

IMPROVE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

by

Philip Lawson & Janet Edwards

Discovery Cruise Talk 1

1st August 2010

Composition

1. Understand and know your camera a bit better
2. Take a greater variety of pictures
3. Improve the quality and interest in your photographs
4. Get more pleasure from your photography

There are a number of considerations when composing your pictures – some of these rules can be broken and others you break at your peril.

Good composition makes the picture more attractive and helps reveal your ideas.

Horizons and horizontals – horizons must look correct.

Likewise verticals must be vertical

Be aware of what you're looking at and what your eye takes as the main focus.

If you have perspective problems, go onto the balcony and get at mid height to gain a little height – then the perspective often is more realistic.

Try a different orientation – portrait v landscape.

Questions you should ask:

- What is the subject? What is the mood of the moment?
- Is my subject moving or still, do I have time to pose my subject?
- Why am I taking this picture? What story am I telling?
- What am I trying to achieve?
- Who is going to look at these pictures?
- Multiple subjects or multiple shots?
- Check the background. Any patterns, lines or shapes that can be used to lead the eye?
- What are other photographers doing?

and think about

- Horizontal and Vertical – very important, unless you are trying to be creative.
- Check carefully what your camera sees.
- Remember: the rule of thirds; the number of main subjects; isolate the subject.
- Different heights / angles (move your feet).
- Moving – space for the subject to move into.
- Framing – try to find architectural or natural frames.

People and Places:

- Be careful with your camera. Always wrap strap around your wrist.
- Spend time walking. Look up and down. Look back regularly. Look out for the unusual.
- Be prepared to “shoot” at a moment's notice.
- Check out the interiors and through arches.
- Don't stand the subject in the middle of the picture.
- Photograph local life, with permission.
- Try to avoid excessive perspective distortion by not looking up at buildings/

What is in the picture?

When you look around, you are selective in what you see – but a camera sees everything that is there.

Ensure that you have a focal point, something that the eye latches onto immediately.

You want something for the eye to focus on.

What shall I include in the picture?

Nowadays you can generally zoom (in or out) to get the image you want - or you could move your feet if the zoom range is not good enough.

Change the angle of view to remove elements by either

- Bending your knees
- Move to the left or right

Get close so that you can fill the frame

The impact is so much more powerful.

Watch your angle

Where you choose to stand changes the interpretation of what you are taking.

If you take from standard human height you get a different shot and meaning than if you get at the same height of the animal, flower etc etc.

If you can't get low, try getting high. The vertical viewpoint taken from eye height is different from what you get if you lift the camera above your head or point it down from above. Be aware of the shadows that you can get if you do so.

The Rule of thirds

Divide your image into 9 sections (a grid of 3 by 3)

Then put your main subject (if you have one) in an area off to one of the sides.

The Vanishing Point

This is apparent in everything we look at – it is always at infinity in the direction of your gaze – although not always obvious.

Convergent lines lead to this point. Technically the vanishing point of a photograph is always in the centre

However, perceptually, the vanishing point moves with the eye – it often looks more attractive if this virtual point is off centre.

Keep the vanishing point on a third horizontally or vertically.

Images read better from left to right

This is because we are reading this text from left to right

Lifetime of training in the ocular muscles

This can be combined, to a lesser extent, with a downward motion, leading to the classic “L” shape.

Diagonal composition is a curiosity that seems to work.

If someone or something appears to be looking at an object or event, the picture is more complete if the viewer can see what that object or event is.

Be very aware that if you don't answer visual queries in the photo then you have a problem.

Avoid being too close in so that you cannot see the context.

Avoid being too wide or far away though – context at the sacrifice of detail is a problem – you must be able to see what is being done or is happening.

Trying to get the detail before context and detail is hard.

Following the flow

With anything that is moving, allow space for it to move into

Typically half of the photo should be allowed.

All moving subjects need that space – in the direction that they are moving into.

Framing the image

Use physical or natural elements in the scene to frame the main subjects

Lead into the image – use elements in the scene to lead the eye towards a main subject or focal point.

Be aware of lines that lead you out and avoid them as already mentioned.

