

Total time:
2-4 hours



Difficulty Level: Beginner

Skill Points:

- Using a silhouette as a focal point
- Using a silhouette as the subject
- Understanding the different types of silhouettes

UNDERSTANDING SILHOUETTES



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There is much confusion among the difference between silhouettes, a shadow, and when something is shadowed. (Review the "Shadows" Action Card). Here is the definition of a silhouette: the dark shape and outline of someone, or something, visible against a lighter background.

KEY LESSON: Silhouettes are powerful, because they make use of shape (See "Shape" Action Card). The most powerful silhouettes include a storytelling element. A simple outline can be effective as a focal point, but rarely as the subject. If it includes a storytelling element, it will often become the subject. These elements can be physical objects or action.



Woman at Sunset: A simple silhouette as this, gives little to a viewer. It becomes a weak photo. There is nothing wrong with starting out this way, and when you feel comfortable, incorporate storytelling details.

Woman & Dog: This is a similar situation to the previous example. The inclusion of the dog, and the ball, greatly increased the story value and resulting pleasure for a viewer of this photo. Take notice to the importance of shape in conveying the story.

Dandelion: When an object has opaque, and translucent parts, the silhouette will vary in density. This is called a **semi-silhouette**.

Monks: Here is an example of what can go wrong - if

you don't consider the entire composition. The intent was for the monk in silhouette to be the subject, as camera focus is placed on him. The device in his hand is meant to be a focal point. The problem here is that he monk in red draws more attention than the subject. This leads to visual confusion. If you intend for your silhouette to be the subject- make sure it firmly holds that position!

Man at Beach: A full silhouette is deep black. A semi-silhouette has some detail in the shadowed areas. Here, we have both. When exposing for a silhouette, you want to take the camera meter reading from the lighter background. Slightly underexposing will turn the silhouette a deeper black tone.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Organize a photo shoot similar in content to the example photos: Shoot at sunset. | Bring a model or two and props (include one or two translucent props) | Bring your lighting bounce cards (if you made them).
- 2- Place your subject(s) into the scene. Introduce your various props to create stories. Be cognizant of the shape (outline) of your silhouettes. (Don't let the model nose(s) disappear). Study the sample photos.
- 3- Take your light meter reading from the bright sky and slightly underexpose.
- 4- Create deep black silhouettes. Now, introduce some light back into the silhouette using your lighting bounce cards, (don't overdo it. You simply want to lighten the deep black) and create a semi-silhouette. Play with your translucent props.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you create deep black silhouetted images? Did your silhouetted images tell a story through shape?
- Were you able to successfully lighten the silhouette into a semi-silhouette?

Total time:
4-6 hours



Difficulty Level: Advanced
beginner to intermediate

Skill Points:

- Learning the effect of the spiral shape
- Identifying spiral shapes in scenes
- Using spirals in an overall composition.

THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE SPIRAL



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When you incorporate certain shapes into your photography, the resulting image is virtually guaranteed to be noticed. One of those shapes is the spiral. Spirals appear everywhere in nature, and as such they have symbolic and mystical meaning that dates back to the earliest humans. The spiral is said to convey feelings of fertility, expansion, transformation, direction, energy, whimsy, and adventure.

KEY LESSON: When a spiral moves in a clockwise direction it is said to inspire the unconscious idea of "intent". A counter-clockwise spiral implies fulfillment. Multiple spirals opposing each other create feelings of conflict. For reasons unknown, testing has shown that women are particularly fond of the spiral shape.

Sprout: Spirals abound in nature. Using them in your nature photography can elevate your images to a higher level. When using a spiral, make sure that it stands out from the background, making it easily visible.

Snail: A spiral isn't always a strong physical shape. It can also be a combination of colors or contrast.

Staircase: Over millennia, all forms of art have used the spiral shape, this is especially true in architecture. If you're having trouble spotting spirals, go visit various buildings.

Rope: Don't be afraid to create your own spiral. The shape itself can create the subject of your image. Working with spirals includes spotting them and making them.

Contrails: This is the type of spiral that could be easily overlooked. But when spotted, the spiral on its own provides enough visual interest to become the subject!

Light and Rocks: Creating spirals in light painting is an easy way to begin in that genre. Simply tie a flashlight to a rope. Wait for dusk. Turn the flashlight on. Set up a long exposure using a tripod. Walk through the scene while twirling the flashlight in a circle.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

Organize three photo shoots.

- **First photo shoot:** find a spiral in nature and photograph it in a pleasing composition.
- **Second photo shoot:** create a spiral shot from a found object (think of the spiral staircase).
- **Third photo shoot:** Shoot a photo, where you create the spiral (think of the rope photo and light and rocks).

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you find and photograph spirals in nature? Did you create an interesting spiral shot, such as the rope?
- Do you now understand the importance of the spiral in photography and art?

Total time:
3-8 hours



CREATING CATCHY IMAGES WITH SPOT COLOR



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Skill Points:

- Identifying spot colors within a scene
- Using spot color within a composition
- Creating a spot color situation
- Experimenting with different spot colors in a color scheme

Our brain is trained to spot, and identify, colors. We tend to assign certain mental and physical reactions to color. By placing an isolated color within a broader scene- a viewer cannot help but look at it, and evaluate it. The art term for this tool of composition is called 'Spot Color'.

KEY LESSON: Certain colors are considered 'power colors' when evaluating their visual weight. Two of the most common power colors are red and yellow. Any color, however, will make a suitable 'spot color' if it stands out from every other color within the image area. Even power colors can be subdued by another color, based upon the composition.



Ladybug: You can find 'spot color' in nature all around you. The color of the ladybug warns predators that it doesn't taste good. It's a warning. When the bug is in its natural environment, such as grass, it stands out.

Hands & Candy: Can 'spot color' be useful when a scene is filled with all kinds of colors? Absolutely! The key is that one color needs to be dominant. In this shot, yellow is the dominant color. The photographer used this power color to draw the eyes to the hands! Take notice of how many yellow candies there are in the hands, and also how many of the yellow candies frame the hands.

Flowers: Can spot color be used when there is a lack of any other color in the shot? Yes! In fact, this is an area where spot color really shines. If you're new to using spot color, start by setting up a shot similar to this. Experiment with different colors and see which colors work best.

