

PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS FOR BEGINNING PHOTOGRAPHERS, AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS & EXPERIENCED AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Photography is fun, exciting and can be very confusing. The world of photography is very large and can be overwhelming when you first discover the passion that you have for taking pictures. This book will help to give you some help with some significant basic photography tips.

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The Best Things About Being A Photographer

Being a photographer, as an amateur or for a living, can be highly enjoyable. It is one of those pursuits where you are able to create something and have a record of it for as long as you want to. Indeed, if you can make some money out of it, photography can be one of the most enjoyable things in the world. There are many beneficial aspects to it as a career and as a hobby.

For one thing, there is the opportunity to make really good money if you are a talented enough photographer. For organizations and groups who hire a photographer – modeling agencies, advertising companies and even families with a special occasion on the horizon, a good photographer is worth paying top dollar.

If you do make a living from photography, the chances are that you will also get to travel and see some of the most beautiful sights in the world. Admittedly, you'll see a lot of them through a viewfinder and this leaves less time to really appreciate them, but on your down time you can see the best of the world.

And there is also the advantage for an amateur that if you are taking photographs, you do not have to spend as much time on the other side of the camera with other people taking photographs of you. If you are shy, this is certainly good news, and it is also reassuring if you just aren't photogenic. It beats having to smile and pose, too.

Anyone Can Be A Photographer – Myth or Fact?

The act of taking a photograph looks incredibly simple. It's just point, click, done – who could get that wrong? And yet, when we look at holiday photographs or pics taken on a night out, we often see exactly how the seemingly simple photographic process can be got badly wrong. Someone in the photo is chopped down the middle, someone else was looking at something off-camera ... these things happen.

If you want to make a living as a photographer, then you have to realize that there is a lot that needs to be got right before you can actually take a photograph. The common refrain of professional photographers advising amateurs is “find the light”. Even with a flash bulb on your camera, the fact is that natural light is the most forgiving form, and is to be desired by photographers.

Keeping the camera still is another issue that amateur photographers often get wrong. The simple fact is that a camera shutter is never as fast as the human eye when it comes to capturing a scene, and if your hands shake when you are taking a photo you will end up with a blurry shot that you might be able to pass off as “artistic” if you have gullible friends.

Many people also take photographs for the sake of taking one. The fact of the matter is that if you want to make money as a photographer you will need interesting subjects. A long-time professional may be able to get away with snapping a banal image because they can make it interesting – but when you are starting out, the subject is everything.

Everyone Is A Photographer These Days

Opinions are always going to be divided on the question of whether making something easier makes it better. Once upon a time, a camera was pretty much a luxury item – or at the very least, something that you would need to have a real interest in if you were going to own one. These days, every cell phone sold has a camera incorporated into it, and digital cameras are inexpensive.

Because we are all on the Internet, there has been an explosion of people taking photographs of anything that you can name. With the increasing number of sites that act as a digital photo album, people are looking to document their lives in a way that does for photographs what blogs do for the written word. You don't need to be a professional to have a portfolio these days.

People are always going to be skeptical with regard to whether this is a positive development. The argument that many people bring is that everyone considers themselves a photographer just because they took a black and white photograph of a park bench which was partially in shadow. And while some people's online portfolios tend towards the pretentious, this is a fairly cynical argument.

Photographs are important to people because they capture a moment in time. On social occasions and holidays, someone will always have a camera, because they want a graphical depiction of a memory. And while it may get annoying to see people posting photographs of their whole life, you can always just not look.

The Digital Age And How It Has Changed Things

The process of photography is one that has changed immensely in all of our lifetimes – even those of us who are not yet old enough to read this. But for those of us who have a few decades on the clock, the changes are most noticeable. We all remember a time when taking a photograph meant a wait of at least a day or two before seeing the finished result. These days, it is a matter of seconds.

Digital photography is the cause for much of the change that has taken place. It used to be the case that we would take a photograph and think “I hope I haven't messed that up”, in the full knowledge that you would have to wait until a couple of days after you got back from holiday to see whether or not you had. As almost all digital cameras now come fitted with a preview screen, that's not an issue anymore.

There is some debate over whether this has led to any real improvement in the quality of photographs most people take. You can have five, ten or even twenty goes at truly capturing the majesty of the Eiffel Tower, but if you are unfamiliar with how to position yourself it will not matter whether or not there are people walking through the shot.

