Love Your D700

written by http://mariloujaen.com

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Episode 1: Using the Interval Timer

You may not know this, but your Nikon D700 has a kick-ass self timer. Don't feel bad if you had no idea. Nikon cleverly disguised it as an "Interval Timer." And, just so you know, the Nikon D7000's 10-shot self timer has NOTHIN' on it. Brag away, my D7000 friends.

The benefit of the Interval Timer, compared to the standard self timer, is that YOU rule. You decide how many pictures it takes, and how often. Your options are almost limitless. I'm not going to even try to cover all of them - just what you need to use your camera to take some great self-portraits with your family.

Let's start with the basics. If you go to the gym, which I don't, you'll be familiar with reps and sets. A **rep** is one exercise, completed one time. One push-up. One jumping jack. One potato chip eaten. A **set** is one series of an one exercise. A bag of chips or 10 push-ups. You might do one set of 10 jumping jacks. Or two, on a good day. If you did two, congratulations! And, for the record that would be 2 sets of 10 reps of jumping jacks.

Where am I going with this gym metaphor? *Somewhere*, I promise.

Your Interval Timer can also do reps and sets. And YOU get to decide how many of each, and how long of a water break you get in between sets. And that is FREAKIN' awesome.

My defacto settings for taking shots with my kids or family is this:

3 Quick Shots (Reps) X 10 Series (Sets) in 10 Seconds Intervals (Breaks) - That gives you **30** shots.

Taking 3 quick shots at a time gives you a teeny bit of hope that you won't have made a funny face or closed your eyes, right as the camera took the photo. 10 series gives you all a chance to relax and forget the camera. 10 second breaks gives you some variety in your shots. And if you get one great shot - well, it was all worthwhile.

Many people don't realize how awesome the Interval Timer is because it is SO confusing to set up. It is extremely unclear what each setting means or does. So don't feel bad if you looked at it and your brain told you to turn off the camera and watch TV. It's not your fault; it's the menu's fault.

Lucky for you, once you've set up your Interval Timer, you can pretty much forget about how stinkin' confusing it is! And I promise to make setting it up easy. Ready? Go grab a coffee and let's do this.
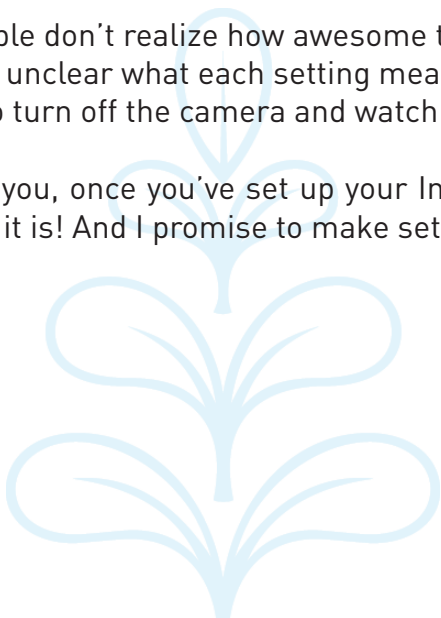
INTERVAL TIMER: Your Quick & Easy Guide

Finding the Interval Timer:

1. Push the MENU button on the back of your camera and use the arrows on the multi-selector to get to your **Shooting Menu** (the menu with the Camera icon).
2. You want to find **Interval timer shooting**, which is, of course, the last option in the menu. Because it can't just be easy!

    Quick Tip: If you are at the top of a menu, you can get to the bottom quickly by pressing the up arrow (not the down arrow).

Setting up your Interval Timer:

You only have to do this part when you want to change the Reps, Sets, or Breaks, but that's probably not very often. Triggering the Interval Timer is a much easier task.

