

# Tips on

## HOW TO TAKE BETTER PICTURES!

*by Jack Vanden Heuvel*

1. **Photograph what you love.** Where is your passion? For example, if you like nature, go for it. If you have no interest in nature, and could not care less about a bird, but you like your children, take pictures of them! Or your dog, abstracts with color, extreme close ups, or buildings!
2. **THINK and dream about what you want to take a picture of,** and what that might look like in your head. Then do what it takes to get it. Read a book or two, such as I talk about in my information sheet. Look at photography books to stimulate dreams.
3. To get a wall hanger for your study, or house, of your favorite place in nature, **photograph it in the first hour of daylight, or the last hour of daylight.** Everything looks better then. Even better is usually the “magic light” of the first 2-3 minutes of light. Even if you just want to take a walk, do it in the first hour of daylight, or the last hour of daylight. Actually the first two hours are good, and the last two hours are good. In autumn and November, the sun is low enough to be pretty nice all day long.
4. In photographing people, a medium telephoto is nice. Even stronger telephotos are nice for isolated the subject from the background, and enabling intimate close ups without being in their face and distracting them.
5. With people, using backlighting with fill flash is nice too. It makes the hair stand out, the face is without shadows, without squinting eyes, and it all looks better.
6. Use a program like Adobe Photoshop. It is helpful for basic things like cropping, fine tuning the exposure, the intensity of the color, and sharpening the photo. You can usually get something like Adobe Photoshop 10 for about \$80. The really good ones like CS5 are \$600. Photoshop is so helpful to take care of problems you could never do anything about in the days of slide film. For example, recropping for composition, lightening up a photo that is a little bit dark, or getting rid of an obnoxious spot on your sensor that sticks out like a sore thumb in the sky.
7. With the Digital age, don't be afraid to take a LOT of pictures. Rapid fire is great for key moments, facial expressions on candid, an animal doing something special, etc. When you get them in your computer, DELETE the bad stuff right away, and just keep the good

ones. I like to get rid of the bad stuff in Windows, evaluating and deleting in the right *view* selection. I use the “preview” selection for this evaluation process. I then rate the ones I want to keep with a star, and delete all the others under a different *view*.

8. Polarizing filters are great, especially in autumn. Get rid of glare off leaves and water with this filter, and allow the true color to come in to the sensor.
9. Single Lens Reflex cameras are great. You can do more with them easier, and the big advantage is that you can switch lenses. Then you can get a wide angle, and telephoto lens to play with. Even a macro lens for close ups. Plus you can use a polarizing filter and see what you are doing.
10. Get eye level with your subject. This is true whether the subject is a child, an adult, a flower, or an animal.
11. Focus on the eye. In close ups of people or animals or birds, you always want that eye in focus, tack sharp.
12. Get the focus right. Any contest will usually pass by any out of focus subjects. They need to be tack sharp.
13. Learn how to run your manual over ride exposure dial.
14. Check your LCD readout when exposure is an issue. You can instantly adjust. If you find out you have been shooting too dark or too light, you can change things and get a good photo right away. You have instant feedback. With most camera, holding the shutter down half way will lock the exposure. This means in difficult light situations, where your camera wants to read it wrong, you can point to the area you want exposed, push the button down half way, keep it down half way, and recompose the picture and click.
15. Go to a Photo Club.
16. Back up your photos with an external hard drive. This is VERY important! Don't lose all those neat photos when your computer crashes. And it will crash.
17. Compose with the THIRDS principal. Although it is not a must, it usually is a tremendous help in composition. Pay attention to the sky line, other “lines”.
18. When there is direction in a photo, such as a person looking to the side, a bird flying, a horse running.... have open area in the photo so they have a place to run, to fly, to look. This means having the person's head in the one third, and two thirds where they are looking open, for example.
19. A common mistake is to have the people you want photographed, or the subject too far away from the camera. Ask what you want in your photo. Do you want the people alone, the background blurred out? Do you want to see people but the whole mountain on too to give a sense of place, and the bigness of the mountain? Decide this before you compose the photo. Zoom lenses let you stay the same place and have it BOTH ways!
20. Stick your elbows in your gut, forming a tripod when you shoot. Do not have your elbows up in the air, since it is not stable.
21. If you chose to buy a point and shoot little camera, get some telephoto power, and Image Stabilization system.