



Tips for Photographing AnglerFish Glowing Jewelry

We are not expert photographers at AnglerFish, but we have learned a few tricks for photographing glowing jewelry.

The camera:

Many cameras are designed as 'point and shoot' cameras and the internal settings are automatically chosen based on some information about the scene, such as 'Outdoor Sports' or 'Nighttime image'. Automatic settings will generally fail to capture the beauty of your jewelry and we recommend using a camera with some degree of manual control over the focus, ISO, f-stop and exposure time. There are many entry-level DSLR cameras (digital single-lens reflex camera), and we're currently using a less expensive Cannon Rebel T5.

The basics:

We assume that you own a camera and know how to take photos. A tripod or other stabilizing device will be necessary, especially when using longer exposure times.

Color balance:

One common issue in photography is color balance. Different light sources have a slightly different distribution of colors, so photos can come out with a blue or red tint. Most cameras have mechanisms to compensate for this. Some cameras have color balance settings such as 'daylight' or 'fluorescent lighting', but the most accurate means for adjusting the color balance is with a 'custom color balance'. If your camera has this feature then you'll want to take a photo of a clean white surface (such as white poster-board or just a white sheet of paper). The camera can then be set to use this reference image to define 'white'.

If you don't have a custom white balance feature on your camera you'll want to verify which settings makes a white object appear most white.

Don't confuse the white balance of your scene by adding multiple kinds of light sources. For example: You have some lamps that you're using to illuminate the subject and there is ambient light coming from a window. These two different sources of light probably have different color spectra. Then the color balance can vary from one place to another within the image. This will most likely confuse and confound both you and your camera (especially using auto white balance!). In this instance, choose to use either the lamps or the daylight.

Lighting:

Direct lighting can be problematic with smooth reflective surfaces such as beads and often leads to images of your lightbulbs or reflecting umbrellas on the surfaces of your beads! Diffusing your light sources with a sheer white fabric can prevent ghost-reflections in or on your beads. A

diffuse light source will also help reduce stark shadows being cast by the piece.

Exposure and Brightness:

It is common to use black or white backgrounds when photographing jewelry. When the background is very dark, the camera's internal meter will register a very dark image. Auto-exposure features will then typically over-expose the image and the details of your jewelry will get washed out. Similarly, with a white background, auto-exposure features will tend to underexpose the parts of the image with your jewelry. This is where manual control of your camera settings can be useful.

There are three things that contribute to the exposure level: ISO, exposure time and f-stop.

We recommend fixing the ISO and f-stop then adjusting the exposure time appropriately.

We recommend an ISO setting of 400 or lower. Higher settings imply a higher sensitivity to light, but will result in grainy looking images. This can be important if you or your viewers want to zoom in and look at specific areas of the image, such as the focal bead of your piece.

F-stop. A lower f-stop number means that more light is allowed into the camera. While that's good, it decreases the depth of focus. If you want an image where things in the foreground and background are in focus, then you'll want a high f-stop setting. We tend to use a higher f-stop, but a narrow depth of focus (lower f-stop) can also produce some very artistic images. A good starting place might be f/20.

The shutter speed (or exposure time) should then be used as the final adjustment for the brightness of your image. This will require some experimentation on your part. Remember, if you're photographing against a white background you'll want the camera light-meter to read high, and if photographing against a dark background you'll want the light meter to indicate a low light level. Try a range of shutter speeds and look at the results before taking photos of all your pieces!

Backgrounds: Glossy backgrounds can be useful in that they produce a second, lower intensity reflected image of your piece. The challenge with a reflective surface is controlling inadvertent reflections and images of other objects around the room including tripods, books, cats and whatever else you might have lying around. Other textured backgrounds such as stone, wood, or fabric can compliment the piece, but if they are too busy they can distract from your composition. When introducing new backgrounds, be careful that they not direct attention away from your jewelry.