1

Getting the Lay of the Land

I still remember the day that I bought my first SLR film camera. I was excited to finally move up from my one-button point-and-shoot camera, but I was a little anxious, too. My new pride and joy sported several unfamiliar buttons and dials, and the explanations in the camera manual clearly were written for someone with an engineering degree. And then there was the whole business of attaching the lens to the camera, an entirely new task for me. I saved up my pennies a long time for that camera — what if my inexperience caused me to damage the thing before I even shot my first pictures?

You may be feeling similarly insecure if your Nikon D5000 is your first SLR, although some of the buttons on the camera back may look familiar if you've previously used a digital point-and-shoot camera. If your D5000 is both your first SLR and first digital camera, you may be doubly intimidated.

Trust me, though, that your camera isn't nearly as complicated as its exterior makes it appear. With a little practice and the help of this chapter, which introduces you to each external control, you'll quickly become as comfortable with your camera's buttons and dials as you are with the ones

on your car's dashboard. This chapter also guides you through the process of mounting and using an SLR lens, working with digital memory cards, navigating your camera's menus, and customizing basic camera operations.

Getting Comfortable with Your Lens

One of the biggest differences between a point-and-shoot camera and an SLR *(single-lens reflex)* camera is the lens. With an SLR, you can swap out lenses to suit different photographic needs, going from an extreme close-up lens (also known as a *macro lens)* to a *wide-angle lens,* which encompasses a wide field of view, to a *super-long telephoto,* which lets you photograph a distant subject without getting too close. In addition, an SLR lens has a movable focusing ring that gives you the option of focusing manually instead of relying on the camera's autofocus mechanism.

Of course, those added capabilities mean that you need a little background information to take full advantage of your lens. To that end, the next four sections explain the process of attaching, removing, and using this critical part of your camera.

Attaching a lens

Your camera can autofocus only with a type of lens that carries the specification *AF-S.* (Well, technically speaking, the camera can also autofocus with *AF-I* lenses. But since those are high-end, very expensive lenses that are no longer made, this is the only mention you'll find of AF-I lenses in this book.) You can use other types of lenses, as long as they're compatible with the camera's lens mount, but you'll have to focus manually.

Whatever lens you choose, follow these steps to attach it to the camera body:

1. **Turn the camera off and remove the cap that covers the lens mount on the front of the camera.**

2. **Remove the cap that covers the back of the lens.**

3. **Hold the lens in front of the camera so that the little white dot on the lens aligns with the matching dot on the camera body.**

   Official photography lingo uses the term *mounting index* instead of *little white dot.* Either way, you can see the markings in question in Figure 1-1.

   Note that the figure (and others in this chapter) shows you the D5000 with its so-called "kit lens" — the 18–55mm Vibration Reduction (VR) zoom lens that Nikon sells as a unit with the body. If you buy a lens from a manufacturer other than Nikon, your dot may be red or some other color, so check the lens instruction manual.

4. **Keeping the dots aligned, position the lens on the camera's lens mount as shown in Figure 1-1.**

   When you do so, grip the lens by its back collar, not the movable, forward end of the lens barrel.

5. **Turn the lens in a counterclockwise direction until the lens clicks into place.**

   To put it another way, turn the lens toward the side of the camera that sports the shutter button, as indicated by the red arrow in the figure.

6. **On a lens that has an aperture ring, set and lock the ring so the aperture is set at the highest f-stop number.**

   Check your lens manual to find out whether your lens sports an aperture ring and how to adjust it. (The D5000 kit lens doesn't.) To find out more about apertures and f-stops, see Chapter 5.

Mounting index dots

Figure 1-1: When attaching the lens, align the index markers as shown here.

WARNING!

Even though the D5000 is equipped with a dust reduction system, you should always attach (or switch) lenses in a clean environment to reduce the risk of getting dust, dirt, and other contaminants inside the camera or lens. Changing lenses on a sandy beach, for example, isn't a good idea. For added safety, point the camera body slightly down when performing this maneuver; doing so helps prevent any flotsam in the air from being drawn into the camera by gravity.

Removing a lens

To detach a lens from the camera body, take these steps:

1. **Turn off the camera and locate the lens-release button, labeled in Figure 1-2.**

2. **Grip the rear collar of the lens.**

   In other words, hold on to the stationary part of the lens that's closest to the camera body and not the movable focusing ring or zoom ring, if your lens has one.

3. **Press the lens-release button while turning the lens clockwise until the mounting index on the lens is aligned with the index on the camera body.**

   The mounting indexes are the little guide dots labeled in Figure 1-1. When the dots line up, the lens should detach from the mount.

4. **Place the rear protective cap onto the back of the lens.**

   If you aren't putting another lens on the camera, cover the lens mount with the protective cap that came with your camera, too.

Using a VR (vibration reduction) lens

Vibration Reduction switch

Lens-release button

Figure 1-2: Press the lens-release button to disengage the lens from the mount.

If you purchased the D5000 camera kit — that is, the body-and-lens combination put together by Nikon — your lens offers a feature called *vibration reduction*. On Nikon lenses, this feature is indicated by the initials *VR* in the lens name.

Vibration reduction attempts to compensate for small amounts of camera shake that are common when photographers handhold their cameras and use a slow shutter speed, a lens with a long focal length, or both. That camera movement during the exposure can produce blurry images. Although vibration reduction can't work miracles, it does enable most people to capture sharper handheld shots in many situations than they otherwise could.

However, when you use a tripod, vibration reduction can have detrimental effects because the system may try to adjust for movement that isn't actually occurring. That's why your kit lens — and all Nikon VR lenses — have an On/Off switch, which is located on the side of the lens, as shown in Figure 1-2. Whether you should turn off the VR feature, though, depends on the specific lens, so check the manual. For the 18–55mm kit lens, Nikon does recommend setting the switch to the Off position for tripod shooting, assuming that the tripod is "locked down" so the camera is immovable.

If you use a non-Nikon lens, the vibration reduction feature may go by another name: *image stabilization, optical stabilization, anti-shake, vibration compensation,* and so on. In some cases, the manufacturers may recommend that you leave the system turned on or select a special setting when you use a tripod, so be sure to check the lens manual for information.

Chapter 6 offers more tips on achieving blur-free photos, and it also explains focal length and its impact on your pictures. See Chapter 5 for an explanation of shutter speed.

Setting the focus mode (auto or manual)

Again, the option to switch between autofocusing and manual focusing depends on matching the D5000 with a fully compatible lens, as I explain in the earlier section, "Attaching a Lens." With the kit lens, as well as with other AF-S lenses, you can enjoy autofocusing as well as manual focusing.

The AF stands for *autofocus,* as you may have guessed. The S stands for *silent wave,* a Nikon autofocus technology.

For times when you attach a lens that doesn't support autofocusing or the autofocus system has trouble locking on your subject, you can focus manually by simply twisting a focusing ring on the lens barrel. The placement and appearance of the focusing ring depend on the lens; Figure 1-3 shows you the one on the kit lens.