1. Select **Interval timer shooting** from the **Shooting Menu** (see above). Here comes the confusing part - but you can do this!
2. On the **Choose start time** screen, highlight **Now,** then press the right arrow button to get to the next step. It doesn't matter that you're not going to actually take the shots right now. For more information, read the "About the Interval Timer Date/Time Option side note below.
3. On the **Interval** screen, using the arrow buttons set the first two options (hours and minutes) to '00' and the third option (seconds) to '10.' This will give us 10 second breaks in between each set of shots. It should look like this: 00:00'10"
4. Press the multi-selector's right arrow button to continue.

    Quick Tip: The right arrow is the only way to get through these menus, even if you have no changes to the settings.
5. On the **Select intvlsXno. of shots** screen, set the first option to 10 (for 10 sets) and the second option to 3 (for 3 reps). It should look like this: 010 x 3 = 0030
6. Press the multi-selector's right arrow button to continue.
7. You are now on the **Start** screen. This is the screen you will use to start the timer from now on.
    *   To start the timer right away, highlight the **On** option and press the **OK** button (on the back of your camera, in the bottom-left corner).
    *   To save your changes and exit, without starting the timer, highlight the **Off** option and press the **OK** button (which is still on the back of your camera, in the bottom-left corner).

side note

About the Interval Timer Date/Time Option
If you order pizza online, like I do - you know that you can order it for delivery NOW, or for delivery at a later date and time - maybe a party you're having on Saturday. This is just like that. If you have a group of people in front of you, and they are hungry (or waiting to have their picture taken ALREADY), you'll just use the Start option (Deliver Now).

But if you do happen to have a party later (or maybe you want to take shots of your beautiful self as you wake up in the morning) you may want to set up the timer to start at a specific time on a specific date. It's nice to know you can, but you may never need to.

Starting the Interval Timer:

1. Select **Interval timer shooting** from the **Shooting Menu**.
2. Highlight **Start** and (pay attention to this!) use the left arrow button to quickly get to the ON option. You could press the right arrow many times and get back to this screen, but WHY?
3. Highlight the **On** option and press the **OK** button (on the back of your camera, in the bottom-left corner).

NOTE: You can stop reading here, but for better results... you may want to keep reading. (Heck, it's just one more page.)

How to Focus:

Unless your camera is set to 'Manual Focus,' the Interval Timer will attempt to focus before each set of shots. This can be great, but I find that I can't plan where my subjects will be when the set starts, so here is what I prefer to do:

1. Set my camera where I want it.
2. If you want to blur the background, make sure your subjects are closer to the camera than they are to the background. You'll have to experiment to get what you want with blur - I'm generally happy to have the subjects in focus for this kind of shot. I'm not too worried about the fancy.
3. Either focus on one of your subjects or on a placeholder that is stationed where you will be in the shot. In a group shot, your focus point should preferably be in the middle of the frame, towards the front.
4. Set your aperture to a high value - depending on how much light you have - preferably it should be f/4 or higher. The higher the aperture, the higher the chance that your subjects be in focus.
5. Once you have achieved focus on a subject, set your camera's focus switch (on the front of your camera) to 'M' for manual focus.

Setting Up the Quick Shots Speed (Frames Per Second)

Because we set the number of shots per set to 3, the camera will take three quick photos. To adjust how quick they are,

- (My Choice) Set your release mode dial to **CL**: Your camera will take the quick shots, at a speed specified in custom setting d4 (CL mode shooting speed). I do this with a d4 setting of 4 fps (frames per second).
- Set your release mode dial to **CH**: Your camera will take the shots at the high-speed continuous rate, up to 7 frames per second.
- Set your release mode dial to **S** and change your "Rep" setting to 1 (instead of 3): Your camera will take one shot per set. For this to work, you MUST change your Interval Timer's Rep setting (see step 5 in the **Setting up your Interval Timer** section for info). Otherwise, the camera will behave just like it does for the first option above - even using the d4 setting for frames per second.

Credit: Just about everything I learned about photography, I learned from Karen Russell's The Photographer's Workshop. Money well spent. And just about everything I learned about Interval Timers, I learned from David Busch's Nikon D700 Guide to Digital SLR Photography (Kindle Edition).