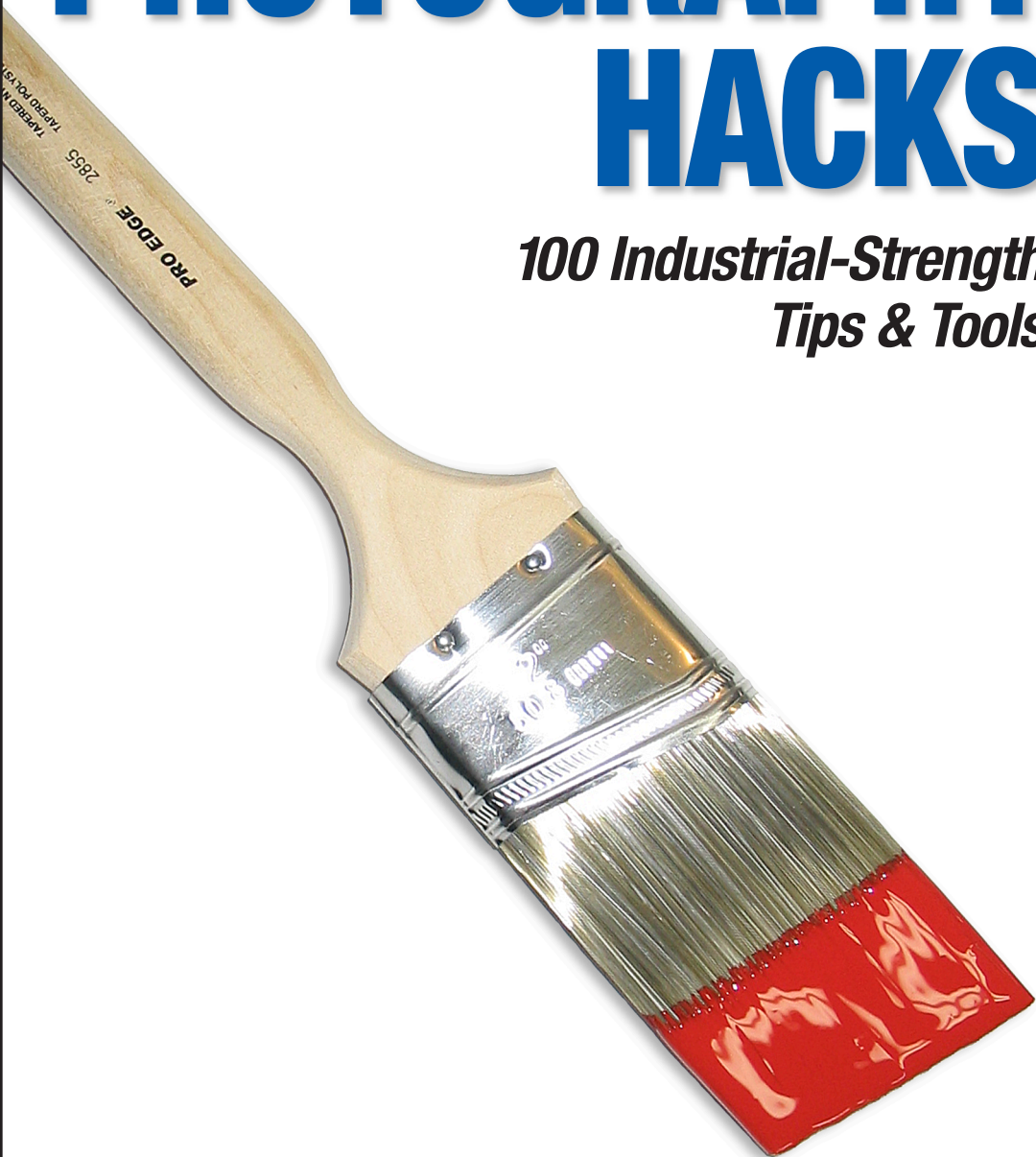


DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY HACKS™

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#11

Convert Your Digicam to a Digital SLR

Shading the LCD monitor for easier viewing during replay is one thing, but why not go all the way and use the monitor as a virtual SLR viewfinder for shooting images too?

Shading your LCD monitor makes viewing the picture in bright sunlight much more enjoyable. But with a little refinement, you can adapt this technique for taking pictures too, creating a virtual digital SLR.

One of the major attractions of single lens reflex (SLR) cameras is that you see the picture through the same lens that records the image. It's WYSI-WYG ("what you see is what you get") photography. In contrast to SLRs, most compact digital cameras provide one lens for taking the picture and another (often referred to as the *optical viewfinder*) for viewing the image.

One of the problems with optical viewfinders is that they're offset from the picture-taking lens, so the composition you're looking at isn't the same one the camera is going to record. This setup is called *parallax*, and the closer you get to the subject the more pronounced the effect will be. The other common problem with most digicams' optical viewfinders is that they're just not very good. You don't get a full view of the subject, and what you do get isn't that great.

You do have another option: you can look through your digicam's LCD monitor when you take the picture. This has created a whole new look in photography: the arm's-length shooting pose. Photographers everywhere are holding their digital cameras out from their body to align what's on the screen. Not only is this pose awkward at times, it's also not good photographic technique, because it's harder to steady the camera during exposure at arm's length. Beyond that, some people have a hard time keeping a straight horizon line when holding an LCD this way. Something seems to get lost in translation.

When visiting the Hoodman (<http://www.hoodmanusa.com>) booth at the Photo Marketing Association show in Las Vegas, I discovered a great solution to all of these problems. Hoodman has designed a special monitor hood, called the Digital Camera Hood, that straps onto just about any model with a 1.8-inch or smaller LCD screen. [Figure 1-12](#) shows the Digital Camera Hood attached to a Canon Digital Elph S400.

The open end fits around the outside of your LCD monitor, and the other end holds a 2x magnifying eyepiece. The Digital Camera Hood attaches easily in just a few seconds. When not in use, it folds up compactly, taking up little space in your camera bag.



Figure 1-12. Hoodman's Digital Camera Hood

To use the Digital Camera Hood, just attach it to the camera, turn on your camera, and view the picture through its eyepiece. Your simple digicam has just been upgraded to a virtual digital SLR with electronic viewfinder.

You can use this rig in any lighting condition. You can both shoot and review your images with it, and you can now hold the camera normally, enabling you to take sharper pictures because you're holding the camera more steadily. As a bonus, the increased magnification of the LCD monitor makes it easier to determine picture quality *before* you take the shot. This is a great time-saver, because you don't have to stop and review the image you just recorded (using the camera's magnification function) to see if you got the shot you wanted.

You might not want to use the Digital Camera Hood when you're on the go, toting your digicam in your pocket. But when you're engaged in serious shooting, close-up work, landscapes, and anything with a tripod, I think you'll find that this setup is a good way to improve your pictures.