



STAND OUT *images*

Improve your photography with easy to implement tips and tricks

WWW.REBECCAHOLMESPHTOGRAPHY.COM

Who am I and what do I know?

I'm a brand and family photographer and film-maker, Mum of three girls, recovering photo-avoider and regular gin sampler.

I create out-of-the-ordinary photography for big-hearted folk. Photography that shines a light on what's amazing about who you are and what you do!

I also teach photography to both amateurs and professionals, mentor both photographers and other business owners...

And I've run a business since I was 19!



Are your photos...

Non-existent?

Grainy

Out of focus

A funny colour?

BORING!

Not-post-worthy?

Let's fix that...



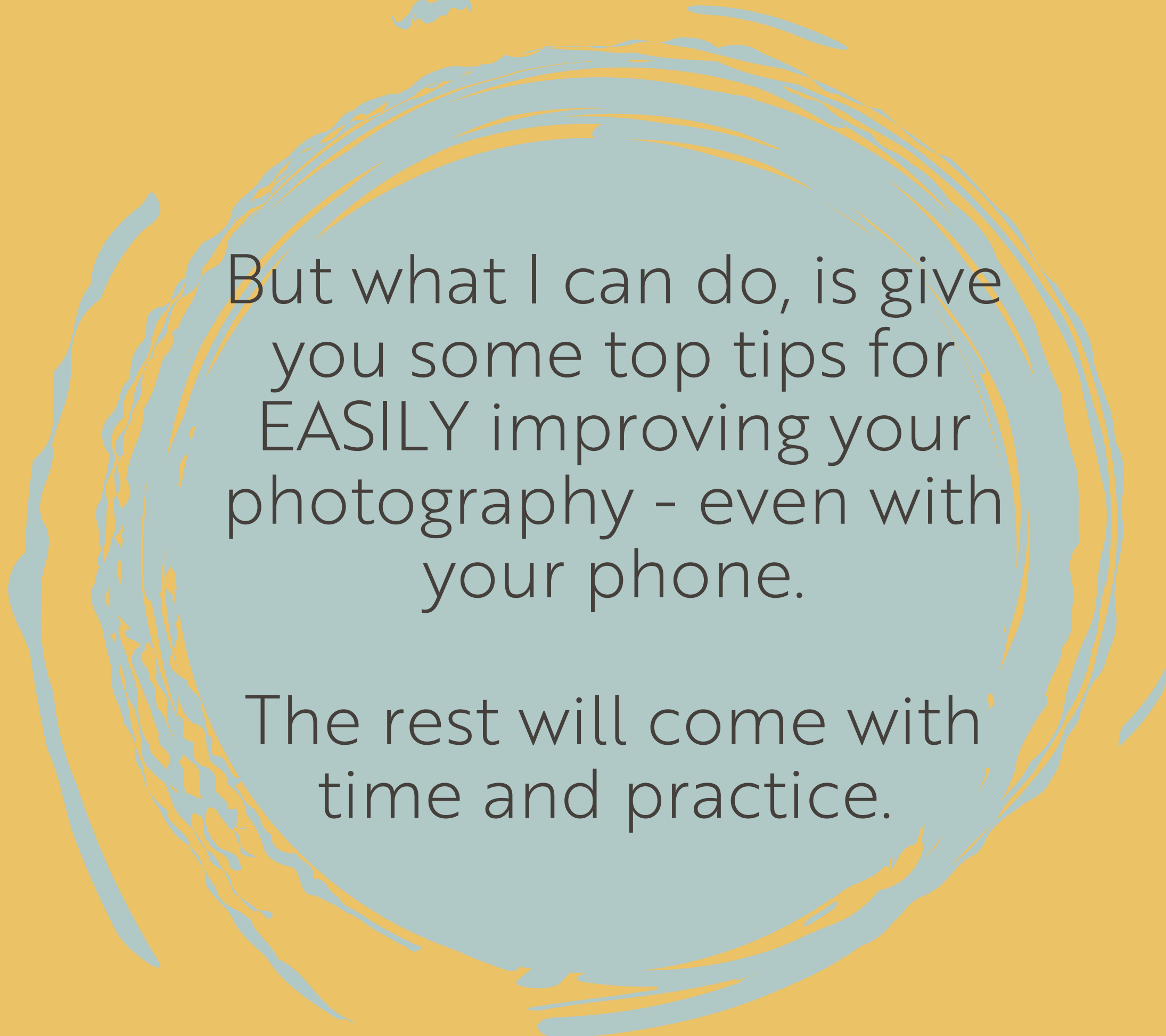
Disclaimer

I can't make you an amazing photographer overnight.

I picked up my first camera when I was 6 years old and took my first professional photograph at age 19.

That's a LOT of years of practice.

