

**Canon® EOS**  
***Digital Rebel XSi/450D***

FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

**by Julie Adair King**



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***Digital Rebel XSi/450D***

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**Julie Adair King** is the author of many books about digital photography and imaging, including the best-selling *Digital Photography For Dummies*. Her most recent titles include *Canon EOS Digital Rebel XTi/400D For Dummies*, *Digital Photography Before & After Makeovers*, *Digital Photo Projects For Dummies*, *Julie King's Everyday Photoshop For Photographers*, *Julie King's Everyday Photoshop Elements*, and *Shoot Like a Pro!: Digital Photography Techniques*. When not writing, King teaches digital photography at such locations as the Palm Beach Photographic Centre. A graduate of Purdue University, she resides in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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# Contents at a Glance

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<i>Introduction</i> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>Part I: Fast Track to Super Snaps</i> .....	<b>7</b>
Chapter 1: Getting the Lay of the Land .....	9
Chapter 2: Taking Great Pictures, Automatically .....	37
Chapter 3: Controlling Picture Quality .....	55
Chapter 4: Monitor Matters: Picture Playback and Live View Shooting .....	73
<i>Part II: Taking Creative Control</i> .....	<b>107</b>
Chapter 5: Getting Creative with Exposure and Lighting .....	109
Chapter 6: Manipulating Focus and Color .....	157
Chapter 7: Putting It All Together .....	201
<i>Part III: Working with Picture Files</i> .....	<b>223</b>
Chapter 8: Downloading, Organizing, and Archiving Your Photos .....	225
Chapter 9: Printing and Sharing Your Photos .....	255
<i>Part IV: The Part of Tens</i> .....	<b>279</b>
Chapter 10: Ten Fast Photo-Editing Tricks .....	281
Chapter 11: Ten Special-Purpose Features to Explore on a Rainy Day .....	311
<i>Index</i> .....	<b>327</b>





# Table of Contents

## *Introduction* ..... 1

### **Introduction** ..... 1

A Quick Look at What's Ahead .....	1
Part I: Fast Track to Super Snaps .....	2
Part II: Taking Creative Control.....	2
Part III: Working with Picture Files .....	3
Part IV: The Part of Tens.....	3
Icons and Other Stuff to Note .....	3
About the Software Shown in This Book.....	5
Practice, Be Patient, and Have Fun! .....	5

## *Part 1: Fast Track to Super Snaps* ..... 7

### **Chapter 1: Getting the Lay of the Land** ..... 9

Getting Comfortable with Your Lens .....	10
Attaching a lens .....	10
Removing a lens.....	13
Using an IS (image stabilizer) lens .....	13
Focusing and zooming the lens .....	14
Adjusting the Viewfinder Focus .....	15
Working with Memory Cards .....	17
Exploring External Camera Controls .....	18
Topside controls.....	19
Back-of-the-body controls .....	20
Front-left buttons.....	24
Ordering from Camera Menus .....	25
Monitoring Critical Camera Settings.....	27
Decoding Viewfinder Data.....	29
Reviewing Basic Setup Options .....	30
Setup Menu 1 .....	31
Setup Menu 2 .....	32
Setup Menu 3 .....	34
Three more customization options.....	35

### **Chapter 2: Taking Great Pictures, Automatically** ..... 37

Getting Good Point-and-Shoot Results .....	38
Using Flash in Automatic Exposure Modes .....	43
Exploring Your Automatic Options.....	44
Full Auto mode.....	45
Automatic scene modes (a.k.a. Image Zone modes) .....	46
Changing the Drive Mode.....	53

