

“Techniques For Moving From Picture Taker to Artist”

ScribbleImages Photography

Gary “Doc” Scribner, Principal Artist





About ScribbleImages.com



I decided to develop and maintain my own website after experience with public domain websites such as Google Photos/Albums, Yahoo and others. I still maintain over 50 albums (non-public) on Google Photos that I use for reference and select audiences.

On scribbleimages.com, I have a number of portfolios displayed, which I constantly update with fresh images. Eventually, some portfolios have to be retired to make room for the new.

I can be reached at my email address: scribbleimages54@gmail.com.

Please write me if you have any suggestions regarding my content.

Sorry, I do not have a Twitter or Facebook account specifically for my photography.

Please note that all images are my proprietary works, and my express permission is required to print any for home use and/or use for commercial publication.



Background: My Steep Learning Curve



My Story: My first “exposure” to photography was watching my father develop photos in the basement of our house in Baltimore, Maryland...circa 1959. An eerie glow from the red safelight filled the darkroom, dimly illuminating his work space. After processing the raw film, he used an enlarger to generate black and white prints. I still remember my first whiff of the stop bath. As Dad pulled a print out of the fixer tray, I marveled at the result.

First Shot: My first camera was a Kodak Instamatic 104 using the nearly extinct 126 film cartridge; circa 1964. A camera long gone. And so are the photos. Darn!

Truth Be Known: I was a really lousy photographer when I started getting a little more serious about photography in 1979. It was the first year I could afford to buy a decent camera, a Nikon FM film camera, in preparation for a coast-to-coast trip from Baltimore and back – hitting all of the major national parks like Arches National Park, Yellowstone, Yosemite and many others. I bought the best film, but the cheapest lenses – what did I know at the time: NOT MUCH.



Photography: Our Photography Will Improve



So What Do We Do To Improve Thymself?

Answer: You learn by shooting a lot of film (the old days) and capturing many electrons (in the digital age). And going over your work and figuring out what you did right and wrong. Repeat until better. Improve your equipment, maybe. Then repeat again, and again, and...

Steps to Being Better? Expand Your Knowledge Base and Be Your Own Greatest Critic

Here are some ideas on how to expand your skillset:

- Use the public library system to get any photography book you can get your hands on
- Check out the internet, of course. Look for “Most Famous Photographers”
- Go to museums and photo galleries to see the works in person – one of the best in the world is the **International Center of Photography**, New York City. The **Smithsonian** will have good exhibits – especially at the **National Portrait Gallery** (8th and G, NW)
- Visit the local private galleries. See the galleries in Prince Frederick (CalvART Gallery) and North Beach (ArtWorks@7th); there are some others in the DC/Maryland area

Photography: Critiquing is Painful But Needed



So What Do We Look For Objectively?

Answer: You need a process for critiquing your work – it is the only way you can figure out what to do in post-processing (via Photoshop) AND/OR fix the next time you shoot

What to Look For (The Short List):

- *Exposure:* Was the image properly exposed, or under/overexposed in critical areas? Blown out highlights and super dark areas are impossible to fix in Photoshop.
- *Exposure Triad:* Was the F/Stop set to provide adequate Depth of Field for the subject?
- *Composition:* Did I follow the rule of thirds; at least did I partition the photo properly?
- *Composition:* Did I chop off anything important? Trees, heads, an important feature? Did I back off the subject enough (or zoom out) to capture everything needed?
- Did I keep the camera reasonably level (sloped horizon?) and free from motion (blur?)
- *Composition/Storyline:* Did I draw the viewer's eye from one point to another?
- *Theme:* If and when appropriate, does it express the desired theme? (ex. Birthday party)



Purpose: Every Photo Has A Story



The Story Is Just As Important As The Photo!

The Story: Every photo has a story: Finding the location to begin with; how you got lost getting there, how you climbed the hill or descended into the gorge to achieve the shot's best aspect; laying on your belly to get the best angle or stepping in swampy goo up to your ankles.

The Environment: Enduring the wind blowing you around and rain spraying on your lens; too much light, or lack there of. A loud noise causing you to jerk the camera; unwanted motion of your target. Extreme heat and frigid cold. We already mentioned the goo, didn't we.

And If That Was Not Enough - The Human Error: The klutz who almost knocked over your tripod; the camera you dropped after shooting the image. And – coffee spilled on the camera – oh no! Forget bending your tripod leg because you were in a hurry. Or getting left on the road in Turkey when the tour bus left without you!

Challenges galore!

Your Camera: Invest Wisely



Equipment Choices

The Reality: A super-expensive camera does not a great photographer make. One has to use a camera system that the photographer understands well and can get the most out of.

