

CHAPTER 4: THE RECORDING MENU AND THE QUICK MENU

Much of the power of the ZS200 lies in the options provided in the Recording menu, which gives you control over the appearance of images and how they are captured. This menu is not the only source of creative tools for this camera; there are several important settings that can be controlled with physical buttons and dials, as I will discuss in Chapter 5, and there also is the convenient Quick Menu, which gives you ready access to several often-used options. I will discuss both the Recording menu and the Quick Menu in this chapter.

The Recording Menu

As I have discussed earlier, the main menu system of the ZS200 includes six major menus: Recording, Motion Picture, Custom, Setup, My Menu, and Playback. I will discuss the Playback menu in Chapter 6, the Custom, Setup, and My Menu menus in Chapter 7, and the Motion Picture menu in Chapter 8. In addition, the camera includes several menus whose icons appear at the top of the line of menu icons only when the camera is set to a particular shooting mode. Those menu systems appear for the Intelligent Auto, Creative Control, Scene, Panorama, Custom, and Creative Video modes. I discuss those systems along with each of those modes, in Chapter 3 for the still-shooting modes and Chapter 8 for Creative Video mode.

When you press the Menu/Set button, you will initially see the main menu screen, which will look generally like the screen shown in Figure 4-1 in one of the advanced shooting modes, such as Program. The actual screen that is displayed depends on the current shooting mode. In Figure 4-1, screen 3 of the Setup menu is active, with the camera set to Program mode.

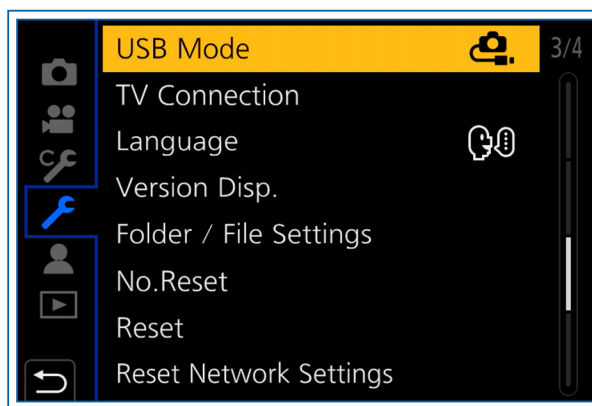


Figure 4-1. Screen 3 of Setup Menu

If, as in this example, the Recording menu screen is not displayed, press the Left button. That action will move the highlight into the left column of the menu screen, as shown in Figure 4-2, where you can navigate up and down with the direction buttons (or the touch screen) to highlight the icons for the various menu systems.

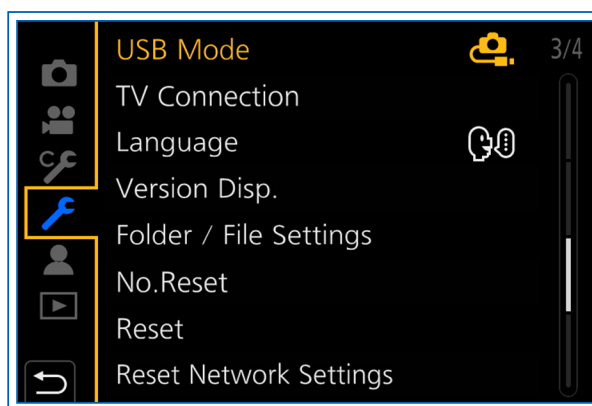


Figure 4-2. Highlight in Column with Menu Icons

If the camera is currently displaying a screen from the Custom menu, as shown in Figure 4-3, the column of icons for the main systems is not shown at the left of the screen. Instead, there is a column of icons for the five subdivisions of the Custom menu: Exposure, Focus/Release Shutter, Operation, Monitor/Display,

and Lens/Others. In that case, you have to press the Left button once to get to that column of subdivisions, and then once more to reach the line of icons for the main menu systems.

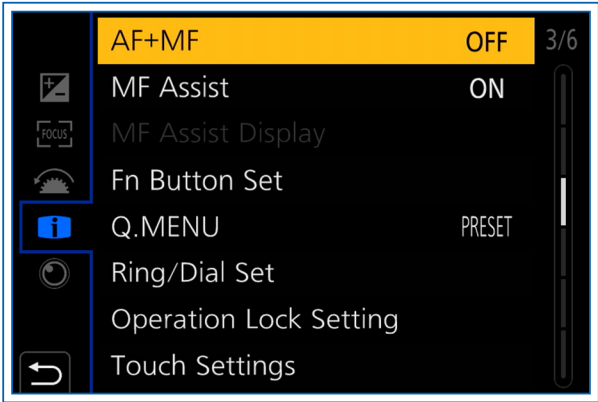


Figure 4-3. Screen 3 of Custom Menu

Once the highlight is in the column with the icons for the main menu systems, use the Up and Down buttons to highlight the red camera icon at the top of the line of icons, indicating the Recording menu, as shown in Figure 4-4. (I’m assuming the camera is in an advanced shooting mode such as Program; in other modes, such as Intelligent Auto, Scene and Creative Control, a special icon for that menu system will be the top icon, just above the camera icon for the Recording menu.)



Figure 4-4. Camera Icon for Recording Menu Highlighted

Then press the Right button to move back over to the main part of the screen, with the Recording menu items. The yellow selection rectangle will highlight a menu item, as shown in Figure 4-5. You can then navigate through the Recording menu to find the item you want to adjust.

As I discussed earlier, the menu options will change depending on the recording mode in effect. If you’re

using the basic Intelligent Auto mode, the Recording menu is limited to two screens, because that mode is for a user who wants the camera to make most of the decisions without input. For the following discussion, I’m assuming you have the camera set to one of the advanced (PASM) modes, because in those modes all four screens of the menu are available.

