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Canon® EOS Rebel T3i/600D FOR DUMMIES®

by Julie Adair King

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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 a series of *For Dummies* guides to popular digital SLR cameras, including the *Canon EOS Rebel T2i/550D, T1i/500D, XSi/450D, XS/1000D,* and *XTi/400D,* and *Nikon D7000, D5000, D3100, D3000, D300s, D90, D60,* and *D40/D40x*. Other works include *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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Introduction

In 2003, Canon revolutionized the photography world by introducing the first digital SLR camera to sell for less than $1,000, the EOS Digital Rebel/300D. And even at that 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 Rebel T3i/600D. Like its ancestors, this baby offers the range of advanced controls that experienced photographers demand plus an assortment of tools designed to help beginners be successful as well. Adding to the fun, the T3i/600D also offers the option to record full high-definition video, plus an articulating monitor that's not only useful but also just plain cool.

This Rebel is so feature-packed, in fact, that sorting out everything can be a challenge, especially if you're new to digital photography or SLR photography, or both. For starters, you may not even be sure what SLR means, let alone have a clue about all the other techie terms you encounter in your camera manual — resolution, aperture, white balance, and ISO, for example. 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. That's a shame because it's sort of like buying a Porsche Turbo and never pushing it past 50 miles per hour.

Therein lies the point of *Canon EOS Rebel T3i/600D For Dummies.* In this book, you can discover not only 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 concepts, 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 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.

Here's a quick look at what you can find in each part:

- **Part I: Fast Track to Super Snaps:** This part contains four chapters that help you get up and running with your Rebel T3i/600D. Chapter 1 offers a brief overview of camera controls and walks you through initial setup and customization steps. Chapter 2 explains basic picture-taking options, such as shutter-release mode and image quality settings, and Chapter 3 shows you how to use the camera's simplest exposure modes, including Scene Intelligent Auto and Creative Auto. Chapter 4 explains the ins and outs of using Live View, the feature that lets you compose pictures on the monitor, and also covers movie recording.
- **Part II: Working with Picture Files:** As its title implies, this part discusses after-the-shot topics. Chapter 5 explains picture playback features, and Chapter 6 guides you through the process of transferring pictures from your camera to your computer and then getting pictures ready for print and online sharing. You can also get help with converting pictures shot in the Canon Raw file format (CR2) to a standard format in Chapter 6.
- **Part III: Taking Creative Control:** Chapters in this part help you unleash the full creative power of your camera by moving into semi-automatic or manual photography modes. Chapter 7 covers the all-important topic of exposure, and Chapter 8 offers tips for manipulating focus and color. Chapter 9 wraps up the part with 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 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 shows you how to fix less-than-perfect images using the free software provided with your camera. Chapter 11 closes out the book with a review of camera features that, though not found on most "Top Ten Reasons I Bought My Rebel T3i/600D" 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 saves you time, effort, money, or another valuable resource, including your sanity.

- This icon highlights information that's 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 another pressing fact.

- When you see this icon, look alive. It indicates a potential danger zone that can result in much wailing and teeth-gnashing if it's 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's useful mainly for impressing your geeky friends, I mark it with this icon.

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

- **Other margin art:** Replicas of some of your camera's buttons and onscreen graphics also appear in the margins of some paragraphs and in some tables. I include these images to provide quick reminders of the appearance of the button or option being discussed.
- **Software menu commands:** In sections that cover software, a series of words connected by an arrow indicates commands you choose from the program menus. For example, if a step tells you, "Choose File➪Export," click the File menu to unfurl it and then click the Export command on the menu.
- **Camera firmware:** *Firmware* is the internal software that controls many of your camera's operations. This book was written using version 1.0.0 of the firmware, which was the most current at the time of publication.

  Occasionally, Canon releases firmware updates, and you should check its website (www.canon.com) periodically to find out whether any updates are available. (Chapter 1 tells you how to determine which firmware version your camera is running.) If you download an update, be sure to read the accompanying description of what it accomplishes so that you can adapt this book's instructions as necessary.

