5 tips on how to take a great photo

Be creative with the pictures you take. Try to create a narrative with your pictures that will help you document the experience. Before you gear up to go, check out these photography tips:

1. Use flash outdoors

It seems like a flash would be the last thing you need on a bright day but the sun can cast harsh shadows and your flash will fill in the shadows. When taking pictures of people on sunny days, turn your flash on. You may have a choice of fill-flash mode or full-flash mode. Both are good on a sunny day.

2. Move in close

A common mistake is being too far away from your subject. Get close! Your goal is to fill the picture area with the subject you are photographing. Up close, you can reveal more about your subject. If you can, don't rely on the zoom to move in. You'll get a better, sharper photo if you physically move closer to your subject rather than zooming in

3. Find a simple background

A simple background shows off the subject you are photographing. When you look through the camera viewfinder, find an area surrounding your subject that is not complicated. Make sure no poles grow from the head of your subject and that your subject isn't sharing the spotlight with something else.

4. Move it from the middle

The middle of your picture is not always the best place for your subject. Bring your picture to life by simply moving your subject away from the middle of your picture. Imagine a tick-tack-toe grid in your viewfinder. Now place your important subject at one of the intersections of lines. You'll need to lock the focus if you have an auto-focus camera because most of them focus on whatever is in the center of the viewfinder.
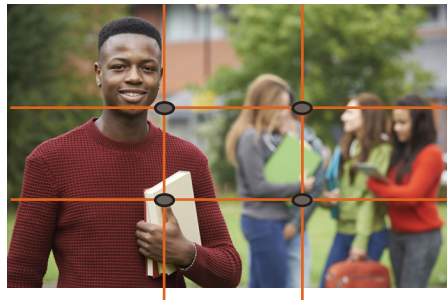
5. Be ready!

It's the worst feeling in the world to have something happening when you're not ready, your camera is in your bag, turned off, or set to the wrong settings. Usually you know if you are planning on shooting photos at an event. Have a practice drill for getting your camera out quickly. Settings need to change when the lighting does. Take a few practice shots with your settings adjusted before the action happens.

It's all about telling a story, and having a front row seat to the ACTION! Taking a great picture requires technique and getting close. Use a hip pack or shoulder strap so your camera is accessible. But remember, no photo is worth risking your safety!

With digital cameras, keep in mind saltwater is more corrosive than freshwater; you'll need to carefully clean your camera every day. It's a good idea to keep your camera sealed in a plastic bag.

Use the reflections of the sun to your creative advantage with water, particularly when calm water comes between you and the brightest part of the sky during sunrise and sunset. Look for natural frames like mountains or arches formed by trees.

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