

How to Become a Great Photographer

by Clem Wehner

How to become a great photographer

2. Learn your craft:
 - a. artistic skill- natural for some people.
(composition, style)
 - b. technical knowledge- not natural, must be learned!
(physics of light & shadow, light manipulation, image creation, color, posing, equipment, tools, painting techniques, and much more)

How to become a great photographer

1. Develop your **photographer's eye** so you can "see" the possibilities for great images.

How to become a great photographer

3. Take a million photos (practice, practice, practice).
4. Critically evaluate your images

Developing a photographer's "eye" Summary

1. Look for subjects that can make your images special.
2. Look at things closer and for longer than you usually would. Study the scene. Take your time.
3. Learn to "crop down" in your head. Envision the shot zoomed in tighter.
4. Compose the shot in your viewfinder- move the camera around, move yourself, zoom in, zoom out. Take your time.
5. Look at everything in the viewfinder, not just the subject.
6. Study the light, shadow, and detail of things you look at.

To improve at anything:

1. Do it
2. Evaluate it
3. Improve it
4. Repeat it (practice)

Evaluating your images

- 1. Understand what makes a photograph great.

THE 12 ELEMENTS OF GREAT PHOTOS

Developed by the
Professional Photographers of America (PPA)

- To guide photographers to excellence
- As criteria for judging photographs

TWELVE ELEMENTS OF A PHOTOGRAPH

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. IMPACT | 7. COLOR HARMONY |
| 2. CREATIVITY | 8. LIGHTING |
| 3. COMPOSITION | 9. TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE |
| 4. CENTER OF INTEREST | 10. STYLE |
| 5. SUBJECT MATTER | 11. IMAGE PRESENTATION |
| 6. STORYTELLING | 12. PRINT QUALITY |

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Evaluating your images

- 1. Understand what makes a photograph great.
(The 12 elements of photographs)
- 2. Evaluate the scene in your viewfinder.
(before you press the shutter)
- 3. Make adjustments to get a better image.
(composition, lighting, exposure, zoom, etc)
- 4. At home, critique your images.
(against the 12 elements)

IMPACT

- **IMPACT** - The reaction when an image is first observed.
 - a. Does the image grab your attention?
 - b. Does it make you say "wow!"
 - c. Does it make you want to look at it further?

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Composition

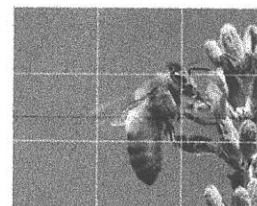
- How the image is framed in the picture.
- How the elements of the photo are arranged.
- How you create design and interest.
- How you avoid distractions.
- How you follow the "rules" of composition

Creativity

- **CREATIVITY** – looking at an ordinary subject and finding an un-ordinary way to portray it.
 - How novel is the image?
 - Is it unique?
 - Does it show your imagination?
 - Does it spark the imagination of others?

The Rule of Thirds

Divide image into thirds each way. Place center of interest at intersection of lines.



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Position the subject using "The Rule of Thirds"

OK

much better

photo by John Powers



photo by John Powers



Using the Rule of Thirds

Both good

photo by Clem Wehner





photo by John Powers



Plan placement of subject

Leave room in front of moving subjects

not this

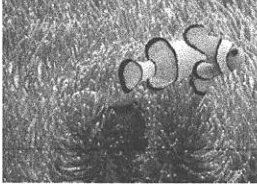


photo by Clem Wehner

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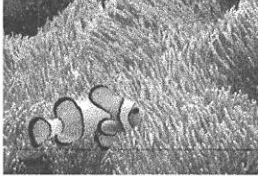


photo by Clem Wehner

Don't shoot down on animals

not this




photo by Clem Wehner

this






photo by Clem Wehner

Leave space in front of moving subject

not this



this



Don't shoot down on people.

Move yourself down to their level.

not this




photo by Clem Wehner

this






photo by Clem Wehner


Watch for distractions.

Avoid branches, objects thru image, etc.

Not these



this



photos by Clem Wehner

Re-compose to eliminate distractions

Move yourself to hide problems

not this

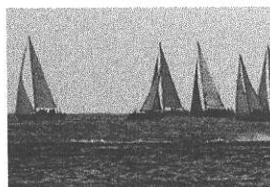


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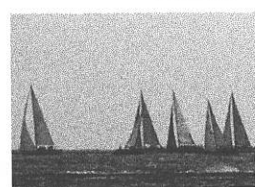


Don't put the horizon in center

not this

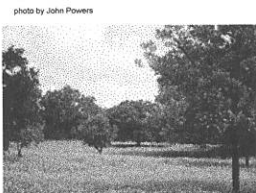


this



Use foreground objects to add interest.

good



much better



Try some unusual angles for added interest.

photo by Fran Wehner



photo by Fran Wehner



Try vertical and horizontal compositions

Pick the one you like best.

photo by John Powers



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Center of Interest

- a. The way you draw your viewer's eye to the subject.
- b. Use composition and leading lines to draw attention to your subject.
- c. Your composition should hold viewer attention, leaving them free to explore the entire image, but always returning to the center of interest.
- d. The fewer distractions, the better.

