

Making Everything Easier!™

Nikon D90

FOR

DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Use the viewscreen to set up, shoot, and review photos
- Take control of lighting, exposure, and color
- Download, manage, and share your photos online or in prints

IN FULL COLOR!

Julie Adair King
Author of all editions of Digital
Photography For Dummies®



Nikon[®] D90 For Dummies[®]

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by Julie Adair King



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About the Author

Julie Adair King is the author of many books about digital photography and imaging, including the best-selling *Digital Photography For Dummies*. Her most recent titles include a series of guides to popular digital SLR cameras, including *Nikon D60 For Dummies* and *Nikon D40/D40x For Dummies*. Other works include *Digital Photography Before & After Makeovers*, *Digital Photo Projects For Dummies*, *Julie King's Everyday Photoshop For Photographers*, *Julie King's Everyday Photoshop Elements*, and *Shoot Like a Pro!: Digital Photography Techniques*. When not writing, King teaches digital photography at such locations as the Palm Beach Photographic Centre. A graduate of Purdue University, she resides in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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Introduction

Nikon. The name has been associated with top-flight photography equipment for generations. And the introduction of the D90 has only enriched Nikon's well-deserved reputation, offering all the control a die-hard photography enthusiast could want while at the same time providing easy-to-use, point-and-shoot features for the beginner.

In fact, the D90 offers so *many* features that sorting them all out can be more than a little confusing, especially if you're new to digital photography, SLR photography, or both. For starters, you may not even be sure what SLR means or how it affects your picture taking, let alone have a clue as to all the other techie terms you encounter in your camera manual — *resolution, aperture, white balance*, and so on. And if you're like many people, you may be so overwhelmed by all the controls on your camera that you haven't yet ventured beyond fully automatic picture-taking mode. Which is a shame because it's sort of like buying a Porsche and never actually taking it on the road.

Therein lies the point of *Nikon D90 For Dummies*: Through this book, you can discover not just what each bell and whistle on your camera does, but also when, where, why, and how to put it to best use. Unlike many photography books, this one doesn't require any previous knowledge of photography or digital imaging to make sense of things, either. In classic *For Dummies* style, everything is explained in easy-to-understand language, with lots of illustrations to help clear up any confusion.

In short, what you have in your hands is the paperback version of an in-depth photography workshop tailored specifically to your Nikon picture-taking powerhouse.

A Quick Look at What's Ahead

This book is organized into four parts, each devoted to a different aspect of using your camera. Although chapters flow in a sequence that's designed to take you from absolute beginner to experienced user, I've also tried to make each chapter as self-standing as possible so that you can explore the topics that interest you in any order you please.

The following sections offer brief previews of each part. If you're eager to find details on a specific topic, the index shows you exactly where to look.

Part I: Fast Track to Super Snaps

Part I contains four chapters that help you get up and running with your D90.

Chapter 1, "Getting the Lay of the Land," offers a tour of the external controls on your camera, shows you how to navigate camera menus to access internal options, and walks you through initial camera setup and customization steps.

Chapter 2, “Taking Great Pictures, Automatically,” shows you how to get the best results when using the camera’s fully automatic exposure modes, including the Digital Vari-Program scene modes such as Sports mode, Portrait mode, and Landscape mode.

Chapter 3, “Controlling Picture Quality and Size,” introduces you to two camera settings that are critical whether you shoot in automatic or manual mode: the Image Size and Image Quality settings, which control resolution (pixel count), file format, file size, and picture quality.

Chapter 4, “Monitor Matters: Picture Playback and Live View Shooting” offers just what its title implies. Look here to find out how to review your photos and how to take pictures using your monitor to compose the scene — that is, how to use the D90’s Live View mode to shoot both still photos and record short digital movies. This chapter also discusses how to delete unwanted images and protect your favorites from accidental erasure.

Part II: Taking Creative Control

Chapters in this part help you unleash the full creative power of your D90 by moving into semiautomatic or manual photography modes.

Chapter 5, “Getting Creative with Exposure and Lighting,” covers the all-important topic of exposure, starting with an explanation of three critical exposure controls: aperture, shutter speed, and ISO. This chapter also discusses your camera’s advanced exposure modes (P, S, A, and M);

explains exposure options such as Active D-Lighting, automatic exposure bracketing, metering modes, and exposure compensation; and offers tips for using the flash.

