

# HAND-HELD LIGHT METERS

Thanks to **TTL metering**, obtaining an accurate exposure in average conditions has never been easier. But what happens when your subject has a tone or reflectance that's a little more unusual? **Tracy Hallett** has the answer in the palm of her hand

## SEKONIC DIGITAL MASTER L-758DR

It might be bulky, but this meter is bursting with sophisticated and highly relevant features. Both reflected and incident light readings are available, but the L-758DR moves into advanced territory by providing flash metering and adjustable mid tone settings. The L-758DR can also be calibrated to match the sensitivity of your camera sensor, digital back or favourite film. Up to three profiles can be stored, although the process of registering them is a little complicated. Once programmed, the meter can recall the dynamic range of individual models, and warn you if you are likely to reach the clipping point (resulting in a loss of key detail in your image). All of this can be achieved without taking a single picture. For those hoping to keep things simple, the Quick Start Guide will lead you



The optical viewfinder on the Sekonic L-758DR displays the reflected light reading through the eyepiece

through the basic operations. To activate the meter you simply press the power button, select the appropriate ISO speed, and choose between 1° spot reflected mode or incident mode. After aiming the device, you hold down the measurement button. Unless you decide to lock the jog wheel, the meter will continue to take readings while the button is depressed.

BEST IN TEST



The Sekonic L-758DR shows exposure information digitally and via an analogue scale at the bottom of the screen

### LIKES

- ✓ Comes with carrying case, battery, strap and data transfer software
- ✓ Stores and recalls dynamic range details
- ✓ Displays exposure latitude warning
- ✓ Offers adjustable mid-tone settings
- ✓ Flash metering available

### DISLIKES

- ✗ Size and weight
- ✗ Price

### PRICE

£479.99

### CONTACT

sekonic.co.uk  
(UK distributor johnsons-photopia.co.uk)

### VERDICT

Ease of use **85%**  
Value for money **85%**  
Performance **100%**

90%  
Overall

## SEKONIC TWINMATE L-208

Light and compact, the Sekonic Twinmate L-208 is capable of reflected and incident light readings. While the casing feels a little flimsy, the internal mechanics seem solid enough. To activate the meter you turn it on, rotate

The casing may look a little flimsy, but the Sekonic Twinmate L-208 is a solid performer

the ISO dial to match that of the camera or film and choose between either reflected or incident light using the switch at the top. It would be useful to see the two modes marked more clearly, as it's easy to forget which is which. Having selected the desired mode, and aimed the meter accordingly, you press the measuring button on the side to activate the guide needle. Once settled, the position of the needle is held for 15 seconds. To obtain a reading, you rotate the dial ring until the match needle aligns with the guide needle, and refer to the shutter speed/aperture combinations underneath. Anyone used to digital equipment will find this system a little antiquated, but there's no doubting it works. None of the images I made using incident readings required adjustment in post-processing. While it can be operated comfortably with one hand, the device comes with a plastic mount, enabling you to attach it to a hotshoe or bracket. Screwing the mount



It's a little on the large size, but the Sekonic L-758DR has a clear display and is packed with features

to the meter is fiddly, but it's worth the effort to achieve hands-free operation. The meter also comes with a strap, battery and carrying pouch. It's a basic package (flash metering is not an option) but the results are impressive.

### LIKES

- ✓ Comes with carrying pouch, mounting plate, battery and strap
- ✓ Can be activated with one hand
- ✓ Compact and lightweight
- ✓ Price

### DISLIKES

- ✗ No digital light level reading
- ✗ No flash metering available
- ✗ Construction feels a little flimsy
- ✗ Limited functions

### PRICE

£79.99

### CONTACT

sekonic.co.uk  
(UK distributor johnsons-photopia.co.uk)

### VERDICT

Ease of use **85%**  
Value for money **90%**  
Performance **85%**

87%  
Overall

EXCELLENT  
VALUE

If you own an SLR with TTL (through the lens) metering you'll be familiar with the exposure compensation button, and the occasional need for bracketing. While in-camera light meters produce satisfactory results most of the time, they can struggle when faced with unusual scenes – excessively light or dark subjects, high contrast, mixed lighting, or when you're using flash.

The main problem lies in the way an SLR measures brightness levels. Every camera fitted with TTL metering reads the light reflected by a subject, and calculates the exposure based on an assumption that the subject has a tone and reflectance equivalent to 18% (mid tone) grey. Of course, this is not always the case. To improve exposure accuracy, many SLRs offer partial,

spot and multi-spot metering which provide a more targeted approach. However, the underlying problem remains: measuring the light reflected from a subject will never be as accurate as taking a reading from the light that falls on a subject.