Camera phones have taken things on a level. It is now possible to take a photo on your cell phone and post it to a site such as Flickr or to your Twitter account within seconds. This has its good points – you can make your friends jealous and keep them posted – and its bad points too. It only takes one ill-advised drunken photograph to disgust a lot of friends.

What Are You Taking a Picture Of?

No matter what you are taking a picture of, there are tips and hints to guide you into improving it. Most people take photographs of their families, friends, pets,

gardens and family celebrations. We like to record our lives for ourselves and for future generations. The days in which we had just one photo of grandpa sitting on a chair and grandma standing next to him – both wearing the most solemn expression - have gone, thank goodness! Let's get into color, light, and happy smiles. Let's catch granny cuddling the kids and granddad with a blob of birthday cake on his chin! Let's leave a legacy for our great-grandchildren to enjoy. But let it be the best kind of photo that we can manage.

When taking photographs of animals or children, remember that they are a lot lower than where you are holding the camera, so get down to their level, otherwise their photo will look bigheaded. Kneeling to take a photo of a pet will bring its face into focus more sharply. Of course kneeling in front of your pet may also make him take a flying leap into your arms, but that's a risk a photographer has to take.

You've seen those photographs of people sitting on something (the sofa, a rock, the ground) and their legs look huge? They are the ones everybody screams at. So what is the cause of this? It's because when you take the photograph, the legs are in front, closer to the camera. You have unwittingly focused the camera on the legs instead of the faces. You may not have had the camera high enough.

Watch that sun! When taking photographs outdoors, the sun will cast a nasty, dark shadow over a face. Use the flash, or stand the subject in the shade. If your subject is in the sun, it often makes them squint their eyes because the light is too bright. But if they wear a cap or hat, the shadow thrown by it will screen the face. That's why it's necessary to use a flash.

When taking photographs of that gorgeous rose in the garden, come up close to it. Digital cameras are wonderful for taking close-ups. You can be just a few centimeters away. Use the macro feature to achieve a sharp, clear photograph of flowers. For animals that you can't get close enough to, use your zoom feature. Also lock the focus by half depressing the button and re-focusing on the animal. This will save you getting a sharp background and a blurry animal.

Take time to pose your subject. A group standing straight up and looking at the camera is a bit boring. Get some fun into it. Maybe they can all wear pink sunnies and sling their arms around each other. Perhaps they could group around an interesting tree – one or two could be up in the tree. Whatever picture you decide to take, work on it just that bit more to upgrade from ordinary to spectacular.

How to Turn Hobby Photography Into a Career

The happy shutterbug who becomes proficient at the hobby of photography may decide to see if it could become a worthwhile career. What could be better than pursuing one of your best-loved hobbies in this way? You will be having so much fun that it won't seem like work. So what do you need to turn photography into a profitable career?

First you need a good knowledge of how to take photos. If you don't know a lot, then take a course or join a photography club. Or do both, depending on how quickly you want this career to blossom. A good course will show you what range of cameras is available and what their functions are. You will quickly become familiar with photography terms, learn the basics of the darkroom and find out the history of photography. You will be encouraged to experiment with different techniques and learn about the different types of specialized photography.

If time or place of photography courses is a problem for you, join online forums for in-depth discussions of techniques and problems. Also look into doing a distance education course through one of the universities. Entering online or real-time photographic competitions will test out your skills and add a feather to your cap should you achieve a win. Camera clubs and photography expeditions are all good ways to hone your skills.

Once you become reasonably knowledgeable through study and practice, you could start out small by offering to be the official photographer at informal or small functions. The budget of many small groups is limited, so they would be pleased to take advantage of free or cheaper rates and you will gain valuable experience. You may decide to specialize in a particular branch of photography

like sports, children, portraiture or landscapes or wildlife. Offer newspapers or magazines photographs you have taken of your specialty.

With training, a home-based photographer will be able to take on assignments for any number of jobs in the local community. Remember that you need more than proficiency in technique; you need creativity to be a great photographer. Anyone with a creative turn of mind and artistic flair can produce wonderful shots with equipment that is not the most expensive, while another without flair may fail even with the most expensive camera that money can buy. All the same, great equipment can often be purchased used from e-bay or other places.

It pays to be flexible. Learn all you can about both digital and film cameras and photography. Don't refuse a job just because it isn't in your favorite field. On the other hand if you hate kids and people annoy you, it may be best to pursue landscape greatness – or anything else inanimate.

