

Digital photography tips

Digital technology has produced many amazing tools, but it's still a challenge to shoot good video. Take advantage of these tips provided by top professional photographers. And learn how to edit, enhance, and organize your photos with Adobe Photoshop Elements and Adobe Photoshop software.

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Taking better landscape pictures

Take a trip to any museum and you'll be surrounded by landscapes. For centuries, artists have created paintings, sculptures, and, more recently, photographs of beautiful scenes of nature. Part of the appeal of a landscape to the artist is that it changes so slowly — it's easier to paint a picture of a mountain range than to paint one of a jogger, because painting takes a long time and the mountain isn't going anywhere, while the jogger will be gone before you know it.

However, artists don't just choose landscapes because mountains stick around longer than a moving person. If that were the case, photographers wouldn't ever take a picture of a sunset or a beautiful meadow full of flowers. Instead, photographers spend a lot of time taking pictures of scenic locations. There's something appealing about photographing nature, and with just a little bit of work, you can easily produce a great photo!



Location, location, location

The best place to start when taking a picture of any scenic locale is, obviously, a scenic place. A nice landscape can be found just about anywhere. It helps to have a snow-covered mountain range, a field of growing corn, or a tropical island, but any interesting location can make a good landscape. The sprawl of a highway, the tops of city buildings, or a row of old houses can all make for excellent landscape portraits.

This landscape is interesting, but the fence in the foreground overpowers the scenery.



The secret is to pick something interesting — an environment that makes your eye look around. A good landscape picture is compelling no matter where you look. Even if there's a part of the image that stands out (a striking tree or a mountain peak), the whole picture should be intriguing enough to capture the viewer's eye.

Don't forget: Colors and shapes are important. You should see a pleasing variety of objects without any glaring distractions.

Getting some distance

Cameras see a smaller slice of the world than people do. If you point your camera at someone in front of you, for example, you might just see their head and chest, but if you look at that same person, you could see their whole body and some of the background. When you look at a landscape, you can turn your head and look around to take in a very large view of the area. Unfortunately, your camera can't do that — it can see only what's directly in front of it.

Part of what makes a picture an actual landscape, as opposed to just a nice picture of some object, is the distance between the photographer and the subject. A good landscape should give the same sort of view that you'd see looking at a scene and turning your head from side to side.

Since a camera can't actually do that, you either have to get really far away from your subject or you could use a special add-on wide-angle lens.

Backing away from the subject allows the camera's lens to take in more of the scene, while using a wide-angle lens changes how much of the overall scene the camera can capture. Either way, you'll want to take a picture that looks like it was shot from farther away than if you were shooting a portrait. It's the distance between the subject and the objects that really makes a landscape unique.

This landscape was taken with a wide-angle lens.



This shows what the picture would have looked like with a normal lens.

**Depth perception**

Many cameras let you adjust a setting called the aperture. While aperture (sometimes called f-stop) is a complicated topic, one thing to keep in mind is that the higher the aperture number, the farther away your subject can be yet still be in focus. If you've ever taken a picture of someone and had the background blurry, this is because the camera's aperture was set very low. If you've taken a picture and the background objects were in focus and distracting, this is because the aperture was set to a higher number.

The aperture is the part of the camera that lets in light, like the iris in your eye, and the numbers describe how open or closed it is. The reason this is important is that you can set the camera's aperture so that your landscape pictures have sharp focus all the way into the distance. If your camera allows you to change the aperture, set it to a higher number to get a picture with more areas in focus. If your camera doesn't have a manual aperture setting, but it does allow you to set different shooting modes, choose the "landscape" mode, which is normally indicated with a picture of a mountain. This will automatically change the camera to the right mode.

Keep it steady

Taking a landscape shot requires a steady hand. All the little details must be in focus for a good shot. When you change the aperture, or set your camera to landscape mode, it often provides more sharpness by letting less light into the camera. This is why many landscape photographers use a tripod to help them capture a great picture. A tripod strong enough to support a digital camera isn't very expensive and can be found in most photography stores or in the photo section of electronics stores.

However, you don't even need a tripod to give you a steady picture. If you can find a flat object, such as a picnic table or bench, you can place your camera on that to eliminate it from shaking. Lots of digital cameras now come with remote controls that allow the camera to be triggered without even touching it. This is a great way to capture a clear landscape photo. If your camera doesn't have a remote control, you can try a trick used by lots of photographers: Turn on your camera's self-timer and let the camera take the shot for you! That way, after you push the button, the timer counts down before actually taking the picture, which should make it shake-free when the picture is taken.

Panoramic shots

For really interesting landscapes, you can try to make a panorama. A panoramic picture is comprised of a series of shots stitched together using software like Adobe Photoshop or Photoshop Elements.



Photos and article supplied by David Schloss.

Taking photographs of animals

Animal photography is challenging because it's difficult to get your subjects to do what you'd like them to do. Sure, a well-trained dog is more likely to sit or stay than your average hamster, but even Lassie doesn't follow directions as well as your average human. But by following just a few helpful tips, you can take animal photographs that say a lot more about your pet than, "Gosh, he's sure blurry!"

Get ready to say cheese

A lot of animals, whether they are house pets or barnyard creatures, don't like cameras. Perhaps it's something to do with the size or the shape of the camera that frightens many animals. Add in the loud click of a shutter and the bright light of a flash, and you can seriously spook some animals. The end result is a blurry, out-of-focus shot.

Many household pets can be trained to get used to cameras. Let your pet sniff or smell the camera when you're not using it, and give them special treats every time you take their picture.

He might be a cute cat, but this picture is blurry. This could have been eliminated with the use of the camera's flash.



If you're taking pictures of wild or barnyard animals, you can't really get them used to your camera. Because most animals are scared of motion and noise, move very slowly and carefully in order to get the best pictures without spooking them.

This zebra at an animal preserve was very nervous about having its picture taken. But this portrait was captured by moving very slowly and not spooking him.



Know their personalities

Most pets have certain rituals, and the same is true for wildlife. They are sleepy part of the time, foraging for food at other times, and playing or fighting the rest of the time. If you know the moods of the animal, you'll be able to tell if they're about to do something playful, funny, or interesting.

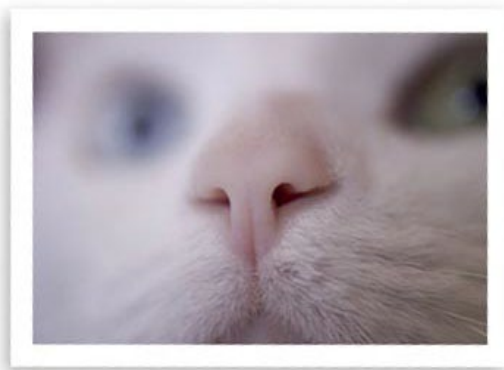
Get their personalities

A good animal picture is not that different from a good person picture. You need to capture their personality in the picture or you'll just end up with a boring snapshot. If your cat likes to play, try to photograph it running around. If your dog has a sad face, try to take a close-up shot of his expression. If you're trying to photograph a lion at the zoo, aim for the big moment when she's doing something straight out of *The Lion King* instead of when she's taking a nap.



Get closer

Another trick for good animal shots is getting close to the subject. Try to get as close as your camera will focus and see if your pet looks interesting from that angle. Often the texture of a pet's fur or the detail in the wings of a parrot are very interesting subjects. (And no, we're not saying you should get close to a lion, but you could use zoom or a telephoto lens to make your picture appear closer.) Look at the detail and colors that make up your pet's fur, hair, feathers, or scales and see if those would be interesting to focus on. Or take a picture that focuses on their eyes, ears, paws, or snouts.



Clear out the clutter

Like a lot of pictures, shots of animals sometimes have really distracting backgrounds. A problem that's particular to animal photography is that animals are generally much shorter than people. As a result, a lot of photographs are taken from above the animal, which isn't the best angle. If possible, try to get on the same level as the subject, by crouching or sitting down, to get a good photograph.



Freeze your subject

If you're taking a picture of an animal when it's moving quickly, it's good to use your camera's flash. Even if it's a bright day out, if the animal is moving quickly (and it's not something dangerous like our friend the lion), turning on your flash will help freeze the animal in motion. Take a Frisbee-catching-doggy to the park and the little boost from your flash will help keep shots of Rover sharp, right down to his fur.

It might be a little harder to get good pictures of animals, but using some of these tricks will get you some great shots of your furry, feathered, scaly, or curly-haired friends.

Article and photos supplied by Dana J. Robinson.

Taking pictures in winter

Winter is a great time to take photographs. The skies are crisp and blue, and in areas of the country where there's snow, a whole world of possibilities open up for the photographer.

Snowstorms are beautiful, and the gentle blankets of snow left after a blizzard are wonderful photographic subjects. A tree covered in the crystalline shimmer of an ice storm is fascinating. Keep in mind, wintertime photography can be tricky — but armed with the right tips, you'll be ready to tackle the first snow of the season and come back with great pictures.