Chapter 6, “Manipulating Focus and Color,” provides help with controlling those aspects of your pictures. Head here for information about your camera’s many autofocus options, for tips on how to manipulate depth of field (the zone of sharp focus in a picture), and for details about color controls such as white balance.

Chapter 7, “Putting It All Together,” summarizes all the techniques explained in earlier chapters, providing a quick-reference guide to the camera settings and shooting strategies that produce the best results for specific types of pictures: portraits, action shots, landscape scenes, close-ups, and more.

Part III: Working with Picture Files

This part of the book, as its title implies, discusses the often-confusing aspect of moving your pictures from camera to computer and beyond.

Chapter 8, “Downloading, Organizing, and Archiving Your Picture Files,” guides you through the process of transferring pictures from your camera memory card to your computer’s hard drive or other storage device. Look here, too, for details about using the D90’s built-in tool for processing files that you shoot in the Nikon Raw

format (NEF). Just as important, this chapter explains how to organize and safeguard your photo files.

Chapter 9, “Printing and Sharing Your Pictures,” helps you turn your digital files into “hard copies” that look as good as those you see on the camera monitor. This chapter also explains how to prepare your pictures for online sharing, create digital slide shows, and, for times when you have the neighbors over, display your pictures and movies on a television screen.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

In famous *For Dummies* tradition, the book concludes with two “top ten” lists containing additional bits of information and advice.

Chapter 10, “Ten (Or So) Fun and Practical Retouch Menu Features,” shows you how to fix less-than-perfect images using features found on your camera’s Retouch menu, such as automated red-eye removal. You also find out how to apply color effects and perform a few other photo-enhancement tricks.

Chapter 11, “Ten Special-Purpose Features to Explore on a Rainy Day,” presents information about some camera features that, while not found on most “Top Ten Reasons I Bought My D90” lists, are nonetheless interesting, useful on occasion, or a bit of both.

Icons and Other Stuff to Note

If this isn't your first *For Dummies* book, you may be familiar with the large, round icons that decorate its margins. If not, here's your very own icon-decoder ring:



A Tip icon flags information that will save you time, effort, money, or some other valuable resource, including your sanity.



Lots of information in this book is of a technical nature — digital photography is a technical animal, after all. But if I present a detail that is useful mainly for impressing your technology-geek friends, I mark it with this icon.



I apply this icon either to introduce information that is especially worth storing in your brain's long-term memory or to remind you of a fact that may have been displaced from that memory by some other pressing fact.



When you see this icon, look alive. It indicates a potential danger zone that can result in much wailing and teeth-gnashing if ignored.

Additionally, I need to point out three additional details that will help you use this book:

Other margin art: Replicas of some of your camera's buttons also appear in the margins of some paragraphs. I include these to provide a quick reminder of the appearance of the button being discussed.

Software menu commands: In sections that cover software, a series of words connected by an arrow indicates commands that you choose from the program menus. For example, if a step tells you to “Choose File⇒Convert Files,” click the File menu to unfurl it and then click the Convert Files command on the menu.

Camera firmware: *Firmware* is the internal software that controls many of your camera's operations. This book was written using version 1.0.0 of the firmware, which was the most current version at the time of publication.

Occasionally, Nikon releases firmware updates, and it's a good idea to check out the Nikon Web site (www.nikon.com) periodically to find out whether any updates are available. (Chapter 1 tells you how to determine which firmware version your camera is running.) Firmware updates typically don't carry major feature changes — they're mostly used to solve technical glitches in existing features — but if you do download an update, be sure to read the accompanying description of what it accomplishes so that you can adapt my instructions as necessary.

About the Software Shown in This Book

Providing specific instructions for performing photo organizing and editing tasks requires that I feature specific software. In sections that cover file downloading, archiving, printing, and e-mail sharing, I selected Nikon ViewNX and Nikon Transfer, both of which ship free with your camera and work on both the Windows and Mac operating systems.

