

FOCUSED CAMERA™

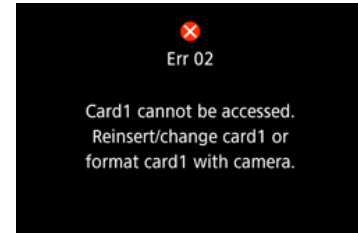
BASIC TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE:

There is nothing more frustrating than pulling out the camera and taking an image only to find that what the camera “sees” is not what you expected. Or worse, the camera “acts up” and won’t even take a picture at all.

Before we get started, if you don’t have a camera manual, you can download one from your camera’s manufacturer by [following this link](#).

If the camera won’t take a photo at all it is probably because the camera can’t focus, there is a memory card issue, or you have an error code.

An error code can be serious and may require repair at a camera dealer. Check your camera manual for what each code means. Many times the error code is something simple like a full memory card, a locked memory card, or no memory card in the camera. These are easy to resolve by switching or putting in a memory card.



An error code can also indicate your camera lens contacts need to be cleaned. Follow the instructions in your camera manual, or find tutorials online for cleaning contacts (never clean your sensor until you have had proper training and have the proper tools). Contact cleaning is relatively easy to do, just do so in a place where you won’t have too much dust or dirt that could get into the camera body during the process (in other words, don’t clean them while standing on a windy beach).

If you don’t have any error codes and you’ve checked your memory card, but the camera still won’t take a photo, it is probably related to the camera’s ability to focus. If the subject and background are too similar then the camera’s autofocus might “hunt” back and forth for focus. For instance, if you were taking a photo of a snow covered branch and behind the branch is more snow, the camera may not be able to determine where to focus. It then stubbornly decides it won’t take a photo. You can try switching to manual focus (a switch on or near the lens or in your camera’s menus) and that should solve the problem. You can have the same issue if there is not enough light. If your camera cannot create a combination of settings that will allow proper exposure, it will refuse to take a photo. This happens most often when the subject and area are dark. You can try overriding this by using a combination of manual mode and manual focus.

Another possible issue is that you are exceeding the minimum focus distance for your lens, in other words, you are too close to the subject. Each lens has a minimum focus distance. That number is usually indicated on the lens in meters and feet, or it can be found online. Those numbers represent how far away you have to be from the subject to get the lens to be able to focus. For instance, if you went out to the garden and saw a bumblebee and tried to get really close to take a detailed photo, the camera may not take the photo. Back up, you are likely too close for the lens, and try again. Most of the kit lenses for Canon and Nikon have a minimum focus distance of about one foot. That is why photographers who take macro photos often buy special lenses that allow them to get much closer.

What about when the camera takes the photo, but the focus isn’t right? If you are in Manual or Aperture Priority Modes, this could be an aperture setting. A wide open aperture gives a more narrow depth of field so parts of your image will be out of focus. Try adjusting the aperture to a more narrow setting like f/8 or f/11. For more information and a [hands-on lesson on aperture, visit our tutorial](#).

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Another possible issue with focus could be the autofocus points are not set (check your manual for how to fix this), or they are set to center while your subject is off to the side. On most cameras you can set the autofocus points to blink or indicate which areas are the areas of focus when you ½ press the shutter button. If you see points light up or indicate an area that you don't want to focus on, you may need to set them differently or change your position/recompose the image.

Additionally, some cameras have different focus modes – like AI Focus, One Shot, and Servo, or Single Point AF and Dynamic AF. These are more complicated than what we will cover in this article and there are lots of tutorials and articles online that go into those details. If you think this may be the issue, try switching to a different option – if you are in One Shot, try switching to Servo, or vice versa.

Lastly, make sure autofocus is turned on. The switch for this is usually on or near the lens (label usually says AF/MF) or it is in the camera's menu options. Some cameras have the ability to set focus to what is called “back button” focus. This means that in the camera settings a different button (other than the shutter release button) has been assigned to focus. On my Canon 5D it is set to the AF-ON button on the back of the camera. If you are ½ pressing the shutter and you have tried all these other solutions and the camera still won't focus, make sure it is not set to back button focus. You can go into your menu to change this or go into the menu and totally reset everything to start fresh.



If the camera is “acting up” by producing an image that is either all white, or mostly too light, or the opposite, all black and too dark, then you have an exposure issue.

