

Camera club Communiqué

December 2018 U3A ACT Australia

The *Camera Club Communiqué* is part of a newsletter sent to members of the “Camera Club” and “PhotoGroup” which are year-long courses run by the University of the Third Age here in Canberra. For privacy reasons, class notices have been omitted from this public version. To contact either class, please email u3acanberracameraclub@gmail.com or u3acanberraphotogroup@gmail.com respectively.

Image Editing Skills (especially for Beginners)

The photo that comes straight out of your camera is generally not very inspiring: it is only after some post-processing (a.k.a. “editing”) that digital images really come alive and get their story across to an audience. For example, all digital images need a little sharpening and many require some enhancement of colour. It is also usually imperative to crop away unnecessary bits of the image which otherwise distract the viewer’s attention without contributing to the over-all story. John Huegel’s impressive post on *Picture Correct* called: *Top 12 Editing Skills Every Photographer Should Know* lists the basic modifications anyone wanting to make good photos should know and be able to apply:

<https://www.picturecorrect.com/tips/image-editing-skills-tools-for-photographers/>



When Should You Convert from Colour to B&W?

We all know that even if you know you want a B&W photo, you should always first process the RAW file in

Lightroom (or alternative) to the best possible colour image. That way you

preserve more data on which you can work later on. But what if you are uncertain whether a photo would be better in colour or B&W? This article makes some good suggestions:

<http://www.shawacademy.com/blog/black-and-white-vs-colour-photography/>

Your Camera's Exposure Compensation Features

The exposure you get from your camera's automatic exposure metering is not always what you want: for example, sometimes you might want a slightly lighter or darker image than the one your exposure meter tells you is OK. Simon Ringsmuth <https://digital-photography-school.com/understand-your-cameras-exposure-compensation-feature/>

explains how to use the exposure compensation feature on your camera. If you choose to use this option, make sure you take special notice of his warning: *Please make note that when you dial in any Exposure Compensation it does not get reset to zero automatically for your next shot. You need to change it yourself manually once you're done using it.*



A Decades-Old Ansel Adams Mystery Solved

The iconic photographer of the American West, Ansel Adams, rarely kept detailed records of where and when he took a photo. This article by Cara Giaimo details how researchers were able to determine exactly when and whereabouts Adams took his famous photo, *Denali and Wonder Lake* in Denali National Park, Alaska.

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/ansel-adams-mystery-astronomy>

Ansel Adams

Photography Rules are made to be broken (sometimes)

Andrew Goodall is an Australian photographer who, in his post at <https://www.picturecorrect.com/tips/creative-photography-tips-techniques/> explains that there are times when we need to break the so-called "rules", such as the "Rule of Thirds". An example well worth noting is the "rule" that you should take photos only during the early morning or late afternoon when the sun is at an angle and casting interesting shadows. But,

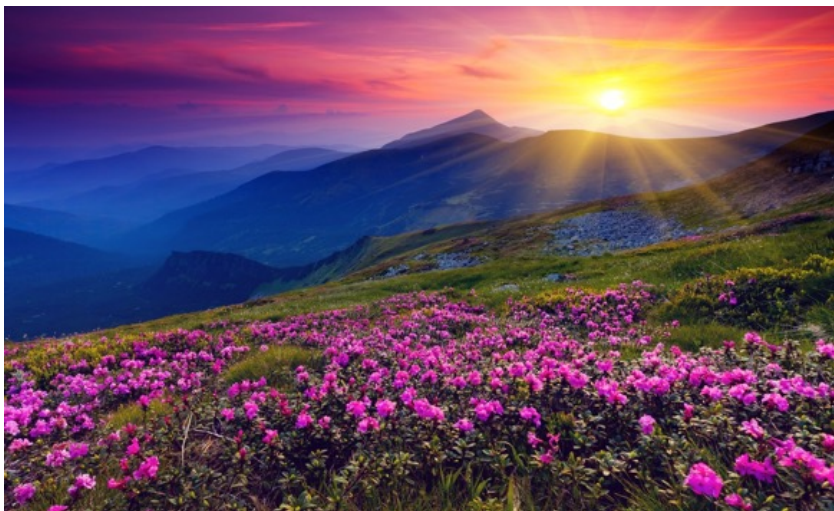


as the illustration show, this is not necessarily so in B&W: midday sun casts harsh shadows but since B&W depends on only shadow and light, often more interesting images can be made at that time of day.