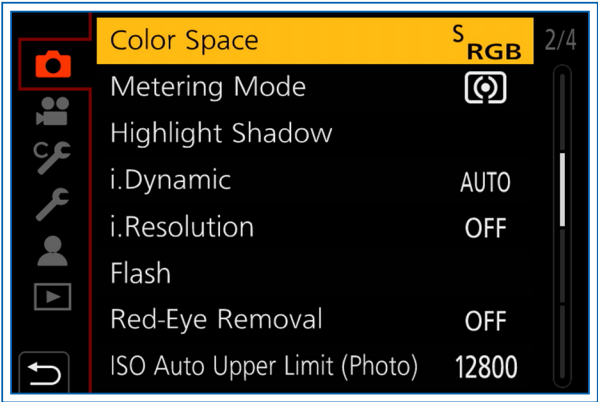


Figure 4-5. Screen 2 of Recording Menu

On the menu screens you will see a fairly long list of options, each occupying one line, with its name on the left and its current setting on the right. (In some cases, the current setting is not shown because it involves multiple options.) You have to scroll through four screens to see all of the items.

You can scroll through the items on any screen using the Up and Down buttons. If you find it tedious to scroll using that method, you can use the zoom lever to speed through the menus one full screen at a time, in either direction. Or, you can turn the rear dial to move through menus one screen at a time. With that method, you can also move from one menu system to another (except when in the Custom menu). And, you can use the touch screen capability, by touching a desired menu option, or by touching the scroll bars at the far right of the menu screen. You can tell which numbered screen you are on by checking the numbers at the right of the screen, which show the screen numbers as 1/4, 2/4, through 4/4.

Depending on the location of a particular menu option, you may be able to reach that option more quickly by reversing direction with the direction buttons and wrapping around to reach the option you want. For example, if you’re on the top line of screen 1 of the menu, at Aspect Ratio, you can scroll up to reach the bottom option on screen 4 of the menu, Multiple Exposure.

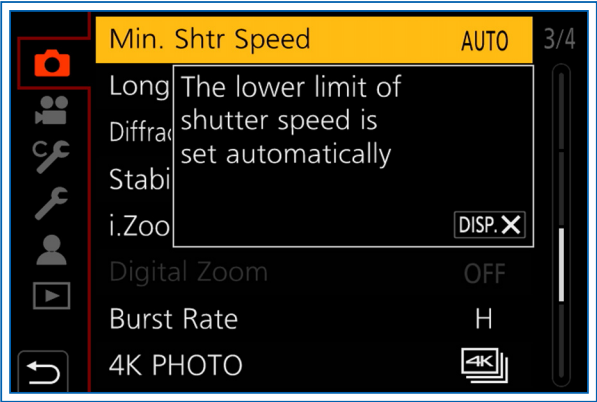


Figure 4-6. Display Button Help Text for Minimum Shutter Speed

Whenever a menu option is highlighted by the selection bar, you can press the Display button to bring up a brief explanation of the item’s purpose. For example, Figure 4-6 shows the screen that was displayed when I pressed the Display button with the Minimum Shutter Speed option highlighted on screen 3 of the Recording menu. Press the Display button again to dismiss the window. In some cases, you also can press Display to see an explanation when a sub-option is highlighted. For example, if you highlight the Raw setting for Quality and press Display, the camera will pop up a brief explanation of that setting.

Some menu lines may have a dimmed, “grayed-out” appearance at times, meaning they cannot be selected under the present settings. For example, in Figure 4-7, two items are dimmed on screen 3 of the Recording menu.

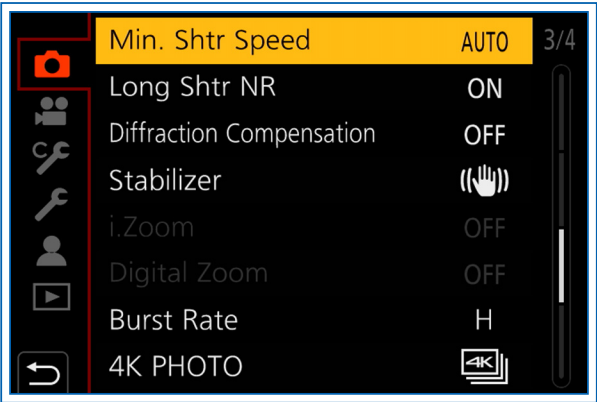


Figure 4-7. Screen 3 of Recording Menu with Items Dimmed

In this case, Quality is set to Raw and the recording mode is Program. With Quality set to Raw, you cannot select Intelligent Zoom or Digital Zoom. If you are in doubt as to why an item cannot be selected, navigate to it with the selection bar, which will be dimmed itself,

and press the Menu/Set button. In many such cases, you will see a message like that in Figure 4-8, explaining why the item could not be selected.

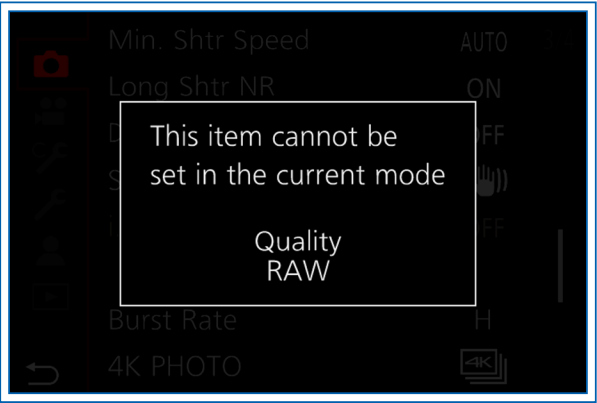


Figure 4-8. Message Explaining Inability to Select Menu Option

Because you cannot make some selections when Quality is set to Raw, if you want to follow along with the discussion of the options on the Recording menu, set Quality to Fine, which is the setting represented by the icon of an arrow pointing down onto two rows of bricks, as shown in Figure 4-9.



