Second Life® Photography Guide

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(http://www.flickr.com/photos/10142325@N00/)

FOTO.com

At the beginning, it is just amazing to notice how simple photography in Second Life is! And soon, you will realize it deals with an infinite source of creativity! For 3D landscapes lovers, new reporters, paparazzi or also studio-addicts, Second Life offers you a fantastic tool. This first part will only deal with shot. Photo in studio or post-treatment will be spoken about later on.

To begin with and to answer a frequent question: no you don't need any camera in Second Life. You photograph what you see on your screen. Of course, there are some cameras to sell or in freebies, but this is just for the appearance.

Yet, photo in SL isn't free. You'll pay about 10 L$ to save each photo in your inventory. To me, this seems to be quite normal. Pictures cover some disk space, which isn't free. If you take 100 photos, it will cost 100 x 10 l$ = 1000 l$ = 4$. So I imagine you can afford that little pleasure….

For studio-photography addicts, you will find some turnkey STUDIOS for sale (not that cheap by the way!). This is an excellent investment to start, and to learn the basis. But one day you will put it in your inventory (and you will win at the same time about sixty prims) and you will build yours.

CAMERA CONTROL

Of course you can already move. If it isn't the case, stop reading right now, and return on Gaia

- **Alt**

The first key you should know is key Alt of your keyboard.
Click on an object and maintain key Alt. Now you can turn around an object (right and left movement of the mouse) and zoom in on this object (up and down movements of the mouse).

- **Alt + Ctrl**

Add key Ctrl and you will surf from all the angles around this object. Release key Ctrl to zoom again.

- **Alt+Ctrl+Shift**

Add key Shift and your camera will move in the screen plan.

- **Wheel mouse**

Your wheel mouse is used for in and out zoom, but you can also use the following combinations: Ctrl + 0 (in zoom) and Ctrl + 8 (out zoom) and Ctrl + 9 to come back to normal.

- **Mouselook mode**

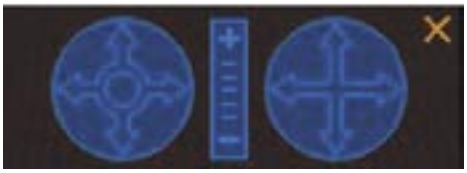
As if you could see with through your avatar's eyes. Move your mouse to the right: you are looking to the right. To enter this mode, you can either roll your mouse to the maximum, or use key M of the keyboard, only if the chat is inactive

- **Esc**

It enables you to come back to first position, behind your avatar.

All these movements are usually possible thanks to a little precise interface, «Camera controls», that you will find in

VIEW >> CAMERA CONTROL.



Zoom

Moving around the object

Moving in your screen plan

Here are the camera basic movements' orders. All the frames are possible and discrete.

Frame tricks:

To add some angle to your frame, I only suggest you to create a cube and to sit on it. Then, publish this cube and modify the angle of the axis which is parallel to your shoulders... oh my God, what does that mean!!!

Then, change for Mouselook mode (key M of the keyboard + inactive chat). Here is a beautiful diagonal frame... So as to leave the Mouselook mode, type ESC or wheel mouse.

LIGHT SOURCES

No photo without light! For SL photographs, the two light sources are light prims and the sun.

1 – The sun

You certainly noticed that light was changing, depending on hours of the day. Since all this is only virtual, you can control the time, sun position, as well as outside lightning....

It is possible to force the general lightning during specific moments of the day: sunrise, noon, sunset and midnight. For that you just have to open the menu

WORLD >> FORCE SUN. Great, it's dark at noon!!!

Even better, you'll feel like being God and move the sun yourself: you first have to add menu CLIENT in the menu bar.... Ctrl + Alt + d. Two menus appear in fact, CLIENT and SERVER.
In menu CLIENT, go down to WORLD and tick the line Mouse Move Sun.
Then pass in Mouselook mode (M) and move your mouse.... GREAT!!! You are the king of the world. Leave the Mouselook mode (ESC or wheel mouse), the sun keeps steady…Set up your model and shoot it...

To come back to the region light parameters:

WORLD >> FORCE SUN >> REVERT TO REGION DEFAULT.

