

**Dapto Camera Club Magazine.**

# **Viewfinder.**

**July 2021**





## Photoshop Tips

Mastering these shortcuts will help you work smarter, save time, and graduate to true Photoshop guru level! (These are tips 14–42.)

- **Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Alt+E** will merge a copy of all Layers
- **F** Cycle through workspace backgrounds
- **X** Change your foreground and background colours
- **D** Reset foreground and background colours to black and white
- **]** and **[** Change your brush tip size
- **Cmd/Ctrl+J** Duplicate a layer or selection
- **Space Bar** Hold Space and drag to navigate around the image
- **TAB** Hides or shows all panels and tools
- **Cmd/Ctrl+T** Transform a layer
- **Cmd/Ctrl+E** Merge selected layer down, or merges several highlighted layers
- **Cmd/Ctrl/Ctrl+Shift+Opt+S** Save for web & devices
- **Cmd/Ctrl+L** Bring up levels box
- **Cmd/Ctrl+T** Open Free Transform tool
- **Cmd/Ctrl+M** Open Curves
- **Cmd/Ctrl+B** Edit Colour Balance
- **Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+Opt+C** Scale your image to your preferred state
- **Cmd/Ctrl+Opt+G** Create clipping mask
- **Cmd/Ctrl+0** Fit on screen
- **Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+>/<** Increase/decrease size of selected text by 2pts
- **Cmd/Ctrl+Option+Shift->/<** Increase/decrease size of selected text by 10pts
- **]/[** Increase/decrease brush size
- **Shift+F5** Fill the selection
- **}/{** Increase/decrease brush hardness
- **,./** previous/next brush
- **</>** First/last brush
- **Cmd/Ctrl+]** Bring layers forward
- **Cmd/Ctrl+[** Send layer back
- **Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+[** Send layer to bottom of stack
- **Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+]** Bring layer to bottom of stack

Viewfinder cover photo taken by.

**Jenny Hale**

## Backyard Photography Tips

Posted: 30 May 2021 08:45 PM PDT

One of the most common questions I am asked at workshops is where I go to get my reference photos. Most people assume that I travel far and wide to get my shots. This is true; I do travel as much as I can, but the bulk of my photo archive comes from places photographed within 100 kilometers (60 miles) of my home. Good reference photos for your art are just outside your front door; you just have to open your eyes and look—really look!



Photo by Paul Nuttall; ISO 80, f/2.8, 1/640-second exposure.

The following article is a simple guide of how to look and see your surroundings and find their hidden beauty.

### The Equipment

To achieve good photographs you obviously have to have a camera, but what camera do you need? My suggestion is a DSLR camera for several reasons. First, the lenses on SLRs are interchangeable, so you can achieve much more with a single camera. As your abilities increase you

will want to purchase new lenses or better lenses than you started with. All-in-one cameras don't allow for any upgrades or interchanging of lenses.

An SLR camera also allows you to attach longer focal length lenses. As for what brand to buy, it all comes down to preference. Today most DSLRs are going to take a great picture. The only thing you need to concern yourself with is the expandability of the make and model you purchase.

In my experience, Canon (which I use), Nikon, and Sony (which will fit all your old Minolta lenses) are the most reliable and expandable models on the market today. Start with a single SLR body like a Canon 50D or Nikon D90, a good short range lens like a 18–55mm, and if money allows, a half decent telephoto lens like a 100–400 to get those far away shots. If you're planning to photograph a lot of wildlife like I do, then a 100–400mm lens is a must-have.

### Observation

Traveling to Africa or Alaska is the obvious way to get great dramatic pictures, but it's very expensive. The drama in your backyard can be just as dramatic if you know where to look and what to look for. Lighting is everything. Learn to see light and position yourself to capture natural light in its most flattering state.

Photo by Don DeBold; ISO 200, f/5.6, 1/640-second exposure.





What do I mean by this? Most people stand with the natural light behind them so that they are photographing into a scene flooded with light. This light is great for a fast exposure but tends to “flatten” a scene because everything has the same intensity and lighting. If you position yourself so that you are shooting into the natural light you create dramatic “back-lighting” which has much more shape and form.

Try to set up the composition in your viewfinder so that lighted areas overlap shadowed areas. This will create a wonderful sense of depth. Overlapping will also create strong contrast in the composition and tends to help the sense of form in a picture. Taking the same shot with different exposure settings will also drastically change the quality of light in your photo. It's good practice to take several different shots with under exposed and over exposed settings to make sure you will return to the studio with at least one shot perfectly exposed.