Five Common Photography Mistakes and How to Fix Them

Sometimes we are thrilled to have taken a great photograph, but when we see it, either on the computer or printed out, there could be any number of things wrong with it and we feel disappointed. Most of these problems can be prevented or fixed if we just know what's causing them in the first place. Here are five of the most basic mistakes photographers make.

1. One of the most common mistakes in taking a photograph is that it turns out too dark. What makes this happen? Basically, not enough light is the cause – it's called under-exposure. This happens when a photo has been taken indoors when the artificial light is just too dim and no flash has been used. To prevent this, bring in some extra lamps or position the subject closer to a window. Outside, lack of light could be caused by it being too late in the evening, or the shutter speed was too fast for the light conditions. In this case, manually adjust the shutter speed if possible. In both cases, flash may be used for extra light. Most photo software allows you to adjust the lighting of your photos.

2. Red-eye is a common problem. The flash reflecting on the enlarged iris causes this. When we are in dimmer light than normal, our irises enlarge to let in more light. When the flash goes off, it reflects on the iris and red-eye is the result. Either don't use a flash or take two pictures with flash one after the other quickly. The first flash will cause the iris to contract; the second flash will get you a picture with no red-eye. Be careful you don't get your subject when they are blinking. Most cameras have a red-eye removal feature. Photo software features include red-eye removal with just a few clicks.

3. Blurred photos are another cause of disappointment. Three main reasons that photos come out blurry are (a) camera shakes, (b) subject movement due to shutter lag, and (c) lack of light. To prevent your camera from shaking either use a tripod or steady yourself against something solid to take the picture. It helps to gently squeeze the button rather than depressing it quickly. If subject movement is the problem, focus the camera, then depress the button to half-way down. Wait for that moment of stillness before fully depressing the button. If you want your subject to be moving for the shot, use the action mode on your camera. If lack of light is the problem either slow down the shutter speed or use the automatic night scenery mode – and a tripod with both.

4. Subject is too far away – use the zoom feature or get closer to the subject. After the event, use the crop and enlarge features of your software.

5. Photos look too light with details washed out. This is caused by over-exposure. Usually it is a bright and sunny day that causes deep shadows. The camera tries to 'fix' the shadows at the expense of the light. Take photos in bright shade or use a flash, which will cast a more even light. Use software to darken it afterwards.

What Can YOUR Camera Do?

Many of today's digital cameras are multi-function; they do many things that were once not even dreamed of with traditional cameras. Even the cheapest, most

basic digital camera can take both still pictures and moving ones, so if your kids are having a great game of soccer you should be able to shoot that winning goal for posterity. If you are not experienced with cameras, it's important to find out just what your camera can do.

When you go into a shop to buy a camera, make sure the salesman gives you a good demonstration of all the features in it. They are trained in camera usage – or should be - for this very purpose, and there is nothing like having an expert show you the ropes. Even if you buy from a generic store, the person behind the counter usually knows something about the products.

Many digital cameras can capture a video clip right to the capacity of your memory card, while others only go for thirty seconds. Some capture the sound as well, while others do not, so if you want sound be sure to pay attention to what you are buying. Some allow voice recording and also playback, which is a good feature if you want to record notes to go with your photographs. The camera will need to have a built in microphone to play back recordings.

Some cameras can play MP3 or other audio files; they also have earphones, which are great for music-lovers, but the quality of the photos is often poor. So if you are more shutterbug than music-lover, watch out for this. You will be able to resize, crop or copy images, or edit video clips before you download them to your computer with some cameras.

Digital camera makers have copied cell-phone technology to give us alarm clocks and international time display, a very handy feature if you go overseas for business or holidays. Even if you want to ring an overseas friend, this feature will enable you to find out what time it is over there. Your friend may not appreciate being woken at 2am.

If you are not sure what features your new camera has, you could take it to a specialty shop and ask. The salesman will no doubt hope to sell you a better one – and he may even succeed, but at least you'll know what you've got. Some regions host short courses for digital photography and it could be worthwhile to

attend one of these. Otherwise, you'll be down to reading the book that came with it and experimenting on your own. At least the photos won't cost you an arm and a leg!

How to Compose Beautiful Pictures

Many shutterbugs rush around with their point and click camera and photograph everything in sight – then they seem to be disappointed with the result. How much better would their photographs be if they took a little time to compose? Sure, we can't always pose candid shots, but there are plenty of times that we can. Even taking time to notice what is in the background can be helpful. At the very least, it could save someone being forever remembered with a pole or tree branch growing out of the top of their head.