Size, Shape and Orientation

The size, shape and orientation of the image can influence the impact of the picture
Most cameras take a 4 to 3 ratio.

16 to 9 is the television ratio.

You have choices – re horizontal or vertical etc

There is no right way – take what appeals to you.

Content will govern your choice. When you are there with your camera, take both choices and see which works when you get back.

Panoramic formats can work and have their place also.

Altering size / shape of the image

Sometimes it is not possible to get the picture you wish in camera so alter on computer.

KNOWING YOUR CAMERA:

- Digital Resolution – TV & Computer ~ 1 Mpixel; A4 (10" x 8") Print >6 Mpx
- Check exposure after taking picture.
- Bracketing – for important pictures take additional 1 under and 1 over exposed.
- Auto vs. Program Modes – Select Sport (Movement), Landscape (large DoF), Portrait (low DoF)
- Shutter Speeds and Camera Shake – Beware of low shutter speeds and high ISO/
- Depth of Field – limited DoF on Compact Cameras.
- White Balance – Select high shutter speed, > 1/125th sec.
- For creative movement blur, select low shutter speed, < 1/30th sec. Use camera support.
- Focus Lock on face or eyes then re-compose before taking the picture.
- Whilst zooming is good for distant or candid subjects, move in or pan around to explore the perspective on near subjects.
- Use telephoto setting for detail and subject isolation.
- Use wide-angle setting for less detail but more context.
- Data on minimum shutter speeds: [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/socs/lups/shutter speeds.doc](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/socs/lups/shutter%20speeds.doc)

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Discovery Cruise Talk 2

3rd August 2010

The majority of photographs taken in the world are of people on holiday
Photographs preserve the memories of a trip, the adventures and, perhaps, the misadventures.

Consider putting yourself in the picture –

See where you are and work out how you can photograph yourself

Take photos of your reflection in mirrors etc

Be clear as to why you are in the picture

Is it a picture of you?

Is it a picture of the scene?

Is the lighting good

- for people?
- for buildings?

Be aware of the background – don't have too much going on in the background.

Good composition counts. Backgrounds are equally important.

When you find the perfect background, be wary of putting a person into it.

If you **do** need to, then put the person on the third and be aware of the vanishing point.

People

Family, friends, or complete strangers.

When the subject is of a complete stranger, you have to work a lot harder to show them.

Ethnicity, colour, activity are all key.

Try and take the photo more on the fly – rather than a posed stance which can be artificial.

Make a difference

Be clear about your subject

Be creative in your composition

A good photograph needs:

- *Light*
- *Composition*
- *Interest*
- *Mood of the moment*
- *Empathy*

Candid or Posed?

By their very nature, candid pictures are usually taken at a distance and offer a glimpse into the private life of the subject.

Should eyes be towards the camera or

Should the photo be a study of concentration?

It depends what you want.

Indoor or Outdoor?

Indoor photography requires more care.

Don't point the flash gun at the subject – point it at the ceiling etc.

Contra-Jour (against the light).

Sometimes you can't avoid taking against the light.

Use natural light if you can.

Soft daylight is by far the most effective light to use on people.

Harsh sunlight and shadow are difficult

Photographing people is notoriously difficult

You have to contend with:

- *Unpredictable behaviour*
- *Making it consumer friendly*
- *The lighting*
- *The background*
- *Skin tones*

Try to find a light that is sympathetic to what the subject is doing.

Dark skins are much harder than light skins.

Viewpoint and Opportunities

Near or far?

Take a set of photographs with some quite close and some far away – to give the detail and the context.

Symmetry

Some people really like symmetry in their photos and many gardens and buildings are constructed in that way.

Viewpoint

Where you view it from freezes the subject in a moment of time - the viewpoint you choose you can lead to a different interpretation.

Elevation

You can go to extremes to get a good photograph but try to get a view on the world that is a little bit different from what you would usually see. If you are higher, the verticals will not lean in as much.

Opportunity

Keep a look out for what is around you – shoot the first one anyway but keep on going.

Some things only happen at certain times of the day so look out for that.

