

# 8 Useful Digital Camera Hacks That Don't Cost the Earth

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You can actually get more out of a photograph with a cheap homemade reflector than an expensive lens when you are on the learning curve with your camera. The good thing is that the photography community is a friendly bunch. There are some great photographers shooting out advice in some [amazing photography blogs](#).

The prime [amateur photography lesson](#) is that it's just about composition and light. But the second most important lesson was taught to me by a professional photographer whom I hesitantly asked about the best kinds of photography accessories. He told me to just shoot more and learn till I find that I can't absolutely do without that extra accessory. It's all about squeezing the most out of what you have till you can't squeeze anymore.

And when you hit the wall, you can squeeze some more by hacking day-to-day objects into nifty camera accessories. Yes, they might not do anything for your style, but they won't hit your bank

account either. So, here's a roundup of some useful digital camera hacks that don't cost the Earth and the moon.

## **Reduce Camera Shake with a Bean Bag**

### **You Need:**

- A bag of lentils.
- Discarded pair of jeans.



If you are coming from a point-and-shoot to a DSLR that weighs 2+ pound (and that's without a heavy telephoto lens), the first thing you have to learn is to stabilize your camera. High-end cameras have stabilization build in, but you still have to be rock still if you don't want your photos to end up with the shakes. This [DIY photography hack](#) on Digitalcameraworld.com shows you how to reduce camera shake while supporting your camera with a homemade "beanbag". Instead of buying one, you can make your own rough n' tough beanbag with a discarded pair of jeans and fill it up with a bag of lentils. Some sewing skills will be required. But you can have someone like your wife do it for you.

In the meantime, you can save the \$30 that takes to buy a camera bean bag.

## **A Camera Image Stabilizer You Can Carry In Your Pocket**

### **You Need:**

- A short 1/4 inch diameter bolt.
- A piece of string slightly longer than your height.
- A large washer or other small weight.

This [\\$1 camera image stabilizer tutorial](#) on Instructables.com shows how you can make a carry along camera stabilizer with the materials mentioned and give yourself some extra stops of exposure. It is a very simple how-to and should take you just about ten minutes to put together. The idea is to

attach one end of the string to a short screw which goes into the tripod mount under the camera, and the other end to a small weight held by your feet. The string is kept taut by the opposing tension created by the camera and the weight planted under your feet. The hacker says that this is a good technique to keep the camera stable and it works well for medium exposure shots. It removes vertical shake and you can also freely pan the camera horizontally. For long exposure shots, you will need an actual tripod. But the best thing is its ultra-portability.

## **Diffuse Flash with an Empty Milk Carton**

### **You Need:**

- An empty plastic milk carton.
- A pair of scissors.



Direct flash can cast harsh shadows, hot spots or reflections. Flash blowout is a common problem in photography because internal flash units may not calibrate the right intensity of the light. So you

may have to diffuse the flash instead of letting it fall directly on the subject. Creating some distance between the camera and the subject is the one way to do it though it doesn't work in all situations. The second cheapest way (and there are many) could be to use an empty plastic milk carton.

Make your flash spread out by using the semi-opaque plastic on a milk carton. This [Digitalcameraworld.com tutorial](http://Digitalcameraworld.com/tutorial) shows you how to cut around the handle and make a neat fitting flash diffuser. The curvature of the handle fits snugly over the camera flash and is small enough to fit in your pocket. You can in fact experiment with a variety of materials to create your flash diffuser – from toilet paper to white foam sheets. Use white semi-opaque materials because the color of the materials affects the color temperature of the light that passes through the diffuser.

A branded plastic diffuser is not very expensive (\$5) but why waste even that.

## **The Flash Bouncer with a Business Card**

### **You Need:**

- A white business card.
- A pair of scissors.



