



## TIPS FOR TAKING GREAT HOLIDAY LIGHTS PHOTOGRAPHS

**Photograph your outdoor Holiday lights while it's still daylight – just at dusk.** It's harder to get good photos when the lights are in the darkness. For outdoor Holiday lights, use late-afternoon light to provide some depth behind already switched-on lights.

- Taking pictures during dusk will often capture a lovely atmosphere shimmering with vibrant background colors — from grays and blues to pinks and reds.
- Plus, the background will still be slightly visible, adding textural contrast instead of a sea of blackness.
- Photos taken during the brighter part of the day won't showcase the Holiday lights, unless the it's a dark day. Experiment a little with when you take your pictures.

**Include the sky.** This is an important part of getting in more light and making the whole composition appear more interesting. Be alert to moody skies with layers of expressive clouds. Skies can provide effective backgrounds that set off the lights in a magical way.

- **Be patient** you may need to take a few photos before the sky and lights appear "just right". Take lots of pictures. In the digital age, it's probably best to take too many pictures than not enough.
- Make your Holiday lights the main attraction.
- Other objects such as trees, lampposts, buildings, and landmarks may also improve the composition of your pictures. Check around for the best overall appearance.

**Set the camera settings to get the best photos.** Your camera's settings have a profound effect on the style of your pictures. Don't just take pictures without thinking about what your camera is doing.

- Take pictures without the flash.
- Have the ISO at 800 or over (this is because you can't use flash). If you want a lower ISO, try 200 ISO with an aperture of f/4 and an exposure of a 1/4 second. For this setting, you may not even need a tripod.
- Set the **white balance** for "tungsten." This will make the lights look their clearest, as tungsten is a manual setting used for shots where the main light source is household light bulbs.
- If you're more experienced using white balance, play around with it a little (experimenting with it will improve your experience anyway). Some people prefer incandescent while others are happy to rely on the automatic white balance (AWB). FOR MORE PHOTOGRAPHY INFO SEE [wikiHOW.com](http://wikiHOW.com)

**Have Your Best Photos Ready!**

**Now fill out your Holiday Lights Registration Form:** [www.cityofsanmateo.org/holidaylights](http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/holidaylights)

Post up to three of your best photos of your house display.

**You can also share more photos online:** Use the hashtag [#SMHolidayLights](https://twitter.com/SMHolidayLights) Twitter: [@cityofsanmateo](https://twitter.com/cityofsanmateo) or [@volunteersource](https://www.facebook.com/cityofsanmateo/) or [Facebook.com/cityofsanmateo/](https://www.facebook.com/cityofsanmateo/)