



5 Tips To Better Photo Composition

We've all done it while taking photos: The bird in the background appears as if it's coming out of someone's head, or a sign we didn't see pulls the focus from the main subject. Or perhaps we unintentionally put everyone in the center of the photo — blocking the amazing landmark behind them.

It's a wonder why our shots don't have the same appeal of the photos we see in magazines. Instead of blaming your camera, focus on the composition of your photos. Here are a few ideas to get you on your way to finer images that will impress your family and friends:

No. 1: Use the "rule of thirds." Try to never put the main subject in the middle of the frame, says photographer Keith Barraclough, who's also a former photography teacher. He suggests dividing your frame into a grid of three equal spaces both horizontally and vertically as the basis of the rule of thirds. The intersecting points are great places to put your subject.

No. 2: Know your focus. For example, you might choose to put a person out of focus in the background while you highlight a yellow flower. "Make sure what is important in the shot is what is shown as the most important," says Sebastian Smith, a photographer and co-creator of Photo School Nashville. What is closer to you, or brighter in color, will pull focus.

No. 3: Bend your knees. Often changing your height will help you put your subject in a good position, relative with the background. "Use a different perspective," says Barraclough. "Shoot from above or below your subject." Changing your height can help you to balance the shot with lights and darks, or put the subject into a good "rule of thirds" position.

No. 4: Guide the viewer's eye. "Use perspective to lead the viewer through the photograph. A good example is a winding road. Start the road at the bottom of the frame and have it end at one of the rule of third points," says Barraclough. That meandering perspective can be used even if you don't have a river or a road. Use the concept to guide the eye right up to your subject, such as flowers, furniture, a picturesque house or pet.

No. 5: Check the horizon. When shooting landscapes, the horizon line should always be straight, not tilted. (Your editing functions can help straighten your shot if you happen to be a little off.) "Horizon lines should never cut the frame in half," says Smith. "Always place the horizon line either in the top or bottom third of the frame."

While there are many other components to great composition, these five tips can make an enormous difference in your photos, no matter what you shoot with.

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