

# Turn Your Flash On and Up!

*Tips and Techniques from The Louisiana Photographic Society  
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Although I usually rail against using cameras in their fully automatic modes, there are times when automatic mode is perfect. Well, almost perfect. A good time to take advantage of automatic mode is any festive occasion in which you wish to be both a participant and photographer. Family gatherings are an especially good time to switch your camera to automatic and enjoy the occasion while recording it. Modern cameras – whether digital or film based – usually have good algorithms for setting focus, exposure and flash; however, there are two particular situations to beware of: strong backlighting and red-eye.

My mother-in-law's dining room includes a wall of windows. Over the years we've learned to turn on our flash when photographing in this room -- even in the daylight. Left to their own logic, all cameras seem to think there is adequate lighting without flash. Because of the many windows, without forcing the flash, the resulting photograph is correctly exposed for the outdoor scene but the interior is underexposed. In this situation, the cameras aren't smart enough to turn on their flash, the photographer has to do it.

The red-eye syndrome that shows up all too often in snapshots is caused by direct flash when the flash is placed close to the lens. With small cameras and their built-in flash, red-eye is difficult to avoid. Furthermore, direct flash in a room full of windows is not a good idea because the flash will inevitably find a window from which to reflect. The solution to both of these problems is an external flash that is bounced from the ceiling.

So remember, when faced with strong back-lighting, turn your flash on and up!