

## TAKING GREAT HORSE PHOTOS by Trudy Nicholson

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### SOME HELPFUL INFORMATION TO HELP YOU TAKE BETTER IMAGES OF EQUINE ACTION



Horse riding is a popular sport in NZ. Many people want to have their special moments captured.

With the availability of digital cameras, there are an increasing number of amateur photographers out there but there are few who can really capture that moment with precision and clarity. Photography, like most art forms develops the more one participates, experiments and has plenty of practise – take a lot of photos!

Take a look through a horse magazine and study images.

Take a look at the classifieds – do some studies of photos

– has the horse for sale been shown off to its full potential? I've put these tips together to help you take great horse photos of your own:

Horses jumping are not always easy to photograph. There are a couple of options here. I have found the most effective method of capturing, being in focus and taking a great image is to set the camera on manual focus.

Here's an exercise to try:

Focus on the jump (when photographing a horse jumping) and see what results you get from:

- Waiting until the horse and rider come into view or
- Following the horse and rider and snap it just after take off. The latter I have found most effective. It is a matter of practising as the ideal photo is mid flight. You can set your camera settings manually or else set to 'sport' (action) mode.
- Or try using the 'automatic focus' setting on your camera – follow the horse and wait for the right moment to press the shutter release button.

Tip: Use a fast shutter speed. That is at least 500<sup>th</sup> of a second and up to 1000<sup>th</sup> of a second. Most people want clear, crisp jumping action images – a blurred image is of no use to anyone!





Capturing motion (action) is an area that seems to give many amateur photographers a lot of grief. Say for example you want a photo of a horse jumping. I am often told that the shot was captured as the horse was about to take off or after it had landed hence the photo was of no use. The problem is often technological; with some digital cameras there is a small time lapse in the time between the shutter being pressed and the picture actually being taken. There can be no delay if you want to 'capture motion'; it is only a matter of seconds and your subject has moved completely out of the frame. The new digital SLR's do not have the 'lag' that the compact models have. But in saying that I have still

taken some great jumping shots with my little Nikon compact camera. I like to carry this small camera with me – I find its small size convenient to carry in my bag. Remember you never know when you might get 'the image' of a lifetime. Another option is to use burst mode or 'continuous mode'. This means you can take several frames per second. Many compact cameras have this option. It will lessen the chance of missing motion.

Be sure to read your camera manual!

You need to be familiar with your camera. I find when I'm using a new camera I like to get out there and practise – it's always an exciting challenge and each camera handles differently. The great thing about digitals is that you can go home, download your images and see what you've achieved. If I see a problem I then read up and find out how I can improve my shot next time.

#### 📷 TIPS FOR BETTER ACTION PHOTOS:

- Use a shutter speed over 1/ 1000<sup>th</sup> to freeze your subject.
- If the subject is moving fast (e.g., a horse galloping around a cross country course) you will need at least a speed of 1/500<sup>th</sup> or more. Most digitals have speeds above these settings so there should not be a problem having a fast enough speed.
- If in doubt set your SLR to sports mode and the camera will work out the settings automatically.
- In sports mode you will have the fastest possible shutter speed.
- Set your shutter speeds according to the result you want to achieve i.e. either a frozen subject or capturing the movement (blur).

Try not to let your shutter speed get below 1/60<sup>th</sup> as this is the slowest speed one can hand hold a camera without a tripod without camera shake. At this speed and below you will always get motion blur.

It is said that action photography takes more skill than other kinds of photography. I believe amateur photographers can also produce good images. Give it a try and if you would like any further help please feel free to contact me.

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