You WILL need to practice. No camera or top model phone can replace practice.



But what I can do, is give
you some top tips for
EASILY improving your
photography - even with
your phone.

The rest will come with
time and practice.

Your lockdown photographs

How did you capture them?

Were there any challenges in the mechanics of capturing them?

How did they make you feel?

Why were they your favourites?

If you could take the photographs again, what would you improve or do differently?



But first... Some phone photography mechanics!

- Two hands not just one
- Clean your lens - it's probably gross
- Use HDR mode!
- Keep your camera straight up and down as much as possible to avoid distortions.
- Use your gridlines!
- Flash is horrible on phones - don't use unless you absolutely have to!!!
- Indoor lights are nearly as bad
- USE your portrait mode! (though be careful of your hair!)



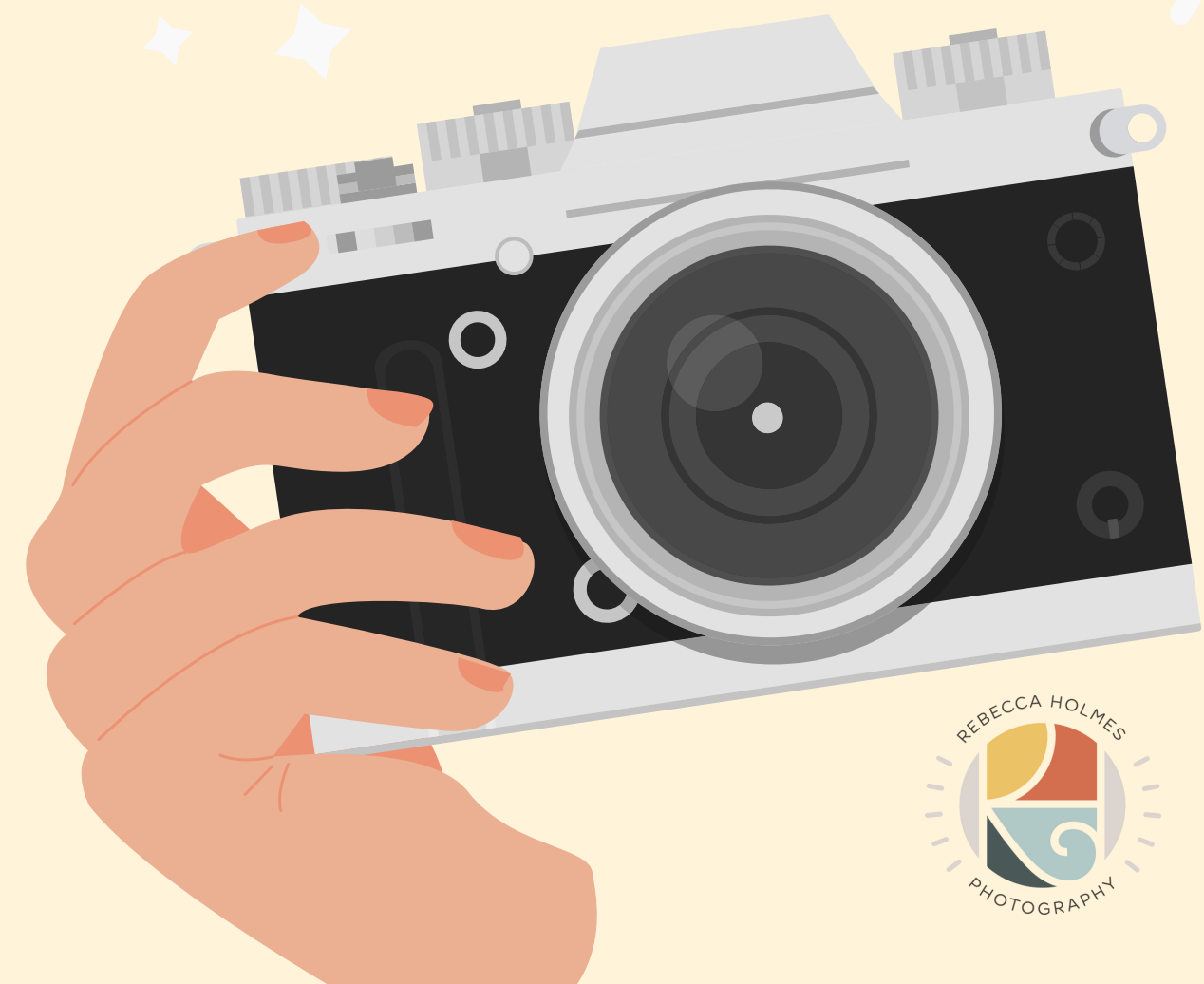
More phone photography RULES...



