The Handy "How To" Photography Guide

For The Novice

Including:
Shooting Products To Sell Online

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1: CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAMERA

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAMERA

Choosing a camera is pretty easy if you know what you are looking for. If you are just starting out, then look for something which is uncomplicated and simple to use. Start with considering your wants and your needs and everything else will eventually fall into place.

If you really don't want to buy a new camera, you may find that the camera on your mobile device is perfect for the job. They are so advanced now and packed with features.

Digital Cameras

Technological advances over the past years brought about the creation of sophisticated digital cameras. They get more and more advanced as time goes on and nowadays you can pick up an excellent beginner's camera for an amazingly affordable price. Photographers are given the chance to experiment more and take far more images which could be easily deleted, modified and enhanced. Gone are the days of the "contact sheets" and "darkrooms"! (Some people will not understand what I mean here... it really doesn't matter though)

Digital images can easily be downloaded onto a computer or even

uploaded to cloud storage facilities and printed or turned into a digital album, later. The features of digital cameras have become so advanced and yet so simple to use, that it is now the norm.

Digital photography simply requires the use of a computer and a decent printer to produce any shot taken. Amateurs and professionals alike can do it all themselves. Users can even dictate the outcome of the pictures taken. Images may be manipulated using readily available software on computers and mobile devices.

Digital photography is convenient and easy to use. A digital camera in the hands of an amateur photographer can produce some amazing shots that will possibly outdo those taken by a professional, with one of those old fashioned 35mm conventional cameras!

Basic Features to Consider

Regardless of brand names, digital cameras have the same basic features that any consumer should know and consider before buying one. Even though the popular digital cameras are generally a point and shoot device, certain features can often single out a particular brand or

model. A good example of this is the term **mega pixel**, and **resolution** which I won't go into now as it gets too technical. In the early days of digital, megapixels were the key to a better camera... the greater the number, the better the picture. However now we are looking at resolution as well, which contributes to the quality, size of image and printability too. I would be inclined to take some advice from a supplier as you should be able to make a few informed comparisons.

If you are simply interested in taking photos quickly and easily, then a point and shoot style camera will be your best bet. Your mobile device will most probably have an excellent camera onboard and this may be all you need. However if you want to be able to access more facilities and enhancements, then you will need to begin looking for something which suits your needs. Taking face to face advice from a good supplier is always the best bet. You will have a chance to hold the camera and try different aspects of it, in order to make up your mind.

2: Focus, Depth of Field and Lenses

Focus, Depth of Field and Lenses

There is a certain way that experienced photographers take such stunning pictures, portraits and photographs where the subject being shot is focused in a clear and perfect manner while the background is sort of a blur. This is particularly effective in product and food photography.

The following are the steps to take those amazing picture-perfect shots.

When the aperture of a camera is large, the image or picture that will be produced has a depth of field that is "shallow". In photography language, this basically means that the area that is behind as well as front of the subject being taken is a blur.

As much as possible, the subject should fill the whole frame. Also, if the subject is a person, don't forget to focus on the subject's eyes.

Practice really does make perfect. There is no such thing as a perfect job done only once. It takes perseverance as well as patience. When shooting pictures it is best to take a series of shots using a lens that

has a wide aperture.

Focus on various areas such as, for example in portrait photography, the ear, nose, and hair using varying apertures for such. You then have many different options to choose from.

To be able to create a depth of field that is shallow, the best thing you should do is use a long lens – preferably a telephoto – and have it set on the zoom that at its maximum. Then, try to stand as close to the subject as possible.

However, for subjects that are in motion, for example a car, the camera must then be moved the same way the subject is moving. Or simply put, the subject must be followed. *(See Photo Effects)*

The body of the camera, especially when taking such moving picture shots, must be steady. Make sure to focus on the subject. Using such a technique ensures that the subject being focused on is clear and crisp while the background is a beautiful blur. Such a picture helps highlight the movement being done by the subject therefore making it seemingly jump from the picture.

