

# General

Carry your camera with you often and everywhere. Don't be concerned that you'll wear it out.

Be careful how you hold your camera so as not to interfere with flash or auto focus.

Be steady, focus and shoot sharp.

Shoot using the lowest practical ISO setting, e.g., 64, 100, 200 <400.

Increase your ISO judiciously but go for it when needed.

Buy a large capacity media card and bracket photos or use burst mode.

Don't shoot RAW unless you're working commercially.

Use mode settings as guides or when you're rushed.

Carry a photo kit box filled with common and useful household items and gardening tools.

Use your camera's video setting for model releases.

Buy a tripod or a GorillaPod.

If you don't have IS or VR, and even if you DO, try to be as steady as possible when shooting.

Grab a shot, just grab a shot--THEN wait for a winner. This advice has particularly applicable when shooting wildlife.

Don't chimp and miss a shot--check your LCD periodically but not after every shot.

When shooting action DON'T CHIMP DURING THE ACTION, wait for a break.

Put a full-length mirror behind you so people can see themselves posing.

Be a model for another photographer--the experience will really open your eyes.

Carry a hand mirror with you in your kit box and a large comb.

Props add life to a photo when the subjects are people. Props can BE the subjects of your photos.

Your camera will see things you don't when looking through the viewfinder and won't see things you do.

Investigate the potential of QTVR.

Keep in mind what purposes you intend for your photos; this dictates a great deal. If you plan to use photos in a slideshow employing Ken Burns Effect, you want to shoot more full frame.

Great places to shoot people: fairs, flea markets, parades, sporting events, waiting in lines, shopping in outdoor markets, on the boardwalk, weddings.

Your face provides a degree of stabilization, but when looking through your viewfinder know that it make you less aware of your surroundings.

Turn OFF digital zoom or know when it kicks in and only use it if you must.

If you have an articulating viewfinder use it to your advantage.

Turn off beep (use it when you are alone then turn if off).

Have your camera ready to shoot wherever it is you are going, or use full Auto.

Keep your lens clean but clean it carefully--a little dust will not hurt.

If you have a P&S that is larger than pocket, buy a UV filter and keep it on your lens.

Acclimate your camera to your shooting environment--hot to cold is biggest problem.

Don't trash sharp photos unless they CLEARLY have no value. Crop and save.

Compose and frame you shots with just a little extra to allow for straightening and cropping.

IF you can program your camera settings check the EXIF information on shots that were not to your liking and determine what you need to change, e.g., contrast, color intensity.

Learn about color--read a book or take a class--your definition of color might we way off.

Plan for weather when shooting or adapt to it if conditions change.

Generally you want to shoot with the sun to your back.

Sunrises and sunsets require slight adjustments to your exposure settings.

If you have exposure compensation settings on your camera learn how to use them.

Many of the pros like to shoot wide and long (fast and long).

Digital noise can be a real problem--avoid it using different shooting techniques.

Play with long shutter speeds, especially at night.

Experiment with macro photography.

Find reasons to shoot that produce more than JUST photos. Do a household inventory for insurance or for a will.

Occasionally shoot using your camera's black and white settings but in most instances you're better off shooting in color then converting to black & white/grayscale, during post.

If your camera gives you the ability to turn OFF auto focus and use manual, learn how that's done--then try it.

Not knowing how your camera meters light and sets focus will produce disappointing photos.

Review your AWFUL photos periodically--can you see NOW what you did wrong or could have done better.

Know what it is you're shooting, IOW, know your subject. If you CAPTURE your subject it matters little what others think of the photo.

A good photo, a poor photo, a GREAT photo, are often very subjective ratings.

From time to time, sit down with your camera in your lap and review the menu selections--could you tell someone what each and every one means, or does?

From time to time sit down with your camera manual and read a few pages or a chapter on a feature of your camera that you never used or don't understand.

When you go on vacation take your camera's manual with you--very often vacations are the times people try to do things with their cameras that they've never done before.

When shooting events try to arrive early to find a good shooting position and to get setup shots. Stay a bit AFTER an event so you can find potential buyers for your photos or to capture breakdown.

Subjects in a public place can be photographed without their permission being given, so shoot, but be considerate.

If you're tired, sit, rest, even lie down, but keep your camera at the ready.

Look, ALWAYS, for the not so obvious subject or the subject from an entirely different perspective.

To test your competency, from time to time, show, or explain to another person, how to use your camera.

If you can trigger your camera using a remote, consider buying the remote and using

it to get photos you might not otherwise be able to capture.

If you are at a loss for what to shoot, or you have a favorite subject, shoot at different times of the day when shadows fall differently. Shoot in different weather conditions and at different times of the year.

Carry an extra battery--on long shoots you might lose camera performance as a battery weakens.

If you're getting low on battery power take your shots using the viewfinder, not the LCD.

Shoot hybrid time lapse photos, e.g., a flower bud to bloom several times a day over the course of a few days. Kids bloom, TOO.

Before you NEED to, try shooting under a variety of conditions such as low or bright light, shoot action of any kind--the faster the better/

Use lens hoods to minimize lens flare.

Don't miss a shot because everything is not just right. Shoot. You CAN fix many photos in post but that should not be your routine.

Shoot full Auto then shoot Manual or Program--compare the photos later and see what you can learn.

Fully understand what happens when you choose aperture or shutter priority modes--mix the two to get the shots you want.

Use video if the action REALLY matters--YouTube is no flash in the pan.

Anticipate shots, don't rush to take them.

Bracket and shoot in burst mode to catch action.

Press your shutter button halfway to set focus, then reframe. You can LOCK focus on many cameras.

Try not to shoot at the extreme focal limits of your lens--back off just a bit.