Figure 4-9. Fine Setting Highlighted for Quality

To do so, on screen 1 of the Recording menu, scroll down using the Down button until the Quality line is highlighted, then press the Right button to pop up the sub-menu. Scroll up if needed, to highlight the top icon with the six bricks, and then press the Menu/Set button to select that option.

With that setting, you will have access to most of the options on the Recording menu. I’ll start at the top and discuss each option on the list. Screen 1 of this menu is shown in Figure 4-10.

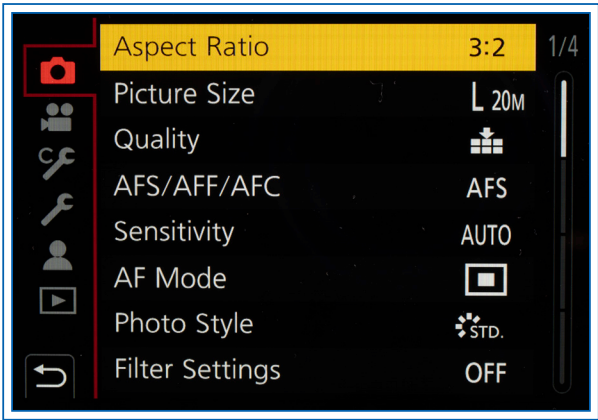


Figure 4-10. Screen 1 of Recording Menu

ASPECT RATIO

This first menu option has four settings: 4:3, 3:2, 16:9, and 1:1, as shown in Figure 4-11, representing the ratio of the width of an image to its vertical height.

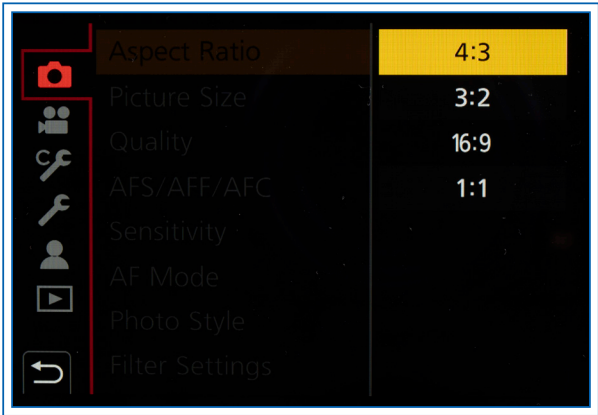


Figure 4-11. Aspect Ratio Menu Options Screen

This setting does not affect just the shape of the image; it also helps determine how many megapixels (MP or M) an image contains. When the aspect ratio is set to 3:2, the maximum resolution of 20 MP is available. When the aspect ratio is set to 4:3, the greatest possible resolution is 17.5 MP. At 16:9, the greatest possible resolution is 17 MP. At the 1:1 ratio, the largest resolution available is 13.5 MP. If you want to view the scene using the entire area of the LCD screen, choose 3:2, which is the aspect ratio of the screen. With 4:3, there will be black bars at the sides of the screen as you compose your shot; with 16:9, there will be black bars at the top and bottom of the screen; with 1:1, there also will be black bars.

Figures 4-12 through 4-15 show the shapes of images taken with the ZS200's various aspect ratio settings.



Figure 4-12. Aspect Ratio Set to 4:3



Figure 4-13. Aspect Ratio Set to 3:2

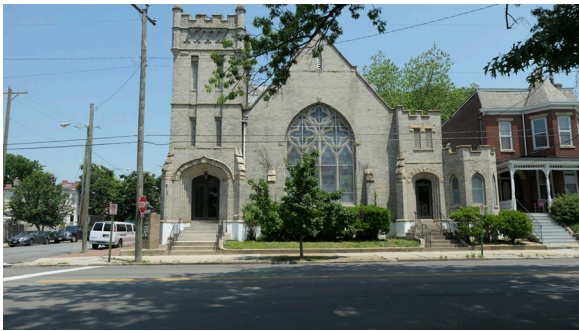


Figure 4-14. Aspect Ratio Set to 16:9

In Figure 4-12, the aspect ratio is set to 4:3. This aspect ratio crops the image slightly in the horizontal direction. Figure 4-13 is an image taken with the 3:2 setting, which uses the maximum number of available horizontal and vertical pixels. For Figure 4-14, the aspect ratio was set to the 16:9 position, which uses the maximum number of horizontal pixels, and crops the vertical pixels. Finally, the 1:1 setting was used for Figure 4-15. This setting uses the maximum number of vertical pixels but crops the pixels in the horizontal direction.

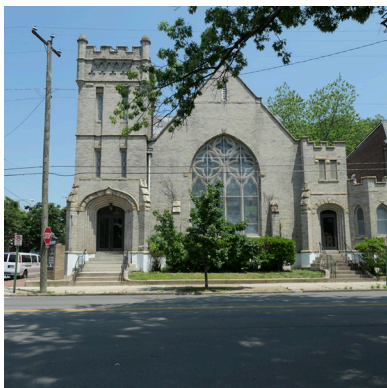


Figure 4-15. Aspect Ratio Set to 1:1

PICTURE SIZE

This next item on the Recording menu controls the number of megapixels in the images you record with the camera, up to and including its maximum of 20 MP. The maximum MP setting, using the L (for Large) setting for Picture Size, is affected by the aspect ratio that you have set using the Aspect Ratio menu item, discussed above. If you set the aspect ratio to 3:2, the maximum Picture Size setting is the full 20 MP, as shown in Figure 4-16, using the full horizontal and vertical extent of the available pixels.

