Photography Field Guide

Whether you’re shooting with a mobile phone or a DSLR camera, this field guide is intended to be a helpful primer on taking thoughtfully composed, well-lit photos.

Composition Essentials

* The focal point should always be obvious in your photos.
* Get close to your subject; this is one of the most effective ways to eliminate distractions and focus the attention where you want it to be.
* Experiment with different angles, including high and low vantage points, to find new and interesting perspectives.
* Streets, sidewalks, fences, rows of street lights, streams, branches, etc., can act as leading lines.
* To use the rule of thirds, imagine overlaying the lines of a tic-tac-toe board onto an image you’re composing. Position your subject at one of the four intersections of the grid to create a point of interest.
* When composing a photo, look for framing devices in both the foreground and background (like windows, doors, people, etc.).
* Having a brightly colored or saturated foreground against a dull background (or vice versa) can help isolate your subject from its surroundings.
* A photo with a **shallow** **depth of field** has a very narrow focal point while the rest of the image is blurry. Photos with a **deep** **depth of field** are entirely or nearly entirely in focus and clear—neither the foreground nor background are blurry.
* A low f-stop (like f/1.4 or f/2.8) uses a large aperture and results in a **shallow depth of field**.
* A high f-stop (f/22 or similar) uses a small aperture and results in a **deep depth of field.** Mostly everything in the image will appear clear and in focus when using a deep depth of field.
* Combine a larger aperture (f/1.4) and a longer (telephoto) lens for the shallowest depth of field effect. A deeper depth of field is gained by using the widest lens with the smallest aperture (f/22).

brand.psu.edu

Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or protected veteran status.

THIS PUBLICATION IS AVAILABLE IN ALTERNATIVE MEDIA ON REQUEST.
Produced by the Penn State Department of University Marketing U.Ed. SCM 18-54

PHOTOGRAPHY FIELD GUIDE | PAGE 1

PHOTOGRAPHY FIELD GUIDE | PAGE 2