2 – Artificial Lightning:

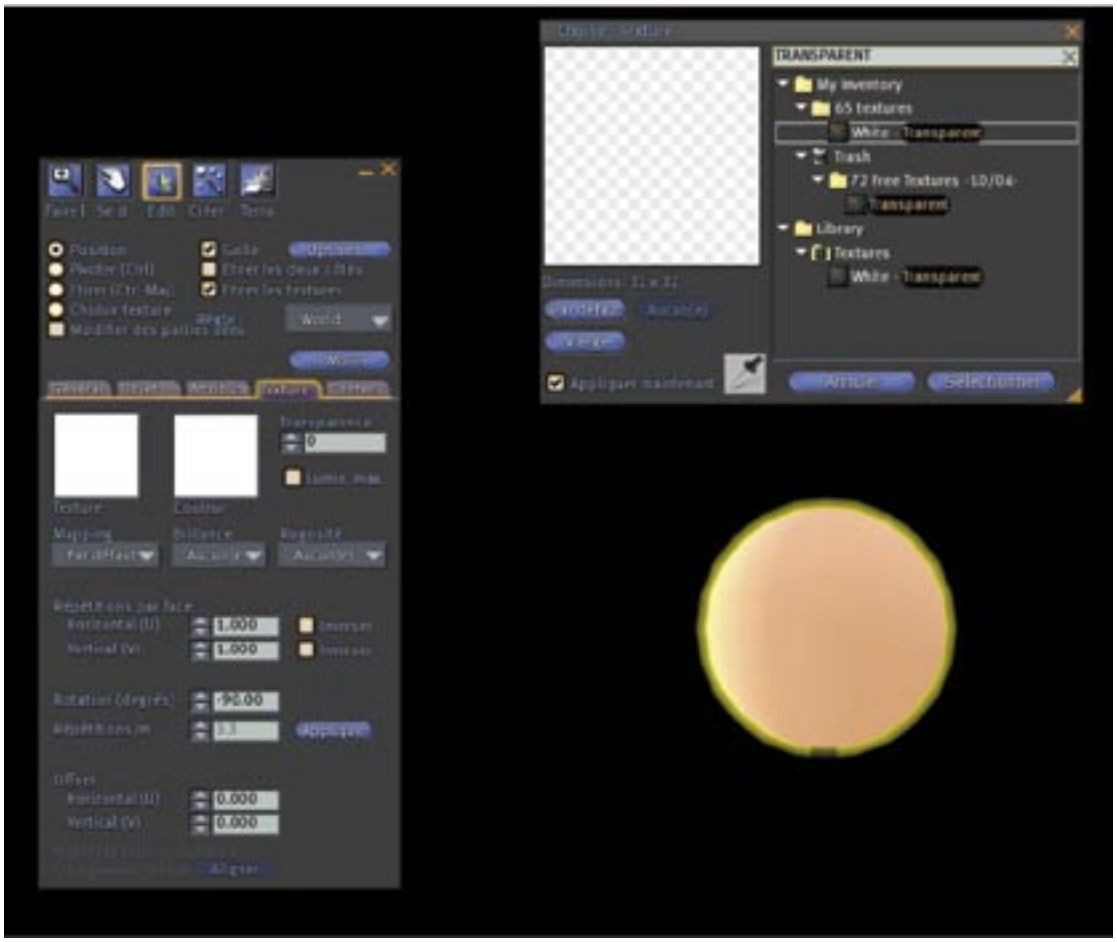
All the power of photography in SL appears thanks to the use of "artificial" light. In studio, that is to say in a place deprived of any light source, your enlightener skills won't find any limits. Douches, Against, Horizontal, Lateral, Plongée, low angle, everything is possible. Ray, intensity, colour filter, position, everything can be carefully parameterized. Yet, be careful with the models which get easily impatient…Better to make your adjustments before!

NO, it is not necessary to buy projectors!!! One more time, it's just to make the scene more realistic! There's nothing easier than creating light.

• Create a shape (a sphere for instance)
• In tab FEATURES, tick the box **Light**
• Then choose the colour of your light: it's in fact similar to a jelly or a filter we would add.
• Three parameters enable you to fix the light beam:
    . Intensity
    . The source ray
    . The falloff, that is to say the reach of the beam in metres.

Using these three parameters and mixing several sources, everything is possible.

• If your light sphere can be seen, make it transparent: you just need to put a transparent texture. Tab Texture, click in the texture box. In the texture choice window, look for a transparent texture. If you can’t find one, there are some in all freebies shops...