So the first rule is look, really look to see what is in the background. Make sure it is visually appealing without detracting from the central focus or subject. The foreground is important too. That headless teddy or the bone from Fido's last meal doesn't really need to be there. Nor do we want the foot of the person who happened to be sitting next to our subject, to intrude into a corner.

Background is such an important part of the shot – the background that is meant to be there, that is. The trunk of a tree, a fountain, a lake or mountains; all are part of the background. You can go to a bit more trouble to pose your subject near a really unusual – but still appropriate - background or you can settle for a bit of old wall, it's up to you.

Simple props can give your photograph special appeal. A feathery scarf or a big, floppy flower pinned to hat or shoulder, or just held in the hand can elevate a shot from ordinary and a little boring to just great. Remember too, to fill up the screen with your subject. Most candid shots of people are simply taken from too far away. This means that you can hardly tell who is in the snap, or whether it is meant to be a landscape instead.

Remember to pay attention to lighting. Too dim or too light and you will lose details that should be there. Don't have the sunlight shining into your subject's face and protect your lens from it too. Watch for inappropriate shadows, too, both on the ground and on your subject's face.

Smiling is important. If you become annoyed while posing your subjects, they will look tense rather than happy. Even if they smile, you will be able to see by their eyes that they are not happy. Smile, laugh, tell a joke or play music; anything to set the mood to one of happiness and joy – or at least, relaxation.

How Light Affects Your Picture

Light is one of the main components of taking a good photograph. As soon as that button clicks, light filters into the camera and records the image. In this case, you might think that the more light the better, and so place your subjects in full sun. This does not always work as you can see by the washed-out color and squinting eyes or shadows in the finished product. Many otherwise good photographs have been spoiled by a dark shadow thrown across the face so it cannot be seen clearly at all. You would think a hat will take care of the squinting, but it will also cast a shadow over the subject's face, so it won't be very clear in the photograph. Sometimes a shadow is thrown across the lower part of the face by the nose, totally spoiling the shot. So how do we utilize available light for the best effects?

First, a dull day will give excellent quality photos. There are no shadows cast in unexpected places and no squinting needed. But all days are not dull, so what can we do to eliminate those shadows? One way is to pose your subject on the shady side of a building or tree. Make sure their face is in total shade, but it is best if the shade is not too dark. Bright or light shade is best.

Another trick is to use a flash. This will eliminate or reduce the shadows that fall across the face. You may need to manually adjust your camera to achieve this. Those cameras on automatic flash will not be likely to flash if the sun is beaming

down. Keeping your back to the sun will take the glare out of an exposure, but there is a problem. If your back is to the sun, your subject will then have to face it – and squint. That's why it's important to keep a shady spot reserved for the face. But the back to sun rule is good to remember when you are taking scenery.

Of course if you are shooting indoors, you'll need the flash for sure. Usually the automatic feature will see that it comes on when needed, but sometimes, extra lighting will enhance your photographs. Good artificial light is usually enough, but if you are taking special photos, another strong source of light might be useful to give a highlight effect. One thing to be aware of is sunlight coming through windows or doors onto the subject. Get rid of it by closing the blind or door. Otherwise your flash will come on and the result will be an over-exposure, leaving the subject looking faded or washed out.

Tips for Taking Indoor Photos

Once you become a shutterbug, you'll find opportunities to take as many indoor photographs as outdoor ones. The basic difference of indoor and outdoor photos is the lighting. Outdoors lighting is generally good, so long as you watch for shadow in inappropriate places. Indoors, you'll probably need the artificial lighting provided by the flash. But there are still some things that could go wrong.

One thing that can spoil your picture is reflected light. This is light that reflects off a shiny surface and causes bright, white patches in the wrong place. Let's face it; anywhere is the wrong place. If you're lucky it won't be right in Aunty Ella's face. So beware of posing your subject close to a window. Even the shiny surface of a wall or refrigerator can cause reflected light to show up.

Red eyes are another horrible addition to your photo. These days, most cameras have a red-eye reduction feature. If yours doesn't, console yourself with the thought that red eyes means your eyesight is good. One neat little trick to reduce red-eye is to take two photographs quickly, one after the other. Red-eye is caused by the flash reflecting on the iris of the eye – which is wider inside due to the dimmer light. Once your flash has gone off, the bright light will cause the iris

to close so the second photograph should have a greatly reduced red-eye, or none at all. Just watch that the subject is not still blinking from the first flash when you take the second photo. If you increase the light in the room it will have the same effect of helping the iris to close. Another tip is to have the subject avert their eyes from the camera.