To focus manually with the kit lens, take these steps:

1. **Set the lens to manual focus mode.**

   Look for the switch labeled in Figure 1-3, and move it from the A to the M position, as shown in the figure.

2. **While looking through the viewfinder, twist the focusing ring to adjust focus.**

   If you have trouble focusing, you may be too close to your subject; every lens has a minimum focusing distance. You may also need to adjust the viewfinder to accommodate your eyesight; you can get help with the process a few paragraphs from here.

If you use a lens other than the kit lens, check the lens instruction guide for details about focusing manually; your lens may or may not have a switch similar to the one on the kit lens. Also see the Chapter 6 section related to the Focus mode option, which should be set to MF for manual focusing. (The camera may automatically choose the setting for you, depending on the lens.)

Zooming in and out

If you bought a zoom lens, it has a movable zoom barrel. The location of the zoom barrel on the D5000 kit lens is shown in Figure 1-3. To zoom in or out, just rotate that zoom barrel clockwise or counterclockwise.

Focusing ring   Auto/Manual focus switch

Zoom barrel

Figure 1-3: On the 18–55mm kit lens, the manual-focusing ring is set near the front of the lens, as shown here.

The numbers on the zoom ring, by the way, represent *focal lengths*. I explain focal lengths in Chapter 6. In the meantime, just note that when the lens is mounted on the camera, the number that's aligned with the lens mounting index (the white dot) represents the current focal length. In Figure 1-3, for example, the focal length is 18mm.

Adjusting the Viewfinder Focus

Tucked behind the right side of the rubber eyepiece that surrounds the viewfinder is a tiny slider called a *diopter adjustment control*. With this control, labeled in Figure 1-4, you can adjust the focus of your viewfinder to accommodate your eyesight.

WARNING!

If you don't take this step, scenes that appear out of focus through the view-finder may actually be sharply focused through the lens, and vice versa. Here's how to make the necessary adjustment:
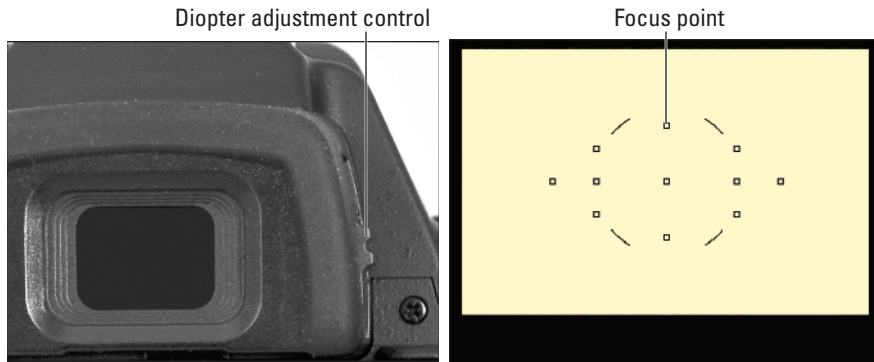
Diopter adjustment control   Focus point

Figure 1-4: Use the diopter adjustment control to set the viewfinder focus for your eyesight.

1. **Remove the lens cap from the front of the lens.**

2. **Look through the viewfinder and concentrate on the little black markings shown on the right in Figure 1-4.**

   The little rectangles represent the camera's autofocusing points, which you can read more about in Chapters 2 and 6. The four curved lines represent the center-weighted metering area, which relates to an exposure option you can explore in Chapter 5.

3. **Push the diopter adjustment slider up or down until the viewfinder markings appear to be in focus.**

WARNING!

The Nikon manual warns you not to poke yourself in the eye as you perform this maneuver. This warning seems so obvious that I laugh every time I read it — which makes me feel doubly stupid the next time I poke myself in the eye as I perform this maneuver.

Working with Memory Cards

Instead of recording images on film, digital cameras store pictures on *memory cards.* Your D5000 uses a specific type of memory card called an *SD card* (for *Secure Digital*), shown in Figures 1-5 and 1-6. You can also use the new, high-capacity Secure Digital cards, which are labeled SDHC, as well as Eye-Fi SD cards, which enable you to send pictures to your computer over a wireless network. (Because of space limitations, I don't cover Eye-Fi connectivity in this book; if you want more information about these cards, you can find it online at www.eye.fi.)

Safeguarding your memory cards — and the images you store on them — requires just a few precautions:

✔ **Inserting a card:** First, be sure that the camera is turned off. Then put the card in the card slot with the label facing the back of the camera, as shown in Figure 1-5. Push the card into the slot until it clicks into place; the memory card access light (circled in Figure 1-5) blinks for a second to let you know the card is inserted properly.

✔ **Formatting a card:** The first time you use a new memory card or insert a card that has been used in other devices (such as an MP3 player), you should *format* it. Formatting ensures that the card is properly prepared to record your pictures.

WARNING!

Formatting erases *everything* on your memory card. So before formatting, be sure that you have copied any pictures or other data to your computer.

Memory card access light

Figure 1-5: Insert the card with the label facing the camera back.

To format a memory card, choose the Format Memory Card command from the Setup menu. The upcoming section "Ordering from Camera Menus" explains how to work with menus. When you select the command, you're informed that all images will be deleted, and you're asked to confirm your decision to format the card. Highlight Yes and press the OK button to go forward.

If you insert a memory card and see the letters *For* in the viewfinder, you must format the card before you can do anything else. You also see a message requesting formatting in the Shooting Information display.

✔ **Removing a card:** After making sure that the memory card access light is off, indicating that the camera has finished recording your most recent photo, turn the camera off. Open the memory card door, as shown in Figure 1-5. Depress the memory card slightly until you hear a little click and then let go. The card should pop halfway out of the slot, enabling you to grab it by the tail and remove it.

REMEMBER

If you turn on the camera when no card is installed, the symbol [-E-] appears in the Shots Remaining area of the view-finder (lower-right corner), and you also see a little symbol that looks like an SD card on the left side of the viewfinder screen. (That card symbol appears whether or not the camera is turned on.) If the Shooting Information screen is displayed on the monitor, that screen also nudges you to insert a memory card. If you do have a card in the camera and you get these messages, try taking it out and reinserting it.

Paws off!   Lock switch
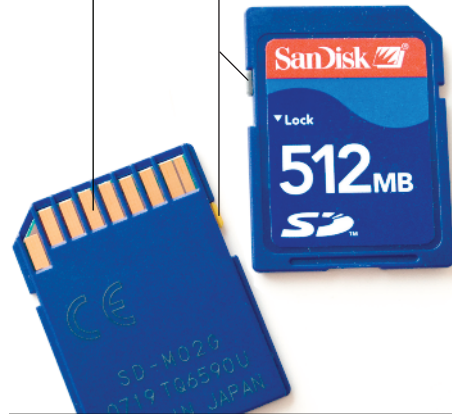
Figure 1-6: Avoid touching the gold contacts on the card.

TIP

Some computer programs enable you to format cards as well, but it's not a good idea to go that route. Your camera is better equipped to optimally format cards.