Rest assured, though, that the tools used in ViewNX and Nikon Transfer work very similarly in other programs, so you should be able to easily adapt the steps to whatever software you use. (I recommend that you read your software manual for details, of course.)

Practice, Be Patient, and Have Fun!

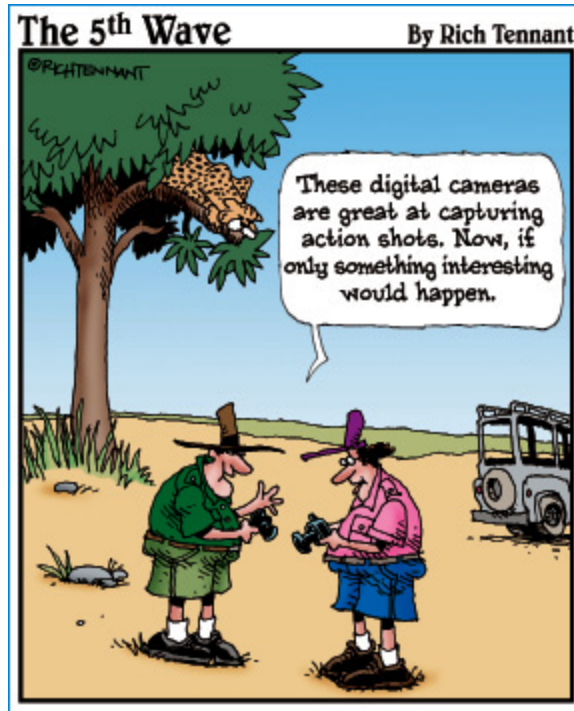
To wrap up this preamble, I want to stress that if you initially think that digital photography is too confusing or too technical for you, you're in very good company. *Everyone* finds this stuff a little mind-boggling at first. So take it slowly, experimenting with just one or two new camera settings or techniques at first. Then, each time you go on a photo outing, make it a point to add one or two more shooting skills to your repertoire.

I know that it's hard to believe when you're just starting out, but it really won't be long before everything starts to come together. With some time, patience, and practice, you'll soon wield your camera like a pro, dialing in the necessary settings to capture your creative vision almost instinctively.

So without further ado, I invite you to grab your camera, a cup of whatever it is you prefer to sip while you read, and start exploring the rest of this book. Your D90 is the perfect partner for your photographic journey, and I thank you for allowing me, through this book, to serve as your tour guide.

Part I

Fast Track to Super Snaps



In this part . . .

Making sense of all the controls on your D90 isn't something you can do in an afternoon — heck, in a week, or maybe even a month. But that doesn't mean that you can't take great pictures today. By using your camera's point-and-shoot automatic modes, you can capture terrific images with very little effort. All you do is compose the scene, and the camera takes care of almost everything else.

This part shows you how to take best advantage of your camera's automatic features and also addresses some basic setup steps, such as adjusting the viewfinder to your eyesight and getting familiar with the camera menus, buttons, and dials. In addition, chapters in this part explain how to obtain the very best picture quality, whether you shoot in an automatic or manual mode, and how to use your camera's picture-playback and Live View features.





1

Getting the Lay of the Land

In This Chapter

- Attaching and using an SLR lens
 - Adjusting the viewfinder to your eyesight
 - Working with memory cards
 - Getting acquainted with your camera
 - Selecting from menus
 - Displaying onscreen help
 - Customizing basic operations
-

I still remember the day that I bought my first SLR film camera. I was excited to finally move up from my one-button point-and-shoot camera, but I was a little anxious, too. My new pride and joy sported several unfamiliar buttons and dials, and the explanations in the camera manual clearly were written for someone with an engineering degree. And then there was the whole business of attaching the lens to the camera, an entirely new task for me. I saved up my pennies a long time for that camera — what if my inexperience caused me to damage the thing before I even shot my first pictures?

You may be feeling similarly insecure if your Nikon D90 is your first SLR, although some of the buttons on the camera back may look familiar if you've previously used a

digital point-and-shoot camera. If your D90 is both your first SLR and first digital camera, you may be doubly intimidated.

