

Jennifer Allman | Session 1:

3 Guidelines For Making Good Photos, Great Photos

List of Required Supplies: A camera (any camera including a phone will work), pen/pencil & paper

Student Time Required: 60 minutes

Step-by-step Instructions:

- Read attached lesson
- Write down the different composition techniques
- Take at least two pictures using each composition technique
- [Use Rubric to grade student's participation](#)

Developing Your Photographer's Eye

- The difference between taking a photo and taking a good photo is knowing what to look for.
- Seeing the world the same as everyone else, yet at the same time, seeing it differently.
- This will take lots of work and practice!
- So to help develop your eye...

3 Guidelines to Use Every Time You Take a Picture

1. A good photograph has a clear **subject** (can also be a theme.) It's about someone or something. It may even tell a story about that subject. But the subject is clear and unambiguous. Whoever looks at the picture immediately sees the subject.
2. A good photograph **focuses attention** on the subject. In other words, the viewer's eye is immediately drawn to the subject.
3. A good photograph **simplifies**. It includes only those elements that draw the eye to the subject, and it excludes or diminishes those elements that might draw the eye away from the subject.



1. Clear Subject

Always start by knowing what you want the subject of your photo to be, and making sure your viewer knows it, too. A really great photo goes a step beyond the good photo. It not only has a clear subject, it also expresses a universal theme. Something that everyone can relate to. This isn't just Alexander, this is all sleeping children. It encompasses a moment in youth.

What is the subject of this photo? What is the theme? What is the universal message I get from this picture? What is happening in this picture that conveys the message?

Before you take a photo, ALWAYS ask yourself, "What is the subject – the theme – that I want this picture to be about?"

2. Focusing Attention

Usually to convey the theme of a picture, there is one major subject of interest: a person, thing, or group of people or things. In this photo, the subject is obviously the boy in focus. What is the theme of this picture? Baseball, summer fun, teamwork? It could be all of those things or none of those things, depending on who you ask. It's okay if, to one person it's one thing, and to someone else it's different. However you interpret it, the theme flows from the undistracted attention on the boy as he starts running to score.



In this photo, the photographer blurred out the background to help the viewer focus on the boy running as well as the boy in the foreground.

After you decide on your subject, ask yourself, “How am I going to focus attention on my subject/theme? How can I draw the viewer’s eye to it?”

3. Is Simplified

The theme of this picture is pretty easy to see – dog, man’s best friend. The photographer could have easily shot this photo from the front of the dog, with the dog looking right at the camera, but with this angle, the photographer shows you an almost regal side of the dog. There is no tongue hanging out, nothing to distract from the almost seriousness of the dogs expression.



As you peer through your viewfinder, before you press the shutter button, always ask yourself: “Have I focused attention on my main subject? Have I zeroed in on the key element in this scene? Have I eliminated the distracting? Have I eliminated the unnecessary? Have I simplified down to the single essence of this scene?”

Only then should you shoot the picture.

How did the photographer simplify when he/she shot the photo of the little boy?



How about the picture of the baseball player? This isn't a simple picture, or is it? You see the people in the background and the fence, and then there is the out of focus player in the foreground. Should they have been eliminated from the photo to simplify it? Probably not, for the following reason:

Simplification means eliminating elements that distract from the theme. It does not necessarily mean eliminating all backgrounds (or foregrounds). Where the surroundings contribute to our understanding of the theme, they are essential, and they should not be eliminated.



So Now You Have 3 Questions to Ask When You are About to Take a Picture:

1. What is the subject – the theme – I want this picture to be about?
2. How can I focus attention on my subject and draw the viewer's eye to it?
3. Have I simplified? Have I included only what draws attention to my subject, and have I eliminated everything that is non-essential or distracting?