Look for things that add character or drama to your photos. Directional lines help create a sense of movement. Position yourself to take pictures with strong visual lines that travel through your picture. This means that the line should enter from one side of your frame and leave the photo on one of the three other sides. Diagonal lines are the most productive for drawing the viewer into your picture and creating depth. Lines can also be made by



changes in light (light to shadow), the edges of two objects meeting, tonal changes, and warm to cool changes.

Photo by Bonnie Shulman; ISO 16000, f/5.6, 1/800-second exposure.

Learn to Capture Simple Things

Look past the obvious and see the wonder in simple things. I have photographed hundreds of old barns and pieces of farm equipment over the years and some of those photos

became the reference for my strongest art pieces. Objects that are old and aged create a sense of nostalgia. Whenever I see an old barn, the first thing I think of is what that old barn could tell us. Sometimes what you're photographing has its own character and charm. This character or charm then translates into “mood” or “presence” and creates life in your photos.

Barns are not the only thing with natural appeal to people. Colorful skies, rolling green fields, waterfalls, and babbling brooks all have a certain “character” to them that is natural and interesting. Ponds are a great location for not only settings, but wildlife. My pond offers a tapestry of color, form, directional lines, contrast, and shapes. I have photographed almost every songbird indigenous to my area. The small waterfall is a favorite bathing spot for them. In addition to the birds are frogs, raccoons, fox, deer, squirrels, chipmunks, and so on and so on.

The key to observation is to never stop looking. The same scene can look very different at different times of day. Lighting changes, climate changes, mood changes. Look beyond the “norm” and learn to see the basic beauty that is in everything around us. Humans really are the luckiest of all species because we have both the power to see and the power to appreciate!



# When You Should and Should NOT use a Flash

By Josh Dunlop

I used to think of myself as someone who didn't use the flash on the camera; I was completely unaware of the difference an off camera flash can make.

When I go out, I almost always carry one with me, even in the day time, as there are tons of uses for it.

We're going to start by looking at possible uses of the flash, then at when you wouldn't want to use it.

## When you Should use Flash Indoors

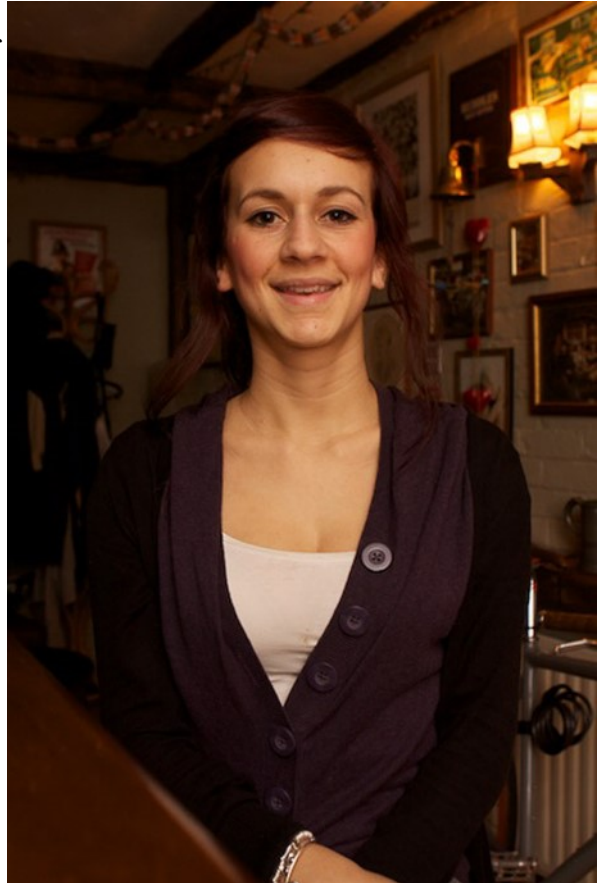
This is the most obvious time to use a flash. I recommend using an external flash unit bounced off the ceiling or a wall for a more natural look. Firing the flash at the same angle as the lens results in a very dull and flattened image. It's much better to take the flash off the camera and shoot from the side.

The first tutorial I ever wrote, back when my blog was on my personal site, explains exactly how to take better photos indoors: Here it is.

## Daytime Outdoors

Less obvious than indoors but still very important.

We've all been there; you're shooting into the sun, your subject is just a silhouette and you can't work out how to fix it.



I've written a very good article with lots of photo examples. You can view this by clicking on the link above if you want to know more.