<b>Chapter 3: Controlling Picture Quality</b> .....	<b>55</b>
Diagnosing Quality Problems .....	56
Decoding the Quality Options .....	58
Considering Resolution: Large, Medium, or Small? .....	60
Pixels and print quality.....	62
Pixels and screen display size .....	62
Pixels and file size .....	64
Resolution recommendations.....	64
Understanding File Type (JPEG or Raw) .....	66
JPEG: The imaging (and Web) standard .....	67
Raw (CR2): The purist's choice .....	69
My take: Choose Fine or Raw.....	71
<b>Chapter 4: Monitor Matters: Picture Playback and Live View Shooting</b> .....	<b>73</b>
Disabling and Adjusting Instant Review .....	74
Viewing Images in Playback Mode .....	75
Jumping through images .....	76
Viewing multiple images at a time.....	77
Rotating vertical pictures.....	78
Zooming in for a closer view.....	80
Viewing Picture Data.....	82
Basic information modes.....	82
Shooting Information display .....	84
Understanding Histogram display mode.....	88
Deleting Photos .....	91
Erasing single images.....	91
Erasing all images on your memory card.....	92
Erasing selected images .....	93
Protecting Photos .....	95
Using Your Monitor as a Viewfinder .....	96
Enabling Live View .....	99
Taking a shot in Live View mode.....	100
Customizing the Live View display .....	103

## **Part II: Taking Creative Control**..... **107**

<b>Chapter 5: Getting Creative with Exposure and Lighting</b> .....	<b>109</b>
Kicking Your Camera into Advanced Gear.....	110
Introducing the Exposure Trio: Aperture, Shutter Speed, and ISO.....	111
Understanding exposure-setting side effects .....	113
Doing the exposure balancing act.....	118
Monitoring Exposure Settings .....	120
Choosing an Exposure Metering Mode .....	124

Setting ISO, f-stop, and Shutter Speed .....	127
Controlling ISO .....	127
Adjusting aperture and shutter speed .....	129
Overriding Autoexposure Results with Exposure Compensation .....	133
Holding on to Highlights .....	136
Disabling Auto Lighting Optimization .....	139
Locking Autoexposure Settings .....	140
Bracketing Exposures Automatically .....	142
Using Flash in Advanced Exposure Modes .....	145
Understanding your camera's approach to flash .....	145
Adjusting flash power with flash exposure compensation .....	149
Locking the flash exposure .....	151
Exploring more flash options .....	152
Using an external flash unit .....	154

## **Chapter 6: Manipulating Focus and Color .....157**

Reviewing Focus Basics .....	158
Adjusting Autofocus Performance .....	160
Selecting an autofocus point .....	160
Changing the AF (autofocus) mode .....	163
Autofocusing in Live View Mode .....	164
Enabling Live View autofocus .....	165
Live View autofocus option 1: Quick mode .....	166
Live View autofocus option 2: Live mode .....	168
Manipulating Depth of Field .....	169
Using A-DEP mode .....	176
Checking depth of field .....	177
Controlling Color .....	178
Correcting colors with white balance .....	178
Changing the white balance setting .....	180
Creating a custom white balance setting .....	182
Fine-tuning white balance settings .....	184
Bracketing shots with white balance .....	187
Choosing a Color Space: sRGB vs. Adobe RGB .....	190
Exploring Picture Styles .....	191
Assessing the Picture Styles .....	192
Setting the Picture Style .....	194
Customizing Picture Styles .....	197
Creating your own Picture Style .....	199

## **Chapter 7: Putting It All Together .....201**

Recapping Basic Picture Settings .....	202
Setting Up for Specific Scenes .....	205
Shooting still portraits .....	205
Capturing action .....	210
Capturing scenic vistas .....	214
Capturing dynamic close-ups .....	217
Coping with Special Situations .....	219

**Part III: Working with Picture Files .....223****Chapter 8: Downloading, Organizing, and Archiving Your Photos . . . 225**

Sending Pictures to the Computer .....	226
Connecting camera and computer .....	227
Starting the transfer process .....	229
Downloading images with Canon tools .....	231
Using MemoryCard Utility for card-to-computer transfers.....	236
Using ZoomBrowser EX/ImageBrowser .....	239
Getting acquainted with the program.....	239
Viewing photos in full-screen mode.....	242
Organizing your photos .....	245
Exploring Other Software Options .....	246
Processing Raw (CR2) Files .....	250