More on Depth of Field (DoF) and Hyperfocal Distance

DoF determines how much of your photo appears in focus. In actual fact, only one plane in any photo is truly in sharp focus but by relying on what our eyes can and cannot see, we can often cheat. We do this by determining how far in front of the subject and how far behind it will be seen to be sharp enough.

This involves what photographers call “circles of confusion”, that is in effect how big a dot can be before it starts to look fuzzy. To work out the distances involved you first need to know how far the subject is from the camera and what aperture you would like to use. Basically, the smaller the aperture and the further away the subject, the greater the zone of apparent sharpness will be.



This is where *hyperfocal distance* comes in: in practice, you do not need to focus on the subject itself for a whole zone to be apparently sharp enough. All you need to know is where in the scene to set focus — it might be somewhere in front

of, or even behind, the actual subject – for everything to seem sharp. This applies particularly in *landscape* photography where having several zones — foreground, middle distance and infinity — in apparent focus lends depth and interest to the image. Many lenses actually have a scale marked on the barrel to help determine this for you but you can also get an app —

f/8 DoF Calculator, for iPhones — at <https://www.photopills.com/calculators/dof>. Other *genres* in which having a grasp of hyperfocal distance and DoF is important are *street* and *sports photography* where you anticipate how far or how close your subject will be and set your camera to encompass this zone before you go into action. Many photographers “park” their cameras with aperture set to f8, just so they are ready for grab shots when they present themselves. It’s not always accurate and may be too slow for the available light but 9 times out of 10 you do at least get a shot.

An article from <http://www.shawacademy.com/blog/what-is-hyperfocal-distance/> explains all this perhaps more clearly than here.

If you print your photos, the size of the *circles of confusion* is of great importance because you have to allow for the distance any viewer will stand to look at your photo. Obviously, the *smaller circle of confusion* the closer the viewer can stand and still see the image as “sharp”. The “correct” viewing distance is generally said to be about twice the diagonal of the print. If viewers insist on peering closer than this, you can only hope they are short-sighted.

Shadows and Highlights: The Mark of Excellence

Tedric Garrison writing for *Picture Correct* draws attention to the fundamental importance of highlights and shadows in a photo. Especially in B&W, if your photo lacks highlights it will appear flat and uninteresting; if it



lacks proper blacks, it will lack depth and emotion. The same is true in colour, but here there is the added contrast of colour against colour. Whatever the medium, it is vital that your highlights be bright enough to attract the viewer’s attention: in many ways, it is the highlights which tell the story you are trying to communicate.

In colour, the modern fashion of super-saturation, which to many of us seems garish, does at least try to address this issue. In B&W, the fashion for ultra-contrast is even clearer: let the highlights tell the story and black out or at least darken everything else that is not essential to that message.

Garrison's excellent article, including an introduction to Ansel Adam's Zone System is at <https://www.picturecorrect.com/tips/shadows-highlights-black-white-photography/>

The Art of the Craft

Tedric Garrison, the author of the above reference, runs a blog at <http://better-photo-tips.blogspot.com/2010/12/art-of-craft.html>

On one post he gave his opinion about the standing of photography as an "art", a topic hotly argued at the end of the 19th Century by the Pictorialists but still a matter of interest to us in the digital age. Garrison says:

My Mother has been a Potter for over 30 years. She prefers hand built pottery to anything created on the potter's wheel. She considers herself an Artist as opposed to a Craftsman. By her definition an Artist creates something that is unique, wherein a Craftsman (no matter how talented) creates something that can be produced again and again.