Longer Life

Cameras run on battery power, and batteries hate the cold. The chemicals in batteries that create electricity don't work well when the temperature drops, so if you'd like to extend your picture taking possibilities, remember to keep the camera inside your jacket. This great trick doesn't only work with cameras, by the way. Keep your MP3 player or your phone close to your body in the cold, and they'll work longer, too!

LCD screens hate the cold as well, and the screens use a lot of power. If your camera has an LCD screen, it's a good idea to turn it off when working in the cold.

Speaking of the cold, holding a digital camera during the winter can lead to chilly fingers. Some people go without gloves when doing winter photography, but it's a better idea to use a pair of fingerless gloves or gloves designed specifically for winter photographers, with fingertips that fold back out of the way.

Meter right

Modern cameras have meters inside them that automatically figure out how to take the picture with the correct exposure. They look at the view through the lens and figure out how the camera should set the shutter and the aperture. But that system gets fooled by the brightness of snow, and thinks that it needs to make a much, much darker picture than it does. There are a few ways to get around this so that your pictures turn out great.

Many cameras have a setting called Exposure Compensation that allows you to manually change the camera's automatic metering. Different cameras have different systems for doing this (see your camera's manual for more information) but setting the exposure compensation to approximately -2 will make your pictures come out the right color.

Some digital pictures of a snowy scene may come out looking especially blue or green. This coloring (called a *color cast*) can be corrected in Adobe Photoshop Elements or Adobe Photoshop.



Winter photography is challenging, but that's exactly what makes it so much fun. With a few simple steps, taking pictures of the snow can be as easy as taking shots during the middle of summer.

Taking better holiday pictures

The holidays are the best time to own a camera. With all the exciting parties, festive colors, and family fun, it's no wonder so many pictures are taken during special celebrations.

But why do so many holiday pictures look the same? Sometimes it's hard to tell if the photo of the family eating turkey was from this Thanksgiving or the last one — without looking at hair or clothing styles.

It doesn't have to be this way. The holidays are a perfect excuse to practice creative photography. With a house full of activity and a unique cast of characters, it's a great time to try to take a holiday photograph you'll cherish for years.

Engage your subject

If you look at enough holiday photographs, you might notice a pattern: there will almost always be a group of people, lots of forced smiles, and some traditional holiday item — a tree, a menorah, a pumpkin, or maybe a turkey.

Instead of taking a busy group shot, try focusing on individual family members, especially if they are doing something festive. Busy backgrounds (ones packed with lots of stuff, or lots of activity) are distracting, and make it harder to spot the subject. Instead of wide-angle shots of people sitting around a table, get close to your subject, and use your zoom to capture their expressions and their actions. Take a close-up picture of someone stringing lights on the tree, or the expression on someone's face as they open a present.

Poorly composed shot of someone engaged in holiday activity



Holiday activity better composed

Choose your background

Obviously your photos will have to have a background, and there's nothing wrong with choosing something holiday related, but it's better to have a *simple* background that still says "holiday" than to randomly pose family members in front of a wall. Look at your background and see if there are distracting elements — a television, a large window that reflects a bright flash from a strobe, a wall full of large photographs — and try to arrange your subjects in such a way as to reduce those distractions.

Sometimes it's better to think of fresh ways to set up your shots — outside in the fall foliage, for example, or in a horse-drawn carriage or a sleigh. You can spice up the fall holidays with a little apple picking or use the colorful bursts of a Fourth of July celebration for a summertime shot and suddenly you've got the perfect background for your family portraits.



Left: Poorly composed background



Above: Nontraditional background depicting the holidays

Lighting your subject

The flash built into compact digital cameras is only meant to throw light on a subject that's just a few feet away. In a lot of shots (especially when you're trying to get far enough away to get everyone in) the subjects can be much farther than the flash can reach. Pictures without enough flash tend to look washed-out and too dark, and many important details are lost.

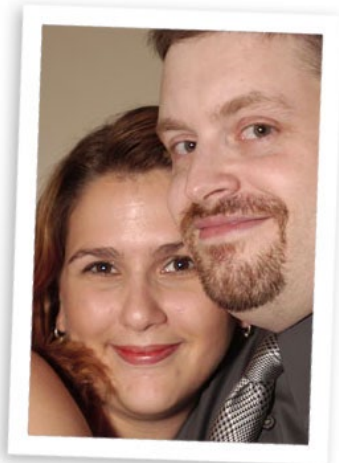
Adding other sources of light will not only make your picture brighter but more interesting as well. And what better time than the holidays to find lots of alternate light sources! Try posing family members near a tree decorated with bright holiday lights, or snap a picture while they're lighting candles. The glow from a set of candles or string of lights can cast a nice, warm effect, as the light and shadows play across the faces of your subjects.



Portrait with interesting lighting

Get a little closer

Think about some of your favorite photographs of people. What makes them so appealing? Often the best photographs of people really say something about the subject's personality. Many portrait photographers prefer to take pictures of people they know, because they can use the familiarity with the subject to take a great picture. Many people get nervous with a camera around, but having a picture taken by a friend or family member can really help put them at ease.



Close-up portrait shot

A nice portrait during the holidays makes a great memento, which can also make a wonderful present. To take a great portrait shot, take a picture of a family member or friend doing something they love doing. If they like to cook, take a picture of them making the Thanksgiving meal. If they enjoy getting into costume, take a shot of them at Halloween.

Don't be afraid to get close to your subject and take lots of pictures. A good picture of someone in action makes for a wonderful portrait, and the more pictures you take, the better your chances of getting exactly the image you want.

Take lots of pictures

One of the joys of digital photography is that you can take plenty of pictures, and delete the ones you don't like. It's always better to take too many pictures than to take too few, and this is especially true during the holidays. When opening presents, welcoming distant family members, or laughing at old home movies, people tend to relax and become more natural. Candid shots of people enjoying themselves are almost always more enjoyable than those awkward posed pictures.

When it comes to taking pictures, there might be no better time than the holidays. Don't be afraid to try lots of new approaches. And remember that a nice picture makes a great gift, so the more you take this year, the better your presents may be next year.

Archiving

The best thing about digital photography is that you can take lots and lots of pictures. But anyone who has a computer full of photographs knows that after a while it gets really hard to organize them so that you can always find specific pictures. It can be tough to figure out which picture is from your baseball game and which was from the ballet recital.

The problem is that the files that come from digital cameras are named in a seemingly arbitrary way and all the file names look similar. With enough folders full of things like DSC00343.jpg, it's no wonder how hard it can be to find the file you're looking for.

By spending sometime renaming your files and folders initially, it's much easier to find them again later. It's even better if you use Adobe Photoshop Elements, because you can search for files by name. Therefore, taking the time to name your pictures will make it even easier to send them to your friends, make calendars, or create slide shows.

Give it a name

While it would be great if you could give a name to each and every one of your pictures, with enough photos that might take forever. So most people give names to their folders, and then also give names to the best pictures in every folder. Everybody has a different way of naming their pictures, and there's no right or wrong way. The key is to find a system that works for you and stick with it. Here are some ideas:

- Include the date in the names of your folders and digital photographs. Try using "10202003" for "October 20, 2003." Or use "feb0304" for February 3, 2004. Or start with the year first, such as "20031231" for December 31, 2003. This way you can find your pictures even if the only thing you remember is the year that you took them.
- Include something descriptive in the name of the folder or file, something that will make sense when you look back at the file years from now. "Abby's 16th Birthday" is a better name than "birthday" for example. When naming individual pictures, you can even add more description, such as "Abby's 16th Birthday-cake.jpg" and "Abby's 16th Birthday-candles.jpg" Or simply "Abby's 16th Birthday-01.jpg"
- You could also make different folders on your computer for different topics — one for pictures of your family, one for pictures of your friends, one for your pets, and so on.

Using Adobe Photoshop Elements

Adobe Photoshop Elements makes it really easy to find all of the pictures on your computer, but it gets even easier to find things if you've named them first. To locate a picture by its name, go to the Find menu and choose "by Filename". Then enter all or part of the file name and press the Enter key. (So if you are looking for those pictures from Abby's birthday party you could enter "Abby" or "birthday" or "cake.") Photoshop Elements will show you all the files with matching names.

So what if you're using Photoshop Elements and you didn't name your pictures right away? Photoshop Elements lets you rename files instantly. Click on the thumbnail of a picture you'd like to rename to bring up information in the Properties window. Type a new name in the "filename" field, and that's it — you've just renamed your photo.

Naming your pictures is a lot like cleaning your room. You don't have to do it, but it sure makes things easier to find when you do. Spending a little time now saves you a lot of time later.

The art of the closeup

There's a hidden world of photography right under your nose. It's a world of colors and shapes and textures, and very few people ever notice it. It's the world of close-up photography, a technique where focusing on very small details makes very large impressions. Close-up photography is about seeing things from a different point of view, and it's easier than you might think.

Get a Little Closer

A good close-up takes a subject that would otherwise be just an element in a larger photograph and turns that into the picture. Great close-ups come from any small object with a lot of detail or color, or with some items that contrast each other. Many people like to take close-up photographs of flowers, with their brightly colored petals and their interesting shapes. But a close-up can also come from constructed objects too, or even people.