Timing

Wait for the perfect shot but don't be afraid of wasting shots and discarding later.

Keep going until either the moment disappears or you have gained the perfect picture on the way.

Modern cameras give you the advantage that you can keep pressing the button.

If you have a "motordrive" on the camera to take repeated shots, then use this.

Take multiple frames per second for as long as you keep the button pressed.

Have a rest in a café

Find a streetside café and take some secret photos of people around you.

Capture people as they perform some activity giving a clearer indication of their way of life.

Markets are so colourful and usually you can get good photos unhindered.

Traditional dance is good as is historic Costume

Although photography might seem like an intrusion into private lives, communication and engagement nearly always prove this is not the case

- *Ask before photographing up close*
- *Show them the photograph afterwards*
- *Be confident in your approach*

Don't be frightened about photographing in places of worship.

Be aware of context and background.

Be bold in your composition
Explore the opportunity

Engagement is what it's all about – then you will get the smile and interaction.

Typically, a lot of Far Eastern people want to look at you all the time.
Pretend that you have finished and then get the more casual photograph when they have stopped posing.

With most cruises, you spend a certain amount of time in cities – use a long exposure and put the camera on something firm so that it will not move.

Stained glass windows are remarkably easy to photograph indoors.

To Sum Up:

Reflections add interest

Mirrored surfaces will do this.

Observation is the key

Look around as you walk

Up, down

Behind

Through

Watch for the unusual

Contrast old and new

Look down blind alleys, look through arches

Put your camera over the wall to see what is down below over the other side.

Look for **sympathetic colours**.

Look for **pattern**

To summarise

- Be careful with your camera
- Spend time walking
- Look out for the unusual
- Don't stand in the middle of the picture
- Photograph local life
- Explore your subject
- Be bold and creative in your composition

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Discovery Cruise Talk 3

4th August 2010

Knowing your Camera

Usual problems in passenger pictures:

- Understanding Exposure (Check Exposure after taking picture) Use Bracketing
- Auto vs Program
- Shutter Speeds and Camera Shake
- Focus and Composition
- White Balance
- Auto vs manual

The modern camera will adjust almost everything for you – but does it get it right?

Yes but not when:

It is very dark

There are fuzzy highlights in the scene

The subject is moving towards you or away from you

The subject has stripes

The subject is predominantly one colour

The photo doesn't know what you are taking – a jetplane, portrait, butterfly, fireworks.

The camera only sees light & therefore doesn't warn you when the shutter speed is too slow for a moving subject.

Or:

- if the real subject of your picture is not focused
- The ISO / Fain is set too high
- The aperture is too wide.

ALL CAMERAS WILL ALLOW YOU DO TO THINGS BETTER.

In **Program (P) mode** tell the camera what you are doing – portrait, landscape, Macro, sports, night shots etc etc.

If you are so inclined, then you can use **TV (Time Value)** – giving you control over the speed of the shutter.

The first shot you take, take on Auto – and then if time, experiment.

What sort of camera?

If possible, use an SLR

DIGITAL RESOLUTION

The quality of the image is proportional to the CCD size – measured in megapixels (millions of picture elements)

More pixels mean more detail.

Does Resolution Matter?

Yes

If you have it, use it

You can then print bigger photos or you can zoom in (later) and crop - without loss of detail.

Can I switch to higher resolution for a specific shot?

Yes, but remember to switch back.

The lecturers leave their cameras on the highest resolution all the time so that they get the best possible shot.

Low resolution mean low detail.

Memory cards can fail – back up to a cheap laptop or have images copied to a CD or DVD – checking before you leave the shop that all is there.

If you delete a photograph then use a recovery program such as **RECUVA** – but you must seek to recover before you take any more photos.

Nearly all cameras take 4:3 ratio and yet most prints are 6:4 ratio,

Slightly bigger cameras with controls on the top are a better option than something like the Canon Xthus

The highest resolution are better – and therefore buy a bigger camera.

Scene Modes adjust more than just the basics and will allow you to do more of what you want.

Bridge Cameras are good – like an SLR but the lens does not come off.

