



PUSHING & PULLING FILMS

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Picture this (no pun intended): You're in a darkened theater, on stage steps Shania Twain, Garth Brooks or maybe Madonna. The lights dim and then you realize you only have 100 speed film in the camera and no flash. In the darkness there's no way you are going to get pictures to come out with that speed film. You could panic and run screaming from the theater or you could "push" the film to get the shot.

Pushing film, also known as uprating, is a method of tricking the camera's meter into thinking it has faster film in the magazine and allowing you to get shots where it would be impossible with slower speed film. This method is extremely useful when working without a flash in low light conditions.

To push film, set your film speed ISO dial to double what the film is really rated for. For example, if you have ISO 200 speed film in the camera and you want to push it, set the film ISO dial to 400. The 400 setting will give you a wider range of available exposures in low light than would the 200 setting.

Some films are specifically designed to be pushed. Many manufacturers now make both color and b&w films that are "push friendly". Films that are made specifically for pushing can often be pushed 3-5 times their normal ISO rating. That makes a huge difference if you have to get the shot.

Now the down side. When you push a film you will have to accept some loss in image quality, namely in image sharpness, contrast, and increased grain. With b&w film it isn't so bad, but color film

quickly loses its quality when pushed. But if you have to get the shot and there is no other alternative, pushing is a viable effect way to shoot in low light.

WARNING: If you push a roll of film -- the entire roll must then be processed at the pushed speed. You cannot reset the ISO dial back to its original setting and assume only those few shots are pushed. You **MUST** tell your processor the film is pushed and to what speed in order for the "push" to work. If you don't inform the processor, the images will be nearly unusable after the processing.

Pulling film, also known as down rating, is a seldom used tactic that merits little attention with today's films. It's just the opposite of pushing film; you rate the film at a lower speed. It was used in bygone days to help control contrast. Today's films work well with contrast and really don't benefit from pulling. There is one exception. Pulling some transparency films will help increase color saturation. Rate the color slide film about 1/3 to 1/2 a stop less than its manufacturer's ISO. If you want to try this to increase color saturation, **DON'T** tell the processor what you did. If the processor knows the film is exposed at a different speed, he/she will attempt to compensate during development, thereby ruining your color saturation attempt.