

A quick note about

Quick Release Plates



Soon after becoming interested in photography, a person understands there are situations in which their camera needs a more stable support than their hands. They buy a tripod which either has a built-in screw that goes up into the

bottom of their camera or a quick-release plate which houses that screw.

That quick-release (QR) plate is designed to stay attached to the base of the camera, enabling a quick attachment and removal of the camera from the tripod. An important part of this convenience is a reduction in the chance that the screw will strip out that thread in the bottom of the camera, which would make it impossible to mount the camera on any support until it's sent to a camera repair shop.

Eventually, the photographer acquires an additional camera body or a telephoto lens with a tripod foot or a flash bracket which has a tripod mount. These accessories need their own, identical, QR plates installed under them full time, otherwise

there's a lot of unscrewing/screwing of that one plate and an increased risk of stripping out the threads under the camera.

People who continue enjoying photography eventually encounter situations in which they want a different camera support: A monopod, a lighter, more compact tripod, a flexible arm with a clamp, a much taller tripod. Those who begin to make videos want to mount their cameras on sliders, shoulder rigs, stabilizers, etc. Unless each of these additional camera supports has an adaptor to receive the same QR plate, it's no longer a quick-release system, it becomes a juggle of assorted small parts, few of which are compatible with each other, and an organizational issue of where to store which QR plates ready to use when needed.

You will read about a fantastic tripod head which has features you find impressive and hear about another camera support which can almost magically appear whenever needed. If you don't find an adaptor to enable these supports to all receive the same baseplate, you're inviting needless headaches into your photography.

You can afford to buy any camera support you desire (if you save long enough, or sacrifice other purchases), but can you afford enough of their QR plates and adapters to make your whole system work seamlessly? What about the system you might have in five years?

Years ago, when I was only shooting stills, I foresaw this need

for matching QR plates for each support. I chose a major, long-respected name in camera supports which was likely to be around for years to come (and to be mimicked by others). The system centers on the Manfrotto 200PL-14 quick-release plates and their adaptors. Even when I cobble together a homemade mount of some sort, or discover a strange brand of tripod head, the Manfrotto adapters can securely receive that 1/4-20 screw and hold the inexpensive plates under every piece of my gear. The adapters are installed full time on those camera supports and everything I own that can be tripod-mounted has that QR plate under it.

No need to have an Allen wrench or a coin on hand. Everything snaps onto anyplace I want. Snap-snap! Having less to think about allows me to concentrate on creativity and interacting with clients.

Incidentally, I use a BlackRapid camera sling or vest occasionally, and their snaps attach securely to the built-in thumb lever of the Manfrotto QR plates.

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