Man & Basket: Which color becomes the spot color? This depends on your overall composition. In this example, the red foliage is the spot color due to its placement in the image. Despite all of that yellow color, the eyes go to the red.

Ferris Wheel: Spot color can also work really well when it is simply surrounded by black or dark tones. This is often utilized in street photography and night scenes.

Girl In Red, Blue, & Black: Spot color has a very graphic quality. Don't be afraid to experiment. This is one of those techniques where you can go wild and still get away with something interesting. Try introducing spot color not only in the shooting phase, but also in the post-production phase.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Shoot a naturally found spot color subject that includes only one other color (think of Ladybug and Ferris Wheel).
- 2- Create a still life shot with a spot color and making the rest of the frame neutral (think of Flowers).
- 3- Shoot a spot color scene with many other bright colors (think of Hands & Candy and Man & Basket).
- 4- Create a very graphic and somewhat abstract spot color shot (think of Girl In Red, Blue, & Black).

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you successfully photograph spot color in a natural environment?
- Were you able to create an eye catching still life using a spot color and a neutral background? Which colors worked best?
- Did you create a multi-color shot where the spot color stood out AND enhanced the visual weight of the subject? Were you able to create a highly graphic shot that attracts visual interest?

Total time:
3-5 hours



Skill Points:

- Recognizing symmetry
- Recognizing balance
- Recognizing asymmetrical imbalance

THE BEAUTY OF SYMMETRY & BALANCE



Symmetry is when the elements within a photograph balance each other out. This aesthetic balance is achieved as parts of a composition are arranged from a real or imaginary line drawn in the middle of the photo. Radial symmetry is created from a central point within the frame - that then radiates balance outward equally in all directions.

KEY LESSON: Symmetry can create a mood such as a sense of 'calmness'. It can also be quite 'visually graphic'. A symmetrical photo mirrors itself from one side to the other. Balance is tricky, as it encompasses more than just symmetry. Asymmetrical images can display symmetry, but also include an imbalance through visual weight.



Woman on Road: This is a classic symmetrical image - where one side of the image mirrors the other side. Both sides have equal visual weight. The imaginary line here is vertical, and it is placed right in the middle of the woman.

Avocado: This is an example of radial symmetry. The symmetry radiates from a central point outward.



Foliage: This image has balance. However, it does not have symmetry. The balance is created through the composition. There are two distinct 'parts' to the photo, but neither commands attention over the other. They are balanced visually, but they are not symmetrical.

Two Staircases: This image presents a symmetrical scene that mirrors the left and right side. The line is physical and quite easy to see. However, this image does not have balance. This is an example of asymmetrical imbalance. The teal color on the right side adds visual weight, thus creating the imbalance.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Organize a photo shoot using content similar to the example photos.
- 2- In your photographs complete the following:
 - Create symmetry & balance (think of the girl on the road)
 - Create asymmetrical imbalance (think of the staircases)
 - Create balance without symmetry (think of the foliage)
 - Create radial symmetry (think of the avocado)
- 3- Print out your photos and study your results

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Were you able to create the assigned types of symmetry & balance?
- Did you remember to observe the entire composition and not become too focused on just the symmetry or balance?
- Did you create an image that displayed balance without symmetry?

Total time:
3-5 hours



Skill Points:

- Evaluating a photographic situation to reveal texture
- Creating a photographic situation to reveal texture
- Recognizing when texture is NOT being revealed

HOW TO CONVEY TEXTURE



Texture is a tactile function of the mind. In photography, we attempt to visually convey a message of tactile function.

We want someone to feel a texture in their mind, as they examine our photos. This is referred to as 'implied texture'. The success of your photographic art is improved - when you touch as many of the human senses as possible.

KEY LESSON: There are six elements in the creation of a photograph that can help visually depict texture. They are light, shadow, highlights, direction of light, angle of light, and intensity of light.



Foliage: This photo does not reveal texture. Light and shadow are required to reveal texture. The photographer didn't transfer the experience visually. This photo actually uses repetition of shape rather than displaying texture.

Paper Cardboard: This is flat paper cardboard paper. How can it reveal texture? Light, shadow, and the angle of the light, clearly show the texture of each piece of paper. It also reveals texture in that the paper is stacked.

Mountains: When light skims across a physically textured surface, it creates highlights and shadows. The human brain interprets these highlights and shadows as texture.

Dog: The direction, angle, and intensity of the light source plays a huge role in the depiction of texture. This photograph has tons of texture. However, this is not transmitted very well visually, due to the lighting. Sometimes, the mind can fill in the blanks. Certain genres of photography require an excellent depiction of texture, such as food. In these cases, the lighting is essential.

Water Drops: This photo has backlight to convey texture. The dog photo had soft, low intensity, diffused light. This photo has hard direct light. The harder and more direct the light source- the better it depicts texture.

Painting: Evaluating texture is a skill. If you were to remove the knife, it might be difficult to evaluate if texture was being revealed. The shadow from the knife clearly indicates the light direction, angle, and intensity. If you're unsure, put an object into your scene and see where the shadow falls. The longer the shadow - the better the lighting will depict texture.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Organize a photo shoot where you look for organic texture, and then use the lighting to capture the texture in your photos. (Think of foliage, mountains, dog, and water drops.)
- 2- Organize a shooting area in your home. Pick three objects. Select one that has some texture, one that has deep texture, and one that is in-between. Photograph using a household lamp as the light source. Vary the angle, direction, and intensity of the light to see how it affects the visual depiction of texture. (Think of paper cardboard, painting, water drops.)
 - Be conscious of your camera settings to get sharp results
 - Use a tripod if necessary

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you discover how light direction, angle, and intensity changed the revelation of texture in a photograph?
- Were you able to identify texture in Action Assignment #1 and transfer your tactile experience to your photos? Ask others if they sense the texture.
- Do you now understand the difference between repetition of shape and the revelation of texture in a photograph?

Total time:
5-7 hours



UNDERSTANDING TONE CONTRAST



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Skill Points:

- Learning to handle tone contrast technically and aesthetically
- Using tone contrast to direct a composition
- Using tone contrast to set up a mood

Tone defines the lightness or darkness of a color. In B&W photography the color is gray. In color imaging it can be any color. White and black are the extreme ends that define tone. **Tone contrast** is the difference between the lightest and darkest tone in an image. Tone contrast is completely different than color contrast.

