

Photography* Tip of the Day 1:

Here's a simple tip that can really make your photos **POP!**

Photos straight out of a digital camera can almost always benefit from a color or contrast adjustment. And luckily almost all photo editing software products provide "auto color" and "auto contrast" buttons. Try each of these as soon as you open your pic in the software's workspace. If you don't like the result, you can always undo it. And send me a note if you need assistance!



Before applying Autocolor



After Applying Autocolor

Photography Tip of the Day 2:

One thing you can do while shooting your photos to avoid spoiling an otherwise good shot is to make sure that your camera is aligned parallel to the horizon. It isn't always easy, but there is probably something in your digital camera to help you: **Grid Lines**.

Check your user manual to see how you can display a grid (lightly) on your screen. Then, when you compose your shot, line up the grid lines with the real horizon (if it's there) or something horizontal in your composition. Then hold the camera steady, and gently press the shutter button. It'll make a world of difference.

If you have already made some shots that need straightening, it's not a very difficult thing to accomplish with most photo editing software. Check your user guide, or send me a note. I'll be happy to help you to get started.



Photography Tip of the Day 3:

Even professional photographers often make the mistake of forgetting to change the settings on their camera from one shooting day to the next. For example, if your digital camera was set for portraits last time and this time you are photographing landscapes, you're going to be disappointed with your pictures.

The "Portraits" setting adds a softness to the image that will make your scenery look slightly blurred and washed out. Scenery should be tack sharp and crystal clear, so just make sure that the first thing you do when you turn your camera on is ***CHECK THE SETTINGS!*** You won't regret it.

Photography Tip of the Day 4:

Here's a simple and highly effective tip for photographing candid shots of people or pets: **GET CLOSE!** Fill up as much of the frame as possible with your subject. And experiment with cutting off portions of hair or shoulders. The results can look artsy and wonderful. Take lots of shots in succession. The pros take tons of pics and throw away most! You see only their best! And in the digital world, shots are cheap! You'll LOVE the results.



Photography Tip of the Day 5:

Have you ever been surprised and disappointed to find that the photo that appeared tack sharp on your camera's LCD screen turns out to be much blurrier than you thought when it comes up on your computer screen or a print? That's because the small screen squeezes everything down so small that the blurs aren't visible to your eye.

There are ways to improve sharpening in photo editing tools, but it's much better to make the images crisp and sharp "in the camera." Here are a few tips:

- The best way to get a sharp photo is to mount your camera on a tripod and use a cable or remote control to trigger your shutter. But that may not always be practical, particularly for the casual photographer.
- Whenever possible, support your body against a wall or a tree; If you can hold your camera on a flat surface, or a bean bag, so much the better. The objective is to stop even slight movement as much as possible.
- If you must hand-hold the camera, steady it by pressing your elbows as close as possible against your body. Take a deep breath--let the air out and **HOLD IT!** Then press the shutter button slowly, so as to create as little shake as possible.

With practice you should be seeing noticeable improvement in the sharpness of your photos.

Photography Tip of the Day 6:

[Note: There are no paid endorsements for any products in this Newsletter.]

As you probably have discovered, pointing your camera's built-in flash directly at a person's face almost always makes for a harsh looking portrait. Noses,

foreheads, and cheek bones become blown-out hot spots, pores are enlarged, and blemishes and wrinkles are accentuated. Sorry to say, there's not much you can do with a point and shoot camera's pop-up flash, unless you are inventive and want to try your hand at creating a DIY flash diffuser. You can probably find some online instructions to help you. Or invest about \$20 in a product like the Gary Fong [DELTA1 Delta Diffuser](#) for point and shoot cameras.

Alternatively, try using a medium zoom so that your flash won't have to be so close to your subject--but it's still tricky to shine enough light on a face to properly illuminate it.

If you are using any sort of digital SLR camera, you can invest that same \$20 (which includes shipping) in a product like the [LumiQuest Soft Screen](#), which places a translucent material in front of your flash by fitting a tab into your camera's hot shoe. I carry one of those around with me in my purse. And [Gary Fong](#) also has some great products for diffusing the light emanating from an external flash inserted into your DSLR's hot shoe.

The good news is that if you do use an external flash in your hot shoe, you can simply point the flash at an angle at a white ceiling or wall and bounce the light back onto your subject indirectly.



Light Bounced from Ceiling

You'll have to do some experimenting with any of these methods until you get the hang of it, but you'll find that your casual portraits will be greatly improved by diffusing harsh light before it does its damage!

Let me know how this works for you, or if you have any questions about light diffusing.

[Note: This and all previous and future tips are consolidated on the [Your Best Shot](#) website.]

Until next time, have yourself a great shoot!

** These tips are geared to casual photographers who can benefit from simple solutions to common shooting issues. Tips are excerpted from the “Your Best Shot Newsletter.” [Click here](#) to sign up to receive it!*

Email me with your questions or suggestions for future tips!