Try to pick things that will catch the eye when photographed. A lightly colored butterfly sitting on a dark leaf. The red petals of a rose with green grass behind. Brown rust across the surface of a shiny piece of chrome. All of these things make very unusual photographs because most people don't stop to look at them closely.

Once you find something you'd like to photograph, go ahead and get close to it. Try to figure out what part of it looks best. Then try to figure out a good way to make the object fit in the photograph. How you chose to shoot your picture is called composition and it is very important for close-ups.

For example, if you're photographing a flower, you might choose to shoot it from down low, using the blue sky as your background, or you might want to take the picture with lots of other flowers behind it. Or maybe you want the flower to fill up the entire frame, without any other flowers or sky behind it at all. All of these pictures will look very different, and that's because they all have a different composition.



Getting in the Mode

Some cameras are better at taking close-ups than others (your camera has to be able to focus very close up to take a good picture) and many of them have a close-up mode. Check your camera's manual to see if it has a close-up or macro mode. (Some cameras show this with a setting that looks like a flower.)

Macro is a type of super close-up, which allows you to get pictures that look they were shot through a magnifying lens. You can get incredibly detailed pictures with a camera that can take macro close-ups, and many cameras have special lenses available for taking macro photographs.

If your camera doesn't have a close-up or macro mode, you can still take a close-up shot with your zoom lens. Position the camera a few feet away from your subject, and zoom in on it until you get the same composition as if you'd walked closer to the object without zooming. Voila! Instant close-up.

Cameras with a manual-focus mode have a bit of an advantage over auto focusing cameras. In the small world of close-up photography, a slight change in focus can make a big difference in how a picture looks. A camera with manual focus allows the photographer to choose what part of the object will be in focus, and what part will be blurry.

Steady On

Close-up photography requires a steady hand. Any little camera motion can really make a blurry photograph. That's why the number one tool in the close-up photographer's collection is a tripod. A nice lightweight but sturdy tripod can really help make a great close-up photograph.

A special kind of tripod, called a "tabletop" tripod, is great for photographing small flowers and other objects. A tabletop tripod looks like a miniature tripod. It's only a few inches tall, and lets you get extremely close to the ground, which is where most flowers are found.

Even if you don't have a tripod, you can get a great close-up photograph. Simply steady the camera by putting it on a chair, a table, even a rock. Anything that will keep the camera from moving will help.

If you try to take close-up pictures of flowers or any other lightweight subject outside, you might notice that any slight gust of wind makes it hard to compose the picture. This can be a problem, so a lot of first time close-up photographers choose to work with still life subjects inside first, to get the hang of it.

Close-up photography can open up a whole new world of creative possibilities. Get in close and try a new photographic technique today.

Sports photography

Look in magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* or *ESPN The Magazine* and you'll see amazing photographs; the agony of a quarterback caught in the middle of a sack, the concentrated face of a bicycle racer sprinting to the finish line, or the tight expression of a basketball player slam-dunking the ball.

It may look easy, but anyone who has brought a camera to a Little League game or a division playoff knows that taking great sports shots isn't so simple. The pros with the photographs we see in the magazine rely on years of experience and bags full of equipment to capture that perfect shot. But you don't need to bring more gear to a game than a football player in order to get a great shot. To get better sports photographs you just need to follow the same rules the pros use.

When it comes right down to it, every sport is about speed. Not all sports are as fast-paced as a basketball game, but they all center on motion, speed, and action. The key to sports photography is to know when and where the action is happening, and taking the picture at the right time.



Know the sport

Before you can take great sports pictures, you have to understand the action involved. You need to know the basic rules of the game so you can figure out when the exciting moments will happen. In a soccer game there's usually a flurry of action in front of the net. In hockey the face-off can be exciting as two teams battle for control. In baseball, nothing beats a last-inning slide to home plate.

Making sure your camera is ready at the right time will go a long way to helping you capture that perfect shot. Many pros spend the whole game looking through their viewfinder. While it's not necessary to watch a whole game with one eye closed, it's a good idea to bring the camera up and look through it when exciting things start to happen.

It's also a great idea to walk around the sidelines, if possible, to get different angles, and remember to take a look at what's happening behind the action, too. Nothing ruins a nice action photo than something really distracting in the background.

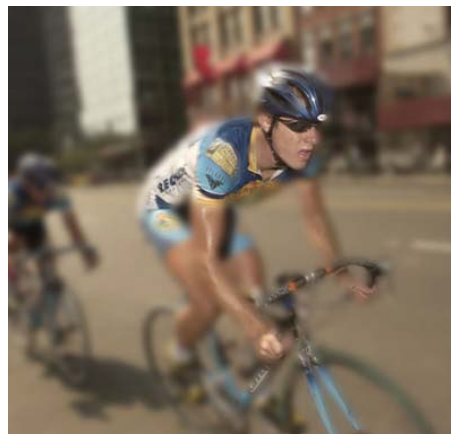


Keeping your focus

If you look at any great sports photograph you'll notice that some parts of the action are razor sharp, while other parts are blurry. This helps draw attention to the action, and make the background less noticeable. Photographers do this by changing the depth of field of a photograph. Depth of field is a complicated subject (and it really just means "how much of the photograph is in focus") so it might be easier to think of it in a practical way. Many cameras have a mode called "aperture control" (it's usually a setting with the letter "A"). The aperture is the opening in the camera that light comes through. Aperture numbers (often called f-stops) relate to changes in the depth of field.

When a camera is set to a low-numbered aperture (like 2.8 or 3.5) only the area where you focus will be sharp. Everything else will be blurry. Focus on a football player's head and a teammate right behind him will be out of focus. Set the aperture to a higher number (like 8 or 11) and not only will his teammate be in focus, but so will the crowd of people behind them sitting on the sidelines.

Sometimes you might want to make sure that only the star player is in focus (during his touchdown run for example) but sometimes you might want to see everything going on (like when the people in the stands are cheering). By changing the aperture you can control how your picture looks. Check out the manual that came with your camera to find out more about changing your aperture.



Making it blurry

Sometimes though you might not want a sharp picture at all. Sometimes if you take a picture of a subject, the camera freezes in the action so well that you cannot see any motion at all. There are two easy ways to use a bit of blurriness to let people know how fast your sports hero is moving.

The first way to add a bit of intentional blur to your photographs is to change the camera's shutter speed. The shutter is a little flap inside the camera that opens and closes to let light get to the film or digital sensor, and that's how a camera takes a picture. Shutters can move very quickly, so a shutter could be open for a really, really short period of time or a really long period of time.

A shutter that's open for 1/1000 of a second (that's one thousand times shorter than a second) freezes motion in place because even the fastest athlete can't move very far in that time. A shutter that's open for 1/8 of a second, though, doesn't freeze the action as well because it is open long enough that when you start to take a picture the subject is in one place, but when you finish taking the picture.

With a slow shutter speed a moving racecar is blurry, a fastball pitcher's arm looks like a cool stream of lines, and surfers look like they are riding a wave made of ice. Varying the shutter speed can yield great results. Check your camera's manual to find out how to control the shutter speed.



Panning for gold

Professional photographers don't just control the blur in their photographs, they also create some blur with a technique called panning. Panning's easy to do and the result can be very cool looking. Start by setting the camera's shutter speed to something slow, something like 1/15 of a second or slower, then start to follow your subject before you are ready to take the picture. Right before the action heats up, press the shutter and then follow the subject until the shutter closes.

For example, if you're photographing a track meet, look through the viewfinder and watch as the racers come toward you. As they get close to the finish, aim the camera at the chest of the lead racer. Push the shutter release and keep the camera pointed at the racer's chest while they keep running by. If you held the camera steady the racer would be blurry, but since you moved the camera at the same pace as the subject, you get a different image. The result will be a picture with a runner who is sharp, but everything else will be a neat motion blur.

Steady yourself

When panning or using a slow shutter speed it's important to have a steady hand: leaving the shutter open for a long time allows the motion of the camera to affect the final picture. That's why sports photographers like to use tripods, or even monopods. A monopod is a like a walking stick that connects to the bottom of a camera, and allows you to steady it while you're shooting. They are a really great investment for anyone shooting sports pictures, and really can help improve the quality of a sports photographer's images.



Getting up close

The final rule of sports photography is that often "closer is better." Some of the greatest sports photographs of all time have been of the faces of athletes, or of just a small part of the action. It's not just that athletes and their expressions are so interesting, it's also because most of us just get to watch a sporting event from the sidelines. By

getting in close to the action we can make a photograph seem more interesting than the same event viewed from the bleachers.

Often it's hard to get close to an event (that's why professional photographers use very expensive lenses to take pictures from very far away) but many times it's possible to get right up to the action. Amateur events often allow people to stand up on the sidelines, and even some professional events have good areas where spectators can get up close and personal.



The great sports shot

Getting a great sports photograph is a matter of timing, technique, and equipment. The best way to learn to take a great sports picture is to take lots and lots of photographs, and see how they look. Over time anyone can go from a sideline snapshot taker to a professional photographer. It just takes a little practice.

Taking pictures in bright light

You're having fun with family or friends at the beach or in the snow. It's such a good time, you want to remember for a long time. You pull out a camera and take pictures. But when you look at the photos, everyone has squinty eyes or their faces are so dark it's hard to tell what they look like.