The flash acts as a second light source, filling in areas where the image is underexposed due to the camera's metering mode prioritising a different part of the frame, such as the sun in the photo below:

## Cool Night Photo Effects

I love night photography; it allows you work with a blank canvas upon which you can make up your own colours and light using, among other things, your flash.

Long exposures allow you to move around the scene without leaving a trail and an external flash fired manually will freeze certain

sections of light around the frame. Have a look at the photo below to see what I mean.

If you want to know more about this, check out my tutorial on light painting.

## Freeze Motion

The cool thing about flash is that it allows you to freeze the motion in a photo with a short burst of light. This works especially well if you're shooting in low light, as shown in the photo below. I couldn't set the shutter speed too high or it would have been too dark so, instead, I used a flash and it caught the droplet of water at it's peak with ease.

## Light Trails

Flash has the ability to freeze the motion in a photo, allowing you to play around with the light trails. This is especially handy if you're working in a low light situation with just a nasty on-camera flash, as it





allows you to produce something cool and creative from very little.  
Have a look at my example below taken at f/11, for 0.8 seconds, at ISO 250.

## When you Should NOT use Flash

### Big Events

I see this way too often and I'm sure you have too: people 100 feet away from a stage trying to use their on-camera flash to take a photo in low light.

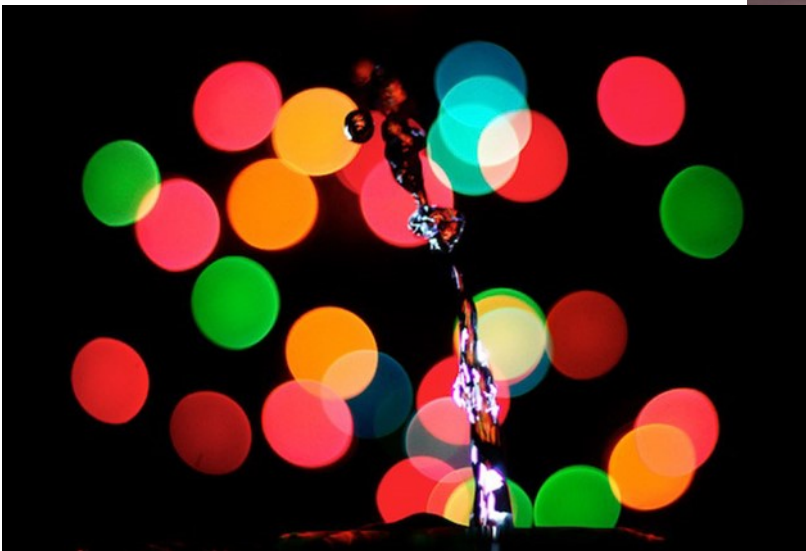
This is utterly pointless and the flash will probably only reach about 10-15 feet before maxing out. You're much better off putting your camera into manual or a priority mode and doing it properly.



### Candid Photography

Nothing says 'look at me' like a big flash attached to an even bigger camera going off in the corner of your eye. If you want to go unnoticed, widen your aperture and raise your ISO. This allows you to take well exposed photos in low light conditions, such as indoors.

I recommend an ISO of about 400 and you can widen the aperture as much as you want; it'll give your photos a nice shallow depth of field so the focus will be on the subject rather than the surroundings.



## Night Time

Unless you're planning on creating cool effects like the ones mentioned above, I recommend turning your flash off.

You'll have to take your camera out of full auto mode for this to prevent the flash firing automatically. The difference is clear: instead of getting a bright overexposed foreground, you end up with a well exposed photo like the one below.

## Concert Photography

I'd say that about 95% of gigs don't allow you to use a flash as it annoys the band, distracts the fans and ruins the lighting designers' hard work.

Instead, widen your aperture and lower your shutter speed so that the camera picks up more light.

Flash casts ugly shadows when shooting at gigs as you're on the ground and the artist is on the stage, producing an unnatural, unflattering angle for the light.

If you want to learn more about gig photography, click [here](#).

## Daytime Outdoors

I know I mentioned *using* a flash in the daytime above but there are only certain situations where you would want to use it.

The majority of the time, shooting outdoors doesn't require firing a flash, even in the shade, as the sun does most of the hard work for you.

If you have a subject that you can move, try to get them to change their positioning so that the sun hits them from the side rather than from behind. If you're having trouble getting the lighting right, try using a polarising filter.