Photography Tip of the Day 7:

Photographing Children

Photographing children can be quite a challenge, but it can also bring great rewards: Capturing every stage of your child's life will create a life-long treasure trove of memories, for you and for your children as they mature. So I've collected a few great tips that will energize your childhood captures. Let's go!

Tip #1: GET DOWN!

Getting down to the level of the child is your first key to success. Bend down, kneel down, or squat down to accomplish this. It'll put your viewer into the action and avoid the distortion that can occur if you shoot from above.



Tip #2: FILL THE FRAME

And while you are down there, experiment with composition. Get close and fill the frame with their faces. Children have fantastic eyes, and making them a focal point can make your shot into a Gem.







Tip #3: DON'T MAKE THEM POSE FOR YOU

If you make them pose for you, you won't be able to capture a natural expression. The best way to achieve that goal is to snap the photos while they are engaged in their natural activities. Be patient, and don't expect that all your attempts will be successful. Just sit back and observe them and keep your camera ready for action!



In the next shot, taken over 21 years ago, our grandson was playing with Minera, the golden retriever. And just at the right moment, I called his name. The result:



In the next example I just let the action happen at an ad shoot where the Baby wrangler had the child engaged



Keeping these three tips in mind while photographing small children will go a long way to making fantastic memories!

Photography Tip of the Day 8

Isn't it wonderful when you look at a close-up photograph of a flower blossom, and the flower is beautifully in focus but the background is very blurred? Or a bird perching on a bird bath, and the flowers in the background are nothing but colorful blurs? Well, even if you're just a casual photographer, you can make it happen. First I'll show you how I did it with my digital SLR camera. First have a look at the two photos below.



DOF: Deep



DOF: Shallow

In the first example, "Deep," you can see that the background is sharp and clear (or should be--it may show up a bit blurry in this email). In the "Shallow" example, the background is quite blurry. This concentrates the viewer's eye on the object that is in clear focus, which is usually how we want our portraits and florals to be photographed. With DSLRs and now with many point and shoot cameras, this effect can be achieved by controlling the size of the camera's aperture--the amount of light that is allowed onto the camera's sensor. So, you will want to set your camera on Aperture Priority (usually "A" or "AV") and remember this rule: The larger the number of the aperture, the smaller the opening. In the "Deep" example, I had the aperture set very small, at 25. And in the "Shallow" example, it was set to a large aperture of 4.

Depending on the lens that you use, and it's focal length setting (if it is a zoom lens), the maximum and minimum aperture sizes may vary. Just use the largest available to get the blurred background.

So what do you do if you want to blur the background and your point-and-shoot camera does not allow you to control the aperture size? Your camera almost surely has some presets for various types of photography. Use the "Portrait" setting to get the shallow depth of field--the blurred background.

Please feel free to [contact me](#) if you would like some more in-depth information about this tip, or if you have any question about photography.

[Note: This and all previous and future tips are consolidated on the [Your Best Shot website](#).]

Until next time, have yourself a great shoot!

Photography Tip of the Day: 9

Using Fill Flash to Enhance Natural Lighting

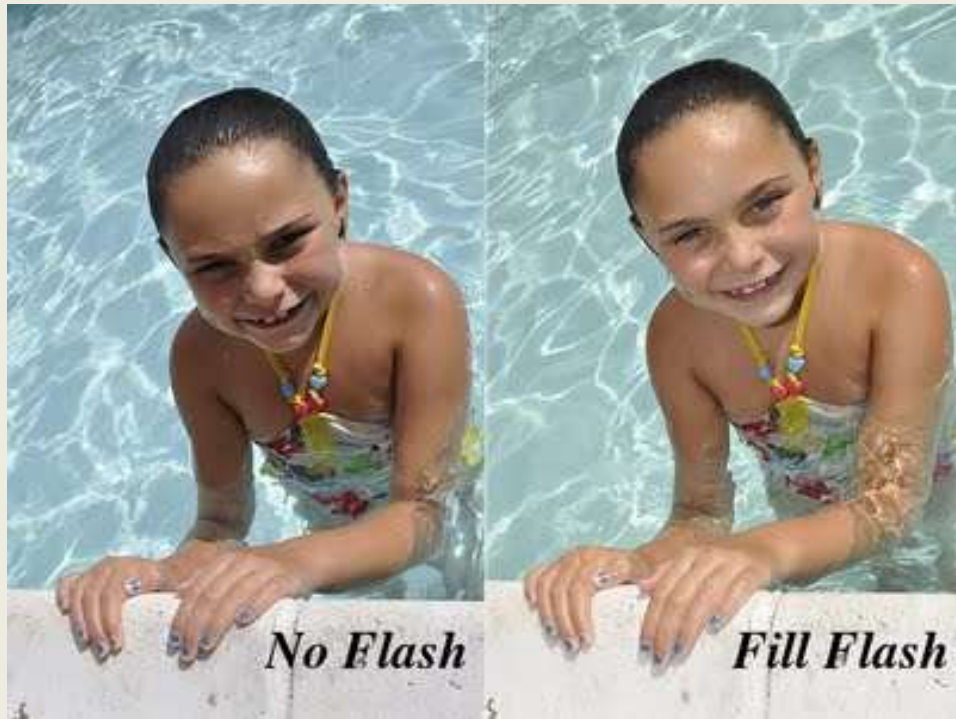
(Adapted from online article of March 28, 2011 by Canon technical expert, Rudy Winston)

