

LEARNING MADE EASY



Nikon® D780™

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Get a thorough tour
of your Nikon D780

Combine photography principles
with camera features

Adjust camera settings to
produce unique results

Doug Sahlin

Author of *Canon EOS 7D Mark II
For Dummies*

Nikon® D780™

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by Doug Sahlin

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Introduction

Your Nikon D780 is the latest and greatest digital camera on the market, with a stunning 24.5-megapixel capture, live view, high-definition video, and much more. But all this technology can be a bit daunting, especially if this is your first real digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera or if you've upgraded from an earlier Nikon model. When you unboxed your Nikon D780, you graduated to the big leagues. All you have to do is master the power you hold in your hands!

I've been using DSLR cameras since 2000. In fact, my first digital camera was a Nikon. But my earliest forays into photography were with film cameras, cameras that didn't give you instant gratification by showing you the resulting image on an LCD monitor. I learned the hard way (and wasted a lot of film), but I loved photography, so I persevered and created images whenever I had the time. I've photographed weddings and sporting events for hire, and I've written several books about digital photography. In this book, I share my experience and knowledge with you. I don't get too technical in this book, even though your camera is very technical. I also do my best to keep it lively. So, if you want to master your Nikon D780, you have the right book in your hands.

About This Book

If you find the buttons and menus on your shiny new D780 a tad intimidating, this book is for you. Here, I take you from novice point-and-shoot photographer to one who can utilize all the bells and whistles your camera offers. You'll find information about the camera menus and every button on your camera, as well as when to use them, and what settings to use for specific picture-taking situations.

This book is a reference, which means you don't have to commit it to memory or read it from beginning to end. Instead, you can return to it again and again, using the Table of Contents and Index to find the information you need.

Throughout the book, you'll see sidebars (text in gray boxes), as well as Technical Stuff icons. All this text is interesting, but if you're short on time or just need to know the basics, you can safely skip these pieces without missing anything critical.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

Foolish Assumptions

As I wrote this book, I made some assumptions about you, the reader:

- » **You own, or have on order, a Nikon D780.** If you own one of those cute little point-and-shoot Nikon cameras, or shoot images with your smartphone, good for you, but this book won't help you with those cameras.
- » **You have a computer on which to download your images and preferably a program with which to edit your images.** This program may be something like Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Photoshop Elements, Adobe Lightroom, the Photos application that comes with macOS, or Nikon's Capture NX-D, which is available for Windows and Mac.
- » **A basic knowledge of photography is also helpful.** If you're totally new to photography and want more information about things like aperture, shutter speed, and ISO, and how they combine to make a properly exposed image, check out *Digital SLR Photography All-in-One For Dummies*, 3rd Edition, by Robert Correll (Wiley).

Icons Used in This Book

Every *For Dummies* book has icons in the margin that draw your attention to important bits of information, and this book is no different. Here's what the various icons mean:



TIP

Whenever you see the Tip icon, you're sure to find information designed to save you time and make your life easier (well, at least your life with your Nikon D780 — I can't promise anything beyond that).



WARNING

The Warning icon warns you about something you should not do — something your fearless author has likely already done and wants to warn you off from. Think of these as headache prevention.



REMEMBER

The Remember icon is the equivalent of a virtual piece of string tied around your finger. This is information you want to commit to memory.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

The Technical Stuff icon is for the geeks in the group who like to know all manner of technical stuff. If that's you, great! If not, you can skip anything marked with this icon without missing anything essential to your understanding of the topic at hand.

Beyond This Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this product comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet that includes the Nikon D780 shooting modes and metering modes, a post-shoot checklist, and more. To get this Cheat Sheet, go to www.dummies.com and type **Nikon D780 For Dummies Cheat Sheet** in the Search box.

Where to Go from Here

If you've had a chance to dip your toe into the shallow end of the Nikon D780 pool, you probably know the camera pretty well, so feel free to skip the first four chapters of the book, and pick and choose which sections contain the information you need to become even better acquainted with your camera.

If you bought this book before getting your camera, or your friendly retailer suggested you buy a copy to get up to speed quickly, I've got you covered. In Chapters 1 through 4, I familiarize you with the basic things you need to know to create great pictures in a short period of time. In Chapters 5 and 6, I show you how to specify image size and image quality and get down to brass tacks with the tilting monitor. No matter where you start, feel free to create your own buffet of information from the remaining chapters in the book. When you're just getting started, consider keeping a copy of the book in your camera bag for ready reference.

