

By Jo Becker, BA

This article is short but addresses a very common and frustrating camera quandary and so I felt warranted its own space here.

We've all seen the nasty red eye phenomenon that makes sweet grandmas look like devils and adorable puppies appear as if they're possessed. Many of today's digital cameras offer an instant "solution" for picture takers the world over. Sounds great, right? Wrong. I strongly recommend you don't use your camera's red-eye setting if it has one.

What is red eye? Red eye is caused when the camera's flash reflects off the retina in the back of the subject's eye. This is more likely to happen whenever a camera's lens is located angularly close to the flash, which is the case with most digital cameras without externally attached flashes. (In other words, digital cameras are so small, that by their sheer physical size, it's most likely the lens and flash will be located close to one another. Using an external flash will help, if you have this option.) When the flash goes off, the retina reflects the light back to the camera lens showing the red from the blood vessels in the eye.

Red-eye reduction settings in cameras try to fix the problem by instigating a series of quick flashes instead of one large flash. In so doing, one of three unsightly things happen: 1) it causes the pupils to dilate creating SMALL, BEADY RED EYES (a *real* improvement, don't you think!), 2) multiple flashes make your subject blink giving you a picture with no eyes, or 3) it makes your subject think the picture has already been taken and they start to move out of frame.

If you don't have an external flash or your camera isn't built to accommodate one, the best solution is to reposition of the camera slightly up or down—i.e., above or below your subject's eye level. This will increase the effective angle between the lens and the flash causing the retinal reflection to slant off in a direction away from the lens.

Now, I know for some of you that might have gotten a little technical and I'm sorry for that. Suffice it to say that when you're taking pictures of humans or animals straight on you should position yourself and your camera just a bit above or below the subject's eye level to help avoid red eye; unless of course you like that look in which case you have nothing to worry about! Go, make evil pictures and be merry!

If all of this seems too overwhelming, ask for help, but keep trying! Before long you will get the hang of it. In the meantime, *hang it there!*

Jo Becker has eight years of licensed real estate experience. As a former broker, she knows how important, and sometimes scary, technology and self-promotion can be. Jo has provided personalized one-on-one marketing consultation and computer software training to the industry since 2002.

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