By her definition, I suppose all photographers are Craftsman, yet being a rebellious son I tend to dispute her definition. When we (as photographers) capture a moment in time, it often can not be duplicated. Therefore photojournalist MUST be artists, right?

When we (as photographers) capture an expression or mood there is no guarantee that our subject will ever feel exactly the same way again. Therefore portrait photographers MUST be artists, right?

When we (as photographers) capture a prospective or angle in nature that most others walk by, we influence how others view the world. Not something you can do everyday. Therefore landscape photographers MUST be artists, right?

My definition varies a bit from my mothers. An Artists makes something unique by putting themselves into the finish product. A GOOD craftsman is always an artist, those that are not deal with mass production and have no emotional tie to their work.

What's in a RAW file and how does software convert it

While it is pretty obvious that if you don't shoot in RAW you are missing out on lots of data which could help you make better, more interesting photos. Of course, not all cameras are "RAW enabled" but the loss of data in jpgs is so significant that even smart phones are now being released

capable of shooting RAW (Note: iPhones themselves are not capable but by using an app such as *ProCamera*, iPhones from X on will do RAW).

RAW of course, preserves almost all of the data the camera's sensor records — we know that — but what actually is that data? James Ritson at <https://affinityspotlight.com/article/raw-actually/> in a lengthy but informative article for *Affinity Spotlight* explores what is in a RAW file and how it works. By the way, *Affinity* is an app which works on multiple platforms (including tablets as well as desktops/laptops). It is capable of processing RAW files and is one of the programs well worth considering if you don't like *Lightroom*.

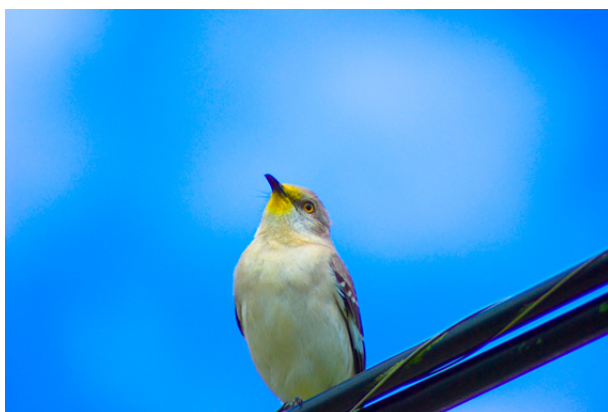
A Beginner's Guide to Photographing Flowers

Jaymes Dempsey is a macro and bird photographer from Michigan whose post for *Digital Photography School* provides a very thorough tutorial in



photographing flowers. For many of us, photographing things in our own backyard is both convenient and a challenge, because the flowers blooming outside the back door require more than just a record shot to do them justice. Getting in close is always a good recipe to capture the individual beauty of any bloom. But there are many other considerations, including the camera and lens (a dedicated macro lens is always a help), a tripod, best to shoot on overcast days (softer light), filling the frame, simplify, composition and, among others, colour contrasts and of course, *bokeh* (out of focus background). You can read Dempsey's post at:

<https://digital-photography-school.com/beginners-guide-photographing-flowers/>



Garden Bird Photography

While on the subject of back-yard photography, another popular subject is bird photography. Here, in Canberra, we are particularly well supplied with birds of all varieties which come to our gardens. In his post for *Picture*

Correct, Wayne Turner outlines the essentials for this popular *genre*. But, as he warns, don't go out and buy very long lenses and other expensive equipment until you have tried your hand with the photo gear you already own.

<https://www.picturecorrect.com/tips/garden-bird-photography-tips/>



Five Tips for Creative Pet Photography

And still in the back-yard, another of the Ann Arbor MI photographer Jaymes Dempsey's posts will be of interest to pet photographers (although, cat-lover warning: all the images in this article are of gorgeous dogs).

