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Nikon D5000 Initial Configuration

The new Nikon D5000 is simply an incredible little camera! It has most of the features found in its predecessor, the advanced Nikon D90, yet in a smaller, more portable body. Its small size belies its flexibility and image quality. Compared to the similarly sized Nikon D60, the D5000 is strikingly more powerful and feature rich.

It shares a 12.2-megapixel sensor with the Nikon D90 and pro-level Nikon D300. You'll take some of the best pictures of your life with this powerful little camera. In fact, using it, you can create images with the quality and size needed for things like stock photography (micro and traditional) and print sales. You may not be interested in earning money with your camera, but it feels good to know you could if you wanted to.

If you simply want to make beautiful images, the D5000 will give you enough control to create fine art photographs. If you're at a party and just want to take great pictures without thinking about camera settings, the D5000's green AUTO mode will take control so you can just point and shoot. If you know nothing about cameras, the D5000 offers 19 scene modes that give you creative control under different shooting conditions without making other camera adjustments.

Can you see why I say this camera is incredible? It will take full automatic control of the picture process when you ask it to or give you complete manual control when you need it. If you want to control only some of the camera's functions while you learn other functions, it will allow you to do that too. In short, you now have amazing flexibility in a small and easy-to-carry package.

The Nikon D5000 may be the first digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera you've purchased. You may have been using a point-and-shoot (P&S) camera but found that your passion for photography exceeded its capability. With a DSLR, you can change lenses for greater image control. You look through the viewfinder or use Live View with the rear LCD and actually view through the lens your camera uses to take the picture. You can configure the camera to work in different ways, using different color styles, image formats, and exposure types. You have different types of exposure meters and a powerful feature called the histogram. Using a DSLR gives you much more control over how an image is created.

Digital Sensor Basics, or Why Does a DSLR Make Better Images?

The sensor size in your D5000 provides potential image quality unobtainable by even the best of the P&S cameras. Many do not realize why a DSLR can make such high-quality images in comparison. Let me explain.

All digital cameras have an imaging sensor that uses very tiny light-gathering points called pixels—an abbreviation of picture elements. Your D5000 has almost 12.3 million pixels on its sensor in an array 4,288 pixels wide and 2,848 pixels tall (4,288 x 2,848 = 12,212,224 pixels, or just over 12.2 megapixels). To be accurate, I'll refer to the megapixel rating of the D5000 as 12.2 usable megapixels.

A point-and-shoot camera has a digital imaging sensor about the size of your little fingernail. Imagine cramming millions of pixels into a space the size of your little fingernail, like the P&S cameras have done. Those pixels are so small that they're not very light sensitive. For a P&S camera to make a good picture, especially in lower light levels, the power gain must be turned up on the pixels. That boosts the signal but also increases noise, thereby degrading the image.

On the other hand, the Nikon D5000 has an imaging sensor about the size of a postage stamp—15.8 x 23.6 mm in size. That's a big difference! Its pixels are much larger than a P&S's and can gather light much more efficiently. The image quality from your new DSLR is sharper and has better color, contrast, and dynamic range and its photos can be enlarged more effectively and with higher quality. You'll be amazed at the difference and so will your friends and family.

So you can get the best use out of your much more complex DSLR camera, let's examine some of the most important settings to confirm and configure for first use of the camera.

First Use of the Nikon D5000

In this section, I'll help you set up your camera for first-time use. There are important functions scattered all through the various menus of the camera that you'll need to examine and set. Even if you've been using your D5000 for a while, please read this section because you might have overlooked some things that will benefit your use of the camera.

Some of the settings we'll look at in this chapter are already preconfigured the way I suggest you set them. Nikon uses many of these settings as factory defaults. However, I wanted to cover these areas for two reasons:

- You may have purchased a preowned D5000, and some of these items may have been changed from the default settings and may not be configured for your style of shooting.
- I want you to become familiar with where these settings are. They are important, and you may decide to change them as you shoot different types of images.

We'll look at two methods to configure the initial settings. First we'll consider how to use the regular menu system to modify settings. Then, for several commonly changed settings, we'll look at how to use the *Information edit* screen for quick reconfiguration. But first, let's take care of the most important starting point… you need power for this electronic device.

Charging the Battery

If you're like me, you'll open the box, put the lens on your camera, insert a battery, and take your first picture. Wouldn't it be a better idea to wait an hour to charge the battery and only then take the first picture? Sure it would, but I've never done that, and I bet you haven't either. Nikon knows this and they don't send out new cameras with dead batteries.

Most of the time the battery is not fully charged, but it has enough charge to set the time and date and then to take and review a few pictures. Think about it. How do you test a brand-new battery? You charge it and see if it will hold a charge. Nikon doesn't send batteries that are untested, so most of the time, you can play with your camera for at least a few minutes before charging the battery. I've purchased nearly every DSLR Nikon has made since 2002, and not one of them has come in with a dead battery.