**Chapter 9: Printing and Sharing Your Photos .....255**

Avoiding Printing Problems .....	256
Check the pixel count before you print .....	256
Allow for different print proportions .....	257
Get print and monitor colors in sync .....	259
Printing Online or In-Store .....	262
Printing from ZoomBrowser EX/ImageBrowser .....	263
Preparing Pictures for E-Mail.....	268
Creating Web-friendly copies of Raw and TIFF photos.....	270
E-mailing photos from the browser.....	273
Creating an In-Camera Slide Show .....	277
Viewing Your Photos on a Television .....	277

**Part IV: The Part of Tens .....279****Chapter 10: Ten Fast Photo-Editing Tricks .....281**

Removing Red-Eye .....	282
Cropping Your Photo .....	287
Adjusting Color Saturation .....	291
Tweaking Color Balance .....	295
Adjusting Exposure .....	297
Three-point exposure control with the Level Adjustment filter....	298
Gaining more control with the Tone Curve Adjustment filter .....	301
Sharpening Focus (Sort Of) .....	304
Shifting to AutoPilot.....	307
Adding Text .....	308
Saving Your Edited Files .....	310

<b>Chapter 11: Ten Special-Purpose Features to Explore on a Rainy Day</b> .....	<b>311</b>
Changing the Function of the Set Button .....	312
Customizing Exposure and Focus Lock Options .....	314
Disabling the AF-Assist Beam .....	316
Enabling Mirror Lockup .....	317
Adding Cleaning Instructions to Images .....	318
Turning Off the Camera Settings Screen .....	321
Creating Desktop Wallpaper .....	322
Adding Original Decision Data .....	323
Creating Your Very Own Camera Menu .....	324
Getting Free Help and Creative Ideas .....	326
 <i>Index</i> .....	 <i>327</i>



# Introduction

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**I**n 2003, when Canon introduced the very first sub-\$1000 digital SLR camera, the EOS Digital Rebel/300D, it revolutionized the camera scene. For the first time, photography enthusiasts could enjoy the benefits of digital SLR photography without breaking the bank. And even at the then-unheard-of price, the camera delivered exceptional performance and picture quality, earning it rave reviews and multiple industry awards. No wonder it quickly became a best seller.

That tradition of excellence and value lives on in the EOS Digital Rebel XSi/450D, known in most circles (and in this book) as simply the Rebel XSi/450D. For an even lower price than its older brother, this baby offers the range of advanced controls that experienced photographers demand plus an assortment of tools designed to help beginners to be successful as well.

If you count yourself among the latter camp, you may have a few questions about how to take advantage of all the features your camera offers, however. For starters, you may not even be sure what SLR means or how it affects your picture taking, let alone have a clue as to all the other techie terms you encounter in your camera manual — *resolution*, *aperture*, *white balance*, *file format*, and so on. And if you're like many people, you may be so overwhelmed by all the controls on your camera that you haven't yet ventured beyond fully automatic picture-taking mode. Which is a shame because it's sort of like buying a Porsche and never actually taking it on the road.

Therein lies the point of *Canon EOS Digital Rebel XSi/450D For Dummies*: Through this book, you can discover not just what each bell and whistle on your camera does, but also when, where, why, and how to put it to best use. Unlike many photography books, this one doesn't require any previous knowledge of photography or digital imaging to make sense of things, either. In classic For Dummies style, everything is explained in easy-to-understand language, with lots of illustrations to help clear up any confusion.

In short, what you have in your hands is the paperback version of an in-depth photography workshop tailored specifically to your Canon picture-taking powerhouse. Whether your interests lie in taking family photos, exploring nature and travel photography, or snapping product shots for your business, you'll get the information you need to capture the images you envision.