One of the first things we're taught about photography is to have the sun behind us. It's a good place to start, but it isn't always the best way to take a picture with the sun shining.

Quick tips

Taking pictures in bright light is easy when you know what to do. Use these quick tips and you can shoot like a pro:

- Always look for the direction of light. If the sun is shining bright, try and use it to create a bit of shadow on the subject. In other words, don't always shoot with it directly behind you. Have the sun at an angle, or halfway between you and what you're taking a picture of. It also lets the people in the picture open their eyes because the light isn't as harsh.
- Sometimes the main light is behind the subject. This is called backlighting or being backlit. If you must shoot something or someone who is backlit, use the camera's fill-flash feature to balance both the "shadowed" face and the background.
- Use the camera's "cloudy" setting. Taking pictures at high noon or in the middle of the day is the worst time to shoot. The harsh light adds bluish or cooler tones to color photos. The benefit the "cloudy" setting offers is a warming of color that makes the picture more pleasant to look at.
- Use the lowest ISO setting your camera has. You should do this no matter how bright the light source is, but it is very important when taking pictures in bright light. Some point-and-shoot cameras give you the option of adjusting the camera's ISO setting. If it doesn't, the pre-programmed mode most likely takes care of it for you.

- Have people open their eyes right before you take the picture. When everyone is standing around with the sun shining right in their eyes or the snow's glare bouncing up from below, it's natural for people to squint their eyes. Before you take the picture, have people close their eyes. Count of three and tell them to open their eyes. You take the picture at the count of four. It's that simple.

One of the biggest benefits of using a digital camera is that you can take as many pictures as you need. And you know right away if you got the picture you want. So go ahead...take as many photos as you like. Better pictures aren't far behind.

Top 10 tips

As you dive into digital photography, take comfort in the fact that others have gone before you. That doesn't mean you won't make a few mistakes. These tips can save you a lot of time and frustration:

1. **Use a camera that helps you get the type of pictures you want.**
Think about how you want to use a digital camera before you buy a digital camera. If you want to make lots of 8x10 prints, you'll need at least 3 mega pixels. If you want to take pictures of a family vacation at the beach, you'll need a camera that has special flash options. Make a list of must-have features, then find a camera that can help you get there.
2. **Use a high-resolution file format.**
One way to squeeze more photos onto a memory card is to set the camera at a low resolution. That's OK if all you want to do is email photos. If you want to make print, you're in trouble. Keep the resolution turned up to its highest JPEG or TIFF setting. When a great photo comes along, you'll be glad you did.
3. **Always have extra batteries.**
Digital cameras need lots of power. Make sure that the batteries are fully charged, and have a backup battery, too. That way the camera is ready when you are.
4. **Have enough memory cards.**
If you take a lot of pictures you need lots of memory. Buy the biggest memory card you can afford. Or have lots of smaller ones. You won't worry about running out of memory when you need it most.
5. **Turn off the camera before removing the memory card.**
When you take a picture, the digital camera writes the photo to a memory card. Taking the card out of the camera while it's still being used can break the camera and destroy the photos. A good rule of thumb is to turn off the camera before taking the card out.
6. **Learn your camera's timing.**
Some cameras have something called "shutter lag." It's when there is millisecond delay between pressing the shutter and the camera taking the picture. If you use the camera enough, you learn the timing and don't miss a shot.
7. **Use the "continuous" mode for fast-action pictures.**
Every digital camera has a single-shot mode. It lets you take one picture at a time. This works fine when taking pictures of things that don't move. But if you want to take fast-action pictures — like sports — you need to change the camera's settings. If your camera has a "continuous" mode that lets you take several pictures right after another, use it. If not, turn off the LCD screen preview and the camera may work faster.
8. **Create a digital workflow.**
Like a jigsaw puzzle, digital needs all the pieces to fit to make a picture. There are four parts to a digital workflow:
 - a. take a picture
 - b. transfer and organize photos
 - c. edit photos
 - d. print and share photos.

It sounds boring, but if you don't do these in the right order, you're asking for trouble. Following these four steps is what makes digital fun and easy.

9. **Some photos can't be fixed.**

In the movies, computers can restore even the most damaged photos to their full focus and glory. Or they can make a picture taken at night look like it was shot in the middle of the day. Good image editing software like Adobe Photoshop Elements cleans up odd color in a photo caused by indoor lighting, removes red-eye, makes color brighter, and more. There is a limit to how much a photo can be fixed. A low-res photo can't make a hi-res print. Bad "framing" can't be corrected. But if you pay attention to the details before taking a picture, you won't have to worry about it.

10. **Always, always, always make copies of your original photos.**

Just like with film, digital cameras create a "negative" of every picture it takes. It's the original photo file — or negative — that you transfer to the computer. If the digi-neg gets lost or damaged, the picture is gone forever. Make a copy of the digi-negs before you do any editing. Burn a CD with the original photo files and your photos are safe. And remember that you only edit copies of the original photo files. Never edit the digi-negs.

Say goodbye to red eye

Ahh, the gross red-eye...we've all seen it. You snap a photo of friends at night and they have red eyes. How does this happen?

A quick biology lesson

Red eyes are worst in dark rooms. The pupils of your eyes get bigger and smaller depending on the amount of light. Lots of light makes them smaller. Low light makes pupils bigger. When you use the flash on your camera, the light reflects off the blood vessels inside the eye. That's where the red comes from.

Quick tips

There are things you can do to stop red eye. Some work better than others, but try them to find which works best for you.

- Use the camera's "red-eye reduction" feature. It's the one that has a circle-slash over an eyeball. It creates quick bursts of light that make the pupil get smaller before the main flash goes off. This is often a big help, but it doesn't remove red eye...it just makes it less obvious. Be careful: in some cameras, using this option can slow down the camera's ability to take the picture when you want it.
- Turn on a light or move to a brighter area. The pupils become smaller and red-eye is less noticeable.
- Have the person look away from the lens, either above the camera or to the side opposite the flash. If you have a camera without the red-eye feature, consider holding the camera straight up and down (vertically) in a way that places the flash closer to your feet than to your hair. This puts the flash at a lower angle and makes red-eye go away.

Sometimes, even trying all of these things, a photo will still have red eye. Fortunately, Adobe Photoshop Elements includes tools that remove red eye and make the picture the way you want it.

Taking artistic photographs

Have you ever wondered why professional photographers hold their hands in a square in front of their faces before snapping a picture? No, they're not going out of their way to look totally lame; there's actually a legitimate purpose to this. They want to figure out if the subject is going to look good in a frame. And that's the question you should ask yourself before you take (or create) an artistic photograph: "Will this look cool if it's framed and hanging on a wall?"

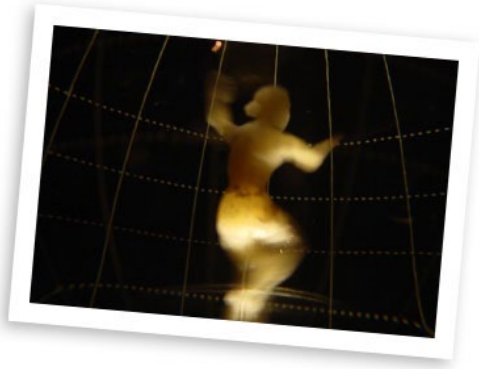
Unlike with other types of photography, artistic photography is all about trial and error. It doesn't matter if your final photograph ends up looking like your original subject, the goal is to make something that's interesting to look at, and to have fun in the process.

Luckily, we're living in the age of technology. Even if your pictures don't come out exactly right the first time around, experimentation through trial and error is half the fun. Here are a few tips to help you better understand which photos are keepers and how to make the accidental shots more creative.

Got those blurry blues

Fear not! It doesn't matter if you didn't actually mean to take that blurry, out-of-focus photograph. The bright side is that if the subject matter is interesting, blurry can be beautiful. As long as you don't try to make every mistake a masterpiece, you can salvage a few of them. Intentionally blurry photographs are especially good to:

- Suggest that things are moving. For instance, when you take photographs of cars at night, the lights end up looking like streaks. This illustrates that the car was moving when you took the photograph and creates the illusion that the car in the photo is actually moving, as well.
- Make things look mysterious. You know how shadows and dark corners always seem to be hiding something? Blurry images are very similar. By blurring out the details, you are essentially hiding certain things from your audience.



Crop creatively, confidently!

It's not uncommon to want to fit everything into one picture. You might even be a "leaner" yourself — you know, the person who moves his/her body around in order to try desperately to squeeze everyone into one shot. That's fine for snapshots, but if you're taking a more creative approach, you may want to leave a little to the imagination. Cropping pictures is a quick and easy way to make boring photos more interesting.

When you crop your images, it's important to remember to:

- Save the original. Always use a copy when you're cropping your photographs, just in case you make some mistakes.
- Experiment with what you crop vs. what you keep. Because you're working with a copy, you can play around with your borders to see what looks best. It's easy to begin cropping in Adobe Photoshop Elements.

