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TIPS & TUTORIALS

Camera Tip: Taking better photos with your new Nokia Lumia 900 Windows Phone

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As I'm sure many of you figured out in the last couple days... that fancy f2.2 camera on your brand spanking new Nokia Lumia 900 seems to take some awfully disappointing photos – particularly in low-light situations. Maybe you've even started to wonder who this Mr. Carl Zeiss is and whether he even had anything to do with this camera.

Anyway – the good news is that most of the issues seem to be software-based, and somewhat fixable! At the very least, this little guide should help you take much better photos depending on the situation.

1. Taking low light shots? Turn off that silly auto ISO setting to reduce noise and avoid grainy looking photos

THE PROBLEM:

Because the Lumia 900 lacks a back-illuminated sensor (BSI) like other smartphones, it tries to compensate for low-light situations by pumping the ISO to all the way to 800. This causes really grainy-looking photos with blue/red scanlines all over the place. Bleh.

THE FIX:

If you're going to take a photo in a low-light situation, tap the camera settings, scroll down to ISO, and manually change it to ISO 100 or ISO 200. Lowering the ISO, will also produce darker photos and slow down the shutter speed – potentially causing blurry photos – so you're going to need steady hands for this. Otherwise, you can also pump up the ISO to 200/400 if you need more light/faster shutter hopefully still keeping the noise down. Try it out and find the best setting for your shot.

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THE PROOF:

Auto ISO: (ISO 800)



Manual ISO: (ISO 200)



2. Taking close-up or macro shots? Switch the Focus Mode to "Macro"

THE PROBLEM:

This one is really silly, and with all the camera experience that Nokia has – I think they should've known better. Unlike previous Windows Phones that intelligently switched the focus mode to Macro when you tried to take a close-up shot – the Lumia 900 doesn't. Why? I don't know.

THE FIX:

Anyway, this one is simple: If you're taking a close-up shot of something, tap the camera settings button, scroll down to Focus Mode, switch it to "Macro" and watch those close objects finally come into focus!

THE PROOF:

Normal Focus Mode: (tap on close object to "try" and focus)



Macro Focus Mode: (again using tap on object to focus)



3. Taking photos with bright backgrounds? Does your object always seem to be in the dark? You might want to use tap-to-focus (or spot metering)

THE PROBLEM:

I don't think this one is necessarily the fault of the camera or software – but rather limitations of point-and-shoot cameras in general. If you're taking a photo where the background is bright – unless your object is exactly in the center of the photo, the camera won't know to focus on that object and adjust the exposure accordingly. As a result, your object of interest can very easily come out darker than expected. And unfortunately, most beautifully composed photos do not have the object of interest in the center (especially when using the [rule-of-thirds](#)).

THE FIX:

There are a few ways to fix this. The easiest solution is to try using the tap-to-focus feature instead of the physical camera button on the Lumia. Tap-to-focus allows you to tap on your object of interest on the screen, and the camera will refocus on that object and adjust the exposure as well – usually bringing your object into focus and making them brighter even with a bright background.

The other way you can fix this is to change the Metering Mode to Spot (default is usually Center). Spot metering will cause the exposure to be adjusted to a smaller part of the image (usually the center, or focal point), and usually brighten the object you're trying to focus on.

THE PROOF:

Physical camera button:



Tap-to-focus with Spot Metering:



LASTLY...

After messing around a lot with the camera settings, I've personally been very happy with these saved settings:

Everything left on default, except...

Exposure: 1.0 (or 0.0 if you're taking a shot outside with great lighting)

ISO: 200

Focus Mode: Macro (yes, always on macro creates photos with smaller depth of field = more bokeh!)

Flash: OFF

Then scroll to the top and choose "Save Settings" to keep this as your default. Give this a try and let me know how it works for you! It's a bit on the brighter side (I like bright photos!), should work well in low-light situations (particularly indoors), and should work for macro shots and portrait shots well. If

you're taking photos outside, in bright light and sun – I would probably leave the exposure at 0 instead of 1.0.

... and more on the way! If you have any tips of your own – please sound them off in the comments and I'll add them up here as well. Let's prove that this phone can definitely take some awesome photos!

