

While Away Hours With Water Drop Photography

By Julian Crombleholme

All you need is some easily found items from around your home and plenty of patience.

EQUIPMENT

1. DSLR preferably with mirror lock up mode, an empty memory card as you will take 100's of images, fully charged battery and preferably a remote shutter release cable but not essential.
2. The ideal lens is a 1.1 macro lens, but you can use your shortest distance focusing lens, about 25 cm is ideal.
3. Speedlight camera flash (on camera flash can be used but set it to manual use and the lowest brightness setting).
4. Tripod
5. Some sort of frame to support your water reservoir bag, preferably height adjustable so you can change the size of the splash (I use two cheap tripods).
6. Freezer bag, the one's with handles are best to hang the bag from and a fine pin or needle.
7. Container to catch your water drop, a cocktail glass or similar with a wide diameter, also a deep tray to catch the overflow.
8. It can be messy so old newspaper and towel, you can also use a freezer bag to protect your camera with a hole for the lens and flash.
9. Food colouring.
10. Coloured paper for background and a way to support it.
11. Coloured gels for your flash, you can use cellophane sweet wrappers (Quality Street)
12. Plastic ruler or a long bolt



CAMERA SETTINGS

Set your camera and lens to manual, put camera in mirror lockup mode, use an aperture of F9 – F16, the higher the F number the better the depth of field and the more will be in focus, Shutter settings will be determined by the maximum sync speed of your camera 1/200 or 1/250 sec. White balance set to flash but you can experiment with this setting. ISO 1000 or higher depending on your camera. Don't use live view.

If using the built-in flash on your camera use the same settings as above but set the flash to manual and to the lowest power output setting. You may need to use higher ISO settings. Don't use the lens hood as this gets in the way of the flash.

MIRROR LOCKUP

DSLR cameras with mirror lockup tend to have more sophisticated electronics than those that don't have this facility. The first press of the shutter button or remote cable release puts the camera in mirror lockup, the second press then takes the image, by using mirror lockup this reduces shutter lag from shot to shot and you will be able to time the drops better.

FLASH SETTINGS FOR SPEEDLIGHTS

In order to freeze the shot, set the flash to 1/32 power or less in manual mode, if using a remote/radio trigger from the hot shoe of your camera place the flash 20 – 30 cm from the drip. If you are lucky and have two speedlights you can use one as a master to fire slaves to illuminate the drops. When photographing water, light the background to produce reflections, if using milk or paint (poster paint or emulsion watered down) light the drop.

SETTING UP



Setup as in photo above.

1. Pour water into reservoir (don't over fill)
2. Place your container to catch the drip under your reservoir and fill to the brim.
3. Pierce a small hole in bag so the drip lands centrally in your container

4. Place bolt in the container standing upright or the ruler across the container where the drip lands, this is where you will focus.

FOCUSING

When you have your first drops landing in your container, it's time to focus on them. Place your camera in a position to suit the lens you are using, if you can focus at 25 cm this is an ideal distance.

You are now all set up to experiment with different liquids, remember it's all about timing the drip and when to press the shutter button this will depend on the height of the reservoir, it takes practice so don't expect results immediately. You can now while away the hours in these difficult times. Try adjusting the height of the reservoir to get different effects, if you have a white ceramic tile try doing some splashes on to a hard surface, this can be quite messy so protect your camera in a plastic bag.

Below are a few images taken using the above settings and my Splash Art system.





