



CREATIVE MEDIA **FUNDAMENTALS**

TRAVEL PHOTO BASICS



CMF001

QUALITY OF LIGHT

There are many types of light, both natural and artificial, but to see light as a photographer is to recognize the quality and direction of light and how it falls upon your subject. The source of light, the intensity, the angle, the color, and the shadows and highlights that light creates all affect the look of your final image. Once you learn this new language of light, the world opens up with many more photographic opportunities, and your images dramatically improve.

QUALITY OF LIGHT: HARD LIGHT

HARD LIGHT comes from a direct source, such as the sun or an overhead spotlight. There are abrupt transitions between light and shadow, producing hard shadows and more contrast. The harder the quality of light, the more difficult exposure becomes – the human eye can see detail in bright areas and dark areas of a scene, a camera has limited ability to capture it all. Hence a very “contrasty” image versus what you see in real life.



Hard light shows the crisp line between the shadows and highlights - it also accentuates wrinkles and imperfections.



QUALITY OF LIGHT: SOFT LIGHT

SOFT LIGHT appears to wrap around your subject with a smooth transition from light to shadow, producing soft shadows. Soft light can be even and flattering, you can find it on cloudy overcast days, in open shade, or you can create it yourself with the help of a light diffuser.

Soft light is a much more flattering light for portraits. Notice how smooth the model's skin appears and you can see a nice reflection or “catch light” in her eyes.

DIRECTION OF LIGHT

You can control the look of your photos just by identifying and controlling the direction of light in your scene.

DIRECTION OF LIGHT: SIDE LIGHT

SIDELIGHT makes shadows more visible which gives your subject dimension and form. Side light occurs naturally in the early morning or late afternoon when the sun is low in the sky. You can also create sidelight by placing your subject near a window or doorway.



Notice how the early morning side light falls upon the rock formation in the background, the model's sweater, and his face. This side light creates texture, dimension, and form.

DIRECTION OF LIGHT: FRONT LIGHT

FRONT LIGHT is also known as beauty light, because it can make your subject a bit more beautiful, eliminating imperfections and softening wrinkles. Front light illuminates the entire face or scene, and if it's soft light, such as late afternoon/sunset, it will be easier for your subject to fully open their eyes.



This family was photographed on a late October afternoon as they faced the setting sun. The front light evenly illuminates their faces and you're able to see a "catch light" in their eyes.

DIRECTION OF LIGHT

DIRECTION OF LIGHT: BACK LIGHT

The direction of BACK LIGHT is coming from behind your subject and can be used to create Rim Light, a Silhouette, Lens Flare, and Transparency of an object. It's best to shoot back light when the sun is low in the sky, early morning or late afternoon. Be careful to avoid shooting directly into the sun or you may produce lens flare (hazy artifacts across your image), unless lens flare is the creative effect you're going for!



Back light shines through the model's hair and creates a "rim" of light around her, visually popping her out of the background.



Back light can also reveal more detail in flowers, leaves, or other potentially translucent objects. Use back light to create more visually compelling images.

FINDING GOOD LIGHT

What is good light and where do you find it? Searching for and creating flattering light is possible when you know what to look for.

EARLY MORNING AND LATE AFTERNOON LIGHT

Beautiful natural light occurs in the early morning or late afternoon. This is when all the famous National Geographic photographers shoot, you can too! When the sun is low in the sky the light is softer and more forgiving. It's also more directional so you can see the texture and form in your scene.



An early morning excursion in Scotland gave me the opportunity to capture a shot as I walked down the gangway. The morning light offers soft side light on the buildings and a lovely reflection in the water.



Late afternoon light is warm and soft and wraps around the surfer, illuminating his face and offering side light that creates dimension and form in the image.

FINDING GOOD LIGHT



The photo on the left was captured in harsh, direct sunlight. Do you see the hard shadows on his face?

The photo on the right was captured as the boy stood beneath the shade of his house, in “open shade.” Notice the even light on his face and the catch lights in his eyes.