Finally, when you go on a photo shoot with your D780, take your time. If you rush a photo shoot, you miss the point of photography, which in my opinion is to observe, imagine, and create.

1

**Getting Started
with the
Nikon D780**

IN THIS PART . . .

Get to know the lay of the land and become familiar with the controls of your Nikon D780.

Learn how to set up your Nikon D780.

Accessorize your Nikon D780.

Find out how to take great pictures automatically.

Specify image size and format.

Master the camera's tilting monitor.

- » Getting familiar with camera controls
- » Looking at your camera from the top, bottom, front, and back

Chapter **1**

Exploring the Nikon D780's Controls

The Nikon D780, which evolved from the Nikon D750 that was introduced in late 2014, is a full-frame camera that captures stunning 24.5-megapixel images. It has all the latest bells and whistles Nikon has to offer on a full-frame digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera. It's a technological marvel that enables you to take great pictures and capture high-definition (HD) video. The camera has a new processor and an advanced, highly customizable 51-point auto-focus system that gives you the ability to capture great images in low light and at a blindingly fast speed of up to 12 frames per second, which is ideal for action photography. You can also create high dynamic range (HDR) images and use the interval timer to create time-lapse movies. This camera features a viewfinder that shows you 100 percent of what the lens captures at a magnification of 0.70x — what you see is what you get. The camera also features a virtual horizon, which enables you to capture images that are perfectly level.

The learning curve with all these bells and whistles may seem a little steep, but don't worry — I'm an experienced professional photographer, and I take pride in understanding how a camera works and how to get the most from any camera. In this chapter, I introduce you to the Nikon D780's controls and help you get the lay of the land, so to speak.

Exploring the Top of Your Camera

The top of the camera is where you find the controls you use most when taking pictures. This is where you change settings like ISO (how sensitive the sensor is to light) and shutter speed, choose a shooting mode, and press the shutter button to take a picture.



ISO stands for International Organization for Standardization, but all you really need to know is that, on your camera, it controls how sensitive the camera's sensor is to light.

You can do lots of other things from the top of the camera, which, in my humble opinion, is the most important real estate on the camera, with the possible exception of the lens. I suggest you get to know the controls on the top of your camera intimately, like the back of your hand. Many photographers, including me, make it a point to memorize where the controls are and access them without taking an eye off the viewfinder.

Here's what you find on the top of the camera (see Figure 1-1):

- » **Release mode dial lock release:** Press the button to unlock the release mode dial.
- » **Release mode dial:** Rotate this dial to choose whether pressing the shutter button captures a single image or a sequence of images. (Turn to Chapter 9 for more on the shutter release modes.)
- » **Mode dial lock release:** Pushing this button enables you to change from one shooting mode to another. When in the upright and locked position, it's not possible to accidentally change shooting modes in the heat of battle.
- » **Mode dial:** You use this dial to specify which shooting mode the camera uses to take the picture. (For more on how to use this dial to choose specific shooting modes, turn to Chapter 9; for more on how to choose optimal settings for specific picture-taking situations, turn to Chapter 13.)
- » **Accessory shoe:** Slide a flash unit that's compatible with the Nikon D780 into this slot (also sometimes known as a hot shoe). The contacts in the accessory shoe communicate between the camera and the flash unit. (For more on flash photography, turn to Chapter 11.)
- » **Sub-command dial:** This dial is used in conjunction with menu commands and other buttons to specify settings.
- » **Power switch:** Turn this switch one notch to power the camera on, and turn it a second notch to turn on the LCD illuminator.



FIGURE 1-1:
The top of the
Nikon D780.

- » **Shutter-release button:** This button pre-focuses the camera and takes a picture. (Turn to Chapter 2 for more information.)
- » **Movie-record button:** Press this button to start recording video. (For more on how to use this button with other features to capture videos, turn to Chapter 8.)
- » **ISO button:** Use this button in conjunction with the main command dial to choose the ISO sensitivity of the camera's sensor. (For more on setting the ISO, turn to Chapter 10.)