KEY LESSON: The human eye is attracted to areas of contrast (where light and dark tones meet). The greater this contrast, the more likely that the eye will go there first. Control over tone contrast is an essential skill for a photographer. Tone contrast can be used to set a mood.



Chair on Black: When tone contrast is set to the extreme, it becomes visually graphic. This can help you to create memorable photographs, especially in the areas of still life, portrait, and abstract.

Spinning Tower: High tone contrast color imaging is also effective. Why is this a high tone contrast image? It has a very bright tone, a very dark tone, and very few tones in-between. Tone contrast is a separate deal than image brightness or color contrast. These 3 are often confused.

Girl & Glasses: In the example of the chair, tone contrast created the subject. In this example, tone contrast between the woman's skin and her sunglasses form a frame that is used to push the viewer toward her eye - the subject. What's the cup and straw? They are a leading line!

Pink Girl: Low tone contrast can also be used to set a mood. What does low tone contrast mean? There is very little difference between the lightest tone and the darkest tone.

Girl in Shadows: This is a 'lower' tone contrast photograph. It's not as low as the 'Pink Girl'. The blacks aren't complete black and the whites aren't complete white. The tone contrast scale has been minimized. Take notice that this example falls more into the dark tone end of the full tone scale. Low tone contrast can occur anywhere on the scale of tones.

Man & Staircase: This is a 'high' tone contrast image. It's high, because it displays an extreme from the light end to the dark end with little tones in-between. What if there were a full range of tones displayed between light and dark? That is referred to as a 'full' tone contrast image.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Organize a photo shoot where you use high tone contrast to create an abstract image in color and B&W. (Think of chair on black & spinning tower.)
- 2- Organize a photo shoot where you use tone contrast to direct a viewer's eyes toward the subject. Complete this Action Assignment in color and B&W. Do one version in high tone contrast and the other in low tone contrast. (Think of pink girl and girl & glasses.)
- 3- Organize a photo shoot where your objective is to use tone contrast to set a mood.
- 4- Remember: Most photos require at least 3 tools of composition to be effective. Don't get bogged down and only use one.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you capture low tone contrast and high tone contrast images? Verify those results with a Histogram. (See Histogram Action Card.)
- How well does your use of tone contrast properly direct a viewer's eyes from Action Assignment #2?
- Did you effectively create a mood with tone contrast? Did you use tone contrast in conjunction with at least 2 other composition tools?

Total time:
5-7 hours



Difficulty Level:
Beginner to intermediate

Skill Points:

- Recognizing the importance of shape in a photograph
- Identifying shapes and using them in a composition
- Using shape to affect the visual balance of a photograph

USING SHAPE YOUR SECRET WEAPON



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Shape is one of the 7 elements of art, it is defined as a 2-dimensional area with a closed outline. Shapes are flat, and can only have height and width; there is no depth. There are two different types of shapes: geometric (precise, regular, and typically manmade) and organic (found in nature).

KEY LESSON: Shapes play an important role in photography. They heavily affect composition, and even the smallest shape can tip the balance of visual weight in a photograph. What makes a shape powerful is what is known as feature recognition: **We evaluate everything that we see by shape.**

Woman on Road: This is a classic use of shape in a photograph. This woman fills a small percentage of the total image area. Yet, because of her shape, she dominates the entire frame. Silhouettes rely on shape to be successful.

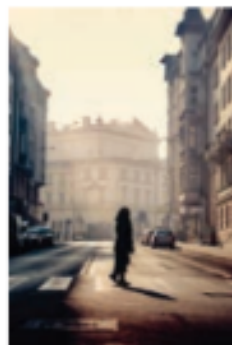
Winter Scenic: Careful composition of shapes can alter the balance of a photo. The triangular roof is a strong shape. It provides the entrance to the photograph. However, the shapes beyond it are stronger, and lead us past it. The repetition of triangular shape in the background helps to enforce this. Even more so, the dark color value, and contrast, in the shape of the people- cements their visual weight as the subject.

Couple: We are programmed to see shape first. You can use that to create interest. The shape of this man's hair creates immediate interest. Try to imagine his hair lying equally on both sides of the head in a more traditional haircut. The drama is gone. This is an organic shape.

Arm & Tattoo: The quirky use of shape can add visual interest to a photo. It can also be a lot of fun. When you begin to 'see in shapes' - an entirely new world of photography will open up to you.

Potter: Even common subjects can take on stronger visual meaning - if you utilize their shape.

Building: Shape is a fundamental design consideration. There are interesting shapes everywhere, including architecture. You just have to look for them! This is an example of geometric shape.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Organize a photo shoot and use shape as the subject. Experiment with different ways to accomplish that. Try a silhouette, but also try other options (Think of woman on road & winter scenic).
- 2- Plan and execute a photo shoot where some part of the human anatomy provides a key shape to the composition. It could be a supporting element (think of couple), or it could be the subject (think of arm & tattoo). Share your results with the subject of your photo.
- 3- Go on a photo shoot and look for interesting shapes to use in a set of photographs. Try to locate at least six different photo opportunities using shape (Think of potter & building.)

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you utilize a shape as the subject in a unique way?
- Did you observe the entire composition and not become too focused on just the shape?
- Did you create an interesting image using a body part as a shape? What did your subject think of your results?

Total time:
8-10 hours



THE IMPORTANCE OF MASS AND EYE MOVEMENT



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Skill Points:

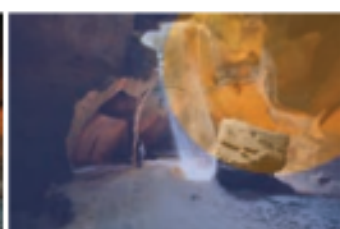
- Discovering how mass placement affects viewer eye movement & interaction
- Learning about eye movement through a picture and why
- Practicing the use of conscious mass placement

Composition is a complex subject, which encompasses art and science. All art composition, including photography, boils down to the human reaction to outside stimuli. In the case of photography, it's visual stimuli. *Mass & Eye Movement* is also referred to as *Visual Weight & Direction*.

KEY LESSON: The following are accepted norms of mass and eye movement. Placing an object on the Rule of Thirds grid does not guarantee attention. Viewers don't follow the exact same path through an image while viewing it, they are not passive, but confront an image actively; composition does not control - it influences.



Mass Placement Maps: Above are six art composition mass placement maps. These are common base configurations for art composition.