Picking Camera Equipment: There is an old saying – invest in the “glass”, not the body. Simply put, this means it is better to spend more of your budget on a good lens (the glass) instead of the camera body itself. However, one needs to make sure the lens bought mates well with the camera body. No use buying a “full frame” capable lens if the body it is attached to is a cropped sensor format. Full frame implies a sensor analogous to 35mm film – 36 x 24 mm.

A cropped sensor, depending on the manufacturer, has a reduced physical size. The reduction in size is expressed as the Crop Factor, which for Sony and Nikon, is 1.5. A 60mm lens meant for a full frame camera will simulate a 90mm (60 x 1.5) lens using a crop-factor camera. Canon has a crop factor of 1.6 (60x1.6) which would yield a 96mm equivalent.



Photography: My Favorite Photographers



Landscapes: *Ansel Adams (1902-1984)* hands down. I am trying to buy one of his originals, but the price is high! Most of his works are in Black and White. He spent many years @ Yosemite. Other great landscape masters include: *Edward Weston (1886-1958)*; Weston also produced excellent still photos of produce and...nudes. Also check out *Dustin Lefevre, Michael Shainblum, Kai Hornung*.

Street Photography and The Human Condition: *Dorothea Lange (1895-1965)* – her excellent work during the Depression documented the hard life of many. Also see *Robert Frank (1924-2019)*; *Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004)*; *Robert Capa (1913-1954)*; Capa was famous for his D-Day photos.

Pictures of the Bizarre: Interesting from the technique perspective - *Diane Arbus (1923-1971)*, *Weegee (Arthur Fellig, 1899-1968)*. Weegee was known for his stark street photography, in the days when photographers would not be chased away from a crime scene or auto accident.

Portraits: Portrait photography is not my cup of tea, but one of the best is *Annie Leibovitz (born 1949)*; *Robert Mapplethorpe (1946-1989)* produced technically excellent photos, but his were some of the most controversial photos of the 20th century in my opinion – banned from some galleries.

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Photography Science



Dictionary of Camera Terminology (1)

- **ISO** –ISO (International Organization for Standardization) denotes the camera's setting for sensitivity to light. It is expressed as a number: **ISO 100, ISO 200 or ISO 800**. The higher the number, the more sensitive to light the sensor is programmed; a photo will appear brighter when taken at a higher ISO setting - using the same shutter speed and aperture as a lesser ISO shot. ISO is analogous to film ASA values. Kodachrome was 25, 64 or 100.
- **Depth of Field (DOF)** – the range of distance from the lens that objects remain in focus (ex. 3 feet to 25 feet); this range varies with each lens and focal length.
- **Shutter speed** – expressed in seconds or fractions thereof ex. **1/125th second**. A longer shutter speed allows motion to show in a photo (ex. Blurring of a moving car); shorter exposures freeze motion to varying degrees; waterfalls show smoothing of water at ½ second or longer.



Dictionary of Camera Terminology (2)

- **F/Stop** – Metric for aperture setting; the higher the #, the smaller the aperture. A high aperture (ex. **F/25**) lets in less light, yielding a darker photo if the same ISO and shutter speed are used – but greater DOF. F/Stop is controlled via interweaved diaphragm blades
- **Focal Length** – magnification power of the lens, expressed in millimeters (mm). Zoom lenses have a range of focal lengths (example 28 to 300 mm); a “prime” lens has a single focal length (ex. 35mm). Focal length impacts the depth of field and the contents (view) of the frame. The lower the focal length, the wider the angle of the lens. A wide angle lens, example, 14mm, has a much wider view than a telephoto (ex. 200 mm) lens. Fish eye lenses have extremely wide angles, close to 180 degrees. Extreme telephotos go up to 800mm; they have a very narrow field of view. Tele-extenders (ex. 1.4x) can increase the focal length through special optics. A 500mm lens with 1.4x extender = 700mm.

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It's All About The Light

Rule 1: It's all about the Light – how much, what color

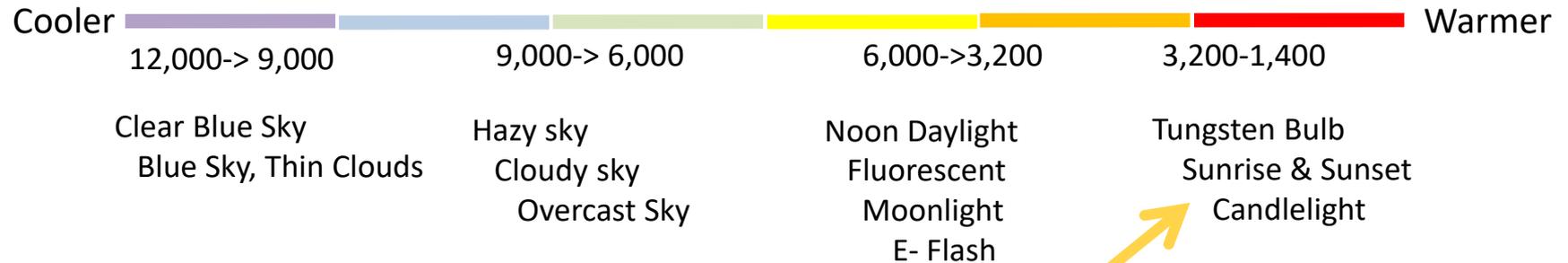
Rule 2: It's also about the light the subject reflects to the camera lens

