



Creating Photos with Impact

Agenda



What Creates Impact



Storytelling



Creativity



Composition



Technical



Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

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Greater Bridgeport Camera Club

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ccullens.com/impact

Agenda



What Creates Impact



Storytelling

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Finding
Adding



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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

What Is Impact?

The sense one gets upon viewing a photo for the first time.



Impactful photos evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another **intense emotion**.



This is the eye candy, the **wow factor**. It is the reason we love the photo. It moves us to look inwards.



Impact is what you get when many attributes are **working together** in concert.



Photos with impact don't just happen. They are **thoughtfully created** and nurtured and cultivated through the careful attention to photographic principles.



The impact of a photo is subjective and can vary from person to person based on individual experiences, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds. There is no magic formula, but there are photographic principles we can all leverage.

What Creates Impact?

Inspired by Professional Photographer
Association's 12 Elements of a Merit Photo.

Think of **Impact** as a stool supported by these four legs.



How strong is the stool?

With 4 legs: Hard to knock over.
With 3 legs: Still very strong.
With 2 legs: Hard to stand up.
With 1 leg: Falls over.
With 0 legs: For your eyes only.

Storytelling

The photo's ability to evoke imagination.

Creativity

The fresh expression of a scene conveying an idea or message.

Composition

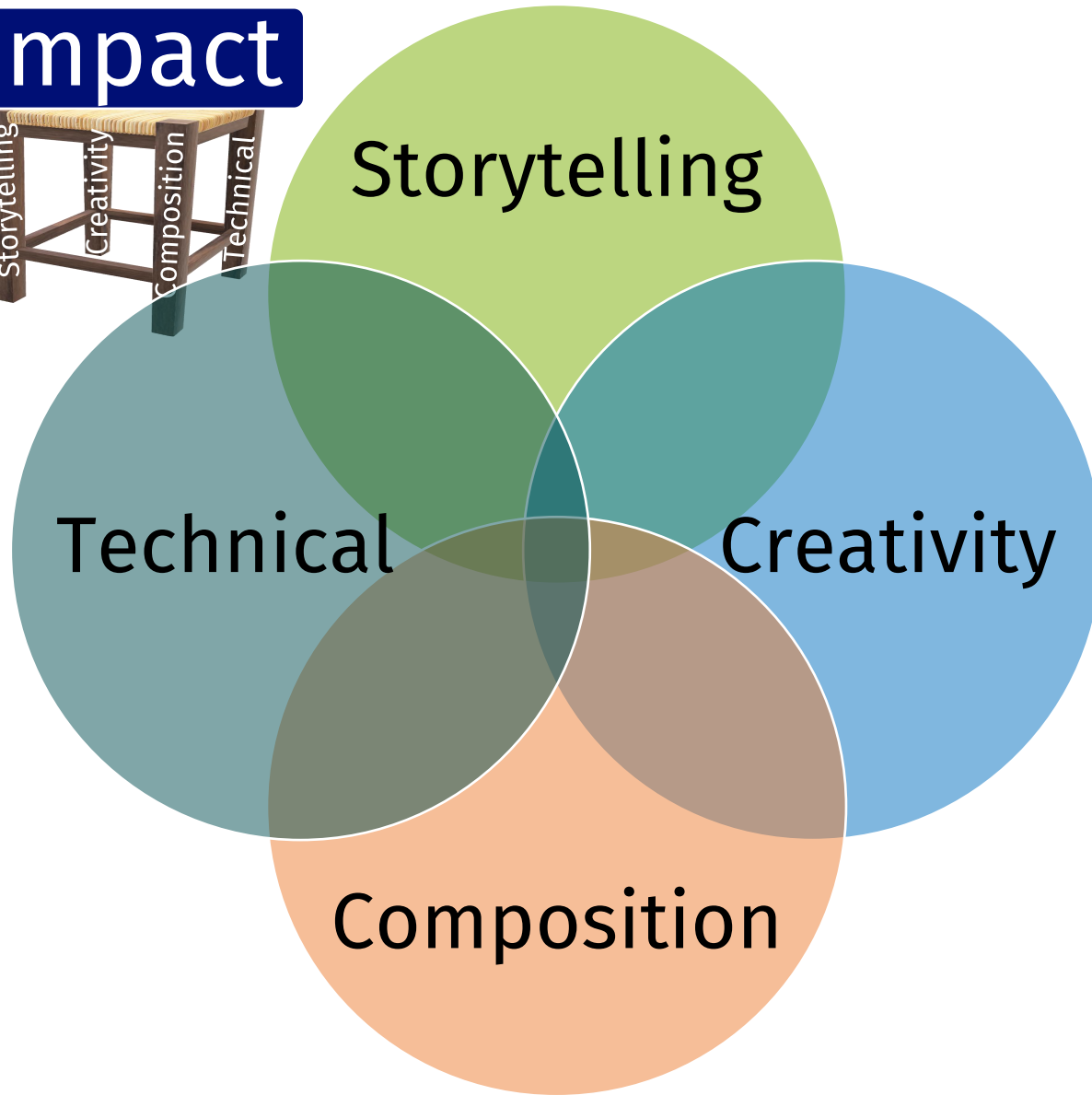
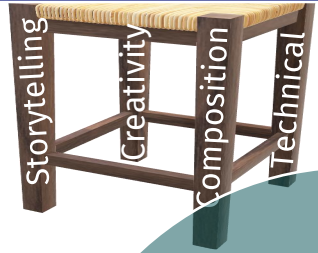
Bringing all the visual elements together to express the purpose.