<https://digital-photography-school.com/five-tips-creative-pet-photography/>

5 Simple Technical Tips To Make Candid Street Photography Easier

Writing at *Picture Correct*, James Maher says



Street photography simultaneously tests your hand-eye coordination, your ability to see and frame interesting moments as they quickly unfold before you, your ability to see light, your technical abilities with your camera, and your ability to be comfortable capturing strangers.

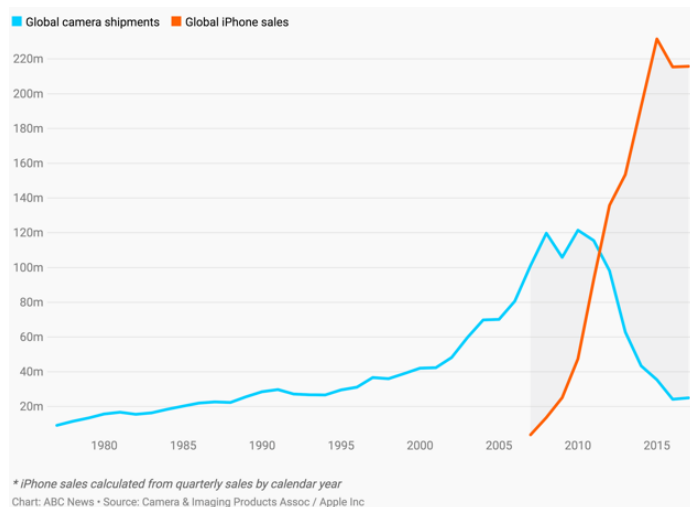
If you are master of all those skills, then street photography could be your genre, particularly if you like to travel. Not only do we often find greater interest in street scenes when somewhere other than home, most of us — like sailors in foreign ports — also feel less shy about doing things which back home we might consider impolite or even risky. Without doubt, the biggest hurdle for would-be street photographers is overcoming the reluctance to take photos of strangers.

<https://www.picturecorrect.com/tips/5-simple-technical-tips-to-make-candid-street-photography-easier/>

Because smart phones are so ubiquitous these days — everyone everywhere seems to be looking at their phones or even taking selfies — street photography with a fairly recent mobile is an excellent way to get started. Modern smartphones are capable of exhibition-worthy images and nobody notices when you are taking a picture: you are just part of the everyday scene.

How the iPhone killed 'big camera'

Stephen Hutcheon writing for the ABC Digital Story Innovation Team on 11th July this year said what we all probably knew: that the smart phone is taking over the world of photography. He said:



When the iPhone 3G went on sale in Australia and around the world 10 years ago today, few realised it was the harbinger of a new era in photography — one that no longer required a "conventional" camera.

Two years later, in 2010, we hit "peak camera". That was also the year of the iPhone 4

which came with a much-improved rear camera and was the first Apple phone to feature a forward-facing camera.

That iPhone, combined with the debut of the Instagram app later that year, helped launch the selfie craze and cement the smartphone as (almost) everyone's camera of choice.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-11/how-the-iphone-killed-big-camera/9971624>

How to Bounce a Flash

Finally, if you must use flash this Christmas to capture the jollity, do try to use bounce flash, especially if you are using on-camera flash. Bouncing the light off a reflective wall or ceiling will give you a much softer, realistic light rather than those hard-edged, red-eyed pictures of the loved ones....

John Roger's article in *Picture Correct* will tell all you need to know and probably even a bit more, at least for the Silly Season...

<https://www.picturecorrect.com/tips/how-to-bounce-a-flash-professional-guide/>

From me personally...

I would like to say “thank you” albeit in their absence to all the photographers around the world who have shared their experience in the “tips”, “posts” and other articles I have quoted over the past year in *Communiqué*. Of course, they will never know I am grateful — they don’t get *Communique* — but I for one have learned a lot from their advice and I look forward to learning even more in 2019. I am not a fan of Christmas (for the past couple of years I have escaped to Japan where there are no endless loop carols) but do have a Happy Hogmanay, an enjoyable and safe holiday season, and may all the light be good in the New Year....

Bob Hay