Outdoors in Daylight

Balanced fill-flash is a wonderful technique that can add life to otherwise ordinary pictures, or even rescue images that previously might have not been useable. What is really nice is that fill-flash can be done with fully automatic exposure control! No special manual settings are needed (unless you want to put your own personal touch on your pictures). Photographers use different terms to describe this technique. Fill-flash, fill-in flash, balanced-fill flash, and so on all refer to the same thing.

A fill-flash picture is one in which the ambient light in the background, sunlight outdoors, or room lighting in an indoor shot is properly exposed and therefore normally visible in the picture. But along with this, flash has been used, and subjects in the foreground of the picture are illuminated by this extra burst of flash. When the two light sources (flash and ambient light in the scene) are balanced, neither will appear overly dark or light. This usually gives makes very natural-looking picture. It can also brighten otherwise subdued faces, lighten shadows from harsh sunlight, or sometimes just add a little sparkle in a subject's eyes.

There is no special trick to taking balanced-fill flash pictures outdoors in daylight, even in bright sunlight. With the camera in any automatic exposure mode such as Program, shutter priority, or aperture priority, and if you are using a DSLR camera, just pop up the built-in flash (or connect a flash unit to the camera's hot shoe and turn it on with default settings). With a point and shoot camera, it is the same. Just turn on the flash.



Changing the brightness of the background:

Balanced-fill flash can also easily be done when you are indoors, or outdoors at night. In a typical flash snapshot in these conditions, we are used to seeing a brightly-lit subject, with a black or nearly-black background. This happens because the ambient light in the room or in the scene was underexposed, but the flash illumination on the subject was correct. To get a more natural-looking, balanced-fill result in these scenes, we need to extend the exposure so that more ambient light is recorded in the scene.

In this situation your DSLR will make it easy if you're set to either shutter priority or aperture priority (NOT Program) modes. However, this might cause your shutter speed to be very low, and necessitate a tripod or a VERY steady hand. To get around this problem, just set your ISO to 400 or 800. If you're using a point-and-shoot camera, you may have to experiment with moving closer or farther

away from your subject to control the achieve the right balance. [The examples below are copied from “thephotographydictionary.com.”]



This picture is a classic backlight situation but it's more than that. This is a nicely colored sunset.



By simply using a flash on the camera and utilizing fill-flash techniques, the colors of the sunset are incorporated into a picture of a person. Had the flash not been used, the sunset would have been washed out

The bottom line:

Don't be afraid to use your flash in daylight is actually one of the most effective times to use it, as long as you are not too far from your subjects. And in low light, do not feel locked-in to 1/60th of a second shutter speeds, and resulting unnatural dark backgrounds. Experiment a little balanced fill-flash capabilities and you will be quickly convinced of its usefulness.

Photography Tip of the Day #10:

Since everyone loves to capture scenery, especially on vacations, these tips will center around landscape photography--though many will be applicable to all photographic compositions. The tips borrow extensively from Darren Rouse, the founder and chief blogger of digital-photography-school.com (DPS). The photos that are used to illustrate the tips will be mine unless otherwise stated. You can read Darren's article at [here](#).

[Some Basics:](#)

- For the vast majority of landscapes, it's important for the photo to be clear and tack sharp. Accomplish this by using the smallest possible aperture (largest F number). Since doing this will let the smallest amount of light onto your image sensor, in most cases you'll want to use a tripod. Use a cable shutter release to minimize camera shake even more.

Look for an interesting sky to enhance your shot. Pure blue or blown-out white skies can make a photo boring. Those of you who know your way around photo editing programs might consider sky swapping. I have a collection of skies that I use for this purpose and always have a camera with me, so when I see a good sky, I shoot it and save it for such rescues.