Rule 3: It's also about the lens used and it's capability to produce an image

Rule 4: It's also about the camera recording the image the lens transmits

Rule 5: It's what you do with the image you produced using Rules 1 thru 4

A Quick Primer On Light – The Science of *Lord Kelvin's Scale*



The Golden Hour for Outdoor Photography
The First Hour After Sunrise & The Last Hour Before Sunset

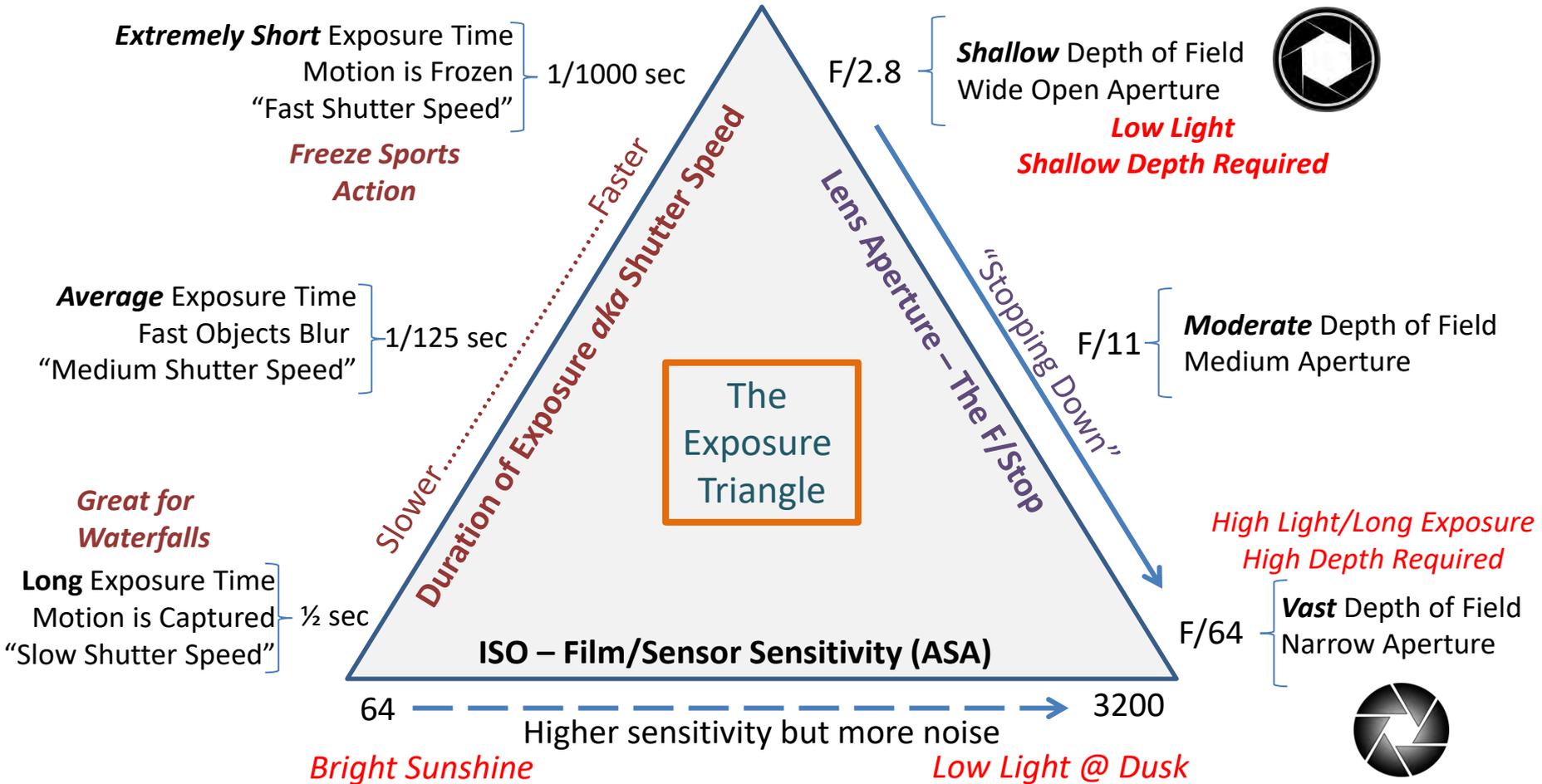
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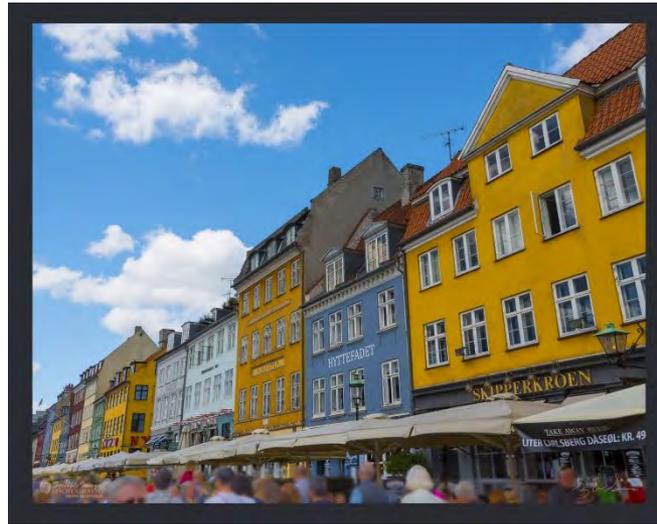
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Three Settings of the Camera Control 90% of The Shot