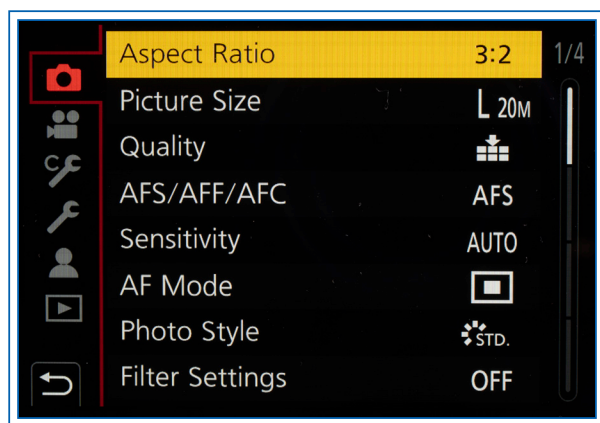


Figure 4-16. Picture Size Setting with Aspect Ratio 3:2

As noted above in connection with the aspect ratio setting, the number of megapixels decreases with other aspect ratio settings.

The higher the Picture Size setting, the better the overall quality of the image, all other factors being equal. However, you can create a fuzzy and low-quality image with a high Picture Size setting with no trouble at all; this setting does not guarantee a great image. But if all other factors are equal, a higher megapixel count should yield noticeably higher image quality. Also,

when you have a large megapixel count in your image, you have some leeway for cropping it; you can select a portion of the image to enlarge to the full size of your print, and still retain acceptable image quality.

On the other hand, images with high megapixel counts eat up storage space more quickly than those with low megapixel counts. If you are running low on space on your SD card and still have a lot of images to capture, you may need to reduce your Picture Size setting so you can fit more images on the card.

As noted earlier, the Picture Size setting is dimmed and unavailable when you have selected Raw for the Quality setting. However, if you select Raw & Fine or Raw & Standard, with which the camera records both a Raw and a JPEG image, the Picture Size option is available for setting the size of the JPEG image.

Extended Optical Zoom

Another point to consider in setting Picture Size is how much zoom power you need to have available. You might not think that picture size is related to zoom, but with the ZS200 it is. The camera has a feature called Extended Optical Zoom, designated as EX on the menu screen and shooting screen. When you set the Picture Size to 5 MP (S), for example (with aspect ratio of 3:2), you will find that you can zoom in farther than you can with Picture Size set to its maximum. You will see an EX designation appear on the menu screen to the left of the Picture Size setting of S, as shown in Figure 4-17.

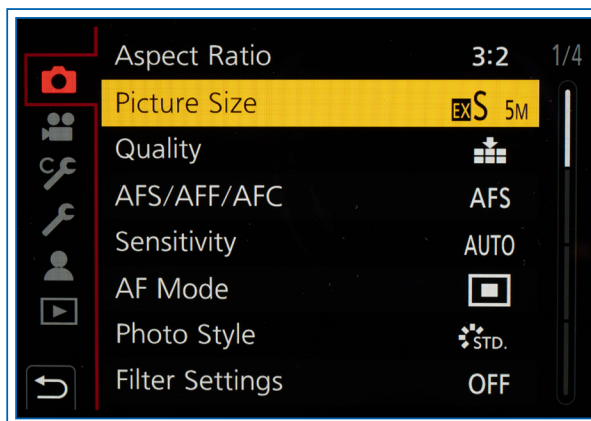


Figure 4-17. EX Designation with Picture Size Set to S

(You will not see the EX designation unless Quality is set to Fine or Standard, because Extended Optical Zoom is not available with Quality set to Raw. This feature also is incompatible with some other settings,

such as 4K Photo, Handheld Night Shot, Multiple Exposure, HDR, and others.)

You will see that the zoom scale goes beyond the normal limit of 360mm as you move the zoom lever on top of the camera toward the T setting, for Telephoto, as shown in Figure 4-18.



Figure 4-18. Zoom Scale Beyond Optical Zoom Limit

Depending on the Picture Size setting, the scale will extend to a zoom level of as much as twice normal, or about an equivalent of 720mm. (If you turn on Intelligent Zoom or Digital Zoom, discussed later in this chapter, the zoom range will extend even farther; for now, I am assuming that both of those options are turned off.)

To summarize the situation with Extended Optical Zoom, whenever you set Picture Quality to a level below Large, you gain additional zoom power because of the reduced resolution. You could achieve the same result by taking the picture at the normal zoom range with Picture Size set to the full 20M and then cropping the image in your computer to enlarge just the part you want. But with Extended Optical Zoom, you get the benefit of seeing a larger image on the display when you're composing the picture, and the benefit of having the camera perform its focus and exposure operations on the actual zoomed image that you want to capture, so the feature is not useless. You just need to decide whether it's of use to you in a particular situation.

I'll discuss Intelligent Zoom and Digital Zoom later, as other Recording Menu options.

QUALITY

The next setting on the Recording menu is Quality. It's important to distinguish the Quality setting from

the Picture Size setting. Picture Size concerns the image's resolution, or the number of megapixels in the image. Quality has to do with how the image's digital information is compressed for storage on the SD card and, later, on the computer's hard drive. There are three levels of quality available in various combinations: Raw, Fine, and Standard, as shown in Figure 4-19. From the top, the five icons stand for Fine, Standard, Raw & Fine, Raw & Standard, and Raw.



Figure 4-19. Quality Menu Options Screen

Raw is in a category by itself. There are both pros and cons to using Raw in this camera. First, the cons. A Raw file takes up a lot of space on your memory card, and, if you copy it to your computer, a lot of space on your hard drive. In addition, there are various functions of the ZS200 that don't work when you're using Raw, including panorama shooting, Intelligent Zoom, Digital Zoom, Resize, Cropping, Title Edit, Text Stamp, printing directly from the camera to a photo printer, and White Balance Bracket. You also cannot get the benefit of using the Filter Settings menu option or Creative Control mode to add picture effects to your images, though you can use those effects when shooting with Raw for Quality. (The resulting image will show the effect when displayed in the camera, but not when opened on a computer unless you use a program that can display the effect, such as Irfanview, from Irfanview.com.)