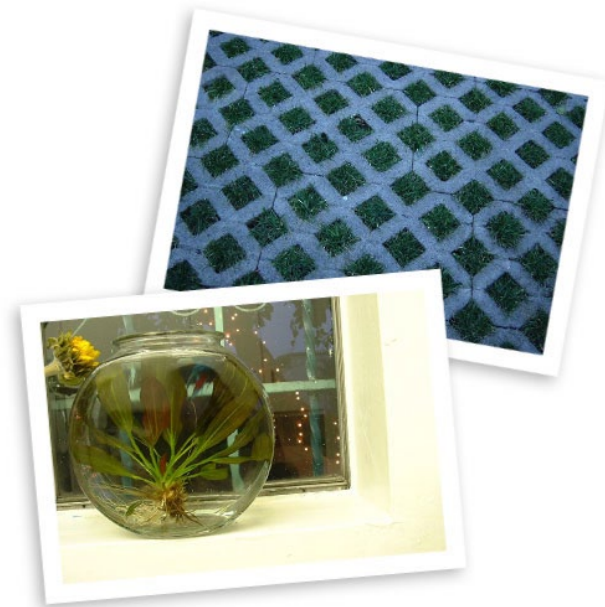
First, in the File menu open the image you'd like to work with. Select the Crop tool, which is the third tool down on the left side of the toolbar. Right click on the image where you'd like the new upper left hand corner of your photo to be, and drag the crop tool to the area you want the bottom right hand corner to be. Now, check your cropping dimensions — the area you're throwing away will be darker than the area you're keeping. If you're happy with this crop, either right click and choose Crop or simply press the Enter key. If you're not happy with this crop, right click and choose Cancel and start over from the beginning. Once you've successfully cropped your image, be sure to go to the File menu and Save as... with a different name than the original.

Close encounters

Sometimes it's ok to get too close for comfort, especially when you're trying to take an artistic photograph. There are millions of interesting objects of all shapes, sizes and colors out there, so why not capture them in photos? Geometric patterns and unique shapes can make for some amazing photographs. Don't be afraid to try close-up shots of the random items in your room, at the mall, or in your own backyard. There are a few things that will help you take better close-ups, including:

- Proper lighting to avoid ugly shadows. Be sure that your light source is bright and that it doesn't create shadows that could hinder the outcome of your photograph. Some shadows are ok, as long as they don't block what it is you're trying to capture.

- Macro settings on your camera. Some higher-end cameras have a macro setting that allows you to take incredibly detailed photographs of very small objects. If your camera has this setting, try using it to capture even the tiniest details.
- Tripods or stationary surfaces. It's very important to hold your camera very still when you're taking close ups. If you don't have a tripod, try resting the camera on a shelf, a stack of books, or even your own knee.



Center of attention

Being the center of attention isn't always a good thing, especially when you're the subject of a photograph. If you're going for a more creative spin on a picture, try changing the balance a little. For instance, if you're taking a picture of a tree, try to include a bit of the background to the left or to the right of the tree, rather than putting the tree exactly in the middle. Try to think more in terms of what's going on around the tree, rather than just thinking about the tree by itself. Taking photos in this way helps you to:

- Capture unintentional moments. In the example of the tree, you could take the photo and later discover that a family was having a picnic in the background, which would add a whole new dimension to your photograph.
- Provide your audience with some extra context. If you just take a photograph of a street, no one will ever know where the photograph was taken. However, if you take a photograph of a street that includes the street sign, suddenly you've provided some background.
- Create a unique photographic composition. Everyone's seen photographs of a bowl of fruit. So why not step back a little bit and take a picture of a bowl of fruit sitting at the end of a very long table? Empty space forces people to look directly at the subject of your picture without the subject taking up the entire space.

Practice makes perfect

There's never been a better time to learn more about photography. Digital cameras make trial and error picture taking far less expensive than traditional film cameras, so you don't have to feel bad if you make a lot of mistakes. The more pictures you take, the better your pictures will become. And now that you are armed with a few new techniques, get out there and start taking some pictures!

Family portraits

Everybody's scrapbook has at least one, and nearly everyone remembers it from childhood: the dreaded family portrait. With everyone dressed their best, the annual trip to the mall for the professionally arranged portrait is part of

many families' traditions. Even though the family portrait is cherished, the pictures from a sitting at the portrait studio aren't always the most creative. It's easy, though, to take a family portrait that's both interesting and timeless.

Know your subject

The biggest challenge most photographers face in taking a good portrait is getting a picture that really shows the subject in a natural way. Even though a portrait is a posed shot, it's still possible to make a subject feel comfortable and natural so that the picture appears candid and flattering.

Taking a picture of a family member gives you an advantage; you should know your subject well enough to be comfortable from the beginning. Talking with your subject helps them to relax, and that's easier with a relative than with a stranger. Pose your family members in a comfortable setting, and chat with them while you take their pictures.

**Location, location, location**

A professional photo studio doesn't look at all like the place where the people in photographs live. That can be a good thing and a bad thing for a photographer. You can deal with this by posing people against a simple background (either colored or textured), which allows the people in the picture to really stand out. On the other hand, a boring background can really rob a portrait of character. It's much more compelling to see people in their own environment and it gives the photograph a sense of place.

So, try both kinds of family photographs. Here's how:

- To take some pictures with a simple background, pose your family near a blank wall, or take a clean ironed sheet and hang it behind them on the wall.
- Try to find a way to capture your family member's favorite activities. Does your dad like to fix cars? Take pictures of him in the garage working on something. Your sister is a ski champ? Take a portrait of her on the slopes. Include the background as part of the photograph, but don't just take a snapshot. Make sure the person's pose is exactly right, so that they remain the subject who just happens to be in his/her own natural environment.



Shoot something else

You don't even have to take pictures of your subject's face. The big burly hands of a construction worker, or the small feet of a baby make for great portraits.

Lighten up

Unlike a snapshot, the lighting in a portrait is extremely important. Lighting can really make a good portrait great, or make a great portrait poor. However, the flashes on compact cameras are very harsh. Professional photography studios have a lot of really expensive flashes, but you can make a nice portrait with the lights found around the house or at your local hardware store.

- Go to a hardware store and buy a number of plug-in clip-on lights, the kind with metal collars around them. Clamp them out of range of your photograph, and point them toward your subject. Since they have metal collars you can direct their light at your subject's face, clothing, and other objects.
- If you can't get to the hardware store, gather up some of your table lamps and floor lamps and use them to light up the room.
- Shine a light on the backdrop. This keeps shadows caused by the subject lighting from showing up.
- Natural lighting is one of the best ways to light a photograph. Pose someone next to a window in the early morning or early evening and let the beautiful colors of the sunrise or sunset light up their face.
- Experiment with turning off the flash in your camera when you use other lighting. Often the soft light of a sunset or the strong light from a batch of clamp lights makes for a great image.



The eyes have it

There's a rule in portrait photography that the most important part of the picture is the subject's eyes. The rest of the picture can be slightly out of focus, but the eyes have to be clear. Your subject doesn't have to look at the camera in a portrait, but if they do their eyes should be in focus.

Hocus focus

Most cameras only focus on the center of the picture. If you want to take a picture of someone whose face isn't going to be in the middle, remember that the camera will focus on whatever is there instead.

There is a trick, though. Most cameras will lock the focus if you press and hold the shutter release lightly. So if you are taking a picture of a family member, and their face isn't going to be the center of the shot, simply point the camera directly at their eyes, and lightly press and hold the shutter release button part way. Then move the camera until you get the picture you want, and press the button all the way down.

With just a little work you can create a family portrait that will be cherished for a lifetime. Get creative, get close to your subject, and get started!

Shooting silhouettes

Looking for ways to get more creative with your photography? An easy way to make an interesting and artistic photograph is by turning a portrait, landscape, or just about any kind of picture into a silhouette.

Silhouetting is an easy technique to make a photograph stand out. You've probably seen lots of silhouettes before. Any photograph with the foreground in shadow and the background lighter is really a silhouette.

A silhouette is a dramatic departure from a standard photograph. Usually photographers work very hard to make sure their subjects are well lit, but with this technique, the roles are reversed. In order to make an artistic or bold photograph the main part of the subject is cast into darkness while the rest of the frame is brightly illuminated.

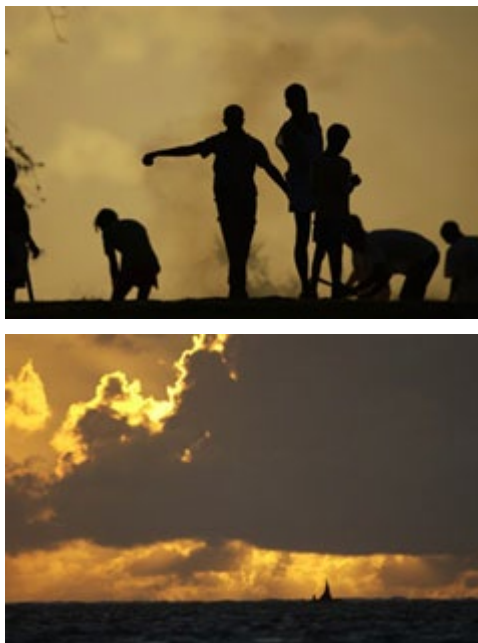
The Shadow Knows

It's easy to set up a silhouette. You can make one anywhere where there's a light source behind your main subject. The trick with getting the exposure right for a silhouette is making the camera think that you're only interested in the light part of the picture, and ignoring the dark subject in the foreground.