When my D5000 arrived, the battery was about 65 percent charged. I played with the camera for an hour or two before I charged the battery. However, let me mention one important thing. If you plug in the battery and it is very low, such as below 25 percent, it might be a good idea to go ahead and charge it before shooting and reviewing too many pictures. Maybe you can get the time and date set and test the camera a time or two, but go no further with a seriously low battery.

The D5000 uses a lithium-ion (Li-ion) battery pack. While this type of battery doesn't develop the memory effects of the old nickel-cadmium (NiCd) batteries from

years past, there can be a problem if you let them get too low. *A li-ion battery should never be used to complete exhaustion.* The battery can develop metal shunts internally if you run it completely down, and that will cause it to short out and stop working. *When your camera's li-ion battery gets down to the 25 percent level, please recharge it*. I don't let mine go below 50 percent for any extended use.

That said, the optimum situation would be to restrain yourself from turning on the camera until after the battery is charged. That'll give you some time to read the section of this book on initial camera setup and check out the Nikon D5000 User's Manual.

Initial Camera Setup

Let's look at the most important functions for initial configuration. In this chapter I'll just point you to the critical and most-used functions. Use the other chapters in the book to read about the advanced configuration of these and many other items.

I'll start with the absolutely necessary items and then advance through the various menus, touching on features that, in my opinion, you should learn for the best initial imaging experience with the D5000.

There are seven menus systems in the D5000 that you'll have to deal with over time. *Figure 1* shows a view of the four menus that affect initial camera setup: the *Playback Menu*, *Shooting Menu*, *Custom Setting Menu*, and *Setup Menu*.

Nikon D5000 front view

Figure 1 – The four critical camera configuration menus

As we go through the chapters of this book, we'll be peering deeply into these four menus for camera configuration and three other menus for in-camera image configuration and convenience items.

First, we'll consider the two bottom-line *Setup Menu* items that must be configured even before any pictures are taken.

Setup Menu – World time

When you open the box with a new D5000, insert the battery and turn it on, you will be prompted to set the time zone and date before you do anything else with the camera. Let's look at this in detail.

There are several functions to set under the *Time zone* and the *Date and time* sections of the *Setup Menu*:

- Time zone
- Date and time
- Date format
- Daylight saving time

Figure 2 – *Time zone* screens

Figure 2A – *Date and time* screens

Time zone – *Figure 2* shows the *Time zone* configuration screens. The screen used to set the zone uses a world map interface to select the area of the world in which you are using the camera. To set the time zone, follow these steps:

1. Press the MENU button and scroll to the Setup Menu.
2. Select *Time zone and date*, and then scroll to the right.
3. Select *Time zone*, and then scroll to the right.
4. Use the Multi Selector to scroll left or right until your time zone is under the yellow vertical bar in the center of the world map screen (see *figure 2*).
5. Once your time zone is selected, press the *OK* button to save the setting.

Date and time – *Figure 2A* shows the three *Date and time* configuration screens. The final screen in the series allows you to select the year, month, and day (Y, M, D) and the hour, minute, and second (H, M, S):

1. Press the MENU button and scroll to the *Setup Menu*.
2. Select *Time zone and date*, and then scroll to the right.
3. Select *Date and time*, and then scroll to the right.
4. Using the Multi Selector, scroll left or right until you have selected the value you want to change. Then scroll up or down to actually change the value.
5. First set the year (*Y*) by scrolling up or down to the correct year, and then scroll to the right.

6. Next set the month (*M*) and scroll to the right.
7. Now set the day (*D*) and scroll to the right. The yellow box will drop down to the next line. The date showing in figure 2A is July 1, 2009.
8. Now scroll up or down to select the correct 24-hour time. If you are not familiar with a 24-hour military-style clock, see the 24-Hour Time Equivalents chart. As an example, if it is 2:39 p.m. where you are, the 24-hour equivalent time is 14:39. You should set the hour to 14, scroll to the right, and set the minute (*M*) to 39. I usually just scroll on past the seconds (*S*) setting, but you can set it too if you want to synchronize your camera's time with an external source for accuracy. *Figure 2A* shows 56 seconds in the second field.
9. When you have set the correct date and time, press the *OK* button to save the settings.

24 Hour Time Equivalents

For your convenience, here is a listing of the 24-hour time equivalents:

A.M. Settings:

12:00 a.m. = 00:00 (midnight)
01:00 a.m. = 01:00
02:00 a.m. = 02:00
03:00 a.m. = 03:00
04:00 a.m. = 04:00
05:00 a.m. = 05:00
06:00 a.m. = 06:00
07:00 a.m. = 07:00
08:00 a.m. = 08:00
09:00 a.m. = 09:00
10:00 a.m. = 10:00
11:00 a.m. = 11:00

P.M. Settings:

12:00 p.m. = 12:00 (noon)
01:00 p.m. = 13:00
02:00 p.m. = 14:00
03:00 p.m. = 15:00
04:00 p.m. = 16:00
05:00 p.m. = 17:00
06:00 p.m. = 18:00
07:00 p.m. = 19:00
08:00 p.m. = 20:00
09:00 p.m. = 21:00
10:00 p.m. = 22:00
11:00 p.m. = 23:00

Interestingly, there is no 24:00 time (midnight). After 23:59 comes 00:00.

