

A Photographer's Equipment and File Management Checklist for the New Year

With the arrival of the New Year, here are some things you can do to be ready for even better photography in the coming months.

Camera and Equipment Preparation

1. Clean all of your camera equipment especially lenses, filters, etc. Now is a great time to take everything out of your bag and vacuum it out (this removes much of the dust that causes problems on the sensor)

2. If you haven't recently had the camera sensor cleaned, you might want to use the next week or two to get that done if you do not have any major shooting planned. A local camera store may provide this service. Biggs Camera <http://biggscamera.com/> in Charlotte does it as a 2 day service for about \$50 or you can send it directly to Nikon, Canon or your respective camera manufacturer. We suggest even for the casual user, this needs to be done every 6-12 months (mirrorless cameras require sensor cleaning more often) to prevent dust spots on the sensor from showing up in your images.

3. Make sure your camera date and time are set correctly as well as write down the starting file number for the year (so you can keep track of how many images you shoot in the new year). Most cameras create file numbers sequentially up to 9999 and then reset to 0001. You can also use an EXIF reader (free software like Kuso EXIF reader) that will tell you how many actuations have been taken on some brands of cameras. Write this number down and then you will know what you started at and can compare it to what you end with in December of 2025.

4. Remember to change any watermarks or copyrights you have created in your camera or on your software to reflect 2025 instead of 2024. For example, if your Lightroom software watermarks all of your images with "Copyright 2024 Brian Osborne" this needs to be changed to "Copyright 2025 Brian Osborne. The same applies to information that can be embedded to the files in your camera usually under the Copyright option in the menu.

5. Update your insurance records with any equipment you have purchased this past year. At all times, you should have the title of each item, description, date purchased, purchase price and serial number in a spreadsheet or something similar. Not only will your insurance company want this but if any of your equipment is stolen, this information will go a long way in terms of helping the police.

6. Consider labeling all of your equipment (camera, lenses, flash, memory cards, etc.) with your name and maybe phone number. This will help prevent confusion if you are shooting with other people who have some of the same gear and may help if

you lose any equipment. A label maker like the Brother models is an easy way to become organized and this model is often on sale for \$20.

File Management Preparation

Beyond camera care and cleaning as well as updating the date you use on the camera and software, now is a great time to think about file management. File management has a lot of pieces to it but here are a couple things to think about:

1. Storage and Backup - Do you have storage space on your computer, external hard drive, etc. to store all of the photos you plan to take this year? Remember that we suggest you have 3 copies of all of your photos, one being offsite. For most of us, this would mean a primary hard drive where your photos are all stored (either in your computer or an external hard drive), a backup hard drive (probably external) and then one copy offsite. We have found BackBlaze Online Backup to be a great option. This service is \$7 a month for unlimited online backup of all photos contained on one computer and the hard drives attached to it. You get one month free of trial membership with [this link](#). If you choose not to do a backup service, I would suggest another external drive that you keep in a safety deposit box, at work or at a relative's house. This way if something terrible happens at your home, you have a copy of your precious images offsite.

2. Make sure that all of 2024's photos are backed up and completed as well.

3. Put some type of file system in place so that you know where all of your different photo shoots are stored and what year and date you took them. In addition, under each topic, you would want to keep all of your "Originals", maybe have another folder for the photos you selected as being the best (I call this "Selected") and then a third folder for your edited images to go into (for me this is called "Finals"). By setting this up, you can easily not only find each topic worth of photos but you know which ones you have sorted through, if you have edited them, etc. Starting off the new year with a system in place is empowering.

4. Go back through last year's photos if you have not already done so and put all of your favorite ones in a separate folder. I call this my Yearly Portfolio and there is nothing better than seeing what you proudly created last year, maybe playing a screensaver slideshow on your computer of the selection, posting them to your website or photo gallery online or even creating a photo calendar for the year out of your 12 best. Whatever the case, it is neat to see what you created last year and to have your favorite images all organized in one place.