## *A Quick Look at What's Ahead*

This book is organized into four parts, each devoted to a different aspect of using your camera. Although chapters flow in a sequence that's designed to take you from absolute beginner to experienced user, I've also tried to make

each chapter as self-standing as possible so that you can explore the topics that interest you in any order you please.

The following sections offer brief previews of each part. If you're eager to find details on a specific topic, the index shows you exactly where to look.

## *Part I: Fast Track to Super Snaps*

Part I contains four chapters that help you get up and running with your Rebel XSi/450D:

- ✓ Chapter 1, “Getting the Lay of the Land,” offers a tour of the external controls on your camera, shows you how to navigate camera menus to access internal options, and walks you through initial camera setup and customization steps.
- ✓ Chapter 2, “Taking Great Pictures, Automatically,” shows you how to get the best results when using the camera’s fully automatic exposure modes, including Portrait, Sports, and Landscape modes.
- ✓ Chapter 3, “Controlling Picture Quality,” introduces you to one setting that’s critical whether you shoot in automatic or manual mode: the Quality setting, which affects resolution (pixel count), file format, file size, and picture quality.
- ✓ Chapter 4, “Monitor Matters: Picture Playback and Live View Shooting,” explains how to review your pictures on the camera monitor, delete unwanted images, and protect your favorites from accidental erasure. In addition, this chapter introduces you to Live View shooting, in which you can use your monitor as a viewfinder.

## *Part II: Taking Creative Control*

Chapters in this part help you unleash the full creative power of your camera by moving into semiautomatic or manual photography modes.

- ✓ Chapter 5, “Getting Creative with Exposure and Lighting,” covers the all-important topic of exposure, starting with an explanation of three critical exposure controls: aperture, shutter speed, and ISO. This chapter also discusses your camera’s advanced exposure modes (P, Tv, Av, M, and A-DEP), explains exposure options such as metering mode and exposure compensation, and offers tips for using the built-in flash.
- ✓ Chapter 6, “Manipulating Focus and Color,” provides help with controlling those aspects of your pictures. Look here for information about your camera’s automatic and manual focusing features as well as details about color controls such as white balance and the Picture Style options.



- ✓ Chapter 7, “Putting It All Together,” summarizes all the techniques explained in earlier chapters, providing a quick-reference guide to the camera settings and shooting strategies that produce the best results for specific types of pictures: portraits, action shots, landscape scenes, close-ups, and more.

### *Part III: Working with Picture Files*

This part of the book, as its title implies, discusses the often-confusing aspect of moving your pictures from camera to computer and beyond.

- ✓ Chapter 8, “Downloading, Organizing, and Archiving Your Photos,” guides you through the process of transferring pictures from your camera memory card to your computer’s hard drive or other storage device. Just as important, this chapter explains how to organize and safeguard your photo files.
- ✓ Chapter 9, “Printing and Sharing Your Photos,” helps you turn your digital files into “hard copies,” covering both retail and do-it-yourself printing options. This chapter also explains how to prepare your pictures for online sharing and, for times when you have the neighbors over, how to display your pictures on a television screen.

### *Part IV: The Part of Tens*

In famous For Dummies tradition, the book concludes with two “top ten” lists containing additional bits of information and advice.

- ✓ Chapter 10, “Ten Fast Photo-Editing Tricks,” shows you how to fix less-than-perfect images using the free software provided with your camera. You can find out how to remove red-eye, adjust color and exposure, crop your photo, and more.
- ✓ Chapter 11, “Ten Special-Purpose Features to Explore on a Rainy Day,” presents information about some camera features that, while not found on most “Top Ten Reasons I Bought My Rebel XSi/450D” lists, are nonetheless interesting, useful on occasion, or a bit of both.