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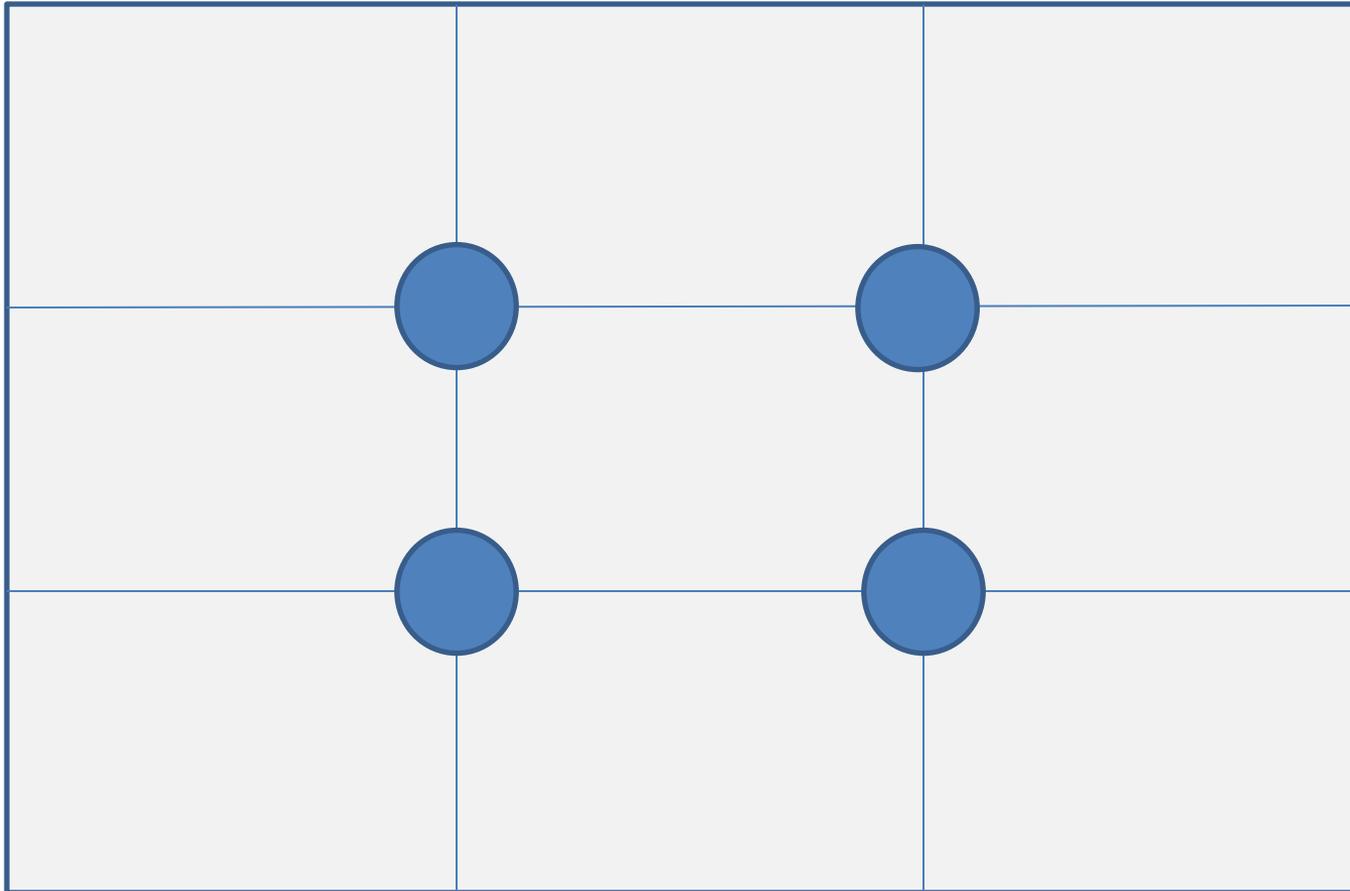