You cannot shoot in Raw quality with the Handheld Night Shot or HDR options, and burst shooting will be slowed down when shooting in Raw.

Finally, you may have problems working with Raw files on your computer because of incompatibility with editing software, though those problems can be overcome by getting updates for your program.

On the other hand, using Raw files has several advantages. The main benefit is that Raw files give you an amazing amount of control and flexibility with your images. When you open up a Raw file in a compatible photo-editing program, the software gives you the opportunity to correct problems with exposure, white balance, color tints, sharpness, and other settings. If you had the aperture of the camera too narrow when you took the picture, and it looks badly underexposed, you can make exposure adjustments in the software and recover the image to a proper brightness level. Similarly, you can adjust the white balance after the fact and remove unwanted color casts. In effect, you get a second chance at making the correct settings, rather than being stuck with an unusable image because of unfortunate settings when you pressed the shutter button.

For example, Figure 4-20 is an image I took with Quality set to Raw, but with settings purposely made to result in underexposure and incorrect white balance.



Figure 4-20. Raw Image Shot with Abnormal Settings



Figure 4-21. Raw Image with Settings Adjusted in Software

Figure 4-21 is the same image after I opened it using Adobe Camera Raw software and made corrections after the fact. The corrected image looks essentially as if it had been shot with proper settings to begin with.

The drawbacks to using Raw files are either not too severe or they are counterbalanced by the flexibility Raw gives you. The large size of the files may be an inconvenience, but the increasing size of hard drives and SD cards, with steadily dropping prices, makes file size much less of a concern than previously. I have had problems with Raw files not loading when I didn't have the latest Camera Raw plug-in for Adobe Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, but with a little effort, you can download an updated plug-in and the software will then process and display your Raw images. Panasonic provides a free download of Silkipix, a program for processing Raw files, so you don't have to buy any additional software to process Raw files.

You certainly don't have to use Raw, but you may be missing some opportunities if you avoid it.

The other two settings for Quality—Fine and Standard—are levels of compression for computer image files that use the JPEG standard. Images saved with Fine quality are subjected to less compression than those saved with Standard quality. In other words, Standard-quality images have their digital data “compressed” or “squeezed” down to a smaller size to allow more of the files to be stored on an SD card or computer drive, with a corresponding loss of image quality. The more compression an image is subjected to, the less clear detail it will contain. Unless you are running out of space on your storage medium, you probably should leave the Quality setting at Fine to ensure the best quality. (Of course, you may prefer to shoot in the Raw format for maximum quality.)

With the ZS200, besides choosing one of the individual Quality settings (Raw, Fine, or Standard), you also have the option of setting the camera to record images in Raw plus either Fine or Standard. If you choose that option, the camera will record each image in two files—one Raw, and the other a JPEG file in either Fine or Standard quality, depending on your selection. If you then play the image back in the camera, you will see only one image, but if you copy the files to your computer, you will find two image files—one with a .jpg extension and one with an .rw2 extension. The Raw file will be much larger than the JPEG one. In a few examples I just looked at on my computer, the Raw files from the ZS200 were all about 22 MB and JPEG files with Picture Size set to Large were between about 5 and 10 MB. (Note that MB stands for megabytes, a measure of file size,

as distinguished from MP or M, meaning megapixels, a measure of the number of pixels in an image.)

Why would you choose the option of recording images in Raw and JPEG at the same time? If you're taking pictures of a one-time event such as a wedding or graduation, you may want to preserve them in Raw for highest quality and later processing with software, but also have them available for quick review on a computer that might not have software that reads Raw files. Or, you might want to be able to send the images to friends or post them to social media sites without translating them from Raw into a JPEG format that most people can easily view on their computers. Also, as I discussed earlier, if you are using Creative Control mode or the Filter Settings menu option to add special effects to images, those effects will not show up in Raw files when the files are opened on a computer. In order to have the benefit of the special setting as well as the benefits of a Raw file, you can use the Raw & Fine or Raw & Standard option to record images both ways.

AFS/AFF/AFC

This next menu option lets you choose how the autofocus system operates when the camera is using autofocus. With AFS, for autofocus single, when you press the shutter button halfway, the camera locks focus on the subject and keeps it locked while the button is held there, even if the subject moves. With AFF, for autofocus flexible, the camera locks focus but will adjust focus if the subject (or the camera) moves. With AFC, for autofocus continuous, the camera does not lock focus, but adjusts it continuously as the subject or camera moves.

If you are shooting images of a landscape or other stationary subject, AFS will work well. The camera will lock focus and keep it there, and the battery will not be drained by adjusting focus. If you are shooting handheld shots at a fairly close distance, though, you might want to use the AFF setting because the camera will adjust the focus if the camera moves slightly, and the focus could be thrown off by that movement, especially when the focus distance is small or the lens is zoomed in.

If you are shooting pictures of children or pets moving around unpredictably, you may want to use the AFC or AFF setting and let the camera continue to adjust focus as needed. With these settings, the camera's battery will

be drained faster than with AFS, but it may be worth it to capture an action shot in sharp focus.

This setting is fixed at AFS in Panorama mode. With 4K Photo shooting, AFF is not available. Only AFS is available with the 4K Photo S/S setting.

SENSITIVITY (ISO)

This next setting lets you set the camera's ISO, or sensitivity to light. On the ZS200, the available ISO settings range from 125 to 12800, though the range varies in some situations. With the lower settings, the camera produces the best image quality, but exposures require more light. With higher settings, the camera can produce good exposures in dim light, but there is likely to be an increasing amount of visual "noise" in the image as the ISO value increases.