SLRs and DSLRs are the best if possible
Single Lens Reflex

Take control of your camera by selecting an appropriate Program mode

A camera's CCD is like lots of buckets that measure the rainfall.
Imagine 1 million buckets in a football stadium in a regular array

The whole in the roof above Wembley Stadium is the aperture that opens and closes
Whilst it is raining, open the stadium roof and each bucket will collect water, the amount will be proportional to the time the roof is open (shutter time) and whether it is a light drizzle.

Each bucket will collect water proportional to how much the roof is opened. A small aperture will not let much rain (light) in.

ISO is like the gain or volume control - the rainfall (exposure) is the same but the high ISO bucket is easier to read.

The diameter of the bucket (ISO)

Each bucket may get different amounts of water, especially if it is only raining at the east end.
The buckets retain an image of what the rainfall is like. 1 minute = 1 inch of water. 2 mins = 2 inches etc etc.

If you open for four minutes, the bucket overflows and you do not get an accurate reading (you get pure white)
Correct exposure is a balance between the region of lightest rainfall vs the region of heaviest rainfall.

Under exposure means you get dark areas –

Over Exposure means large areas of white and you cannot recover the lost detail by darkening on the computer

Correct exposure is a balance between ISO, Shutter Speed and Aperture – stick to ISO numbers of less than 400 and a shutter speed of greater than 1/100th of a second.

Digital cameras offer instant replay – with zebra zones and histograms.

Zebra zones show stripes or flashing indicating that you have over-exposed certain areas.

The flashing zones should not be ignored.

The histogram illustrates the distribution of tones within the picture/capture from darkest (left, 0) to the lightest right, 255. It should convey the feeling that all of the tones have been encompassed.

A histogram indicating normal exposure is centre weighted – the histogram clearly drops to zero at both ends. Both ends of the “mountain range” should come down to the “sea shore”.

If there is a lot of black in the photo then the histogram may be right or left-biased but will still go down to the seashore at both ends.

If a photo is over-exposed then large areas of white will have registered and light areas of histogram will appear off-scale

Philip uses a Canon G11

For situations where the camera consistently over or under exposes the photograph then manually adjust the exposure with the Exposure Compensation Control – the plus and minus button may be on a dial.

If the subject is under-exposed then dial in +1 or +2; You must do this on the spot – you cannot do it afterwards. Remember to switch back to zero though.

Having selected the correct shutter speed for the subject, there is only one correct aperture. However, the camera might not get it right – take 3 or 5 shots at different exposures. This is called Bracketing.

Snow completely confounds the modern camera. You have to deliberately over-expose to get snow white; or use bracketing.

Perfect exposure comes in many forms.

You can perfectly expose but the shutter speed may be wrong so that there are light streams etc.

Program Modes:

Choose an appropriate Program Mode from the dial

P – Program

Running Man – Sport or anything that is moving

Flower – Close up photography

Mountains – Landscape

People – Portraits

You will find them either on the dial or on the Menu

Knowing how the various modes differ will help you understand why it's important to take time.

Sport / Action Mode – will select a faster than normal shutter speed, commensurate with your maximum aperture. It's about freezing the action – it's a very fast shutter speed.

When a point and shoot picture is taken, the shutter stays open long enough to make a good exposure. If there is not enough light, the shutter may remain open so long that the image is blurred by the movement of taking the photo.

A gorilla grip or bean bag can be really good to avoid camera shake.

Alternatively, use a self timer or a remote control to take the vibration out of the equation.

Image Stabilisation helps but doesn't always solve the problem.

When ultimate detail is important, the **Landscape Mode** will select a smaller than normal aperture, commensurate with a shutter speed fast enough.

Depth of Field determines that everything is in focus. Everything from the foreground to the background is in focus.

Portrait Mode offers the complete converse, putting the background out of focus & the foreground is in focus. Portrait mode differentiates between the foreground and background.

The very small digital compact camera does not allow for depth of field etc.

Digital cameras may also increase the red and green saturation.

What to focus on? This can be a difficult dilemma.

Focus on the eyes – this can be difficult if the camera insists of focusing on the centre of the subject, Auto focus has this problem.

