

Introduction to Lens Filters

Topic 5 - Introduction to Lens Filters

Learning Outcomes

In this lesson, we will take a look at lens filters. By the end of this lesson, you will have a good idea of what lens filters are for and how they can be used in photography.

Introduction to Lens Filters

Camera lens filters can serve a variety of purposes in digital photography. They can be very useful for capturing scenery in extremely difficult lighting conditions, because they can enhance colours and reduce reflections. On another level, they can simply protect lenses.

Filters are widely used in photography and while some photographers only use filters on rare occasions, others rely on filters for their everyday work. For example, landscape photographers heavily rely on various filters, while street and portrait photographers rarely get to use them.



Since digital photography is all about the quality and intensity of light, lens filters are often important in order to modify the light before it enters the lens. Many photographers believe that some of the built-in tools in Lightroom and Photoshop can simulate filter behaviour and effects. They believe that these physical filters are redundant in the digital age. Of course, some filters are easily created in Photoshop but some can never be simulated in any software. Some filters actually help you in terms of getting even better results during post-production, which we will look at a little later. Just remember, there are different types of lens filters available, and we need to have an idea about what they do, and when and how to use them.



Introduction to Lens Filters

What are filters and why should you use them?

We wear sunglasses to allow us to see better in intense light and to protect our eyes from harmful UV rays/wind/dust and also to reduce glare. Filters also serve a similar purpose – they can help reduce reflections, protect your lenses from potential damage, and help to fully or partially reduce the amount of light that enters the lens. They can also enhance colours that we see.

At the same time, filters can sometimes negatively impact photographs if they are not used properly. A good analogy would be wearing sunglasses in a really dark room or at night. Therefore, not only do you need to know what filters to use, but you also need to know how to use them and in which situations. There are many different kinds of filters out there – from relatively inexpensive UV filters to very expensive filters worth several hundred dollars or euros. This can make the process of choosing the right filter type, rather challenging.

Types of Lens Filters

Lens filters come in different shapes and sizes. The most popular lens filters are circular, screw-on filters. These mount, directly onto the filter thread in front of a lens. They come in different sizes, depending on the lens filter thread. The standard and the most common size of screw-on filters for professional lenses is 77mm.



Introduction to Lens Filters

What have we learned in this lesson? A Summary

We have had a good introduction into what lens filters are and their role in digital photography.