Generally speaking, you should shoot images with the lowest ISO that will allow them to be exposed properly. (An exception is if you want the grainy look that comes with a high ISO value.) For example, if you are shooting indoors in low light, you may need to set the ISO to a high value (say, 800) so you can expose the image with a reasonably fast shutter speed. If the camera were set to a lower ISO, it would need to use a slower shutter speed to take in enough light for a proper exposure, and the resulting image would likely be blurry and possibly unusable.

The ISO setting is available only when the camera is set to one of the advanced shooting modes, including the PASM modes, Panorama, and Creative Video. To make the setting, select this menu option and a horizontal menu will appear at the bottom of the display, as shown in Figure 4-22.

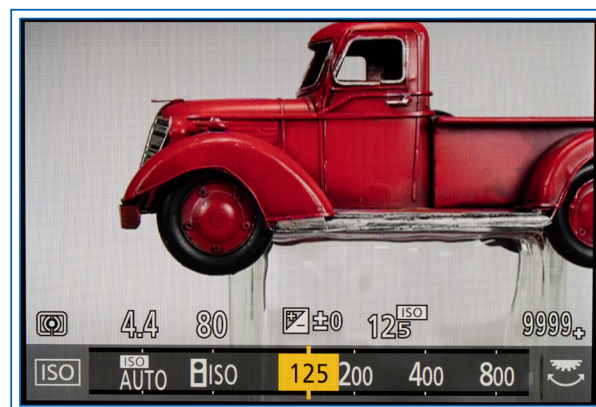


Figure 4-22. ISO Menu

You can scroll through the values on this menu by pressing the Left and Right buttons, by turning the rear dial, or by scrolling the menu with the touch screen. The possible numerical values are 125, 200, 400, 800, 1600, 3200, 6400, and 12800, unless you change some menu settings, discussed below, to add values below 125 and above 12800, as well as intermediate values.

When you set a numerical value for ISO, the ISO Auto Upper Limit (Photo) option (discussed later in this chapter) does not apply. When you set ISO to Auto ISO, the camera automatically adjusts ISO up to the maximum value set with ISO Auto Upper Limit (Photo), based on the brightness of the scene. As discussed in Chapter 3, you can use Auto ISO with Manual exposure mode for still images, which lets you keep shutter speed and aperture fixed while the ISO varies.

When you use the Intelligent ISO setting, the camera adjusts the ISO based on the movement of the subject as well as the brightness, so the camera can set a higher shutter speed to stop the motion. Intelligent ISO is available with the Intelligent Auto, Program, and Aperture Priority modes, but not with the Shutter Priority or Manual exposure modes, or when using the Post Focus option.

When would you want to use a numerical value for the ISO setting, rather than setting it to Auto ISO or Intelligent ISO? One example is if you want the highest quality for your image, and you aren't worried about camera movement, either because you are using a tripod so a slow shutter speed won't result in blur, or the lighting is bright enough to use a fast shutter speed. Then you could set the ISO to its lowest possible setting of 125 (or 80 if Extended ISO is turned on) to achieve high quality. On the other hand, if you definitely want a grainy, noisy look, you can set the ISO to 3200 or even higher to introduce noise into the image. You also might want a high ISO setting so you can use a fast shutter speed to stop action or in low light. In many cases, though, you can just leave the setting at Auto or Intelligent and let the camera adjust the ISO as needed.

It is important to be aware of how much a high ISO value can affect the quality of your images. Figures 4-23 and 4-24 are two images of the same subject; Figure 4-23 was taken at ISO 125 and Figure 4-24 was taken at ISO 12800.



Figure 4-23. ISO Set to 125



Figure 4-24. ISO Set to 12800

As you can see, the high-ISO image shows considerable deterioration, both in the subject itself and in the plain background. You can use this high setting when absolutely necessary to get a shot, but it's advisable to avoid the highest ISO values when possible.

AF Mode

This next menu option controls what area of the scene the camera focuses on when using its autofocus capability. (You select an autofocus or manual focus mode by pressing the Left button to bring up the focus mode menu.)

When you select the AF Mode menu option with the focus mode set to AF, AF Macro, or Macro Zoom, the camera displays a line of icons representing the six choices available for the AF Mode setting: Face/Eye Detection; AF Tracking; 49-Area; Custom Multi; 1-Area; and Pinpoint, as shown in Figure 4-25.

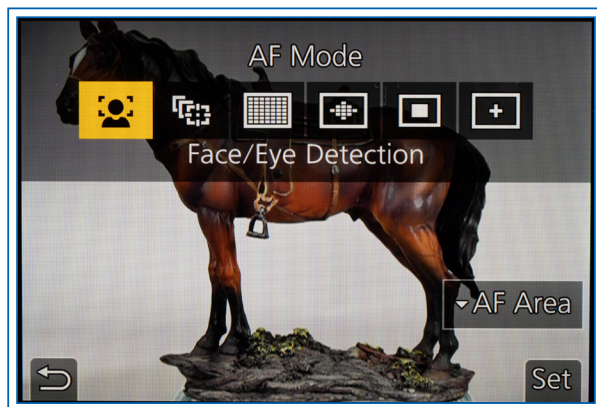


Figure 4-25. AF Mode Menu Options Screen

Use the rear dial or the Left and Right buttons (or the touch screen) to highlight the choice you want. Then press the Menu/Set button or the Set icon, followed by the Fn3 button, or press the shutter button halfway, to select that setting and return to the recording screen.

In Intelligent Auto or Intelligent Auto Plus mode, only two of these options are available: Face/Eye Detection and AF Tracking. Following are details about all six options that are available in other recording modes.

Face/Eye Detection

When you select this setting, the camera does not display any focusing brackets or rectangles until it detects a human face. If it does, it outlines the general area of the face with a yellow rectangle. Then, after you press the shutter button halfway down, the rectangle turns green when the camera has focused on the face. If the camera detects more than one face, it displays white rectangles for secondary faces, as shown in Figure 4-26.