✐ **Handling cards:** Don't touch the gold contacts on the back of the card. (See the left card in Figure 1-6.) When cards aren't in use, store them in the protective cases they came in or in a memory card wallet. Keep cards away from extreme heat and cold as well.

✐ **Locking cards:** The tiny switch on the left side of the card, labeled *lock switch* in Figure 1-6, enables you to lock your card, which prevents any data from being erased or recorded to the card. Press the switch toward the bottom of the card to lock the card contents; press it toward the top of the card to unlock the data.

You can protect individual images from accidental erasure by using the camera's Protect feature, which is covered in Chapter 4.

WARNING!

One side note on the issue of memory cards and file storage: Given that memory cards are getting cheaper and larger in capacity, you may be tempted to pick up an 8GB (gigabyte) or 16GB card thinking you can store a gazillion images on one card and not worry about running out of room. But memory cards are mechanical devices that are subject to failure, and if a large card fails, you lose lots of images. So I carry several 4GB SD cards in my camera bag. Although I hate to lose any images, I'd rather lose 4GB worth of images than 8 or 16GB.

Do you need high-speed memory cards?

Memory cards are categorized not just by their storage capacity, but also by their data-transfer speed. SD cards (the type used by your D5000) fall into one of three *speed classes,* Class 2, Class 4, and Class 6, with the number indicating the minimum number of *megabytes* (units of computer data) that can be transferred per second. A Class 2 card, for example, has a minimum transfer speed of 2 megabytes, or MB, per second. Of course, with the speed increase comes a price increase.

Photographers who shoot action benefit most from high-speed cards — the faster data-transfer rate helps the camera record shots at its maximum speed. Users who shoot at the highest resolution or prefer the NEF (Raw) file format also gain from high-speed cards; both

options increase file size and, thus, the time needed to store the picture on the card. (See Chapter 3 for details.) Finally, you sometimes enjoy better movie-recording performance when using higher speed cards. As for picture downloading, how long it takes for files to shuffle from card to computer depends not just on card speed, but also on the capabilities of your computer and, if you use a memory card reader to download files, on the speed of that device. (Chapter 8 covers the file-downloading process.)

Long story short, if you want to push your camera to its performance limits, a high-speed card is worth considering, assuming budget is no issue. Otherwise, even a Class 2 card should be more than adequate for most photographers.

Exploring External Camera Controls

Scattered across your camera's exterior are buttons, dials, and switches that you use to change picture-taking settings, review and edit your photos, and perform various other operations. In later chapters, I discuss all your camera's functions in detail and provide the exact steps to follow to access them. This section provides just a basic road map to the external controls plus a quick introduction to each.

One note before you move on: Many of the buttons perform multiple functions and so have multiple "official" names. The AE-L/AF-L button, for example, is also known as the Protect button. In the camera manual, Nikon's instructions refer to these multi-tasking buttons by the name that's relevant for the current function. I think that's a little confusing, so I always refer to each button by the first moniker you see in the lists here.

Topside controls

Your virtual tour begins with the bird's-eye view shown in Figure 1-7. There are a number of controls of note here:
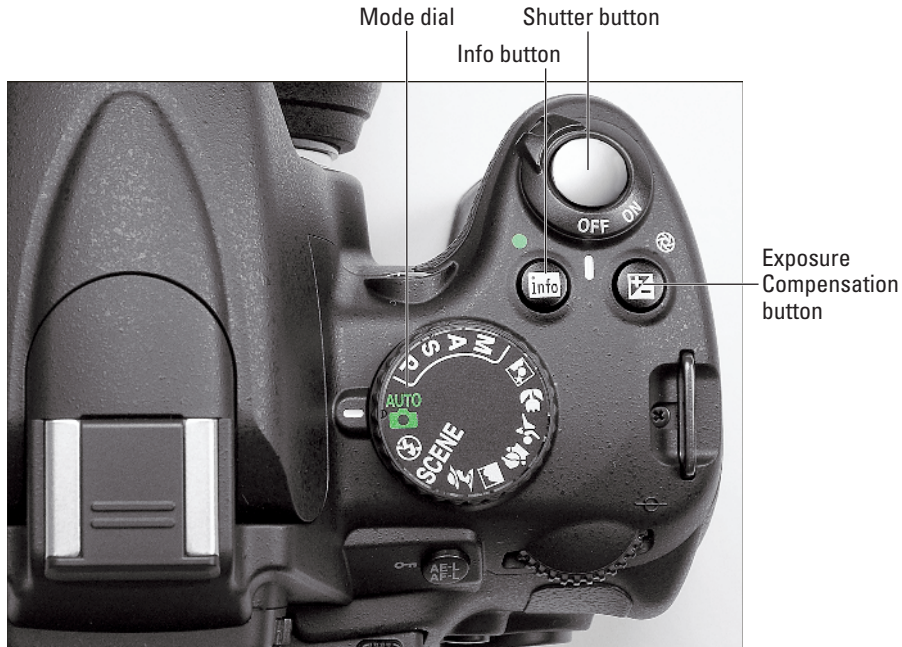
Mode dial   Shutter button

Info button

Exposure
Compensation
button

Figure 1-7: The tiny pictures on the Mode dial represent special automatic shooting modes.

✔ **On/Off switch and shutter button:** Okay, I'm pretty sure you already figured this combo button out. But check out Chapter 2 to discover the proper shutter-button-pressing technique — you'd be surprised how many people mess up their pictures because they press that button incorrectly.

✔ **Exposure Compensation button:** This button activates a feature that enables you to tweak exposure when working in three of your camera's autoexposure modes: programmed autoexposure, aperture-priority autoexposure, and shutter-priority autoexposure, represented by the letters P, S, and A on the camera Mode dial. Chapter 5 explains. In manual exposure (M) mode, you press this button while rotating the Command dial to adjust the aperture setting.

✔ **Info button:** You press this button to display the Shooting Information screen on the camera monitor. The screen not only enables you to easily view the current picture-taking settings but also is the pathway to the Quick Settings screen, through which you can adjust some settings more quickly than by using the camera menus. See the upcoming section "Monitoring Shooting Settings" for details. To turn the screen off, press the Info button again.

TIP

See the little green dots above this button and the Information Edit button (bottom-left button on the camera back)? The dots are reminders that pressing these two buttons simultaneously for more than two seconds restores the most critical picture-taking options to their default settings. See "Restoring default settings," at the end of this chapter, for more on this topic.

✔ **Mode dial:** With this dial, labeled in Figure 1-7, you set the camera to fully automatic, semi-automatic, or manual photography mode. The little pictographs, or icons, represent the Nikon Digital Vari-Program modes, which are automatic settings geared to specific types of photos: action shots, portraits, landscapes, and so on. Chapter 2 details the Digital Vari-Program and Auto modes; Chapter 5 explains the four others (P, S, A, and M).