- Natural light is 100% easier to make look good so go near a window, or go outside
- KEEP STILL
- Get a phone tripod - they're cheap but invaluable
- Keep horizons and lines straight! (I don't like feeling seasick)
- Crop or move yourself - only zoom if you absolutely have to
- If it's going to end up square - take it square IN your phone

SLR photography tips...

- Stand properly, hold your camera correctly - support it well and it will be easy to take great photos
- Keep it clean, inside and out!
- Be careful when changing a lens - avoid changing it at the beach!
- Most amateur-level cameras are designed to work in auto predominantly
- The quality of your lens is generally more important than the quality of your camera
- Digital SLR cameras are generally harder to use than phone cameras - so patience will be needed!

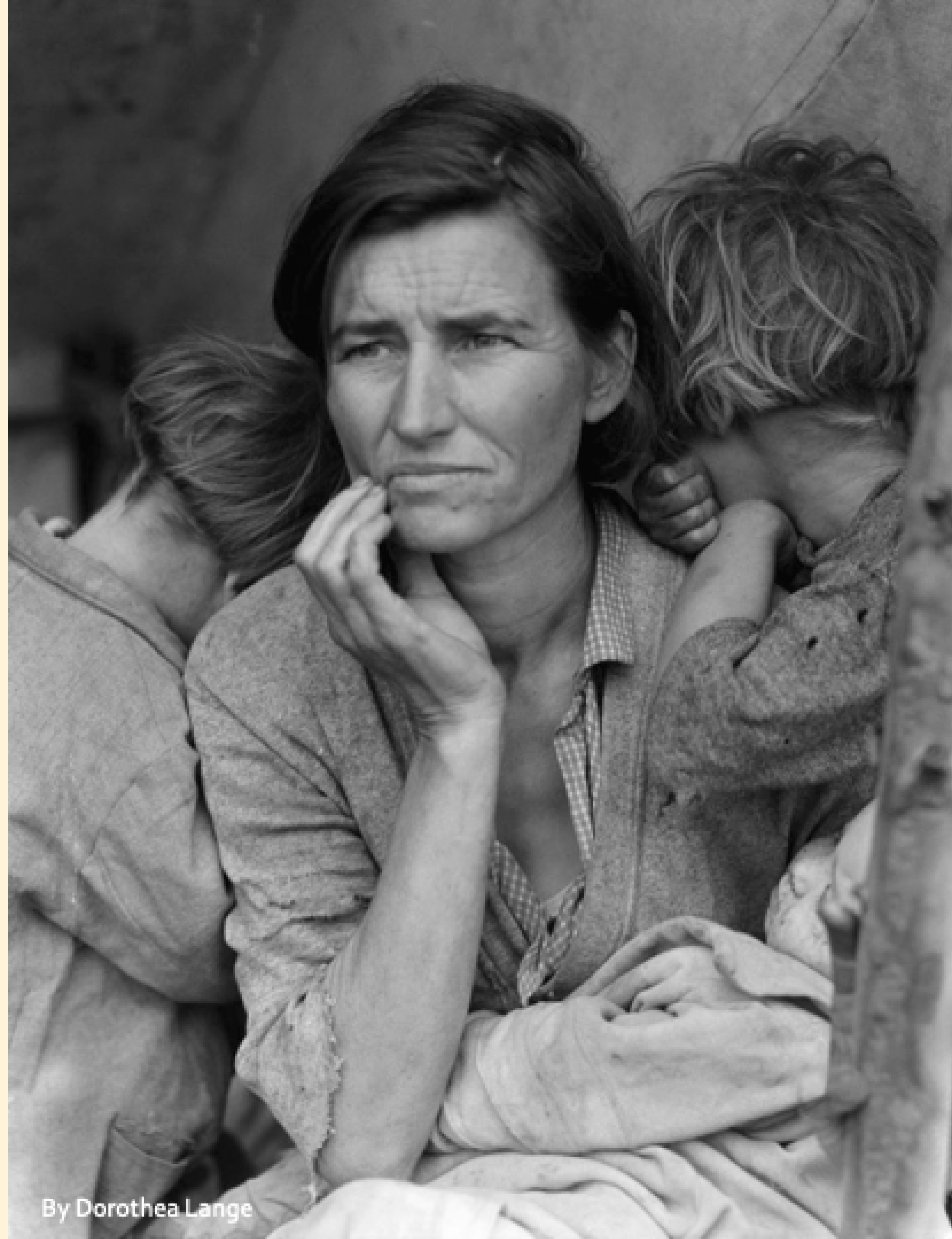


Photographs are 2D representations of 4D things - the more you can make your photograph look and feel 4D, the better.

The best photos make you
feel something!

What makes a 'good' photograph?





By Dorothea Lange

"Bad as it is, the world is
potentially full of good photographs.
But to be good, photographs
have to be full of the world."

DOROTHEA LANGE AND DANIEL DIXON





"In 2000, former Washington Post photographer Carol Guzy spent time at a refugee camp in Albania during the Kosovo crisis and took a photo that won the Pulitzer Prize — one of four in her career. It depicts a young boy being passed through a barbed wire fence at the border.

"It's actually a joyful photo," Guzy says. "Families that had escaped ethnic cleansing did not know if their loved ones had survived or not; [they] were lined up along that fence." When one family saw relatives on the other side of the barbed wire, they celebrated and handed their young children back and forth while waiting to be reunited."



"Smile of Mom" by Manh Cuong Vuong in central Khanh Hoa Province. The photographer took part in a community project, which captured people in need, printed and sent their portraits to them to give them a belief and joy in life.