Bouncing flash off a surface is another way of diffusing light and preventing harsh, unnatural light to fall on the subject. Bouncing light also prevents hot spots and red eyes along with shadows when you are shooting indoors. You can use ceilings and walls to bounce the flash. But that's possible only if you have an external flash. But worry not because here's an almost free solution to bounce light off the ceiling with your own bounce card and the in-built flash.



The Party Bouncer card takes 15 seconds to fashion. Take a white business card made of cardboard and snip two cuts on the other end of the card and attach it to the metallic hinges of the integrated flash, preferably at an angle of 45 degrees. The [Diyphotography.net tutorial](http://Diyphotography.net/tutorial) shows it to you in pictures.

A professional grade bounce card (e.g. Rogue FlashBenders ROGUEFLAG Bounce Card) can cost as much as \$30.

## **DIY Photography Backdrops**

### **You Need:**

- Cotton Duck fabric.
- Dowel rod.
- Cup hooks (2).



[Instructables.com's tutorial](#) on how to create a cheap backdrop for your DIY photo studio should take you under ten minutes to set up if you are handy with a drill. You can buy cotton duck fabrics in any color starting with the standard black or white. This is one of the easiest tutorials I could find that allows you to make a full-length backdrop for your subjects. You can experiment with other cheap materials like colored paper, muslin cloth, velour, velvet, or even a non-creased table cloth. Ideal

qualities are that it should be wrinkle and reflection free. Also, once you learn how to control depth of field, you can lessen the comparative importance of the background material.

Low-cost backdrop support systems (like the CowboyStudio Photography 6x9ft Black Muslin Backdrop with One Section Cross Bar) can cost upwards of \$50.

## **Rain Guard for Your Lens with a CD Case**

### **You Need:**

- A blank CD case.
- Polythene.
- Gaffer tape.



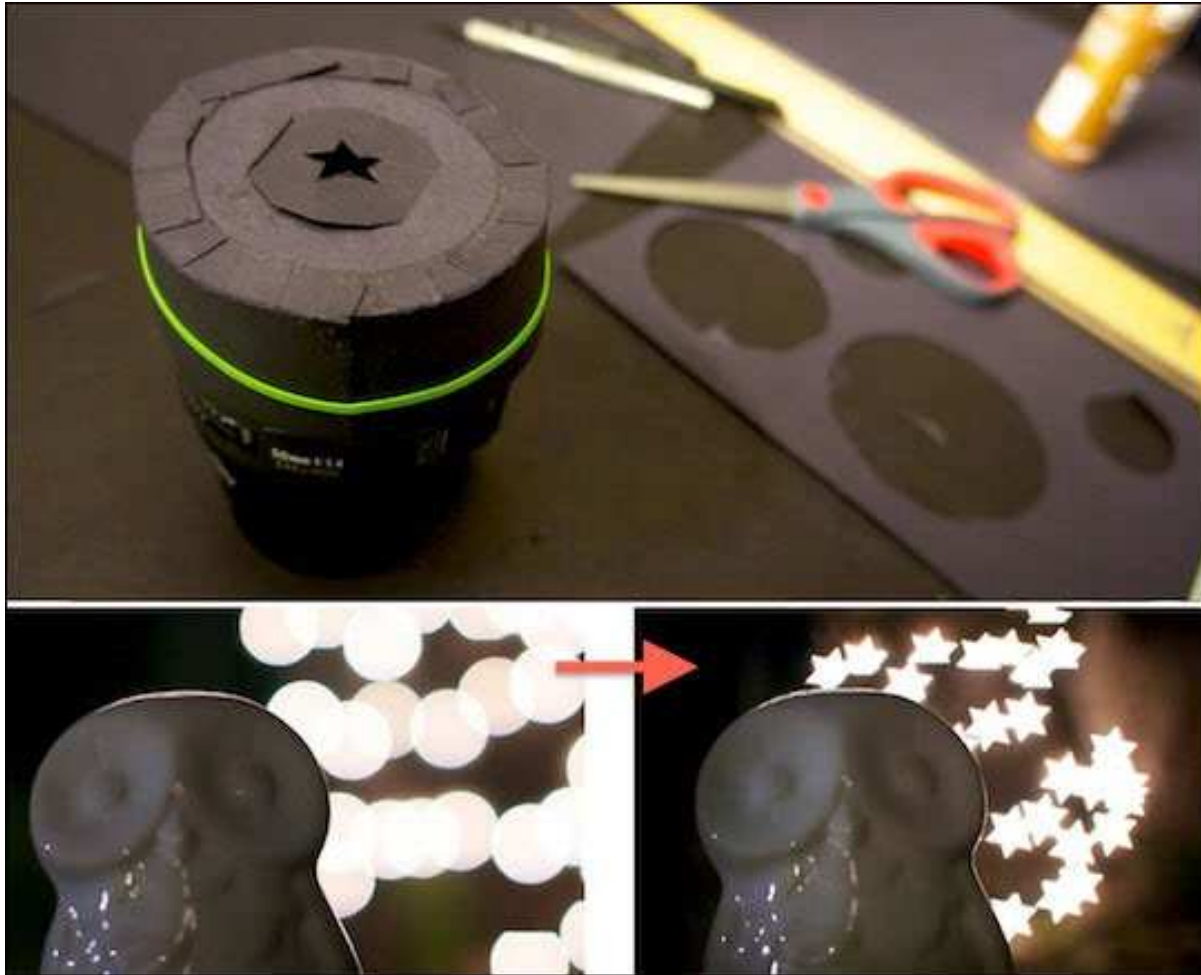
Whether you like it or not, you will be hit by the weather; pun intended. Your camera might say it has an all-weather body, but it takes a brave man to risk it. [Digitalcameraworld.com](http://Digitalcameraworld.com) takes you through the construction. You have to cut two blank CD case covers and attach them with Gaffer tape so that they extend out and protect your lens from the drops. It is a simple photography hack, and all you have to do is precisely measure out the diameters as instructed.

