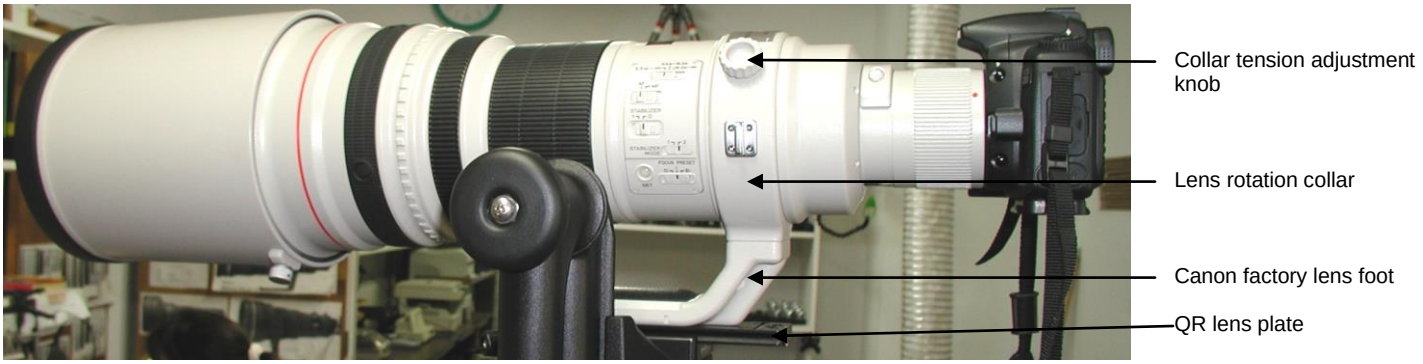
Introduction to Photo Terminology
The Quick-release (QR) System

Arca-Swiss style?…Quick-release shoe?…rotation collar?…Say again? Photo lingo can be a bit intimidating and confusing at first. We have put together some information to assist you while wading through these murky waters. These descriptions are meant to give you a general understanding and are not specific to any one type of lens or camera manufacturer.

The Lens

A "collar" refers to a rotation collar, or tripod collar (see Fig.1). It is a separate ring on the lens barrel, normally found near the end of the lens that connects to the camera body. It rotates on the lens barrel independently of the focusing ring and/or the zoom ring. Most small wide-angle, macro, and zoom lenses don't have one. Most large prime and zoom telephoto lenses have them, and this ring usually connects to an L-shaped tripod mount, called a "foot". The lens collar and foot are attached and rotate together.

FIGURE 1



The collar has a tension adjustment knob and is usually tightened to stay in one position, but it can be loosened to change the orientation of the camera body from landscape to portrait or retightened in any position you choose. Some photographers leave the collar loosened to have added flexibility in composing an image.

The standard lens foot has one or more threaded mounting holes that allow you to screw the lens onto the standard mounting stud of a tripod, monopod or ground pod. Smaller tripods generally have ¼-20" mounting studs and larger tripods have 3/8" mounting studs. Some tripods offer a reversible stud that allows the user to switch between the two standard sizes depending on the user's needs.

Usually one or two threaded mounting holes are found in the foot, depending on the size of the lens. The tripod mounting foot on smaller lenses generally has a standard ¼"-20 screw hole size; however on larger lenses, one or more holes may be 3/8" size. Without a quick-release (QR) system, you would spend a substantial amount of time mounting and removing your lens by screwing the lens foot directly onto the mounting stud of the tripod or tripod head. This can be an extreme disadvantage in the field, especially if you use a variety of different lenses and need to interchange them quickly depending on the situation. Thus "quick-release" systems were born.

QR Systems

A QR system consists of a clamp (sometimes called a "shoe" – makes sense, it holds the "foot"), and a plate with screws that attaches to the lens foot or camera body. The clamp and plate work in conjunction to keep the lens secure on the tripod head, and some systems allow you to adjust the position of the lens relative to the tripod by moving the position of the plate within the clamp jaws. The clamp usually has either a screw knob or a lever release mechanism to open the jaws and release the plate, which allows you to quickly remove the lens from (and mount the lens to) the tripod or other lens support.

