

Universal Light Code (ULC)

FAQs

Q- What is the Universal Light Code?

A- The light code is based on a new method that forms a notation for natural, existing, and available light, spanning the full range of human vision: fresh snow in sunlight, to grass in starlight.

Q- Why haven't I heard about this code before?

A- It's new. It's a "grass-roots", from-the-bottom-up, approach to place simple as well as complex exposure information in the hands of everyone.

Q- Why am I first hearing about this code on the internet?

A- The internet is the ideal forum for information sharing. The value of the light code is that it makes possible the rapid exchange of exposure information in a simplified and efficient manner.

Q- Why is this light code needed?

A- There are currently only arbitrary scales or codes for reflected light in use by photographers. There is no universal or international standard used as a primary benchmark for photographers. The UNIVERSAL LIGHT CODE (ULC) is a simple code for photographic notation consisting of twenty six "file folders" that contain the full range of light that can be seen by the human eye. A "decoder" is used to translate the scene into exposure settings. For example: a full moon (man-in-the-moon) is CODE C and lightning is CODE K. Anyone armed with the UNIVERSAL LIGHT CODE for a scene has the knowledge that currently belongs to the professional

Q- How can the light code help me?

A- It provides an easy to use way of finding the shutter speed, aperture and film speed you need to photograph a scene under difficult lighting conditions.

Q- Who will find using the light code most helpful?

A- Anyone from the beginning photo student with an adjustable camera to the seasoned professional.

Q- Can the light code be used with pinhole cameras?

A- Yes.

Q- What do I need to use the light code?

A- There is a chart at this site called the "Exposure Tetrad" that can be used to "decode" the ULC. The Black Cat Extended Range Exposure Guide can also be used as a decoder dial for use with the Universal Light Code.

Q- How do I get more information on the exposure guide?

A- Information is available at this site.

Q- What about reciprocity?

A- The exposure chart and the guide averages and corrects reciprocity problems found in all films. Any guide is a tool to get you into the general "territory". The exposure guide gives you a starting point for further experimentation.

Q- Do I need to use my light meter with this code?

A- No. Light meters are often "fooled" by unusual lighting conditions. To use the light code with the exposure guide, first place the camera in manual mode, then place the film speed (ISO) next to the light code letter. The dial then allows you to select a very wide range of shutter speed and aperture settings.

Q- Can I use the exposure information from others with this light code?

A- Yes. However, when exposure information is exchanged in publications, there are sometimes essential parts missing, making it impossible for other photographers to get similar results. The value of the light code is that only a single letter, for example the letter "M", is required. The "decoder" dial on the exposure guide, uses this letter to provide you with the film speed you select, along with the shutter speed and aperture.

Q- What are the essential parts needed for any exposure?

A- Exposure is a tetrad. Four elements come into play when any exposure is made:

- 1- The amount of light in the scene.
- 2- The film speed used (ISO).
- 3- The shutter speed.
- 4- The aperture.

The light code compacts the tetrad into a single letter code that embodies all four elements. The guide dial "decodes" this information back into the language the camera needs: film speed, shutter speed, and aperture.

Q- Where do I find photographs that show the light code in use?

A- A new web page called "The Universal Light Code Gallery" is located at this site.

Q- Are there any restrictions on using the light code?

A- The Universal Light Code is to be used, by individuals, openly and freely for the rapid exchange of exposure information. Since this code system is a trademark of Black Cat PhotoProducts, Inc., any commercial use by publishers, electronic or otherwise, and manufacturers, requires registration. Registration opens a membership in the ULC Council (administrative agency for the ULC). Registration and membership will ensure uniform use of the code. There is no cost for registration.

Q- What do you see as the future for the Universal Light Code?

A- The internet is the testing ground for the light code's need and usefulness. The goal at this site is to post photographs along with the light code used, to make it possible for anyone to duplicate the exposure results.