## *Icons and Other Stuff to Note*

If this isn’t your first For Dummies book, you may be familiar with the large, round icons that decorate its margins. If not, here’s your very own icon-decoder ring:



- ✓ A Tip icon flags information that will save you time, effort, money, or some other valuable resource, including your sanity.
- ✓ When you see this icon, look alive. It indicates a potential danger zone that can result in much wailing and teeth-gnashing if ignored.
- ✓ Lots of information in this book is of a technical nature — digital photography is a technical animal, after all. But if I present a detail that is useful mainly for impressing your technology-geek friends, I mark it with this icon.
- ✓ I apply this icon either to introduce information that is especially worth storing in your brain's long-term memory or to remind you of a fact that may have been displaced from that memory by some other pressing fact.

Additionally, I need to point out two other details that will help you use this book:



- ✓ **Other margin art:** Replicas of some of your camera's buttons, dials, controls, and menu graphics also appear in the margins of some paragraphs. I include these to provide a quick reminder of the appearance of the button or option being discussed.

If the information you see on your camera menus and other displays isn't the same as what you see in this book, and you've explored other reasons for the discrepancy, a firmware update may be the issue. Firmware is the camera's internal software; Chapter 1 shows you how to check which version your camera is running. This book was written using version 1.0.4 of the firmware, which was the most current at the time of publication. You can check the Canon Web site ([www.canon.com](http://www.canon.com)) to find out whether any updates are available. Firmware updates typically don't carry major feature changes — they're mostly used to solve technical glitches in existing features — but if you do download an update, be sure to read the accompanying description of what it accomplishes so that you can adapt my instructions as necessary. (Again, changes that affect how you actually operate the camera should be minimal, if any.)

- ✓ **Software menu commands:** In sections that cover software, a series of words connected by an arrow indicates commands that you choose from the program menus. For example, if a step tells you to "Choose File→Print," click the File menu to unfurl it and then click the Print command on the menu.

## About the Software Shown in This Book

Providing specific instructions for performing photo organizing and editing tasks requires that I feature specific software. In sections that cover file downloading, organizing, printing, and e-mail sharing, I selected Canon EOS Utility along with Canon ZoomBrowser EX (for Windows users) and ImageBrowser (for Mac users). These programs are part of the free software suite that ships with your camera.

Rest assured, though, that the tools used in these programs work very similarly in other programs, so you should be able to easily adapt the steps to whatever software you use. (I recommend that you read your software manual for details, of course.)

## Practice, Be Patient, and Have Fun!

To wrap up this preamble, I want to stress that if you initially think that digital photography is too confusing or too technical for you, you're in very good company. *Everyone* finds this stuff a little mind-boggling at first. So take it slowly, experimenting with just one or two new camera settings or techniques at first. Then, each time you go on a photo outing, make it a point to add one or two more shooting skills to your repertoire.

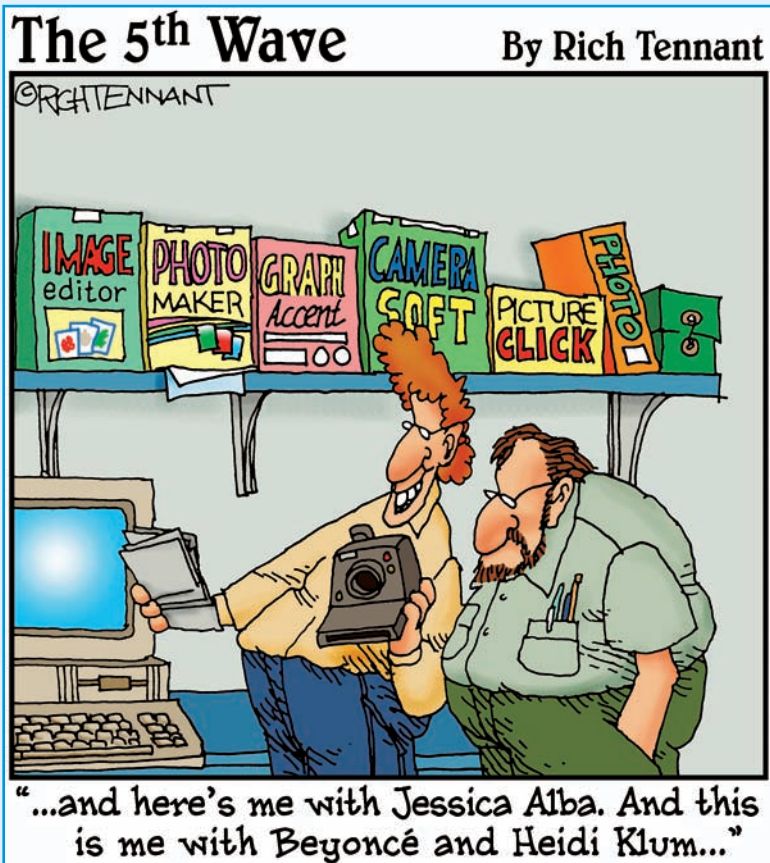
I know that it's hard to believe when you're just starting out, but it really won't be long before everything starts to come together. With some time, patience, and practice, you'll soon wield your camera like a pro, dialing in the necessary settings to capture your creative vision almost instinctively.