Dull Sky



Replaced Sky

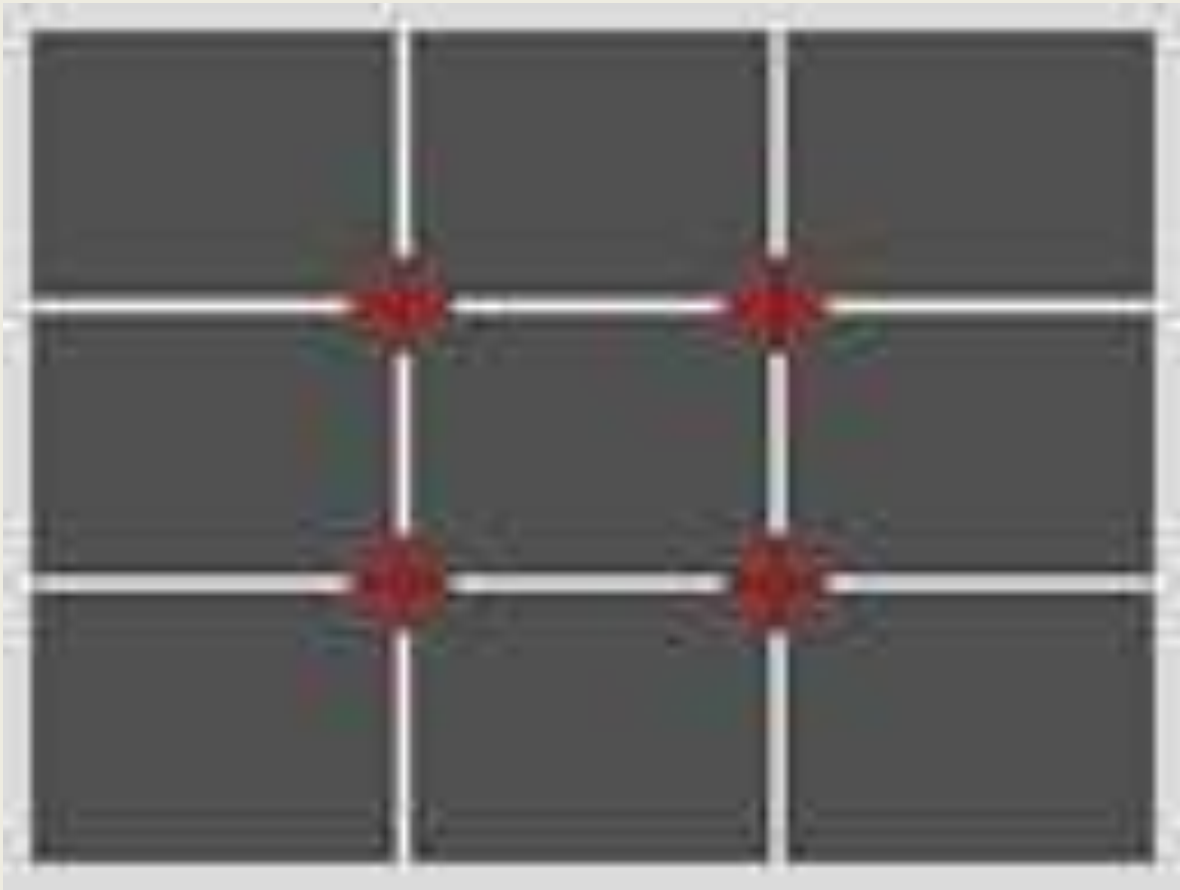
Try to be aware of wires and other ugly distractions that could spoil the shot, and find an angle to shoot that either eliminates them or minimizes them. Sometimes they are easy to edit out, but sometimes it can take hours to rescue a photo from its overhead wires.

All shots need some sort of focal point, and landscapes are no exception - in fact without them landscape photographs end up looking rather empty and will leave your viewers eye wandering through the photo looking for a place to rest. Focal points can take many forms in landscapes and could be a building or structure, a striking tree, a boulder or rock formation, a silhouette or other object of interest. Think not only about **what** the focal point is but **where** you place it. More about that later.



The lone walker serves as a focal point for this landscape

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Rule of Thirds Schema

One way to instantly improve your images is by using the "**Rule of Thirds**". Mentally divide your image frame into three horizontal and three vertical grids. You will end up with two horizontal lines and two vertical lines. These lines can help you create a stronger composition by placing vertical and horizontal planes along the imaginary one-third lines and by placing the subject at the intersections of the horizontal and vertical lines.



Rule of Thirds



Rule of Thirds

Using diagonal lines can be a very effective way of drawing the eye of those viewing an image into it and to the main focal point. The 'lines' need not be actual lines - they could be the shape of a path, a line of trees, a fence, river or any other feature in an image.



Diagonal Lines



Diagonal Lines

Converging lines (two or more lines coming from different parts of an image to a single point) can be all the more effective.

More landscape photography tips and rules will be presented in the next issue.



Converging Lines

More landscape photography tips and rules in the next edition of the newsletter. But you can always [contact me](#) with questions:

All tips will also appear on my website, [Your Best Shot!](#)