Tags: [900](#), [camera](#), [carl zeiss](#), [closeup](#), [iso](#), [lumia](#), [macro](#), [nokia](#), [photos](#), [pictures](#), [skydrive](#)

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[alright, cool.. so where be the photos dude?](#)



About the Author: [Shift+F](#)

I'm a recent senior computer engineering grad from the University of British Columbia. I'm also a bit of a phone addict - as I currently switch between a BlackBerry, a few iPhones and a few Windows Phones (Samsung Focus, HTC Titan, Lumia 900). I'm now work as a software developer full-time.

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[Ravi Roshan](#)

chk dis image.. original click by lumia 800.. no editing... any setting for this ??

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/t...>



3 weeks ago 3 Likes

Like Reply



Guest

wow so amazing mywpstory.com can you teach us how to take that photo?

2 weeks ago in reply to Ravi Roshan 1 Like

Like Reply



thysommb

Good info. I do wish they'd work on this camera SW. I had to shoot video and capture a still to get an exact copy of the image on my screen, the software kept ruining the shot before it stored. When I take a picture, I just want it to "printscreen" and be done with it!

1 month ago 6 Likes

Like Reply



Sayomical Tech Geek

I agree completely with all the tips on this post especially the macro mode tip. Hoping Nokia releases a fox for the camera soon!

1 month ago 5 Likes

Like Reply



Kirksl

I also noticed if you change Center Weighted to Center Spot and tap the screen where the background is the furthest away, in low lighting, really helps too.

2 months ago 6 Likes

Like Reply



My Windows Phone Story

This is an awesome tip, and I've decided to add it to the post. Cheers buddy.

1 month ago in reply to Kirksl

Like Reply



rdubrmw

thanks!

2 months ago 5 Likes

Like Reply



techblogger

Thanks ShiftF. I'll play with these settings and apply them. Thanks for putting this together.

1 month ago 4 Likes

Like Reply



Hysommb

Author it seems you giving alot of tips but i feel your photos are like totally rubbish. How do you give tips when you cant even take nice photos? Curious?

5 weeks ago 1 Like

Like Reply



Tiwailz

Thx for the great tips. Are they also helpful with the lumia 800?

1 month ago 3 Likes

Like Reply



mikkitt

Very much so.

1 month ago in reply to Tiwailz 1 Like

Like Reply



My Windows Phone Story

As rikkit mentioned - the camera & software are the same in the Lumia 800/900 - so these tips should work well for both phones!

1 month ago · in reply to Tweakz

Like Reply



Lisa Estrella

Thank you so much for the recommending settings. I applied them and now my pictures are so much better! I've been looking for recommended settings everywhere and now I finally found them :) Thanks!

1 month ago · 3 Likes

Like Reply



Kostas X. Kousimovallis

I changed the focus to macro but still having problem with apps that reading barcodes. None of the apps which are in Marketplace are working because the preview its so blur

1 month ago · 2 Likes

Like Reply



My Windows Phone Story

Very interesting. Using most barcode software (such as the Amazon price check one) - I never have to fiddle with settings at all. It seems to re-focus using Macro mode automatically for me.

1 month ago · in reply to Kostas X. Kousimovallis

Like Reply



planetparker

Wait, am I reading this correctly, because I seem to remember that the higher the ISO, the longer the shutter remains open, therefore allowing more light to pass through. So 800 ISO should produce brighter (albeit more grainy) shots, versus 100 ISO. Do I have that right?

1 month ago · 2 Likes

Like Reply



Slade307

With film, the higher the ISO, the more sensitive the film is to light - less light required for a decent image. The shutter doesn't need to be opened for as long. Lower the ISO, the longer the film needs to be exposed to light - slower shutter speed and more chance for blurred images. However, the lower ISO usually had better color.

1 month ago · in reply to planetparker · 5 Likes

Like Reply



Anthony

It's actually the opposite...

ISO relates to the sensitivity of the sensor. 100 being less sensitive than 800. Therefore under the same lighting conditions and assuming constant aperture size, the shutter has to stay open (8x) longer at ISO 100 than at ISO 800 to achieve the same exposure (i.e., collect the same amount of light). So the higher the ISO, the faster (shorter) the shutter speed.