Of course, the sphere can’t be seen anymore. It is more practical to take the photo, but less to find it... Linden knew that, so just go to:

VIEW >> HIGHLIGHT TRANSPARENT or ctrl + Alt + T

-Now you just need to move the light. Much easier in SL than in a real studio.
You can add as many sources as you want. Yet, I suggest you to train fist with only one source. Move it all around the model and just observe it. You will notice that light and shadow problems are always the same, ad soon you’ll be able to find some solutions.

PHOTO INTERFACE

To call SL Photo interface, click on **SNAPSHOT** in the toolbar.

This interface will enable you to send a photo by email, to save a photo directly in your inventory or to save it on your hard disk.

If you don’t want to use this interface and prefer to send directly the snapshot on the hard disk, select **Snapshot to disk** in File menu or Ctrl + ‘ (American keyboard) or Ctrl + ù (French keyboard).

Send a postcard

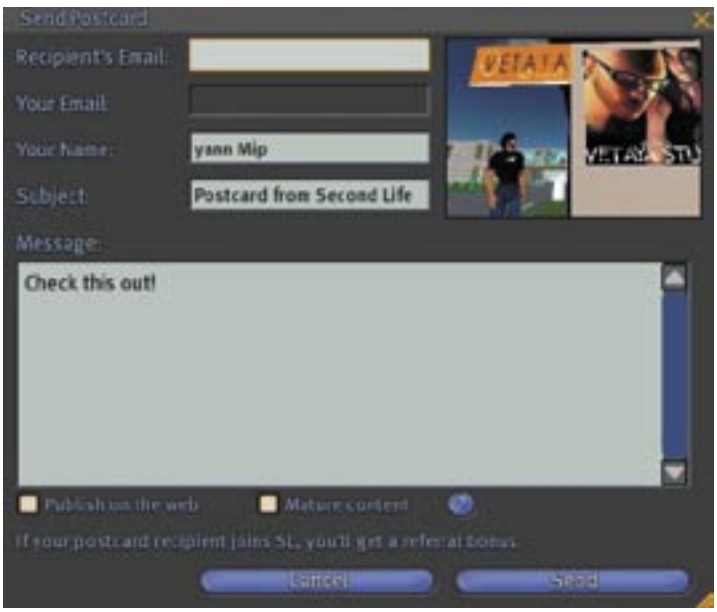
You can send the photo you have just taken to an email address (so outside SL) for free.

Once you have ticked box **Send a postcard,** you have to choose your picture **pixel** resolution. (I’ll tell more about that a bit later) as well as the picture quality, that is to say, the file compression ratio which will be sent.
Take your photo clicking on new snapshot: you can check it in the preview window (ok, it isn’t that big but well, it isn’t smaller than the screen of a digital reflex), then click on **Send.**

The window **Send Postcard** is opened.
Write the recipient’s email address, as well as the subject and the message. Your own name and email address are automatically written.

Don’t forget to have a look at the sentence in the bottom!!! If your postcard recipient joins SL, you’ll get a referral bonus.

Tick the box publish on the web, so as to allow your picture, name in SL, subject, place and message on SL website.



This is what you'll receive:

This snapshot has been taken in 1024 x 721

With a 100% picture quality.

This picture is a 29,8Ko jpg file.

You cannot send a photo whose size is bigger than 1 Mo.

Upload a snapshot:

Tick box **Upload a Snapshot**.
This time, your snapshot will be sent directly in your inventory, and that will cost 10 L$.

Take your photo clicking on new snapshot; check it in the preview window, then click on **Upload(L$10).**

In the middle of your screen, the wonderful photo you've just taken appears. Click then on ok in the blue window on the top right corner which will by the way remind you of the 10 L$ you have to pay.
You will find your beautiful picture in file "Photo Album" and will be called «snapshot». Rename it quickly: right click and rename it.

Save a snapshot on the disk:

Ah ! SL photographers will get interested…You just have to tick this line to save your snapshots on your hard disk. This way, you will be able to post-treat them, to archive them, to print them, etc…

Take your photo clicking on New Snapshot, check in the preview window, then click on Save. You don't have to use the preview, you can directly save on the disk:

FILE> SNAPSHOT TO DISK or Ctrl+` (Ctrl + ù, for French keyboard)

For the first photo, the traditional window « Save as» will ask you where you wan to save the snapshot on your hard disk, and how you want to name it... By default, it will be saved as «Snapshot_001.bmp». For the following snapshot, only the end 001 will change for 002.
BMP files use a lot of disk space, that's why you'll need a consequent hard disk if you feel like starting a photographer career!!!