About the Software Shown in This Book

In chapters that cover picture downloading and editing, I show you how to get things done using the free Canon software that ships on one of the two CDs in your camera box. (The other CD contains the software manuals in electronic form.) Rest assured, though, that the tools used in these programs work similarly in other programs, so you should be able to easily adapt the steps to whatever software you use.

eCheat Sheet

As an added bonus, you can find an electronic version of the *For Dummies* Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/canoneosrebelt3i600d. The Cheat Sheet contains a quick-reference guide to all the buttons, dials, switches, and exposure modes on your camera. Log on, print it out, and tuck it in your camera bag for times when you don't want to carry this book with you.

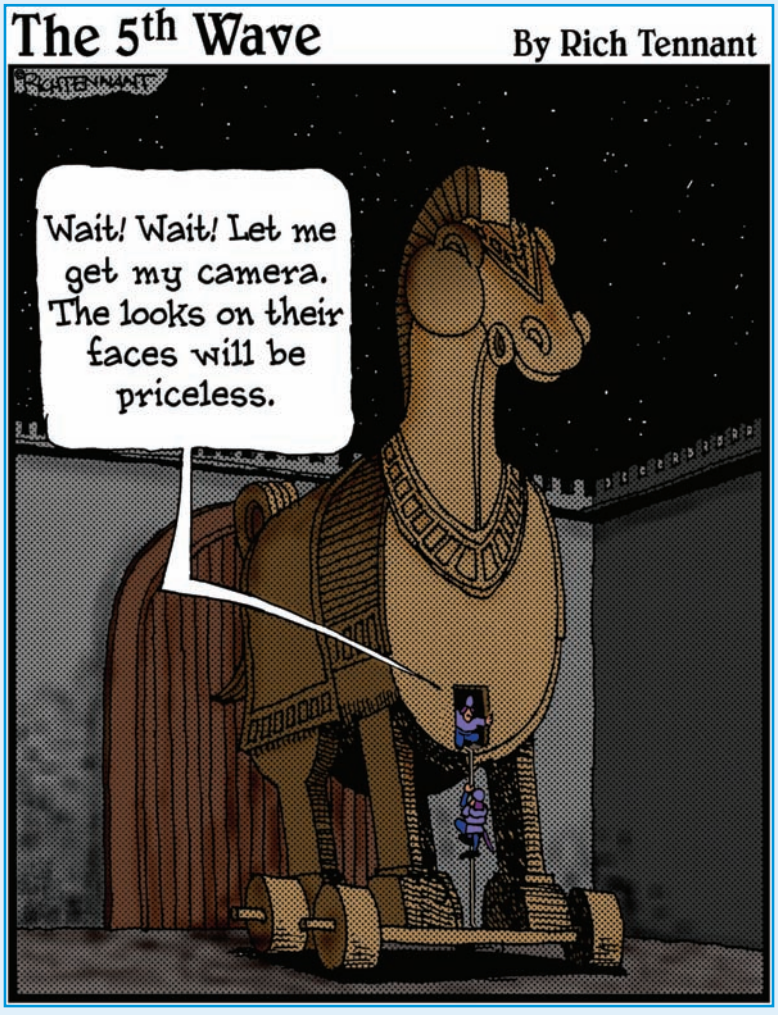
Practice, Be Patient, and Have Fun!

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. Take it slowly, experimenting with just one or two new camera settings or techniques at first. Then, every time you go on a photo outing, make it a point to add one or two more shooting skills to your repertoire. 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 and a cup of whatever it is you prefer to sip while you read and then start exploring the rest of this book. Your Rebel T3i/600D is the perfect partner for your photographic journey, and I thank you for allowing me, in this book, to serve as your tour guide.

Part I

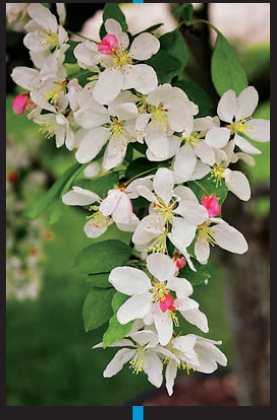
Fast Track to Super Snaps



In this part . . .