Technical

The quality of the photo itself as it is presented for viewing.

Photography Principles Overlap

Impact



Changing focus can alter any pillar

- **Storytelling** – Adding motion blur to an object can enhance what your mind sees.
- **Creativity** – Putting specific items in focus or not in focus, to enhance uniqueness.
- **Composition** – Focus can be used to direct the viewers eye to the main subject.
- **Technical** – Focus may be altered using many aspects of your camera – shutter speed, aperture, camera motion. Also, focus changes in post-processing using focus stacking and blurring.

Is the Impact Stool Standing Strong?

- ✓ Lighting
- ✓ Focus
- ✓ Color

Technical

The quality of the photo itself as it is presented for viewing.

- ✓ Breathing space



Composition

Bringing all the visual elements together to express the purpose.

Putting too much weight on any one leg of the impact stool can lead you into the danger zone.

Creativity

The fresh expression of a scene conveying an idea or message.



Storytelling

The photo's ability to evoke imagination.

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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

Storytelling

"One picture is worth a thousand words."

The photo's ability to evoke imagination



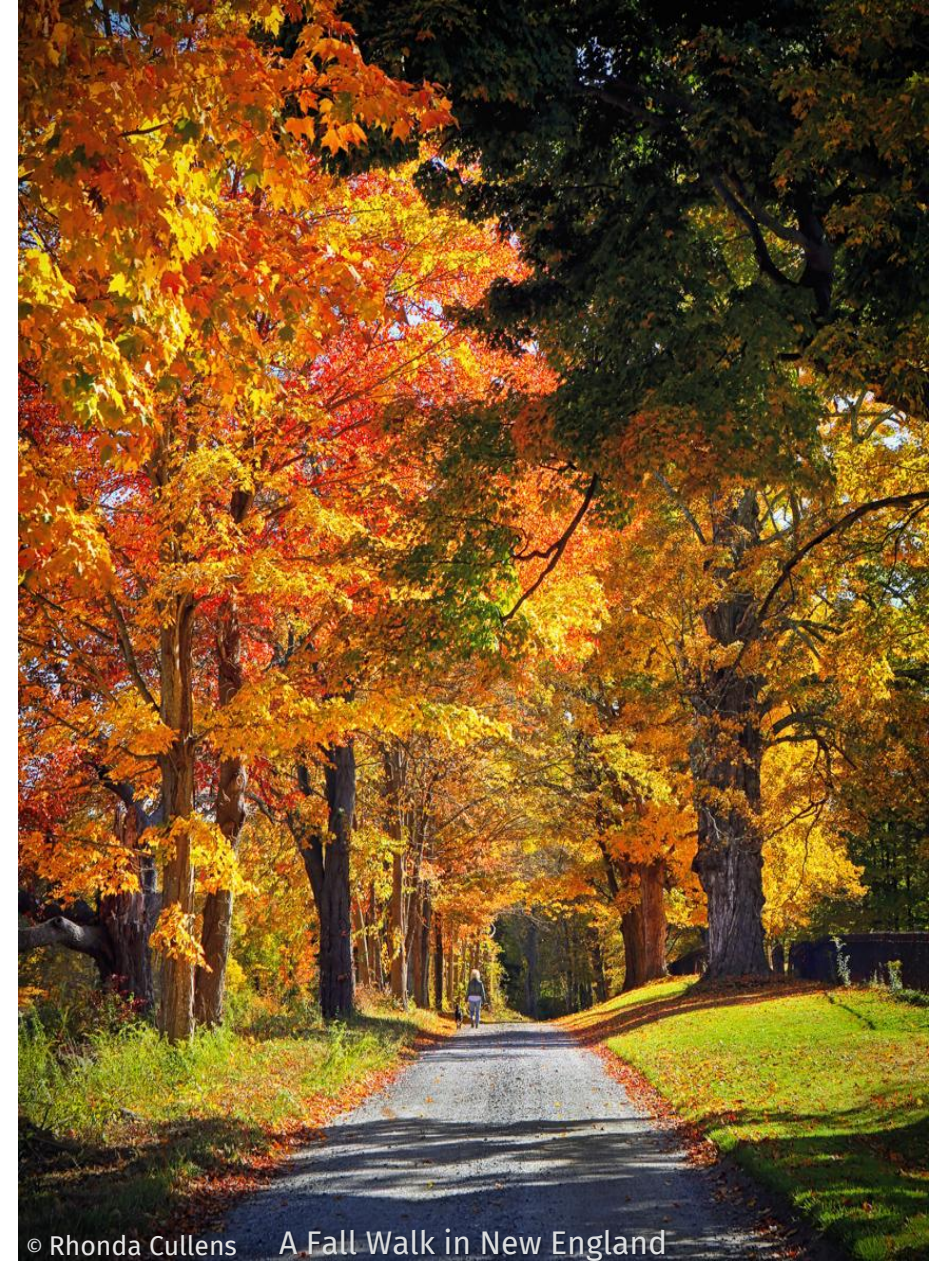
Take a **step back** to see what kind of stories you can create with your camera