All cameras have a two stage button – look at what you want to focus on and move the composition to partially press and focus on what you want. i.e. move camera to focus on face etc and press down slightly – then move the camera to recompose the image. Keep in the same position and move back to take the photograph now focused appropriately.

Once mastered, you will do this fairly naturally.

Good composition places the main point of focus off-centre – preferably on a left 1/3rd

Zoom and Perspective

When taking a picture of a person - zoom in to magnify the subject.

Close up vs Context – always take both if you can.

Daylight vs artificial light.

White balance.

Even outside we have changing light conditions which we don't even notice as we have adapted to the changes.

Light is forever changing.

Blue light can mean that the camera often gets things wrong.

The colour of artificial light depends on the light source.

AWB – Auto white balance tries to get it right but doesn't always succeed - it assumes that the picture contains all colours and light levels.

Look for the White Balance settings and alter appropriately as needed.

Tell the control that you are taking on a Cloudy Day and it is likely to be right.

Select "Shade"

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Discovery Cruise Talk 4

5th August 2010

DIGITAL EDITING

Look at <http://www.el-image.com/cruises> for downloads of information sheets as well as cruise information, our photos etc etc.

Finding the “perfect image” in camera is extraordinarily rare.

Therefore editing is important but remember GIGO (Garbage in – garbage out). You cannot make a silk purse out of sow’s ear.

The fun of the photography is not just in the taking – but in the showing of the image.

Editing for printing – consider whether you are going to put in a frame, on a block.

Adobe Photoshop – is the best of the best (around £750 RRP)

Or look at Adobe Photoshop Elements.

Corel is another useful program.

Don’t decry the free tools.

Serif Photoplus

Photoscape

Pixia

Photo! Editor

The one that Philip recommends, generally speaking, is **VICMAN’S PHOTO EDITOR**

It is good because it comes with a partner program:

VICMAN’S WEB PHOTO ALBUM

If you feel more adventurous then use **GIMP** which mirrors Photoshop but has a steep learning curve – as does Photoshop though, so don’t let this put you off.

WORKFLOW:

The dynamic range of subject totally within the dynamic range of the camera.

In computing terms black is represented by 0 and white by 255.

Two 4 letter words Philip does not like are:

AUTO – be ware of anything that is done automatically. Alter things manually. Alter will always over or under compensate.

You can change the levels – setting the black point and the white point.

Take the marker and move the extremities to the seashore.

Levels, Brightness , Contrast

Beware of Brightness and Contrast controls also – such as the one in Picasa. Adjust the histogram so that the mid-tones are changed. “Levels” are what it’s all about.

Every program that Philip recommends has a “Levels” control to adjust the histogram – seemingly Picasa does not have this.

White Balance (the colour temperature) gets fixed into JPEGs on the camera. This is why it is best to take the photograph set as though it is a cloudy day. Alternatively take the photograph on “RAW” so that you can manipulate things later – this is more flashcard hungry however. Try to get things right at the outside.

Manipulate the highlights, then the midtones, then the shadows and then the skin tones.

Colour

If you have a tool called “**Colour Variations**” this is worth using – Photo Shop has it, Photoshop Elements has it and a number of others do too. Check GIMP etc for this.

Edit your photograph in the same conditions as it will be viewed – if displayed in your room in daylight; then edit in daylight. If you are going to display on computer and other media then edit by halogen light.

Watch out for over-saturation of colour.

Horizons and Perspectives - The Distortion Tool is useful for fixing perspective

Re-touch

Use the Clone tool and the Blur also

Crop and Format

Print

There is no physical limit to how big your prints can be – they only have to contain enough image detail for good resolution to remain.

If you print at 10 x 8 inches – then you need 3000 dots x 2448 at a resolution of 300 dpi.

PRINT PAPERS:

Gloss – Great for Family, Travel, Nature, Technical

Matt – better choice for albums and behind glass

Printing problems – run the automated cleaning program from time to time.

Saving good quality files as JPEGS is not to be advised ever.

A photograph re-saved as JPEG will lose a lot of the detail and quality which can never be regain. Saving it as a TIFF is far better.

