

PHOTOGRAPHY BASICS

1. FILL THE FRAME

Take a moment to think about what you are trying to say and try to fill the frame with just that. Then once you think you have gotten as close as you can.....get closer! You'll be amazed how many times there is another picture in your picture and often one with more impact. I know this sounds simple and obvious, but go look at your gallery with fresh eyes.

A note on why you shouldn't zoom:

Unless you have an optical zoom – and smart phones don't – you need to avoid zooming if possible. You CAN zoom, but what you are actually doing when you zoom digitally is you're just throwing away pixels and therefore, picture quality.

2. PERSPECTIVE

If you only take away one thing from these meetings, let it be this: Nearly everyone takes pictures stood up from their eye level...take one shot like this and then buck the trend and get low (or high or wide – move around to try and see things differently)

Your photography will instantly improve!

3. COMPOSITION

Believe it or not, some photographers have written hundreds of thousands of long, tightly-packed words about the cornerstone of composition that is 'The Rule of Thirds'. Some have even attempted to explain it by invoking fundamental universal principles and mathematical formula.

Why bother? It works. Use it.

In short, when you look at a picture your eyes look, not all at once but at tiny focused points in quick succession. That's why your eyes are always darting about and, scientists have proven, when you first look at a picture your eyes will tend toward the four points where the lines in the diagram cross.

That, above all other reasons given, is why the rule of thirds works—by placing your subject slap bang onto one of those points you can be sure it's one of the first things that strikes anyone about the picture.

4. SEE THE LIGHT

Photography is painting with light and the light you use determines how your subjects appear. Light is a complicated subject....here is what you need to know:

Light has: **Color, Direction, Quantity & Quality**

Color

A very quick but simple technical bit: Light has color. You know that lovely light just before sunset (called golden hour) it's a very different 'color temperature' to normal day light or flash. That's all you really need to know...

It's controlled by your camera or phones white balance (WB) and auto is usually a good place to be unless you like a warmer look and then you can try out 'sunny' to warm up skin tones.

Direction

The direction of light changes as the sun moves across the sky

Quantity

The amount of daylight changes with the hour, weather, season and latitude

Quality

The quality varies from flat light in cloudy conditions to hard light in bright sun especially from 11am to 2pm.

5. CONTROL THE LIGHT

Your Brain

Your camera or smart phone is not as clever as you are...it can only see 4 stops of light but your eye can see 12 stops.

What is a 'Stop' of light??

The term "stop" is used in every aspect of photography to represent a relative change in the brightness of light.

For example: If you start with a single light bulb and then add another bulb, the light intensity will increase by one stop.

To increase the light by another stop you would need to double the light for a total of 4 bulbs, and so on....

For example you line up your friends against a bright background and all looks amazing...you take a picture and your friends are quite dark and the background is not great either...what happened?

The camera or smart phone is trying it's best to work out the exposure (how much light to capture) so guesses somewhere in the middle, it doesn't know your friends are more important than the background.

Your job is to help it prioritize.

The great news is that most cameras, phones and apps have something brilliant called exposure compensation that nobody much ever uses. It basically allows you to add or subtract light after the camera has made its guess. It often has the symbol +/-

Check out your device and start using it today!

Indoor tricks

What we want is quality of light and not quantity. Often in a room there is way too much light bouncing everywhere to make an interesting picture, so take control! Turn off the overhead lights, close the door, half close the curtains and suddenly things get interesting.

Taking control may mean moving your subject to a better position....look around, are there any pools of light from windows, maybe turn on a lamp. Again, creativity is key here; play around and experiment.

Cheats:

Try an HDR (High Dynamic Range) app (or setting) which takes three pictures of varying brightness and blends them automatically to give a single image.

6. ADD LIGHT

Turn off your flash.

Built in flash is not your friend...it looks harsh and generally will ruin a good shot, so get out your manual and find out how to turn it OFF!

That said, I am a big fan of 'off camera flash', but currently smart phones, iPhones, iPads and most compact cameras do not support this technology. However, we can still use the principles employed by this technology.

If you cannot take control and move the subject to the light, you have two options to dramatically improve the existing light....both fit in your pocket and are relatively inexpensive. The first is....

Reflectors

Old school, but used by professionals the world over in photography, film and TV because they are cheap, simple and effective.

Reflectors simply bounce the existing light in the direction you want...remember when you were a child and you'd bounce light off your watch around the ceiling in class? Same principle.

It involves a little moving them around and experimenting to get the best results.

They are great to fill in heavy shadows or just to bathe your subject in a wonderful pool of light.

**See the attached handout for how to make your own reflector on the cheap.

Abstracts:

Get in as close as your camera can focus and look for patterns in everyday objects...you'll be amazed with the results and no apps are required.

Tilt Shift:

Tilt Shift has traditionally been used in architectural photography, but you'll have seen the effect anywhere things look miniature and toy like.

You can apply the effect to new or existing pictures and it adds a particular style of blur. This effectively increases the impact of the picture by directing the viewer eye to a particular part of your image.

Depth of Field:

The perception of depth in a picture can be controlled by how much is in focus and how much is blurred, this also directs the eye to the important detail or just helps you remove distracting clutter.

This is normally controlled by the aperture of a traditional lens and the smaller the number such as F2.8 gives the least depth...ideal for portraits and the bigger the number, the more that is rendered sharp for landscapes, etc.

7. HAVE FUN!!!

And that's really the point of all this, anyway!

Here are some helpful websites to get you started and inspired:

lphonephotographyschool.com

lphoneographycentral.com

Hipstography.com

lphoneart.com