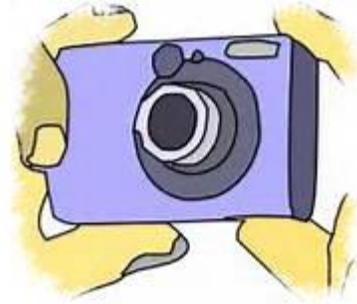


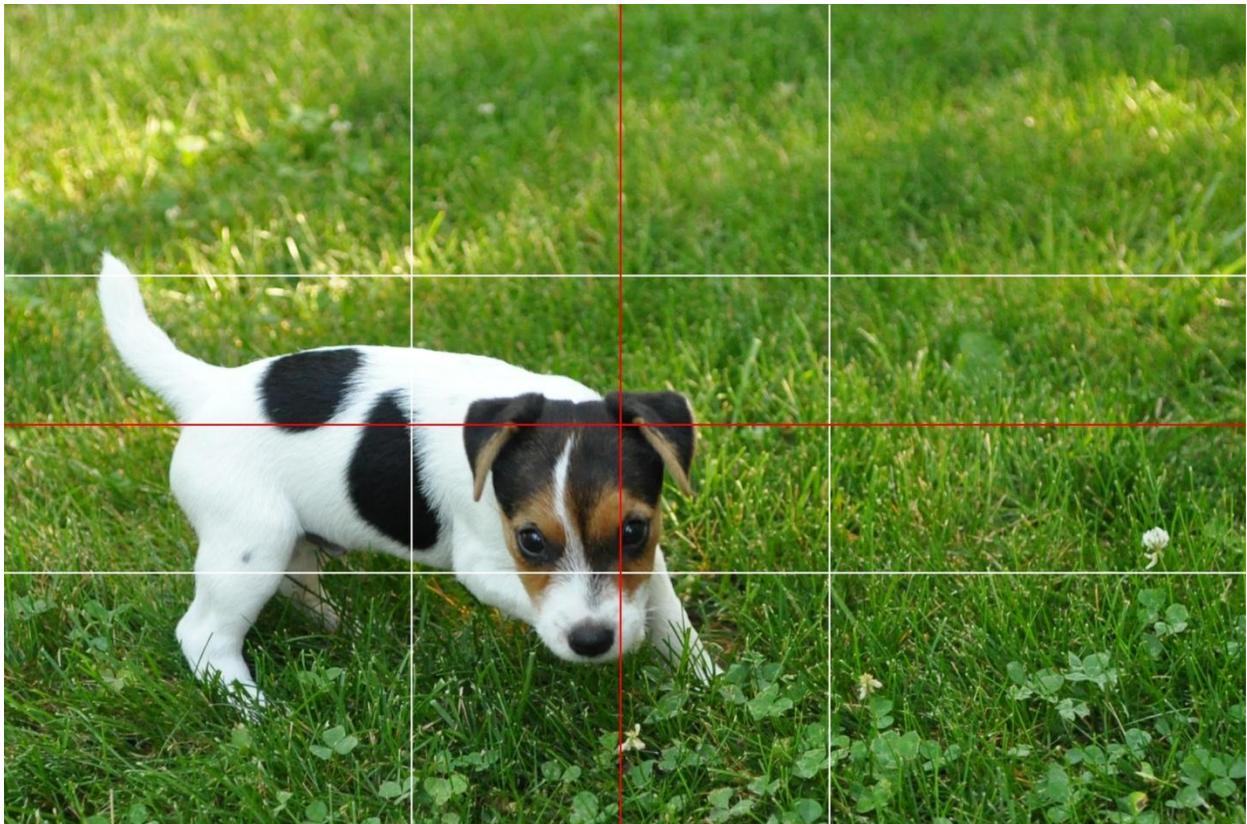
Capturing Great Shots!

Ten+ tips for getting that winning photo!



There are many, many types of cameras around today and it isn't always the biggest or most expensive camera that captures the best shot that wins the photo contest. Many excellent photos are taken with smaller cameras and even the iPhone. However, a few "points to remember" may be of help to you. These few hints below may help you capture that extra special winning shot!

1. Subject: Think about your shots. What are you trying to capture? If the photo is to follow a theme, make sure you're following the theme completely. Think if your photo is telling a story of some kind.
2. Composition: Take time to think about your composition. When you look through your viewfinder or at your camera screen, you see how your chosen subject is positioned in your frame. There are some widely used rules in photography for making your composition more eye appealing. The most popular of these rules is the "rule of thirds".



Imagine two lines going horizontally across your photo and also two lines crossing vertically as the white lines are in the photo above. This divides your photo into thirds, both up and down.