Photographic Composition

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The Rule of Thirds – Landscape Orientation



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The Rule of Thirds – Landscape Orientation



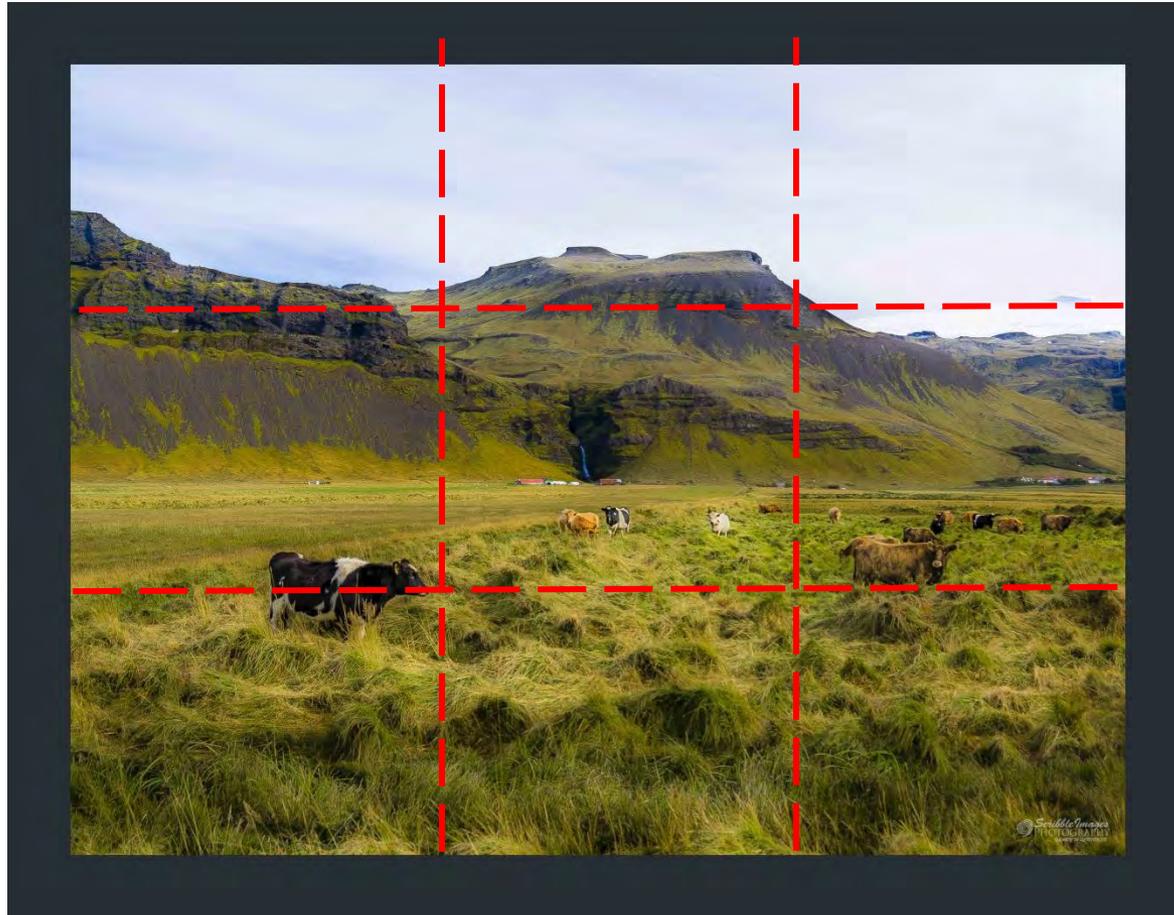
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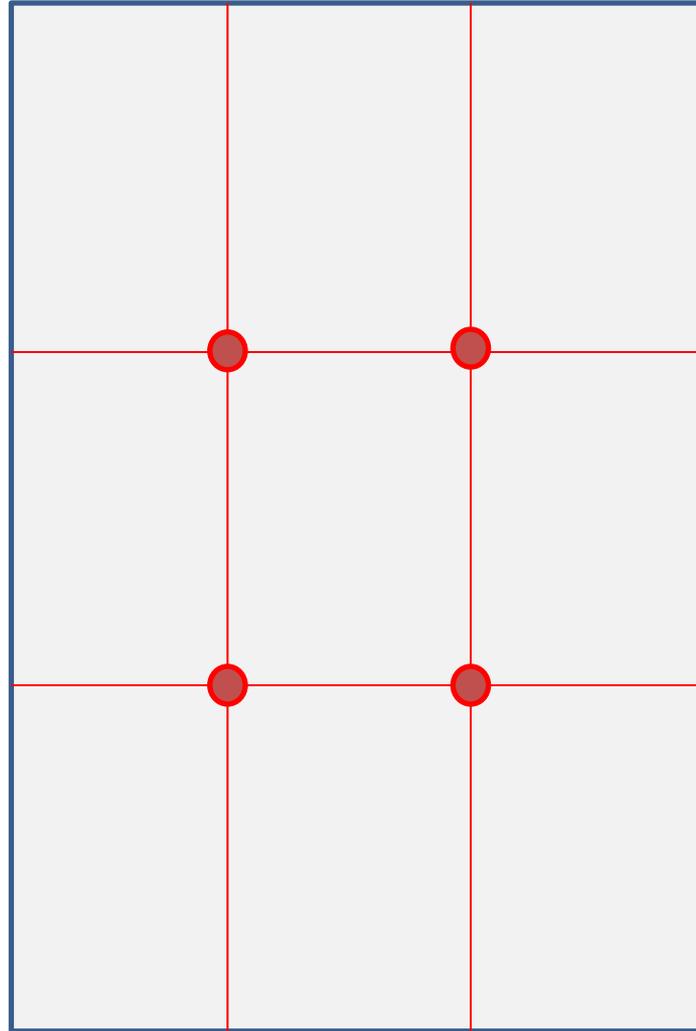
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**The Rule of Thirds
Portrait Orientation**