3: Photo effects

Photo effects

There is also an easy and stress free way to create a similar photo effect without doing the techniques aforementioned. This became possible some years back with image software. "Adobe Photoshop" has a "blur" function, which blurs the picture's background in a uniform manner independently as well as authentically the way an actual photograph may be done by a technically-savvy photographer. The software blur is and looks artificial while the real blur is more organic in feel.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the technology of software is advancing so much now that it enables anyone to create a blur that is considered as "smart." This function takes into consideration the picture's depth of field. This basically means that the function applies a lot of blurring effects to the pixels that appears more distant and applies a lot less blurring to the pixels that appear nearer.

Depth of field is a fairly easy concept to understand especially to those serious in learning the art and craft of photography. All it takes is a lot

of patience, perseverance and a heart that is willing to learn as well as a mind that is open to making mistakes and gradually correcting them along the way towards creating a picture perfect shot.

An example of that classic motion effect. The camera must follow the vehicle at the same speed and use a very fast shutter.

4: Focus and get the best out of a shot

Focus and get the best out of a shot

Taking pictures is an experience that is rewarding as well as memorable. Photography can be fulfilling as well as frustrating. The following are basic tips and advice to get the most out of taking great pictures.

1: Taking pictures indoors

There may be instances when pictures taken indoors are blurry. The best way to solve this problem is by switching the automatic focus on your camera. This prevents from you having to manually focus and tirelessly concentrate on getting it sharp when the camera can do the work for you, in less time, making it easier for you.

Also, there is a reason why there is a flash on your camera. You need to use it especially when taking indoor shots. Pictures that are blurry are also the result of poor lighting. When this happens, the shutter of the camera is forced to open for a considerable amount of time therefore making the image blurry.

Dark photos could be prevented by using a flash. Indoor shots need to

have a flash even if there is light available. To make sure though, it is highly advisable that one shot be taken with a flash and another without.

2: Batteries, batteries, batteries

Sometimes, trying to achieve focus can prove to be difficult especially if your camera is running out of power. You should always check your batteries. A flash system takes a lot of battery power and the sign that you need to have your old batteries exchanged for new ones is when your flash does not fire when taking that shot.

3: Get the glare out of your pictures

There may be instances when the final prints of your pictures may have a glare. Usually this happens when the flash reflects off mirrors, walls that are shiny, windows, TVs, etc. You may be able to avoid this by putting the camera on its side.

4: Frame and focus

Before clicking on that shutter button, focus on framing the shot you are taking. Be aware of the picture's frame and try not to cut off the top of the head.

The best way to take pictures is with your bare hands. Remove gloves if you are wearing them and don't hold any objects while framing and focusing the shot. Doing such actually helps in avoiding the lens to be unnecessarily blocked.

5: What about pictures taken outdoors?

There may be instances where people may be squinting when their pictures are being taken. To avoid this, try to position people so they aren't facing the sun. It may be handy to have an umbrella handy.

Cases also occur where people appear dark or shadowy in the picture even if the pictures are taken outdoors. When this happens, it could be that the photographer was positioned directly towards the sun. As much as possible, the sun should be behind the person taking pictures. Or use a flash to reduce any shadows on the subjects being

photographed, if it is necessary that the photographer be positioned towards the sun.

An example of a backlit subject (against the sun) and using either a flash or a reflector board (white card is good) to reflect some natural light back onto the face.

Most cameras have a capacity to lock on their focus. To do this, have your camera point towards a spot that is bright. Keep pressing on the shutter halfway, without going overboard and pressing it completely. Then, move the camera to the picture you are to take and press the shutter fully.

Be aware not just of the subject you are focusing on but on any backgrounds available where your subject is positioned. Pay attention to trees or any objects that could appear behind the subject that could ruin the shot. There have been instances where a flag pole seems to be coming out of a model's head, when actually the shot was just poorly framed and focused.

All in all, focusing is easy if you put your mind and eyes into it. Photography is an art form and medium that is used to express any emotion, idea or message. For the photography hobbyist, taking pictures is a way to experiment and explore, while a serious photographer could just as well use photography to convey a concept that no other medium could best express. Photos do not just capture a moment, but an idea whose time has come.

6: Why wide angle, and how?

When is the best time to use a wide angle lens and how do you select the appropriate wide angle lens for a particular shot?