Back-of-the-body controls

Traveling over the top of the camera to its back side, shown in Figure 1-8, you encounter the following controls:
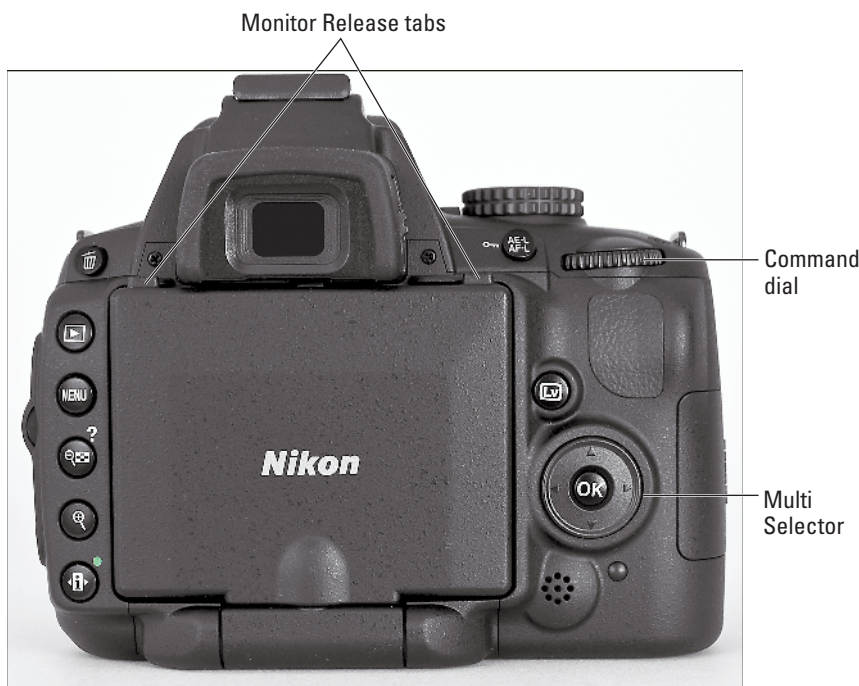

Figure 1-8: You use the Multi Selector to navigate menus and access certain other camera options.

✔ **Command dial:** After you activate certain camera features, you rotate this dial, labeled in Figure 1-8, to select a specific setting. For example, to choose an f-stop when shooting in aperture-priority (A) mode, you rotate the Command dial. And in manual exposure (M) mode, you change the f-stop by rotating the dial while pressing the Exposure Compensation button, as explained in the preceding section. (Chapter 5 explains apertures and f-stops.)

✔ **AE-L/AF-L/Protect button:** Pressing this button initiates autoexposure lock (AE-L) and autofocus lock (AF-L). Chapter 5 explains autoexposure lock; Chapter 6 talks about autofocus lock.

In playback mode, pressing the button locks the picture file — hence the little key symbol that appears to the left of the button — so that it isn't erased if you use the picture-delete functions. See Chapter 4 for details. (The picture *is* erased if you format the memory card, however.)

You can adjust the performance of the button as it relates to locking focus and exposure, too. Instructions in this book assume that you stick with the default setting, but if you want to explore your options, see Chapter 11.

✔ **Monitor Release tabs:** You use these tabs to release the monitor from its locked position. More about the monitor in Chapter 4.

✔ **Lv (Live View) button:** You press this button as the first step in recording a movie or taking advantage of Live View shooting, in which you can use the monitor to compose your shots. Chapter 4 introduces you to both Live View features.

✔ **Multi Selector/OK button:** This dual-natured control, labeled in Figure 1-8, plays a role in many camera functions. You press the outer edges of the Multi Selector left, right, up, or down to navigate camera menus and access certain other options. At the center of the control is the OK button, which you press to finalize a menu selection or other camera adjustment. See the next section for help with using the camera menus.

✔ **Delete button:** Sporting a trash can icon, the universal symbol for delete, this button enables you to erase pictures from your memory card. Chapter 4 has specifics.

✔ **Playback button:** Press this button to switch the camera into picture review mode. Chapter 4 details the features available to you in this mode.

✔ **Menu button:** Press this button to access menus of camera options. See the next section for details on navigating menus.

✔ **Zoom Out/Thumbnail/Help button:** This button has a number of functions, but the ones you'll use most often are

  • *Display help screens.* You can press this button to display helpful information about certain menu options. See "Asking Your Camera for Help," later in this chapter, for details.

  • *Adjust the image display during playback.* In playback mode, pressing the button enables you display multiple image thumbnails on the screen and reduce the magnification of the currently displayed photo. See Chapter 4 for a complete rundown of picture playback options.

✔ **Zoom In button:** In playback mode, pressing this button magnifies the currently displayed image and also reduces the number of thumbnails displayed at a time. Note the plus sign in the middle of the magnifying glass — plus for zoom in. Like the Zoom Out button, this one also serves a few minor roles that I explain in later chapters.

✔ **Information Edit button:** In picture-taking mode, use this button to shift from the Shooting Information display to the Quick Settings display, where you can change critical picture taking options.

This chapter is the only time you'll see the monitor in its locked position. When you aren't using the camera, it's a good idea to return it to this position to prevent damage to the monitor. Chapter 4 offers a quick refresher on how to adjust the monitor position.

Front-left buttons

On the front-left side of the camera body, shown in Figure 1-9, you find the following controls:

✔ **Flash/Flash compensation:** Pressing this button pops up the camera's built-in flash (except in automatic shooting modes, in which the camera decides whether the flash is needed). By holding the button down and rotating the Command dial, you can adjust the flash mode (normal, red-eye reduction, and so on). In advanced exposure modes (P, S, A, and M), you also can adjust the flash power by pressing the button, while simultaneously pressing the Exposure Compensation button and rotating the Command dial. See Chapter 5 for all things flash related.

✔ **Function (Fn) button:** By default, this button changes the current Release mode to the Self Timer setting. But if you don't use that feature often, you can use the button to perform one of seven other operations. Chapter 11 provides the details on changing the button's purpose. (*Note:* All instructions in this book assume that you haven't changed the function, however.)
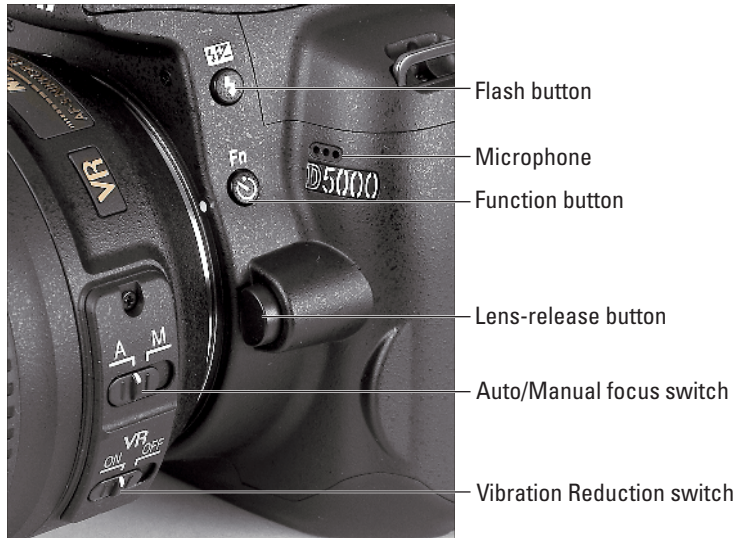
- Flash button
- Microphone
- Function button
- Lens-release button
- Auto/Manual focus switch
- Vibration Reduction switch

Figure 1-9: Press the Flash button to pop up the built-in flash.