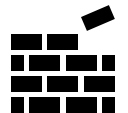
One beautiful thing about art is that each viewer might create their **own** story



Look at the photo as if it is your **first time**, find the story elements and make them noticeable



© Rhonda Cullens A Fall Walk in New England



Subject – Keep it interesting and appropriate. Pretty doesn't mean it's right.
Title – Use to provide an emotional connection to the photo.

Storytelling

"Every picture tells a story, but sometimes it doesn't explain it."

The photo's ability to evoke imagination



Take a **step back** to see what kind of stories you can create with your



One beautiful thing about art is each viewer might create their **own** story



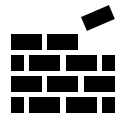
Look at the photo as if it is your **first time**, find the story elements and make them noticeable

Photographer Tip

Downplay your emotional attachment to the story to sense what the audience sees.



© Rhonda Cullens A Fall Walk in New England



Subject – Keep it interesting and appropriate. Pretty doesn't mean it's right.
Title – Use to provide an emotional connection to the photo.

How to Find the Storytelling

1 Ask yourself

Is easy for you to tell a story about the scene?

Yes, taking a stroll on a beautiful fall day.

If you find it hard, the storytelling can use improvement.



2 Is the main subject clearly defined?

Yes, a fall scene, with a gravel road to walk along.

How is the subject helping to launch the story?



3 Is there interaction or activity helping the story?

Not much, but she is walking and on the left side to remind us cars use the road.

Runner standing vs Runner passing vs Runner finishing



Storytelling Only – You Decide #1

1

Is easy for you to tell a story about the scene?

If you find it hard, the storytelling can use improvement.

A little. More if you know the category is “Thrill of Victory or Agony of Defeat.” Expression is sad or “defeated”.

2

Is the main subject clearly defined?

How is the subject helping to launch the story?

Maybe, the expression on her face. Bright, easy to find.

3

Is there interaction or activity helping the story?

Runner standing vs Runner passing vs Runner finishing

Nice that the horse is looking down and defeated as well.



Storytelling Only – You Decide #2

1

Is easy for you to tell a story about the scene?

If you find it hard, the storytelling can use improvement.

Not really, simply a lighthouse on a day of nice day.

2

Is the main subject clearly defined?

How is the subject helping to launch the story?

Is the subject the living quarters, the lighthouse or the rocks?

3

Is there interaction or activity helping the story?

Runner standing vs Runner passing vs Runner finishing

No people, no activity, no storm.



