



THE ESSENTIALS OF  
CREATING  
**BETTER**  
**IMAGES**



**This booklet is intended to accompany your camera's manual.**

While you need basic supplies for your camera to function properly and gear to keep your equipment safe, quality images are not all about the latest and greatest technology.

They're about learning new techniques and improving the ones you already know.

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# BEFORE THE SHOT

Each time you raise your camera to your eye, ask yourself a very important question: "How long do I have to get this picture?" The answer is very important and will determine how much preparation you can put into the image as well as how many chances you have to retake the picture.

A grandmother reading a story to a child will likely stay that way for at least a few minutes.



A sled zipping down a hill will be there and gone in just a few seconds.



Take a second to look for little details that could be distracting.

While the child is the main focus of the image, the water bottle on the bench is a small detail that is very noticeable.



By removing the bottle, the viewer's attention is drawn to the child without any distraction.



Watch the background for objects or details that could interfere with the image.

In this family picture it appears there is a tree growing out of the boy's head.



By taking a small step to the left before taking the picture, the conflicting element is separated from the primary subject.

# DURING THE SHOT PT.1

While you are capturing an image, remember to think about composition. While you may see a scene in a certain way, the image will not necessarily convey that feeling. You will need to include details you feel are necessary while excluding those that could detract from the image.



In the left image, it is unclear what this man is doing. The lined object on the right side of the frame is distracting and unrecognizable. In the image on the right, the microphone is a point of focus and easy to understand. It is now clear that the man is singing.

In many situations, you will have the option to show more or less of your intended subjects. Different compositions can have different effects on the final image.



A wide-framed image can show a setting or provide extra context about what is happening. A close-framed image can have a more personal, intimate feeling.

# DURING THE SHOT PT.2

In addition to framing your subject based on the content in the image, there are many fundamental composition techniques that can have a drastic effect on the overall picture.

Two of the most common options relate to the amount of information in an image. In this case, both images are clearly recognizable as a skyline. However the image on the left is filling the frame with detail, whereas the image on the right is making use of empty space to make the city seem less imposing.



Another common technique is the use of symmetry. In the image on the left, the two tall trees balance each other on opposite sides of the image, framing the cloud in the center. On the right, only one tree is shown, giving the clouds more significance in the composition.



# AFTER THE SHOT PT.1

It's time to mix things up! The only way to get better is to try new techniques. Capturing an image is only the first step. What you do after is equally as important. Now that you have captured the image as you envisioned it, photograph the same subject, but in a different way.

Try changing your depth of field. A shallow focal plane can change an image and give more focus to the main subject.



A wide focal length can exaggerate depth and give an image a comical feel.



Changing your subject in relation to the direction of light can have a dramatic effect.



# AFTER THE SHOT PT.2

Changing the distance from your subject can have a dramatic effect on the final image. It can also remind you not to miss the big picture or the little details.



Especially for travel photography, it is important to take a standard picture before you get creative. A standard image of what you saw is quick and easy to capture. That way, if something happens and you don't have time to set up a complicated picture, you still have something to take with you.



# KIDS & PETS

There are certain subjects that are inherently photogenic and are very commonly photographed by those who care for them. Children and pets provide nearly limitless picture opportunities. There are a few tips and techniques that almost always result in memorable images.



Photographing with a wide angle, from below their eye level can give them a triumphant feel, not commonly seen by adults.

Try putting them in situations that are out of the ordinary or commonly reserved for everyday activities, like reading the newspaper or shaving.



Photograph them as they are. It's what makes them so endearing. While a mess that will take hours to clean may not seem like the thing you want a picture of, in a number of years, those are the images that may mean the most.



# PEOPLE IN CONTEXT

Showing context in an image can make the difference between an everyday picture, with a significance that only you completely understand, and a picture that can be shared and understood by anyone who sees it.

A child with a swim suit and a surf board seems more natural at the beach. The setting offers some description about his attire and where he went on an adventure.



A man in a standard, nondescript suit, standing against a wall, offers little information about his job or his talents. However, placed in front of a stage, it becomes clear that he is a performing pianist.



# APPRECIATE THE CLASSICS

There are many instances where the technique used to capture a subject can, itself, become the purpose of an image. In addition, becoming familiar with these techniques can allow you to see other subjects in new and unique ways.

Reflections can affect the viewer's understanding of an image.



Silhouettes can give an image a completely different feeling.



Natural and man-made patterns replace context with form.



'High key' (light subjects on a light background) or 'low key' (dark subjects on a dark background) can give an image a light-hearted or dark and moody feeling, when used appropriately.



# A LITTLE MOTIVATION

Throughout your adventures in photography be sure to keep something in mind. No one will ever be able to teach you everything and you will never be able to learn everything. This isn't a bad thing. In fact, it's very inspiring. It simply means that no matter how much you know about photography, you always have the possibility for your next picture to be better than your last.

Here are a few ideas for your photographic journey, that will always lead to something new.

## **Read your Manual.**

Odds are there's a function in your camera you don't use regularly or may not even know about.

## **Pick apart pictures that hold your attention.**

If you see a picture and find yourself looking at it for a long time, ask yourself what makes it so interesting.

## **Start projects.**

You never know where they'll lead you.

## **Photograph people you do/don't know.**

It will let you practice new techniques as well as expand your comfort zone.

## **Go to events.**

Every event is different, as are the pictures.

## **Tell a story with images.**

It can help you learn how to convey a message with your images.

## **Tell a story with as few images as possible.**

Editing your own images is a daunting task.  
This will help you refine that process.

## **And remember,**

"If everyone sees everything differently,  
there are at least 7 billion ways  
to take a picture of anything."

To see some recent work  
or sign up for classes,  
be sure to stop by my site!

**JON KOPACZ**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY**

248.310.6461   [JonKPhoto@gmail.com](mailto:JonKPhoto@gmail.com)   [JonKPhoto.com](http://JonKPhoto.com)