Many cameras have automatic metering, meaning the camera looks at all the light in the image, and figures out the best exposure to make sure everything comes out well lit. But with this type of photograph, you don't want everything to be well lit. Automatic exposure is great when you're trying to make sure your picture is well exposed, but it's not so great when you're trying to do something creative.

Here are some tips for getting a good silhouette:

- **Your background should be much brighter than your foreground.** Position your subject between your camera and the sun.
- **Make sure your camera's flash is turned off.**
- **If you've got a camera with automatic metering, you can trick it into taking a silhouette.** Most cameras measure the light when the shutter button is being depressed part of the way (at the same time as it auto-focuses), not when the button is pressed all the way down (which takes the picture). Point the camera directly at the lighter background, and press the shutter half way, then (without letting up on the shutter release button) point the camera at your subject, and press the button all the way and take your picture. In most cameras this will lock the exposure setting into the camera, ignoring the foreground.
- **Many cameras have an exposure compensation control which allows you to override the camera's meter.** If the foreground is too light, set the exposure compensation to a negative value to darken the foreground.
- **Unlike with film cameras, with digital you can keep experimenting until you get just what you want.** Don't be afraid to try changing settings now to get different results.



Spectacular Silhouettes

What makes a good silhouette shot? Try to pick something that will really stand out in the foreground when positioned against the lighter background. A person with a distinct profile makes a great silhouette. So does a mountain range set against the morning sun.

Since the foreground is in complete shadow, it's important to be able to recognize the subject without any visual details except for its outline.

Still life's are usually not the best subject for the silhouette technique, but they make a great test subjects. Simply set up an object in front of a light source, and fire away. (This works best if you're in a room where the only light source is the one making the silhouette.)

Keep On Trying

The great thing about a silhouette photograph is that it's an unexpected way to photograph a subject. So experiment! You might get the perfect shot.

The art of cropping

Just like when you get a haircut, you can make photos look better by cutting them. It's called "cropping." Knowing what and when to crop can make the difference between a good photo and a great one.

Cropping gets rid of extra parts of a photo and focuses on what matters. There are a couple of different ways to crop a photo. The first is with the camera. The other is with image editing software like Adobe Photoshop Elements.

Crop with a camera

Here's how to crop with the camera:

- Look through the viewfinder or LCD screen.
- Move closer to or farther away from the subject of the photo.
- If you need to, you can also use the "widen" or "tighten" feature.
- When you have the photo "framed" the way you want, take the picture by pressing down on the shutter release.

The #1 rule of cropping with a camera is to get close, and then get even closer to what you are taking a picture of. Look at any number of family snapshots and you'll see why. Aunt Millie looks small and there's lots of wasted space

on each side. Move closer for a tight portrait of Aunt Millie, that brings out her eyes and the life in her smile and you can create a photo with more impact and personality.

Crop with the computer

There are times when a picture needs more cropping. Adobe Photoshop Elements and Adobe Photoshop Album can help you:

- **Crop for interest.** Whether you crop in the camera or later in software, focus on what really matters in the picture, and crop for that.
- **Crop to fit standard print sizes.** Make sure you're getting the photo print you want by setting the image editor to standard print sizes. Doing so automatically crops some of the photo for you.
- **Try unusual crop shapes.** Wide panoramas and tall vertical shapes can make the right photo look great. Ovals, squares and circles can add life to a picture, too. As you get the hang of cropping, you see its power and want to try more things like tight portraits with the hair, chin and ears cropped out.
- **Straighten crooked horizons.** Sometimes a photo is crooked. You can crop to make it look straight.
- **Don't mess with success.** If you've cropped the photo right the first time, resist the need to trim more. Sometimes leaving a photo alone is the best crop of all.

Composition 101

Finding a photo within a photo

All great pictures have one thing in common. They are well composed. There's a balance to it. There's just one thing that makes you want to stare at it forever.

Composition — also called “framing” — is fun to talk about, because there is no right or wrong. The only rule is that there are no rules. But there are a few tips to help you take better pictures:

- **Pay attention to framing.** Nothing ruins a photo faster than distracting elements in the background. Don't get so focused on the photo's subject that you ignore what else is going on around them. Watch out for poles, trees and power lines, and look all the way around the edges of the frame, asking “Is this what I really want?”
- **Learn the Rule of Thirds.** The human eye has its “visual center” and this is the place that it is naturally drawn to. Imagine the viewfinder is divided into thirds, both horizontally and vertically. This grid creates four points where the lines cross. For the greatest impact, place the subject where the lines intersect, instead of in the center of the frame.
- **Every photo has a foreground and a background.** How you want people to look at your picture tells you what to do with the foreground and background. To blur the background, zoom in close and choose a large aperture setting (like F2.8). This works really well for pictures of a person.
- **Change your line of sight.** Try kneeling, or even putting the camera on the ground. Or climb a flight of stairs so you're higher than the subject you're photographing. Digital cameras with twist and tilt LCD screens make it even easier. Changing angles provides a new way of seeing things, and makes for a more dramatic picture.
- **Look for elements that lead the eyes through the photo.** A winding path, a row of telephone poles or even a line of chairs at the beach can serve as elements in a good photo.
- **Keep your eyes open for patterns.** Interesting photos can be made of the waves and patterns created by drifting snow, a flock of birds flying in formation or pipes stacked at a construction site.
- **Try getting in close.** Look for texture, in the wrinkles of a face or the bark of a tree. Hands say a lot about a person. Pay attention to details.
- **Cropping brings a photo to life.** If you edit photos on the computer, you are no longer limited to the standard 4 x 6, 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 print sizes. Look at each photo and think about what you really want people to see. Then crop everything else away. Try some unusual shapes, like panoramas or narrow verticals.

Remember: variety is the spice of photography. Composition is only limited by your imagination. Experiment, have fun, and keep learning!

Taking great fireworks photos

Everybody loves fireworks. But they are hard to photograph. Even with the bright colorful light, the darkness of night presents a few challenges. With some planning and the right gear, you can have photos worth bragging about.

What you'll need...

1. **A tripod.** To photograph fireworks, the camera's shutter has to be open for one second or longer. That means the camera can't move at all or else the picture will be out of focus. A tripod keeps the camera perfectly still.
2. **A digital camera that has long shutter speeds.** Shutter speed controls how long light is allowed into the camera. It is also known as "exposure." The best fireworks pictures have an exposure time between 2 and 10 seconds. If your camera doesn't do that, try using the "nighttime" or "fireworks" features.
3. **A digital camera with a self-timer.** This isn't mandatory, but it sure helps. Using the self-timer to activate the shutter release means that you won't accidentally shake the camera as you press down on the shutter.

Taking a good picture...

These tips can make a night of fireworks photography much more enjoyable:

- **Low ISO is the way to go.** The biggest enemy of fireworks photos is something called noise. It looks like tiny white or multi-colored dots when you print the picture. The longer the exposure, the more noise. If your camera lets you, pick the lowest ISO possible.
- **Choose the right aperture.** Aperture — also called F-stop — makes or breaks a photo. It decides how much light is let into the camera. Like Goldilocks in search of the perfect bed, there is one aperture that's just right. If it's too big (such as F-2.8) all the light streaks turn white. If it's too small (F-11 or F-22) the fireworks are hard to see. Use the camera's LCD screen as a guide. You might need a different F-stop at the beginning, middle or at the end of the fireworks show.
- **Be mobile.** Fireworks shows look different from every angle. Try to predict where the best photos will come from. Take pictures from there. When you think you've got the pictures you want, move to a new location.
- **Bring spare batteries.** Taking pictures of fireworks uses a lot of special features that gobble up batteries fast. Make sure you have an extra set of batteries so you can keep taking pictures.
- **Use long exposure noise reduction.** If your digital camera has a noise reduction feature, use it! But be careful. It doubles your camera's exposure time. In other words, if you shoot a 10 second picture, you can't take photo for at least 10 more seconds.

Summer guide for taking great digital photos

School's out, the sun is shining, vacations are being planned — it must be summertime! That means it's time to get your digital camera out and start snapping all kinds of bright, colorful, and fun photographs documenting all the awesome things you do this summer. But where do you begin? With so much to see and so much to do, it might feel a little overwhelming. Never fear — armed with all the tips and tools found in the Summer Shooting Guide, you'll be ready to take your summer vacation by storm.

These articles illustrate just how easy it is to take incredible shots during the summer. Not only will you find tips on how to take pictures of the waves crashing on the beach, huge national monuments, and thrilling roller coasters, you'll also learn how to protect and pack all of your equipment for traveling. From camera accessories to travel books to battery chargers, all your summer photography needs are covered in the Summer Shooting Guide.

Digital camera accessories

Point-and-shoot digital cameras are designed to take great pictures, right out of the box. Some digital cameras are made to extend your picture-taking fun, thanks to add-on lenses and accessories.