Living at the Lighthouse

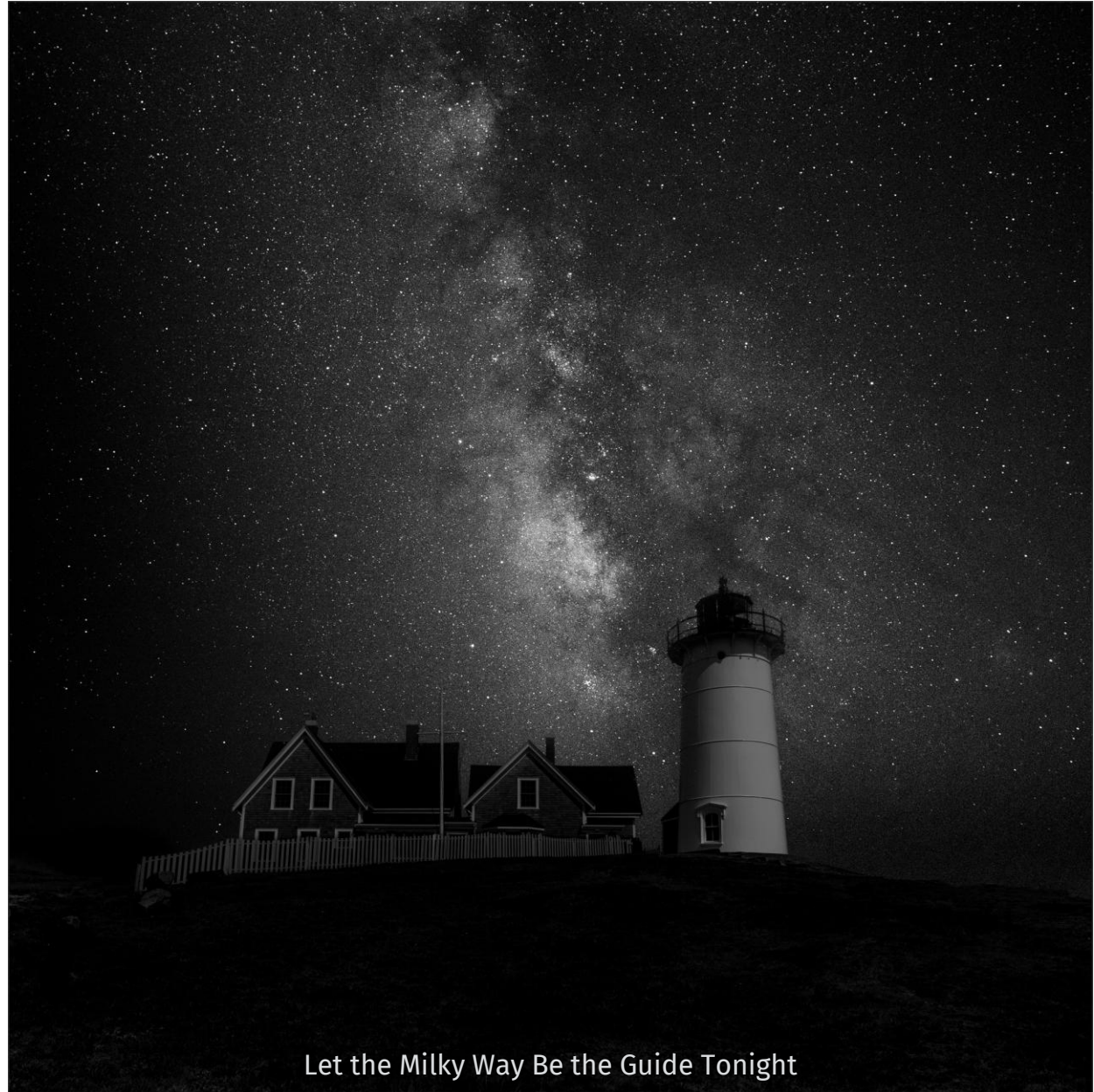
As the Photographer, You Can Insert a Story

Photographer Tip

Creating the story before
clicking the shutter
is often easier
than adding it
later.



Living at the Lighthouse



Let the Milky Way Be the Guide Tonight

Thoughts on Adding Storytelling

The Story

- Define the main subject and key story elements clearly.
- Our most cherished stories often stem from everyday moments.
- Avoid letting your emotions overshadow the viewer's perspective.
- Remember, like any story you read, this one also needs editing and revision.

Subject Matter

- Consider how the subject matter contributes to the story.
- Keep in mind the context of the subject, whether it's dramatic, serene, or familiar.
- Ensure secondary subjects are distinct and visually separate, avoiding mergers.
- Enhance engagement by add interactions or providing additional context.

What Else?

- Consider additions or removals to improve the story.
- Explore how capturing motion can enhance storytelling.
- Evaluate the role of foreground and background in supporting your narrative.
- Utilize the title to provide hints about your story's content.



Is there a story?
How can the story be
improved?