OPEN SHADE

If your early morning hours are spent sleeping and sunsets are missed because you’re at a show or dinner, there are other options for finding good light. Open shade! Open shade can be found almost anywhere on a sunny day: beneath a tree, under the porch of a house, in a doorway, under an umbrella, in the shade of a building, or any other location where the sunlight is not directly falling upon your subject.

Find a nice doorway and place your subject just on the inside. The indirect, open shade lighting will evenly illuminate their face and make you look like the super photographer.



FINDING GOOD LIGHT

OVERCAST LIGHT

You might think that a gray, overcast day would be a terrible time to shoot, but an overcast sky can result in great photos. Instead of a direct light source coming from a small spot in the sky, the clouds on an overcast day create a huge softbox in the sky, resulting in even, diffused light falling upon your subjects and less contrast in your images. And if you're lucky enough to have some weather roll in, this can be a great time to take advantage of the different moods weather can evoke in a photograph.



A foggy summer day at the beach helped me capture a unique image of a surfer walking off into the distance.



An overcast day in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Who knew that a gray day could make your images look more colorful? It's true. Soft overcast light conditions reduce glare and reflections, resulting in less contrast and more saturated (vivid) colors.

CONTROL THE LIGHT

Light comes from many sources and directions with varying degrees of intensity. That's why it's important to identify the light so you can begin to modify (control) it to your liking. Reflecting and diffusing (softening) the light creates so many more possibilities for capturing a beautiful image, because you're in control.

REFLECT LIGHT

Light is reflected around you every day - mirrors, glass, white walls, and even white tablecloths reflect light. You can buy professional reflectors of gold, silver, and white from camera stores, but you can also use the "found" reflectors listed above to bounce light into the shadows and further illuminate your scene.



A reflector helps diminish shadows, wrinkles, and many other imperfections, so why not use it? Here my friend is holding a gold board below this family to reflect light and help brighten up their faces on a dark, gray day.

DIFFUSE (SOFTEN) LIGHT

You can soften harsh light by placing a sheer white fabric, paper, or a professional diffuser between your subject and the harsh light source (ex: bright sunlight at high noon). Or you can use your Crystal Cruise umbrella, found in your stateroom closet, to diffuse the harsh sun.



The photo on the left is "before" the photo on the right is "after" using the diffusion.

RULES OF COMPOSITION

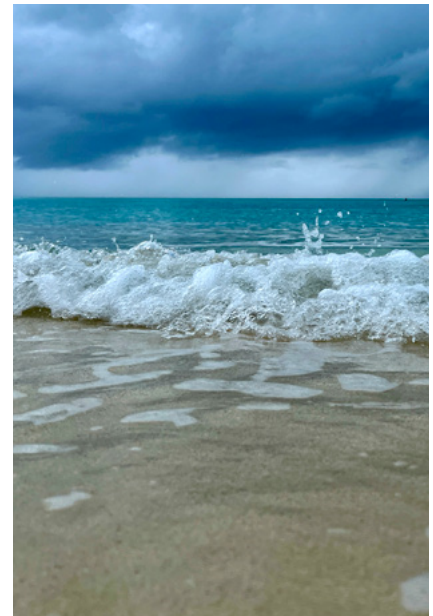
Following the rules doesn't sound very creative does it? But you can take better pictures by understanding some basic rules of composition. These "rules" are proven design principles you can use to create compelling images. After you learn these guidelines, you can take risks, break the rules, and create your own style.

RULE OF THIRDS

Envision a tic-tac-toe board on your viewfinder and place something of interest near one or more of the intersections. This "off-center" composition creates visual interest and impact in your photos.



In a close-up, vertical portrait shot, keep the eyes in the upper third of the image.



Move the horizon line to the upper or lower third of the image for a more interesting shot.

RULES OF COMPOSITION

FRAMING

A framing element in your scene draws attention to your main subject. A quick way to focus attention and to enhance the sensation of depth in a scene is to use some object or shape in the foreground as a frame.



This cutout window made a nice frame as I shot a picture of my Mom on the Ancient City wall in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

LINE

Lines are in everything we see. The straight vertical line of a building, the curved line of an archway, the horizontal line of the horizon, or the diagonal line of a runner moving forward. Used in image composition, these lines instill a sense of unity, strengthening the composition and guiding the viewer's eye through the photograph.



