

Panning

Panning is a technique that allows you to capture a sense of speed around a moving object such as a car or person riding a bike. The aim is to keep the moving vehicle in focus, while blurring the background. This effect is achieved by using a slow shutter speed while moving your camera (panning) with the vehicle as it moves across in front of you.

This technique takes a lot of practice and experimentation to perfect. Don't be disappointed if only 1 in a 100 of your images work out! Keep practicing.....

Location

Stand so that the car is travelling across in front of you. It does not work if the car/bike is coming towards you

Stand fairly close to the moving vehicle (eg. side of the road) – it does not work if you are a long way from the car

Ensure that the background behind the car has some details to be blurred

You will get more blur if the car is travelling fairly quickly (60km/hr or above)



Equipment

This technique can be done without a tripod if you concentrate on keeping your camera steady as you pan

If you have a tripod with a panning head (that allows you to move your camera from side to side) you might want to try using that for extra stability

Choose a lens with the focal length of around 24mm (wide angle) to ensure you get the car and background in the frame.

Experiment with the Image Stabilization (also know as Vibration Reduction) on the lens turned on and off to see which works best for you

Camera Settings

Shooting mode

To give the most flexibility and control with your settings move your main dial to Manual mode.

Focus mode

Set your focus mode to Spot focus. Some newer cameras have an Vehicle detect setting which searches the image and locks focus on any vehicles it detects automatically.

Burst mode

To improve your chances of scoring a good shot set your camera to take a burst of images with each press of the shutter button. Choose the highest shot rate available – this will vary by camera model.

Aperture

Start with an aperture of f/11 and adjust if necessary to achieve appropriate exposure of the scene.

ISO

Set your ISO to Auto - this means the camera will choose a value automatically to achieve appropriate exposure.

Shutter Speed

Try a shutter speed of 1/30 sec and then increase/decrease to achieve the effect you want.

This will take a bit of experimenting as the best shutter speed will vary according to how fast the vehicle is travelling and how much background blur you want.



Technique

Your aim is to have your car/bike in focus and the background blurred - this requires a fair bit of practice to get your settings and panning technique correct.

Stand with both feet firmly on the ground facing forwards toward the road

Hold your camera to your eye securely, tuck your elbows against your body for stability

Turn your body (keeping your feet still) to the direction the car will come into view

As the car travels across in front of you, turn your body at the same speed as the car.

Hold your shutter button down and fire off a burst of shots. It's crucial to be turning at the same speed as your subject is moving

After each burst of images check your image and adjust your shutter speed in necessary – try it slower and faster.



This technique takes LOTS of practice so repeat this process over and over until you get the image that you want

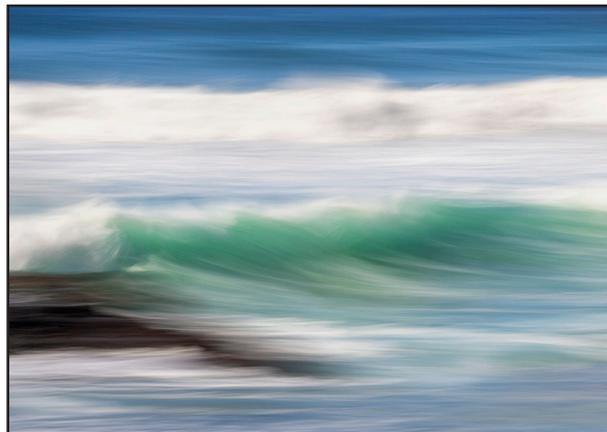
Don't be discouraged if your first 100 attempts are not successful!

Other uses for panning

The panning technique can also be used to achieve other more creative images.

In the long exposure wave examples shown below the camera was panned with the wave as it moved towards the beach. A slow shutter speed of 1/4 sec was used, helping to smooth out the water.

To keep the shutter open for that length of time it was necessary to use a Neutral Density filter on the front of the lens to reduce the light entering the camera.



When photographing flying birds it can be helpful to move the camera at the same speed as the bird, using a fast shutter speed (1/2000sec) to freeze motion.