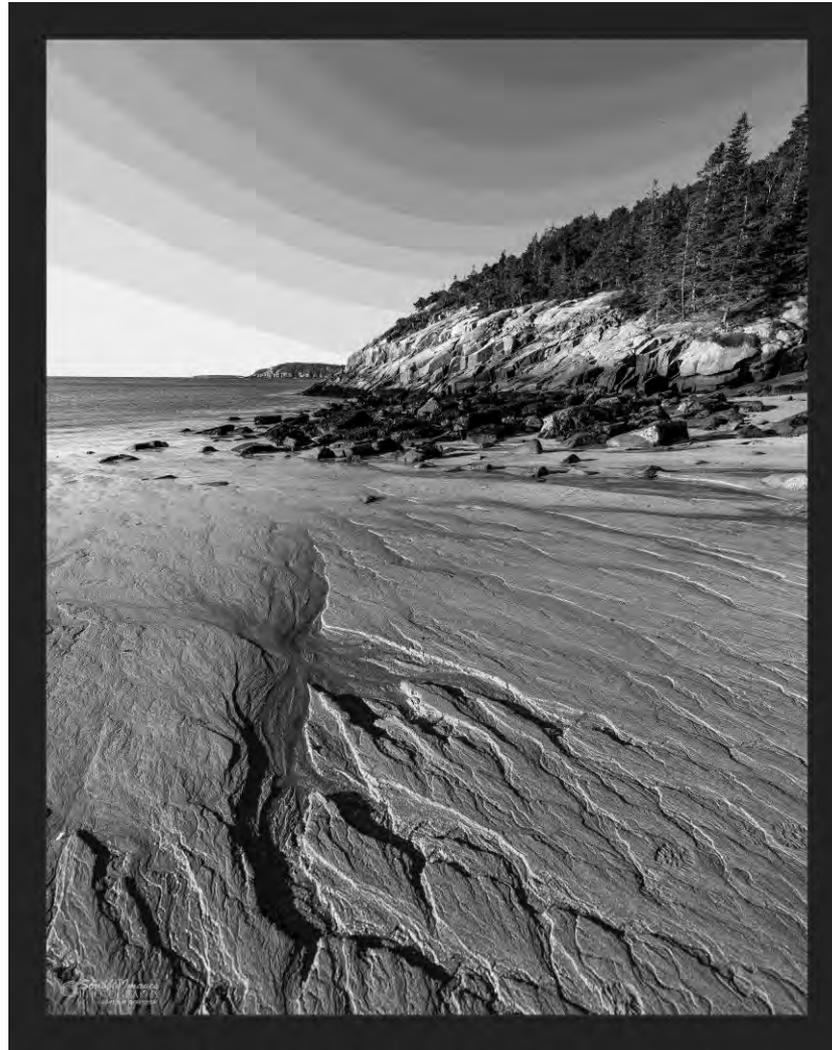
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**The Rule of Thirds
Portrait Orientation**