Making sense of all the controls on your T3i/600D isn't a task you can complete in an afternoon — or, heck, in a week or maybe even a month. But that doesn't mean you can't take great-looking pictures today. By using your camera's point-and-shoot exposure modes, you can capture terrific images with very little effort. All you 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 most-automatic photography modes 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 a few picture-taking settings that come into play in any exposure mode and show you how to use your camera's Live View and movie-making features.



1

Getting the Lay of the Land

In This Chapter

- Attaching and using an SLR lens
- Adjusting the viewfinder's focus
- Working with camera memory cards
- Getting acquainted with external camera controls
- Selecting options from menus
- Using the Shooting Settings and Quick Control displays
- Customizing basic camera operations

For many people, getting your first *serious* camera means moving from a point-and-shoot to an SLR (single-lens reflex) model. As with any growth spurt, the excitement of the move is often tempered with a bit of anxiety. Sure, you'll be able to do lots of new things with your dSLR (digital SLR), but along with that newfound capability comes a barrage of new buttons, knobs, LCD menus, and mechanical knickknacks. Heck, this may be the first time you've even changed lenses on a camera — a big step in itself.

If the Rebel T3i/600D is both your first SLR *and* your first digital camera, you're getting something of a double-whammy in the New Stuff department. But fear not: With some practice and the help of this chapter, which introduces you to each external control, explains how to adjust camera settings, and offers advice on a few setup options, you'll quickly get comfortable with your new camera.

Adjusting the Monitor Position

One of the many cool features of the T3i/600D is its articulating monitor. When you first take the camera out of its box, the monitor is positioned with the screen facing the back of the body, as shown on the left in Figure 1-1, protecting the screen from scratches and smudges. (It's a good idea to place the monitor in this position when you're not using the camera.) When you're ready to start shooting or reviewing your photos, you can lock the monitor in the traditional position on the camera back, as shown on the right in Figure 1-1. Or for more flexibility, you can swing the monitor out and away from the camera body and then rotate it to find the best viewing angle, as shown in Figure 1-2.

Figure 1-1: Here you see just two of the possible monitor positions.

Because playing with the monitor is no doubt one of the first things you did after unpacking your new camera, I won't waste space here walking you through the process of adjusting the screen. (If you need help, the camera manual shows you what to do.) But I want to offer a few monitor-related tips:

- **Don't force things.** Although the monitor assembly is sturdy, treat it with respect as you adjust the screen position. The monitor twists only in certain directions, and it's easy to forget which way it's supposed to move. So if you feel resistance, don't force things — you could break the monitor. Instead, rely on that feeling of resistance to remind you to turn the screen the other way.
- **Watch the crunch factor.** When positioning the monitor back into the camera (whether face in or face out), take care that nothing gets in the way. Use a lens brush or soft cloth to clean the monitor housing on the camera back so there's nothing in the way that could damage the monitor.

- **Clean smart.** It's virtually impossible to keep nose prints and fingerprints off the monitor — well, it is for me, anyway. When you get the urge to clean the screen, use only the special cloths and cleaning solutions made for this purpose. (You can find them in any camera store.) *Do not* use paper products such as paper towels because they can contain wood fibers that can scratch the surface of the LCD. And never try to use a can of compressed air to blow dust off the camera — the air is cold and can crack the monitor.

- **Live View photography has some drawbacks.** *Live View* is the feature that enables you to compose your photos using the monitor rather than the viewfinder. You switch the feature on and off by pressing the Live View button, which is found to the right of the viewfinder and looks like the icon shown in the margin here.

  Live View may feel more comfortable than using the viewfinder if you're stepping up to the T3i/600D from a point-and-shoot camera that didn't have a viewfinder. But the monitor is one of the biggest drains on battery power, and autofocusing in Live View mode is slower than when you use the viewfinder. For these reasons and a few others you can explore in Chapter 4, I stick with the viewfinder for most regular photography and reserve Live View for movie recording. (You can't use the viewfinder in Movie mode.) Whatever you decide, note that if Live View is enabled and you orient the monitor to face the same direction as the lens, the monitor may display a mirror image of your subject.