If you put UP a background against which to shoot, try to avoid shiny or reflective materials.

If you can't afford to buy them try making those things that will enhance your photo taking, e.g., soft boxes, shooting boxes, seamless, textured backdrops, etc.

Understand the rule of thirds and use it MOST, but not all the time.

When getting started or just learning to use a new camera don't hesitate to shoot on full Auto but expect a few milliseconds of shutter delay.

If your camera allows for continuous focus try using it for sports or when tracking one person in a group or crowd.

## Techniques

Get close to your subjects--physically if need be or by long zoom.

Minimize clutter in the background, either by clearing it away or softening it with a wide aperture setting.

With or without a tripod experiment with panoramas--this DOES require post.

Practice this 10-10-10 technique--take ten steps from wherever you are standing and for ten minutes look for ten unique shots.

Purposely shoot a subject contrary to established rules or contrary to how you'd typically shoot--you won't necessarily get a good photo although you just might. It's an exercise to stimulate your creativity.

Shoot the same subject from various angles, right, left, up, down, beneath, above, behind...

Whenever you are shooting closeups, shoot a full scene for reference.

PLAY with your WB settings for different effects.

Shoot a gray card.

Learn how to set a custom WB and use it when it works best.

Learn how to use your self-timer to get into shots or to make sure a shot is steady.

Try theme shooting. For more fun let someone CHOOSE the theme other than you, then go shoot it with the intent of pleasing THEM, first.

Try shooting your subject THROUGH something, like a fence, or glass, or a doorway.

When shooting very large or very small objects, place something in the photo composition that can give a sense of perspective.

When shooting people if the subject is standing have him or her sit--standing still, have them walk.

Trick--If you want to shoot a particular subject--a person, and you don't feel comfortable asking for permission when it's not required, try panning back and forth over a large area. Don't shoot until you have your subject in frame; they won't know they are the subject.

You can avoid red-eye in most shots if you don't have your subjects in a very dark place.

AF is wonderful but it often fails when you're shooting subjects with depth, repeatedly--in these instances use manual focus.

Shoot "things" when at parties--it's good practice and you'll be surprised how few people have photos of their stuff. Include *SOME* of the stuff in your event shots.

Shoot small groups UNPOSED--over one person's shoulder with only one face in sharp focus for example, or in profile, looking at one another, NOT YOU.

Place gray cards in out of the way places.

Carry a spray water bottle and gallon bottles of water. Use of applied water can enhance photos.

If you KNOW action will take place a particular spot and you only need to capture the action AT that particular spot, use manual focus.

## Lighting

Use ONLY available light whenever possible. Even available light, at times, can be too much.

Understand what your flash can do and what it can't. Use flash for fill light.

Learn about and try using slave flashes or inexpensive continuous lights.

When you use flash, plan to diffuse or bounce it most of the time--this reduces its range, however.

Shooting indoors try using the slow-sync setting on your flash.

Get a good histogram. Know what a good histogram IS for your particular shot. Train your eye to see shadows, midtones, and highlights.

Learn how to pan action shoots moving laterally.

If you have a camera with a high MP count don't hesitate to shoot scenes and crop; otherwise, zoom with your feet.

Snipe other photographers but do it from a distance or ask permission.

Shoot on overcast days.

Shoot during the golden hours.

Use shadows effectively and minimize them whenever its appropriate.

Know that blown highlights are more likely to ruin a photo than dark shadows.

When in bright light use the viewfinder, rig a sun shade, or use a Hoodman or Delkin hood.

Shadows are both good and bad--they give depth to a photo but they also scream--amateur.

When taking photos using flash in very low light, unless you really crank back the flash's intensity (which may not be practical), you'll have dark shots.

## Posing

Tell your subjects what you plan to do.

If you pose people have them assume comfortable poses and let them relax between shots.

When shooting pets have a snack handy and let the pet's master give commands.

Knowing that pets and children are often not easily posed or controlled during a shoot requires you to be creative, patient, and a fast shooter.

Some people have gummy smiles--have these subjects "grow" a smile as you shoot.

Most of us have a good side--ask your subject if they have a preference for being shot more right or left.

MOST people seem to prefer photos not taken head on, and not silhouettes.

Have guys pull in their guts, have women turn their hips. Women should never stand with their knees together.

POSE the subject to minimize signs of age, e.g., have a subject tilt their head back to stretch the neck or partially hide a double chin with hand placement.

Try shooting with another photographer but have the subjects play ONLY to the other photographer--only look at you when you ask.

As we age we get facial lines and wrinkles. Saying these are character features does not soften them. See if you can minimize the appearance of lines but having the person take on the expression that created the lines.

Use clothing to mask signs of age, e.g., a pulled up collar to mask a less than attractive neck.

Have subjects lick their lips before taking the shot, pucker, then relax.

Have women apply lipstick if no other makeup. A light powder to take down shine on

a face is a real plus.

Shoot seniors soft, and against black backgrounds when doing portraits.

People wearing glasses present problems with lens reflections and distortion--have the subject remove his or her glasses for a few shots.

Don't pose people in OBVIOUS poses--script stop action.

Have your subject smile with teeth and without, grin big and slightly, and just look reflective.

DON'T have your subjects say, "Cheese" have them say, "Yes."

Learn a few jokes--talk with your subjects as you make camera settings.

When taking group shots ALWAYS take more than one in the same pose--burst.

In large groups have the seniors sit in chairs, kids sit on the floor at their feet, and the remaining adults stand according to height with relationships taken into account. Do NOT rush posed group shots.

When shooting people at parties if they are seated at a table, eating, take a pass.

When shooting children have a favorite toy available. If the child is very young have the parent stand behind you holding a toy or talking with the child. Most children are okay with flash.