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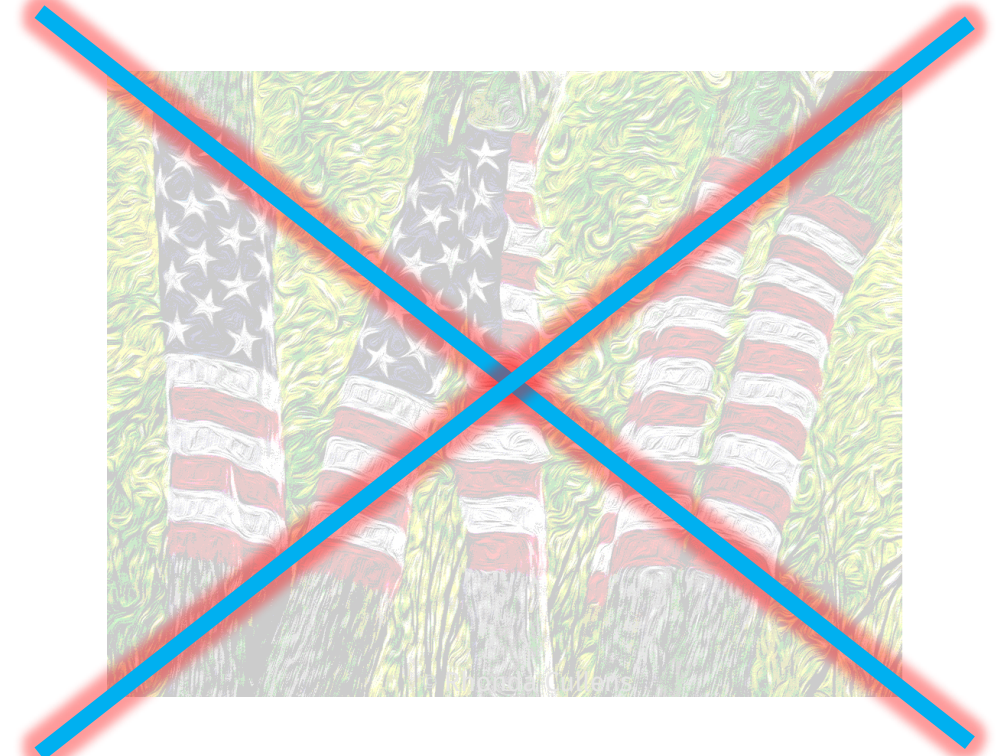


Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

The *Creativity Principle* is **different** than a Creative Category focused on *Altered Reality*



Creativity Principle

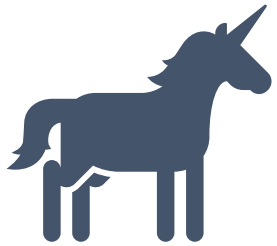


Not talking about Creative Altered Reality

Creativity

*"Creativity is a wild mind
and a disciplined eye."*

The fresh expression of a scene
conveying an idea or message



The ability to **perceive** more than just the physical reality before the camera, allowing you to create something unique and captivating.



Creativity emerges in your mind as a sense that something is distinctly **different** or unexpected. Often combining known things into a new reality.



It may involve using **unconventional** perspectives, experimenting with light and shadows, or creatively manipulating composition.



Chane Cullens - *Time for a Break*

How to Find the Creativity

1 Ask yourself

Why it is unique or interesting?

If you find it familiar or boring, creativity can use improvement

Mostly, the exploding objects are rare.



2

What specifically is unique?

The perspective, the alignment of elements, the lighting style ...

The high shutter speed to freeze the motion dust.



3

Where is there creativity in secondary elements?

How do they show additional creativity?

The axe tells you how it happened. The pieces flying show impact strength. The dust makes it look real.



Breaking an Old Brick

Creativity – You Decide #1

1

Why it is unique or interesting?

If you find it familiar or boring,
creativity can use improvement

Yes, new to me.

2

What specifically is unique?

The perspective, the alignment of
elements, the lighting style ...

Yes, showing the path of the
bouncing dice.

3

**Where is there creativity in
secondary elements?**

How do they show additional
creativity?

On the left, we see the dice
falling. On the right the dice are
stationary. Which helps us
understand more.



Creativity – You Decide #2

1

Why it is unique or interesting?

If you find it familiar or boring,
creativity can use improvement

Not unique, however interesting.

2

What specifically is unique?

The perspective, the alignment of
elements, the lighting style ...

Yes, the “bite out of the cookie”
shadow.

3

**Where is there creativity in
secondary elements?**

How do they show additional
creativity?

Maybe, the extra chocolate chips
laying around?



A Taste of Love

Working to Stand up the Stool



Bake cookies. First photo.



80 photos later - new background, new lighting, added milk and I ate part of a cookie

Storytelling

Creativity

Composition

Technical
Excellence

Creativity Is Possible Even with Cookies



Thoughts on Adding Creativity

The Scene

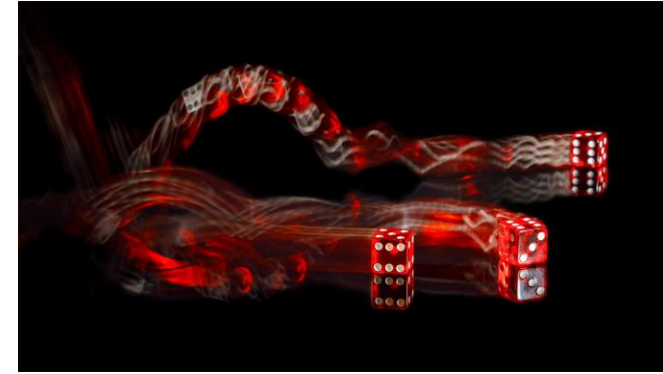
- Recognize a scene's potential and employ creative techniques to capture it.
- Challenge yourself: How can I capture this scene differently?
- Explore multiple approaches to capture the moment.
- After capturing, assess: Would others find it dull?

