of a second when I'm working with people. If it gets slower than that, I'm just too worried about movement and blur. So this works great for people or portraits who aren't doing a lot of moving.	
1/125	**STILL OBJECTS** When I'm working with something that isn't moving at all, I feel comfortable shooting with a shutter as slow as 1/125. Yes, I CAN go slower if needed - by making sure I remain very still as I shoot. However this is just my 'safe zone' speed.	

SHUTTER SPEED RULES

CHECK YOUR SHUTTER!

Now these aren't hard & fast rules - and sometimes it will change based on the situation, but having a guideline like this is really helpful for me to pay attention, and notice when my shutter is too slow.

So the next time you feel that your images just aren't as sharp as you'd like, check your shutter speed and see if you might be able to get a more clear & sharp image, simply by making that shutter a bit faster.