First things first. The best time for selecting a wide angle lens is when

you are planning to take a shot of a landscape.

Another important aspect of landscape photography is the selection of the appropriate light as well as the perfect location of the landscape shot. As much as possible, and depending on what it is being shot, the selection of the appropriate day to catch that landscape picture perfect landscape view is everything.

7: Lights, location and action

When the location has finally been chosen for the wide angle lens shot, try to notice the light effects visible on the area that you plan to shoot in over a whole twenty four hour day. This ensures that you know how the lights play over the range of mountain, sand or seas. This also helps you plan just how it is you are to go about taking that shot, when and how.

When you finally know, it is therefore time to be a little bit creative. You may include elements in your picture's foreground in order to have an additional scale and depth to your pictures. Also, feel free to look around from other points in the area where you think the shot could

just as well be taken. This may add a little bit of interest to the final picture. Also consider taking a variety of levels and positions.

8: Time is always of the essence

Believe it or not, in order to avoid any shadows that may appear harsh on the picture, the best time to shoot is early during the morning as well as late in the golden afternoon.

During this time, take your camera out and set it up using a tripod. Then, take a reading of any area of the shot using a light-meter. Once the appropriate measurements have been taken, adjust the speed of the shutter and the aperture.

After all these, all you need to do is to press the release button and take your picture.

9: Make use of natural effects

If there are any natural creations occupying your shot, try to use a backlight or side lighting that provides the leaves, – for example – grass, water or smoke an appearance that these seem to be

translucent, almost ethereal.

Pictures of a beautiful sunset are best taken just when the sun has gently touched the horizon and immediately a maximum of five – count them - five short minutes just after the sun has finally set. It is best that you use or position yourself to a geographically high point.

A filtered polariser may also be used in order to heighten the sky's colour or tone, thus delivering a picture befitting a postcard. A wide angle lens helps a lot in increasing the picture's scope.

Do not forget to relax. This prevents the camera from unnecessarily shaking and helping you focus on the subject more than anything else.

10: Supply yourself with much needed supplies

Since landscape photos are usually taken far from the city and well into the country, it is best that you pack up a host of equipment that enables you to take pictures even during temporary obstacles. A torch always comes in handy, bottled water is another (to keep the photographer replenished and not thirsty).

Basically, a wide angle lens has a focal length that measures less than forty millimeters. Be aware as well as be wary that the length of the lens changes how an image is seen.

Determining the best lens to use for a particular shot requires a lot of patience, skill and practice. The art of mastering landscape photography doesn't have to be difficult. And the best lens to use for such kind of photography is a wide-angle lens. Getting that that shot right takes not only skill but the strength, stamina and endurance to get to where the location of the landscape is and the energy – upon reaching that location – to get the job done. And when that moment arrives, the job has only just begun.

5: Zoom Lenses

Zoom Lenses

If you are a photographer or just someone that loves taking pictures using your camera or your mobile device, you must know what zooms are for. Zoom lenses are normally added to your basic camera unit to be able to focus on a subject correctly. Mobile devices will have one inbuilt and you can purchase clip on zoom lenses for your device too!

During the past, you would see a photographer carrying his huge camera case which contained about half a dozen different lenses. Each of these lenses has a fixed focal length and can only be used for a certain type of focus shot. If the photographer wants to take a shot on something from a different angle, he would need to change lenses. That takes a lot of time and possible loss of the good view for the shot.

Having all these lenses and carrying them every time you have a shoot can be a big burden, not to mention, expensive. Thanks to our ever improving technology, zoom lenses were introduced. With zoom lenses, you can have a single lens that covers the same range that three or more fixed focal length lenses. This definitely lets the photographer change angle or focus instantaneously as compared to

the old lenses.

Mid-range zoom lenses are versatile since they can cover normal, wide-angle and telephoto focal lengths with just a single lens. Telephoto zoom lenses are great for portraits, scenic, travel, candid and sports photos. Long zooms are useful for wildlife and sports photography.

