

Why You Need A Tripod

A tripod serves the purpose of stabilizing the camera so that camera shake does not degrade image quality. A tripod becomes absolutely necessary whenever it is too dark to shoot hand held (and a using a flash would not be appropriate). It will enable you to shoot: - in extreme shade (the woods, dark urban alleyways), - indoors, - at dawn, dusk, or night, - precisely aligned panoramas, - sharp macro shots.

Tripod Investment

You can buy a tripod as a complete package (tripod legs and the head) but be careful! There are tripods out there that have heads on them that are intended for video cameras and these types of heads are not suitable for still cameras. There are also many cheap and poorly made tripods that in my opinion are not worth buying. Often they break too easily and they could even damage or destroy your camera if a leg won't stay tight and slips. It may feel like a lot of money to buy a good quality tripod, but it's worth it in the long term. Consider investing in something that will be safe, secure, stable, convenient to use, and that will last you for many, many years.

Highly Recommended Tripod Brand

Manfrotto by Bogen Imaging.

We use Manfrotto tripods at AIPH because they are a good value for the \$. They are well made, durable, and parts are available if something needs repair. Manfrotto makes a large variety of tripod legs, heads, and accessories, and you can buy Manfrotto tripod legs and tripod heads separately. This allows you to purchase legs appropriate for your physical stature, and a head that fits your budget, and meets your needs.

Tripod Legs Suggestion

Buy legs that will allow you to get the camera to your eye level. If you are tall, this will require a bigger, heavier, and more expensive tripod. Check the specifications before you buy, and get legs appropriate for your stature. Most tripod legs are steel and/or aluminum, but there are also carbon fiber legs available. Carbon fiber legs are strong, lighter than the metal legs, and less prone to vibration. Unfortunately, carbon fiber legs are extremely expensive. If you are extremely rich, I do recommend them.

Tripod Head Suggestion

The traditional three handle, pan-tilt tripod head* is a pain in the butt to use. I highly recommend a ballhead with a camera quick release. Ballheads** are often lighter, and more importantly, they have only one control knob to adjust the camera position. The traditional pan-tilt tripod head uses 3 controls levers to accomplish the same thing, (which is why I described it as a pain in the butt to use). Consider investing in a ball head one that has a quick release system. This involves an adapter plate that attaches to the camera (and stays on the camera). When you want to use the tripod, you set it up the legs and then simply snap the camera on to the head (no more screwing and unscrewing the camera to attach or remove it from the tripod). Well worth the slight additional cost, because it saves time, and minimizes the aggravation of setting up or breaking down a tripod.

* Traditional Pan-Tilt Tripod Heads

These are a pain to use and are **NOT RECOMMENDED**.



illustrated: Manfrotto 804RC2 3-Way Pan/Tilt head

** **RECOMMENDED** Manfrotto 496RC2 Ballhead with Quick Release Plate

Additional release plates are available if you have more than one camera.



Manfrotto Tripod Legs

For people 5' 5" tall (or taller) get the **Manfrotto 055XDB Tripod Legs**.

People 5' 5" tall (or less) the **Manfrotto 190XBD Tripod Legs** may be adequate.

Where Do You Buy A Tripod?

Maybe you can find a good used one on Craigslist, on e-bay, or at a garage sale?

For new equipment, I do feel that whenever possible, you should consider buying locally.

Please try to support the camera shops in our region. In Philadelphia, please consider shopping at **Calumet Philadelphia**, 215-399-2155, 1400 S. Columbus Boulevard, Philadelphia, PA 19147, or at **WebbCam**, 241 North 12th St., Phila. PA 19107, 215-923-8380. Both stores have knowledgeable and friendly staff, sell professional equipment, and at fair prices.

If you prefer to shop on-line, I can recommend visiting www.bhphotovideo.com They have good prices, service, and are honest web merchants. Note that the B&H web-site is a great resource for researching equipment specifications, and prices (even if you buy it elsewhere)!