Camera Settings: Check these before you start shooting

White Balance: Effectively, the colour of light, you tell the camera what the primary light source is, for example, sunny daylight, cloudy daylight, shaded light, incandescent (standard household bulbs), fluorescent (strip lights and energy saving bulbs) or you leave it set to Auto White Balance (AWB) and the camera decides.

ISO: Changes the sensitivity of camera to light. The higher the value, the more sensitive, ISO 100-200 is good for outside on sunny days, 400-800 for cloudy, dull days, and when shooting indoors without flash (for example at a wedding in a church) you would probably set 1600-3200. The quality of your images dis-improves at higher ISO settings, you can notice this in the form of noise (grainy, pixelated features in your images and a reduction in colour saturation and fidelity)

Shooting Mode: If you want to improve your photography, you need to move away from the camera's auto settings. Greater understanding of settings gives greater control over your picture taking, allows you to shoot competently in many different situations and will make your images more professional looking and less like snapshots.

Primarily, experienced photographers use:

> **Aperture Priority Mode :** Denoted by **A, or Av** on your camera dial or menu (you set the aperture, the camera automatically selects the shutter speed
>
> **Shutter Priority:** Denoted by **S or Tv,** you set the shutter speed, the camera sets the corret aperture
>
> **Manual Mode:** You set shutter speed and aperture, the camera tells you whether your exposure is correct by means of a light meter or a **+ /-** sometimes with a number like +2 -2 etc

Shutter priority is used where your primary concern is freezing or blurring movement (eg sports, dance, or blurring movement might be where you want to blur moving water in a landscape image)

Aperture priority is used when your primary concern is depth of field (how much of your image is in focus) examples would be where you shoot a landscape and want everything in focus, so you would use an aperture like F8, F11 or F16 and if you were shooting a portrait and wanted the background to be blurred, you would shoot at f2.8, f4 etc.

Manual mode is used when you want full control

Exposure Compensation: Modern cameras are equipped with very sophisticated light meters, however they are not 100% foolproof. There are certain instances where the camera's meter will overexpose (allow too much light) or underexpose (allow too little light)

Underexposure: An example would be a portrait in which someone has the sun behind them or lots of bright sky, or they are standing in front of a large window, or in front of a very bright white wall

Overexposure: Someone standing with a lot of dark area behind them, a dark surface, or perhaps a singer at a concert with lots of dark stage area behind them.

In these circumstances you can override the camera's setting s to allow more or less light.

Number 1 tip for improving your pictures?

Never shoot a handheld picture at less than 1/60 second, use a tripod where the subject permits. This will greatly increase the sharpness of your pictures.

The array of technical choices can be overwhelming, the simplest approach is to stop and ask your self "what do I want to achieve with this picture"? "What is the subject"?

Recommended Books:

Photography Foundations for Art & Design, Mark Galer

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Photography-Foundations-Art-Design-Creative/dp/0240516001/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1351237875&sr=8-1