



4 Benefits of Shooting RAW with your Nikon camera

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What is RAW (NEF)?

RAW or NEF (Nikon Electric File) is a file format that captures the image straight from the sensor without any heavy compression. Other file formats, such as JPEGs, apply a large amount of compression to an image and do not allow you to edit the file in the same way. By shooting RAW, photographers are able to capture more information about an image, affording themselves more technical details to work with in post-production. RAW files are also a great 'safety net' file format, allowing you to rescue mistakes or correct wrong settings. JPEGs do not have the same level of control in post-production as a RAW file does.

Here are some major advantages to shooting in RAW format:

1. Rescuing a dark or bright image

Accidentally taken an image which is too dark? RAW can help. In most circumstances, the photographer is able to retake a shot, deleting the one they are not happy with. However sometimes the moment has passed and the pictures you are left with might need some work to bring them back to life. With RAW, you have the option to manipulate the image as if you were still in-camera. As per the examples below, RAW allows you to brighten or darken the image much further than you'd be able to with a JPEG. This helps to rescue an image which may not have been as you had hoped at the time so the moment is not lost.



ORIGINAL IMAGE



EDITED RAW IMAGE

2. Picture Control

Picture Control is a setting found in your camera's shooting menu. This setting allows you to experiment with the look and feel of your image. You can change these settings before shooting but you can only change them on an image afterwards if you shoot RAW. For example, if you take your pictures in 'monochrome' picture control and set your image format to JPEG, you will only get black and white images. In RAW however, you have the ability to change the picture control of the image afterwards, both in-camera or in software, and go back to a colour image.



MONOCHROME PICTURE CONTROL



EDITING RAW FILE IN CAPTURENX-D



VIVID PICTURE CONTROL

3. White Balance

White Balance is simply the colour of light. Man-made lighting can often produce an orange or blue hue to an image which needs neutralising in-camera. You can, of course, select the type of white balance you require before you shoot in order to ensure it is correct for the situation you are in, however you may not always have the time or inclination to do so. With RAW however, you have exactly the same options after shooting as you did before. For example, if you accidentally take all of your pictures on 'Incandescent' white balance and you meant to have it on 'Shady' then you could change this quickly and easily after shooting using both post-processing software or in-camera.



INCANDESCENT WHITE BALANCE



SHADY WHITE BALANCE

4. Non-Destructive editing

When you download images to your computer and go to edit them, you may not have considered that you can go back on the changes you have made to that file. When you edit JPEG images this is called destructive editing which means you are always losing something as you save or edit - meaning you cannot go back on your changes.

When you edit a RAW file however (known as 'Non-Destructive editing') whatever you do to that image in software can be reversed. This means, even if you have cropped an image and completely changed the contrast and saturation, you are able to go back to that image and remove your changes to get back the original image you captured at the start.