Features of Zoom Lenses

Here are just some of the features of most zoom lenses available:

1. Macro focusing. This feature allows the lens to focus at a close range. To determine how close a lens is able to focus, a reproduction ratio is specified in the lens. A 1:4 reproduction ratio means that a lens can focus an object such that if the diameter of the object is 4 inches, it will measure just 1 inch in the picture itself.

2. One-touch zoom control. Most of the zoom lenses have just a single ring that controls the focus and zoom at the same time.

3. Lens aperture. There are zoom lenses that have only one

maximum aperture, while others have two, for example f2.8-4.0. The f-number changes as the zoom changes.

Tips for buying zoom lenses

If you are planning to buy a zoom lens, the first thing you have to consider is the focal length range. For you to know what correct focal length range to buy, you must identify your purpose for the lens. If you think you will use it mostly for travel and vacations, a mid-range zoom would suffice. However, if you are planning to use it for sports and portraits, a telephoto zoom is a better choice.

The size and weight of the lens is also a consideration. In general, a bigger and heavier lens is usually faster. One that has wide zooming range can also be larger.

Lens speed is important if you are intending to use the lens for indoor photography. A faster lens allows more light which makes it easier to shoot in subdued lighting.

If you are using a lot of filters, it is best to consider the size of the zoom so it can accommodate as much filter. If you want close-up

photos, you must also consider the specifications of the camera with regard to macro focusing. If you are after flexibility, it is best to have a zoom with continuous macro focusing than a limited one.

Of course, just like any other product, price is also a consideration. The better the features of the zoom lens, the more expensive they will be.

Zoom lenses are really a good investment if you are thinking of making photography a business. Even if you don't, and you are just someone who loves taking pictures, having a zoom lens is still a good choice. You can take great shots at different angles and distances.

So if you are thinking of getting one, decide first on how you intend to use the lens so you can make the right choice. As you become more and more into this hobby or profession, then you can buy different types of zooms. Carrying just one or two zoom lenses is not a bad idea.

6: How Do Filters Work?

How Do Filters Work?

If you are a professional photographer, you must have a set of filters in your camera equipment. Even if you are just an amateur, you probably have one or two filters. What are filters? Why do photographers buy different filters? How do they work?

Camera filters are transparent optical elements that change light properties entering the camera to improve the recorded image. Filters affect the different properties of an image such as sharpness, contrast, colour, highlight flare, and light intensity. It can alter one or a combination of these properties, and can also create various special effects.

Camera filters are connected to the front of the lens. Aside from its features, it also protects the lens from elements such as salt air. Some cameras need lens adapters to be able to use filters.

Filters work the same whether you use them on a digital camera or good old film. There are just a few differences to be considered. Filters that can reduce excess contrast such as polarisers are helpful. Digital

cameras are also known to be less sensitive to ultraviolet light, thus, ordinary UV filters may not be needed. Also, infrared filters are easier to use in digital cameras.

Some Filter Types

There are different kinds of filters for a camera and each has its own purpose.

Ultraviolet filters. As the name implies, this type of filter absorbs ultraviolet light. Cameras, especially ones that use film, have high sensitivity to the invisible light known as ultraviolet light. This is common in making outdoor shots, especially in highly elevated places where there is only a thin layer of atmosphere that absorbs the ultraviolet light.

Without UV filters, viewing far images can be difficult because UV causes a haze that diminishes details with farther distance. UV filters are available in various absorption levels measured by the percentage of transmission at 400 nanometers. A filter that transmits 0% is ideal for long distance and aerial shots. For normal situations, a UV filter

with 29% transmission is generally good enough.

Infra-Red filters. These filters are used to reduce visible light. Filters that can totally absorb visible light and transmit only infrared lights are useful for situations like recording heat effects and aerial haze penetration.

Natural density (ND) filters. ND filters are used when light intensity is high and proper exposure needs to be attained or when a specific lens opening is required for sharpness purposes. This type of filter evenly absorbs light throughout the visible range which alters the exposure effectively without the need to change lens opening or do colour shifts.

Polarising filters. Polar filters or polarisers enhance contrast, colour and reflection control. It has a different optical principle compared to other filter types. Polarising filters allows light to pass through in just one vibratory direction. Different alignment can produce different effects to the image. If the filter is aligned perpendicularly to the polarised reflected glare, the result would create stronger colours because true-coloured reflection will pass through.