<https://expertphotography.com/when-you-should-shouldnt-use-a-flash/>



---

## Photography Tips for Focused Images Think Like a Pro





Sharp images still eluding you? These tips will help anyone who is struggling to get the best focus out of their DSLR:

1. **Know your focal points.** If you're looking through the viewfinder, you'll see a number of squares and rectangles—these are your potential focus points when you're auto-focusing. Some new cameras have upwards of 70. Horizontal rectangles pick out vertical lines (think: trees, doors), while vertical rectangles hone in on horizontal ones. Squares represent cross points—they lock onto lines that go in any direction. The center focus point on any camera is a cross point, and on some new cameras all focus points are.
  2. **Focus first, then recompose.** It's often quickest and most effective to use the center focus point. Place this point over the subject you want to look the sharpest, push the shutter button halfway down, then re-compose the shot. Be aware that camera movement at this point will result in blurry images. If the center focus point is nowhere near the center of the composition, you might want to try using one of the other focus points instead.
  3. **Find a line.** Auto-focus requires an area with contrasting features in order to pick out the best plane of focus. On a stretch of bare skin, white sand, or blank wall, it may not be able to lock onto anything. For this reason, the best approach is to find a line; typically for portrait photography, the eye is a good spot to focus on, while for landscapes, you might look to the horizon.
  4. **Use the correct focus mode for your situation.** For stationary subjects, there is a mode called “One Shot” (Canon) or “Single Servo” (Nikon), which locks on to a focus area. For sports, wildlife, or other genres of photography where the subject is in motion, “AI Servo” (Canon) or “Continuous Servo” (Nikon) will change the focus continually without locking.
  5. **If in doubt, focus on the foreground subject.** Humans naturally perceive things that are up close as sharper than those that are far away. If you replicate that approach by emphasizing an object in the foreground, your photo will likely look natural and pleasing.
  6. **Use aperture priority mode.** A favorite of amateur and professional photographers, this mode saves you adjusting all the camera settings from scratch. If you choose your desired depth of field and ISO setting, the camera automatically adjusts the shutter speed for sharp photos.
  7. **Avoid shooting in low light.** Natural light or professional studio lighting guarantee clearer, better photos.
  8. **Watch how you stand.** If you are shooting with a deep depth of field (and thus a small aperture), the shutter will need to stay open for longer to let in enough light. The slow shutter speed means that any movement will be recorded as motion blur. To avoid shaking the camera, practice a stable stance with your arms locked to the side—or better yet, set up a tripod.
  9. **If you're shooting at a slower shutter speed, be aware of the limits of your hand.** With a kit lens or a wide-angle, many people can take a focused image with a shutter speed of 1/30th to 1/60th of a second while holding the camera. A telephoto lens, which brings distant objects into close-up, will be more sensitive, so you might only be able to get away with 1/200th of a second shutter speed. Lenses with image stabilization can give you a leg up.
  10. **Use a faster shutter speed for a moving subject.** This is the time to deprioritize depth of field, or you will end up with very blurry photos.
  11. **Use live view to help with manual focusing.** Many contemporary DSLRs have a live view mode via a small screen. One good time to use it is while manual focusing—it will give you a good indication of when your image is in sharp focus.
- Consider post-processing.** There are changes you can make after shooting, if you have raw files with good image quality. You can sharpen an image to bring out the details, although it's not the same thing as focus. You can also try focus stacking, which essentially makes a collaged image from several photos of the same composition focused at different points.

---

### Links of Interest:

Viewbug - <http://www.viewbug.com/>

ePHOTOzine - <http://www.ephotozine.com/>

Federation of Camera Clubs [NSW] - <http://www.photographynsw.org.au/>

Australian Photographic Society - <http://www.a-p-s.org.au/>

Gurushots - <https://gurushots.com/>

Free Lessons with Serge Ramelli - <http://photoserge.com/free-lessons/all>



# Tree Photography Tips and Techniques

by Alex Zorach

Nature photography is a favorite genre of photography, and within nature photography, trees are one of the most common subjects. Trees are widespread, tremendously diverse, and can make both beautiful and majestic subjects.



Photo by peaceful-jp-scenery (busy); ISO 200, f/13.0, 1/50-second exposure.

In some respects, trees are also easy to photograph: they are widely visible and, unlike animals, they sit still, allowing you to carefully compose exactly the photo you wish to capture. The best way to get better at photographing trees is to get out there in the world, look at trees, and take lots of photos of trees.

However, there are a few tips and tricks that can help you to take beautiful photos of trees.