If your camera is designed to work with accessories (check your owner's manual or the box your camera came in), you can increase your photographic possibilities by trying some out. Add-on lenses either screw onto the front of your camera's existing lens or snap right onto it, and accessories make your camera better for flash photography or to use in special situations. The following is a guide to some of the most popular lenses and accessories you can buy for your camera.

Lenses

Telephoto lens — One of the most popular add-on lenses, the telephoto lens, magnifies your image, allowing you to take pictures of things that are farther away than you can photograph with your normal camera lens. Use a telephoto lens when you're trying to capture a photo of a bird up in a tree, for example, or when you're at the zoo and want to take a picture of a lion, without getting too close.



Did we have to sneak up on a bird to photograph this? No. We used a telephoto lens to get close without the bird ever knowing.

Wide-angle lens — A wide-angle lens gives your camera a different view of the world. Imagine looking at something through a paper towel tube — you can't see the things around you, only what's right in front of you. Now take away that tube, and suddenly you see much more of the world around you. A wide-angle lens does the same thing for your camera; it changes the way the camera sees — from being a narrow area of the world to a much wider one so your pictures will be able to "see" more of a scene, but everything will look wider.



Fisheye lens — This lens is like a super powerful wide-angle lens. Using a fisheye lens is like looking through the peephole on your front door — everything looks distorted and strange. Most people use fisheye lenses only when they are trying to take a creative or artistic picture.



Whoa! That's a weird picture. But it's neat, and it wouldn't be possible without a fisheye lens.

Macro lens — In order to take pictures of things that are really close, you should try a macro lens. Many digital cameras already have some ability to take macro photography, but macro lenses are more powerful than what comes standard. They'll let you capture the details on a flower or get right up close to a bug.

Accessories

Flashes — The built-in flash on most digital cameras is only powerful enough to light up just a few feet, which is enough for snapshots of your friends, but it might not be enough if you're trying to take pictures of a larger area. Some digital cameras can use flashes that connect to the top of the camera and allow you to shed more light on your subject.

Remote controls — A remote control allows you to take a picture without having to stand directly next to your camera, which is great for group portraits or long-exposure shots where you don't want to shake the camera. Many cameras come with a remote control these days, but often people just leave them in the box. Be sure to carry yours with you, because you never know when having a remote control could come in handy.



Card readers — There's a cable with every camera you can use that connects it to your computer in order to transfer images. But leaving your camera on while you load pictures into Adobe® Photoshop® Elements or onto your hard drive takes lots of battery power. Use an external card reader and you can save the life of your batteries. Pull your memory card out of your camera and put it into a card reader connected to your computer and your digital camera will have plenty of juice when you need it. (Just remember to put the card back into the camera when you're done.)



Article supplied by David Schloss

Digital photography on the road

If you're traveling for the summer, you've got the perfect excuse to grab your digital camera and take some great pictures. Perhaps your family is going away on vacation to a theme park or to the beach, a national monument, or somewhere exotic. Or maybe you're just going to visit your family in another town or another part of the city.

No matter what you're doing or where you go this summer, it's the perfect season to practice digital photography. There's no school and you have plenty of free time, the sun stays out longer, and let's face it, digital photography is just plain fun.

If you're heading out and trying to figure out what camera gear you'll need, here's a handy guide of what to bring to make your photographic summer the best yet.

Camera bag — Storing your camera in a waterproof camera bag is a great way to protect your gear, and your pictures. Camera and electronics stores both carry a decent selection of these types of bags. Make sure the bag says that it's waterproof to be sure that a sudden rainstorm or splash from a pool won't hurt what's inside.

Power cord — Bringing your camera's power cable and its battery-charging dock means that you'll have plenty of juice if you're going to be on a long trip. Recharge your battery every night when you go to sleep and your camera will work all day, every day.

Extra battery — If you're going to go out for a long time without a power outlet nearby (camping or rafting, perhaps), you can get more use out of your camera by bringing along a second charged battery. Nothing's more depressing than finding your camera has run out of power right before your group gets to the top of the mountain, or floats over the waterfall.

Extra memory card — Memory cards can hold a lot of pictures, but if you're not going to be back to your computer for a long time, bring an extra memory card or two. You'll be able to take more pictures without erasing any, and not have to worry about having to bring a computer along.

Lens-cleaning cloth — Dirty fingerprints can smudge a camera's lens, and cleaning it with a paper towel can scratch the surface. Get a lens-cleaning cloth from a pharmacy or optician and you'll be sure to have great pictures without any thumbprints.

Optional lenses and accessories — Many digital cameras work with additional lenses and accessories that can add to your photo-taking fun. Try a wide-angle lens on your camera and see how neat it is to capture a sunset. Or use a strobe to light up a dark room. Check your camera's manual to see what other accessories are available for it.

Tripod — Nothing ruins a picture like unintentional camera shake. A tripod will help you keep your camera steady, so you can focus on your subject rather than keeping your camera in focus.

Camera manual — Many people leave their camera's manual at home when they head out, but the manual is a great resource. Forget what a button does? Just look it up. Want to try out macro photography? It's all there in the book.

With our digital photography travel kit, you'll never miss a great photo opportunity. So pack up your camera and hit the road this summer to see what kind of pictures you can take, no matter where you are.

Taking great photos at theme parks

If you're an amusement park fanatic, you've probably been anxiously waiting all winter for summer to arrive. Now you can finally drag your friends and family on all those exciting and scary roller coasters! But just because you'll be spending a large portion of the time hanging upside down, don't think that you shouldn't bring your digital camera to capture some of the fun.

Strapped in

There are many ways to protect your camera while you are enjoying yourself on all the thrill rides. If you're going to document your day at the amusement park, you're going to need to have your camera with you, but it won't do you

any good if you lose it or if it gets smashed while you're on a ride. Consider these options to protect your camera while you enjoy yourself:



- **Lockers** — Most theme parks offer lockers, where, for a small fee, you can store the things you may want to access later but don't want to carry around all day.
- **Padded bags** — You can keep your camera in a padded camera bag with a strap to wear it around your neck ... just be sure to hold onto it during the rides.
- **Holding areas** — Most large rides have staff people willing to hold your belongings while you ride the ride, but use this option as a last resort because the theme park is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
- **Buddy system** — Bring a friend with you to the park and take turns on the rides. They can hold your camera while you're on Super Thunder Mountain, and you can take pictures of them getting sick!

Location, location, location

The best pictures you take at an amusement park will be the ones where you scouted out an excellent location before snapping the photos. Look around and see if there are any locations that allow you to capture multiple rides in one shot. See if there's a way to get close enough to that huge roller coaster that allows you to actually get some people in your photograph. Their expressions will be priceless! Don't spend your entire day looking for photograph opportunities, but spend at least a little time planning out a few shots. You'll be happy you did when you see the great shots you get.



Don't try this at home! A professional photographer shot this roller coaster while on it, safely and with the proper gear. But you can still take pictures like this safely on the ground, as the great rides thunder past.

Detail oriented

Because most things at theme parks are really big and oversized, it's easy to forget about all the little things. The prizes, food stands, games, and murals are all excellent subjects for your photographs. They also make excellent filler items as you piece your photographs together trying to re-tell the story of your day at the park.

The little detailed areas of the parks are also excellent places to take photos of your friends and family. Since you'll

probably be riding the rides with them, you won't be able to get photos of them easily, so this is the perfect way to include them in your pictures. Don't forget to take a photo of the group first, then ask someone to switch places with you so that you're in some of the photos as well.

Nightlife

If you decided to stay at the park into the evening, a whole new world of potential photographs opens up to you. When the sun goes down, all the colorful neon lights turn on, creating a ton of cool photo opportunities for you. This is a great way for you to experiment with the way motion and light work together in photography. And remember, because it's digital, you can take a series of pictures of the same thing to see which one turns out best. And don't forget the amazing light shows at the end of the night. Many theme parks have special fireworks displays just before they close up for the night, and this is a great way to enhance your photo collection from the day. After all, who expects to see fireworks anytime other than July?

**To zoom or not to zoom**

As cool as your digital or optical zoom can be, try to resist the urge to zoom in too much during your trip to the amusement park. There are so many visually stimulating things to see, so why limit your options by zooming into something really closely? Zoom works for really detailed small things, but don't forget to try to capture the big picture sometimes, too. This ferris wheel is interesting because the subject is so far away, and because of the reflections in the water.

The best part about taking photos at amusement parks is that no matter what, every picture is going to be proof of the fun and excitement you had that day. You'll know your day was a success if your pictures accurately tell the story of your day at the park and the thrills you had.



Article supplied by Dana J. Robinson

Nature photography

One of the best things about summer is that you don't have to be inside a school building all day long. You're free to do what you want, and to explore. Hopefully this summer you'll get some time to be in nature: Go for walks in the forest, go camping with your family, or even just sit around on your lawn.

Nature has always been a popular subject for photography. Birds, trees, mountains, flowers — how can you go wrong? You might be tempted to leave your camera at home. After all, who wants to take a camera when you're out playing, right? But trust us, bring your camera with you and you'll be rewarded with a bounty of summertime photographs.



