

READ THE LIGHT.

Handheld meters for film photography



INCONSISTENT EXPOSURE



CONSISTENT EXPOSURE

BETTER EXPOSURES. SMARTER CHOICES.

Incident metering explained.
Six new options. Five used options.
A practical guide to your next roll.

SEKONIC / GOSSEN / MINOLTA

01 / WHY INCIDENT

Same light. Different tones.

Meter illumination without letting a white or black subject bias the reading.



WHITE SCENES

A reflected meter sees lots of returning light and tends to recommend too little exposure. Whites turn gray. Add exposure to that reflected reading to keep whites bright.

BLACK SCENES

A reflected meter sees little returning light and tends to recommend too much exposure. Blacks turn gray. Reduce exposure from that reflected reading to preserve dark tones.

Incident metering measures the light falling on the subject. Under unchanged illumination, both objects receive the same exposure. Their reflectances create their different tones. A carefully interpreted reflected reading can be just as accurate.

02 / IN THE FIELD

Start at the subject.

Ambient describes continuous light. Incident describes the way you measure it.



SEKONIC L-308X-U

Product photo: Sekonic

01 Set film ISO or working EI.

Use box speed, or EI 320 for ISO 400 color negative film when giving approximately +1/3 stop.

02 Select ambient + incident.

Choose ambient mode and position the dome as the manual directs. Use the normal raised dome if retractable.

03 Read the subject's light.

Hold near the important area. For a standard exposure reading, aim the dome toward the camera.

04 Keep the light path clear.

Do not shade the dome with your body. An alternate reading position must have equivalent illumination.

05 Transfer the settings.

Choose a shutter speed, read the aperture, and set both on the camera. Re-meter when the light changes.

ONE EXPOSURE. THREE CREATIVE CHOICES.

1/60 at f/11 = 1/125 at f/8 = 1/250 at f/5.6

These conventional full-stop settings give the same exposure, with different motion rendering and depth of field. A separate meter does not include lens-filter or bellows corrections.

03 / BUY NEW

Digital meters to start with.

Sekonic and Gossen offer current photographic incident meters. These three also measure flash.



BEST ALL-ROUND STARTING POINT

Sekonic L-308X-U

WHY IT WORKS Compact; incident and reflected readings; direct aperture/shutter display; one AA battery.

TRADE-OFF Fixed head and broad reflected reading, rather than a built-in spot finder.

BEST FIT Most film photographers who want a straightforward first meter.



SWIVEL-HEAD ALTERNATIVE

Gossen Digipro F2

WHY IT WORKS Rotating head, incident/reflected modes, aperture or shutter priority, and illuminated display.

TRADE-OFF Larger than a tiny pocket meter; no built-in narrow spot finder.

BEST FIT Portraits and deliberate available-light work where positioning matters.



COMPACT GOSSEN OPTION

Gossen Sixtomat F2

WHY IT WORKS Ambient/flash readings, direct digital settings and selectable full, half or third-stop display.

TRADE-OFF Fixed head, unlike the Digipro F2. Check the exact version when buying older stock.

BEST FIT A conventional digital meter with useful exposure controls.

Manufacturer product listings checked September 25, 2026; dealer stock varies.

04 / BUY NEW

Small kits. Classic controls.

Good choices when ambient light is the priority and you enjoy a physical exposure dial.



SIMPLE ANALOG CHOICE

Sekonic L-208 TwinMate

WHY IT WORKS Palm-size incident/reflected meter with a needle and exposure dial. Uses a CR2032 battery.

TRADE-OFF Ambient only; limited dim-light range. Reading a dial is less direct than a digital aperture display.

BEST FIT Daylight walks and a compact manual-film kit.



ULTRALIGHT HYBRID

Gossen Digisix 2

WHY IT WORKS Tiny body: digital EV measurement plus a dial showing exposure combinations. Incident and reflected.

TRADE-OFF Ambient only. You transfer the measured EV to the dial before choosing settings.

BEST FIT Travelers who value minimum weight and visual exposure relationships.



BATTERY-FREE ANALOG CHOICE

Sekonic L-398A

WHY IT WORKS Swivel head, classic needle/dial operation and an amorphous sensor that needs no battery.

TRADE-OFF Ambient only; less suited to very dim interiors. Learn the high-slide and accessory workflow.

BEST FIT Daylight and brighter continuous-light setups; photographers who like analog tools.

These are genuine incident-capable meters; many camera-shoe meters are reflected-only.

05 / BUY USED

Proven tools. Buy condition.

Minolta is a used-market choice for these models. Sekonic also has strong discontinued options.