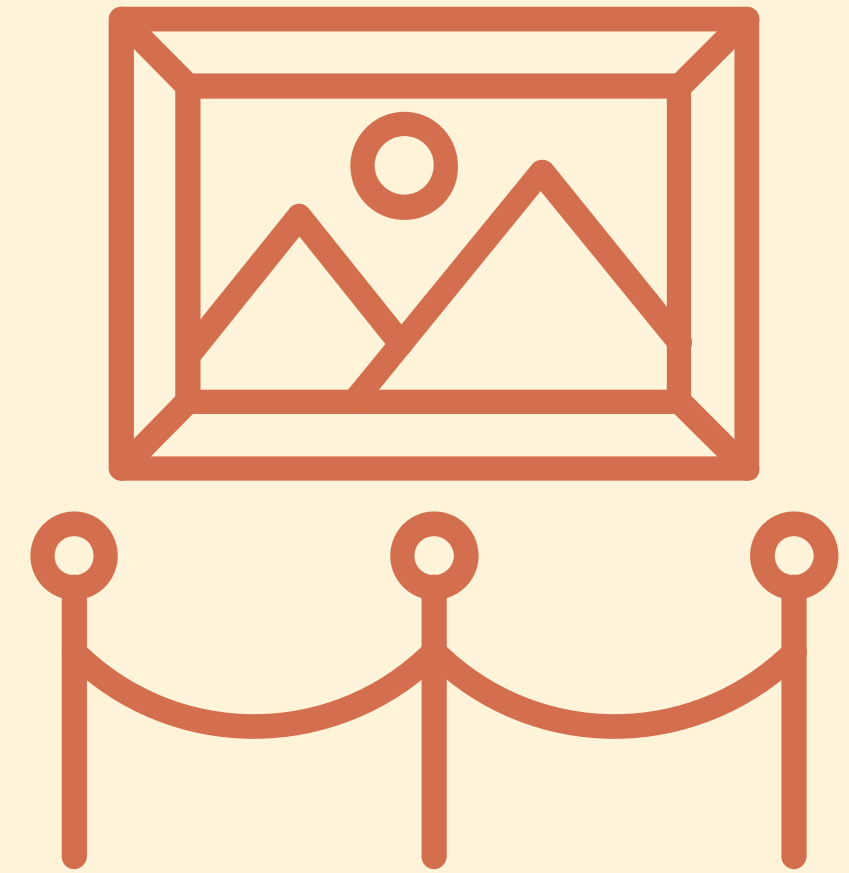
"This woman was extremely happy to be photographed for the first time. If not also a little embarrassed, it was a special moment for me, as it is for her. Through the pictures we know, happiness often comes from very simple things. Everyone's happiness is different," Vuong recalled. Photo courtesy of Agora/Manh Cuong Vuong."

*Source:
<https://e.vnexpress.net/news/life/culture/four-vietnam-photos-among-agera-s-best-of-2020-4196336.html>



What makes a 'good' photograph?

- Vision – interesting and engaging subject matter
- Intention/Purpose – a reason for taking a photograph
- Story – communicates a story or emotion
- Execution - expresses all of the above successfully! (How you take the photograph)
- Creates a response in the viewer
- Serves to communicate a point



What makes a 'good' photograph for you?

What sorts of photographs make you sit up and take notice?

Which photographs do you enjoy looking at, or find interesting?

What it is about a photograph, for you, that makes is 'good'?





1.

Intention

Set a clear intention for your photograph. What do you want it to do for you? What do you need it to show?

Don't just 'spray and pray', be clear, and upfront about what you want to take, and why.

Setting your intention

What is your intention for the photo you'll create?

What feeling do you want to capture?

How do you want your photograph to impact your audience?

What techniques will you use?

What will be different from your last lockdown photograph?



2.

Learn to 'read' light

The word 'photography' literally means 'drawing with light'.

Think about;

- The type of light
- The direction of light
- The quality of light
- How could the light be improved?
- What is the light doing to the subject?
- Could more interesting lighting make my photo better?





Types of light

- Natural light
- The sun!
- Can be outdoors or indoors
- Artificial light
- Electric lights – roof lights, lamps, car lights, torches
- Flash
- Phone or other screens

How does the type of light affect the FEEL and look of the picture?

What type of light is right for your brand?



