

Inspirations from the Forest

Photography Tips

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Photography is an excellent way to explore nature, document what you see, and then share your discoveries with others. Here are ten suggestions to help guide you in making beautiful and interesting photographs.

1. **See like a camera sees.** Look through the camera to observe the frame and the two-dimensional image; it is different from what your eyes see. Observe the image—what is in it and what is not. Remember that this framed image will be the photograph, not what you see with your eyes.
2. **Get close.** Fill the frame with what is interesting to you, and get rid of what is not. Some cameras or lenses let you get very close to photograph small objects. Closest is often best for nature photography. Turn the camera on its side if the shape of your subject better fits into the vertical rectangle.
3. **Get a new perspective.** Imagine, if I were a mouse, a monkey, or a bird, how would I see the world? Then get down on the ground, or find a high spot to look down from and see the world through new eyes. Changing your perspective results in more creative photographs. Look up under a flower and see a beautiful umbrella of color!
4. **Focus, focus, focus.** Make sure that the most important part of your photograph is in sharp focus. For example, if you are taking a photograph of an animal or a person, look to see the glint in their eyes before you take the photograph.
5. **See the light.** The “photo” in photography means light. Good photographers study the way light plays on the image. Light can be direct and harsh, or indirect and soft; it can be behind the subject or in front of the subject. The color of the light changes in the early morning or late afternoon. These two times of day are often very beautiful because the light becomes warmer and casts long shadows. When light hits the subject from the side, it can help make objects look three-dimensional.
6. **Look at the colors.** Color photographs look better when there is color in them! Color has emotions and beauty all to itself. Usually it is best to select out the most colorful part of your subject and let color be a guide in the development of the image’s composition.
7. **Tell a story.** Think of photographs as verbs, not just as subjects. Make your next photo about something happening, like a bee collecting nectar or the wind blowing across the field. Photographic art can include a series of photographs that show change, such as before and after a snowfall or before and after a fire.
8. **Set the exposure.** Most modern cameras automatically select the proper exposure (the right amount of light) based on the center of the image frame. Sometimes, however, the camera will be fooled, and the part of the image you think is important may be too dark or too light. This happens most often when the part of the image you like best is not in the center, or when the light is coming from behind the subject. If you can adjust the exposure manually, briefly point your camera at the most important part of the photograph; then use this reading to set the exposure.
9. **Hold the camera steady.** When you zoom in closer, or take pictures in low light, it is easy to lose focus. This is because the camera needs more light, and to get it, the camera keeps the shutter open longer before snapping the shot. To keep your photographs sharp, steady the camera. Many photographers use a tripod; however, you can place the camera on something sturdy or hold it against a solid object like a tree. Even setting your camera on the ground can greatly improve your photograph.
10. **Play with the camera controls.** Modern cameras are usually automatic. They select the focus, length of exposure, and lens aperture for you. If possible, switch to manual so you can adjust the aperture or shutter speed. By changing these controls, you affect the focus depth of field, which is how much of the picture is in focus, as well as the duration of exposure, which freezes things or lets them move while you are taking the photograph. Camera controls allow you to make interesting effects and put you in greater control of the image. Experiment, and you will find that wonderful photographs await you!