USED PICK / ALSO CONSIDER AUTO METER V F

Minolta Auto Meter IV F

WHY IT WORKS Ambient and flash metering, swiveling head and readable digital controls. Uses one AA battery.

TRADE-OFF Age, dome condition and battery corrosion matter. Buy with a test/return window.

BEST FIT A tested IV F for value; a V F if its added functions justify the price. Photo: IV F.



USED PICK / MORE CONTROLS

Sekonic L-358

WHY IT WORKS Rotating/retractable dome, memory and backlit display; reads ambient and flash.

TRADE-OFF Larger than a 308-series meter. Optional spot finders and radio modules may be missing.

BEST FIT Portraits and lighting work. Its published incident range extends below the 308 series.



USED PICK / SMALL AND DIRECT

Sekonic L-308S / L-308S-U

WHY IT WORKS Compact incident/reflected ambient and flash meter using one AA battery.

TRADE-OFF Shutter-priority/EV workflow; lacks the L-308X's aperture-priority mode. Fixed head.

BEST FIT A first film meter when a verified working example saves enough over buying new.

Recommendations are editorial judgments based on features; no hands-on comparison test is claimed.

06 / USED BUYING CHECKLIST

A bargain must still meter.

A meter that turns on is not necessarily a meter that measures accurately.

VINTAGE GOSSEN / FIFTH USED OPTION

Luna-Pro F

A good analog option if you enjoy a needle and exposure calculator dial. It measures ambient and flash, incident and reflected light, and uses a standard **9-volt battery**. Bulk and slower dial operation are the main compromises.

CHECK THESE BEFORE YOU BUY

01 Test more than one light level.

Compare with a trusted meter in steady bright light and dim light, with matched ISO, mode and dome position.

02 Inspect the parts that matter.

Check the dome/diffuser, battery contacts, display or needle, buttons, head movement and battery door.

03 Verify the exact battery.

Early Luna-Pro/Lunasix versions can require a mercury-battery solution. The Luna-Pro F is a different, 9V model.

04 Price the complete working kit.

Confirm the incident diffuser is included. Missing accessories, calibration and repairs can erase a low purchase price.

Prefer a return window. Check actual sale prices for tested examples. Cosmetic grades and an old catalog price do not establish accuracy or present market value.

07 / COLOR NEGATIVE FILM

My preference: +1/3 stop.

A small cushion against underexposure, with normal C-41 processing.
Color film Only!

+1/3

ABOUT 26% MORE LIGHT

Measured relative to a reliable box-speed reading.

Shadows receive the least exposure and create the thinnest image areas on a negative. A little extra light can help marginal shadow information register more fully.

Color negative film generally tolerates extra exposure well. At only 1/3 stop, the benefit may be subtle; box speed remains valid.

SET A LOWER EXPOSURE INDEX ON THE METER

FILM ISO	METER EI	EXPOSURE BIAS
100	80	Approximately +1/3 stop
160	125	Approximately +1/3 stop
200	160	Approximately +1/3 stop
400	320	Approximately +1/3 stop
800	640	Approximately +1/3 stop

Apply it once. At EI 320, ISO 400 film already receives the extra exposure. Do not add another +1/3 stop. Process normally.

Keep the distinction. This is a color-negative preference, not a blanket rule for slide film. It cannot rescue a badly misplaced meter reading.

Rounded EI values. Use only intermediate camera settings that your camera or lens supports.

08 / QUICK CHOICES + SOURCES

Choose for how you work.

Manufacturer specifications inform the shortlist; condition determines the value of a used meter.

New, straightforward digital	Sekonic L-308X-U
New, rotating head	Gossen Digipro F2
New, very small ambient kit	Gossen Digisix 2 or Sekonic L-208
New, no battery	Sekonic L-398A
Used, direct digital operation	Minolta Auto Meter IV F / V F or Sekonic L-308S
Used, more head/control flexibility	Sekonic L-358
Used, analog dial experience	Gossen Luna-Pro F

SOURCES & IMAGE CREDITS

Click a source title below to open it. Product photographs: Sekonic (five models), Gossen (three models), and KEH (Minolta IV F). The cover and ceramic still life were generated with AI for illustration; they are not product documentation or film tests.

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Sekonic: L-308X-U
- 02

Gossen: Digipro F2
- 03

Gossen: Sixtomat F2
- 04

Sekonic: L-208
- 05

Gossen: Digisix 2
- 06

Sekonic: L-398A
- 07

Minolta: Auto Meter IV F manual
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Minolta: Auto Meter V F manual
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Sekonic: L-358
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Sekonic: L-308S-U
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Gossen: Luna-Pro F manual
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Gossen: legacy battery guidance
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Kodak: Gold 200 exposure latitude
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KEH: Minolta IV F photo / listing