The camera may take in JPEG by default but if you re-save as JPEG then you are putting a crease on a crease.

Never do this.

Cropping is the last thing you do – after you have done all of your editing.

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Discovery Cruise Talk 5

8th August 2010

Landscapes & Composition

When we are immersed in a landscape, all of our senses are involved – but the viewer of our photos only *sees* what we have brought from the experience. Therefore we need to be creative:

We need strong composition / reflection / tonal interchange / texture / colour harmony (colour matches – primary and secondary colours: e.g. blue and yellow).

Be aware of changes in light from the back to the front of your picture – for example due to cloud on mountains or sun on part of your composition.

Tips:

- 1) **Tripods** – gorilla pod: helps get sharp image or you could even use a monopod i.e. has one leg. Releases – Some come with a remote control – or you can use a self timer with the camera on a wall etc.
- 2) **Change your viewpoint:** Don't take from the same place as everyone else. Crouch down, or put the camera lower – go up, or go along the path. If you crouch down, the primary subject breaks into the skyline. Plants, especially if very small, then see plant in its context.
- 3) **Format** – Even at print stage or, after printed, by cropping.
- 4) **Images read from left to right** – so main subject may be best to the left.
- 5) **Wide Angle** – gives us even more than we can see with the eye.
- 6) **Depth of field** – how much of the photo is to be in focus. Focus only on the subject (usually in the foreground but may be whole photo if that is what we want).
- 7) **Isolate the subject** – This can be done by different focus or colour or tone / contrast.
- 8) **Landscapes need a focal point.** Where should it be? We need something to catch the eye.
- 9) **Think about the foreground** – Place points of interest in the picture; this helps the viewer get into the picture, fill the space, include environment for a plant. Beware – the foreground matter may compete with the main subject. Lead the eye with scale e.g. people on sand dune.
- 10) **Consider the Sky** – if bland, don't let it dominate. Use bold composition. If it is dramatic, make it a large part of the shot.
- 11) **Line and Form** – Use lines to lead the eye. Use symmetry or asymmetry. Lines give the image depth. It can also be of interest to create pattern. Lines often lead to the "vanishing point" It is better if this is off centre – ideally on thirds. Look for forms in the landscape e.g. S or V, swirls or ovals.
- 12) **Capture Movement** – It adds drama.
Use long shutter speeds to capture movement in waves, trees, skies, people etc. Fast shutter will freeze it.
- 13) **Problem Conditions** – Some lighting conditions defy the camera's method of evaluation.
1) exposure 2) White Balance.
"Auto" works if there are sufficient contrasts in colour, light and tone. If basically the whole photo is white, it gets over exposed. It may also be over-blue where the Auto White Balance is set wrongly. Use the "Cloudy" setting as a default and, if time, try different settings. Icebergs do have real blue ice, so don't exclude this.
- 14) **Work with the weather** – With snow, use a snow setting
- 15) **Golden Hour** – Low lighting morning and evening
- 16) **Computer Editing** – put on borders to enhance the photograph and experiment with the various options available within the editing program.

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Discovery Cruise Talk 6

10th August 2010

KNOWING MORE ABOUT YOUR CAMERA

Awards are made on interest, composition, quality, exposure, sharpness

Now that you are taking more pictures, there are extra important tips:

White (colour) Balance

99% of buyers actually purchase cameras to take faces and close ups of people. However when we move away from that purpose to landscapes (particularly of the Arctic etc) then you need to move away from Full Auto.

We meet all sorts of different lighting conditions and need to tell the camera how we want it interpreted.

When your camera is in auto mode then AWB seems to produce very blue photos under arctic conditions.

The colour of daylight changes throughout the day and with the amount of cloud cover.

The colour of artificial light depends on the light source.

Auto assumes that the picture contains all colours and light levels. It is better to go to Manual and tell the camera what you want. Go to the White Balance settings and tweak them manually.

AWB tends to take the colours out as it tries to balance the light.

The pre-sets on the camera remove colour casts. Most photographers set their settings on "CLOUDY" because it doesn't remove anything.