Polarisers are increasingly being used for outdoor shots to improve contrast and colour saturation. A blue sky can be darkened by a polarizing filter, but it has to be blue in the first place.

Polarisers can also minimize and control reflections from water or glass surfaces. To get the best results, an angle of 33 degrees incident to the surface is advisable. The effect can be seen by viewing through while the polariser is rotated. An object in water can appear as an object out of water without having the reflection.

Optical filters can be a good investment for those who want to make a living out of photography. It allows for different kinds of shots with special effects. It also makes an image look more alive by the different features and effects these filters have to offer.

But even when taking pictures just as a hobby, having some of these filters will be necessary to get the image of clarity desired. Taking a shot without a filter is indeed different from a shot with one.

There are just some considerations that need to be thought about before buying filters. Different types of filters are obviously for

different purposes. It is best to determine what the main purpose is and what type of situation is commonly encountered.

Filters for special effects

Have you seen picture ads in magazines that look so nice that they don't look real at all? Some of them have been "photo shopped". But, definitely, most of them have been taken using a camera with a special kind of filter.

There are a wide variety of filters to choose from when adding to your camera equipment. There are filters for either colour or black-and-white shots or both. Each filter has its own function, whether for enhancing the colour contrast, improving sharpness, highlight flares and more. And there are filters for special effects like those photos normally seen in magazines and advertisements.

Here are some examples of filters that can be used to enhance the image by adding special effects to them.

Star and Cross Effect Filters

There are different star effect flares available such as Star-Six and Star-Eight. The Star-Six has six-pointed light flares, while Star-Eight has eight-pointed flares. These flares add more brightness to images. This filter is good when taking pictures of streetlights, theme-parks during the night or sun-reflections on glass structures.

A star filter example. It gives a fabulous emphasis to the points of light in the picture.

A cross screen filter is similar to star filters except that the flare is four-cross. It also gives a dramatic effect to bright points in the image. It is ideal for taking photos of ladies wearing jewelery.

Spectral cross filter produces cross effects as well as soft-focus effects normally desired for portraits, outdoor shots with direct lighting or back lighting with increased cross effects. It is a filter with two transparent and colourless optical glasses in a rotating frame with a black gauze-like fiber in between.

Vario cross filter gives an effect of four rays of light coming out from each light source point. It is a filter consisting of two glasses with parallel lines etched on each glass. The front glass can be rotated separately to modify the angle of the light rays.

Close-up Filters As the name implies, these filters are for close-up photography which are better than zooms. These filters are available in +1, +2, +3, +4, and +10 diopters with the higher number giving a much closer shot.

Macro close-up filters are good for taking shots of small insects,

flowers and other tiny objects at close-up. It has a +10 diopter rating with a 2-element, 2-group construction lens.

Split field filter takes a close-up shot of half of the image while the other half is normal. This is used for keeping in focus both close and far objects at the same time.

Multivision Filters To create a fantastic effect of repeating an object in a single photo, multivision filters are used. These are available in 3PF, 3F, 5F, 6F, and 6PF where the number determines the number of times the object will be repeated. It works great with dark backgrounds or larger objects.

Multivision filters are made up of optical glass accurately cut into different facets. colour multivision filters add different colours to the image. There are two types available – 3F with three faces in red, green and blue and 5F with five faces equally divided into orange and green colours.

Misty Spot Filters This type of filters provides a blurring effect of the background of a clear and sharp central image. There are four types of

these kinds available.

A breezing filter gives unidirectional streaks of the blurred background. Gradual filter has streaks that seem to originate from the center image. **The windmill filter** has a blurring background that swirls about the center. **The halo filter** has blurring streaks that originate from a point at the edge of the field.

Diffusion Filters provide a soft focus effect on the image due to an irregular or uneven surface. This kind of filter is specifically used for portraits.

Centre Spot Filters The center of this filter has a clear spot that gives the center image a clear and sharp effect, while the background can have an effect of fog to make it romantic.

These are just some of the special effects filters available for professional and amateur photographers alike. It surely is nice to add even just one or two to your collection with the fabulous effects that it can provide on your shots.

