

Taking Better Photos

By Dan Hyde



March 23, 2017

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How to take good photos?

1. Understand the features and quirks of your camera.
2. Always have a camera with you.
3. Shoot lots of pictures.
4. Use the 8 tips from last time.
5. Know the basics of **visual composition** (Coming up!).
6. Learn skills of **observation** and how to select interesting and unusual scenes. "Learn to See!"
7. **Share** your photos with others and **discuss why** some photos "work" and others don't.

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Photographer's Goal



Grab the attention of the viewer; communicate an idea; or share an experience, mood, or emotion.

What's the difference between a "snapshot" and a "good photo"?

Many good photography books. One I like is *Langford's Starting Photography* by Michael Langford and Philip Andrews, 7th edition, Focal Press, 2015 (about \$25 at Amazon.com)

Photo by Mary Jane Hyde

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Simple Ideas in Composition

- A photo is a 2-D **frame** of a 3-D world.
 - What to include in the **frame**? What to exclude?
 - Use your viewfinder to **frame** the image.
 - Zoom in with your lens or walk closer.
 - Look for distortions such as too close and large nose.
 - We want pleasant balance within the **frame**.
- Looking/moving into the space.
- Use **frame** within **frame** to focus attention on **subject**.
- Use illusion of depth. Many ways to accomplish.
 - Landscape – fore, middle, and background
 - Shading

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Looking/Moving into Space



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Use Frame within Frame



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Use Illusion of Depth



“Rule of Thirds”



- Placing **subject** in the center can be boring, try **Rule of Thirds**.
- Divide the screen into thirds with two horizontal lines and two vertical lines. Some cameras have a built-in grid for this.
- Place **subject** at an intersection or along a line.
- Really a guideline and not a rule to always follow!
- Based on Golden Ratio or “Divine Proportion”

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Strong Photos

Usually, the **strongest photos** are those that are simple and present the **subject** in a clear, uncluttered way.



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Some Principles to Apply

1. Eyes go to part of image most in **focus**.
2. Eyes go to the **brightest** part of the image.
3. Eyes are attracted to where strong **light areas** and **dark areas** are **adjacent**, i.e., contrasts in tone.
4. Eyes take a **path** through an image.

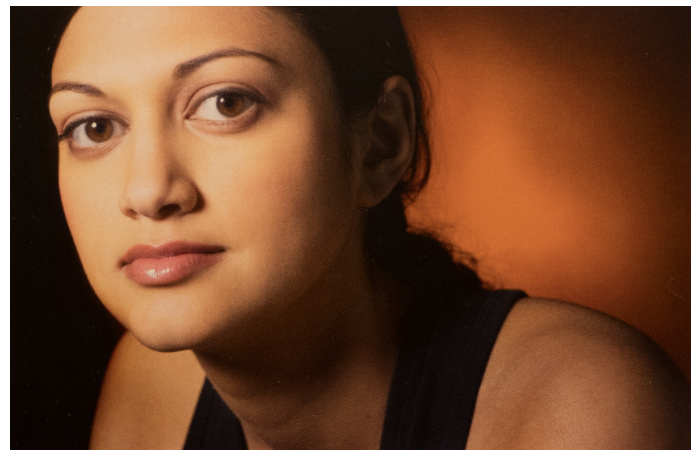
Use these principles to stimulate interest or manipulate viewer.

- When taking pictures of wildlife, focus on the eyes.
- Use contrasts in tone to focus attention – **tonal interchange**.
- Use leading lines to focus attention.
- Use curved lines to entice eyes to follow.
- Use “S” curves to entice eyes to follow.

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The eyes have it!

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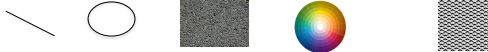


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Photographers work with line, shape, texture, color, and pattern,



the same as other visual artists, e.g., oil painters.

While most photographers are more interested in the **content**, i.e., who or what's in a photo, some emphasize the **structure** of a photo. Attending to both **content** and **structure** are important for a unified picture!