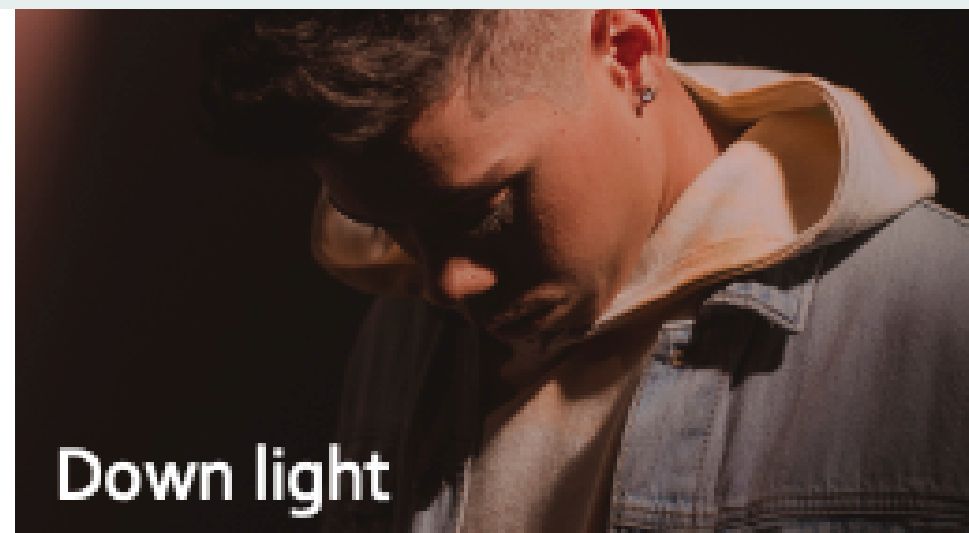


Quality of light



- Hard light; Has very defined edges and strong shadows. It usually comes from a small light source.
- Soft light; Has not very defined edges, the shadows aren't sharp. It usually comes from a large light source.

How does the quality of the light affect the picture? How does the quality of light affect the subject?



Direction of light



- Where is the light coming from and going to?
- How does the direction of light affect your photograph?

For example, uplight can look ghostly, backlight is usually dramatic, side light can age (but also add character) and front light can make you look younger!



Learning to see light better

- Become a light detective
- Don't just look – SEE, 'read' the light and see how the picture was created
- Start taking note of the light you see
- The type, colour, quality and direction
- If you're struggling to see light, try looking for the shadows first, as they're sometimes easier to see.





Light reading practice





Light reading practice





Light reading practice





Light reading practice





Light reading practice





Light reading practice





The shapes exercise

Using the shape provided, take two photographs with DIFFERENT styles of light

If you practice nothing else, practice understanding and 'reading' light... It will make the biggest difference to your photographs.

*Look for light everywhere
and analyse it!*

3.

Tell a story with your photo

- Telling a story in a photograph adds depth and interest, it keeps the viewer looking at the image longer.
- I can also tell a story of your brand, for example, this photograph doesn't just show a 'pretty' cafe table, it shows that cafe in action - a conversation, enjoyment, comfort, warmth
- How? Make a plan!! Figure out what story you want to tell, then what you could put into an image to create it.





4.

Remove distractions

Use the four-corners rule! (thanks Dad!)

Before you take the picture look at all four corners - is everything in the photograph NECESSARY? Can things be removed? Can you move the camera so that the superfluous isn't seen?





5.

Focus

Make sure you tell the camera where to focus - no matter the camera you're using!

Your eyes are ALWAYS better than the auto function.

6.

Include yourself!

It is possible, with a bit of planning, to include yourself in photographs.

- Self timer function
- Remote trigger
- Asking a trusted friend to press the button for you



7.

Laugh, play, have fun

Ditch the posed look and make the photographs more natural.

Interact with others in the photograph.

Our 'insta-smiles' are NEVER our best smiles.

If you're working with a buddy, don't be afraid to CALL THEM OUT when they put on their 'insta-smile'.





8.

Add humour

People respond to humour!