You're right that the higher sensitivity of high ISO's comes at the cost of increased pixel noise.

1 month ago · in reply to planetparker

Like Reply



Gallem White

I do not have steady hands. My old Focus had anti-shake, which made my pictures sharper than I would have imagined possible. My new lumia, however, takes fuzzy picture

after fuzzy picture. Help?

1 month ago 2 Likes

Like Reply



rikkitt

Tap on the screen to take pictures - less wobble

1 month ago in reply to Galen White 1 Like

Like Reply



[My Windows Phone Story](#)

I'd have to agree with rikkitt here. Try using tap-to-focus. Otherwise you might have to bump up the ISO to 400 or even 800 to to speed up that shutter.

1 month ago in reply to rikkitt

Like Reply



Joxxy

Well, I worked perfect for me! I made the recommended settings changes to my lumia 900 and the pictures now look perfect! Thanks Frankie! You are AWESOME!!

2 months ago 3 Likes

Like Reply



Bob R

The above tip is very good. I use iso 200 and ev +.5.
In addition to changing the setup as talked about above. I have found that the scene modes work best. As an example; I have taken multiple landscape shots from the same spot same time etc.. The shots taken using the "Landscape" Scene mode always had better white balance and focus. No matter how careful I was in touching the screen on a far off (infinity) point the camera always wanted to focus on something close by? Night Scene also seems to work better. Obviously the software needs some work. Who is the responsible party for the Camera SW? is it Nokia or Microspeake er Microsoft?

2 months ago 2 Likes

Like Reply



Badbird68

Is the flash the lighthning bolt or the light bulb symbol? what is the lighthning bolt with the letter A?

3 weeks ago

Like Reply



Hysommb

means the camera decide itself when to use the flash

3 weeks ago in reply to Badbird68

Like Reply



Illmanz89

guys i really have problem

maybe it is a bug
whenever i want to shot macro
i will change the setting to macroand a very nice pic taken
but then when i want to take the 2nd pic its like the camera is not in macro anymore
because is is very blurry even i already focus it
i need to change the scene to other type and then change to macro again to take the macro shot again
it is very bothering me
any1 have the same problem??

3 weeks ago

Like Reply



David1111

can you teach me how to take these photos?
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/t...>

1 month ago

Like Reply



alexbong

How I wish the camera would just autofocus close objects instead of doing all the hassle to change to 'macro' mode. And, there's the colour oversaturation problem (Post-processing issue, perhaps). With this fixed, than the camera would be fine for me.

1 month ago

Like Reply



Tazsheam

Good tips. This is a fine phone but the camera is horrid. I've tried your setting and it is now quite improved though still below par.

1 month ago

Like Reply



Techni5

Excellent findings, though I always kept the Lumia 800 ISO at 200 for night shots, auto for day shots. Will test on the Lumia 900 too.

1 month ago

Like Reply



Jaakub Rusimek

No flash? Seriously? What was the point of you buying an high-end mobile in the first place?

1 month ago

Like Reply



My Windows Phone Story

It's not so much that flash is a bad thing. If you're trying to take photos of your friends in a dimmed restaurant, or at a club/bar - flash would probably be very useful. I usually recommend turning off the flash when taking more composed, or scenic shots since cell phone flashes tends to wash out the photo in a weird way.

1 month ago in reply to Jaakub Rusimek

Like Reply



wizlll

you really think a tiny piece of shit flash on any camera is useful? lol even I don't use the flash built into my dslr. and i'm not even a pro photographer.

1 month ago in reply to Jaakub Rusimek

Like Reply



Jaakub Rusimek

Well guess what - flash is there for a reason. There just isn't always enough light to make a good photo. But deal with it your own way. You can always take your halogen lightning in your awesome pocket.

1 month ago in reply to wizlll

Like Reply

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04/13/2012 09:48 AM

[...] with a lot of camera settings, I've found a few tips that might help new Lumia 900 owners out:

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05/09/2012 06:46 AM

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