## Experiment

The best way to get better at photographing trees is to take photographs of trees. However, getting creative with your composition, angle, and the aspect of the tree that you wish to focus on can help you to discover new ways to produce artistic or powerful photographs of trees. Pick a tree, any tree, and try photographing it in as many ways and from as many angles as possible. Focus on the leaves, the bark, the stems, the roots, the fruit or flowers, or the bare branches, depending on season. Compare the bark on the trunk to the bark on smaller branches, or the leaves low on the tree to the leaves higher to the top (if you have a way of getting close enough to photograph them).



Photo by Emilian Robert Vicol; ISO 125, f/11.0, 1/120-second exposure.

Try taking photos of the tree from a distance, as well as from within the tree, looking outward. Photograph the ground under the tree; look up through the tree to the sky. Photograph the miniature ecosystem created by the tree, the moss or lichen growing on the trunk or roots, the animals or other plants that make this tree



their home, and the soil or ground in which the tree lives.

Return to each tree at different times of the day and year

Trees are remarkably dynamic. The color and appearance of deciduous trees changes sharply in the different seasons, as they sprout fresh leaves, as their leaves mature and turn darker green, and then as the leaves turn colors and drop in the fall. Evergreen trees have more subtle changes throughout the year, but they are dynamic as well.

Trees also look radically different at different times of day and in different lighting. Trees are light capturing machines, and accordingly, the visual effects as the sun shines on them from different angles throughout the day can be surprisingly complex and interesting.



Photo by Mark Coleman; ISO 100, f/5.2, 1/320-second exposure.

In some cases you may wish to photograph sunlight filtering through branches or interesting shadows cast by the sun, whereas at other times you may find that an overcast or even rainy day brings out color contrasts that were not evident on a clear day. Inclement weather such as floods, droughts, snow, and ice storms often produce new and beautiful scenes with trees that can be captured in photographs. Although a tree may stand in the same place for years, sometimes you may only have one opportunity to capture a unique occurrence in a photograph.

Know your trees

Botanical knowledge is not necessary, but it certainly can't hurt. Some people look at a tree and see just a tree; others might see an oak, or further, specific species like a pin oak, northern red oak, or swamp white oak. Each different species has a particular appearance and growth habit. Knowing more about the biology and ecology of trees can guide and enrich your experience as a photographer in a number of ways.

As you get to know the various species of tree, you will know where to return to find beautiful fall colors, spring flowers, or interesting shapes of bare branches in winter, even when you visit at a different time of year when the scene may look more mundane. Knowledge of a tree's ecology and biology, and your own skill at photographing that type of tree often go hand-in-hand. You will find that as you learn more about a tree, you become better capturing interesting aspects of it in pictures, and you will also find that the more you photograph a tree, the more curious you become about the tree itself and its relationships to other living beings.





Photo by Gerald Oskoboiny; ISO 2500, f/2.8, 30-second exposure.

### Summary

Reading about how to photograph trees can only get you so far. Turn off your computer, get outside, and take some pictures. You do not need to do anything fancy; start with the first tree you find!

---

## Photographing Stormy Seas

I am often asked for an advice how to photograph the sea, so this is my first blog with tips on shooting stormy seas. Another blog will follow with advice on long exposure and impressionistic images. Before sharing my advice, here a few words about me and the sea. My fascination with the sea started in my childhood. Two months spent every year by the Baltic Sea thought me how to understand the sea and how to love it. Later on, during my multiple trips to Portugal, I gained an extensive knowledge of the Atlantic Sea. It was there that my seascape photography really took off. Atlantic Ocean in Portugal is like an artist's canvas for me, always changing, always delivering surprises and satisfaction. I capture the open waters perpetual cycle of change while getting close to the sea, be it a physical closeness or through the use of 200mm zoom lens. By seeing, feeling and hearing, I almost feel like one with the sea. I once wrote in my poem: "I am not by the ocean, I am the ocean myself, and water, the salty water starts running in my veins" and I truly mean it. My fascination with the wave was strongly reinforced even earlier, in 1989, when I saw the "Lighthouse in a Storm at la Jument" image by Jean Guichard depicting the French lighthouse in a tempest. I promised myself that one day I would be taking images of the sea at its worst, and I do, whenever there is an opportunity. Obviously, there are many different styles and approaches when photographing the sea. Some prefer impressionistic style, other choose personifications and isolations, and many more are happy with more experimental techniques. I go for strong contrasts, well defined textures and dynamism, which goes well with noir approach. This blog however is not about styles, but practical information. If I am to choose just one tip, I would like to say, stay safe. Here are however, a few more. Stormy seas and giant waves are beautiful, but powerful and unpredictable, so always keep a safe distance. Timing is everything when photographing the sea. Concentrate on catching the decisive moment and including interesting shapes, textures and contrast into your composition. The knowledge of the tides is essential for your safety and for achieving the most dramatic photos. Start shooting an hour to two before high tide and keep shooting for at least an hour after high tide. Use telephoto-zoom lenses, anything from 100 to 400mm as it allows for a safe distance from the waves. An aperture of F/9 ensures that more of the scene is in focus and fast shutter speeds of 1/500 – 1/2000 of a second works well. Monopod or a tripod with a fluid head gives some support for heavier lenses and enables quick movement of the camera in all directions in search of a perfect wave. Keeping the camera kit dry in stormy conditions is challenging. Protect your camera with a camera waterproof cover. Fit a deep lens hood on your lens and use wet lens wipes followed by a wipe with dry lens cloth. I hope you will find these tips useful.