Figure 1-2: You also can unlock the monitor from the body and then rotate the screen to get the best view of things.

Getting Comfortable with Your Lens

One of the biggest differences between a point-and-shoot camera and an SLR camera is the lens. With an SLR, you can swap lenses to suit different photographic needs, going from an extreme close-up lens to a super-long telephoto, for example. Additionally, an SLR lens has a movable focusing ring that lets you focus manually instead of relying on the camera's autofocus mechanism. Even this basic difference extends your picture-making opportunities in big ways.

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 several sections explain the process of attaching, removing, and using this critical part of your camera.

Attaching a lens

Your camera accepts two categories of Canon lenses: those with an EF-S design and those with a plain-old EF design.

The EF stands for *electro focus;* the S, for *short back focus.* And *that* simply means the rear element of the lens is closer to the sensor than with an EF lens. And no, you don't need to remember what the abbreviation stands for — just 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 website to find out which lenses work with the Rebel T3i/600D.

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 1-3.

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

   - *Canon EF-S lens:* The white square is the mounting index.
   - *Canon EF lens:* The red dot is the mounting index.

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

Figure 1-3: Which index marker you should use depends on the lens type.

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

   The lens also has a mounting index. Figure 1-4 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 T3i/600D. If you buy a different lens, the index marker may be red or some other color, so again, check the lens instruction manual.

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

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, as indicated in Figure 1-4.

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 the beach on a windy day, 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.

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, labeled in Figure 1-4.**
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 (counterclockwise).**

   You can feel the lens release from the mount at this point. 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. These steps help keep your lens and camera interior dust-free.

Figure 1-4: Place the lens in the lens mount with the mounting indexes aligned.

Using an IS (image stabilizer) lens

The 18–55mm lens sold with the Rebel T3i/600D camera offers *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. Camera shake is a problem because it can result in blurry images, even when your focus is dead-on. Although image stabilization can't work miracles, it does enable most people to capture sharp handheld shots in many situations that they otherwise couldn't.

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 switch (shown in Figure 1-5) to Off. You also can save battery power by turning off image stabilization when you use a tripod. If you use a monopod, leave image stabilization turned on so that it can help compensate for any accidental movement of the monopod. (I never can keep those things perfectly still, no matter how hard I try — but then again, I drink way too much coffee.)

Figure 1-5: Image stabilization can help ensure sharper handheld shots.

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.

Whatever type of lens you use, image stabilization isn't meant to eliminate the blur that can occur when your subject moves during the exposure. That problem is related to shutter speed, a topic you can explore in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 offers more tips for blur-free shots and explains focal length and its effect on your pictures.

Shifting from autofocus to manual focus

Your Rebel T3i/600D offers an excellent autofocusing system, which you can find out how to exploit to its best advantage in Chapter 8. With some subjects, however, autofocusing can be slow or impossible, which is why your camera also offers manual focusing.

Make the shift from auto to manual focus as follows:

1. **Set the AF/MF switch on the side of the lens to the MF position.**

   This switch sets the focus operation to either auto (AF) or manual (MF). Figure 1-5 shows you the switch as it appears on the Rebel T3i/600D 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. **Look through the viewfinder and twist the focusing ring until your subject comes into focus.**

   On the kit lens, the focusing ring is at the far end of the lens barrel, as indicated in Figure 1-5. If you use another lens, the focusing ring may be located elsewhere, so check your lens manual.

   If you have trouble focusing, you may be too close to your subject; every lens has a minimum focusing distance. (For the kit lens, the minimum close-focus range is about 10 inches; for other lenses, check the specifications in the lens manual.) You also may need to adjust the viewfinder to accommodate your eyesight; see the next section for details.

