

Photographic Tips and Exposure Guide



After entering numerous photography competitions and listening to the judges' comments, I have come away with a few ideas to help get some winning pictures. A good photograph should have four things going for it. Start with an interesting subject and give a good presentation for impact. Proper exposure and technique are two more factors that will make an average snapshot into a meaningful photograph.

If a subject or scene catches your eye, chances are it will make for a good photograph. Just think about what it was that attracted you to the subject and concentrate on that aspect when taking the picture. Before taking the picture, study the different camera angles and then decide on the best shot. Be sure to fill the frame with the subject while carefully watching the background for distracting elements. With your eye to the viewfinder, look all around the frame to make sure nothing is included that you don't want in the picture.

When shooting outdoors on a sunny day, avoid the midday period when the sun is directly overhead. The morning and afternoon hours are the best time for picture taking. When the sky is overcast, you can get diffused portraits and close ups with no shadows. Just avoid including the sky in pictures when it is overcast, especially with slide film. When the lighting is contrasty, take a closeup meter reading of the subject.

For correct composition, place the main subject slightly off center. Look for framing and lead in lines. Include foreground, middleground and background in the photo and use a small lens opening to increase depth of field. Decide whether your subject lends itself to a horizontal or vertical format and compose accordingly. Get on the same plane as the subject and be careful not to tilt the lens. This way, you can avoid converging lines in your photographs.

To emphasize the subject and blur the background (selective focus), shoot with a large aperture while focusing carefully. In general, use the faster shutter speed and lens opening combinations to avoid camera shake. The light falling on the subject makes the photograph. Learn to see the light, notice how it changes during different times of the day and use light colored walls and reflectors to bounce light onto your subjects.

Existing light photography is challenging and there are times when the light levels are too low to use the camera's built in metering system. An exposure table comes in very handy in

these situations. The information in the table (click on the box below) is from the Kodak Existing Light brochure that I have used over the years. A cable release and a tripod are necessary when using shutter speeds below 1/30th of a second.

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