The **structure** is how the **visual elements** of **line**, **shape**, **texture**, **color**, and **pattern** work together to form the image.

In the following images, what are the dominate **visual elements**?



Line, shape, texture, color, or pattern?

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Line, shape, texture, color, or pattern?

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Line, shape, texture, color, or pattern?

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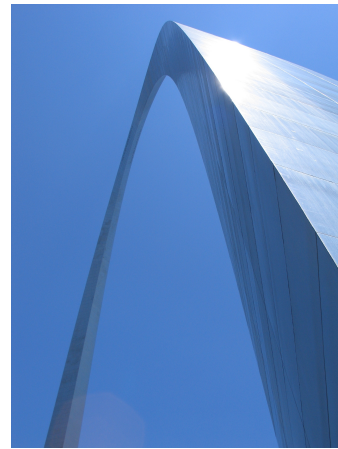


Line, shape, texture, color, or pattern?

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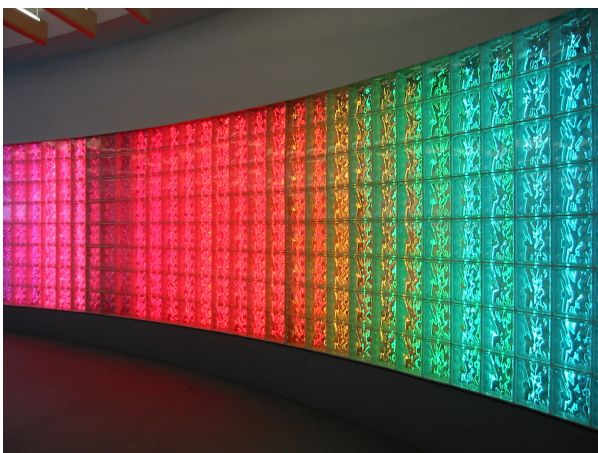


Line, shape, texture, color, or pattern?

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Line, shape, texture, color, or pattern?

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More on Photo Composition

- Learn to trust your own instincts and feelings.
- The “Wow!” factor.
- Move the camera around and explore the scene.
- Lots of theory is great, but you need a system you can remember and use in the field! Let’s look at one.

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The NYIP System

New York Institute of Photography's Three Guidelines

1. "What is the subject of the picture?"
2. "Draw attention to your subject."
3. "Simplify!"

The beauty of these three guidelines is that you can easily recall and use them while shooting any time.

They are general and flexible. There are many ways to achieve guidelines 2 and 3. Let's practice on some images.

www.nyip.edu - lots of free tips and articles.

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Guideline1: What is the subject of the picture?



What's the focus?

Ideas on how to apply #2: **Draw attention to subject?**

Ideas on how to apply #3: **Simplify!?**

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Guideline1: What is the subject of the picture?



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Timing critical!

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Guideline1: What is the subject of the picture?



Guideline 1: What is the subject of the picture?



Guideline 2: Draw attention to your subject.



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Guideline 2: Draw attention to your subject.



Guideline 2: Draw attention to your subject.



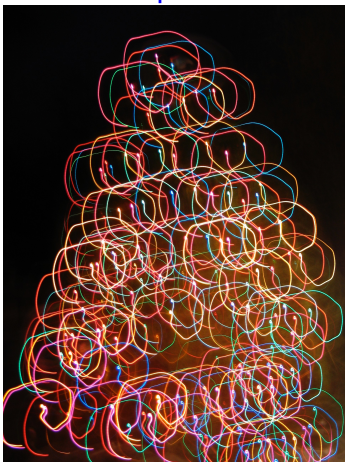
Guideline 3: Simplify.



Use Humor



Experiment



Questions?

Exercises for practice:

1. Try out the compositional ideas in this presentation.
2. Learn the three steps in the compositional system I discussed. Learn to use the three steps in your shooting. Consciously apply the three rules on your next photo shoot.
3. With a friend, look through magazines such as National Geographic for images with good composition and analyze why.