Woman in Cave

Left: Most successful photographic compositions need at least three tools of composition, in addition to the "Mass Placement Map", to be successful. The map is a foundation. Looking at the 6 examples above, can you identify which map was used here?

Right: The map is shown as an overlay, on the photo. What is the subject of the photo? Given the map, and the additional composition elements, the woman is the subject. The rock to the right is a focal point. The streaming rays of light and path in the sand, leading up to the woman, are leading lines. The rock formation to the left is a frame.

Boy Recording

Left: This one is a little more difficult. What "Mass and Eye Movement" map was used here?

Right: Take notice that this map has been flipped vertically and horizontally. Mass and Eye Movement maps work equally well in any orientation. However, it is the placement of objects within the map that make it work, or not work.



What Mass & Eye Movement map is at work here?
It's the triangle.



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Organize some photo shoots where you specifically use each of the six Mass & Eye Movement maps on this Action Card. Subject matter is open.
- 2- Don't forget that the map is simply the beginning. You must plan at least three other tools or rules of composition to be successful in your efforts.
- 3- With practice, the maps will become secondary, and you won't even think about them anymore. They'll just happen.
- 4- Print out your results, and view them as a group.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you incorporate other tools of composition to complete the photographs?
- Do you feel that using Mass Maps strengthened your shots?



ACTION CARDS (GENRE SET)

Total time:
6-8 hours



Difficulty Level: Normal

Skill Points:

- Composing to meet client expectations
- Composing with natural light and a set structure
- Creating a personality for an inanimate object

CREATING ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY



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Architectural photography can take many forms. If the shot is being created for the architect, they will want the photo to illustrate their vision of the building, and for the structure to look architecturally sound (no weird angles). Interiors can be particularly difficult.

KEY LESSON: For an architect- do not bend vertical lines and study how the building makes use of natural light and artificial light. A great time to shoot architecture is right after dusk- when the natural lighting balances in intensity to the artificial lighting. Look for key details and try to highlight them.

EQUIPMENT

- **Camera**
Any camera (depending on end use)
- **Any lens + lens hood:**
A wide angle to normal (tilt-shift is a plus)
- **Filter (optional):**
Polarizing and graduated ND filters
- **Tripod + Shutter release:** Highly suggested
- **Post-production software:** Highly suggested



TIPS! These settings can vary widely. This is a starting point.

Shooting Mode	M or A/Av	Metering mode	Evaluative / Matrix
ISO	400	Focus mode	Single shot
Aperture	f/8 - f/16	Format	RAW
Drive Mode	Single shot	White balance	AWB AUTO

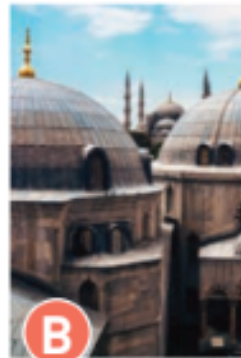
Shutter Speed As needed (Use a tripod if necessary)

Post-process to correct for converging lines to gain experience

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



A



B



C



D



E



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

1- Study the sample photographs:

- A- This is a classic 'clinical' architectural photo. There is no distortion. If your equipment cannot correct for converging line distortion up close- shooting from a distance can be an alternative.
 - B- To display an architectural era, scout for a shooting location that shows more than one building. Put interesting details in the foreground and use juxtaposition to place an overall view in the background.
 - C- Architecture photography as art is an easier way to get started. Scout your intended subject. Look for interesting shapes and angles at different times of the day.
 - D- The trick to architectural interiors is balancing interior and exterior exposure. Shoot camera raw /expose for shadows. Don't forget composition.
 - E- A sunset, or sunrise, will often provide the most dramatic lighting. Bring a flashlight. With extended exposures, you'll need a tripod and a remote shutter release. Notice the converging lines due to focal length, camera position, and an upward angle.
- 2- Set aside one full day to explore architectural photography: Begin the 1st half of your shoot by trying to create 'clinical' architecture shots. For the 2nd half of your shoot, create artistic architecture shots.
- 3- Explore your chosen subjects carefully: study **space, shape, color, light**, and the **architect's intent**.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Does your shot have a pleasing composition? Did you study, and highlight, the architect's intent for design?
- Did you use juxtaposition and find interesting details? Does your shot have pleasing light?

Total time:
2-4 hours



Difficulty Level: Very
challenging

Skill Points:

- Creating composition that invokes thought
- Using simple elements to convey a message
- Willingness to break rules

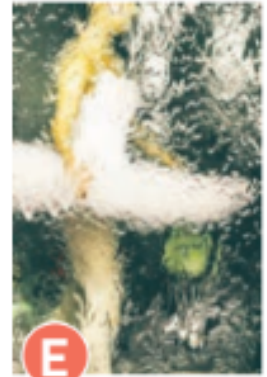
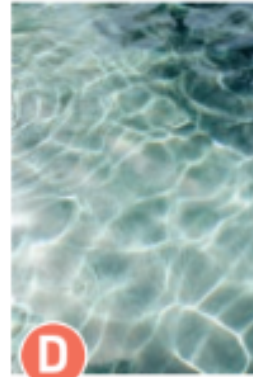
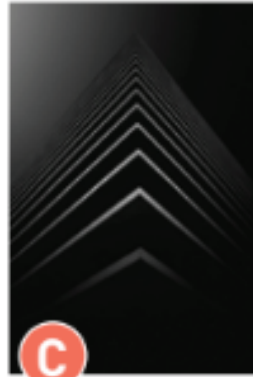
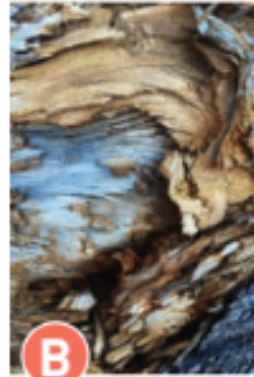
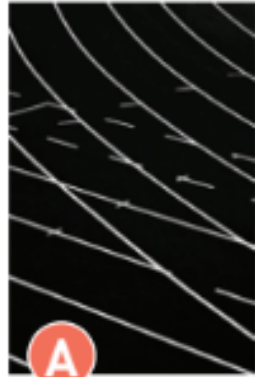
CREATING ARTISTIC ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHS



By definition, abstract artwork is: art that does not attempt to represent external reality, but seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, forms, lines, colors, and textures.