A Daylight or Direct Sun Preset only works when the subject is in direct sun. If in cloud, it will not work. Set on Cloudy and there is no problem.

Use the **Preset Program Modes** to allow you to select the White Balance.

Scene Modes allow you to select a White Balance + other aspects by scenic content

Noise and ISO

Digital Cameras suffer from "noisy" pictures – visible not audible.

A variance in the pixel level recorded

- **Statistical**
- **Thermal – heat within the picture expressed visually**

ISO 100 leads to a dark photo

ISO 400 leads to a little more detail

ISO 2400 gives lots more definition of light but also loads of noise – grasshoppers in the dark.

Suburban Night Sky at ISO 800 gives lots of noise. Do not let your camera turn the gain up too much.

Higher ISOs give you noise

Shutter Speeds and Blur

Fully Auto selects a shutter speed

- Based upon the required exposure
- With no knowledge of the subject conditions

Is the subject moving?

Do you wish to convey or freeze the idea of movement in the picture? If you want to convey movement, then take on a slow shutter speed. If you want to freeze the moment then select a fast shutter speed

The Tv setting is Time Value setting and gives you complete manual control but is extremely hard work.

If you want to freeze the action, go for the Sports setting.

There is a very good Shutter speeds document at http://www.lancs.ac.uk/socs/lups/shutter_speeds.doc

Invest in a very small tripod – about £7.00 – or a bean bag.

You can **take on Multiple Frames** and use panning - then choose which shot you like best at the editing stage.

Depth of Field

Depth of field is controlled by the Aperture.

Av – You choose the aperture as to whether it is fully open or fully closed in factors of 2 – stops.

When ultimate detail is important, the Landscape Mode will select a smaller than normal aperture, commensurate with a shutter speed fast enough to avoid shake.

Small apertures give greater depth of field.

Wide Angle views (lenses) exhibit

When the subject is in the foreground, **Portrait Mode** will select a larger than normal aperture, to deliberately put the background out of focus. You can use the portrait mode for things other than just a person. Portraits are not always about people they are about interpretation of close up.

Landscape Modes – digital compact cameras often do not have small enough apertures to get really great depth of field.

Digital Cameras (**Scene modes**) may also increase the blue and green saturation.

Small apertures will mean longer exposures

Keep the camera rack steady

Focus

Focus can be a difficult dilemma – focus on the eyes.

Manual Focus gives full control but is slower than autofocus.

Use the central focus

Remember the two stage press to get the face into focus and then recompose and squeeze harder. It takes out the lag.

Zoom and Perspective

When taking a picture of a person as your main subject you have a choice

Zoom in

- Long focal length for detail

Zoom Out /Wide Angle – for context.

Moving around changes the perspective.

Try both close up & context. Always take a pair to compare

Macro Photography

Close up photography requires special lenses or using the little flower icon.

Be aware of your depth of field and the Bokeh (not distracting).

The depth of field in Macro photography is extremely shallow.

Photographing in RAW allows you to sort out data when you get home and work on the picture on the computer. If you shoot in jpg then the detail is fixed at the time of shooting. **Even small cameras can come with a facility to shoot in RAW – ensure only buy such from now on.**

IMPROVE YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

by

Philip Lawson & Janet Edwards

Discovery Cruise Talk 7

15th August 2010

From Dawn to Dusk

Photography records people and places illuminated by light
The nature of the light is ever changing
Indoors and outdoors
Sunny or Shady
And throughout the time of day

Time of Day

The photographic day can be split into sections:

Sunrise at 6.00 a.m. Dawn is anything up until the moment of sunrise.

6.00 – 7.00 a.m. Sunrise – the golden hour

7 – 9 Early Morning 0 an ideal time for photography

9 – 11 Late morning bright light strong shadows clear air

11 – 2 Midday

Afternoon

2 -4 Afternoon Heat haze can be a problem.

4-5 Late afternoon terrific warm, golden light. An ideal time for photography

5-6 Sunset great skies 10 minutes before and 10 minutes after sunset

607 dusk is great for skylines, whilst there is residual light in the sky.