Add Interesting Details

- Explore intriguing details like color and light.
- Consider depth of focus.
- Create or observe patterns.
- Capture dynamic action.

Have Fun!

- Embrace imagination.
- Invite a friend to join.
- Adapt to change to turn failure into success.
- Keep learning new things.



Having Fun by Learning & Playing!



Checking drop zone



Flour



Brown Sugar



Chocolate Chips



Egg



Broken Egg



The Baker's Magic Hands

Find Creative Ideas from People and the Internet



Embrace Curiosity

- Ask questions
- Be observant
- Borrow ideas



Experiment and Play

- Try new things
- Embrace mistakes
- Play and have fun



Create the Right Conditions

- Make time
- Collaborate
- Connect

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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

Composition

"Seeing and composing the beauty is what separates the snapshot from the photograph."

Bringing all the visual elements together to express the purpose of the photo.



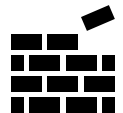
Holds the viewer in the photo and prompts the viewer to **look** where the most important element is placed.



How items are **arranged**. The choices made on what to include or exclude.



There are a few dozen composition rules. However, you can **break** them to help succeed in your vision.



Center of interest – The point or points where the viewer should stop as they view photo

How to Find the Composition

1 Ask yourself

Overall, does your mind understand the layout?

Yes, it feels good.

Is the scene pleasing to look at?



2

How did you find the center of interest?

Most of the feathers are leading lines. The eye is on the rule of thirds intersection.

Leading lines? Rule of Thirds? Focus? Lighting? Left to Right?



3

What distracts from the layout?

The background is not distracting. I want to look at the feathers, but I always jump back to the eye.

What has your eyes jumping somewhere they don't need to go?



Tucked in for Comfort

Composition – You Decide #1

1

Overall, does your mind understand the layout?

Is the scene pleasing to look at?

Mostly, I was expecting more water from a lighthouse seashore scene.

2

How did you find the center of interest?

Leading lines? Rule of Thirds? Focus? Lighting? Left to Right?

Yes, the white lighthouse stands out by brightness and rule of thirds.

3

What distracts from the layout?

What has your eyes jumping somewhere they don't need to go?

The sunset background and rocks foreground support it. Tree is blocking part of the lighthouse



Lighthouse at Sunset

Composition – You Decide #2

1

Overall, does your mind understand the layout?

Is the scene pleasing to look at?

Mostly, I was expecting more water from a lighthouse seashore scene.

2

How did you find the center of interest?

Leading lines? Rule of Thirds? Focus? Lighting? Left to Right?

I'm still looking for it. Maybe the bright sun, sea stacks, the beach?

3

What distracts from the layout?

What has your eyes jumping somewhere they don't need to go?

Middle half of the photo is empty. My eyes are bouncing between the bright top right and lower left corners. The horizon is not level.



Thoughts on Adding Composition

Center of Interest

- Is there a clear center of interest point?
- Avoid having too many key items to look at in first glance.
- How can I guide the viewer to the focal point?
- Decide what to exclude, even if it's beautiful.

Leading Lines

- It can be straight, curved, or intricately shaped.
- It could involve one or multiple objects, each with its own appeal.
- It might be highly prominent or subtly woven into the scene.
- Our natural tendency is to scan from left to right.

What Else?

- Our attention gravitates toward the brightest object.
- Our focus is drawn to the sharpest item.
- The rule of odds becomes less effective with more than 5 items.
- A subtle dark vignette retains the viewer's attention inside the photo.



In this photo, what is good and bad about the composition?

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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

Technical

"There is nothing worse than a sharp photo of a fuzzy concept."

The visual presentation of the photograph.



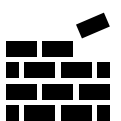
Lighting, focus, exposure, camera motion, color, post-processing, printing, mounting, fine details ...



While focusing on the **nuts and bolts** of photography use caution to avoid excessive post-processing.



It's what makes you look like a pro. Even a great scene **falters** without technical excellence.



Presentation – finished look, crop, border or mat to enhance the look

Lighting – defines dimension, shape and roundness, also light impacts the color & tone

Technique – camera settings & perspective, focus, angle, pose, expression, skin tones, lens, texture, digital noise

Color – color choice, saturation, harmony and tones to enhance the emotional appeal and structure

How to Find the Technical Excellence

1 Ask yourself

Do the colors, focus and lighting match the scene?

What technically makes the scene standout?

Yes, this close-up photo needs sharp focus to see details. Bright scene with bright saturated colors.

2

What specific technical aspect do you like best?

Are the important subjects easy to see and evaluate?

The lighting creates depth with the shadows. The red and green colors *complement* each other, and green and blue are *similar* colors. Everything in sharp focus.

3

What technical details distract?