✔ **Lens-release button:** You press this button before removing the lens from your camera. See the first part of this chapter for help with mounting and removing lenses.

✔ **Lens switches:** As detailed in the first part of this chapter, you use the A/M switch to set the kit lens to automatic or manual focusing. The VR Switch turns the Vibration Reduction feature on and off.

Make note, too, of the tiny microphone perched just above the D5000 label. Be careful not to obscure the microphone with your finger when you're recording a movie, a subject you can explore in Chapter 4.
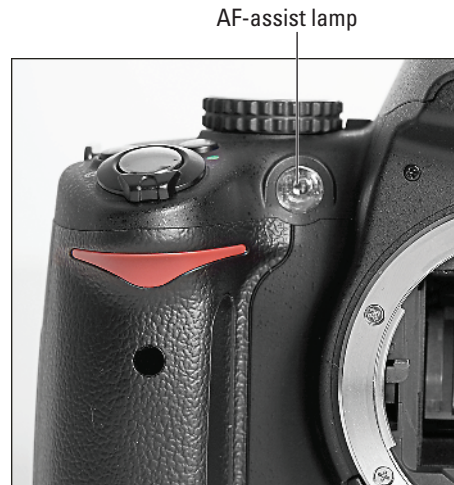

AF-assist lamp

Figure 1-10: The AF-assist lamp is a lonely animal.

Front-right controls

Wrapping up the list of external controls, the front-right side of the camera is really quite sparse. There's only one item there, as shown in Figure 1-10.

In dim lighting, a beam of light shoots out from the AF-assist lamp to help the camera's autofocus system find its target. In general, leaving the AF-sssist option enabled is a good idea, but if you're doing a lot of shooting at a party, wedding, or some event where the light from the lamp may be distracting, you can disable it through an option on the Custom Setting menu. Chapter 6 explains this and other autofocus features.

Ordering from Camera Menus

MENU   You access many of your camera's features via internal menus, which, conveniently enough, appear when you press the Menu button. Features are grouped into six main menus, described briefly in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1		D5000 Menus
Symbol	**Open This Menu . . .**	**to Access These Functions**
▶	Playback	Viewing, deleting, and protecting pictures
🔲	Shooting	Basic photography settings
✎	Custom Setting	Advanced photography options and some basic camera operations
🔧	Setup	Additional basic camera operations
🖌	Retouch	Built-in photo retouching options
📋 📋	Recent Settings/ My Menu	Your 20 most-recently-used menu options or your custom-designed menu

After you press the Menu button, you see on the camera monitor a screen similar to the one shown in Figure 1-11. Along the left side of the screen, you see the icons shown in Table 1-1, each representing one of the available menus. The icon that is highlighted or appears in color is the active menu; options on that menu automatically appear to the right of the column of icons. In the figure, the Shooting menu is active, for example.

I explain all the important menu options elsewhere in the book; for now, just familiarize yourself with the process of navigating menus and selecting options therein. The Multi Selector, shown in Figure 1-8, is the key to the

game. You press the edges of the Multi Selector to navigate up, down, left, and right through the menus.

Menu icons

Figure 1-11: Highlight a menu in the left column to display its contents.

REMEMBER

In this book, the instruction "Press the Multi Selector left" simply means to press the left edge of the control. "Press the Multi Selector right" means to press the right edge, and so on.

Here's a bit more detail about the process of navigating menus:

✔ **To select a different menu:** Press the Multi Selector left to jump to the column containing the menu icons. Then press up or down to highlight the menu you want to display. Finally, press right to jump over to the options on the menu.

✔ **To select and adjust a function on the current menu:** Again, use the Multi Selector to scroll up or down the list of options to highlight the feature you want to adjust and then press OK. Settings available for the selected item then appear. For example, if you select the Image Quality item from the Shooting menu, as shown on the left in Figure 1-12, and press OK, the available Image Quality options appear, as shown on the right in the figure. Repeat the old up-and-down scroll routine until the choice you prefer is highlighted. Then press OK to return to the previous screen.
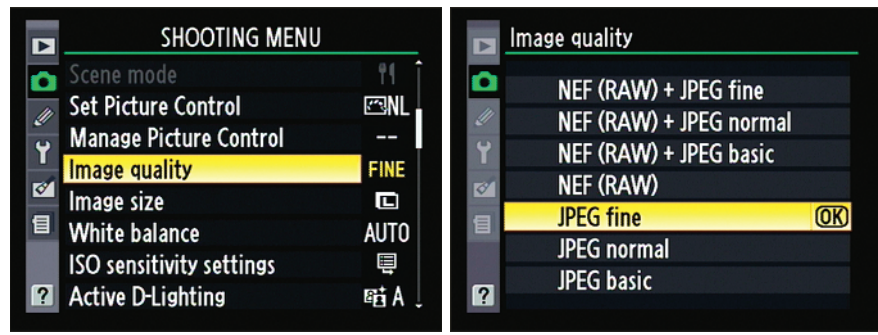

Figure 1-12: Select the option you prefer and press OK again to return to the active menu.

In some cases, you may see a right-pointing arrowhead instead of the OK symbol next to an option. That's your cue to press the Multi Selector right to display a submenu or other list of options (although, most of the time, you also can just press the OK button if you prefer).

✔ **To quickly access your 20 most recent menu items or create a custom menu:** The sixth menu is actually two menus bundled into one. The Recent Settings menu, shown in Figure 1-13, provides

Figure 1-13: The Recent Settings menu offers quick access to the last 20 menu options you selected.

a list of the 20 menu items you ordered most recently. So if you want to adjust those settings, you don't have to wade through all the other menus looking for them — just head to this menu instead.

Through the Choose Tab option at the bottom of the menu (not shown in the figure), you can switch to the My Menu screen. From there, you can create your own custom menu that contains your favorite options. Chapter 11 details the steps involved in making and using your menu. The My Menu screen also contains a Choose Tab option so that you can switch back to the Recent Settings menu at any time.

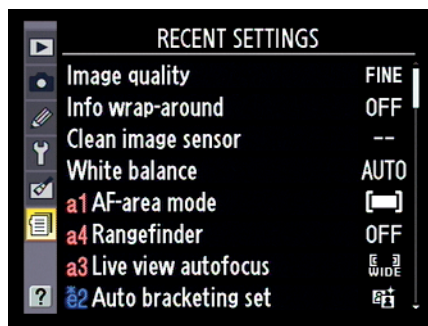The menu icon changes depending on which of these two functions is active; Table 1-1 shows both icons.

Monitoring Shooting Settings

Your D5000 gives you the following ways to monitor the most critical picture-taking settings.

✔ **Shooting Information display:** If your eyesight is like mine, reading the tiny type in the viewfinder is a tad difficult. Fortunately, you also can press the Info button to display the Shooting Information screen on the monitor. Press the Info button to display the screen; press again to turn it off.