Once the sun has come up, we need to concentrate on the angle of the sun.

Photographs taken at dawn give an ethereal light – it is worth taking photographs then.

When out at dawn, there is often soft lighting with mist etc.

As soon as the sun comes up it is important to consider the direction of the lighting:

Front lighting

The light source lies directly behind the camera

This light is flat producing no contrast at all

Lights the subject evenly with virtually no shadows

Surface details within the frame are hidden, making objects appear feature-less

Back lighting

The light source lies directly in front of the camera and and sometimes incorporated into the frame

Objects depicted are often thrown into silhouette resulting in incorrect

Side lighting

Light source is to the left or right of the frame, adding definition of the shape of objects

Deep shadows are a feature of side lighting

Be aware that shadows can be long

Top lighting

Only occurs at midday especially between the tropics

Can be very harsh and creates unappealing shadows

Flat Lighting

Occurs on very overcast days

Can be bright or dark dependant upon the time of day and the weather

Subjects have little or no shadow, no depth to the scene

Colours are very muted

Sunrise

Very bright side lighting

It's good for an hour or two afterwards. Sometimes you have to wait for the sun to rise to bring the level of sunlight down.

The best natural history photos are taken between 9.00 – 11.00 in the morning – it is an ideal time to record something.

By late morning, the sun is almost at its whitest

Shadows are strong in enclosed areas

Distant colours can start to look a little insipid.

By midday for most of the world, there will be deep underlying shadows – many animals have a brow that keeps their eyes shaded.

The midday sun is not the best time nor the most comfortable to photograph – unless you have absolutely no choice.

Midday opportunities

Despite the adversity, Midday

May provide an opportunity to take alleyways

There are very very blue skies at midday- intensely polarised skies at midday.

If the light is too harsh, try to encourage the person out of the sunlight into the shade.

Digital cameras with the white balance set to AUTO may not correctly record the warm light of early morning.

Set to cloudy or shadow

Use colour correction filters in this event.

Small puffy white clouds are often better than a clear blue sky.

Featureless white skies are the most uninspiring

Light levels are low so exposures are longer

The afternoon light is often characterised as the poorest of light – mainly because of the build up of heat during the day.

By late afternoon the quality and angle of the light significantly improves – illuminating faces and eyes. It is a prime time to photograph animals. You get improved sculpting. Just before sunset is the best time to get photos if you didn't get them in the morning.

Sunsets can be good and shadows can be seen climbing on distant hills.

Ask

Where is the sun?

Should I wait for the cloud to Passover or come over?

Should I come back later or earlier tomorrow?

Should I use AWB or a daylight preset?

Is there enough light to handhold?

As dusk there is no real sun – exposures will be long. You may get etherealness and illuminations.

After dark there is still plenty to photograph.

Night Photography

After dark there is still plenty to photograph

Evening and night skies

City scapes

There are no hard or fast rules

Always turn the flash off.

Flash guns will provide fall off and only illuminate about the first three feet.

Keep the camera steady – use a wall or something to keep the camera rock steady and turn the flash off.

City photography at night can be easier where there is no movement

Where there is movement, accept there will be blur.

Fountains can be good at night.

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Discovery Cruise Talks 8 & 9

18th & 19th August 2010

638 photos were chosen for the Digital Photo Frame from 23,738 submitted during the cruise.

J's photo of the Discovery – daisy framed at Flam – was also shown.

The aim of the cruise was for people to understand and know their cameras better, to take improved photos and to enjoy photography more. This aim was achieved.

- Data on minimum shutter speeds: http://www.lancs.ac.uk/socs/lups/shutter_speeds.doc
- Philip Lawson & Janet Edwards – Google generally
- Philip Lawson & Janet Edwards website: <http://www.el-image.com> &
- <http://www.el-image.com/cruises>
- VicMan's Photo Editor: <http://www.vicman.net/vcwphoto>
- GIMP: <http://www.gimp.org>
- Faststone Resizer: <http://www.faststone.org>
- Picture Resize: <http://www.pictureresize.com> or try <http://pictureresize.com>
- Picture and File Recovery <http://www.recuva.com>