So without further ado, I invite you to grab your camera, a cup of whatever it is you prefer to sip while you read, and start exploring the rest of this book. Your Rebel XSi/450D is the perfect partner for your photographic journey, and I thank you for allowing me, through this book, to serve as your tour guide.



# Part I

## Fast Track to Super Snaps



## *In this part . . .*

**M**aking sense of all the controls on your Rebel XSi/450D isn't something you can do in an afternoon — or, heck, in a week, or maybe even a month. But that doesn't mean that you can't take great pictures today. By using your camera's point-and-shoot automatic modes, you can capture terrific images with very little effort. All you have to do is compose the scene, and the camera takes care of almost everything else.

This part shows you how to take best advantage of your camera's automatic features and also addresses some basic setup steps, such as adjusting the viewfinder to your eyesight and getting familiar with the camera menus, buttons, and dials. In addition, chapters in this part explain how to obtain the very best picture quality, whether you shoot in an automatic or manual mode, how to use your camera's picture-playback features, and how to take advantage of Live View shooting.



# Getting the Lay of the Land

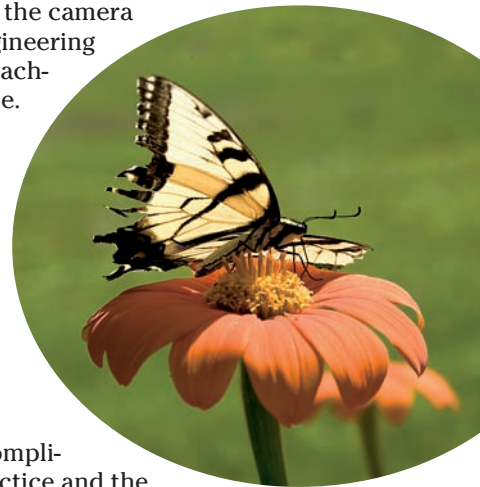
## *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Attaching and using an SLR lens
- ▶ Adjusting the viewfinder to your eyesight
- ▶ Working with camera memory cards
- ▶ Getting acquainted with external camera controls
- ▶ Using the camera menus and Camera Settings display
- ▶ Deciphering viewfinder data
- ▶ Customizing basic camera operations

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 Rebel XSi/450D 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 Canon 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, and navigating your camera's internal menus. Finally, the end of the chapter walks you through options that enable you to customize many aspects of your camera's basic operation.

## 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 to a super-long telephoto, for example. 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 three sections explain the process of attaching, removing, and using this critical part of your camera.

### Attaching a lens

Your camera can accept two categories of Canon lenses: those with a so-called EF-S design and those with a plain-old EF design.



The EF stands for *electro focus*; the S, for *short back focus*. And no, you don't really need to remember that little detail — but you do need to make sure that if you buy a Canon lens other than the one sold with the camera, it carries either the EF or EF-S specification. (If you want to buy a non-Canon lens, check the lens manufacturer's Web site to find out which lenses work with the Rebel XSi/450D.)

