

How to take stunning Reflection Photographs

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Reflections can make for really eye-catching images, and once you start looking, you'll spot them everywhere – so here's how to maximise their potential.



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Water

The image that probably comes to mind when you think 'reflection' is the classic lake-as-mirror. If you want pin-sharp reflections, you need still conditions, as even a slight breeze will ruffle the water's surface and distort the reflection. Lakes are often still and windless first

thing in the morning, so it might be a good idea to set that alarm clock – and it will also give you the opportunity to catch reflections of the sky's dawn colours. Late evenings can also be a good time for windless conditions, and have the advantage of the sunset adding drama to a reflected sky.

Go slow

You can get beautiful effects with a slower shutter speed, which gives the water time to move during the exposure for a more abstract and textured effect. Using a neutral density filter will cut down the amount of light hitting the sensor and allow for longer daylight exposures than would otherwise be possible. With slow shutter speeds you'll need to shoot tripod-mounted, with a remote release to trip the shutter, otherwise camera shake could ruin the image.

Balancing act

You might need to use a neutral density graduated filter to balance out the exposure between the watery reflection, which will always be darker than the subject it is reflecting, and the sky, which will naturally be brighter. Position the filter's darker section over the sky, but take care not to overdo it – too strong a filter will create a jarring, obviously artificial effect. Alternatively, use editing software to selectively increase the contrast – although as a rule of thumb it's best to do as much of the heavy lifting while you're taking the shot (after all, who wants to spend more time than they have to in front of the computer – that's time you could be enjoying more photography!)

Break the rules!

It's not often you can get away with dividing a photo in two, but a perfect lake reflection is one of those times. To make it really impactful, position the horizon line slap in the centre of the frame, so you record equal amounts of your subject and its reflection.

Street photography

There are so many reflective surfaces intrinsic to buildings and the urban landscape, including vehicles, that you'll be spoilt for choice. One effective approach is to capture something old and something new, the old reflected and contrasting with the shiny modern surface and

design. Dusk can be a great time for shooting waterfronts, with the lights of the buildings twinkling in the water. It's worth noting that there is no law against photographing private buildings from a public space, and no matter what security guards might say, they cannot stop you, they have no right to look at or demand that you delete your images, and they certainly can't take your camera off you.

Rainy days

Shooting in the rain may not be the most fun you can have with a camera, but it can give great results, and with British weather being what it is, it's probably a good idea to get used to it! Do take care to keep your camera and lens covered, as well as yourself. Raindrops pattering on a lake's surface create little ripples that can slightly distort reflections for an arty effect, while puddles and wet pavements can be wonderfully reflective, especially later in the evening in urban settings, when they'll be reflecting bright street lights and shop signs.

Abstracts

You can create atmospheric abstracts from distorted ripples and reflections in water. The more colourful the subject, the more interesting the final image will be. Sometimes you'll get the best results by mostly – or only – framing for the reflection.

Quick tips

- When you're scouting for reflective lakes, note that the deeper and bigger the body of water, the smaller are its chances of creating a good reflection, unless it's in a very sheltered position.
- With lakes, to avoid glare and ensure good colour saturation, shoot when the subject is in direct light but the water in which it's reflecting is in the shade.
- Shoot at sunrise and sunset over the sea to capture the glorious colours reflected from the sky.