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Canon 2261A003

Canon Speedlite 550EX Instruction Manual

Model: 2261A003

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Canon Speedlite 550EX is a high-performance shoe-mount flash unit designed to integrate seamlessly with Canon EOS SLR cameras, including models like the G6, G5, G3, G2, G1, Pro1, Pro90, and all EOS SLR cameras. It serves as a primary component of a sophisticated flash system, offering advanced features for professional and enthusiast photographers.

Key features of the Speedlite 550EX include:

- High-output shoe-mount flash for EOS system.
- Automatic zoom coverage from 24mm to 105mm, extendable to 17mm with the built-in wide-angle panel.
- Full compatibility with all EOS models, including refined E-TTL autoflash for improved performance.
- Maximum Guide Number of 180 (ISO 100, ft.).
- AF-assist beam that links to the EOS-3's 45-point area AF system.
- Advanced flash functions such as FP Flash (high-speed sync), FE lock (flash exposure lock), and FEB (Flash Exposure Bracketing).
- Built-in wireless transmitter for controlling other Speedlite 550EX units as slave units.
- Operates on 4 AA-size batteries and supports optional external power supplies like Compact Battery Pack E and Transistor Pack E.





Figure 1: Front view of the Canon Speedlite 550EX, showcasing its main flash head and Canon branding.

2. SETUP

2.1 Battery Installation

The Speedlite 550EX requires four (4) AA-size batteries for operation. Use alkaline or Ni-MH rechargeable batteries for optimal performance.

1. Locate the battery compartment cover on the side of the flash unit.
2. Slide the cover open in the direction indicated by the arrow.
3. Insert four AA batteries, ensuring correct polarity (+/-) as indicated inside the compartment.
4. Close the battery compartment cover securely until it clicks into place.



Figure 2: Side view of the Speedlite 550EX with the battery compartment open, revealing the battery slots.

2.2 Mounting to Camera

To attach the Speedlite 550EX to your camera:

1. Ensure both the camera and flash are powered off.
2. Slide the flash's mounting foot fully into the camera's hot shoe.
3. Tighten the locking wheel on the flash unit to secure it firmly to the hot shoe. Do not overtighten.
4. Power on the camera, then power on the Speedlite 550EX. The flash is now ready for use.

3. OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

3.1 E-TTL Autoflash

The Speedlite 550EX utilizes Canon's E-TTL (Evaluative Through-The-Lens) autoflash system, which measures flash exposure through the camera's lens for precise and consistent lighting. This system automatically adjusts flash output based on subject distance and ambient light conditions.

3.2 Flash Head Position and Zoom

The flash head can be tilted and swiveled to bounce light off ceilings or walls, creating softer, more natural illumination. The flash automatically adjusts its zoom position to match the focal length of your lens, covering a range from 24mm to 105mm. For wider angles, pull out the built-in wide-angle panel to extend coverage to 17mm.



Figure 3: Speedlite 550EX with its flash head tilted, demonstrating its bounce capabilities.



Figure 4: Another perspective of the Speedlite 550EX, highlighting the adjustable flash head.

3.3 Wireless Flash Function

The Speedlite 550EX features a built-in wireless transmitter, allowing it to function as a master unit to control other Speedlite 550EX units set up as slave units. This enables off-camera flash photography without the need for additional triggers.

- Set the master unit to 'Master' mode and slave units to 'Slave' mode.

- Ensure clear line of sight between the master and slave units for reliable communication.
- Adjust flash ratios and compensation from the master unit.

3.4 Advanced Flash Modes

- **FP Flash (High-Speed Sync):** Allows flash synchronization at all shutter speeds, useful for shooting with wide apertures in bright conditions.
- **FE Lock (Flash Exposure Lock):** Locks the flash exposure for a specific part of the scene, similar to AE lock for ambient light.
- **FEB (Flash Exposure Bracketing):** Automatically takes three shots at different flash exposure levels (standard, underexposed, overexposed) to ensure optimal lighting.

4. MAINTENANCE

Proper maintenance ensures the longevity and optimal performance of your Speedlite 550EX.

- **Cleaning:** Use a soft, dry cloth to wipe the flash unit. For stubborn dirt, a slightly damp cloth can be used, followed by a dry one. Avoid using strong solvents or abrasive cleaners.
- **Battery Care:** Remove batteries if the flash will not be used for an extended period to prevent leakage and damage. Store batteries in a cool, dry place.
- **Storage:** Store the flash in a dry, dust-free environment, away from extreme temperatures and direct sunlight.
- **Handling:** Avoid dropping the flash or subjecting it to strong impacts. Do not force the flash head or mounting foot.

5. TROUBLESHOOTING

If you encounter issues with your Speedlite 550EX, refer to the following common problems and solutions:

Problem	Possible Cause / Solution
Flash does not fire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure batteries are correctly installed and charged. Check if the flash is securely mounted to the camera's hot shoe. Verify the flash is powered on. Allow sufficient recycling time after a full-power flash.
Flash exposure is incorrect (too dark/bright).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check camera's exposure settings (ISO, aperture, shutter speed). Ensure E-TTL mode is active. Adjust Flash Exposure Compensation (FEC) on the flash or camera. If using bounce flash, ensure sufficient light is reaching the subject.
Wireless flash not working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm master and slave units are set to the correct modes. Ensure clear line of sight between master and slave units. Check that all units are on the same channel/group if applicable.
Flash works only manually on digital SLRs.	<p>The Speedlite 550EX was primarily designed for EOS 35mm film cameras. While compatible with digital SLRs, some advanced E-TTL features may function in manual mode only, or with limited automation depending on the specific digital camera model. Refer to your camera's manual for full compatibility details.</p>

6. SPECIFICATIONS

Model Number	2261A003
Guide Number	180 ft. (ISO 100)
Flash Coverage	Auto zoom 24-105mm, 17mm with wide panel
Power Source	4 AA-size batteries (alkaline, Ni-MH)
Dimensions (L x W x H)	7.8 x 6.1 x 4.9 inches
Item Weight	1.65 pounds
Compatible Mountings	Canon EOS hot shoe
First Available	May 31, 2000

7. WARRANTY AND SUPPORT

For warranty information, technical support, or service inquiries regarding your Canon Speedlite 550EX, please refer to the official Canon website or contact Canon customer service directly. Keep your purchase receipt as proof of purchase for warranty claims.

You can find more information and support resources by visiting the official Canon website or contacting their customer support channels.