

7 Reasons to Shoot in RAW

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1) Record the highest quality.

When you shoot RAW you get *all* the data. That's why a RAW file is bigger than a JPEG. If you shoot JPEG the camera is processing for you and compressing the file.

2) Tweak to your taste.

RAW gives you control over saturation, contrast, sharpness, etc. JPEG, however, makes those tweaks for you according to the picture style you select. That's great as long as you like the results. If you don't, it's really difficult (*and a whole lot of work*) to undo.

3) Record maximum colors & tones.

JPEG files are 8 bit and RAW are anywhere from 12 to 16 bit. An 8-bit file gives you 256 levels of color, while a 16-bit file contains a whopping 65,536! That's a whole lot more leeway for adjustments without running into banding or other artifacts.

4) More forgiving of exposure errors.

Having all that data in a RAW file gives you the flexibility to correct gross overexposure and even underexposure on some cameras. Even if it looks like you blew out the highlights there's a good chance they can be recovered. (*Check out this example: <https://exploreinfocus.com/ettr-expose-right-shooting-in-raw/>*)

5) Easily adjust white balance.

When you process a RAW image you can change the white balance to whatever your heart desires. I typically just leave my camera on Auto White Balance and then tweak if needed when processing.

6) Ability to re-process.

Software improves all the time. As long as you have your RAW file—even years from now—you can go back and process the image again with newer, better software.

7) Spend time processing.

You may wonder why I list this as an advantage, but I've met lots of photographers who get as much enjoyment out of processing and "developing" their images as they do from capturing them. Shooting in RAW makes for more ops to get creative when creating your final outcome.

Award-winning nature & wildlife photographer, Jeff Parker, leads photo tours & workshops for the Naturally Curious throughout North, Central & South America & the tigers of India.

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