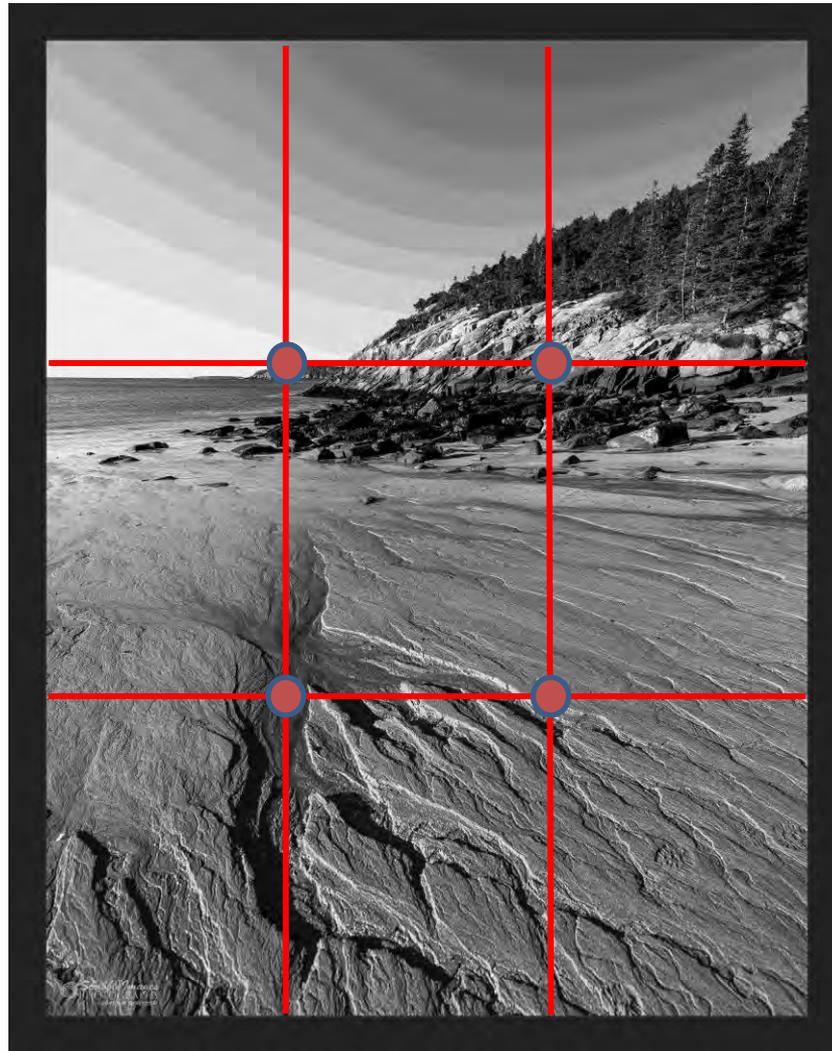
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**The Rule of Thirds
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Develop Your Photoshoot Process

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Preparing for Your Photo Shoot

1. Prepare – Prepare – **Prepare** - for your shoot
2. Research your intended targets – location, lighting, weather, other environmental
3. Based on your research, prepare a list of equipment you need
4. When possible, take a tripod or monopod to eliminate as much unwanted motion
5. Make sure you have enough CHARGED batteries and EMPTY memory cards (or film!)
6. Pack cleaning supplies for lenses, cameras and other equipment
7. Clean your lenses before you leave – use proper cloth and blower; avoid liquids
8. Pack a tool to tighten screw on quick release plate to camera’s base; a quarter works
9. Get familiar with the camera’s menus; especially the really important ones!
10. Build a cheat sheet for your camera settings and develop discipline checking them
11. Remember the 7 P’s:

Proper-Prior-Planning-Prevents-Pitifully-Poor-Photographs

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Before Aiming To Take The Shot (DSLR/Mirrorless)

1. Check your camera menu to make sure you are shooting in camera raw (if available)
2. Check the image quality setting (has to do with how large the jpeg file will be)
 - a. I always shoot camera raw .NEF + JPEG Basic (Nikon); .ARW + JPEG (Sony)
 - b. Camera raw provides a much better image data capture for processing
3. Check your **P-S-A-M** Dial (Program/Shutter/Aperture/Manual) – most important
4. Check your **ISO** setting – rule of thumb – leave it on ISO 100 when you shut down
5. Switch on Vibration Reduction (VR)/Image Stabilization (IS) for handheld shots
 - a) Turn off VR for shots made on a very steady tripod; TBD on others
6. Check your lens – make sure it is on automatic focus (AF), not manual*
*Go manual if you encounter difficult light conditions affecting the autofocus
7. Make sure the lens is free of dust and dirt; use the proper cloth or blower to clean
8. Ensure the lens is attached to the camera tightly – should snap in place
9. Install the lens hood to block out unwanted sidelight; install any filters needed
10. For handheld shots, try to use the neck strap (avoid the drop-sies)
11. Calibrate the diopter-adjustment dial for those who wear glasses
12. Other settings for advanced work: bracketing, exposure compensation (next lesson)

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Ready Aim Fire – Preparing The Shot