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

- 1. 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. Locate the proper lens mounting index on the camera body.**

A *mounting index* is simply a marker that tells you where to align the lens with the camera body when connecting the two. Your camera has two of these markers, one red and one white, as shown in Figure 1-1.



Which marker you use to align your lens depends on the lens type:

- *Canon EF-S lens*: Align the lens mounting index with the white square on the camera body.
- *Canon EF lens*: Align the lens mounting index with the red dot instead.



**Figure 1-1:** Which index marker you should use depends on the lens type.

If you buy a non-Canon lens, check the lens manual for help with this step.

**4. Align the mounting index on the lens with the correct one on the camera body.**

The lens also has a mounting index; Figure 1-2 shows the one that appears on the so-called “kit lens” — the EF-S 18–55mm IS (image stabilizer) zoom lens that Canon sells as a unit with the Rebel XSi/450D. If you buy a different lens, the index marker on the lens may be red or some other color, so again, check the lens instruction manual.



**Figure 1-2:** Place the lens in the lens mount with the mounting indexes aligned.

**5. Keeping the mounting indexes aligned, position the lens on the camera's lens mount.**

When you do so, grip the lens by its back collar as shown in the figure.

**6. Turn the lens in a clockwise direction until the lens clicks into place.**

In other words, turn the lens toward the lens release button (see Figure 1-1), as indicated by the red arrow in Figure 1-2.

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

Check your lens manual to find out whether your lens sports an aperture ring and how to adjust it. (The Rebel XSi/450D kit lens doesn't.) To find out more about apertures and f-stops, see Chapter 5.



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, as shown in the figure; doing so helps prevent any flotsam in the air from being drawn into the camera by gravity. See Chapter 3 for tips on cleaning your lens.

## Removing a lens

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

- 1. Locate the lens-release button on the front of the camera.**

I labeled the button in Figure 1-1.

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

In other words, hold onto the stationary part of the lens that's closest to the camera body.

- 3. Press the lens-release button while turning the lens away from the lens-release button.**

You should feel the lens release from the mount at this point. Just lift the lens off the mount to remove it.

- 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 an IS (image stabilizer) lens

If you purchased the Rebel XSi/450D camera kit — that is, the body-and-lens combination put together by Canon — your lens offers a feature called *image stabilization*. On Canon lenses, this feature is indicated by the initials *IS* in the lens name.

Image stabilization 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 image stabilization 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, image stabilization can have detrimental effects because the system may try to adjust for movement that isn't actually occurring. Although this problem shouldn't be an issue with most Canon IS lenses, if you do see blurry images while using a tripod, try setting the Stabilizer On/Off switch (shown in Figure 1-3) to Off. You also can save battery power by turning off image stabilization when you use a tripod. (Note that blurry images can result from causes other than camera shake; see Chapter 6 for help.)

If you use a non-Canon lens, the image stabilization feature may go by another name: *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.



**Figure 1-3:** Set the focusing switch to MF before turning the manual focus ring.

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.

### *Focusing and zooming the lens*

Like any modern camera, digital or film, yours offers autofocus capabilities, which you can explore in detail in Chapters 2 and 6. But with some subjects, autofocus can be slow or impossible, which is why your camera also offers manual focusing. The process is quick and easy: You just turn the focusing ring on the lens until your subject comes into focus. To try it out, take these steps:

### 1. Locate the AF/MF switch on the side of the lens.

Figure 1-3 shows you the switch as it appears on the Rebel XSi/450D kit lens. The switch should be in a similar location on other Canon lenses; if you use a lens from another manufacturer, check the lens instruction manual.



### 2. Set the switch to the MF position, as shown in the figure.

Don't try to move the focusing ring with the switch set to the AF (auto-focus) position; with some lenses, doing so can damage the lens.