Take it everywhere

Every trip to the lake, every walk in the woods is an opportunity to take new pictures. Look around at the shapes the trees make, the patterns caused by light and shadow. Notice the way that things repeat in nature, and try to capture pictures that show off the beauty that is the outdoors.



Take it when you play

If you like to ride a mountain bike, take your camera with you. Are you going to paddle your canoe this summer? Take your camera. Look at every trip outside as a chance to get new and exciting pictures, pictures that you wouldn't be able to take sitting inside at school.



Make it a photo assignment

Turn your photography into a game, and give yourself a photo assignment. "Today I am going to take pictures of five new birds." Or maybe "I am going to photograph interesting insects." Of course, that doesn't mean that you can't take pictures of other things that come along, but challenge yourself and try to stick with your topic. You'll notice things in a new way. Use your self-assignment as a way to check out the world around you.



Look through the lens

Sometimes it's hard to picture exactly how your nature photograph will look when you're walking around. Every now and then, stop in your tracks and pick up your camera. Put it to your eye and look through it, turning around in a circle, looking up and down, and checking to see what's interesting where you're standing. The chances are you'll notice great pictures right in front of you that you didn't know were there.



Whatever you do this summer, make sure that you take your digital camera with you, and make the most of your days. You'll never be disappointed if you're out in nature and you have your camera. There's always something new to see, and to photograph.

Article provided by David Schloss

Photos of national monuments and icons

So you're spending the summer visiting national monuments — nothing beats a trip to the Liberty Bell or the White House or the Capitol building for your summer vacation. If you're going to be stuck in the car visiting our country's national treasures, be sure to bring along your digital camera and make the most of your trip.

Many people think that it's boring photographing national monuments. So many people visit them every year that many pictures end up looking the same. But half the challenge and most of the fun is to try to take pictures that don't look like postcards or ordinary snapshots.



Don't look at the Capitol as just a building made out of marble. Watch the way the sun reflects off it. Look for colors and shapes in the building that make it unique. Crop your photographs in order to make the building look more interesting than a gift shop souvenir. When your friends look at your pictures, they should be interested in the composition, the colors, and the shapes.



The same goes for any other monument. The crack of the Liberty Bell is famous, but instead of capturing a photograph of a broken bell, look around at the building it lives in. Try to feel the historical importance of it, and take pictures that speak about its grandeur.

Look at the people

Our national monuments are great gathering points; people from all over the world head out to look at our buildings, national parks, and battlefields. Millions of people visit our country each year just to glimpse things like the Statue of Liberty or Mount Rushmore.

Each of these people represents a glimpse at another culture, and it's interesting to look at the tourists from a photographic point of view and take pictures of them appreciating our landmarks. It's especially great to talk with the people you're photographing and find out more about them. Part of the joy of being a photographer is getting to interact with all sorts of fascinating and unique people.



Document your trip

Another photographic activity to think about when you're on the road visiting monuments is documenting your family's trip. Take pictures of your travels the way a documentary photographer would. Don't just snap regular pictures; try to make a travelogue that you'll appreciate for years to come. Look at the way your family prepares for

the trip, take pictures at rest stops along the way, and capture images of your family as you learn about our country's rich history.



Traveling to national monuments doesn't have to be a dull activity when you bring your digital camera with you. Use your trip to look at shapes and colors, develop your skills as a people photographer, and don't forget to delve into documentary photography as well.

Article supplied by David Schloss

Taking photos while traveling

Going on vacation is really exciting, and you probably want to take pictures of everything you do and see. But before you start snapping shots of everything under the sun, stop and make a plan of action so that you end up with really great photographs that represent your whole trip.

Gear head

Packing all the proper equipment is crucial while you prepare for your vacation. When you're using a digital camera, you get the luxury of taking tons of photographs and not worrying about how much film you have. However, you are limited by the size of your memory card, and if you're on vacation, you may not have a way to upload your photos from your camera to your computer. There are a few things you can do to be sure you can take photos of your entire vacation, not just the first day:



- Bring a couple of back-up memory cards to use when the first ones get full.

- Travel with a laptop so that you can remove the images from your memory card as it gets full. Don't forget to bring the proper cables!
- Lower the resolution of the images you take — the smaller the resolution, the more images you can fit on one memory card.
- Pack extra batteries as well as a battery charger to avoid gaps in your picture taking (because you have to shop for new batteries.)

Getting to know the place

Before you leave, try to do some research about your destination. Figure out what cool things there are to do and see, so that you're already somewhat familiar with the place before you arrive. If you don't have time to look things up before you leave, you can always ask tour guides, check out tourism offices, look at postcard racks to see what others have taken pictures of, or just take some time to explore the area for a while. The more you know about the area, the better your photos will be in the long run.

People, places, things

When traveling with your family or friends, you're probably going to take a lot of pictures of them doing various things. Before you take too many pictures of your mom and dad on the plane or in the car or standing in front of buildings, remember that you can take those kinds of pictures anywhere and at anytime. Instead, try to take pictures of them in front of famous monuments or standing near a cultural icon that represents the place you traveled to.

Because you're the photographer, you always end up behind the camera instead of in front of it. However, if you're traveling with other people, they will want to capture some memories that include you! No matter how much you may want to take all the photos, it's important to get in some of the pictures, too. A good trick is to be sure someone else on the trip has a camera, too. That way, you can trade cameras every once in a while. It's usually not the best idea to ask a stranger to take a photo for you, unless he or she is a tour guide or someone you know — the last thing you want is to have your camera stolen while you're on vacation!

Travel diary

Everyone has the tendency to take pictures of every cool thing they see on vacation, whether or not they actually know what it is they're photographing. To avoid forgetting what you took pictures of and where you were when you took them, you should keep a brief travel journal or diary.

Your journal can be something as simple as keep tracking of where you went on which days, or as complex as detailing what time of day you went to a particular place. Some people even number their photographs and write a small blurb about each one, so when they get home, they know exactly what they're looking at. You can decide how detailed you want your journal to be, but in the end, the more you document, the better your memories of your vacation will be when your trip is finally over.

Archiving your memories

Of course, one of the best ways to keep a record of your travels is with Adobe Photoshop Elements for Windows or Macintosh. With Photoshop Elements, you can not only organize your photos, but you can create folders full of pictures from every part of your trip. Make a folder for each day of your trip, and you'll have a photographic diary to look back on, or to share with your friends. You can create a slide show from your travel diary, or email pictures of your trip to your friends and family.

With Photoshop Elements you can even order custom photo books of your trip, complete with captions and other information. There's no better way to showcase your vacation photographs than with a hard-cover coffee-table book for everyone to enjoy.

Taking photos of water

Summer is here, and with warm weather comes a ton of water-related activities. Pools, lakes, oceans, rivers, waterfalls and even backyard sprinklers — you name it, summer's got lots of water! A lot of people don't think they can take photos of these fun-in-the-sun moments for fear of ruining their cameras. But fear not! By taking some minor precautions and remembering a few simple tips and techniques, shooting wonderful water photographs can be a snap.

Other important tips to remember:

- Don't let your camera get too hot. The sun can bake the inside of a car or trunk, so don't leave your camera somewhere it will get too hot.
- Do not swim with your camera unless you have a special waterproof model.
- Keep your hands dry while you are holding your camera.

Reflections

One of the coolest things about water is its mirror-like ability to reflect images. The next time you see a still body of water, check to see which parts of the landscape around it are being reflected in it. You can often see mountains, trees, buildings or statues and at the right angle, you can capture both the item itself as well as its reflection. Things to look for to make your reflection photographs really spectacular are colorful lights, clouds in the sky, uniquely shaped structures. The water's movements are important too — the best reflections will show up in water with minimal waves and other motions.



Glare

The sun is one of the best and one of the worst things to deal with when you're taking pictures. It provides great lighting for crisp, clear photos outdoors, but when you're trying to capture great water shots, it becomes a little troublesome. When light hits water, the result is glare. There are many ways to help minimize glare in your photographs. The easiest way is to try to avoid it altogether by changing your position or the angle at which you take the shot.

Another way to reduce or even eliminate glare is by using a polarizing filter. In addition to reducing the glare, polarizing filters can enrich your outdoor photographs in a lot of other ways. They can make the colors in the water and the sky richer and cut through the haze and fog you often encounter during early-morning shots. So check to see whether your digital camera accommodates filters, and compare and contrast the difference they make in your photographs.

Movement

Some of the best nature photographs include free-flowing water. But what is the best way to capture the movement without creating a big blur? Or what if you want to freeze time and get a shot of a huge wave crashing against some rocks? There are simple solutions to both of these questions.

To create a silky smooth image of running water, you should set your camera to landscape mode (or another slow shutter speed mode) and use a tripod. The tripod will eliminate any accidental motion of the camera while you're taking the photo, and the result will be a beautiful, flowing body of water.



To get a great freeze-frame shot of water, you should set your camera to a sports mode (or another faster shutter speed mode) and try to include enough of the surroundings in the shot to give it some context. A close-up picture of water hitting a rock doesn't tell much of a story, so try to include some of the background to make the picture more interesting.

