

## Do you wish you were a better photographer?

You really do not need a fancy camera to take good photos- you just need to follow these simple tips to improve your photography.

Start seeing and thinking like a photographer. Notice how light falls on different objects - see how light changes colour throughout the day - capture these moods.

All it takes is a little know-how and experience. Keep reading for some important picture-taking tips.

Grab your camera and start shooting your way to great pictures.

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## 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. For children, 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.

When photographing people in a scene - in front of a building, or other object,( If the people are the main subject) keep them within three metres of you, focussing on their eyes.

## 2. 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.

If you 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 orange and warm and makes for great pictures.

### Choosing which light to use

Photography is about understanding light-its direction, its temperature, its intensity.

Be aware of the many and varied moods and effects of light. Natural light in the morning is cool and clear, at midday the light is white, and in the afternoon the light is warm.

Photos taken in the late afternoon have a dreamy quality about them. To better understand how light affects your photos, stand in an open area and hold your hand (palm down) out in front of you. Slowly turn 360 degrees, and notice how the light changes, on your hand. Look for even lighting with details in the shadows, and this is where to place your subject. Ideally, light should come from 45 degrees of subject both vertically and horizontally. You can use reflectors to send light into shadow areas if your camera doesn't have a flash facility.

### 3. Use natural light whenever you can

Whatever the weather, any kind of weather is suitable for photos, and the worst weather may actually suit your subject best.

An overcast day is actually preferable for portraits. There are no harsh shadows under eyes, noses, and chins, and nobody has to squint. Flowers also photograph best on a cloudy day, especially pastel-coloured flowers with soft textures.

Is it raining? Don't worry. Look at how a wet street shines and reflects headlights and traffic signals. And a calm, rainy day means better reflections of the autumn leaves across the lake. Just take care that you don't soak your camera. And in dark fog or rain, remember to use +0.5 or +1.0 exposure compensation.

The weather will affect the mood of your picture. Soft, foggy light will convey a very different feeling from the one the same scene conveys on a bright sunny day.

### 4. Use fill 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 great results.

Try not to use flash at greater distances than three metres, when photographing night-time sports or stage shows, it's a waste of time. Instead set 800 ISO or more on your camera settings or choose night programme, which will pick up low light and create photos without the need for flash.

If you are taking flash pictures of people within the three-metre range, indoors, try diffusing your flash with a tissue in front of the flash window to try to avoid "Red-Eye". If you do get red-eye it can be removed with programmes such as Photoshop CS3 or 4.

EXTRA TIP: If your camera uses flash for every photo, and you want to take an available light photo, cover the flash window with black electrical tape.

Know how far your flash will reach.

The biggest flash mistake is taking pictures beyond the flash's range. 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.

#### 5. 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 subject's head.

If you have an aperture priority button set it on F2.8 or F4 to blur out a distracting background.

#### 6. 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. Highlight the centre of interest in your photos. Capture details that give the subject individuality

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. If you get closer than the closest focusing distance of your camera (see your manual to be sure), your pictures will be blurry.

#### 7. Move it from the middle

The middle of your picture is not always the best place for your subject. Bring your picture to life by simply moving your subject away from the middle of your picture. You'll need to lock the focus if you have an auto-focus camera because most of them focus on whatever is in the centre of the viewfinder.

#### 8. Lock the focus

If your subject is not in the centre of the picture, you need to lock the focus to create a sharp picture. Most auto-focus cameras focus on whatever is in the centre of the picture. But to improve pictures, you will often want to move the subject away from the centre 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, centre the subject and press and hold the shutter button halfway down. Second, reposition your camera (while still holding the shutter button) so the subject is away from the centre. And third, finish by pressing the shutter button all the way down to take the picture.

#### 9. Take some vertical pictures

All sorts of things look better in a vertical picture. So next time out, make a conscious effort to turn your camera sideways and take some vertical pictures.

## 10. Be a picture director, not just a passive picture-taker.

Try using a viewpoint from a different angle to gain unique perspective in your photos; looking up-looking down. Tilt camera 30 degrees up from level, photograph small pets and toddlers from ground/eye level.

Give your photos impact! By tilting the camera 30% when taking shots give dynamism to your picture.

NOTE: When taken from a stepladder; double chins disappear!

Take control of your picture-taking and watch your pictures dramatically improve. 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!

Enjoy yourself taking photos!

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