As shown in Figure 1-14, the Shooting Information screen displays the current shooting settings at a size that's a little easier on the eyes and also provides more detailed data than the viewfinder. If you rotate the camera to compose a portrait shot (the image is taller than it is wide), the Shooting Information display rotates as well. The default display shows white text on black, as shown here. See the section "Customizing

shooting and display options" for information on how to switch to a different display style.

After you display the Shooting Information screen, press the Information Edit button on the back of the camera to switch the display to Quick Settings mode. Or, if you find it easier, just press the Information Edit button twice; your first press brings up the Shooting Information screen, and the second takes you to Quick Settings mode. Either way, you then can quickly access a variety of camera settings, represented by the icons at the right side and bottom of the screen. Press the Multi Selector left or right to highlight the icon for the setting you want to adjust — a little label appears at the top of the screen to tell you what each icon means, as shown in Figure 1-15. Press OK to jump directly to the menu where you can change the setting.

✔ **Viewfinder:** You can view some camera settings in the viewfinder as well. For example, the data in Figure 1-16 shows the current shutter speed, f-stop, ISO setting, and number of shots remaining. The exact viewfinder information that appears depends on what action you're currently undertaking.

If what you see in Figures 1-14 through 1-16 looks like a big confusing mess, don't worry. Many of the settings relate to options that won't mean anything to you until you make your way through later chapters and explore the advanced exposure modes. But do make note of the following two key points of data that are helpful even when you shoot in the fully automatic modes:
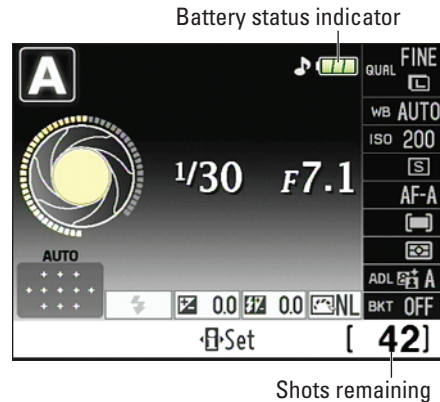
Battery status indicator

Shots remaining

Figure 1-14: Press the Info button to view picture-taking settings on the monitor.

Figure 1-15: Press the Information Edit button to shift from the Shooting Information screen to the Quick Settings display.

Figure 1-16: You also can view some camera information at the bottom of the viewfinder.

✔ **Battery status indicator:** A full battery icon like the one in Figure 1-14 shows that the battery is fully charged; if the icon appears empty, go look for your battery charger.

Your viewfinder also displays a tiny low-battery icon when things get to the dangerous point. It appears in the lower-left corner of the framing screen (that is, not on the row of camera-settings data, but actually in the image area).

✔ **Pictures remaining:** Labeled in Figure 1-14 and also visible in the viewfinder in Figure 1-16, this value (42, in the figures) indicates how many additional pictures you can store on the current memory card. If the number exceeds 999, the value is presented a little differently. The initial K appears above the value to indicate that the first value represents the picture count in thousands. For example, 1.0K means that you can store 1,000 more pictures (*K* being a universally accepted symbol indicating 1,000 units). The number is then rounded down to the nearest hundred. So if the card has room for, say, 1,230 more pictures, the value reads as 1.2K.

Asking Your Camera for Help

If you see a small question mark in the lower-left corner of a menu, press and hold the Zoom Out button — note the question-mark label above the button — to display information about the current shooting mode or selected menu option. For example, Figure 1-17 shows the Help screen associated with the ISO setting. If you need to scroll the screen to view all the Help text, keep the button depressed and scroll by using the Multi Selector. Release the button to close the information screen.

? ISO sensitivity

ISO sensitivity: Choose ISO sensitivity. Choosing higher values allows faster shutter speeds to be used to achieve optimal exposure with a given subject at a given aperture, making higher values suited to taking pictures of moving subjects or shooting under low light.

Figure 1-17: Press and hold the Zoom Out button to display onscreen help.

A blinking question mark in the viewfinder or Shooting Information screen indicates that the camera wants to alert you to a problem. Again, press the Zoom Out button to see what solution the camera suggests.

Reviewing Basic Setup Options

Your camera offers scads of options for customizing its performance. Later chapters explain settings related to actual picture taking, such as those that affect flash behavior and autofocusing. The rest of this chapter details options related to initial camera setup, such as setting the date and time, adjusting monitor brightness, and the like.

Cruising the Setup menu

Start your camera customization by opening the Setup menu. It's the menu marked with the little wrench icon, as shown on the left in Figure 1-18. Scroll down the menu using the Multi Selector to display the second screen of the menu, shown on the right.
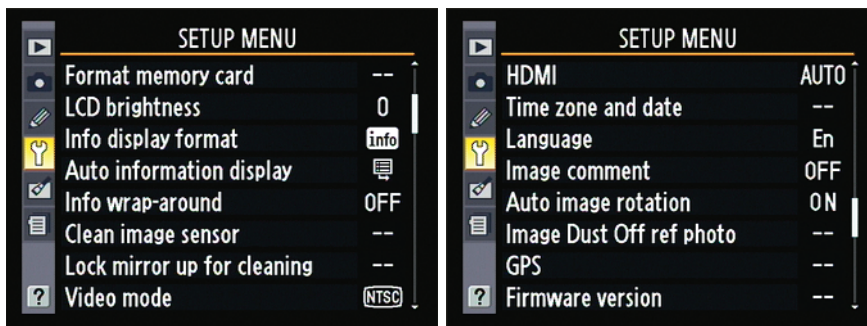

Figure 1-18: Visit the Setup menu to start customizing your camera.

Here's a quick rundown of each menu item:

- **Format Memory Card:** You can use this command to format your memory card, which wipes all data off the card and ensures that it's properly set up to record pictures. See the earlier section "Working with Memory Cards" for more details about formatting.

- **LCD Brightness:** This option enables you to make the camera monitor brighter or darker. If you take this step, keep in mind that what you see on the display may not be an accurate rendition of the actual exposure of your image. Crank up the monitor brightness, for example, and an underexposed photo may look just fine. So I recommend that you keep the brightness at the default setting (0). A second option on this menu, Auto Dim, causes the screen to dim gradually (to save battery power) when the Shooting Information screen is displayed. The feature is turned on by default.

- **Info Display Format:** You can use this command to choose the type of graphic and color used to display basic camera settings. You can save different choices for Auto/Scene modes and P, S, A, and M modes. Your choices are Classic and Graphic (the default, shown in this book). You can display Classic with a Blue, Black, or Orange background, or you can display Graphic with a Green, Black, or Brown background.

- **Auto Information Display:** As with the Info Display Format, you can set this option separately for the Auto/Scene modes and the advanced modes (P, S, M, and A). When you enable this option, the shooting information is displayed when you press the shutter button halfway, and, if

you disable Image Review (an option covered in Chapter 4), after you take a picture. When this option is set to Off, you can press the Info button to display the Shooting Information screen.