KEY LESSON: To create abstract photography, you need to adjust your thinking. Don't look at the world around you in its physical form. Imagine that you see it through blurry eyeglasses. You want to only see shapes, colors, lines, forms, and textures. Now, you must compose a meaningful shot, from that blurry vision, that a viewer will recognize with some effort.

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



EQUIPMENT **Camera:** Any DSLR, mirrorless, hybrid, compact or smartphone
Lens + Lens hood: Any lens (manual focusing is a benefit)



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Study the sample photographs.
 - A- By eliminating details, and framing something simple -the photo becomes abstract- but still recognizable
 - B- Look past the obvious, to 'see' details that tell a smaller story about a bigger picture.
 - C- Shoot design elements in-camera, and use post-production to add abstraction to the resulting photo.
 - D- Abstract photography often depicts a familiar subject in an unfamiliar way.
 - E- There is a difference between abstract and 'semi-abstract' artwork. This image borders on being more semi-abstract.
- 2- Self-assign two shots
 - #1 For the first shot- pick an object and set about creating an abstract photo of the object (think of the tree bark or the water examples).
 - #2 For the second shot- go on a photo shoot and 'find' a subject that you will photograph in an abstract manner (think of the running track or the building examples).
- 3- Explore your chosen subjects carefully and from all angles.
- 4- Setup your camera: Due to the creative nature of abstract photography, there are no set rules on how to set up your camera.
- 5- The key to this Action Assignment is to change your visual perception of objects that you photograph.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Does your shot have a pleasing composition? Do viewers need to contemplate what they are looking?
- Can a viewer ultimately discern what they are looking at?
- Does your shot generate visual excitement?
- Did you simplify to the basic elements of shapes, forms, lines, colors, and textures?

Total time:
2-4 hours



Difficulty Level: Normal

Skill Points:

- Composition with limited POV (point of view)
- Patience & learning bird behavior
- Creating sharp photos with a moving subject

GETTING STARTED IN BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY



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Bird photography is fun and personally rewarding. Equipment can be a factor in your quest for great bird photographs.

However, some of that can be overcome with a little knowledge on bird behavior, as well as putting in some effort doing research.

KEY LESSON: Distance can be an obstacle. A super telephoto lens resolves that problem. You can invest in a 200mm lens, and couple it with a less expensive teleconverter for good results. Learn the birds in your area and set up feeders near a window inside your home. Try to find an area that receives good light in the morning and/or in the evening.

EQUIPMENT

- Camera

DSLR, mirrorless, or compact camera

- Any lens + lens hood

Min. moderate telephoto: 200mm

- Tripod

Necessary with super telephoto lenses

- Flash (optional as a fill light)



TIPS!

These settings can vary widely. This is a starting point.

Shooting Mode	S/Tv	Metering mode	Center-weighted
Shutter Speed	1/1000th or faster	Focus mode	Continuous
Aperture	at least f/5.6	Format	RAW + JPG
Drive Mode	high speed burst	White balance	AWB AUTO
ISO	800 and adjust as needed to facilitate shutter speed		
Focus Points	Center grouping		

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



A



B



C



D



E



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

1- Study the sample photographs:

A- Without a telephoto lens you will not capture the intricacies of the bird's feathers & face. Use a 200mm lens or longer. Consider using a teleconverter.

B- A 200mm lens with a 2x teleconverter creates a dramatic closeup and eliminates unnecessary background.

C- Once you're able to capture a close shot, look for interesting plumage, lighting, and shape.

D- Midday light is generally not flattering for bird photography. Try to shoot early or late in the day. Look for a background that color contrasts with the bird for better separation.

E- Try to set up your feeders in a position that will place the bird looking toward the camera or perpendicular to the camera- not away from the camera.

2- Assign a shooting location: Many park reserves have established blinds for photographers- check your area. Or, begin at the zoo. Use the zoo setting to get used to the long telephoto lens. At the same time, research and set up your bird feeding area outside your home.

3- Begin by practicing on capturing the bird sharply in focus and with the face visible. Study the sample photos.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Is the image sharp and free of camera shake?
- Can you see the bird's feathers & colors?
- Did you compose using the bird's shape, and/or background contrast?

Total time:
2 - 4 hours



Difficulty Level: Easy

Skill Points:

- Choosing proper B&W subjects
- Identifying tone value in a scene
- Composing with light, shadow, shape, and texture
- Proper exposure

GETTING STARTED IN BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY



Black & white photography requires two skills to get started. The first is learning to 'see' a great black and white subject. The second is converting the color file to black & white (if you're not shooting film).

KEY LESSON: Black & white photography is reliant on tone, as there are no color contrasts. Look for subject with strong light and dark values. It's also helpful to seek subjects with texture and strong shapes. When converting a digital color file to B&W - try to use a method that converts each color channel separately.

EQUIPMENT

Camera

Any camera

Lens + Lens hood

Any lens

Post-processing software

Mobile or desktop

Black & white viewing filter

Optional but highly recommended

Camera functions are less important here. Use the settings that you are comfortable with.

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

1- Study the sample photographs:

- 1- The best subjects for B&W photography have a bright white, a deep black, and a full range of tone in-between. An inexpensive B&W viewing filter will teach you to see in 'tone' versus color.
 - 2- Great subjects for B&W photography will often display strong shapes and texture.
 - 3- Vastly different 'colors' can convert to 'very similar' tones. When converting to B&W try to separate the tonal values of different color channels.
 - 4- If the 'color value' of a scene isn't particularly interesting- look to B&W as an alternative - if the scene displays separated tone values, texture, and/or strong shadows.
 - 5- Learning to judge contrast is an important part of B&W photography. A higher contrast photograph, such as the hands, creates a different mood than a soft contrast image of the same subject.
- 2- Great black & white subjects are everywhere. Look for strong light and shadow. It's also helpful if the lighting highlights texture. Judge the subject looking for tone and ignoring color value. I.e. blue and red may produce the same tone. However, a deep dark blue will have a different tone than a bright light red.
- 3- Begin by looking for subjects that meet the criteria discussed above. Setup your camera.
- 4- Post-process the color files into B&W images. Experiment with converting the different color channels separately.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Does your image display good tonal range?
- Do you have strong light and shadow?
- Did you make use of texture?
- Is your contrast appropriate to the subject?

