

10 Steps for Better Pictures

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Keep the Camera Steady

Use a tripod when possible and you will notice a difference in the sharpness of your photos. If you are in a place where tripods are not allowed or you don't have one with you, steady the camera on something like a fence, car table or building. You could also lean against a tree for support while holding the camera. If nothing else, practice the camera holding techniques listed below:

- Use both hands
- Rest elbows on chest
- Relax
- Take a deep breath and let it out slowly while taking the picture
- Brace yourself on a stationary object if possible

Get Close

Move in close to the subject to remove any background clutter. Using a telephoto lens will assist you in getting closer and will help to blur the background.

Horizontal and Vertical Pictures

Shoot in the vertical orientation when taking pictures of tall subjects such as buildings and trees to emphasize height. Horizontal shots emphasize width and are good for landscapes such as a lake with mountains in the background.

Horizon Placement

Pay attention to where you place the horizon in your photographs. If you want to emphasize the sky, then place the horizon low when taking the picture. If you want to emphasize the foreground, then place the horizon high when composing your photograph.

Rule of Thirds

Divide the frame in your viewfinder into thirds both horizontally and vertically (like a tick-tack-toe game board). Instead of centering the main subject, place the main subject on one of the points where the horizontal and vertical lines intersect. This will make your picture more interesting.

Time of Day

The time of day can affect the quality of the light. The best time for outdoor natural light photography is in the morning or evening when the rays of the sun are at a lower angle. This causes the light to be more diffused and colorful. In the middle of the day and early afternoon, the sun is very harsh causing deep shadows and bright highlights. Cloudy and overcast days are also good days to take pictures outdoors.

Color

Pay attention to color. Color can bring different feelings or moods to your photograph.

Reds = passion, excitement, warmth, power

Blues = peace, calm, cool

White = purity, innocence

Black = ominous, foreboding, unknown

Include People

If you are shooting a photo of a majestic mountain, great waterfall, or deep canyon, place a person in the picture to give it proportion.

Take Lots of Pictures

The professionals do it and so can you. Did you really think that great picture you saw in a magazine was the result of a single shot? Learn good photo techniques, take lots of photos and you will increase your probability of getting that fantastic shot. With digital, you have already paid the price so fill the card and then erase the ones you don't want.

Break the Rules

Don't always follow the rules of photography but instead use them as a guideline. For example, using the "rule of thirds" most of the time makes your photos more interesting although you may have a certain photograph that works better by centering your main subject. As a general rule, zoom in and fill the frame with your subject although there may be a great photo to be taken by stepping back and getting a wider view.

Understanding and using the rules of photography will help you get that great photo but don't be afraid to step outside of the box.