### 3. While looking through the viewfinder, twist the focusing ring to adjust focus.

The focusing ring is at the far end of the lens barrel, as indicated in Figure 1-3.

If you have trouble focusing, you may be too close to your subject; every lens has a minimum focusing distance. (See Chapter 6 for more tips on focus issues.) You may also need to adjust the viewfinder to accommodate your eyesight; see the next section for details.

If you bought a zoom lens, a movable zoom barrel lies behind the focusing ring, as shown in Figure 1-3. To zoom in or out, just move that zoom barrel forward and backward.

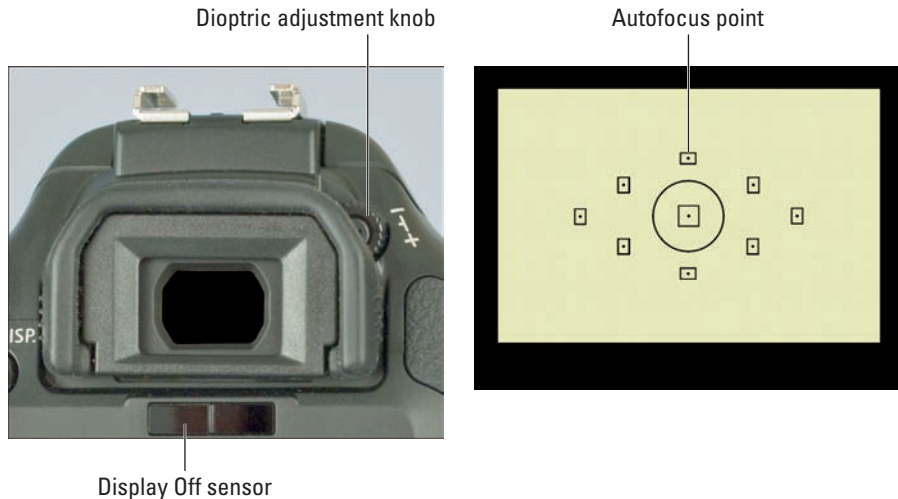
The numbers on the zoom barrel, by the way, represent *focal lengths*. I explain focal lengths in Chapter 6. In the meantime, just note that when the lens is mounted on the camera, the number that's aligned with the white focal-length indicator, labeled in Figure 1-3, represents the current focal length.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

## Adjusting the Viewfinder Focus

Perched on the top right edge of the viewfinder is a tiny black knob, officially called the *dioptric adjustment control*. I labeled the knob in Figure 1-4. With this control, you can adjust the magnification of the viewfinder to mesh with your eyesight.



If you don't take this step, scenes that appear out-of-focus through the viewfinder may actually be sharply focused through the lens, and vice versa.



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

Here's how to make the necessary adjustment:

- 1. Remove the lens cap from the front of the lens.**
- 2. Look through the viewfinder and concentrate on the focusing screen shown on the right side of Figure 1-4.**

The *focusing screen* is the collective name assigned to the group of nine autofocus points that appear in the viewfinder — the little squares with the dots inside. I labeled one of the little guys in Figure 1-4. (The circle that surrounds the center autofocus point is related to exposure metering, a subject you can explore in Chapter 5.)

- 3. Rotate the dioptic adjustment knob until the autofocus points appear to be in focus.**

Don't worry about focusing the actual picture now; just pay attention to the autofocus points.



If your eyesight is such that you can't get the autofocus points to appear sharp by using the dioptic adjustment control, you can buy an additional eyepiece adapter. This accessory, which you pop onto the eyepiece, just enables further adjustment of the viewfinder display. Prices range from about \$15–30 depending on the magnification you need. Look for an adapter called an *E-series dioptic adjustment lens*.

One other note about the viewfinder: See that little black window underneath the viewfinder — the one labeled Display Off sensor in Figure 1-4? When you put your eye up to the viewfinder, the sensor tells the camera to turn off the