7: Colour or Black and White?

Colour or Black and White?

The debate regarding the use of colour or black and white for photographs has been going on for decades. Many traditionalists still prefer the formal appearance of black and white photographs. However, these days there seem to be only a few traditionalists left as most photographs are being taken in colour.

Many people began opting for colour pictures simply because they were simpler and cheaper to produce. This was not always the case, as it took some time before the required technology for colour photographs could surpass the quality of black and white photos.

Before colour, in the good old days... black and whites were the standard print used for on film. Many historical materials that may contain pictures are often in black or white. During the early days of photography, black and white processing and printing was less expensive than colour. At the same time, black and white photographs had better quality than colour.

At the start, colour photographs were too expensive to process and

print compared to black and white. Plus, the outcome of colour photographs was not as crisp or sharp as black and white. It was only until after the eighties when the quality of colour photographs surpassed black and white.

Colour in Today's Photographs

The arrival of colour printing into the main photography scene meant the decline of black and whites. As a result, the supply of black and white film dwindled as well as the facilities that could process and print them. In just a short time, black and white photographs became the exception in photography while colour became the rule.

In today's world almost everything is in colour. Photographers, amateur and even professionals prefer using colour in order to better express the details of the pictures that they take. In addition, photographs processed and printed in colour are cheaper than black and whites. In fact these days it is easier to get photographs printed in colour than black and whites.

The technology used in photography these days is able to produce

photographs that capture each and every vivid detail in colour.

Furthermore, the advances in photography have also made it possible

for people to convert their existing black and white photographs into

colour. The results are astounding as the photograph is vibrantly

reprinted in colour without leaving any detail out.

The Resurgence of Black and White

The current trend in revivals, black and white photographs, are

experiencing a comeback as photographers are rediscovering the

power of black and white imagery. Many people now view black and

white photos as an innovative take on the usual coloured pictures. At

the same time, black and white photos impart a sense of reality that

can be lost in coloured pictures.

Print advertising was the first industry to revive the interest in black

and white pictures. Gigantic billboards across the country featured ads

done entirely in black and white. Since then, black and white

photographs became requested all over the place.

Black and whites became popular with brides who wanted to add a

historical and classic touch to their wedding pictures. Photography classes have also used black and white photographs as a great way to teach students on how light affects film. However the resurgence of black and white was inevitable because it's simply beautiful.

What goes with what?

In the early days, people had no choice but to use black and white since it was the only medium available to them. But today, people can choose what they want for their photographs. In most cases, the choice of using colour or black and white is a matter of personal preference.

Keep in mind that most subjects can be taken in black and white. However there are times when using colour can help bring out the true beauty of the subject. You may want to pass up a black and white motif for subjects that are known for colour like an autumn settings, flowers and colourful butterflies.

Use a black and white theme for subjects where colour may become a distraction to the viewer. Scenes of war or an accident are more

compelling and less violent to look at minus the colour of blood. In this way, black and white photographs relay more emotion without being too disturbing.

8: Tips for successful amateur photography

Tips for successful amateur photography

Whether you just have a simple point-and-shoot camera, a mobile device or the more expensive digital SLR, you can definitely take quality pictures like the pros do. It's not the type of camera that takes great shots, it's the photographer. If you don't know how to correctly take a shot, you can take a really bad picture from an expensive camera.

As long as you know how to correctly take pictures and are willing to make some adjustments, taking great photos will be easy for you. Here are some tips to help you shoot like professionals even with your simple digital camera.

1. Would you like your shots to have a warmer feel? Most shots taken from a digital camera without any adjustments look cool and clammy. This is because the white balance setting is set to "auto" as default which is fine for snapshots.

If you want a warmer effect, though, with sharp colours, you may want to set the white balance to "cloudy" setting instead of auto.

This is like adding a mild warming filter to the lens of your camera. Cloudy setting increases the yellow and red colours adding a richer and warmer effect to your shots.

2. Polarising filters can be one of the most important investments you can add to your digital camera. These filters reduce the glare and unwanted reflections on your shots. This is great when you frequently take landscape and outdoor shots. Pictures taken with a polariser have richer and more saturated colours.