Total time:
1-3 hours



Difficulty Level:
Easy / Normal

Skill Points:

- Portrait lighting of multiple people
- Creating intimate portraits
- Capturing great expressions on multiple subjects

CREATING PORTRAITS OF COUPLES

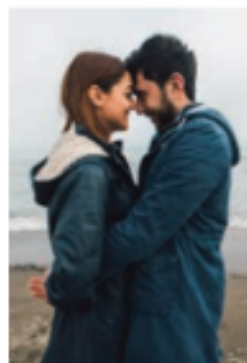
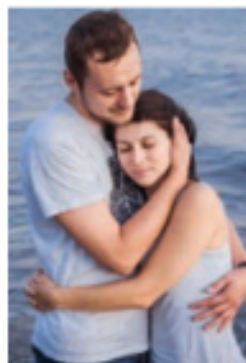


PHOTZY.COM

Couple portraiture is often completed in one of two ways. The couple is looking at the camera (most often used for announcements or as a gift) The second version is looking at each other, or involved in some activity, (they would likely hang this in their home).

KEY LESSON: It's important to depict the loving relationship. Watch them as you create their portraits and pose them. Do they look comfortable? Does their body language indicate that they are comfortable? If not, change immediately.

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



EQUIPMENT

- Camera

Any DSLR, mirrorless, hybrid, or compact camera

- Any lens + lens hood

from a normal view to a 135mm telephoto

- Lighting

Indoor: Window or doorway

Outdoors: Natural light, Golden Hour or shade

- Clothing & Props



TIPS!

Shooting Mode **A / Av**

White balance **AWB** **AUTO**

Drive Mode Single shot

Format **RAW** Additional .jpeg -optional-

Focus Mode **AF-S**

Metering Center weighted

Shutter Speed **1/125th to 1/500th**

Focus Points Center grouping

ISO **400** adjust to facilitate shutter speed (minimum 125th)

Aperture **f/5.6 - f/8** -watch the depth of field-



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Set up a portrait session with a couple for indoor and outdoors. Use clean backgrounds with a neutral or solitary color.
- 2- **Indoor:** Use a large window or patio door. Use reflectors as necessary. Position the couple to create different types of lighting across their two faces. Make the lighting cohesive with the pose.
Outdoors: Shoot during the Golden Hour. Study the sample pictures. Try a variety of poses. Go no wider than 1/2 body length. Focus on expression, touch, and posing. Carefully pose the hands.
- 3- Setup your camera following the tips and adjust as needed.
- 4- Try different poses. Experiment with shooting at chest level, to eye level, and also shooting down on the couple. Do not shoot up at them. Always watch the hands, hair, and expression.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did your depth of field cover both subjects? Is your image sharp?
- Does your lighting look pleasing on both subjects? Is your color accurate? (Look at the skin)
- Did you capture interesting and loving expressions?
- Do both subjects look comfortable with the pose?

Total time:
1-3 hours



Difficulty Level:
Very challenging

Skill Points:

- Portrait lighting of a group
- Working with different personalities
- Proper posing
- Capturing expressions

CREATING PORTRAITS OF FAMILIES



Family portraiture will be the most difficult to master as you learn. You're dealing with multiple individuals of varying ages. The lighting can be challenging, as well as managing the different personalities. The family may be as small as two people or as large as dozens of people.

KEY LESSON: Avoid backlighting unless it has a muted intensity. Do not "line up" subjects. Vary the height of the heads. Coordinate clothing to avoid clashing colors and patterns. Have family members touch each other. Avoid hats. Be careful of the depth of field.

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



EQUIPMENT

- Camera

Any DSLR, mirrorless, hybrid, or compact camera or smartphone

- Lens + lens hood

Larger Groups -> 18mm - 28mm
Smaller groups-> 28mm - 135mm

- Tripod & Shutter Release

- Clothing & Props

Similar colors and no distinct patterns



TIPS!

Shooting Mode **A / Av**

White balance **AWB** **AUTO**

Drive Mode Single shot

Format **RAW + JPG**

Focus Mode **AF-S**

Metering Evaluative / matrix

Shutter Speed **1/125th or faster**

Focus Points All focus points

ISO **400** adjust to facilitate shutter speed (minimum 125th)

Aperture **f/8 - f/11** Small groups **f/16** Larger groups



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Start with a small family- no more than four. Set up a portrait session outdoors and select a clean background with a neutral or solitary color.
- 2- Shoot during the Golden Hour. Be conscious of the light intensity in the eyes of the subjects. Use backlight only if low intensity such as a light overcast sky.
- 3- Mount your camera onto the tripod. Look over the camera when shooting the pictures to engage the group. Keep heads tilted toward each other, and have family members touching.
- 4- Setup your camera following the tips.
- 5- Study sample photographs.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did your depth of field cover the entire group?
- Is your image sharp and free of camera shake?
- Did you capture interesting expressions on everyone?
- Is everyone's eyes open?
- Did you use soft even lighting?
- Is your color accurate? (Look at the skin)
- Did you pose with varying head heights?

Total time:
2-4 hours



Difficulty Level:
Easy / Normal

Skill Points:

- Composing with food
- Using backlighting and front fill light
- Working with depth of field
- Creating appropriate color balance

CREATING MOUTHWATERING FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTZY.COM

You can create awesome food photography with a smartphone and some editing software. However, there are some key considerations. The food needs to appear delicious. Color balance, lighting, and the food's appearance of freshness is extremely important.

KEY LESSON: Food appears best when the main light comes from the rear (backlighting). However, sometimes, you will want to use some fill lighting into the front areas. Don't let the food dry out. Set up camera and lighting first. Then prepare the food. Photograph the food while it is moist. Always color correct.

EQUIPMENT

- Camera

Any camera including a smartphone

- Lens

Any close focusing lens

- Bounce Cards

To create front fill light

- Kitchen items props

- Filters

Close focusing filters allow a lens to focus closer (Optional)

- Tripod and lens hood (Optional)



TIPS!

Shooting Mode **A / Av**

Aperture **f/5.6 to f/16**

Drive Mode Single shot

White balance **AWB** **AUTO**

Focus Mode **AF-S**

ISO **800** adjust to facilitate shutter speed

Shutter Speed **1/180th** at least

Metering Matrix/Evaluative

Focus Points



Close ups

Format Shoot in **RAW** & correct color in post

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



A



B



C



D



E



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

1- Study the sample photographs:

A- A simple composition, with props, helps in the creation of a delicious looking food photo.

