



# Click Love Grow Creative Workshop:

## Pro Wedding Photography

### With Amy Philp

## Speedlight for Beginners

In the first lesson, Amy says she considers a speedlight an essential part of her camera bag when she's photographing weddings. So Click Love Grow have created this guide for anyone who's never used one but would like to learn.

Many photographers buy speedlights in the hope of combating challenging low light situations, and then end up putting them away in frustration because it feels all too complicated. And I think a reason for this is most online tutorials ARE complicated. Speedlights do have a lot of functions, but some of those functions relate to using a speedlight as part of a bigger studio set up, in conjunction with multiple speedlights, or for shooting from a great distance. Serious overkill.

So we're going to simplify it for you and give you only what you need to know so you can use a speedlight confidently as fill light, to take beautiful photos in challenging light.

We believe the only thing you need to learn in order to use a speedlight to capture events relates to controlling the strength of the flash... and that's what you'll learn in this EASY guide.

Let's go!

## Introduction to Using a Speedlight

This guide will show you how to use a speedlight as fill light, which means adding just enough just enough flash in natural light so you don't have to shoot at crazy high ISO. We'll show you how to do it in daylight for a natural light look, as well as those situations where there's no natural light, eg. outdoors at night or indoors with only low artificial light sources including dance floor lights.

And of course we'll explain how to balance speedlight settings with camera settings, so you'll know what to tweak when the result isn't what you're after.



## How to Angle Your Speedlight

Any good speedlight will have the ability to use the flash head in different positions, from 180 deg to 90 degrees (relative to the body of the speedlight). When shooting weddings, Amy uses her speedlight in the 90 degree position - in other words, pointed straight at her subjects, with the inbuilt bounce card and diffuser pulled out to soften it as much as possible.



## Diffusers

Many speedlights come with an inbuilt diffuser and bounce card which slides out from the front. The diffuser helps to soften and scatter the light, and the bounce card helps to direct it. Try playing with and without both to get a feel for the difference they make.

You can also buy small diffusers that attach to the front of your speedlight and these are really popular with wedding photographers. If that's something that interests you, look online for Gary Fong Lightsphere, Magmod, Magsphere, Godox Diffusion Dome, or if you want to go super budget, you can even get miniature light boxes that attach with a velcro strap.

But for the lessons in this workshop, and even going forward, you can get away with a speedlight and no other diffuser attachment.

Read on for a printable summary you can use as a quick start guide to help you practice.

## Speedlight Modes

Just like your camera, speedlights also have auto modes and manual mode. And also just like your camera, the auto mode will be easier to use but give you less control over the result, and manual mode is a slightly steeper learning curve but gives you full control over the final result.

TTR and M mode are the most common modes to use a speedlight for this type of photography.

### TTL Mode

An auto setting for speedlights.

**How it Works:** It takes a reading of the ambient light through the lens, and combined with the camera settings, decides what power it will fire at. It takes your camera settings into account when taking the reading.

TTL is noted differently depending on the brand of speedlight. Obviously this list is not exhaustive, there are other speedlight brands on the market but these are the most commonly used:

- Canon - E-TTL
- Nikon - I-TTL
- Sigma - S-TTL
- Pentax - P-TTL
- Olympus - O-TTL

**Pros & Cons:** The benefit of TTL is not needing to make any decisions about flash strength, but the disadvantage is your exposures can vary and if that happens you'll need to address it in editing.

You do have a little control though, by playing with the speedlight's exposure meter compensation. For a stronger flash, increase the exposure meter compensation. For a weaker flash (and therefore more natural light look) reduce the exposure meter compensation.

**Video** - check your library for a video which shows how to adjust the exposure meter compensation.

## M Mode

The manual mode of speedlights.

**How it Works:** In M mode you decide what power it will fire at. The power is represented as fractions of full power - 1/1 is full power, and on most speedlights the minimum power available is 1/128. And each fraction increases or decreases in 1/3rd increments. I know, I know... it's a lot of numbers! But all you need to do is take tests until you get a look you like.

**Pros & Cons:** The benefit of M mode is you have complete control over the strength of the flash, and you'll get consistent exposures in photos taken in the same light. The disadvantage is there's a little more fiddling at the start to get the right exposure than using it in TTL - but once you've set it up, you're good to keep shooting and if the light changes, you can adjust using your ISO.

**Video** - check your library for a video which shows how to adjust power in M mode.

Ok... on to how to use the speedlight to get an exposure.

## Camera Settings - How To Set Your Exposure

The following will describe in detail the settings to start with and what to adjust if your exposure isn't right. Once you've read it and understand it, in your library you'll find two printable field guides to make it easy to practice.

Whether you're using your speedlight for some gentle fill light in outdoor daylight, outdoors at night or indoors with no natural light, the process is the same. The only difference will be the strength of the flash.