First you need to take a couple of test shots in some different lighting. If moving around to different lighting changes the photo (better or worse) then you have already begun to solve the problem.

Make sure you haven't accidentally turned on spot metering. There are different metering modes – matrix/evaluative, zone multi/multiple, partial, center weighted, and spot metering. Go to your camera manual and set it to matrix (Nikon), evaluative (Canon), or zone multi/multiple (Sony, Olympus, Fuji). We could go into lots of detail here, but just like focusing modes, we don't need to right now. There are tons of videos and articles and tutorials online if you want to know more. If you have checked this and still have issues, then it may be a lighting issue that is affecting the exposure.



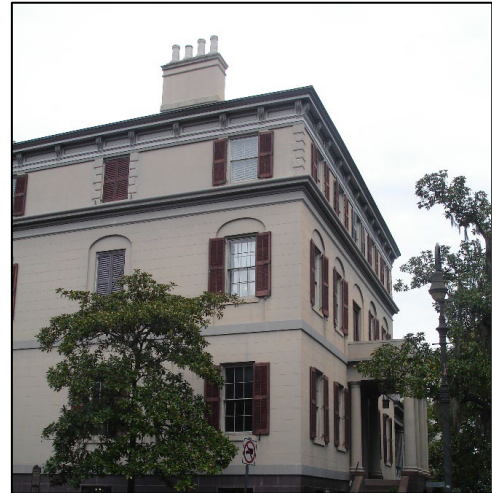
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If the image is too bright/white, you are getting too much light. If you are in auto mode, move into the shade or away from windows. Move your angle or direction so you aren't shooting into a bright sky. You can also take a look at the settings on auto, then go into manual and plug those in as starting points. Adjust the aperture farther closed (larger f/# = smaller aperture diameter = less light allowed in). Keep changing the aperture dial a bit at a time until you get the right exposure. You can also increase your shutter speed.

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If the image is too dark/black, then you have the opposite problem. You are not getting enough light. Turn on the lights, go to a room with windows, move outdoors, or move out of the shade and into the brighter sunlight. You can also take a look at the camera settings in auto, then go into manual mode and plug those in as starting points. Open the aperture (smaller f/# = wider aperture diameter = more light allowed in) or decrease the shutter speed. Decreased shutter speed to about 1/80 can help, but may introduce blur or camera shake unless you have a tripod. You especially don't want to go slower than 1/80 if you are shooting handheld, using a giant lens, or taking pictures of fast moving things (like kids and dogs).

Extreme contrasts can also "trick" your camera into not seeing what you see. Our eyes can see a much higher dynamic range than the camera can, so if you are on a white sand beach in bright sun trying to take a photo of a black wild stallion, that contrast of white and black will be very difficult for the camera to "see." Anything in your image that is very bright/white or very dark/black can confuse the camera. The camera is not smart enough to know what you are taking a photo of, so it has to take its best guess, and that is why your exposure and/or focus may be off. If you have ever taken a picture of a person or building outside and the sky in the background looks white instead of blue, then you have experienced "blow out" from improper exposure in that part of the image (even if the rest of the image is fine).



I had to put a black border around this image otherwise you cannot see where the sky ends and the paper begins!

If your image is too white or too black try to decrease the contrast by adding or reducing lighting, moving your position or angle, and/or changing out the scenery/background or subject. For instance if you are taking a portrait of your child in a dark green dress, don't put him/her in the shade in front of green bushes.

If the above didn't solve the issue, or when you took those test shots and moved around *all the images* had the same problem, then most likely it is the exposure compensation setting. Find your camera manual and reset it.

If all else fails, it is possible that the conditions you are trying to shoot in exceed the capabilities of your camera or lens and there is nothing you can do about that except to try changing lenses if you have another option. For example, my kit lens at 55mm allows only f/6.3 as its widest aperture, but the 50mm lens will go to f/1.2.

After all of this, if you are still having problems, consider a little more research into your camera's manual. You can also try YouTube. There are so many videos that offer troubleshooting help for cameras of all makes and models. Last option, [give us a call](#). We offer one-on-one instruction and mentoring for beginner and amateur photographers. You can also reach out to us with questions by joining our [Facebook](#) or [MeWe Groups](#) online.