If your camera won't allow filters, like a simple point-and-shoot camera, don't fret! You can still have a polarising effect on your shots by placing a good quality pair of sunglasses in front of the lens. It gives an effect similar to a polariser. Just make sure that you place it to the lens as close as possible and the rims are not seen.

3. For an outdoor shot with shine, use your camera's "flash on" or "fill flash" feature. This lets you control when you want the flash to go off, instead of it deciding when it wants to. This mode exposes first the background then adding enough flash to illuminate your subject.

For great results, place your subject where the sun illuminates the hair from the side or back. Alternatively, to let your subject be comfortable and not be annoyed by the sun's heat, place your model in the shade then use the flash to illuminate the subject.

However, built-in flashes only have a maximum range of 10 feet. Thus, it would be better not to go too far from your subject.

4. Taking detailed shots of objects like flowers or small insects is easy with your digital camera. Most digital cameras have a feature called "close up" or "macro mode" usually indicated by a flower sign. With this mode turned on, you can take shots of objects as close as possible. However, you only get a shallow field-depth when taking close up pictures so it is better to focus on the most important part of the subject then allow the other parts of the image go soft.

5. Leveling the image may be difficult for amateurs as well as some pros. One way to get a level or an even shot, especially of a nature shot, is to look for some horizontal lines as guide. If you have a view of the horizon, where the sky meets the ocean, you can use that as your leveling guide.

If it still is difficult for you, you could try taking several shots at different angles so you'll know which one would give you the best shot. After some time it will become natural for you to take even shots.

These are just some of the tricks you can do to take excellent shots, be it a simple point-and shoot kind of camera, mobile device or the more professional SLR type. Photography is really an enjoyable and fulfilling hobby, especially when a lot of people also appreciate your work. It is not that difficult to take shots that most people will like. Just explore, read different books, and take advice from pros and you'll surely be one of them in just a matter of time.

9: Strategies for portrait photography

Strategies for Portrait Photography

Photography is one of the most popular hobbies and professions in the world. There is nothing like capturing fragments of reality and preserving it. There are many kinds of photography, but one of the most in-demand is portrait photography.

A good portrait is described as a picture with a quality image that captures both the physical features and character of the subject. Taking good portraits is very challenging because a photographer needs a subject with an upbeat personality that also reflects sensitivity and liveliness.

There are lots of factors that photography enthusiasts need to know in capturing the perfect portrait.

1. Revelation of the subject's character

For a portrait to be considered good, it must capture at least one element that shows the features and traits of the subject as well as one that captures his or her individuality. The image must reveal an important part of the subject's character that can be identifiable by

those who know them. Therefore, it is quite challenging for a portrait photographer to show the character of his subject, if they have only met for the first time.

2. The right moment to take pictures

Definitely, the photo shoot should start when the subject is comfortable and at ease with his or her appearance and surroundings. Never shoot if the subject is tense or uneasy, because it will reflect in the pictures. There is no rule that says a conversation should stop when shooting starts; it can still continue especially if it makes the subject open up more to the photographer.

Remember that the subject does not need to smile to make the portrait look good. Often, a thoughtful or a serious expression is preferred, since it reveals more of the subject's character.

3. Preparedness of the photographer

This is important since it is the photographer who takes control of a photo session. The subject must feel that the person behind the camera knows what he's doing and is experienced enough to tell the subject how to pose. The photographer himself must be prepared and

relaxed throughout the session.

4. Right kind of lighting

Probably the best light that can be used for capturing the personality of the subject is natural daylight. The variety of lighting choices brought about by outdoor conditions gives more creative leeway for the photographer. Having the subject sit near a window can also produce great effects. The only disadvantage of natural light is that it's not always consistent. This is the reason all photographers must utilise artificial lighting. All photographers should have studio flashes. Also, the position of the photographer in relation to the subject can also be shifted in order to maximize the light available.

5. Appropriate background

Simply put, a bad background can destroy a picture. Always pay close attention on the scenery behind the subject when framing shots. There are many creative options that be used when shooting outdoors. The subject can be made to pose beside or in front of colourful flowers or leaves, the sea or the sky. To reduce the effect of a distracting background, a photographer can make use of long lenses or an expansive aperture. For indoors, one can use black or grey cloth for

the background, then adding coloured transparent plastics over the flashes to modify colour.