Dust, overly bright or dark areas, focus, contrast, colors ...

Shiny lines on pencil leads. sharpening, contrast and saturation are on the edge of getting harsh.



Technical – You Decide #1

1

Do the colors, focus and lighting match the scene?

What technically makes the scene stand out?

The tiger's orange color works well with the fall-colored background, where it needs focus, it has focus, lighting feels natural.

2

What specific technical aspect do you like best?

Are the important subjects easy to see and evaluate?

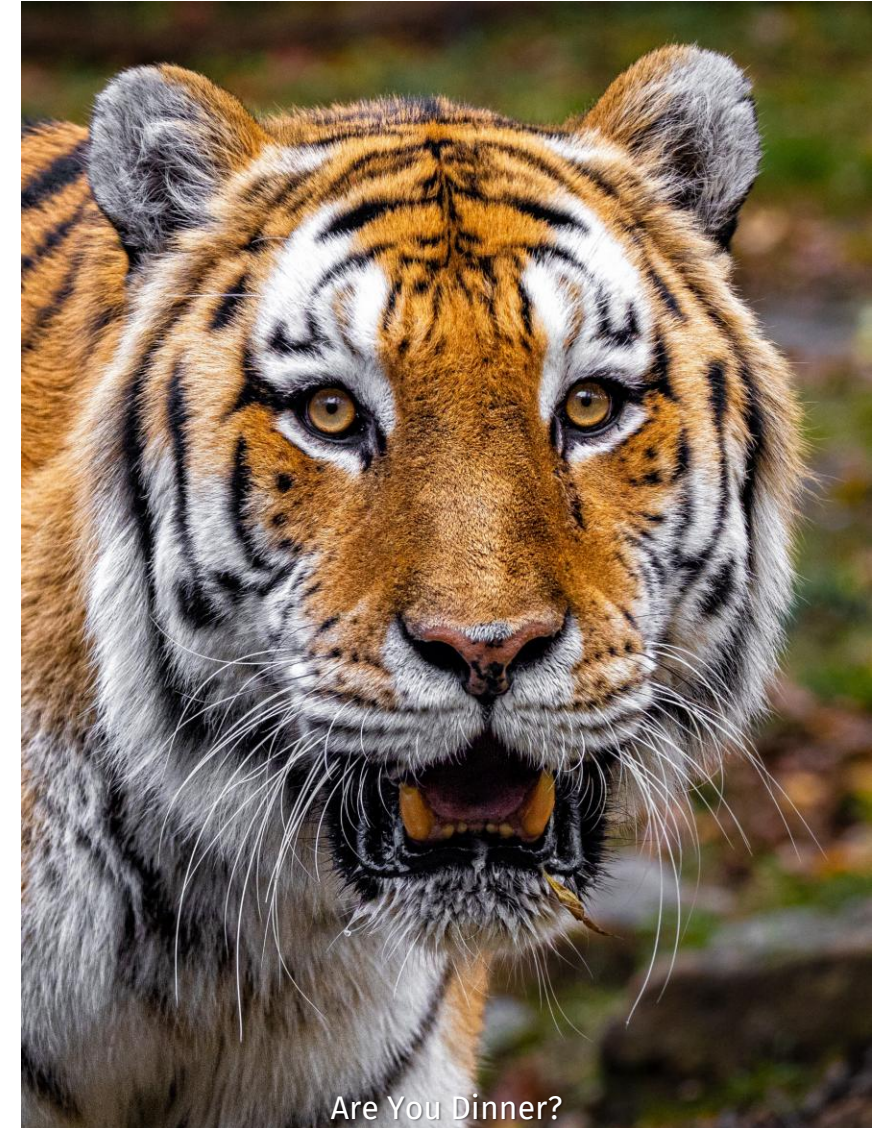
Good focus and texture, even texture in the white areas on the face, crisp whiskers, eyes level, looking at camera.

3

What technical details distract?

Dust, overly bright or dark areas, focus, contrast, colors ...

Bottom of face and under face could use more light. The lower right needs to be duller.



Are You Dinner?

Technical – You Decide #2

1

Do the colors, focus and lighting match the scene?

What technically makes the scene stand out?

Colors are dull, focus is a little soft everywhere, sky overexposed.

2

What specific technical aspect do you like best?

Are the important subjects easy to see and evaluate?

Nothing. It's challenging situation with bright sky and the shade in the valley.

3

What technical details distract?

Dust, overly bright or dark areas, focus, contrast, colors ...

Sky is too bright and the sky reflections in the water might be too bright. Not sharp. No contrast. Dull colors.



Smith Rock State Park

Thoughts on Adding Technical Excellence

Lighting

- How do alterations in light direction and quality impact the story?
- Is the exposure appropriate? Should it be brighter or darker?
- How can I utilize lighting to enhance depth?