Figure 2B – *Date format* screens

Figure 2C – *Daylight saving time* screens

Date format – The D5000 gives you three ways to format the date (see *figure 2B*):

- Y/M/D = Year/Month/Day (2010/12/31)
- M/D/Y = Month/Day/Year (12/31/2010)
- D/M/Y = Day/Month/Year (31/12/2010)

D5000 owners in the United States will probably use the second setting, which matches the Month/Day/Year format so familiar to Americans (for example, 12/31/2010). People in other areas of the world can select their favorite date format.

To select the date format of your choice, do the following:

- Press the MENU button and scroll to the *Setup Menu*.
- Select *Time zone and date*, and then scroll to the right.
- Select *Date format*, and then scroll to the right.
- Choose the format you like best from the three available formats by scrolling up or down.
- Press the *OK* button.

Daylight saving time – Many areas of the United States observe daylight saving time. In the springtime, many American residents set their clocks forward by one hour on a specified day each year. Then in the fall they set it back, leading to the clever saying, "spring forward or fall back."

To enable automatic *Daylight saving time*, follow these steps (see *figure 2C*):

1. Press the MENU button and scroll to the *Setup Menu*.
2. Select *Time zone and date*, and then scroll to the right.
3. Select *Daylight saving time*, and then scroll to the right.

4. Select *On* or *Off* from the menu by scrolling up or down.
5. Press the *OK* button.

If you turned daylight saving time to *On*, your D5000 will now automatically "spring forward and fall back," adjusting your time forward by one hour in the spring and back one hour in the fall of the year.

Recommendation

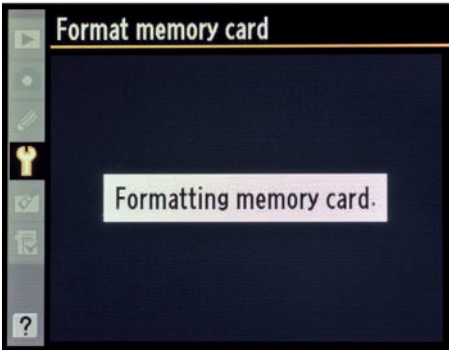
If you live in an area that observes daylight saving time, it's a good idea to set your camera to make this adjustment automatically. I always leave my camera set to *On*. Why not let the camera remember to change this value twice per year?

Next, you'll learn how to format an SD memory card in your camera so that it's ready to take pictures. It's important that you format the card in your new camera before using it so it's customized to your particular camera.

Setup Menu – Format Memory Card

While you're in the *Setup Menu*, please notice the location of the memory card formatter. As mentioned previously, when you insert a card into a new camera for the first time, it's a good idea to format the card with that camera. This will match the card to the camera and give you greater image storage reliability in the long run.

Nikon D5000 back view



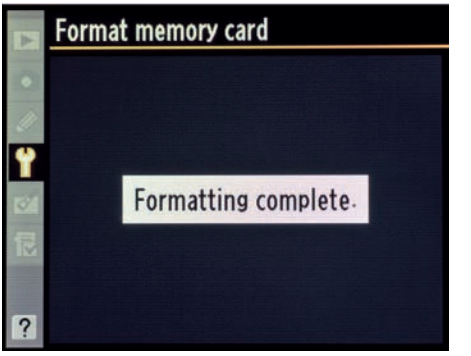


Figure 3 – *Format memory card* screens

Here are the four steps to format a memory card using the menus (see *figure 3*):

1. Press the MENU button and scroll to the *Setup Menu*.
2. Select *Format memory card*, and then scroll to the right.
3. Select *Yes* from the screen with the big red exclamation mark and the words *All images on memory card will be deleted. OK?*
4. Press the *OK* button.

Once you press the *OK* button, you'll see two screens in quick succession. One says *Formatting memory card*, and the next says *Formatting complete*. Then the camera switches back to the *Setup Menu*'s first screen. The card is formatted, and you can take lots of pictures.

Where to Format the Memory Card

It is always a good idea to format the memory card in your camera and not with your computer (*and ONLY when it has no images on it!*). I once had an expensive 16 GB memory card fail after I formatted it in my computer. The camera would not recognize it afterward, nor would it format it. I had to send the card back to the manufacturer, who replaced it for me, fortunately. Since then, I have always formatted the card in the camera *after* I've transferred all the images to my computer. Better safe than sorry.

Now, let's move to the *Shooting Menu* for several important configuration changes.