Some lenses enable you to use autofocusing to set the initial focusing point and then fine-tune focus manually. Check your lens manual for information on how to use this option, if available. (This option isn't offered on the kit lens.)

Zooming in and out

If you bought a zoom lens, it sports a movable zoom ring. On the kit lens, the zoom ring is behind the focusing ring, as shown in Figure 1-5, but again, the relative positioning of the two components depends on your lens. With the kit lens, you rotate the lens barrel to zoom. A few zoom lenses use a push-pull motion to zoom instead.

The numbers around the edge of the zoom ring, by the way, represent *focal lengths.* Chapter 8 explains focal lengths in detail. In the meantime, just note that when the lens is mounted on the camera, the number that's aligned with the white focus-length indicator, labeled in Figure 1-5, represents the current focal length. In Figure 1-5, for example, the focal length is 24mm.

Adjusting the Viewfinder Focus

Perched on the top-right edge of the viewfinder is a tiny black knob, labeled in Figure 1-6. Officially known as a *dioptric adjustment control,* this knob enables you to adjust the magnification of the viewfinder to mesh with your eyesight.

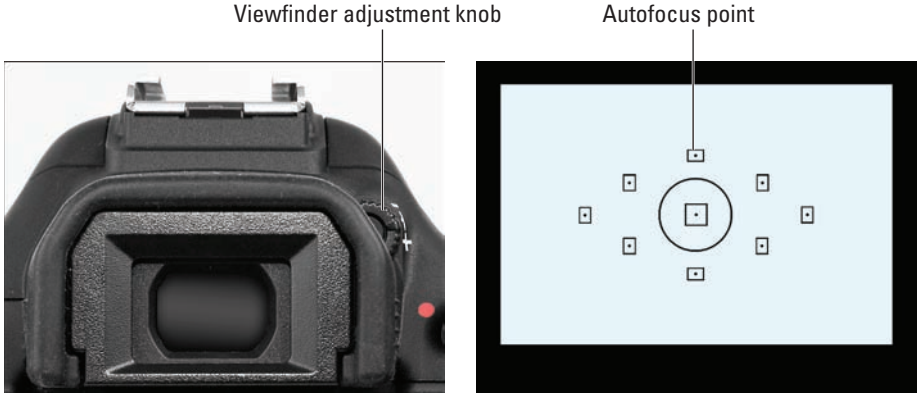


Figure 1-6: Roll the little knob to set the viewfinder focus for your eyesight.

Adjusting the viewfinder to your eyesight is critical: If you don't, scenes that appear out-of-focus through the viewfinder may actually be sharply focused through the lens, and vice versa.

Follow these steps to adjust your viewfinder:

1. **Remove the lens cap from the front of the lens.**
2. **Look through the viewfinder, aim the lens at a plain surface (such as a white wall), and concentrate on the focusing screen shown on the right side of Figure 1-6.**

   The *focusing screen* is the collective name assigned to the group of nine autofocus points that appears in the viewfinder — the little squares with the dots inside. One of the little guys is labeled in Figure 1-6. (The circle that surrounds the center autofocus point is related to exposure metering, a subject you can explore in Chapter 7.)
3. **Rotate the dioptric 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 sharpness of the autofocus points.

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

Working with Memory Cards

Instead of recording images on film, digital cameras store pictures on *memory cards.* Your Rebel T3i/600D uses a specific type of memory card — an *SD card* (for *Secure Digital*), shown in Figures 1-7 and 1-8. You can also use *high-capacity* SD cards, which carry the label SDHC and come in capacities ranging from 4–32GB (gigabytes), and *extended-capacity (*SDXC) cards, which offer capacities higher than 32GB.

Memory cards also are rated according to *speed class,* which refers to how quickly data can be written to and read from the card. A higher-speed card helps ensure the smoothest movie recording and playback. Currently, the fastest cards have a speed rating of 10. For movie recording, Canon recommends that you purchase a card with a speed class of 6 or higher.

Whatever the speed or capacity, safeguarding your memory cards — and the images on them — requires a few precautions: