

History of photography

We owe the name "Photography" to Sir John Herschel, who first used the term in 1839, the year the photographic process became public. The word is derived from the Greek words for light and writing.

1620 — Robert Boyle, founder of the Royal Society, reported that silver chloride turned dark on exposure.

1690 — Angelo Sala noticed that powdered nitrate of silver is blackened by the sun.

1727 — Johann Heinrich Schulze discovered that certain liquids change colour when exposed to light.

1805 — Thomas Wedgwood captured images, but his silhouettes could not survive because there was no known method of making the image permanent.

1827 — First successful photo produced by Niépce, using material that hardened on exposure to light. This picture required an exposure of eight hours.

1831 — Louis Daguerre discovered a way of developing photographic plates, a process which reduced exposure time from eight hours down to half an hour.

1835 — First negative is produced, depicting the window at Lacock Abbey.

1851 — Frederick Scott Archer introduced Collodion process, reducing exposure times to two seconds.

1860 — Celluloid invented and John Carbutt persuaded a manufacturer to produce thin celluloid as a backing for sensitive material.

1871 — Dr. Richard Maddox used Gelatin (which had been discovered only a few years before) instead of glass as a basis for the photographic plate.

1884 — George Eastman introduces flexible film. Four years later he introduces the box camera, and photography begins to achieve mass appeal.

Southwest Region News Service

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Basic photography



Beginning tips
for taking great
photographs

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OUTREACH AND EXTENSION

Essential photograph tips

Keep Your Camera Ready

Spontaneous moments make priceless pictures. To capture them, you need a camera with you.

Get Close

As a general rule, the closer you get to the subject, the better your picture. Getting close eliminates distracting, unnecessary backgrounds and shows the subject clearly.

Keep People Busy

When photographing people, keep them busy! Your pictures will have a feeling of lively spontaneity. To avoid stiff, static poses, prompt your subjects to be active. Their expressions will be more relaxed and natural. Think candid.

Use A Simple Background

A simple background focuses attention on the subject and makes clear, strong pictures. A cluttered, multi-color background distracts from the star of the photo. Move your subject or your camera to find a simple, uncluttered background.

Place The Subject Off-Center

There is nothing wrong with placing the subject in the center of your viewfinder. However, placing the subject off-center can make the composition more dynamic and interesting to the eye.

Include Foreground In Scenics

When taking scenic pictures, try including objects in the foreground. Elements in the foreground add a sense of distance, depth and dimension.

Hold Your Camera Steady

Holding the camera steady is vital for sharp, clear pictures. When you push the shutter button, press it gently rather than jabbing it. Even slight camera movement can rob your pictures of sharpness.

Look For Good Lighting

Good lighting can make your pictures more interesting, colorful, dimensional, and flattering to the subject. Strong sunlight is only one of many types of good lighting. Some people are surprised to learn that cloudy, overcast days provide the best lighting for pictures of people. Bright sun makes people squint, and it throws harsh shadows. On overcast days, the light is soft and flattering.

- The best daylight for pictures is before 10 a.m. and after 3 p.m. Angle your subjects away from the sun, and place them near a reflective object.
- If you're shooting indoors, make sure your flash is on and you're within 6 to 12 feet of your subject. For outdoors shots, face away from the sun -- but still use your flash for "fill lighting."

Choose The Right Film

- A 100-speed film, it is the best in bright sun.
- A 200-speed film is best when you need an all-around performer. Great for slow to moderate action in a variety of indoor and outdoor situations.
- A 400-speed film does it all. Ideal for extended flash range, as well as outdoor shots.

Before going on vacation

- **Give your camera a tune-up, fresh batteries and a lens cleaning. If your camera uses a hard-to-find battery, buy a spare.**
- **Try a short 12-exposure roll at home. Process and check the quality of work.**
- **Pack 36-exposure rolls—you'll have less to pack. Use a 200-speed film for daylight pictures. For more versatility, try a 400- or 800-speed color print film.**
- **Carry film in plastic zip-top bags. Without the boxes and canisters, it's easy for airport security to hand-inspect, rather than x-ray, your film.**

Rules of composition

Have a Strong Center of Interest

It is best to have one main point of interest. Whatever the main subject, always give it sufficient prominence in the photo to make all other elements subordinate to it.

Use the Best Camera Angle

Good pictures usually depend on selecting the proper point of view. When you want to photograph a subject, don't just walk up to it and snap the shutter. Walk around and select the best camera angle for the picture. For example, instead of shooting down at your child or pet, crawl around with them and snap photos from their perspective.

Move in Close

One rule of composition you should always keep in mind is whether the picture you're about to take would be better if you moved in closer. A close-up picture focuses your attention on the main subject and shows details you could otherwise overlook.

Use Lines for Interest and Unity

Use leading lines to direct attention into your pictures. Select a camera angle where the natural or predominant lines of the scene will lead your eyes into the picture and toward your center of interest.

Watch the Background

The background can make or break a picture. It can add to the composition and help set the mood of a picture, or it can detract from the subject if it is cluttered. Watch out for backgrounds that are more compelling than the subject. Cluttered, distracting backgrounds often spoil otherwise good pictures. Before you snap the shutter, stop for a minute and look at the background.