

Simple tips for great photography



You don't need to be a professional photographer or have a sophisticated camera to contribute a memorable picture to Photofest. Whether you're using a digital point-and-shoot or a smartphone, there are a number of easy guidelines to help you draw attention to the important part of your scene and enhance the impact of your shot.

The next time you set out to capture the moment, keep the following tips in mind:

Experiment with settings

Before you start directing your photo, take some time to get to know your camera's features. Can you turn on gridlines for help with composition? Play around with your camera's zoom and flash settings so you're prepared when the perfect picture comes your way. The better you know your camera, the more creative you can be.

Know your flash

If used correctly, flash can be your secret weapon to dramatically improve the quality of your photos. However, use it too close and you may end up with overexposure, making the people in your photos look washed out. Be sure to do some tests of your flash range so you know the best distance to stand. When in doubt, set the flash to automatic mode, so your camera will only fire the flash when it's needed.

Flip your camera

Most photographers never think to turn their cameras on their sides—the majority of photos are taken in horizontal, or "landscape," format. Try changing your orientation for a different, more interesting result. Taking a vertical, or "portrait," view can emphasize the height of an installation, or eliminate empty space to frame a single individual in a powerful way.

Upload your photos at PumpAppreciationDay.com/photofest from October 1, 2012 – March 31, 2012



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Change your perspective

How many photos do you take from a standing position? Matching the level of your subject can lead to more personal, professional photos, so try switching up your heights and angles. For instance, if you're taking a picture of a pump installation, it may be helpful to get down on your knees. Moving away from eye-level shots can help you take more memorable pictures.

Off-center your subject

Resist the urge to position your subject in the middle of your viewfinder. Imagine your frame is divided into three equal columns and three equal rows—like a tic-tac-toe grid. The “rule of thirds” says that the most important elements of your scene should be positioned on the gridlines, or the points at which they intersect. This simple tip will add balance and interest to your photo.

Pick a plain background

There's nothing worse than arranging a great group shot, then realizing it looks like a pump is sticking out of someone's head. While the human eye can detect different layers in a view, the camera flattens the foreground and background—meaning photo subjects can get lost in a busy environment. Look around for a plain, unobtrusive background and compose your shot so it doesn't distract from what you want people to see.

Move in close

When you can't get a clear background, it can be helpful to move in and fill the viewfinder. This reduces a lot of unnecessary scenery and lets the viewer focus on the main subject. Avoid digital zoom if you can physically get close to your subject, as zoom degrades your image quality.

Be aware of the light

Light can be the most valuable tool available to photographers—if they observe it carefully and work with it. When you're outdoors, avoid shooting during the middle of the day and try to put the sun behind you or over your shoulder to avoid harsh backlight and strong shadows on your subject. Early morning or early evening are the best for creating long shadows and rich color in scenic photographs.

BONUS TIP: Take a lot of pictures

The more pictures you take, the greater your chances of capturing a great shot. If you're using a digital camera or your phone, it doesn't cost anything to make a mistake. So carry your camera with you and take photos frequently. The best shots often come up when you least expect them.