

TAKE
OUR
WORD
FOR IT

CARTER RAE COMMUNICATIONS LTD



PHOTOGRAPHY

A BRIEF GUIDE TO TAKING
BETTER PICTURES

INTRODUCTION

Of all the various subjects, people reliably make the best photographs. Nothing is more fascinating to us than other people. A good 'people' photograph shows character, emotion and a connection for the viewer. The biggest mistake many photographers make is to try to shoot a person's whole body, head to toe. Don't attempt this, unless clothes are important (such as a uniform). The best shots are simple so move closer and remove any clutter from the picture.

LOCATION, LIGHT AND COMPOSITION

The first thing to do is find your location. Choose a spot with a simple, medium-toned background. Tree foliage, grass or the ocean work well. Minimise patterns, shapes and colours. Keep that background simple, or include a famous landmark.

A photograph is all about light so always think of how the light is striking your subject. The best bet is to move around so that the sun is behind you and to one side. Late afternoon is the best time as it gives a nice, warm, golden glow.

Composition is the key to an interesting photograph. Despite all the technical jargon, photography is essentially an art form. To improve your skills, find photos you like and study them, asking yourself: 'Why exactly do I like this picture?'

When you take a photograph, identify what the subject is. Answering 'a person' or 'a building' is not good enough. Although it may be tempting to simply snap your photos and rush on, take time to explore the subject and see what appeals to you. Ask yourself: 'What is the purpose of this photograph?' and 'What is the reaction I want a viewer to have?'

Create impact by using real or inferred lines that lead the viewer's eye into and around the picture. You can also connect lines in a path or shape, such as a triangle. A picture is a playground for the eyes to explore, so provide a path of movement, and some space for the eye to rest.

A problem with many photographs is that they're blurry. Avoid 'camera shake'

by holding the camera steady. Use both hands, resting your elbows on your chest, or use a wall for support.

Depth is an important quality of good photographs. We want the viewer to think that they're not looking at a flat picture, but through a window, into a three-dimensional world.

□ FURTHER TIPS

The beauty of an image is often in its proportions. A popular technique with artists is called the Rule of Thirds. Imagine the frame divided into thirds, both horizontally and vertically, like a noughts and crosses board. It's always tempting to use a wide angle lens and 'get everything in'. However, this can be too much and you may lose impact.

Generally try to keep the eyes, not necessarily the head, in the centre of the frame. If the person is looking slightly to one side, add extra space to that side.

Get your subject relaxed and happy: with children, give them something to play with; and chat to adults about the location, their job or a skill. People hate waiting while you adjust your camera so always plan the shot and adjust your camera first, before asking people to pose.

□ THINGS TO CONSIDER

- When taking photos of groups of people, try to arrange them in original and interesting ways. Stand on a chair or crouch down with the camera pointing up to obtain interesting angles
- To add fun and action to a shot, hold the camera at an angle – 30 degrees with the right side up works well
- At presentations, zoom in as close as possible to the recipient. Get them to hold their award or certificate close to them. Remember, it's their face and emotion that's interesting – not what shoes they are wearing!
- Generally, try to consider your shot as an original artwork. It may not win the Turner Prize but it may capture your audience and even provoke a reaction. Dare to be different!

Further Information

If you have any questions in relation to the brief information contained in this introductory guide, or would like further information, please contact:

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There is a vast difference between taking a picture and making a photograph.

Robert Heinecken

The ear tends to be lazy, craves the familiar and is shocked by the unexpected; the eye, on the other hand, tends to be impatient, craves the novel and is bored by repetition. W H Auden