

1. Frame Your Shot, Noting The Selected Focal Length Of Your Lens

Great panning shots depend on a good choice of **shutter speed**. What you're after is a fast enough shutter speed to freeze the subject, but a slow enough shutter speed to blur the background. In order to identify a good shutter speed, it's important to know what focal distance you'll be shooting at. The best way to discover this is to point your camera at the point in the scene where you'd like to take the shot. Then, zoom in or out until you're happy there's enough room for your subject in the frame. Now, make a note of your lens's focal length, e.g. 200mm.

2. Select Your Camera's Continuous Shooting Mode

When panning, there's no harm in capturing more than one shot. In fact, it's a good idea. Also, there's a danger with one-shot or single shooting mode that you'll press the shutter too early, and have to press the shutter again, by which time it may be too late. Choosing your camera's continuous shooting mode means that even if you do press the shutter button too early, you can just keep the shutter pressed down and know you're likely to get the shot.

3. Select Your Camera's Continuous Auto-Focus Mode

Your choice of auto-focus mode is important too. Because your subject is moving, choose an auto-focus mode that will continuously re-focus on your constantly-moving subject. On a Canon DSLR or Mirrorless camera look for **AI-SERVO**. On a Nikon camera look for **Continuous/AF-C**.

4. Select Your Camera's Shutter Priority Mode

In order to specify the shutter speed you want to use, you must first select your camera's Shutter Priority Mode. On a Canon camera look for **TV** mode. On most other brands of camera, look for **S** mode.

5. Choose A Shutter Speed Close To 1 / Focal Length

Remember you made a note of the focal length in step #1? Now you need to use this value to help you choose the shutter speed you're going to use. The shutter speed you should choose will be as close to $1 / \text{focal length}$ as possible. So, if your focal length from step #1 was 200mm, you'll want to choose 1/250s. From here you can lower your shutter speed, until you achieve your desired effect. This shutter speed is a good starting point as it should be fast enough to freeze your subject, but slow enough to blur the background.

6. Stand With Your Legs A Shoulder's Width Apart

Having a good stance when panning is very important. It helps you hold the camera steady and ensures a nice smooth panning motion. Make sure your feet are pointing approximately towards where you think you'll be pressing the shutter button. Check that you have free movement of your upper body, so you'll be able to follow the subject's movement without your arms being obstructed.

7. Find Your Subject Through The Lens

Pick your subject up in the viewfinder well before it arrives where you intend to press the shutter button, and start following it.

8. Half-Press The Shutter Button

Again, well before your subject reaches the point where you want to take the photo, half-press the camera's shutter button. This tells the camera to start focusing on the subject. Because you chose a continuous auto-focus mode earlier, the camera will continue to focus on the subject from now on.

9. Follow Your Subject's Motion

Keep following your subject's motion smoothly, in a horizontal position. If the subject is also moving vertically – e.g. jumping – ignore the vertical motion, just follow the horizontal motion.

10. Fully Press The Shutter Button

When your subject arrives at the position you want to take the photo, fully press the camera's shutter button, but don't stop the smooth horizontal panning motion. Keep the camera moving smoothly.

11. Stop Moving Your Camera

Now, just a second or two after you've taken the photo, or when you run out of room and can't physically keep tracking the subject, you can stop the horizontal panning motion.

12. Check Your Results & Adjust Your Settings

Now that you've captured your first panning shot, check whether the subject is sufficiently sharp, and that the background is sufficiently blurred. If the subject isn't sharp enough, increase your shutter speed, and jump back to step #6. If the background isn't blurry enough, decrease your shutter speed, and jump back to step #6. Finally, don't be afraid to have parts of your fast-moving subject appear a little blurry. As the example below shows, this can emphasize the motion and speed in a visually powerful way. To achieve this look, simply decrease your shutter speed until you get the result you want.

Summary

To recap this tutorial, panning is a photography technique which helps you capture your fast-moving subject by matching its movement, using a shutter speed which freezes the subject, but blurs the background, emphasizing the subject in the process. As you've discovered, there are several distinct steps which help you get the right camera settings. These can seem daunting at first, but with practice, they'll become second nature and you'll be able to pay more attention to the panning technique itself, tracking your subject with a smooth, horizontal motion.