

PHOTOGRAPHY – 5 STEPS

The following steps will provide you with the basics of photography using a smart phone device.

1. COMPOSITION 1 – THE SUBJECT:

One of the main principles of photography in general, and even more prominent when it comes to photography for kids is: What is the subject? What do you want to photograph? Is it your dog? A toy? A person? A good picture requires good composition, and one of the key composition questions photographers ask themselves is what the subject is. Once the subject is chosen, it's time to find it and take the shot.

2. COMPOSITION 2 – DISTANCE:

How big do you want the subject to appear? Based on your answer, you will need to get closer or take a few steps back. At this stage, don't use the smart-phone zoom, use your legs.

3. COMPOSITION 3 – CHECK THE BACKGROUND:

How many times have you seen a picture where the object blended into the background? Like someone wearing a black shirt standing in front of a dark wall... or people smiling to the camera when something is growing out of their heads? In order to avoid these mistakes, checking the background and the foreground of a shot is required. Scan the background and the foreground of an image, and look for clutter, distraction or any other distraction that might ruin the photo.

4. FOCUS:

One of the most important photography principles, that makes photos sharp or blurry, is focus. Quality photos are ones where it's very clear where the focal point is.

First, the focus point can be determined very easily. Once the picture's composition is clear, tap the screen, on the object which they want the camera to focus on. A yellow square will appear around the tapping point. This is where the camera is going to focus. If you wish to change it – no problem. Tap the screen again to cancel the former focus point and then tap a new point.

Next, after taking the shot, it's very easy to find out if the focus was set properly – present the photo on the display and zoom in by pinching and spreading two fingers apart. If the focus was set on the desired object, you'll find that when you zoom in, the object remains sharp while its surroundings are becoming blurry.

5. LIGHT:

Light in general, and the light's direction and magnitude in particular, play a key role in a pictures' quality.

Light direction: look around you– where is the light coming from? The sun? A window? A naked light bulb? Then look at the subject – is it lighted or placed in a dark place? And therefore – will the image be dark or light-ed? While discussing the questions above, look at the scene through the smart-phone's display, as it demonstrates better the device's interpretation of the scene and the light. It is a good rule to never take images when the light is facing the camera, this will make the subject dark. It is better to have “the sun always at your back...” but watch what it may do to your subject and adjust for your angles of shooting accordingly.

Light's magnitude: Exposure is a critical ingredient in any photo. Different exposure levels result in darker or brighter photos. This can make a big difference in the quality of the photo.

If you are using an iPhone, you can experiment and experience the impact of different exposure levels. How? In the previous section I explained how to set the focus and about the yellow square you see on the screen. Do it again now and you'll notice that to the square's right there is a small “sun” symbol. If you drag your finger down, the exposure will be less and picture will be darker. If you will do the opposite, the picture will get brighter.

FINAL NOTES

Take many photos – one of the most basic principles in any learning is practice. The more you practice, the more experience you gain and the better your skills become. In photography, the practice is taking photos, as many as possible. And what can be easier and more accessible than turning on your smart-phone camera and taking pictures? They cost nothing, right?

On the other hand – don't exaggerate by taking more and more photos without proper guidance and control. Do it for practice, not just for killing time. The purpose is to learn photography and enjoy it, while taking advantage of the low cost of photos, but not to spend time in an endless “point and shoot” exercise.

Assignment:

Step 1: Define Subject: _____

Step 2 &3: Composition: Explore with Distance & Composition. Shoot your subject 3 times at different distances and 3 different angles trying to keep any distracting elements away from the frame. (Total = 3 images minimum)

Step 4: Focus: Take 3 additional shots keeping in mind the above, but change the focus on the three shots. They can be from the same angle and at the same distance. (Total = 3 images minimum)

Step 5: Light Direction: Take one shot with the sun in front of you and one with the sun behind you. (Total = 2 images minimum)

Step 6: Light Exposure: If you use an iPhone - Take the same picture 3 times. Use different exposures for each by using the “sun” symbol. One with medium exposure level, as recommended by the iPhone camera. One by dragging the finger up, the picture is lighter or overexposed. And one by dragging the finger down so the picture is underexposed. (Total = 3 images minimum)

On your blog, post your images.

Label each image in order to correspond with the assignment.

Choose one image from the Composition section. Tell me what you like about this image and what could you have done better?

Choose one image from the Focus section. Tell me what you like about this image and what could you have done better?