✔ **Info Wrap-Around:** When you enable this option, the cursor wraps around from one side of the screen to the other when you are changing settings using the Quick Settings screen. That is, if you press the Multi Selector to move the cursor to the setting at the top-right corner of the screen, an additional press right takes the cursor around the horn to the setting at the lower-left corner. With the default option (Off), you're instead stopped dead in your tracks when you reach the boundary of the screen.

✔ **Clean Image Sensor:** Your D5000 is set up at the factory to perform an internal cleaning routine each time you turn the camera on or off. This cleaning system is designed to keep the image sensor — that's the part of the camera that actually captures the image — free of dust and dirt.

By choosing the Clean Image Sensor command, you can perform a cleaning at any time, however. Just choose the command, press OK, select Clean Now, and press OK again. The other option with this command specifies whether the camera performs automatic cleaning only at startup, only at shutdown, or never. To change the way the camera sensor is cleaned, select Clean At Startup/Shutdown instead of Clean Now. Then press the Multi Selector right, highlight the cleaning option you prefer, and press OK.

✔ **Lock Mirror Up for Cleaning:** This feature is necessary when cleaning the camera interior — an operation that I don't recommend that you tackle yourself because you can easily damage the camera if you don't know what you're doing. And if you've used mirror lock-up on a film camera to avoid camera shake when shooting long-exposure images, note that in this case, the lock-up feature is provided for cleaning purposes only. You can't take pictures on the D5000 while the mirror lock-up option is enabled.

✔ **Video Mode:** This option is related to viewing your images on a television, a topic I cover in Chapter 9. Select NTSC if you live in North America or other countries that adhere to the NTSC video standard; select PAL for playback in areas that follow that code of video conduct.

✔ **HDMI:** See Chapter 9 for information about this setting, which relates to options involved with connecting your camera to an HDMI device.

✔ **Time Zone and Date:** When you turn on your camera for the very first time, it automatically displays this option and asks you to set the current date and time. Keeping the date/time accurate is important because that information is recorded as part of the image file. In your photo browser, you can then see when you shot an image and, equally handy, search for images by the date they were taken.

✔ **Language:** You're asked to specify a language along with the date and time when you fire up your camera for the first time. Your choice determines the language of text on the camera monitor. Screens in this book display the English language, but I find it entertaining on occasion to hand my camera to a friend after changing the language to, say, Swedish. I'm a real yokester, yah?

✔ **Image Comment:** See Chapter 11 to find out how to use this feature, which enables you to add text comments into a picture file. You then can read that information in Nikon ViewNX, the software that shipped with your camera. (The text doesn't actually appear on the image itself.)

✔ **Auto Image Rotation:** Keep this option set at the default setting (On) so that the image is automatically rotated to the correct orientation (horizontal or vertical) in playback mode. The orientation is recorded as part of the image file, too, so the auto-rotating also occurs when you browse your image thumbnails in ViewNX. *Note:* The rotation data may not be accurate for pictures that you take with the camera pointing directly up or down. See Chapter 4 for more about picture playback. Also, when you shoot pictures in burst mode, the first image of the sequence is used as the basis for rotation, even if you rotate the camera while shooting the sequence.

✔ **Image Dust Off Ref Photo:** This specialty feature enables you to record an image that serves as a point of reference for the automatic dust-removal filter available in Nikon Capture NX 2. I don't cover this accessory software, which must be purchased separately, in this book.

✔ **GPS:** If you purchase the optional Nikon GPS tracking unit for your camera, this menu item holds settings related to its operation. This book doesn't cover this accessory, but the manual that comes with the unit explains everything you need to know about using it.

✔ **Eye-Fi Upload:** This menu item (not shown in Figure 1-18) appears only if you install an Eye-Fi memory card, a special type of card that enables you to send your pictures over a wireless network to your computer. Unfortunately, Eye-Fi cards are significantly more expensive than regular cards — about $50 for a 2MB card. But if you do use the cards and you find yourself in a situation where wireless devices are not allowed, choose Disable from the Eye-Fi Upload menu to shut off the signal. For the whole story on Eye-Fi, including help with setting up your wireless transfers, visit the company's Web site at www.eye.fi.

✔ **Firmware Version:** Select this option and press OK to view what version of the camera *firmware,* or internal software, your camera is running. You see three separate firmware items, A, B, and L. At the time this book was written, A and B were version 1.00 and L was version 1.001.

Keeping your camera firmware up-to-date is important, so visit the Nikon Web site (www.nikon.com) regularly to find out whether your camera sports the latest version. You can find detailed instructions on how to download and install any firmware updates on the site.

Browsing the Custom Setting menu

Displaying the Custom Setting menu, whose icon is a little pencil, takes you to the screen shown in Figure 1-19. Here you can access six submenus that carry the labels A through F. Each of the submenus holds clusters of options related to a specific aspect of the camera's operation. Highlight a submenu and press OK to get to those actions, as shown in Figure 1-20.

In the Nikon manual, instructions sometimes reference these settings by a menu letter and number. For example, "Custom Setting a1" refers

Figure 1-19: The Custom Setting menu contains six submenus (A through F).

to the first option on the Autofocus submenu. I try to be more specific in this book, however, so I use the actual setting names. (Really, we've all got enough numbers to remember, don't you think?)
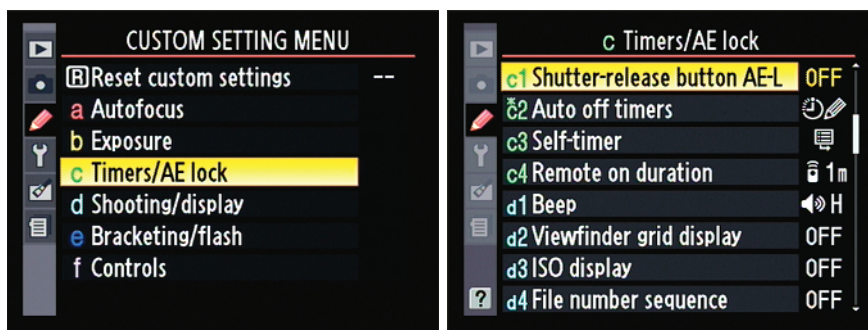

Figure 1-20: Highlight a submenu and press OK again to access the available settings.

With that clarification out of the way, the following sections describe only the customization options related to basic camera operations. Turn to the index for help locating information about other Custom Setting options.