When you take an indoor photo with just the flash it tends to bleach out the front people while dimming out those in the back. To avoid this problem, try opening your aperture to as big as it will go. This will let lots of light in. The best shutter speed is about 1/60. If your camera does not allow manual adjustment, make sure there is plenty of light from other sources. If you have lamps, try and have them overhead if possible to mimic the position of the sun. Your flash should prevent any unwanted shadows from forming.

Indoors, people are more likely to sit on the sofa to have their photo taken. This can be a problem if the sofa is under a window, or the wall behind it is shiny. But another problem is that their legs are closer to the camera than their faces. It might be advisable to take the photo from the waist up. That way no one will be able to complain that you gave them fat legs or knobby knees.

Tips for Taking Outside Photos

There are three important factors in taking outside photos: location, lighting and composition. Most photos are of people. Even when you are on vacation and want to take a photo of where you've been, you usually have a person in it too. That way it proves you've been there! However, you must decide which one is the most important to get a good photo. If the scene is more important than the person, make sure there is enough light and that you are not too far away. Sometimes we think that castle would be a great photo, but find it's not much more than a blur in the background, or the person has taken up so much of the photo the castle is obliterated.

If the person is to be the most important – say, it's an outdoor wedding photo, then don't have too much in the background. A single tree would enhance the

picture, rather than distract the eye into looking at something else. A large, gnarled tree-trunk often forms a wonderful background for an outside snapshot of a person or group. The thing is not to make the background too busy.

If you are taking a photo of a scene, it can add appeal to have one side at the top framed in some close vegetation like branches. Or there may be a tree or rock that could feature to one side. Look through some geographical magazines for shots like these. Some of them are beauties, and you can do that too. If you photograph a building, try moving it from the center of focus to the side for greater appeal.

Lighting is another point of outdoor pictures. Mostly the light is great outdoors, but just watch the play of light and shade, particularly on your subject's face. If you have your back to the sun and it's late, watch that your own shadow is not featured in the snapshot. An easy tip to get the shadow off your subject's face is to use a light colored cardboard or T-shirt to reflect light onto it. Someone who is not going to be in the photo should hold this – and you must be careful you don't accidentally get them in.

Composition consists of who and what is in the photo and what they are doing. A straight line of cheesy grins may be okay, but you can make it so much more interesting with a few props. When taking children at play, you still need them to look at the camera; otherwise their faces will be half hidden. To do this, quietly focus the camera on them, then call their name or just say, Hey! Click as soon as their heads jerk up, but before they have a chance to get out of play position.

Tips for Taking Portrait Shots

Sooner or later you'll want to take a portrait shot. Unless you are practicing to become a professional photographer, this will probably be fairly informal, but there are some tips that will make your portrait taking easier and give you better results than you might otherwise get. Many amateur portrait shots end up in the bin due to over-exposure or being out of focus. Don't let this happen to yours.

When you take a portrait shot, you need to focus on your subject's eyes. Character is in the eyes and you want to express the character of the person. Use an aperture of f8 and be about three feet away. Make sure your subject is relaxed and in a happy frame of mind. Any anger or tension will show up in the photo. Chat to them, crack jokes if they are that type of person or play music. Make sure the music is something they like; otherwise you could get a scowl rather than a smile.

Make sure your subject is comfortable. Provide a chair or other seating with good back support so they don't slump. Make sure they are not too hot, too cold or thirsty. If the subject is a child, offer an appropriate toy to hold. If they are very small, they may not want to give the toy up easily so it could well be in the photo. In this case, make sure it is not dirty or tattered. You could also have interesting pictures on the wall for them to look at while you get ready.

You will need to get all your props and things ready ahead of time. Children and old people get fussy if they have to wait. If you have spotlights coming from anywhere but your camera, you may need light deflectors such as a white board or umbrella. This will diffuse the light, make the tones warmer and prevent red-eye.

The background is important. If you are taking a portrait in your house you won't have access to much gear with which to create a plain background, so try for a blank wall. One with wallpaper could be good to prevent light reflection. In front of drawn curtains would also be suitable. At least, try not to get the refrigerator in the background.

An ordinary 35mm camera is ideal for portraits, but they can be taken with other cameras. If you don't have a 35mm, just use whatever you have and see what happens.

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