For the ultimate exposure accuracy, you need a hand-held light meter. These devices frequently offer reflected and incident readings. As a rule, the more you spend the more features you receive. Pricier models feature flash and spot metering, plus exposure accuracy up to 1/10th of a stop. Whether you spend £80 or £500, the promise of perfect exposures is priceless.

## GOSSEN STARLITE 2

The Gossen Starlite 2 feels good in the hand. While it might not be the most compact meter on the market, the solid construction and generous rubber grip make it well worth the extra 195g in your kit bag. The Starlite 2 offers incident, reflected and flash metering, and sports a retractable dome – once lowered, the dome can be used to take incident readings for 2D surfaces such as prints or drawings. Alternatively, reflected light measurements can be taken via the optical viewfinder. The area measured can be changed from 5° to 1° via a twist of the dome ring but, unlike the Sekonic Digital Master L-758DR, the results do not appear in the viewfinder. To take an incident light reading (for a 3D subject) you raise the dome, choose an ISO to match that of the camera or film, select a metering mode from Ambient or Flash – a black square highlights the active mode, but it's tricky to see – and aim the meter towards the camera.

Once you've opted for either aperture or time priority you press the M button to take a measurement. You can instruct the Starlite 2 to memorise up to nine light readings and then calculate the average by pressing the AVR button. Fans of the Zone System will be delighted to find that brightness values can be assigned to predefined zones of grey, optimising the contrast range. The Gossen Starlite 2 is an excellent choice for enthusiastic amateurs and professionals.

The area measured by the Gossen Starlite 2 can be changed from 5° to 1° via a twist of the dome ring



All pictures ©Daniel Calder

### LIKES

- ✓ Measurements displayed in both analogue and digital formats
- ✓ Comes with carrying case, battery and strap
- ✓ Powered by single AA battery
- ✓ Great for the Zone System
- ✓ CINE mode
- ✓ Flash metering available
- ✓ Easy to use

### DISLIKES

- ✗ No electronic display in viewfinder
- ✗ Tricky to see what's selected in the viewfinder
- ✗ Size and weight
- ✗ Price

**PRICE** £429.99

### VERDICT

Ease of use 85%  
Value for money 85%  
Performance 95%

**88% Overall**



GREAT FOR THE ZONE SYSTEM

The Gossen Starlite 2 offers incident, reflected and flash metering, and sports a retractable dome

## GOSSEN DIGISIX

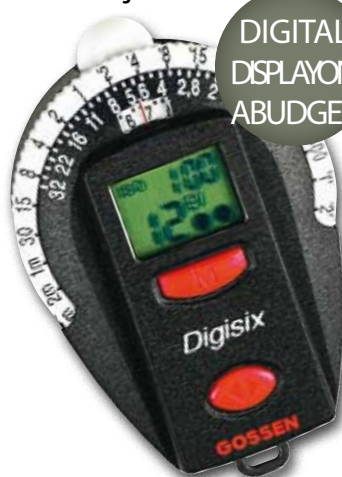
The Gossen Digisix provides incident and reflected light measurements in a light, pocket-sized package. Aside from the standard functions, this mini meter features a timer (ideal for long exposures), a watch and alarm function (ideal for early morning shoots) and the ability to measure temperature. While the list of functions is inevitably short (there's no flash metering) the Digisix is incredibly

The Gossen Digisix measures incident light, reflected light and temperature – it also works as a timer and an alarm clock!

easy to use. To take a light reading you just slide the diffuser to the left (incident) or right (reflected) and use the function button to select exposure metering. Once you've confirmed the relevant ISO, you position the meter and press the M (measuring) key. The exposure value (Ev) will appear on the digital display. You can now transfer this information into the setting window (which is frustratingly small) by rotating the shutter speed dial. At this point, all of the suitable shutter speed and aperture combinations can be seen clearly on the scales. Somewhat surprisingly for such a budget device, the Digisix also offers contrast measurements. Using this feature, the meter takes about two readings every second for as long as the M key is held down.

The microprocessor then calculates the difference between the first measurement and subsequent readings and displays the result on the

Switching from a reflected light reading to an incident light reading is easy on the Gossen Digisix



DIGITAL DISPLAY ON A BUDGET

digital screen. If the idea of learning how to use a light meter fills you with dread, try the Gossen Digisix – with just two buttons, it's hard to go wrong.

### LIKES

- ✓ Comes with carrying pouch, battery and strap
- ✓ Can be activated with one hand
- ✓ Digital LCD readout
- ✓ Compact and lightweight
- ✓ Price

### DISLIKES

- ✗ No flash metering available
- ✗ Setting window too small
- ✗ Limited functions

### PRICE

£119

### CONTACT

[gossen-photo.de/english](http://gossen-photo.de/english)  
(UK distributor [intro2020.co.uk](http://intro2020.co.uk))

### VERDICT

Ease of use 90%  
Value for money 85%  
Performance 85%

**87% Overall**