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STORYTELLING-

- a. The best photos tell a story.
- b. Adds interest, makes it memorable.
- c. Make sure that the story is obvious.
- d. Pick a title that matches the story and is easy to understand.
- e. A story makes it more than just a picture.

SUBJECT MATTER

- a. Clearly interprets the subject
- b. Correlates to the surroundings
- c. Interesting, appealing, exciting, emotional, documenting, humorous, beautiful, unusual, thought-provoking, etc.

(Not blah, lifeless, boring, uninteresting, meaningless)

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COLOR HARMONY

- a. Harmonious with subject.
- b. Harmonious with background

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TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

- a. Focus is exactly what was intended.
- b. Exposure is perfect.
- c. Color is correct.

LIGHTING

- a. Direction of the light is right for the subject.
- b. Exposure is right for the subject.

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STYLE

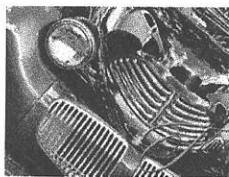
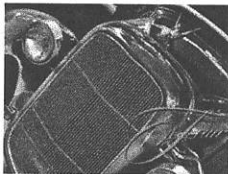
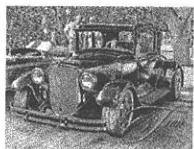
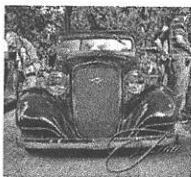
- a. A specialization in the kind of photography you do.
- b. A personal style that identifies the image as yours.

PRESENTATION

- a. Cropped well to enhance the image.
- b. Zoom not too wide or too tight
- c. Oriented for best effect

STYLE

(photos by Fran Wehner)



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Print Quality (for prints)

- a. Printing is true to captured image
- b. Density is accurate
- c. Print finish enhances the image


How to evaluate your images

Evaluation exercise

PHOTO SCORING SHEET

Does the image have:

1. **IMPACT:** Does it make you say "WOW!" ?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. **CREATIVITY** – Is the subject and layout imaginative?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. **COMPOSITION-** Are the elements of the photo arranged nicely?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. **CENTER OF INTEREST-** Is the subject apparent?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. **SUBJECT MATTER-** Is the subject interesting to the viewer?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10




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6. **STORYTELLING-** Does the image tell a story?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7. **COLOR HARMONY-** Are the colors harmonious?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8. **LIGHTING-** Is the direction of light and exposure right for the subject?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9. **TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE-** Is the focus and exposure what was intended?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10. **IMAGE PRESENTATION-** Is it cropped well?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Total score _____

-----ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER-----

11. **STYLE** - Is the image representative of your personal photographic style?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
12. **PRINT QUALITY**- If printed, is the exposure and color of the print correct?
(Score) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



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10. IMAGE PRESENTATION

Wide range of scores in many elements

Example:

Center of Interest, Storytelling, Impact

2s to 10s

Why?

Does the title help?



"Mirror Image"

- 9.42- TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE
- 7.88- LIGHTING
- 7.85- COLOR HARMONY
- 7.61- PRESENTATION
- 7.50- COMPOSITION
- 6.61- IMPACT
- 6.39- CREATIVITY
- 6.33- INTERESTING SUBJECT
- 6.28- CENTER OF INTEREST
- 5.62- STORYTELLING



Why did the photographer take this photo?

What did the photographer want us to see?

What's special about this image?

Title

- Helps compensate for the variation in the way people see things
- Helps the artist convey their vision

The Importance of a TITLE

Titles can help answer:

Why did the photographer take this photo?

What did the photographer want us to see?

What's special about this image?

Truly great images

score high

on all elements

Great Photos Are NOT Accidents!

BEFORE shooting- Study the 12 elements.

WHILE shooting- Consider each element while shooting, not later.

AFTER shooting- Critique your own work against the 12 elements.

That's how you become
a great photographer!

This process:

1. Teaches you to critically evaluate your own images (even before shooting).
2. Instills a consistent thought process you can apply to all your photography.

"There are no shortcuts to any place worth going"

-Beverly Sills

1. Do it
2. Evaluate it
3. Improve it
4. Repeat it (practice)

IMAGE EVALUATION

TITLE _____

SCORE: (low) **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** (high)

IMPACT: Does it make you say "WOW!"

CREATIVITY – Is the subject and layout imaginative?

COMPOSITION- Are the elements of the photo arranged well?

CENTER OF INTEREST- Is the subject apparent? Viewer knows where to look?

SUBJECT MATTER- Is the subject interesting to the viewer?

STORYTELLING- Does the image tell a story?

COLOR HARMONY- Are the colors harmonious?

LIGHTING- Is the direction of light and exposure right for the subject?

TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE- Is focus, exposure, and color what was intended?

IMAGE PRESENTATION- Cropped well? Orientation good?

TOTAL