B- Backlighting, or side lighting, is essential, because it shows texture.

C- Foods that display strong color values will confuse the camera white balance. Shoot in camera raw and carefully adjust color balance in post.

D- When shooting down onto the food, depth of field is less a consideration than layout and composition. In this case, side lighting replaces backlighting.

E- Depth of field is important when shooting directly at food. Use it to guide the viewer's eyes. Backlight the scene, and provide a lot of fill light to the front.

2- Backlight your 'set' with window light. Use bounce cards for front fill light. Three priorities: backlight or side light, pleasing color, fresh looking food!

3- Select the food carefully. Look for flaws. Create a composition.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you properly place the focus for the composition? Is your image sharp and free of camera shake?
- Is the color balance pleasing and does the food look appetizing? Does the food appear fresh - or dried out?

READY! SET! GO! ACTION CARDS - GENRE: FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

Total time:
8 hours



Difficulty Level: Very
challenging

Skill Points:

- Exposing for a predominance of light tones
- Conveying a message through tonal selection
- Proper post-production

CREATING BEAUTIFULLY EXECUTED HIGH KEY PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTZY.COM

High key is a stylistic genre, where the subject is reproduced primarily as white or light colors or tones. This style can be discovered, or created through lighting, props, wardrobe, and post-production techniques. A correctly executed high key image will also have a small area of 'black' to create a full contrast artwork.

KEY LESSON: High key photography is often misunderstood. It is **NOT** an overexposed image, or one in which all of the dark areas have been removed, or altered, in post-production. A high key image begins in-camera. It requires proper exposure, and a keen photographer's eye toward light, shadow, and tone.

EQUIPMENT

Camera

Any camera including a smartphone camera

Lens + Lens hood

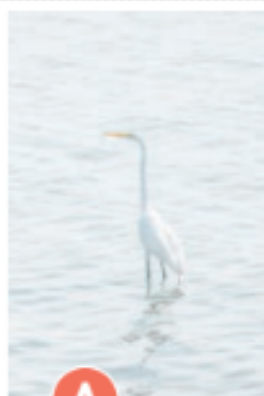
Any lens

Post-processing software

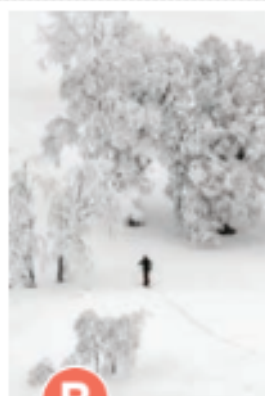
Necessary

There are no set rules on how to set up your camera. Be cognizant of exposure. If possible, check the histogram to make sure that the vast majority of tones are falling into the upper third of the scale.

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



A



B



C



D



E



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

1- Study the sample photographs:

A- Let's start with what high key isn't... This image is simply over-exposed. Over-exposure created in-camera, or in post-production, does not create a true high key effect.

B- This is an exquisitely 'spotted', exposed, and processed high key shot. It consists of primarily white or light tones along with small areas of black to produce a full contrast effect.

C- High key does not mean simply white with some areas of black. It can include various colors. However, they should be light toned and fall into the upper third of the histogram.

D- A properly executed high key image will have at least 75% of the image surface area in the white or light toned area of the histogram.

E- Post-production can be used to enhance the high key effect by increasing the brightness value of some middle tones. Be careful. If you go too far, your high key image will look faked. This is a good example of post-production helping the final effect.

2- Self-assign two high key shots: For the first one you will assemble your subject by choosing the subject, props, clothing, location, etc. Keep all chosen tones in the upper third of the histogram. Use the appropriate lighting to create the high key effect. For the second shot, you must go out on-location and 'find' a high key subject. This may require you returning to your chosen subject to 'get the right light' for the high key effect.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Does your shot have a majority of white or light tones with a small area of black?
- Were you able to primarily create the effect in-camera or did you have to rely heavily on post-production?

Total time:
4 hours



Difficulty Level: Very easy

Skill Points:

- Basic composition
- Spotting problems: crooked horizon, trashcans
- Finding interesting light
- Creating sharp photos

CREATING JAW-DROPPING LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY



Landscape photography allows you time to think through your process before clicking the shutter. In order to instill 'visual excitement', and a 'story', into landscape imaging, you have two primary tools: composition and light.

KEY LESSON: Create your landscape images within 2 hours of sunrise or sunset. Watch out for manmade objects that will ruin the composition and mood. Focus on these tools of composition: leading lines, layering, focal point, and juxtaposition with an object of known size. Also, look for motion and reflections.

EQUIPMENT

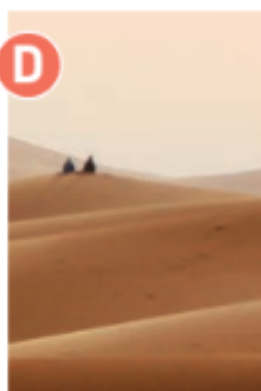
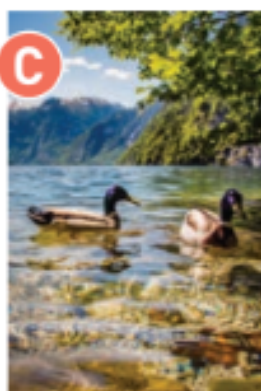
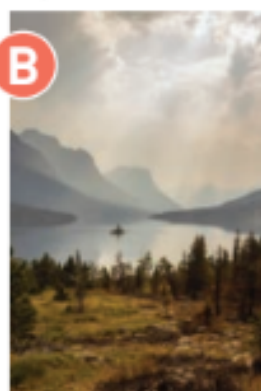
- **Camera**
Any camera including a smartphone
- **Lens + Lens Hood**
Any lens, but typically you want a wide-angle to a moderate telephoto
- **Tripod** Optional (but highly suggested)
- **App software Photo Pills**
- **Notepad** Take notes and be sure to record location Metadata on the camera



TIPS!

