

Tips For Taking Great Photographs

by Clem Wehner

1. Get down on the subject's level. Don't shoot down on animals and people.
2. Use the "Rule of Thirds" to position the subject for a more aesthetically pleasing layout. But, remember the "rule" is really a guide.
3. Plan placement of subject to make sense in the scene. In the image leave room in front of objects that normally move.
4. Watch for distractions in the background. Take time to examine the scene in your viewfinder for things you don't want. Recompose if necessary.
5. Beware of bright objects that draw attention away from the subject. Remember, the brightest object in the image tends to become the subject.
6. Try vertical and horizontal orientation. Chose the one that looks best. It may depend on the subject. Vertical subjects (people, trees, tall objects, etc) generally need vertical camera orientation (portrait orientation). Horizontal subjects (landscapes, wide shots, etc. generally need horizontal camera orientation (landscape orientation).
7. Compose with objects in the foreground to give a sense of scale, to frame the image, to add interest, and to show depth.
8. Use leading lines to direct attention to the subject or center of interest of the image.
9. Don't split the image with a horizon line. Put the horizon in the lower or upper third.
10. Zoom in or get closer to eliminate distractions, and to emphasize the subject.
11. Try some unusual angles for added interest. Tilt the camera for variety. It doesn't have to be just vertical or horizontal.
12. Use early and late sun for warm color tones. The first and last two hours of the day are best.
13. Avoid clutter that detracts from the subject. Recompose as necessary. The best images are simple.
14. Don't forget small things as subjects. Some small things are great subjects. Some of the best landscapes are little ones-- flowers, rocks, interesting dirt formations, water running, creeks.
15. Try shooting close-ups of unusual things. Try unusual close-ups. Try close-ups with a short Depth of Field to blur out the background.

16. Try unusual views, angles, and backgrounds for interest. Images with contradictory parts or meanings are interesting.
17. Learn to use your camera's pre-programmed modes such as portrait, sports, landscape, night, auto, etc. These help you be creative and accommodate different lighting.
18. Digital photography requires careful exposure of dark areas of a scene. Even a little underexposure will cause dark areas of the scene to go black and you'll lose detail.
19. Learn the effective range of your flash. It's probably less than you think. Keep your subjects in range. Take a flash picture outside in the dark to learn your flash's range.
20. When the light is bad, photograph colorful objects in your scene to keep it from being dull. Take pictures even when weather is bad. Everything seems more beautiful after a rain.
21. Put a subject in your landscapes. The landscapes will be more interesting. Even a photo of the Grand Canyon is more interesting with something in the foreground
22. Use natural and window light for soft gentle lighting. Light from a north-facing window is best because it's very diffused. (The Sun is always to our south and can't shine directly into a north-facing window).
23. Shoot indoors without flash for beautiful ambient lighting. Camera must be on tripod. Use long exposure (1/2 second or longer) or auto exposure.
24. Shoot some black and white. It has timeless beauty. It can even turn "ordinary" into art! Even a mud puddle can be beautiful in B&W.
25. Be patient and take plenty of time to get the best shots. Plan carefully. Remember that with wildlife, you are on their schedule, not yours.
26. Great photos always have a "story" to tell. Look for images with something to say. They are always better than those without a subject.
27. Remember, photographers are the great storytellers of the world. You help preserve history and heritage for future generations. Without photos, they won't know who we were.

Now, go take some photos—lots of them!