- Funny face
- A blooper
- A 'look what happened when we were making this product' photo
- Anything that show's you're totally HUMAN and therefore not perfect

9.

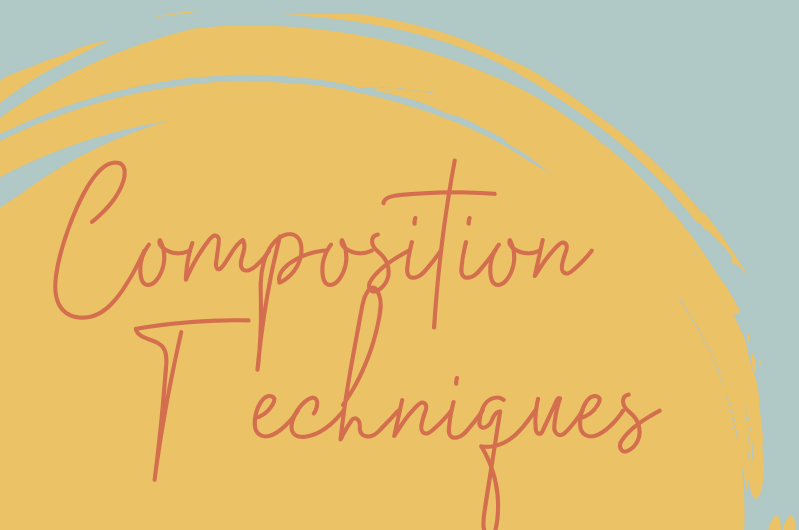
Learn some composition techniques

- Composition = the way you compose your image
- The elements you choose to include/not include in your image
- Helps achieve your purpose/aim – can create balance, calm, tension, a journey, a story
- Techniques – titled 'rules' but are really more 'guides'
- They are ways you can compose your image to make it more interesting or to articulate your point better
- Used by photographers ALL the time to create eye-catching photographs
- Here are just a few...



Rule of thirds

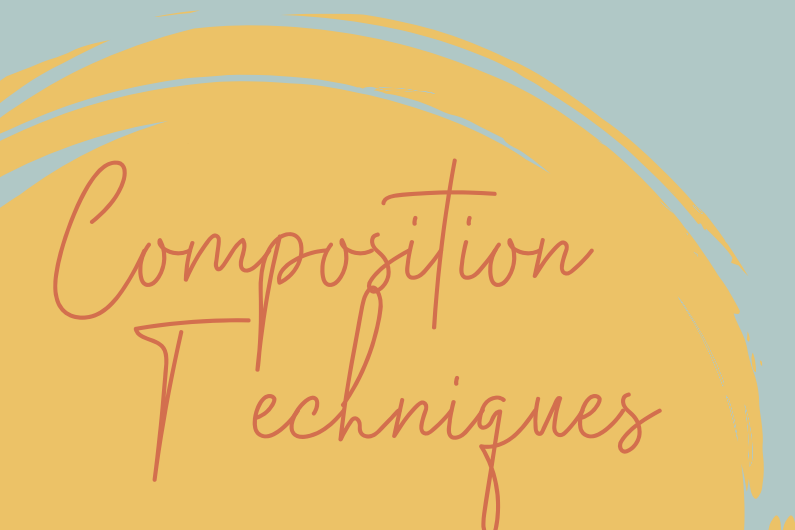
- Divide your picture into thirds with two horizontal and two vertical lines
- Place the important parts of your image along those lines
- Or even better, place the important parts where the lines intersect
- Use the grid lines on your phone!