Technique

- Is the camera position, height, and angle ideal?
- Are the aperture, shutter speed, and ISO settings correct?
- Determine what should or shouldn't be in focus.

Color

- How do colors enhance the story?
- Should I adjust color intensity?
- Is monochrome a better option?

Presentation

- Have I examined the finer details?
- Consider sensor and lens cleaning.
- Add a vignette, border, or both?



Finishing Lunch

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Using Impact to Evaluate Photos

Evaluate your photo and ask tough questions about each leg of the stool.



Impact

With 4 legs: Hard to knock over.
With 3 legs: Still very strong.
With 2 legs: Hard to stand up.
With 1 leg: Falls over.
With 0 legs: For your eyes only.

Storytelling

The photo's ability to evoke imagination.

Creativity

The fresh expression of a scene conveying an idea or message.

Composition

Bringing all the visual elements together to express the purpose.

Technical

The quality of the photo itself as it is presented for viewing.

Does your photo Stand Up?

Thoughts on Adding Storytelling

The Story
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Define the main subject and key story elements clearly.Our most cherished stories often stem from everyday moments.Avoid telling your audience a one-sided or biased perspective.Remember, like any story you read, this one also needs editing and revision.
Subject Matter
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider how the subject matter contributes to the story.Keep in mind the context of the subject, whether it's dramatic, serene, or familiar.Ensure secondary subjects are distinct and visually separate, avoiding mergers.Enhance engagement by adding questions or providing additional context.
What Else?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider additional elements to improve the story.Explore how capturing motion can enhance storytelling.Evaluate the role of foreground and background in supporting your narrative.Utilize the title to provide hints about your story's content.



Is there a story?
How can the story be improved?

Thoughts on Adding Creativity

The Scene
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recognize a scene's potential and employ creative techniques to capture it.Challenge yourself: How can I capture this scene differently?Explore multiple approaches to capture the moment.After capturing, assess: Would others find it odd?
Add Interesting Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Explore intriguing details like color and light.Consider depth of focus.Create or observe patterns.Catch dynamic action.
Have Fun!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Release imagination.Include a friend to join.Adapt to change to turn failure into success.Keep learning new things.



Thoughts on Adding Composition

Center of Interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is there a clear center of interest point?Avoid having too many key items to look at in first glance.How can I guide the viewer to the focal point?Decide what to exclude, even if it's beautiful.
Leading Lines
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Can be straight, curved, or irregularly shaped.Can lead the viewer's eye to the subject or away from it.Can be used to create a sense of depth or to lead the viewer's eye to the subject.Can be used to create a sense of movement or to lead the viewer's eye to the subject.
What Else?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">See what new patterns emerge in the scene.Our focus is often on the sharpest item.The rule of thirds becomes less effective with more than 3 items.A subtle dark vignette reduces the viewer's attention inside the photo.



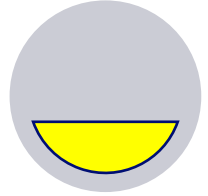
In this photo, what is good and bad about the composition?

Thoughts on Adding Technical Excellence

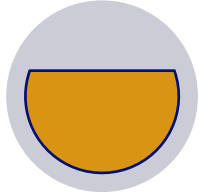
Lighting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">How do alterations in light direction and quality impact the story?Is the exposure appropriate? Should it be lighter or darker?How can I utilize lighting to enhance depth?
Technique
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is the camera position, height, and angle ideal?Are the shutter, aperture, ISO, and focus settings correct?Is the image sharp or blurry?Is the image in focus or out of focus?
Color
<ul style="list-style-type: none">How do colors influence the story?Should I adjust color balance?Is the image a better color?
Presentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">How is the photo presented?Consider color and contrast.Add a vignette, border, or text?



Creating Impact Requires a Plan



Vision



Prepare



Achieve

Define

Why

Verify

How

Knowledge

Honesty

Time

Nature

Alternatives

Should Impact Include Photographer Effort?



It is a slippery slope to include effort when evaluating on a photo because *assumptions* must be made.

There is no way to know the actual capture effort

- Effort is highly dependent on photographer, technique & luck
- Maybe it's a composite
- Maybe it's a controlled environment (photo ops, zoo)

Plus, effort also happens outside of photo capture

- Hiking all night uphill to capture the sunrise?
- Using Photoshop for 20 hours?
- Planning and learning for three weeks?



Was this a lot of effort? What is effort.

- Two weeks of wondering what is a great 'bricks' photo?
- Reading the camera manual to learn what is possible?
- Waiting for afternoon shade?

How did I capture this?

- Using video mode on my camera.
- One take, one brick destroyed, one video frame used.
- Effort was a lot less than you think!

The best choice is to evaluate on the photographic principles that you see.

Creating Photos with Impact

Questions?



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