A 1024 x 721 snapshot will cover 2.11 Mo. A 3000 x 2000 one can cover until 19 Mo...

In the Snapshot interface, you'll be offered 5 options:

-Show interface in snapshot
This will let all SL interface appear on your snapshot: toolbar, menu bar, window, etc....

-Show HUD objects in snapshot
Thiw will let HUD objects appear, only if you have some of course…

-Keep open after saving
If this line isn't ticked, the interface will be shut immediately after you've taken the photo.

-Keep specified aspect ratio
Tick this line so that your picture really gets the aspect ratio you specified in the picture size. (next chapter)

-Freeze frame (fullscreen preview)
Here is a practical option. If you are a RL photographer, sure you'll enjoy it…
During the photo, the view will be frozen and you'll be able to turn around indefinitely and to take as many photos as you want. If only someone could develop that in RL!!!!

All these options will only be worth after the snapshot refreshing.

PICTURE SIZE

If you send your photo by mail or directly in your inventory or even on your hard disk, in any case, you will have to choose pixel size of your snapshot.

Don’t forget: the digital picture is made of plenty of pixels (little squares). If your picture is made of 1024 pixels (little squares) in horizontal (H) and 768 pixels in vertical (V), it means its pixel **resolution** is about 1024 x 768 = 786432 pixels.

By default in the snapshot window, the different values correspond to your screen pixel resolution. You can modify le width and the height: the file byte size will also be modified as well as the view time.

Which size to choose?

1024 x 768 is the standard size. In any case, to **upload in the inventory/ Upload a snapshot** and **Send a postcard**. A bigger size would be useless and would slow down the view.

If you save on the hard disk, things become a little more complex. In act it depends on what you are going to do with this snapshot.

- **Souvenir with view only on the screen**: leave in 1024 x 768

- Post-treatment aimed at being uploaded again and saved in jpg, but only for screen view: Here is the typical case of SL photographer. During a shooting, he saves all the “pictures” on his hard disk. Then they will be treated thanks to a photo retouch software. Of course it is much easier to work on a picture made of many pixels than on a “pixel-less” one.
024 x 768 isn’t enoughgt to work. But be careful, the more pixels there will be, the heavier in bytes your file will be and the harder it will be for your CGA to «view». With a « medium » CGA, I usually take my photos in 3000 x 2000. I am clever enough as regards retouch. I met some photographers who were shooting in 4000. Now it’s up to you ! Try and choose the size that fits you.

To take high resolution snapshots, you must activate the debug mode: Ctrl + Shift + d.

The «CLIENT» menu is now available in the menu bar. Open it and select the 4th line: «high-res snapshots».

This portrait of Sayara Suen has been taken in a 3000 x 2000 picture size. Anti-aliasing work was easy and all the details appear correctly.

IMPORTATION OF A PICTURE IN SL

Once the picture is post-treated, it's necessary to import it in Second Life. This operation requires some precautions:

1- Which picture size?

After various retouch and post-treatment, you should have a pixel high resolution picture (for instance 3000 x 2000). As we've already seen, it is no use importing a picture whose pixel resolution is higher than 1024, it would be useless and would take a long time to appear in world. So, before a photo importation, you have to dimension it again, with 1024 pixel for the bigger side.
(To sum up, you take a photo with a pixel high resolution in SL, than after the retouch you dimension it again in 1024 to send it back in SL).

2- Which picture format?

