

## Sidekick SK-100

### Ball Head Selection

The Sidekick was initially designed to give photographers who already own a suitable ball head (with a robust weight capacity and an Arca-Swiss style clamp) the ability to add gimbal style action to their photographic arsenal. The Sidekick is not a tripod head in and of itself. It attaches to a ball head to form a gimbal head. **NOTE:** Bogen, Manfrotto and Gitzo quick-release clamps and plates are not compatible with our plates, flash brackets, or Sidekick. The Sidekick was designed to work well with lenses up to the size and weight of a 300mm f/2.8, however it can handle up to a 500 f/4 if the ball head used is suitable. The Sidekick can also handle a 400 f/2.8, a 600 f/4 and an 800 f/5.6 lens when partnered with the most robust ball heads (Arca-Swiss B1 & Z1(sp only), Foba Superball, Linhof Profi III, Graf Studioball, Markins M20 or Q 20).

#### In order to use the Sidekick you *must first satisfy* the following prerequisites:

- 1) You *must have* a robust ball head with a suitable Arca-Swiss style quick-release screw-knob clamp. **NOTE:** Lever style quick-release clamps are **not recommended** for use with our Sidekick due to safety issues. Some examples of ball heads with compatible style quick-release clamps are: Arca-Swiss (not the “double-decker”/dual groove), Kirk Enterprises, Markins, Really Right Stuff, Foba and older Studioballs.
- 2) Your ball head *must have* a panning base which allows you to loosen a knob and spin the head 360 degrees with the ball locked (Most larger pro ball heads have this).
- 3) Your lens must have a rotation collar and foot with tripod mounting holes.

A stock or factory lens foot on its own does not have a suitable configuration for mounting the lens securely to the Sidekick’s quick-release clamp. Therefore **to mount your lens to the Sidekick, the lens must have either:**

- an Arca-Swiss style quick-release plate attached to its mounting foot (length must be equivalent to our recommended lens plate) or
- a quick-release replacement foot installed on the rotation collar (length and profile must be equivalent to our recommended replacement foot QR plate).

The ball head you plan to use with the Sidekick should be rated by the manufacturer to hold the weight of the heaviest lens you own. However a *suitably robust* ball head means that the ball head should be able to hold the weight of *all* the gear you plan to mount on it *when it is side-loaded*. Add up the weight of the heaviest of the following:

- Camera (with batteries & strap), and lens with quick-release plate attached
- teleconverters, extension tubes, lens hood and filter
- flash unit, cords and flash bracket

Add all this to the weight of the Sidekick and this is the total weight you will be side-mounting on your ball head.

One critical issue to keep in mind when comparing ball head maximum weight capacity ratings is that manufacturers’ ball head ratings do not take into consideration the off-set side-load torque force applied by the Sidekick with all camera gear attached. There is no established industry standard for establishing the weight capacity of a ball head. The max load on a ball head is almost always applied from the top of the ball, or on the side at a small distance away from the ball, and thus might not cause creep when the ball is locked down. The manufacturer’s ball head load rating may not take into consideration when the load not a static, is further off-set from the ball, and/or when torque forces are applied to the ball head clamp, stem and ball. Comparing ball head load ratings can be therefore somewhat misleading.

Another issue to consider is that the side-load mounting orientation of the Sidekick puts a slightly uneven pressure upon the pan base of the ball head, which can be magnified when using larger lenses or if using a ball head with an inferior build panning mechanism. Therefore we recommend ball heads that are well built and therefore more resistant to wear than in a normal ball head usage scenario, especially if the Sidekick is to be used frequently as the primary lens support.

These issues are why we highly recommend that you choose a ball head that is rated to hold a more substantial capacity than the total weight of the load you will be mounting to the ball head when using our Sidekick. Also, if you are considering acquiring a larger heavier lens in the future, a well-built ball head, even though more expensive, might be a very beneficial investment. **For mounting lenses larger than a 300 2.8, we currently recommend:** Markins Q20, Really Right Stuff BH-55 PRO, Kirk Enterprises BH-1, Arca-Swiss Z1 (installation of our C-12 QR clamp recommended); Giottos MH-3000 (installation of our C-12 QR clamp recommended).

Visit our website for ball head comparisons and recommendations – <http://www.tripodhead.com/faqs-ballhead-recommendation.cfm>