

## Introduction

Great — you like taking pictures of trains! This guide gives simple, safe, step-by-step tips so your train photos look stronger and more interesting. I'll cover planning, safety, camera or phone settings, composition ideas, creative effects (like panning), editing basics, and how to share your photos responsibly.

### Quick checklist before you shoot

- Know where trains will be and when (timetables or station info).
- Ask permission to be on private property. Never go onto tracks.
- Bring your camera or phone, spare battery, and memory card/space.
- Think about lighting: golden hour (just after sunrise or before sunset) is great.

### 1) Safety and rules (always first)

- Never step onto the tracks. Train tracks are dangerous and private property.
- Stay behind platform lines and follow signs and staff instructions.
- Don't block level crossings or create hazards for drivers or pedestrians.
- If you want to photograph on private land (rail yards, depots), get permission first.
- Be aware of your surroundings — trains are quiet until close.

### 2) Equipment — what to use

- Phone: modern phones are fine. Use gridlines, HDR, and burst mode.
- Camera: a compact, mirrorless or DSLR is ideal. A zoom lens (like 24–70mm or 70–200mm) covers many shots.
- Tripod or beanbag: helps for long exposures and low-light shots.
- Optional: polarizing filter (reduces reflections), ND filter (for long exposures in daylight).

### 3) Basic camera settings (DSLR/mirrorless) — start here

These are starting points; change them based on light and speed.

- **Shutter speed** — controls motion blur:
  - Freeze fast trains: 1/1000 to 1/2000 s
  - Freeze local/slow trains: 1/500 to 1/1000 s
  - Panning (blur background, sharp train): 1/30 to 1/125 s depending on train speed
  - Long exposure for light trails at night: several seconds (use tripod)
- **Aperture** — controls background blur and sharpness:
  - f/5.6–f/8 is good for sharpness and some background separation
  - Use wider aperture (smaller f-number) for strong subject isolation
- **ISO** — sensitivity:
  - Keep ISO low (100–400) in daylight for less noise. Increase only if you need faster shutter in low light.
- **Focus mode** — continuous AF (AF-C) for moving trains; use back-button focus or half-press shutter to track.
- **Shoot RAW** if your camera/phone supports it — gives more editing flexibility.

### 4) Phone tips (if you only have a phone)

- Use burst mode to take many shots quickly — choose the best later.

- Lock focus and exposure (tap and hold) so the camera doesn't refocus when the train moves.
- Try a manual camera app to control shutter and ISO if available.
- Use gridlines to follow the rule of thirds and horizon level.

## 5) Framing and composition

- Rule of thirds: put the train off-center for a more dynamic picture.
- Leading lines: use tracks, fences, or platform edges to lead the eye into the frame.
- Include context: stations, signals, buildings or people tell a story.
- Try different angles: low (close to track level), high (overpass), front three-quarter, side view.
- Close-ups: photograph details — wheels, headlights, signage, textures.

## 6) Shooting techniques

- **Panning** — keep the train sharp and blur the background:
  1. Set shutter speed around 1/30–1/125 s (faster for slower trains, slower for fast ones).
  2. Stand with feet apart, follow the train smoothly as it passes, press the shutter while continuing the motion.
- **Freeze motion** — use fast shutter (1/1000s) to capture crisp details and flying debris/sparks.
- **Long exposures at night** — use tripod, remote or timer, and shutter of several seconds to capture light trails and reflections.
- **Silhouettes** — shoot into the light at sunrise/sunset with the train between you and the sun; expose for the sky.

## 7) Storytelling and variety

Don't only take the same shot. Make a series that tells a story: arrival, departure, close-up details, the station environment, passengers (stay respectful of privacy).

## 8) Editing basics (phone apps like Snapseed or Lightroom Mobile; desktop Lightroom/Photoshop)

- Crop and straighten to improve composition.
- Adjust exposure, contrast, and whites/blacks for punch.
- Increase clarity or sharpness carefully — don't overdo it.
- Adjust color temperature (warmer for sunset shots) and saturation slightly.
- Remove small distractions with a healing/clone tool.

## 9) Save, tag, and share responsibly

- Keep original RAW or high-resolution files and export copies for sharing.
- Add a caption: where, when, and what type of train (if you know it).
- If posting online, don't include exact location of a private rail yard or unsafe spots that others might try to copy.

## 10) Practice exercises (try these)

1. Take 10 photos of a stationary train using different apertures and see how the background changes.
2. Practice panning with a slow-moving train: try 1/60, 1/30, 1/15 and compare which looks best.
3. Shoot a train at golden hour and again at noon — compare the mood and colors.

## Final tips

- Be patient — good shots often come from waiting and watching.
- Study other photographers' train pictures to get ideas (but don't copy exactly).
- Always choose safety and permission over a risky shot.

If you want, tell me what camera or phone you use and a photo you took (or upload one). I can give specific settings and editing steps for that exact picture.