Shooting Mode	M or A / Av	Drive Mode	Single shot
Shutter Speed	1/60th or faster for wide-angle to normal lenses 1/200th or faster for moderate telephoto lenses		
Aperture	f/5.6 - f/16 depending on desired depth of field		
White balance	AWB AUTO	Format	RAW JPG optional
Metering	Matrix / Evaluative		
Focus points	All focus points		
ISO	200 (and adjust to facilitate shutter speed)		

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Study the sample photographs:
 - A- Watch out for manmade objects that destroy the composition (see red arrow).
 - B- Layering is a powerful tool to indicate depth perception.
 - C- Reflections increase interest, objects of a known size create depth perception.
 - D- A focal point can help lead the eyes into the shot. It can also add story and mood.
 - E- Motion can add visual excitement to a static shot.
- 2- Self-assign a landscape location that you can return to.
- 3- Study your location for the recommended composition tips and setup your camera. Recommended: Use a tripod and include an object of known size.
- 4- Visit your location more than once. Use the Photo Pills app to help you predict where the Sun will be when you return.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you properly place the focus for the composition?
- Did you compose using the tools in the Key Lesson?
- Is your image sharp and free of camera shake?
- Does your image convey the location with beauty & story?

Total time:
2-4 hours



Difficulty Level: Challenging

Skill Points:

- Composition with limited point of view
- Spotting problems: crooked horizon, trash cans, etc.
- Balancing exposure between the sky and foreground

CREATING ROMANTIC LIGHTHOUSE PHOTOGRAPHS



PHOTZY.COM

KEY LESSON: Shoot as close to sunrise or sunset as you can. Your best angle of view will likely be some distance away. Bring a flashlight. Find a vantage point where the lighthouse is juxtaposed against the landscape, the water, or both. Time your shot to the moments when the exposure for the sky is close to the exposure for the lighthouse.

EQUIPMENT

- **Camera:** Any camera including a smartphone
- **Lens + Lens Hood:** Any lens, but typically you want a wide-angle to a moderate telephoto
- **Filters (Optional):** Graduated ND and/or a polarizing filter
- **Tripod:** with a sturdy head and a wired or wireless shutter release for long exposures
- **App software Photo Pills**
- **Notepad** Take notes and be sure to record location Metadata on the camera



TIPS!

Shooting Mode **M** or **A / Av**

Shutter Speed **1/60th** + wide-angle to normal lenses
1/200th + moderate telephoto lenses

Aperture **f/2.8 - f/11** depending on desired depth of field

ISO **200** and adjust to facilitate shutter speed

Metering **Matrix / Evaluative**

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



A



B



C



D



E



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Study the sample photographs:
 - A- Shoot early or late in the day. Include foreground objects to show depth perception and to add interest.
 - B- Using a silhouette of the structure can be quite dramatic once the light levels get very low.
 - C- If the natural lighting does not introduce color, you can create it in post-production. Experiment with motion blur of the water.
 - D- Strive to be shooting when the light levels of the sky match the light levels on the lighthouse for a balanced exposure.
 - E- Use foreground objects to create composition and then add interest with the lighthouse in the distance.
 - 2- Self-assign a lighthouse location (if possible- pick one that you can return to often).
 - 3- Set your shoot time for 1 hour before sunset, and plan on shooting up to 1.5 hours after sunset.
 - 4- Study your location for the recommended composition tips and camera POV and setup your camera.
 - 5- Visit your location more than once if possible. Use the Photo Pills app to help you predict where the sunset will occur in relation to the lighthouse and your potential camera position.
- * **Tip:** Experiment with blurred motion and watch out for camera blur due to the wind.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Is the lighthouse sharp and free of camera shake?
- Did you compose using the sample pictures for ideas?
- Is the color pleasing? (Doesn't need to be accurate)
- Did you experiment with motion blur in the water while keeping the lighthouse sharp?
- Did you frame the shot tight enough or wide enough?

Total time:
8 hours



CREATING DRAMATIC LOW KEY PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTZY.COM

Difficulty Level: Very
challenging

Skill Points:

- Exposing for a predominance of dark tones
- Conveying a message through tonal selection
- Proper post-production

A low key photograph is reproduced primarily as black or dark hued colors or tones. This style can be organically discovered, or created through lighting, props, wardrobe, and post-production techniques.

KEY LESSON: Low key photography is often misunderstood. It is **NOT** an underexposed image, or one in which all of the light areas have been removed, or altered, in post-production. A low key image begins in-camera. It requires proper exposure, and a keen photographer's eye toward light, shadow, and tone. Study the sample images.

EQUIPMENT

Camera

Any camera including a smartphone camera

Lens + Lens hood

Any lens

Post-processing software

Necessary

There are no set rules on how to set up your camera. Be cognizant of exposure. If possible, check the histogram to make sure that the vast majority of tones are falling into the lower third of the scale.

SAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS



A



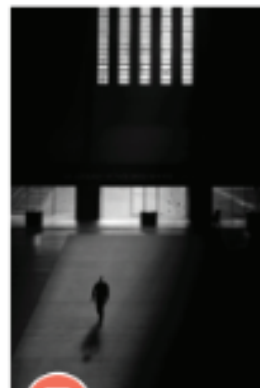
B



C



D



E



ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

1- Study the sample photographs:

- A-** The left side of this image is simply underexposed. The right side is properly exposed. Underexposure created in-camera, or in post-production, does not create a true low key effect.
- B-** This is an exquisitely 'spotted', exposed, and processed low key shot. It consists of primarily black or dark tones along with small areas of bright tones to produce a full contrast effect.
- C-** A properly executed low-key image doesn't necessarily need an absolute white (255 on the histogram). However, the included light tones should be in the upper third of the histogram. The light tones versus dark tones will have a significant impact on the mood of a low key photograph.
- D-** Carefully crafted lighting can help to create a low key image. However, most low key photographs will require some fine-tuning in post-production.
- E-** Post-production can be used to enhance the low key effect by decreasing the brightness values of some middle tones. If you go too far, your high key image will look faked.

2- Self-assign two low key shots: For the first one you will assemble your subject by choosing the subject, props, clothing, location, etc. Keep all chosen tones in the lower third of the histogram. Use the appropriate lighting to create the low key effect. For the second shot, you must go out on-location and 'find' a low key subject. This may require you returning to your chosen subject to 'get the right light' for the low key effect.

HOW DID YOU DO?

- Does your shot have a majority of black or dark tones?
- Were you able to primarily create the effect in-camera or did you have to rely heavily on post-production?