<http://beatamoore.co.uk/?p=4200>

# 10 Tips for Food Photography

by Cristina Toth

Food photography is telling beautiful stories, whether it's being made for a culinary blog or as a business or hobby.

You may often see at parties or in restaurants some people more attracted to food and photographing it than interacting with the folks around them.

Food photos have become a trend for many people in digital photography, smartphones with powerful cameras, and social networks. Shooting food is fun but also very challenging for those who turned the hobby into a profession.



When you are photographing food, you need to make those watching your images eager to taste and enjoy it with all their hearts.

To shoot beautiful food photos, you need to find the right props, a distinctive style, and, most of all, inspiration. Here are some tips that will put you on the right track:

## 1) Know Your Camera

Read the manual carefully and practice a lot. In the end, you will choose the photo in which the food looks the most delicious. Try to use the manual mode, so you can have full control of the camera settings. Shoot in RAW as much as possible, even if you need a larger memory card, as the compression of JPG files may not retain all the details in your photos.

## 2) Stabilize Your Camera

Use a tripod whenever it's possible or any other sturdy surface that could stabilize the camera. Shooting handheld may result in blurred images. If you still prefer to shoot handheld, you may need to lean your arms or elbows on the edge of the table. When the light is weak, your camera needs to be stable.

## 3) Follow the Rule of Thirds

Divide your display in 9 equal parts - 3 rows on 3 columns, and place the subject along those imaginary lines.

## 4) Use Natural Light Properly

You will get the best results by shooting under natural light, but try to avoid direct sunlight. Find a big window where the curtains can provide the diffusion. Or you can even use a semi-transparent shower curtain. If you want to use studio lights or any other artificial light, you should place them on the opposite side of the sub-





ject. Usually, home lighting can alter the white balance, giving you unnatural shades of yellow or red. I prefer the cloudy days when I can shoot even outside, as the clouds provide a great diffusion, precisely what I'm looking for.



#### 5) Use a Neutral Background

Choose a neutral background to place your plate on, so the focus would be on the actual food and not on its surroundings.

#### 6) Stage the Scene

Try to place some other elements around your plate to complete the decor, arranging them as visually appealing as possible. You can place ingredients from the recipe around the plate; this way, you will create a story in a single photo. If you used herbs, chocolate flakes, or fruits in the recipe, let the ingredients be part of the props. The color of the props must match the prepared plate, and the contrasting colors work best.

Move the props around the food until you get a

frame in which you have the perfect scene.

If you have a laptop in the frame, the viewer will understand how much you enjoy the muffin or coffee while working. A cookbook would show that you are eager for new experiences in the kitchen.

#### 7) Food Must Have Life and Texture

To obtain the texture, you can sprinkle spices on the food. Coarse salt, pepper, various herbs or even bread crumbs would be perfect.

The vessel in which you place the food can provide volume. Don't hesitate to overlap the food if necessary. You can add drops of water, bites, which would create the idea that someone just did it. The viewer will be eager to have a bite as well.

#### 8) Photograph Cooked Food Quickly

Cooked food should be photographed as soon as it has been removed from the fire, while it is still hot and fresh, with vibrant colors.

#### 9) Find the Perfect Angle

Flat foods (like pizza) are best photographed from above, while layered foods (burgers, for example) can be taken from the side and drinks from an angle of 45 degrees or any other angle which will highlight their height.

#### 10) Consider Orientation

Vertical photos are easier to crop and attract more attention. They are perfect for Instagram and Pinterest, and the horizontal ones are ideal for Facebook or banners.