It's important to note that the factory or "stock" lens foot *does not* have the correct shape to mount it directly into a QR clamp on its own. Therefore, it is necessary to attach a clamp-compatible plate to the bottom of the lens foot in order to securely connect the lens to a clamp on a ball head, the Wimberley Head and Sidekick, or another tripod head with a QR clamp.

In today's photo marketplace, there are two main styles of QR systems (see Fig. 2), fixed cavity and *Arca-Swiss style*, and unfortunately for the consumer they are not compatible with one another. Wimberley uses Arca-Swiss style clamps and lens plates in our QR system. While Arca-Swiss has set the standard for this clamp and plate style, it does not mean that all Arca-Swiss style plates and clamps are compatible. Arca-Swiss style systems are more universal than fixed-cavity systems and are size specific in only one direction (width).

Most manufacturers Arca-Swiss style plates can be used with most other Arca-Swiss style clamps, but not all. There is no set standard in the industry for quick-release systems. Companies tend to make products that work well together, but are less inclined to make products that are cross-compatible with other manufacturers because they loose money when a customer chooses a competitor's product over their own. This is not true at Wimberley. We plan our plate and clamp specifications with cross-compatibility in mind; however, because there is no set standard for plate & clamp specifications, the fit is not guaranteed in every instance.

Manfrotto offers a Rapid Connect (RC) system which has a shape and size of QR plate specific in length and width to their corresponding RC clamp. The dimensions and shape of these RC components prevent them from being compatible with Arca-Swiss style components because their shape and size only fits in their specific width clamp. Gitzo plates and clamps are similar to the Manfrotto RC system; you can use only the Gitzo plate with the matching Gitzo QR clamp with the same exact dimensions.

GITZO QR plate and clamp
Not Arca-Swiss compatible

Manfrotto RC2 QR
Not Arca-Swiss compatible

Wimberley
C-12 clamp & P-10 lens plate

Arca-Swiss "double-decker" clamp

Your lens will need a QR plate to mount it to the Wimberley Head or Sidekick. Our lens recommendations can be found on our website:
http://www.tripodhead.com/products/lens-plates-main.cfm

Example:
According to our chart, a Sigma 300-800mm lens takes a P-50 lens plate plus a BS-100 brass reducer bushing.

This ** means that one of the mounting holes on the foot of the 300-800mm lens is a 3/8" size, and since all our lens plate mounting screws are ¼", a 3/8" to ¼" reducer bushing (the BS-100) needs to be installed into the larger mounting hole in the lens foot so that it is reduced to ¼" and can accept the ¼" screw in our lens plate.

If the lens has more than one mounting hole, we highly recommend using both holes to mount the plate as this gives a more sturdy mount and prevents the plate form twisting on the lens foot.

Replacement Foot

A replacement foot replaces the factory foot on the lens to reduce the height of the lens. When using specific lenses, those that have a high profile, a replacement foot is necessary to achieve optimal balance when using our Wimberley gimbal tripod heads. When a replacement foot is required, you would remove the existing foot from your lens collar and attach the replacement foot in the same place. This is most critical when using the Sidekick.

The plates listed are the recommended plates for use on the Wimberley Head. If the recommendation chart lists a lens plate and then a symbol, refer to the symbol key to find out if the lens you are using needs replacement foot or Sidekick shifter in place of, or in addition to, the recommended plate shown for your lens. Refer to the Sidekick plate chart if using the Sidekick.

http://www.tripodhead.com/products/sidekick-compatibility.cfm

We hope this helps clear things up a bit. Please let us know if you have questions and we'll be happy to assist you.

info@tripodhead.com

Phone: 434-529-8385
Toll-free in USA & Canada 888-665-2746