

how to do panning in photography

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Essence of Photography: Panning

Learn how to create amazing photos of moving subjects by panning the camera.

By [Jason Kravitz](#)

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NYC Taxi Motion by [Jason Kravitz](#)

There are many different kinds of effects you can capture with [long exposure photography](#) and specifically using [motion](#) in your images.

Panning is a special type of motion where the subject is sharp in focus and the background is blurred out.

Street Speed

by [Photo Masala](#)

How to do Panning Photography

The technique is simple in theory. Often it can be done handheld without a tripod if you can try to keep a steady plane of motion.

1) Set your camera for a longer shutter speed.

It does not have to be too long but long enough to capture some motion. The above photo was 1/30" (one thirtieth of a second).

2) Try to track the subject at the same speed it is moving.

It is helpful to start following the subject BEFORE you press the shutter so that you are moving along with it at a similar speed.

For example, if the subject is moving from your left to your right. Turn your body to the left and start tracking. As the subject gets close to your center, press the shutter button and keep tracking to your right as the shutter creates the exposure.

After you release the shutter, keep following the subject with your camera for a short while longer to keep the continuity of motion.

That's it.

Simple right?

speed in b/w

by Davey

You know that you did it correctly when your subject appears in focus, while the background seems to blur out of focus with a sweep of motion.

scooters on patrol

by Jason Kravitz

Practice a Lot

With digital cameras, you can practice panning much more easily than film because you can immediately see if your camera is setup correctly and if you did it right.

Plan to take a lot of practice photos until you get the movement down, and even still, with each new subject and setting, it may take a few practice photos to get it correct.

Speed

by Sugata

Try to practice somewhere where there are many potential subjects. Like on the side of a road with frequently passing cars or bikes. You can even plan your background to try to get something interesting in the blurred out areas.

Mountain Bike Panning

by [Bruno](#)

don't sever the tether

by [Jason Kravitz](#)

Panning People

Panning is not just for fast moving subjects like cars, bikes, and motorcycles. You can pan people walking if you get the motion right.

Though keep in mind that a slower moving subject may require a slower shutter to capture the motion. For example, the photo at the top was 1/30" but this photo below of people walking is 1/4" (one quarter of a second) which means the shutter is open longer to get that slower movement across the frame.

De compras con mama

by [JMYuste](#)

Here are a few other panning photos of different moving things to give you some ideas.

Panning-Suhith

by [Srujan Chennupati](#)

panning-3

by [fateme@@](#)

Merry go round...

by [Warren](#)

Panning Trains

by [parag](#)

You also don't have to always pan in a horizontal direction. You can do panning in a vertical motion as well like this amusement park ride that goes up and down.

Caída libre

by [Josep](#)

Sometimes you may only get part of your subject in focus and sometimes you miss it completely.

While it can be challenging to get it right, it is the type of fun photography experiment that you can practice over and over and when you get a good one, it can be very rewarding.

art bug

by [Jason Kravitz](#)

Essence of Photography is a series of tips, tutorials, and visual inspiration on a variety of photography skills and techniques.

You can practice these skills and more by purchasing a deck of [Photo Cards](#) from Zoom In Reach Out, a non-profit with a mission of teaching to see the world from a different perspective.

All photos in this article were posted to the [Aminus3 Photography Community](#) and are copyrighted by their respective photographers.

Click on any photo to see a larger version or to leave a comment for the photographer.

Want to share your own photography experiments with panning?

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