

Here are 10 things to look for in a good photograph.

(NOTE: These are offered in no particular order.)

- 1. Correct exposure.** The image is not too bright or too dark, unless for artistic reasons. There should not be any blocked up shadows or blown out highlights. Use the correct f-stop shutter speed combo, for your intended purpose.
- 2. Sharpness.** The photo is sharp where it needs to be. Unless for artistic reasons, your subject should be in sharp focus. If you're photographing a person, the eyes must be in focus.
- 3. Background.** Is there anything in the background that distracts from the photo or competes with your eye's attention on the subject? Look for uncluttered backgrounds.
- 4. Composition.** Is the photo balanced? You want to avoid horizons that cut through the middle of the photo. Unless for artistic reasons, you want to avoid placing your subject dead center.
- 5. Intruders.** Look out for intruders. These are simply objects that encroach on the edges of your image. Tree branches are a typical offender as are power lines, etc.
- 6. Color.** Are the colors believable? You want to get good color rendition in a color photograph. Unless for artistic reasons, the color should be similar to what you saw with your naked eye.
- 7. Emotion.** The photograph should evoke some emotion. Any emotion will do. But really good photographs cause an emotional reaction. (Often overlooked, by the way.)
- 8. Subject.** You want to find an interesting subject. It can be a person, an animal, a mountain, etc., whatever it is, look for something that is special, or interesting or better yet arresting. If you're not sure what the picture is about, it's not typically a good photograph.
- 9. Attention.** Is there enough attention on your subject? Look for ways to draw attention to the subject. This can be done by getting closer, filling the frame, using the correct lens choice, eliminating clutter, etc.
- 10. Light.** It's impossible to have a good photograph without good light. It is possible to have an OK subject, but take the OK subject and put it in good light and all of a sudden, you have a GOOD subject. Look for the light.

Composition Handout

Do's

1. Animals and People flow into an image
2. Use the 2/3's rule, or break it on purpose
3. When shooting small animals or kids, get down to their level. (or your background will always be the ground)
4. Change your perspective (Get Higher, Get Lower)
5. In landscapes include a foreground interest.
6. In portraits always focus on the closest eye.
7. Make the eye go to your subject (leading lines, DoF, brightness)
8. Shoot in the shade, or early morning or late afternoon (golden hours)
9. The viewer's eyes are drawn to the brightest part of the image.
10. Use Layering to isolate the subject

Don'ts

1. Crop people at their joints
2. Don't shoot into the sun
3. Don't rely on auto exposure
4. Don't use auto focus for reflective subjects
5. Don't get your reflection in the shot.
6. Avoid getting a crooked horizon
7. No poles through the head
8. Keep your shadow out of the shot.
9. Don't shoot against windows
10. Don't shoot backlit subjects without exposure compensation (unless you want a silhouette)
11. Get unwanted objects out of the shot
12. Don't crop your subject out of the frame.
13. Crop people at their joints.
14. Avoid lens flare, sun or flash.
15. Stay out of direct sun i.e. most of the day.