[https://www.dreamstime.com/blog/10-tips-for-food-photography-56157?](https://www.dreamstime.com/blog/10-tips-for-food-photography-56157?utm_medium=email&utm_source=email_newsletter&utm_campaign=newsletter-blogs-2013#ref7703503)

[utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=email\\_newsletter&utm\\_campaign=newsletter-blogs-2013#ref7703503](https://www.dreamstime.com/blog/10-tips-for-food-photography-56157?utm_medium=email&utm_source=email_newsletter&utm_campaign=newsletter-blogs-2013#ref7703503)



# How to take the best pet photos

Fido's ready for his Animal Planet audition? Here's how to capture the moment

By Les Shu



Taking photographs of pets can sometimes be as difficult as shooting a starry night. At least with stars, they tend to stay put in one place for several minutes. But with a few simple tricks and camera settings to keep in mind, it's not impossible to capture amazing, professional-looking photos of these important family members, worthy of hanging on the wall next to pics of the grandparents.

To help you take great pet photos, we spoke with Josh Norem, a pet and landscape photographer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Norem started photographing animals when he first volunteered at local animal res-

cue organizations, which have a need for high-quality photos but don't have the time or resources. You can follow him on Facebook and 500px.

How do you get your pet to cooperate?

Josh Norem: There are many tricks of the trade, but in the end it comes down to patience and being ready for that special moment when it happens. In a perfect world you'd have a "wrangler" to direct the animal to look at you, but oftentimes the cat or dog will just look at the wrangler, so it helps if he or she can stand next to you or lead the animal's vision to where you are located. If you don't have an assistant, try using squeaky toy apps on your phone [to draw the animal's attention] – I use Human-to-Cat Translator and Dog Squeaky Toy on my iPhone, which are both free. The only hard part is holding the phone and the camera at the same time. Making a strange noise will sometimes be enough to get the cat or dog to look at you for a brief second – this is where it pays to be ready. You want to have your composition set and focus locked on their eyes.



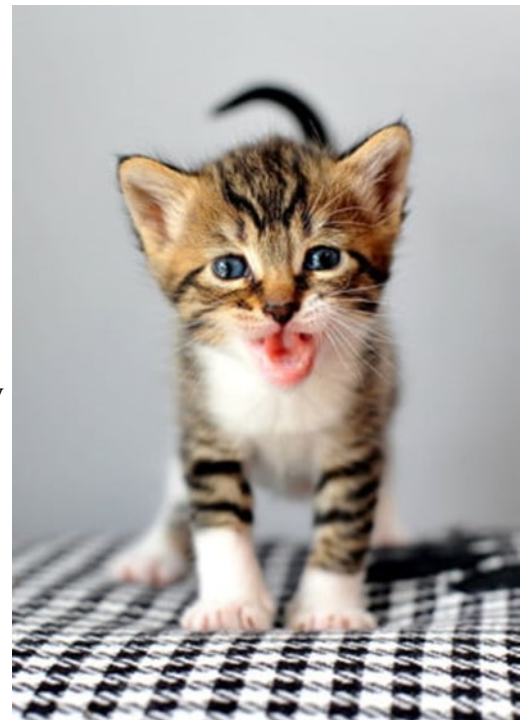
At the local rescue organization where I volunteer, we usually do a play session when shooting shelter cats like Tommy (pictured above). It's important to make them look fun and energetic, though it's not always possible.

What type of equipment do you use?

This image was captured using a \$400 50mm f/1.4 prime set to f/4. Prime lenses, as opposed to zooms, are super-sharp, lightweight, and fun to use

JN: You don't need special gear, but a speedlight or flash is a must-have if you're indoors. Unless you have spectacular natural light, the flash will fill in the shadows and also helps freeze the subjects, which is one of the reasons a lot of my photos look tack sharp – it's the flash, and also a steady hand and good lenses.

If there's one golden rule of flash photography, it's that you never want to point your flash directly at the subject, at least not without some sort of diffuser. It will make the subject look horrible in most conditions, and can also cast shadows around them and it will look ugly. Point your speedlight up at the ceiling; the light goes up and







comes down on the subject, looking very natural and even (this won't work if you have tall ceilings). Avoid using the camera's built-in flash, as it puts light right in the subject's eyes and the result looks terrible.

Speaking of lenses, there is no substitute for having a good lens, period. You will see a very noticeable difference between a DSLR kit lens and a \$1,000 prime lens. A 50mm prime lens is the best value.