When using it for fill light outdoors, the aim is always to simply brighten the scene or subject a little while getting as close to a natural light look as possible. When using it at night or indoors with only artificial ambient light, you'll need to use it at a stronger power and a natural light look is not really possible. But when using it in conjunction with your ISO at the lowest power you can manage and still get an exposure, you can avoid that overly bright, jarring look with no background detail that we get from in-built flashes.

So start by choosing your camera settings as per normal.

**Shutter Speed** - This is the only element of the exposure triangle that is used differently when it comes to speedlights, as it's affected by something called "sync speed".

Every speedlight has a sync speed - it's the maximum shutter speed you can use your camera and speedlight at together. If your speedlight's sync speed is 1/200, and you shoot at faster than 1/200, your shutter will close before the light from the flash can be fully captured, and you'll get black bands at the edges of your photo (sometimes called "curtains").

So when shooting portraits, always start by setting your shutter speed to the maximum sync speed of your speedlight. Most modern cameras will override any attempt to increase it so you won't be able to accidentally use it faster.

**Aperture** - Set it in the same way you would when shooting portraits without a speedlight.

**ISO** - For outdoor fill light, as a jumping off point start with it set to around 1/400. If you're shooting with very little natural light, you might need to start a lot higher, say 1/1000.

**Speedlight (TTL)** - Set the exposure meter set to 0.

**Speedlight (M)** - Set the power to minimum. On most modern speedlights that will be 1/64 or 1/128.

Take a test shot.

If it's underexposed, start increasing your ISO up to the maximum you're prepared to shoot with your camera, knowing what it can handle. As a guide, Amy will shoot up to ISO 2000, whereas with my slightly older 5dMk2 I will shoot up to 1600.

If it's still underexposed once your ISO is at your comfortable maximum, start increasing your flash power in 1/3rd increments. If using TTL, do this by increasing exposure compensation (needle to the right, or +1 and beyond). If using in M mode, do this by adjusting the fraction - so if you were at 1/128 power, you'd adjust it to the next increment which would be 1/128 -0.7.

Take another test shot.

If still underexposed, repeat as above.

If it was overexposed in your first test shot, in TLL reduce exposure compensation (needle to the left, or -1 and beyond). In M mode, you're already at minimum power so you can reduce your ISO.



All of this might be a lot of numbers! But it's one of those techniques that's best learned by doing, so the best way to start is to practice at home, and ask questions in the group.

We have also shared some handy videos that illustrate all of this in an easy visual and you'll find those in your library.



In Week 3 we'll be diving deep into using speedlight for creative purposes with some really fun techniques for capturing some hero shots, such as this one below. But the focus will be on how we physically use or place the speedlight for different looks - the technical process for how to get an exposure with it is the same as we've just detailed.





## Quick Start Guide - M Mode

### Camera

- **Shutter Speed:** Set to maximum
- **Aperture:** Desired setting for the subject
- **ISO - Daylight:** 1/400
- **ISO - Night:** 1/1000

### Speedlight

- Attach speedlight & turn it on
- Angle at 90 degrees
- Slide out inbuilt bounce card & diffuser
- Set power to minimum

Take a test shot.

### If Underexposed

- Increase ISO by 1/3rd increment
- Take a test shot
- Repeat increasing in 1/3rd increments until desired exposure is achieved OR comfortable ISO limit is reached
- If comfortable ISO limit is reached before achieving desired exposure:
  - Increase flash power in 1/3rd increments
  - Repeat until desired exposure is achieved
- If flash power becomes too strong:
  - Open aperture or reduce shutter speed

### If Overexposed

- Reduce ISO by 1/3rd increment
- Take another test shot
- Repeat as above until desired exposure is achieved

## Quick Start Guide - TTL Mode

### Camera

- **Shutter Speed:** Set to maximum
- **Aperture:** Desired setting for the subject
- **ISO - Daylight:** 1/400
- **ISO - Night:** 1/1000

### Speedlight

- Attach speedlight & turn it on
- Angle at 90 degrees
- Slide out inbuilt bounce card & diffuser
- Set exposure compensation at 0

Take a test shot.

### If Underexposed

- Increase ISO by 1/3rd increments
- Take a test shot
- Repeat increasing in 1/3rd increments until desired exposure is achieved OR comfortable ISO limit is reached
- If ISO limit is reached before achieving desired exposure:
  - Adjust speedlight exposure compensation to the right by one increment
  - Repeat until desired exposure is achieved
- If flash power becomes too strong:
  - Open aperture or reduce shutter speed

### If Overexposed

Reduce flash power by adjusting speedlight exposure compensation to the left by one increment

Repeat until desired exposure is achieved