

Topic 026

Filters Color Photography

1. UV/Skylight

These filters are almost clear (slightly amber) and reduce blue haze caused by UV light. They're used mainly for protection - if you drop your lens, you might just damage the filter instead of the lens. They also protect against dust, moisture and scratches.

Note: By using these filters you can save your lens. From my research on filters, Nikon and B+W make the best Skylight and UV.

2. Polarizers

Most people only think about using a polarizer when there is a blue sky and they want it make it a richer, deeper blue. This is a good enough reason to have this filter, but not the only one. What this filter will not do is make a blue sky out of an overcast sky, no matter how much you want it to be blue. The only way to do that is with a blue graduated filter.

Another use for this filter on sunny days is that it can be used as a neutral density filter in order to give you longer shutter speed times. Enabling you to pan, zoom or any other types of camera motion that you can think of.

3. Split Neutral Density and Split Graduated

The contrast of light in a scene either in the early morning or at sunset can be one of your most difficult problems to overcome in exposing a successful landscape photograph.

Basically the film can record either the sky or the land properly - but not both! If you expose properly for the land then the sky which appears colorful to your eye will be colorless and washed-out in the final photograph. Graduated filters are useful for scenic landscapes, when you want to combine a bright sky with a dark foreground. I use them primarily at sunrise and sunset.

The top half of a split neutral density filter is neutral-density and the bottom half is a clear. If you look through a split ND filter, the top half is dark; it gradually turns lighter and finally becomes clear from halfway down to the bottom. The reference to "neutral

density" indicates that the filtration neither adds nor subtracts from any of the naturally occurring color. The only effect the filter has is in decreasing the amount of light that passes through the ND portion of the filter.

These filters can be purchased in a variety of densities, but are generally found in one of the following: 1-stop (ND.3), 2-stops (ND.6) and 3-stops (ND.9). The three different densities provide various amounts of ND effect depending upon the strength of the filter (the strongest being the 3-stops variety). It is difficult to say which one you will need at any given time. During the day if you are photographing in open shade you will probably do best with a 2 stop, in darker shade - 3 stop. When photographing a landscape that is in bright sunlight try using the 1 stop filter on the sky, it will slightly darken the sky and make the landscape really stand out. When photographing at sunrise or sunset if you use a 3-stop grad filter you will have complete balance between the sky and the foreground. Sometimes you may want this or you may want to keep the sky a little brighter than the foreground, then use a 2 stop.

The split-graduated filters work the same way, except that they are colored. Whatever color they are, that color will be added to your photograph. Sometimes the color works while at other times it makes your picture look totally unrealistic. The only filter in this group that I use but not all that often is the 1-stop blue, which I use on blue skies days to darken the blue sky and add a bit of blue at the horizon line.

4. Yellow/Blue Polarizer

This filter adds blue and/or yellow to the scene.

5. Color Enhancing (Didymium/Intensifier)

It creates brighter, more saturated reds, rust browns and oranges on film, with minimal effect to the other colors. Since it increases the color saturation, particularly for red, it is useful for sunrise/sunset, fall foliage, red barns, red-orange flowers, and the red soil of Prince Edward Island.

6. 80 Blue

The "80" series of filters is designed for daylight film to be used with tungsten lighting. The strength of these filters is backwards to other filters. The 80A has the strongest blue (2-stops), 80B (1-2/3 stops), 80C (1-stop). 80B at twilight increases the blue in the scene to a rich cobalt blue as well as converting any tungsten lighting in the scene from yellow to white light. This filter is also used when you are photographing waterfalls or snow scenes to make them appear slightly blue.

7. Warming Filters

There are 2 different series of warming filters, both as their name suggests add warmth to a picture. The 81 series is the more popular of the two, it is available in varying strengths - 81A, 81B and 81C. A is the lightest, B is medium, and C is the strongest. Their best use is to remove the blue cast from your pictures on an overcast day.

Number 85 is the other series (they look orange in color), they are much stronger in intensity than the 81 series (they look amber). The #85 filters are normally used so that tungsten film can be used in daylight - usually used for motion pictures. For the landscape photographer they can be used at sunrise/sunset to create a very warm and golden appearance.

Note: Out of three filters named, I recommend starting with 81B. For the other two, I use the 81A more often, particularly with spring and summer foliage as it enhances the green of leaves and grass.

8. Neutral Density (ND)

Don't get these confused with split-graduated neutral density filters. These neutral density filters have the same degree of light reducing effect across the entire picture. You would use this filter when you want to reduce the overall light level in a scene, usually to obtain a slower shutter speed or if you wanted to use a wider depth-of-field. This doesn't apply so much with today's cameras as it did a few years ago, when cameras didn't have the high/fast shutter speeds that they do now. Uses for this filter include wildflowers blowing in the wind to create a blur of color or moving water that takes on a softer look with a

slower shutter speed. These filters are available in densities of .3 (1 stop), .6 (2 stop) and .9 (3 stops).

9. FL-D

This is a magenta colored filter that is designed to correct the color of fluorescent lighting for daylight film. Florescent lighting unfiltered has a blue-green color cast on daylight film. Some photographers use it for dusk shots in cityscapes, to correct for the green of the office lights it also adds pink-purple color to the sky. Some other photographers use it as an enhancing filter at sunrise/sunset.

The only problem with using the FL-D filter to correct for fluorescent lighting in a cityscape at twilight is that there is also tungsten lighting in the city. This must be corrected with an 80A or 80B filter, which makes the sky go cobalt blue. Unfortunately you can't use both filters at the same time to correct for the two lighting sources because they negate each other, therefore you must choose between the two.

10. Soft and Diffusing

The greatest selection and variety of soft/diffusing filters that is available on the market is probably the largest of all of the filters. The concept behind them is to soften the image by adding some blur so that the image is no longer sharp or crisp. Out of all of my soft looking images 99% were created by using a double exposure technique, where one exposure is sharply in focus and the other is completely out of focus.

11. Color Correcting (Compensating)

What these filters really do is they hold back all of the other colors in favor of the color of the filter that is being used. For example, a CC20B reduces all colors but blue by 20%. These filters come as "gels" (thin pieces of gelatin) which are used with a gel holder or as hard plastic filters, which can be used in the Cokin holders. Color Correction filters are available in primary colors - green, red and blue - and printing colors - yellow, cyan and magenta.

12. Colored Polarizers

Sunset

This is a warm/orange-graduated filter that adds a light brown to the foreground and orange to the sky, simulating or enhancing sunsets. I find that it just looks like you really filtered the shot and not very well.

Sepia

This filter is used to give the image an old, weathered, brown look.

Star

These filters give a star effect from any bright - point light source.