Camera rain guards with lens protection can cost around \$25.

# Bokeh Effects Filter

## You Need:

- Sheets of black construction paper or posterboard.
- Scissors
- Electrical Tape
- Velcro



[Bokeh](#) are artistic photo effects which appear as out-of-focus points of light. You can create them naturally with your camera settings and placement of your subject. Or you can use bokeh filters. The best thing about creating your own bokeh filters is that you can give them creative shapes in various sizes. Try Chris Perez's cheap and easy [DIY tutorial on creating bokeh effects](#) with black construction paper.

Creative bokeh kits cost around \$20 or more.

## **Remote Shutter Trigger**

### **You Need:**

- 2.5 mm Hands free phone headset.



Well, with the number of cell phones we change, you should have a spare handsfree phone headset lying around somewhere. Making one from a headset is easy if you have 10 minutes to spare. This [Instructables.com photography tutorial](#) shows you just how. You can do away with the ear piece by snipping away the wire leading to the ear piece as explained in the tutorial. The camera shutter stays open as long till the button in the handsfree is depressed.

Remote shutter triggers actually are very cheap. You can buy one for under \$10. But it's still fun to make one in the spirit of DIY.

## **Be Creative...Be a Photography MacGyver**

We have our own wishlists...a desire list of the [coolest accessories every photographer wants](#). But after splurging \$2000 on the latest camera, we could also calm our wallets by turning to some [digital photography accessories we can make ourselves](#). It doesn't hurt to try.

If you are starting out with digital photography, browse through [The Essential Guide To Digital Photography](#). It is free. Just like the helpful DIY photography tutorials written by experts in the field. If they can attach a piece of cardboard or plastic to their cameras, so can you. Tell us about the favorite digital camera hacks you have come across. Your tips in the comment thread could turn us all into MacGyver's and save us a bundle. Image Credit: [Shutterstock](#)

The post [8 Useful Digital Camera Hacks That Don't Cost The Earth](#) appeared first on [MakeUseOf](#)