Trust me, though, that your camera isn't nearly as complicated as its exterior makes it appear. With a little practice and the help of this chapter, which introduces you to each external control, you'll quickly become as comfortable with your camera's buttons and dials as you are with the ones on your car's dashboard. This chapter also guides you through the process of mounting and using an SLR lens, working with digital memory cards, navigating your camera's menus, and customizing basic camera operations.

Getting Comfortable with Your Lens

One of the biggest differences between a point-and-shoot camera and an SLR (*single-lens reflex*) camera is the lens. With an SLR, you can swap out lenses to suit different photographic needs, going from an extreme close-up lens to a super-long telephoto, for example. In addition, an SLR lens has a movable focusing ring that gives you the option of focusing manually instead of relying on the camera's autofocus mechanism.

Of course, those added capabilities mean that you need a little background information to take full advantage of your lens. To that end, the next four sections explain the process of attaching, removing, and using this critical part of your camera.

Attaching a lens

Whatever lens you choose, follow these steps to attach it to the camera body:

- 1. Remove the cap that covers the lens mount on the front of the camera.**
- 2. Remove the cap that covers the back of the lens.**
- 3. Hold the lens in front of the camera so that the little white dot on the lens aligns with the matching dot on the camera body.**

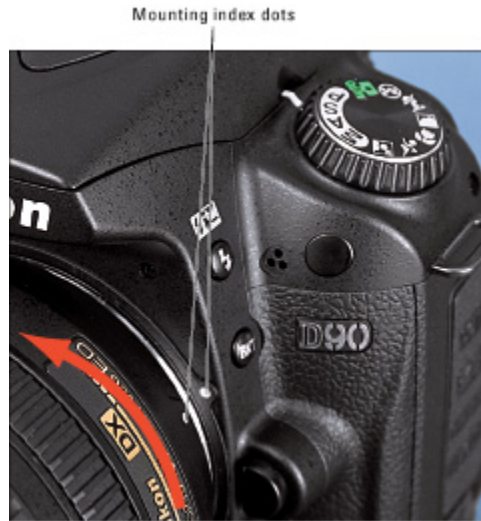
Official photography lingo uses the term *mounting index* instead of *little white dot*. Either way, you can see the markings in question in Figure 1-1.

Note that the figure (and others in this chapter) shows you the D90 with its so-called “kit lens” — the 18–105mm Vibration Reduction (VR) zoom lens that Nikon sells as a unit with the body. If you buy a lens from a manufacturer other than Nikon, your dot may be red or some other color, so check the lens instruction manual.

- 4. Keeping the dots aligned, position the lens on the camera’s lens mount as shown in Figure 1-1.**

When you do so, grip the lens by its back collar, not the movable, forward end of the lens barrel.

Figure 1-1: When attaching the lens, align the index markers as shown here.



5. Turn the lens in a counter-clockwise direction until the lens clicks into place.

To put it another way, turn the lens toward the side of the camera that sports the shutter button, as indicated by the red arrow in the figure.

6. On a lens that has an aperture ring, set and lock the ring so the aperture is set at the highest f-stop number.

Check your lens manual to find out whether your lens sports an aperture ring and how to adjust it. (The D90 kit lens doesn't.) To find out more about apertures and f-stops, see Chapter 5.



Always attach (or switch) lenses in a clean environment to reduce the risk of getting dust, dirt, and other contaminants inside the camera or lens. Changing lenses on a sandy beach, for example, isn't a good idea. For added safety, point the camera body slightly down when performing this maneuver; doing so helps prevent any flotsam in the air from being drawn into the camera by gravity.

Removing a lens

To detach a lens from the camera body, take these steps:

1. Locate the lens-release button, labeled in Figure 1-2.

2. Grip the rear collar of the lens.

In other words, hold on to the stationary part of the lens that's closest to the camera body and not the movable focusing ring or zoom ring, if your lens has one.

3. Press the lens-release button while turning the lens clockwise until the mounting index on the lens is aligned with the index on the camera body.

The mounting indexes are the little guide dots labeled in Figure 1-1. When the dots line up, the lens should detach from the mount.

4. Place the rear protective cap onto the back of the lens.

If you aren't putting another lens on the camera, cover the lens mount with the protective cap that came with your camera, too.

Figure 1-2: Press the lens-release button to disengage the lens from the mount.