Now positioning your main subject, or any of the main elements of your photo, on any of these lines, or on any of the intersections of the lines, gives you a more pleasing composition. Much more eye pleasing than having your main subject dead center in the frame. The two red lines in the above photo show the center of the photo both horizontally and vertically. Notice the puppy above is mostly below the center horizontal red line and mostly to the left of the center vertical red line. If you have a horizon in your photo, always try to place it a little above or below the actual center. One more note to remember when talking about a horizon if you have a horizon of trees or a body of water, make sure it is straight across. Just think, there is never a body of water such as a lake or ocean that is higher on one end.

3. Background: The one thing that ruins many a good photo is a poor background! Always notice what else is in your shot as well as your chosen subject. Is there a branch coming across the corner? What's behind your subject? You don't want a tree "growing" out of the back of your subject's head. Is there something unsightly in your photo that takes away from your subject? Is the background too busy and your subject doesn't stand out? Taking just a couple of steps one way or another can quickly remove an unsightly object from your photo.

4. Fill Frame: Fill the frame with your subject unless the background compliments it. Don't be afraid to get close or to get your subject from a different angle. Maybe crouch down and shoot up at your subject rather than just at eye level. If you do end up having too much background, you can always crop the photo later.

5. Lighting: Lighting is very important for a good photo. Notice where the light is coming from. Your best shots are with the sun or light behind you - not behind the subject. When you shoot into the light, your subject will be dark and the background may be blown out. Outdoor natural lighting is the best to get good photos. Professional photographers say the best time for photos is early in the day or in the late afternoon. Not mid-day when the sun is directly overhead. Notice shadows. Some shadows can compliment your photo, but shadows across your subject may not be appealing and may make your subject look too dark. Sometimes using a flash even on a sunny day will prevent too much shadowing. Notice the sample photo above has some shadows on the grass in the background. However, these shadows add a little interest to the photo and do not take away from the subject.

6. Focus: Get a sharp photo! Most likely the camera you're using has automatic focus. But you have to give the camera time to focus, so follow your camera's directions. The majority of cameras focus by holding the shutter button just half way down for a second, then pushing the button completely. Sometimes you get an out of focus photo, but it's not the fault of the camera. It's because the photographer wasn't too steady. Make sure you're standing comfortably on both feet and holding your camera steady in both hands. Bringing your elbows close into your body will help you steady the camera. Or, if a wall or fence is close by, you can steady your camera on that. Notice in the sample photo above that the grass in the background is a little blurry, while the grasses in the foreground around the puppy are very much in focus. This makes the puppy stand out and definitely be the center of attention in this photo.

7. Take multiple shots: Your subject may have moved or your focus may be off. Take many shots and then you can select the best one at home. Also just step to the left or right a little, or zoom in or out a little, and take a few more shots. You may like these better when reviewing them later.

8. Post Processing: No harm in doing a little post processing on your photo with your computer before printing. You may want to crop it and/or adjust the lightness/darkness and/or adjust the saturation.

9. Resolution: Always have your camera set at the highest resolution or "best" setting. This high setting is necessary to get good prints of your photos. Your photo may look great when you review it on the screen of your camera or on your computer screen, but if not at a good resolution, it won't look sharp when printed. The best resolution to print at is 300 dpi.

10. It's always fun to take pictures of animals. Many times we notice that the pet or animal in our photo has greenish eyes when we're using a flash. The reason for this is the same as when you notice "red eye" in photos of people. In animals, the greenish cast is the reflection of the animal's retinas reflecting light back at you. In animals, especially those that have good night vision and especially if they see in black and white, the rods and cones of the eye are more prevalent and reflect more light than do our own eyes. It becomes a highlight of sorts, and when using a flash, if the flash is pointed straight at the eye, it will reflect the light straight back at you just like a mirror would. If the animal is looking slightly in a different direction, the light, just like a mirror, comes back at a slightly different direction and does not enter the lens, so produces no "green eye". To prevent the effect, use one hand to create a movement and get the animal to not look straight at you while you flash the shot. Or, just like people photographers do, use an off camera flash. It creates just enough change of angle that the reflected light does not enter the lens thus resulting in no "green eye". The flash mounted on a "point & shoot" camera is so close to in line with the lens that "red eye" or "green eye" is a constant problem when a subject is looking straight at you.

11. Practice, practice and have fun! Take many photos. With the digital cameras today, it doesn't cost anything to take a lot of photos. The more pictures you take, the better you'll get. You'll soon be able to recognize your favorite shots and know why they are your favorites. Find new subjects to take pictures of. As a good photographer, you'll be able to make even the most everyday thing into a terrific photograph if you're creative enough.