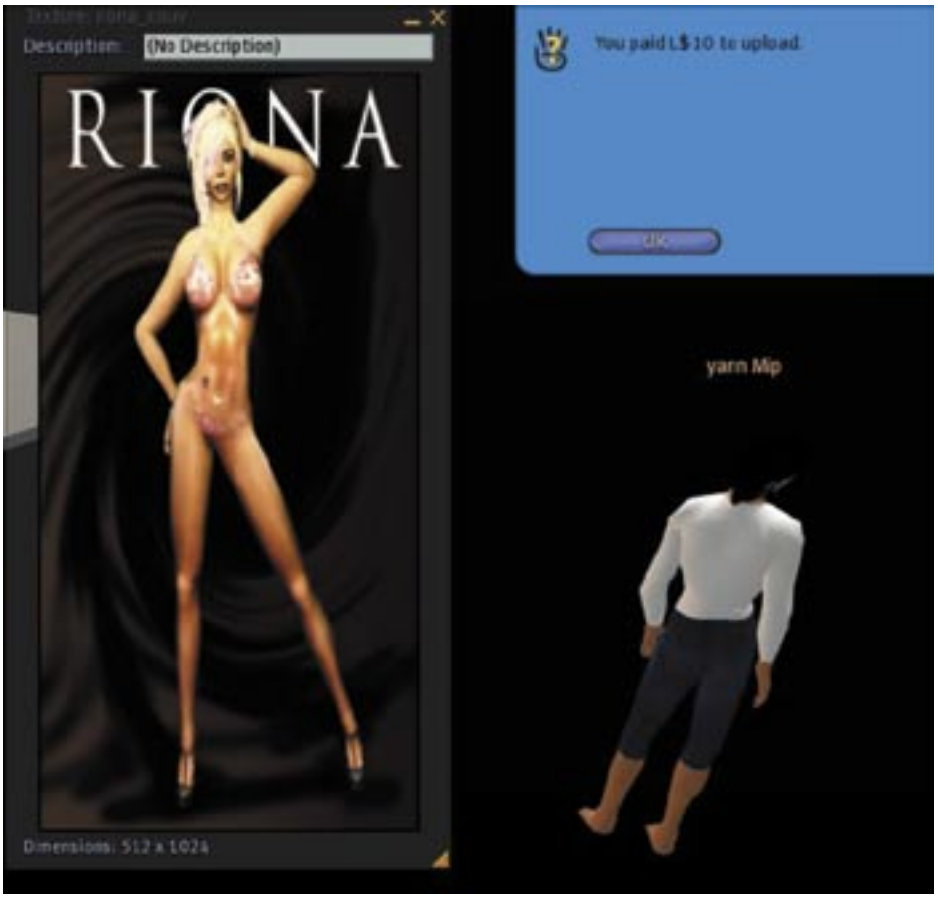
Here are the different possible formats by Second Life: JPG, BMP and TGA.
Linden suggests you to use the TGA format. First of all because it is the only one able to bear transparency and also because it is the best adapted to 3D. It can work with 1 to 32-bit colours depth. It is less voluminous than BMP and is less dangerous than JPEG.

When creating a TGA file, you have to make a choice: 8, 24 or 32 bits?
In act it deals with the picture colour depth. A 2-bit picture means that each pixel of the picture will be coded by 2 bits (1 or 0), and so it will get the value 00 or 11 or 01 or 10, that is to say 4 different possible values: 2_2.
In a 8-bit picture, $2_8 = 256$ values can be given to every pixel, that is to say 256 different colours.
As for a 24-bit picture, each pixel can get $2_{24} = 16.7$ millions of different colours.
32 bits is usually the depth that enables to manage transparency.
So, if you don't import a transparent picture (texture, clothes, tattoo, etc... there is just no reason to import in 32 bits, but only in 24 bits.
If you want to create a SL picture gallery, be careful with all that. You certainly noticed the lagg is often important in galleries or in photographers'.
Here is the reason why:
A 2048 x 2048 32 bits picture will cover 2048 x 2048 x 32 = 134217728 bits / 8 = 16,7
Mo. This is quite heavy for a single picture! Whereas in 1024 x 1024 and in 24 bits, it is only 3 Mo, for the same view quality. And you can bet many galleries are made of very heavy pictures...

Once your **24 bits TGA** is ready, you just have to import it in SL.
File >> Upload picture (10L$)
Don't forget that a picture preview is available before the importation and the 10L$ debit. Cliquez sur Upload (10 L$) pour commencer le chargement.
Once the upload's finished, your picture will be opened with strange dimensions. Don't worry, you'll be able to come back to the right ones once your picture is fixed on a prim. Now let's dimension the prim properly.
For an application of the picture on a prim face, you just need to slide on it (from the inventory).
You'll be able to find your picture in Texture file.

Picture preview window that you are going to upload. Confirm clicking on **Upload(10L$)**

Strange dimensions of the uploaded file. In fact they are "rounding" dimensions& 1024, 512,256, 128....



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