- » **Exposure compensation button:** Use the button in conjunction with the main command dial to increase or decrease the exposure. (See Chapter 9 for more information on using this feature.)
- » **Control panel:** This panel shows you all the current settings. (Turn to Chapter 2 for more on how to read the information on the control panel.)
- » **Focal plane mark:** Used when you need to measure exact distance from the subject to the focal plane for manual focus or macro photography.
- » **Main command dial:** Use this dial in conjunction with another button or menu command to change a setting. For example, you hold the AF-mode button and use the main command dial to specify the AF mode used to capture images.

Exploring the Back of Your Camera

The back of the camera is where you find controls to capture images or movies using live view, access the camera menu, and much more.

Here's what you find on the back of your Nikon D780 (see Figure 1-2):

- » **Viewfinder eyepiece:** Look through the viewfinder to compose your pictures. Shooting information, battery status, and the amount of shots that can be stored on the memory card are displayed in the viewfinder. The eyepiece cushions your eye when you press it against the viewfinder and creates a seal that prevents ambient light from having an adverse effect on the exposure.
- » **Diopter adjustment control:** This control fine-tunes the viewfinder to your eyesight. (Turn to Chapter 2 for more on how to use this control.)
- » **Live view selector:** This control is a switch that enables you to capture images in live view mode or to shoot movies. (I explain how to use this switch in detail in Chapters 7 and 8.)
- » **Live view button:** Press this button to lock the mirror; the view through the lens is displayed on the tilting monitor. Push this button to shoot images or movies in live view mode (see Chapter 6).
- » **AF-ON button:** This button can be used for focus in autofocus mode. You can also choose the role assigned to this button by creating a custom setting (see Chapter 14).
- » **AE-L/AF-L button:** This button enables you to lock exposure and focus to a specific part of the frame (see Chapter 9).

- » **Multi selector:** You use the multi selector for a myriad of tasks, such as changing the autofocus point, selecting an option when using the *i* menu instead of the camera menu, switching from one camera menu to the next, or selecting a menu item. The multi selector has four arrows (up, down, right, and left) that you use to navigate to and select options, menu commands, and settings. In the middle of the dial is an OK button, which you use to commit a setting or option. (I show you how to use this dial throughout this book as it relates to a specific task.)
- » **OK button:** Use this button to select a highlighted option. This button can also be assigned to perform a specific task in viewfinder or live view photography (see Chapter 14).
- » **Focus selector lock:** Use this button to lock focus to a specific autofocus point. This feature comes in handy when you're focusing on an off-center subject or locking focus to a specific point in the frame.
- » ***i* button:** Press this button to access the *i* menu. (I show you how to use the *i* menu throughout this book in conjunction with various tasks.)
- » **Speaker:** This is where camera sounds and movie sounds are played.
- » **Memory card access lamp:** Flashes when the camera is accessing the memory card.
- » **Tilting monitor:** This is where you view menu items, review images, and create images and movies in live view mode. (Turn to Chapter 2 for more on the tilting monitor.)
- » **Info button:** Use this button to review shooting information.
- » **Zoom out/metering button:** Use this button to change metering modes (see Chapter 9). This button is also used to zoom out while reviewing images.
- » **Zoom in/QUAL button:** Use this button to specify image quality (see Chapter 5). This button is also used to zoom in while reviewing images.
- » **Help/protect/WB button:** This button is multifunctional. You can use it to view help information on the currently selected item (when available), protect images when reviewing them, or set the white balance.
- » **MENU button:** Press this button to display the last-used camera menu on the tilting monitor. (Turn to Chapter 4 for more on the camera menu.)
- » **Charge lamp:** Illuminates when you connect an external charger to the camera.
- » **Play button:** Press this button to review images and play movies (see Chapter 6).
- » **Delete button:** This button deletes an image (see Chapter 4).



FIGURE 1-2:
The back of the
Nikon D780.

Exploring the Front of Your Camera

On front of your camera, you'll find a couple of buttons that you use every day and some that access features you rarely use. The following features are on the front of your camera (see Figure 1-3):

- » **Self-timer lamp:** This light flashes when the self-timer is used. It flashes faster when it's time to smile and say, "Cheese."
- » **Pv button:** Press this button to preview the *depth of field* (the amount of the image in front of and behind your subject that's in focus) at the current f-stop.
- » **Fn button:** Press this button to quickly access selected settings. The default role for this button is to choose image area (see Chapter 5). Pressing this button is not for the ambidextrously challenged — you have to hold the button with one hand and rotate either the main command dial and/or the sub-command dial. You can assign a different role to the button by creating a custom setting (see Chapter 14).
- » **Stereo microphone:** Records audio when recording movies. Because the Nikon D780 is a state-of-the-art camera, it records in stereo.
- » **Flash mode/flash compensation button:** Use this button to choose the flash mode and to enable flash compensation. (I discuss flash, an illuminating subject, in Chapter 11.)
- » **BKT button:** Use this button to specify the bracketing increment and number of shots when bracketing exposure. You can also change the role of this button by creating a custom setting (see Chapter 14).
- » **Lens mounting mark:** Use this to align a lens when mounting it to your camera. (For more information, see Chapter 3.)
- » **Lens release button:** Press this button when releasing a lens from the camera (see Chapter 3).
- » **AF-mode button:** Use this button to specify the desired autofocus (AF) mode. (For more information on autofocus modes, turn to Chapter 10.)
- » **Focus-mode selector:** Use this switch to specify autofocus or manual focus. (For more information on focusing your camera, see Chapter 4.)
- » **Body cap (not shown):** Use the body cap to protect the interior of the camera when a lens isn't attached.



FIGURE 1-3:
The front of
the Nikon
D780.

Exploring the Bottom of Your Camera

Here's what you find on the bottom of the Nikon D780:

- » **Battery-chamber cover:** Protects your battery from the elements.
- » **Battery-chamber cover latch:** Press this latch to one side to open the cover and access your battery.
- » **Tripod socket:** Thread a tripod into this socket. Tripods come in handy when you want to steady the camera when shooting at slow shutter speeds or when you're taking a family photo and you don't want to be missing from the frame.

- » Changing the default settings that matter most
- » Taking a gander at the tilting monitor
- » Getting to know the control panel
- » Working with the viewfinder
- » Taking a look at the *i* menu
- » Seeing what happens when you press the Info button

Chapter 2

Setting Up the Nikon D780

When you unbox your Nikon D780, it's like stepping into a brand-new car. Everything is all bright and shiny. You nestle into the driver's seat and take it all in. You know how to drive, but this car is different from your old one. It's the same with your new camera. You probably know how to take pictures, but the viewfinder and the tilting monitor are different. And maybe your last camera didn't have a control panel on top of the camera. Your Nikon D780 does. It's a whole new world!

Even if you're a seasoned Nikon user, there's something for you in this chapter. Here, I show you how to set the date and time, use the tilting monitor, get familiar with the viewfinder and *i* menu, and more.

Customizing the Default Settings

Your camera ships with some default settings you can modify to suit your taste. In this section, I show you how.

Setting the date and time

Chances are, your camera won't be set up with the correct date and time when you get it, so one of the first things you'll want to do is get those two items set correctly. To change the date and time, follow these steps:

1. Rotate the power switch to the ON position.

Your Nikon D780 powers on.

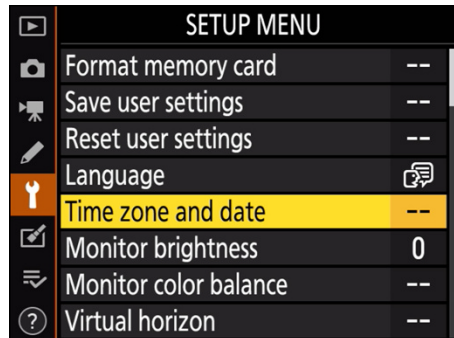
2. Press the MENU button on the back of your camera.

You're presented with many choices. Breathe.

3. Press the down arrow on the multi selector to navigate to the setup menu (it looks like a wrench), and then press the left arrow on the multi selector to select the icon.

The monitor refreshes, and you're presented with lots of setup options.

4. Press the right arrow on the multi selector to place the cursor inside the menus, and then press the down arrow to select Time Zone and Date (see Figure 2-1).



5. Press the right arrow on the multi selector.

The monitor refreshes and displays the time zone and date options.

6. Press the down arrow on the multi selector to select the Time Zone option (see Figure 2-2).

FIGURE 2-1: Navigating to Time Zone and Date.

7. Press the left arrow or right arrow on the multi selector to select your time zone (see Figure 2-3), and then press OK.

The camera is set to your time zone and the monitor refreshes to show the time zone and date options.