Any faces that are the same distance away from the camera as the face within the yellow rectangle will also be in focus, but the focus will be controlled by the face in the yellow rectangle. If Metering Mode is set to Multi, the camera will also adjust its exposure for the main detected face.

With this setting, the camera also will look for human eyes. It will place a set of crosshairs across the closest eye it finds and fix focus there. If you want, you can

change the eye that the camera focuses on. To do that, when the camera is displaying frames over detected faces, press the touch screen over the eye you want the camera to focus on, then press the shutter button halfway to focus. (Touching a different eye does not work in Intelligent Auto mode; in that mode, if you touch the screen, the AF Mode setting will change to AF Tracking.)

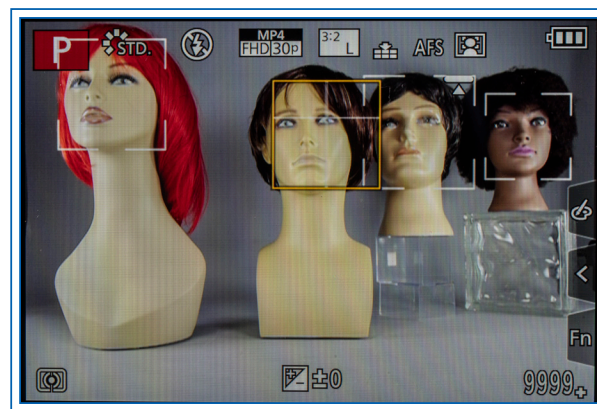


Figure 4-26. Face Detection in Use

You also can change the face that the camera focuses on. One way to do this is to touch the screen and move the focus frame with your finger. To use that system, go to the Touch Settings item on screen 3 of the Custom menu and, under Touch Settings, set Touch AF to AF. Another way to do this is to use the Direct Focus Area option. To do that, turn on the Direct Focus Area option on screen 2 of the Custom menu. Then, when the Face/Eye Detection frame is displayed on the screen, press any of the four cursor buttons to start moving the focus frame to the location where you want it. When the frame is being moved, you can also turn the rear dial to change the frame's size.

When the focus frame is sized and located as you want, press the Menu/Set button to lock it in place. The camera will then shift its focus to the area inside that frame. You might want to use this option if you are aiming at two faces, but you want to focus on the one that is farther away from the camera. Ordinarily, the camera will focus on the closest face, but if you move the frame over the other face, the camera will direct its focus there. To reset the frame to its original position, press the Display button while the frame is movable.

AF Tracking

This next setting for AF Mode allows the camera to maintain focus on a moving subject. On the menu

screen, highlight the second icon, which is a group of offset focus frames designed to look like a moving focus frame. Press the Menu/Set button or half-press the shutter button to select this option.

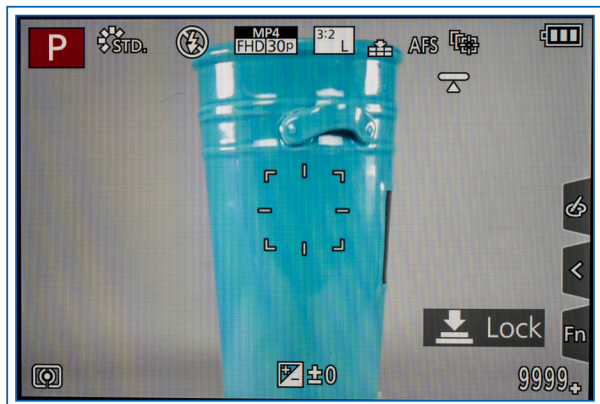


Figure 4-27. AF Tracking Focus Frame

The camera will then display a special focus frame with spokes sticking out of it, in the center of the display, as shown in Figure 4-27. Move the camera to place this focus frame over your subject and press the shutter button halfway, then release the button. If the camera can identify a subject at this location, the frame will turn yellow. The camera will then do its best to keep that target in focus, even as it (or the camera) moves. The yellow bracket should stay close to the subject on the display.

When you are ready, press the shutter button to take the picture. If you want to cancel AF Tracking, press the Menu/Set button.

If the camera is not able to maintain focus on the moving subject, the focus frame will turn red and then disappear. AF Tracking will not work when Time Lapse Shot is in use. With several Creative Control mode settings, including all of the Monochrome options; the camera will use 1-Area mode if AF Tracking is set.

To use this option with the touch screen, just touch the subject on the screen to select it, and press the AF Off icon on the screen to cancel the tracking focus.

Using AF Tracking can reduce the time to take a picture of a moving subject. If you are trying to snap a picture of a restless four-year-old child or a fidgety pet, AF Tracking can give you a head start, so the camera's focus is close to being correct and the focusing mechanism has less to do to achieve correct focus when you suddenly see the perfect moment to press the shutter button.

49-Area

This next option for AF Mode causes the camera to focus on up to 49 small focus zones within the overall autofocus area, which is the same area as that of the current aspect ratio setting. The camera then looks within the focus zones and selects however many subjects it detects that are at the same distance from the camera and can be focused on.

To make this setting, select the third icon on the AF Mode menu, which looks like a screen with multiple focus points. Then, when you push the shutter button down halfway, the camera will display green rectangles to show you which of the multiple focus areas it has selected to focus on, as shown in Figure 4-28.