As for specific equipment, I use a Nikon D800 with three Nikkor gold band "pro" lenses and a SB-900 flash. I shoot in aperture priority mode 99-percent of the time and use TTL metering on the flash, which is like "auto" mode in that the flash reads the scene and considers the camera's exposure settings in order to

properly set the flash power. It's extremely accurate and very easy to use.

When using flash it's easier to get little white "catchlights" in the subject's eyes, which helps bring out their eyes and makes the eyes – and the subject – seem more interesting.

What are some rules to keep in mind?

JN: There are some basic guidelines you can follow. Rule number one: Always focus on the eyes. If the eyes aren't in focus, the shot is wasted, end of discussion. The way to do this is to make sure you know which focus point is active; don't let your camera control it, because it will usually focus on what's closest to the camera (the animal's nose). You can always change focus points from "auto" to "single point." Do this (consult your camera's manual if you don't know how) and have that focus point right on the animal's eyes.

You also want to pay attention to the rule of thirds, so when cropping try to get the closest eyeball in the upper or lower quadrant of the frame to give it a pleasing composition. Besides focus and composition, you need to worry about your exposure; if the exposure is too dark or too bright, adjust it using exposure compensation. The last tip is to get at or below eye-level with your subject. This will always add intimacy and a unique perspective to a shot. If you have good focus and exposure, you're very close to the goal of getting a great image. The rest is timing, practice, and a little bit of luck.

The best tip for taking great pet photos is to get eye-level with them. That usually means laying on the floor, but it adds a unique perspective and lets you see details you might not normally notice.

How do you take those beautiful close-up portraits?

JN: To take a close-up shot of your pet with a smooth, blurred background, set your camera to aperture priority mode and your lens to the widest aperture possible (lowest f-stop number). For a good lens that will be f/2.8, or for a really fast prime it might be as low as f/1.4; on a kit lens it will be f/3.5 usually. Next, get close to your subject, and have them be a few feet away from their background. (In general the further the subject is from the background, the blurrier it will be; the closer they are to the background, the more it'll be in focus.) The wide aperture setting will take care of the rest. Be warned though, you could end up with eyes that are in focus and a blurry nose and head. Sometimes that looks pretty cool; it's all up to how you want the picture to look. If you want your pet's face to be more in focus, just close down your aperture a bit (go from f/2.8 to f/4, for example) or zoom out a bit. Extra distance between you and the subject will get more in focus.



Blurry backgrounds are achieved by using a wide aperture, being close to your subject, and having them as far away from the background as possible.

How do you take photos of your pet in motion?

The trick to capturing pets in motion – like a dog in midair – is a fast shutter speed and a camera and lens that can hold focus on a moving subject. I put my camera into continuous focus mode instead of single-shot. This keeps the focus motor active the entire time, so I just hold down the back focus button, but you can also do it by holding down the shutter halfway. The second part of the equation is a fast shutter speed,



which requires a lot of light to work properly. If you're in midday sun you will be fine, but if it's dark you will need to boost your ISO to compensate. As a general rule you can try switching to shutter speed priority mode and set your shutter speed to 1/500 or so as a starting point, and see how that looks. Going higher is okay as long as you have enough light. Ideally you'll want the dog's eyes in the shot, and it's much easier to focus if they are going side-to-side instead of coming toward you. So get your shutter speed up, set it to continuous focus and fire away. Shooting animals in action takes patience, high shutter speeds, and lots and lots of practice.

Is there a way to achieve similar results with a point-and-shoot camera?

So far, the tips mentioned revolve using a DSLR, but what about you point-and-shoot camera owners? The problem with automatic point-and-shoot cameras is shutter lag, which is the time between when you press the shutter button and the picture being taken. It

can be a few seconds on some cameras, which is too long in most cases unless you have a very patient animal. Most point-and-shoots will also use the onboard flash in a lot of cases, which always looks terrible. My advice: Turn off the flash and set the camera to burst mode so you can take many pictures at once. Use portrait mode if your camera offers it, and if you can control the aperture put it at its smallest number.

<https://www.digitaltrends.com/photography/how-to-take-best-pet-photography/>

×

## INDOOR PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY CHEAT SHEET

⋮
<
>

CAMERA MODE	→	MANUAL OR AV MODE
ISO SETTINGS	→	800 FOR BRIGHT INDOOR LIGHT 1600+ FOR LOW INDOOR LIGHT
SHUTTER SPEED	→	1/60-1/200 HANDHELD 1/15TH ON A TRIPOD
APERTURE SETTINGS	→	F/1.2 TO F/4
WHITE BALANCE	→	DEPENDING ON YOUR LIGHT SOURCE



