

Photography

...“the art and science of utilizing radiant energies to form latent images on sensitized emulsions”.



An Illustrated lectures series of lessons and articles of interest for the modern photographer.

Presented by

D'ANGELO
PHOTOGRAPHY

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Illustrated Lecture Series; *Understanding Photography*

Photo Basics: Top Photo Tips

Do you wish you were a better photographer? Sometimes all it takes is a little know-how and experience. Keep reading for some important picture-taking tips. Then grab your camera and start shooting your way to great pictures.

1. Look your subject in the eye
2. Use a plain background
3. Use flash outdoors
4. Move in close
5. Move it from the middle
6. Lock the focus
7. Know your flash's range
8. Watch the light
9. Take some vertical pictures
10. Be a picture director

1. *Look your subject in the eye*

Direct eye contact can be as engaging in a picture as it is in real life. When taking a picture of someone, hold the camera at the person's eye level to unleash the power of those magnetic gazes and mesmerizing smiles. For children and pets, that means stooping to their level. And your subject need not always stare at the camera. All by itself that eye level angle will create a personal and inviting feeling that pulls you into the picture



2. *Use a plain background*

A plain background shows off the subject you are photographing. When you look through the camera viewfinder, force yourself to study the area surrounding your subject. Make sure no poles grow from the head of your favorite niece and that no cars seem to dangle from her ears.



3. *Use flash outdoors*

Bright sun can create unattractive deep facial shadows. Eliminate the shadows by using your flash to lighten the face. When taking people pictures on sunny days, turn your flash on. You may have a choice of fill-flash mode or full-flash mode. If the person is within five feet, use the fill-flash mode; beyond five feet, the full-power mode may be required. With a digital camera, use the picture display panel to review the results. On cloudy days, use the camera's fill-flash mode if it has one. The flash will brighten up people's faces and make them stand out. Also take a picture without the flash, because the soft light of overcast days sometimes gives quite pleasing results by itself.



4. *Move in close*

If your subject is smaller than a car, take a step or two closer before taking the picture and zoom in on your subject. Your goal is to fill the picture area with the subject you are photographing. Up close you can reveal telling details, like a sprinkle of freckles or an arched eyebrow.

But don't get too close or your pictures will be blurry. The closest focusing distance for most cameras is about three feet, or about one step away from your camera.



5. *Move it from the middle*

Center-stage is a great place for a performer to be. However, the middle of your picture is not the best place for your subject. Bring your picture to life by simply moving your subject away from the middle of your picture. Start by playing tick-tack-toe with subject position. Imagine a tick-tack-toe grid in your viewfinder. Now place your important subject at one of the intersections of lines.

You'll need to lock the focus if you have an auto-focus camera because most of them focus on whatever is in the center of the viewfinder.



6. *Lock the focus*

If your subject is not in the center of the picture, you need to lock the focus to create a sharp picture. Most auto-focus cameras focus on whatever is in the center of the picture. But to improve pictures, you will often want to move the subject away from the center of the picture. If you don't want a blurred picture, you'll need to first lock the focus with the subject in the middle and then recompose the picture so the subject is away from the middle. Usually you can lock the focus in three steps. First, center the subject and press and hold the shutter button half-way down. Second, reposition your camera (while still holding the shutter button) so the subject is away from the center. And third, finish by pressing the shutter button all the way down to take the picture.



7. *Know your flash's range*

The number one flash mistake is taking pictures beyond the flash's range. Why is this a mistake? Because pictures taken beyond the maximum flash range will be too dark. For many cameras, the maximum flash range is less than fifteen feet—about five steps away.

What is your camera's flash range? Look it up in your camera manual. Can't find it? Then don't take a chance. Position yourself so subjects are no farther than ten feet away. Film users can extend the flash range by using Kodak Max versatility or versatility plus film.

8. *Watch the light*

Next to the subject, the most important part of every picture is the light. It affects the appearance of everything you photograph. On a great-grandmother, bright sunlight from the side can enhance wrinkles. But the soft light of a cloudy day can subdue those same wrinkles.

Don't like the light on your subject? Then move yourself or your subject. For landscapes, try to take pictures early or late in the day when the light is orangish and rakes across the land.



9. *Take some vertical pictures*

Is your camera vertically challenged? It is if you never turn it sideways to take a vertical picture. All sorts of things look better in a vertical picture. From a lighthouse near a cliff to the Eiffel Tower to your four-year-old niece jumping in a puddle. So next time out, make a conscious effort to turn your camera sideways and take some vertical pictures.

10. *Be a picture director*

Take control of your picture-taking and watch your pictures dramatically improve. Become a picture director, not just a passive picture-taker. A picture director takes charge. A picture director picks the location: "Everybody go outside to the backyard." A picture director adds props: "Girls, put on your pink sunglasses." A picture director arranges people: "Now move in close, and lean toward the camera."

Most pictures won't be that involved, but you get the idea: Take charge of your pictures and win your own best picture awards.

BUT...

Do not pose the kids... candid shots will always seem more natural than the shots you try to get them to smile in. Give them something to do within a contained area and shoot natural shots of them.



A Few More Good Tips

1. Use the camera manual. It will become your new best friend. I often sit on the deck with the camera, manual and a coke and play with the settings, set up a little still life with a plant and practice. Put the manual in your camera bag... take it everywhere! I have post-notes and index cards in the manual to help me “remember” .
2. Buy a UV filter for each lens you own. It’s easier to replace a scratched lens filter than it is to replace your actual lens.
3. Buy a lens hood for each lens you own and always use it. They will keep stray light off of the front of the lens and reduce lens flare.
4. Learn to use all your SLR camera settings. Even those you don’t think you’d ever use. Practise changing settings like ISO, aperture and shutter speed, and White Balance so you know them like the back of your hand. A moving animal won’t sit and pose until you work out your settings.
5. Buy a sturdy tripod and a remote release. They both come in handy for taking photographs that require long shutter speeds. For example night photography or slow motion water or Macro shots.
6. You can never have enough SLR / DSLR photography magazines and books to learn from. The best ones will explain what camera settings were used, along with each photograph displayed.
7. Don’t touch or blow on the mirror inside your camera body when you have the lens off. If you damage the sensor, you may as well buy another camera body, because that’s how much it will cost to fix. If you notice spots appearing in your photos, it may be dust on the CCD sensor. Do not attempt to clean this. Most larger camera stores offer this service at a reasonable cost.
8. If at first you find your getting a lot of blurred photo’s, change to a fast shutter speed. The faster the photograph is taken, the less chance there is of it being effected by camera shake. Holding the camera closer to your body or resting it on a nearby object is also a good tip. If you’re taking nature shots, steady yourself by leaning against a tree.

9. When you buy a digital camera bag, think about the future. I have a closet full of bags. A waist pack type for short day trips, a high tech backpack type for trekking, and a few over the shoulder type for everyday use. consider the protection they will afford your lenses as well as how you will carry them.

10. The best way to learn what your SLR camera can do, is through experimentation. If your taking a photograph of running water, try both fast and slow shutter speeds to see for yourself what the difference is. Or if your photographing a beautiful landscape, try different aperture settings. You'll be surprised at how many photo's you can get from shooting the same scenery with different settings. do this when you have time and usually are alone. Do not attempt to experiment or use the manual to figure out settings at Christmas dinner or during your childs' birthday party!

11. Always press the shutter button half way down to prefocus before going all the way and taking the photograph. This will usually result in clearer photo's every time. It is also especially useful when you can anticipate where a subject is going to be positioned before it gets there. You can prefocus on that spot by pressing and holding the shutter button half way, then as it comes into view, press the rest of the way down.

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