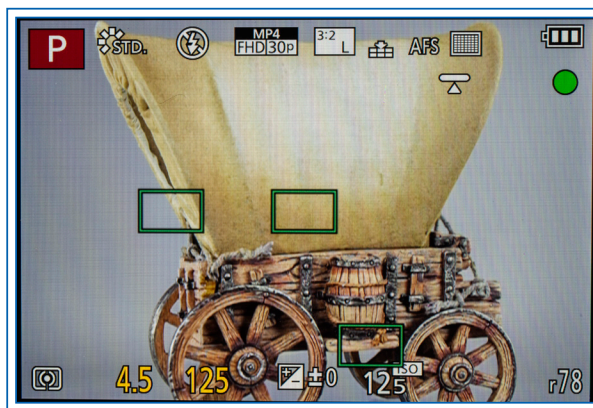


Figure 4-28. Green Focus Frames with 49-Area Setting

The name of this setting is somewhat misleading, however, because, even though the camera has 49 focus zones, it will only use a few of those zones at any one time in this mode. By default, the camera uses the nine zones in the center of the screen. With the default setting, if you focus on a scene with a prominent object at the far right, the camera will choose whatever object it can find in the center of the display to focus on, and will ignore the object at the right.

If you want the camera to direct its focus somewhere other than the center of the scene, press the Down button while the 49-Area icon is highlighted on the menu screen, and then move the block of focus zones where you want them using the cursor buttons, as shown in Figure 4-29.

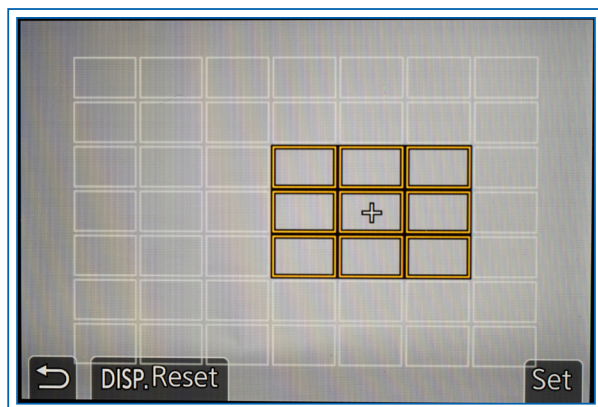


Figure 4-29. Screen for Moving Focus Blocks

If the Direct Focus Area option is enabled, you can use the cursor buttons to move the focus area around the screen when the camera is in shooting mode with the 49-Area option selected. If the Touch AF option is turned on through the Touch Settings item on screen 3 of the Custom menu, you can touch the screen in shooting mode to select the area for the focus zone.

When you have set the focus area using the touch screen or cursor buttons, the camera displays a small white cross on the screen to indicate the center of the block of focus zones it is currently using. (The cross will disappear if you press the Menu/Set button or the AF Off icon.)

The blocks near the center of the overall focus area have nine zones each, but the blocks near the edges of the display area have only six or four blocks.

The 49-Area method can be useful if your subject is likely to be located within a predictable area, and you want to have the option to adjust that area somewhat. It is a good mode to use when you are shooting landscapes or general scenes that do not require you to focus on faces or on any one particular object.

Custom Multi

This setting lets you create a custom-tailored focus zone out of the 49 available blocks. For example, you can create a horizontal focus area that is seven blocks across, or a vertical one of the same size. You can create a zone that has 13 blocks arranged in a pattern in the center of the screen. Or, you can create a completely free-form zone with any arrangement of blocks. Somewhat oddly, with the free-form option you can create a focus area that uses all 49 of the focus blocks, resulting in a true 49-Area focus mode, unlike the mode with that name, which can use only up to nine blocks.

The process for using this option is a bit complicated, so I will lay out the steps below.

1. Go to the AF Mode item on the Recording menu and scroll to the fourth icon from the left, with the label Custom Multi below it, as shown in Figure 4-30.

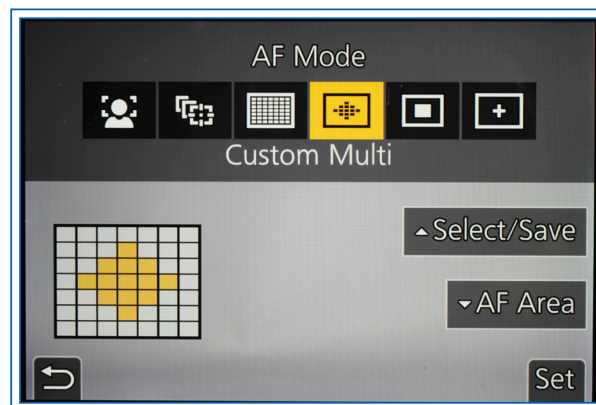


Figure 4-30. Custom Multi Option Highlighted on Menu

2. Press the Up button to move to the line of possible patterns for the focus zone, as shown in Figure 4-31.

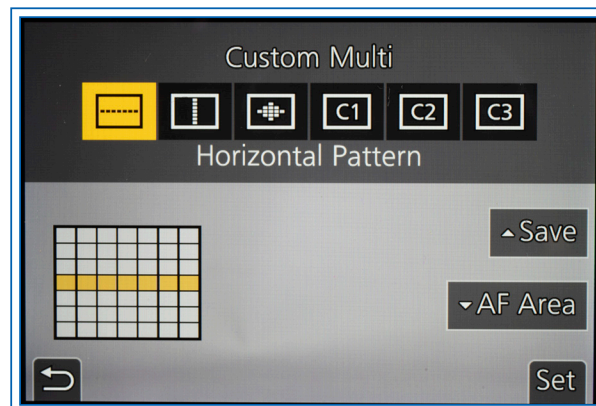


Figure 4-31. Choices for Custom Multi Pattern

3. Scroll through these icons to select the one you want. The last three—C1, C2, and C3—are for free-form custom patterns you can create and save to these numbered slots.
4. When you have selected horizontal, vertical, central, or free-form for the shape, press the Down button to move to the AF Area option. There you will see a screen with all 49 blocks, some of which will be highlighted in yellow for the horizontal, vertical, or central choices, but all of which will be blank for the free-form options.