

FILM SPEED AND CAMERA EQUIPMENT

Films are referred to as being fast, medium, or slow – a reference to their sensitivity to light. Fast films have high ISO (International Standards Organization) numbers and slow films, low ones. Fast films are useful in low-light situations, since they increase the chances of achieving a correctly exposed image when

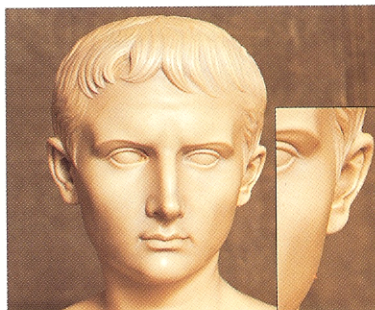
a less-sensitive, slower film may result in underexposure. The drawback of this increase in speed, however, is a reduction in image sharpness and an increase in contrast. Slow films are ideal when light levels are good and you need the highest-quality prints.

Upgrading (pushing) film

- Color negative film can be exposed at twice its rated ISO number if it is given special processing to compensate.

SLOW FILM

This marble bust was shot using a very slow-speed film (ISO 32). Note the delicate, almost creamy texture of the statue's surface and the soft gradation of tones between the lit right-hand side and the shadowy left-hand side. Even in the enlargement (*see inset*), the appearance of any grain is negligible.



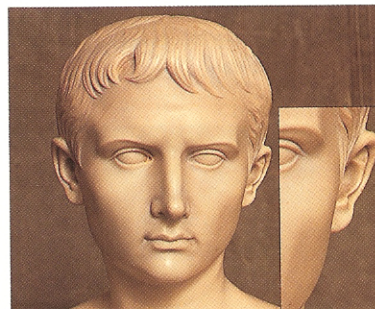
Choosing slow film

A slow film is ideal for brightly lit subjects, or where a degree of subject movement or blur is required. It is often used for still life subjects that need to be enlarged while still retaining a lot of detail and a fine-grained image. Even if light is poor, the camera can be set up on a tripod and a long exposure given.



MEDIUM FILM

Using the same lighting as above, the bust was shot using a medium-speed film (ISO 200). Note that grain becomes coarser the faster the film. Here the film is much faster than the ISO 32 film (each doubling of the ISO number is a doubling of the sensitivity), but the quality is still good, and the grain can only just be detected.



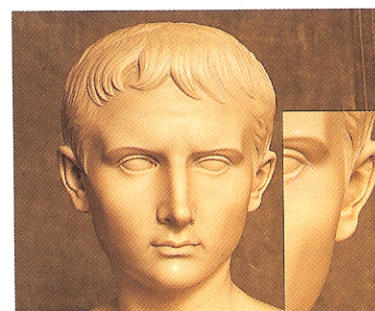
Choosing medium film

A film in the medium-speed category is suitable for a wide range of different subjects and lighting conditions. Although ambient light levels are high in this bright Mediterranean scene, medium-speed film can also be used in less light earlier or later in the day when the sun is much lower in the sky.



MODERATE-FAST FILM

With the film speed doubled to ISO 400, the appearance of the bust on the full-frame image is slightly different. The surface of the bust looks less fine and the contrast between light and shade is beginning to increase slightly. As you would expect with a faster film, the grain is now fairly noticeable in the enlargement.



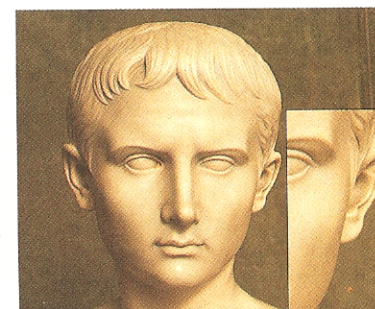
Choosing moderate-fast film

This shot of a seagull in flight requires a fast shutter speed to capture the movement of the subject and avoid camera shake, as well as a small aperture to cover any slight error in focus. The speed of a moderate-fast film enables you to photograph subjects in even extremely dim lighting conditions.



ULTRA-FAST SPEED FILM

The ISO 1000 film used for this photograph of the bust is 1.5 times more sensitive than the ISO 400 film, and now the grainy nature of the film emulsion is apparent. Note, too, that the soft gradation of tone apparent in the version using the slow film is now more abrupt and that there is a slight color shift.



Choosing ultra-fast film

Choose an ultra-fast film when light levels are really low, for example, in a dimly lit interior or outdoors at dusk. This type of film is so sensitive that it will give you acceptable results even by the light of a match. The graininess of the resulting image can add to the dramatic impact and atmosphere of the shot.

