

## Guidelines for Shooting Stronger Photographs

### 1. *Compose your picture according to the main subject or idea you want the photograph to convey*

- Size (the largest thing in the frame) usually signifies what is most important in an image. Consider filling most or all of the frame with your main subject.
- Focus on the person, people, or thing(s) to which you want to draw attention
- Use lines, color, light, and other elements to lead the eye to the subject
- For a more dynamic composition, do not put your main subject in the center of the photograph. Use the rule of thirds—imagine a tic-tac-toe grid and place your subject on one of the four points where the lines intersect. (By default, your camera will set the focus based on what is in the center of the frame. See below for how to trick your camera's auto-focus.\*)



### 2. *Compose the background and foreground to support the main subject or idea*

- Think about what needs to be in the frame to provide context and convey your intended meaning.
- Try to shoot against a plain background (minimize clutter—unless that is part of the subject of your photograph); don't let the background compete with your subject; remove objects that connect to or seem to be coming out of your subject (or move your own position in relation to your subject).
- Use your zoom lens and/or a lower aperture to decrease your depth of field—the range that is in focus—and bring attention to what's in the foreground.
- Frame the shot. Including things in the foreground (around the edges of the frame) adds visual interest and context for the photo and draws attention to the subject.
- Consider whether the shot works better horizontally or vertically (or even at an angle).

### 3. *Consider the light*

- Turn off your flash whenever possible. (Try turning the flash off and holding the camera steady to use ambient light. Use a tripod or put your camera on a solid surface to steady it.)
- Adjust your ISO. (ISO is the film speed. See your camera manual for how to do this.) Lower numbers make your camera less sensitive to light and should be used in brighter conditions. Higher numbers make your camera more sensitive to light and

should be used in low light conditions without flash. Very high ISO numbers can make your photos look grainier.

- Where is the light source in relation to you or your subject? It is best to have the light behind you or to the side. Outdoors, use a flash for fill if your subject is in shadow (unless you want your subject in silhouette).
- Know your flash range (usually no more than 10 ft. or about 4 steps). You can get a close-up shot with a flash by zooming in rather than moving in too close for your flash.
- Daylight is most pleasing at an angle (mornings and later in the afternoon) and harshest around noon. If possible, shoot early or late in the day or in the shade at midday.

4. *Consider where you are in relation to your subject*

- How far are you from your subject? Consider moving in close.
- How does the picture change if you are at, above, or below eye level? (When photographing children, try getting down to their eye level or even lower.)
- Where are you and your subject in relation to the light source?

\* Even if your main subject is not in the center, you should still frame the shot in the center. Press the shutter button halfway down, and then reframe while still holding the shutter button. Complete the shot by pressing shutter button completely. Use the same trick for exposure. Aim your camera so the part of the photo you want the exposure for is in the center, press the shutter button halfway, and then reframe your shot.