6. Usage of costumes and props

Portraits usually are a rare photograph of a subject, and good costumes can make the portrait more interesting and valuable. You don't always need to use a full costume; sometimes a hint of it will make wonders, such as hats or scarves. Props should be used very carefully, and should not distract from the main subject of the photograph. A prop should establish the natural pose and mood of the one being photographed.

7. Framing

The kind of framing can already create the image desired by the photographer. It is recommended that photos be cropped before shooting. The image should be checked a few seconds before clicking the shutter. Images that are not needed should be excluded from the shot.

Producing the perfect portrait may seem hard at first but these tips may help novices so that they may shoot better pictures.

10: Shooting products to sell online

Getting professional results at virtually no cost at all...

Here are a few step by step tips to getting some good clean shots of your products which will go a long way towards helping you sell, time and time again.

Create a clean background with no visible lines between the horizontal and the vertical.

Professional photographers, when photographing people quite often use a large white or patterned cloth or paper background which they pull down off a roll and hang down to the floor and then over the floor. This gives a slight curve and you don't see any lines or change of directions.

To photograph products they do the same but on a smaller scale. They tend to buy ready made light boxes with built in lighting and backgrounds etc.

You can do just this using a decent bright window, a large sheet of paper, a spot of sticky tape and a sheet of paper to use as a reflector. Cost? Probably 50 pence!

So... how do you go about this? The next image shows you may little set up for this demo. The window sill is very narrow so I used a bit of stiff card to create a wider horizontal surface. The large paper is simply taken from a sketch / layout pad but a sheet of lining wallpaper or white paper table cover would do. No-one will ever know!

Position your product on the paper area

Place the object on the paper and then take a look at it using your camera / smartphone. Frame it up so that you don't see the edges of the paper of parts of the window etc and see if it looks suitable. You my find that because the light is entering through the window from the side that you experience some shadowing. In this example it was ok and gave a little shape to the object.

Setting the product in the middle of the paper area.

Once the shot was taken, it came out well and no further adjustments were needed.

You will want to take more shots of your product from different angles, perhaps any special markings and features.

Then move on to the next one...

Here is an example of a product needing a little help with the lighting.

The first one is without any assistance and the other is with assistance, using a piece of paper to act as a reflector.

And this is how to apply your lighting (free daylight!) Simple.

Flat objects, books, mats, paper, cloth, crochet etc.

To get a nice shot of any of these examples, you will want to take the photo from above. Here are two hand painted and glazed terracotta coasters, with a slight crazed surface, as an example. The available daylight should cover everything - but if you are not happy and get unwanted shadows, you may we wish to apply the lighting trick to blend things a little.

In this example there is a little reflection on the left one but in this case it shows the glossy surface off quite well.

Other enhancements

Backgrounds

You can play with different coloured paper as your background. Perhaps a light grey or cream may help in certain cases. You may want to use a stronger colour but care should be taken so that you don't detract from your product.

Lighting

The reflector paper could be a different colour to help create a "warm infill" from one side perhaps. You could also use a carefully positioned lamp to assist in filling in any shadows. You must always bear in mind that the product must be shown as correctly as possible with undistorted colours.

Flare

If you are getting too much shine or flare from surfaces (from the window), try adjusting the angle of the camera to see if you can lose it that way. Or take a large sheet of tracing paper and stick it to the window to soften the incoming light.

In Camera enhancements

Most smartphones give you the opportunity to use built in enhancements and filters etc. Try them, as they are there to use but do be careful. You may find that just adjusting the white balance helps a little.

Props

You may wish to enhance your product images with a few props. For example, a book on cross stitch could include a few lengths of silk, needles and other associated items, placed carefully around the product. A hand made felt doll might have some cuttings of felt, scissors and threads neatly arranged. Your choice. Try experimenting.

So there we have it. All set to go? I hope you find this book helpful. It's not meant to baffle, just help you get to grips with taking some great photos.

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