Adjusting auto off timers

To help save battery power, your camera automatically shuts off the monitor, viewfinder, and the exposure metering system if you don't perform any camera operations for a period of time. Through the Auto Off Timers menu option, you can specify how long you want the camera to wait before taking that step. Open the Custom Setting menu, choose Timers/AE Lock, and press

OK. Then highlight Auto Off Timers, as shown on the left in Figure 1-21. Press OK to display the second screen in the figure. Here, you can select from three prefab timing settings, Short, Normal, and Long. If none of those settings works well for you, choose Custom, which enables you to customize the shut-off timing for playback and menu display, image review, and metering independently. If you go this route, be sure to highlight Done and press OK after changing the settings, or your changes don't "stick."
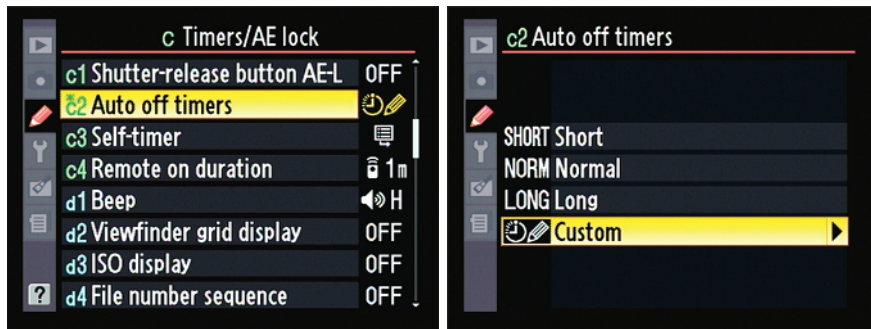

Figure 1-21: Visit the Timers/AE Lock submenu to adjust the timing of automatic monitor, viewfinder, and metering shut-off.

Customizing shooting and display options

Visit the Shooting/Display submenu (see Figure 1-22) of the Custom Setting menu to tweak various aspects of how the camera communicates with you, as well as to control a couple of basic shooting functions. Check out the following options:

✔ **Beep:** By default, your camera beeps at you after certain operations, such as after it sets focus when you shoot in autofocus mode. If you're doing top-secret surveillance work and need the camera to hush up, set this option to Off. On the Shooting Information Display, a little musical note icon appears when the beep is enabled. Turn the beep off, and the icon appears in a circle with a slash through it. You can also control the volume of the beep. Your choices are High (the default) and Low. *Tres* cool.
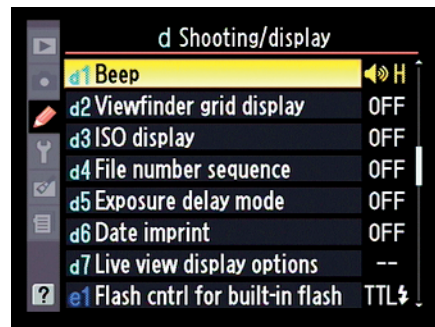

Figure 1-22: Customize your shooting and display options from this menu.

✔ **Viewfinder Grid Display:** You can display tiny gridlines in the viewfinder by setting this option to On. The gridlines are a great help when you need to ensure the alignment of objects in your photo — for example, to make sure that the horizon is level in a landscape.

✔ **ISO Display:** Normally, the Shooting Information display and viewfinder indicate how many shots will fit in the remaining space on your memory card. But if you prefer, you can use this display space to instead show the current ISO setting. See Chapter 5 for the complete story on this option.

✔ **File Number Sequence:** This option controls how the camera names your picture files. When the option is set to Off, as it is by default, the camera restarts file numbering at 0001 every time you format your memory card or insert a new memory card. Numbering is also restarted if you create custom folders (an advanced option covered in Chapter 11).

Needless to say, this setup can cause problems over time, creating a scenario where you wind up with multiple images that have the same filename — not on the current memory card, but when you download images to your computer. So I strongly encourage you to set the option to On. Note that when you get to picture number 9999, file numbering is still reset to 0001, however. The camera automatically creates a new folder to hold for your next 9999 images.

As for the Reset option, it enables you to assign the first file number (which ends in 0001) to the next picture you shoot. Then the camera behaves as if you selected the On setting.

Should you be a really, really prolific shooter and snap enough pictures to reach image 9999 in folder 999, the camera will refuse to take another photo until you choose that Reset option and either format the memory card or insert a brand new one.

✔ **Exposure Delay Mode:** If you turn this option on, the camera waits to record your picture until about one second after you press and release the shutter button. What's the point? Well, a tiny mirror inside the camera moves every time you press the shutter button to take a picture. For shots that require a long exposure time, there is a slight chance that the vibration caused by that mirror movement will blur the picture. So by delaying the actual image capture a little, the odds of that mirror-related blur are lessened. For normal shooting, leave this one at its default setting, Off. And check out Chapter 2 for information on using the camera's self-timer function as an alternative option when you want to delay the shutter release.

✔ **Date Imprint:** Through this option, you can choose to imprint the shooting date, date and time, or the number of days that have passed since you took the photo.

TIP

The default setting, which disables the imprint, is the best way to go, however; you don't need to permanently mar your photos to find out when you took them. Every picture file includes a hidden vat of text data, called *metadata,* that records the shooting date and time, as well as all the camera settings you used — f-stop, shutter speed, and lots more. You can view this data in the free software provided with your camera as well as in many photo programs. Chapter 8 shows you how.

✔ **Live View Display Options:** Use these settings to control the screen appearance when you use Live View. Chapter 4 tells all.

Preventing shooting without a memory card

If you explore the Controls submenu of the Custom Setting menu, you find an option called No Memory Card. Keep this one set at the default (Release Locked), which disables the shutter button when no memory card is in the camera. If you set it to Enable Release, you can take a temporary picture, which appears in the monitor with the word "Demo" but isn't recorded any-where. (The feature is provided mainly for use in camera stores, enabling salespeople to demonstrate the camera without having to keep a memory card installed.)

Customizing external controls

The Controls submenu also enables you to change the function of the AE-L/AF-L button and the Function button. Chapter 11 provides details, but while you're working with this book, leave both options at their default settings so that things operate as I describe. For the record, the AE-L/AF-L default setting is AE/AF Lock; the Function button default is the Self Timer option.

This same submenu also offers two "Reverse" options: Reverse Dial Rotation and Reverse Indicators. The first one reverses the direction in which you rotate the Command dial to change camera settings; the second reverses the orientation of the exposure meter, a feature covered in Chapter 5. Again, leave both settings at their defaults unless you want to be terribly confused when you read instructions here and in the camera manual. (Set Reverse Dial Rotation to Off; select the Reverse Indicators option that puts the plus sign on the left side of the meter.)

Restoring default settings

You can quickly reset all the Custom Setting menu options to their original, factory default settings by choosing the Reset command at the top of the menu. (Refer to Figure 1-19.) Press OK to display a confirmation screen that asks whether you really want to go forward with the reset; highlight Yes and press OK again.

To restore critical picture-taking settings *without* affecting options on the Custom Setting menu, you can instead use the so-called *two-button reset* method: Press and hold the Info button and the Information Edit button simultaneously for longer than two seconds. (The little green dots near the buttons are a reminder of this function.)

One fly in the ointment to remember — and it's a pretty big, ugly, hairy fly: After you restore the camera defaults, be sure that you also revisit the File Number Sequence option on the Shooting/Display submenu of the Custom Setting menu. The default setting, Off, is Not a Good Thing; turn the option On to avoid file-number confusion. See the earlier section "Customizing shooting and display options" for details. (You don't have to take this step if you use the two-button reset method of restoring defaults.)