Do you see the implied diagonal line of the palm trees leading your eye through the shot?

RULES OF COMPOSITION



SCALE

How do you know if something is small or large? In real life we can usually tell if something is large or not, but in the world of photography, it's not always that easy to get a sense of proportion. So how can we make sure that immense size is properly appreciated? Provide a familiar reference point to define the scale. By including people or common objects in a scene, the viewer can quickly understand the scale.

A church in Cadiz, Spain has a very large door, but the size would not be fully realized without a “human scale” reference.

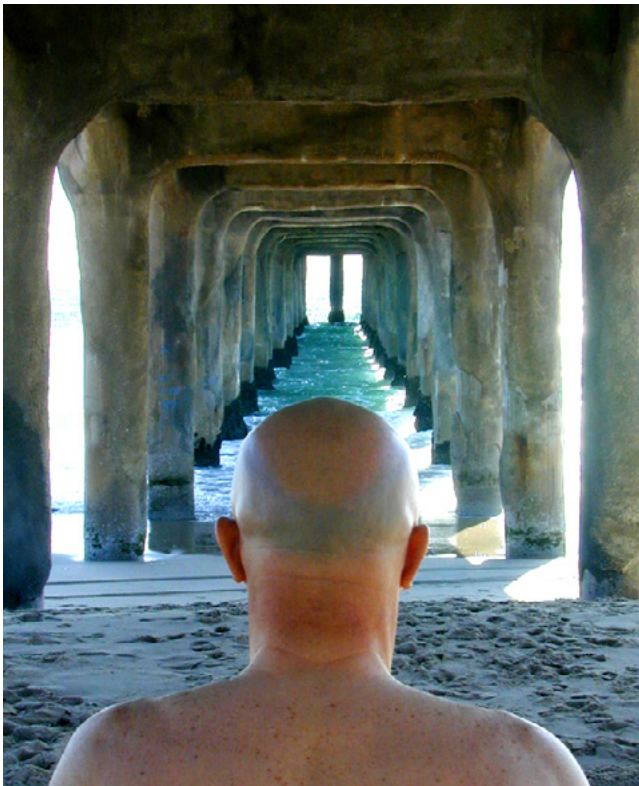


Create a little whimsy in your images by playing with scale. Anything close to camera appears larger than objects in the distance.

RULES OF COMPOSITION

PATTERN

Patterns, both natural and man-made, bring a sense of visual rhythm and harmony to photographs that, like a series of repeating notes in a melody, capture the imagination. Patterns appear whenever strong graphic elements—lines, colors, shapes, or forms—repeat themselves.



The repeating pattern of the pier pylons juxtaposed with the man in the foreground create depth and visual interest.



The bright colors on this door in Paraty, Brazil captured my attention. I used my blue shirt as a lively contrast.

COLOR

Colors, more than any other design element, determine the emotional content of a photograph. You can establish the entire mood of a shot by emphasizing a particular color scheme: Reds and oranges are hot and exciting, Blues and greens are cool and refreshing. Complementary colors are opposite each other on the color wheel. When placed together they intensify.

RULES OF COMPOSITION

ANGLE

Mix things up and tell a story with your images by taking pictures from various angles and distances. Think about how movies and television shows are edited together to tell a story and create visual interest.



A wide shot, a medium shot, a close-up, and different angles tell your viewer “Hey, there’s a story here!”

ROOM TO ZOOM

COMPOSING THE SHOT

There is something nice about getting in close and filling the frame with your subject because it provides more impact and you can capture expressions. The problem is, the wide-angle of the lens distorts your subject's face. The solution is to stand back and give yourself "room to zoom." By stepping back and zooming in using the telephoto setting on your lens, you are essentially compressing space. The background becomes blurred, eliminating distracting elements and your subject's face looks better.



This image was captured up-close with a wide angle lens. My nose looks bigger, my forehead is huge, and the shape of my face appears to be out of proportion.



This image was captured with a long, telephoto lens. Zooming in to fill the frame with your subject is a much more flattering perspective.