

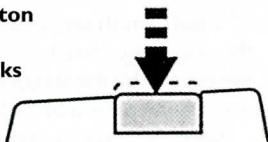
How you hold the camera can make a difference.



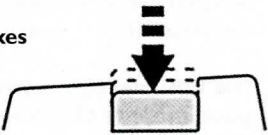
# Steady State

Good photographic technique isn't just a matter of f-stops and shutter speeds. Simple physical strategies can contribute greatly to the quality of your work. In particular, holding the camera steady and pressing its shutter button smoothly can actually make your pictures sharper. Here, excerpted from *Photography*, a new Prentice-Hall textbook by Henry Horenstein and Russell Hart, is advice about these seemingly straightforward tasks.

**Shutter button pressed halfway (locks the focus)**



**Shutter button pressed all the way (takes the picture)**



On an autofocus camera, the shutter button is more than just the button you push to take a picture. It's also your main autofocus control. Press it halfway, and the camera autofocuses—locking the focus on whatever part of the scene the viewfinder's focus point is covering. Press the shutter button all the way and the camera takes the picture.

Getting a feel for the shutter button's two-step operation takes a little patience. The key is to keep your finger on the shutter button at all times—before, during, and after the exposure. If a subject moves in or out, if you move back and forth to change your composition, or if you decide to focus on a different part of the scene, all you have to do is lighten your touch on the shutter button, reposition the focus point, and press the shutter button halfway again. Once you recompose, you're ready for the next shot. —R.H.

Holding the camera steady and pressing the shutter button smoothly are both crucial to making your pictures sharp—just as crucial, often, as the quality of your equipment or the care with which you focus. Hand tremors or sudden jabbing of the shutter button can jiggle or jerk the camera undetectably—causing anything from a lack of sharpness to a streaky blur.

Find a comfortable way to grip the camera—one that allows easy operation of camera controls—and stick with it. Note that many 35mm cameras have grip surfaces and ergonomic contours designed for you to curl your fingers around for a secure hold.

#### For horizontal photographs:

- Whatever the design of your camera, your right hand should be positioned with forefinger resting, not arched, against the shutter

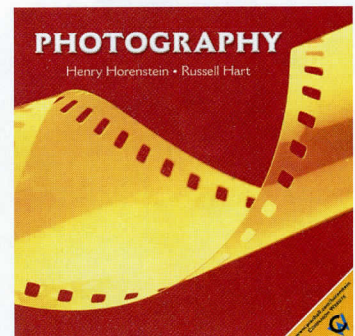
button; other fingers pressed against the front of the camera; and thumb almost vertical against the camera back. If your camera has a manual film-advance lever, place the end of your thumb underneath its tip, in a position that allows you to quickly rotate it after every shot. And hold the lens from below, not from the side or top.

- Your left hand should cradle the lens, with fingers wrapped around its barrel so you can operate the controls. The bottom of the camera rests against the palm of your hand or the base of your thumb, depending on the camera's size.

#### For vertical photographs:

- Your left-hand grip becomes more important when you orient the camera vertically. In holding the lens, the left hand actually does most of the work of supporting the camera. Where you place your right hand depends partly on whether your camera has automatic or manual film advance. If it's manual, you'll probably need to orient the camera so that the shutter button is at the top, allowing you to freely rotate the film advance lever. If your camera has automatic film advance, the shutter button (and your right hand) can be placed at the top or bottom.

As for the camera's shutter button, your finger should remain resting on it whenever you're shooting. When you take a picture, press it in one smooth motion, releasing pressure only after you hear the shutter click. This minimizes the chance that vibration transmitted to the camera will create unwanted blur in the photograph. It's an especially important technique if you're shooting with an autofocus camera, because the shutter button has a special two-step operation (see sidebar) that also allows you to activate and lock the focus. ■



For more information about *Photography*, visit [www.prenhall.com](http://www.prenhall.com).