1. Check the F/Stop (aperture) & Shutter Speed combination – will it work?
2. Sense Motion – flowers in a 20mph breeze are really tough – need 1/4000 exposure
3. Check the lighting on the target – where is it coming from? Shadows? Too bright?
4. Frame it up – no chopping off heads or tops of trees; the sides count too
5. Make sure your camera is level so the horizon is where it is supposed to be
6. When in doubt using a zoom lens, back off to a wider shot – you can always crop
7. General Principal: Apply the rule of thirds (see Composition section above)
 - a. Exception: Sometimes the shot dictates a different view – go with your gut
8. Aim the camera’s focus point in the right area
 - a. When taking photos of birds and wildlife, focus on the eye
 - b. Photos of humans – usually better to take a shot from an angle vs. straight on
 - c. Landscapes – aim for a point about 1/3 of the way out
9. **Okay – now you are ready to press the button – but not quite yet** (see next slide)

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Finally – You Are Ready to Trigger the Shutter

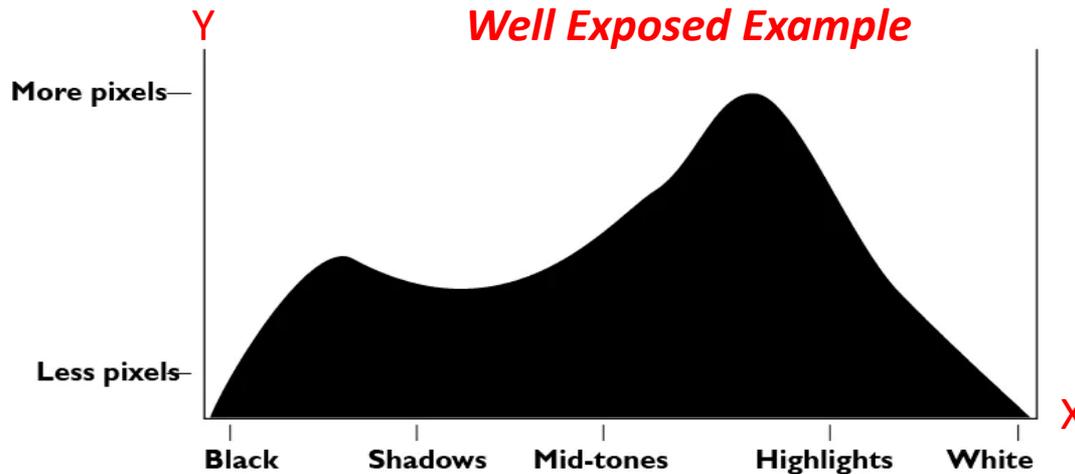
1. Hand-held shots: Squeeze shutter button very gently – don’t jerk it.
2. Tripod shots: use electronic shutter trigger or cable release to avoid camera shake
3. Take multiple shots @ different angles; try different apertures to assess impacts on the depth of field.
4. If doing sports photography, configure the camera to take multiple shots by keeping the shutter button pressed, versus having to keep pressing the button for each shot. Cameras have different capabilities to take rapid fire shots.
5. Playback the image; check the histogram (see next slide).

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Checking The Histogram

1. Most modern Digital Single Lens Reflex & Mirrorless Cameras have a histogram display.
2. The histogram gives you detail on the brightness of the image spectrum.
3. The y-axis represents the strength/weakness of the color band.
4. On many cameras, one can look at each color’s histogram: red, green, blue, etc.
5. Overly dark images will be leaning against the black side; over-exposed images will lean against the right side of the graph



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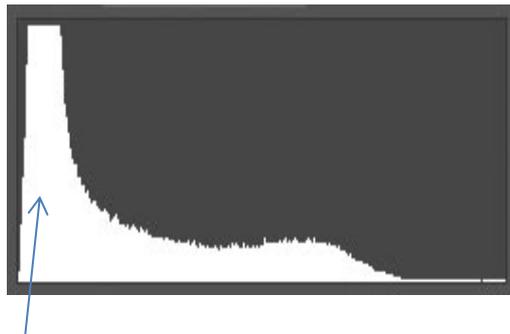
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Checking The Histogram

Under Exposed Example



Dark

Over Exposed Example



Light

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Your Photo Shoot Has Concluded – Now What?

1. Turn off all cameras; remove batteries (but not memory cards – yet)
2. Properly pack your cameras, lenses and other equipment
3. Depending on your situation, perform the following with your memory cards:
 - a. If traveling on an airplane, train or other public transport, remove memory
 - b. Place memory cards in a protective case ON YOUR PERSON
 - c. Download the contents of the card to a computer or server, when feasible
 - d. Perform the download every day of a multi-day engagement
 - e. Use a “courier pouch” large enough to keep track of your cards
 - f. Keep cards/pouch away from magnetic devices and liquids
 - g. Optional: Set card’s read/write switch to “read only”
4. Ensure that you have a backup of the photos before you start your editing
 - a. Follow a logical process when editing – edit with the raw file, not the jpeg



Proper-Post-Processing-Produces-Pleasant-Perfect-Photographs



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