Demonstrate the
rule of thirds

Framing

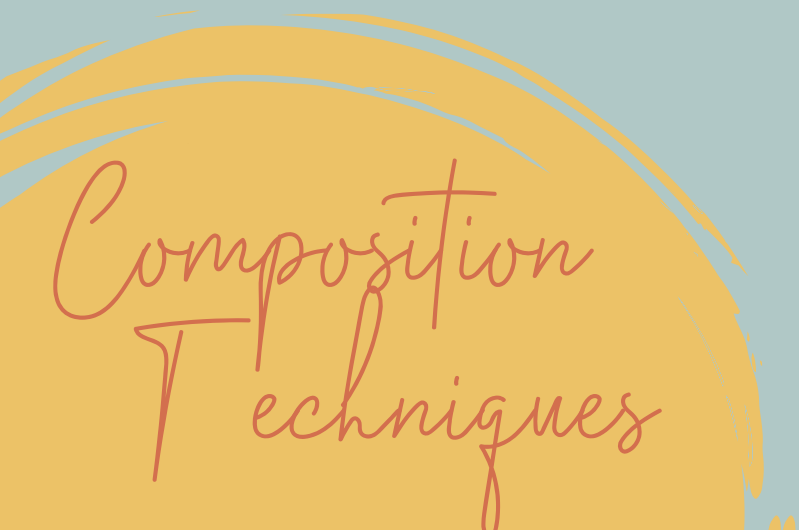
- Place the important parts of your image within a frame
- The frame can be made of anything – buildings, clouds, trees, objects



Demonstrate
framing

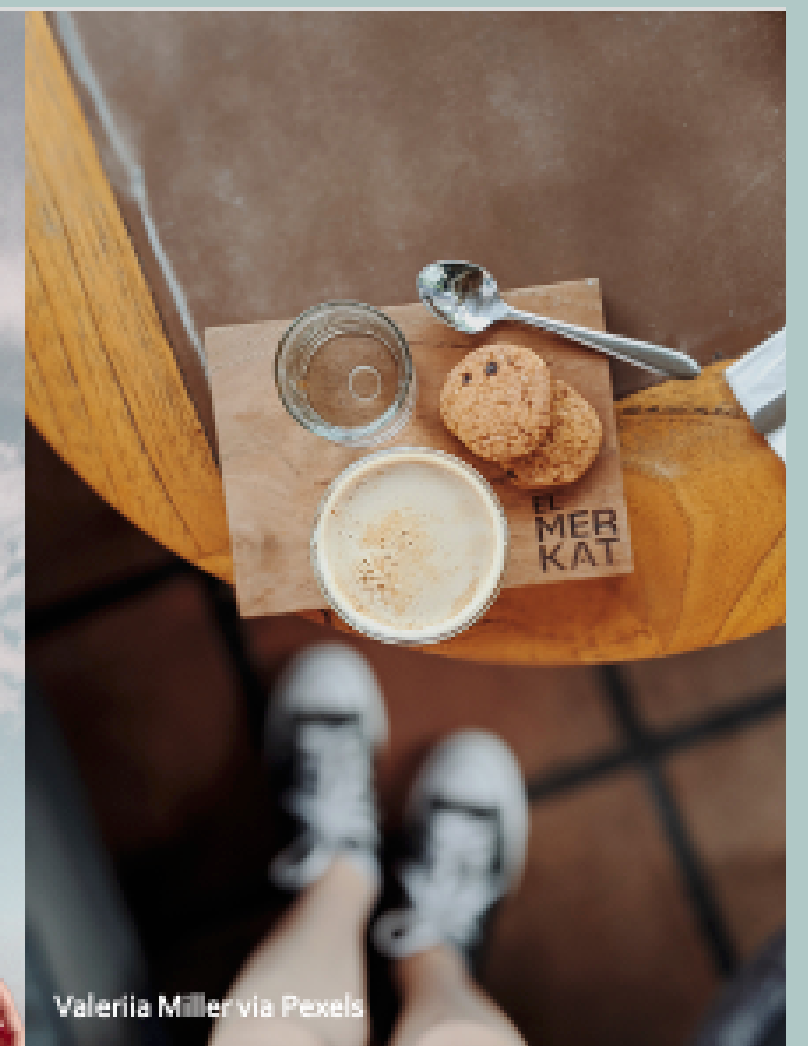
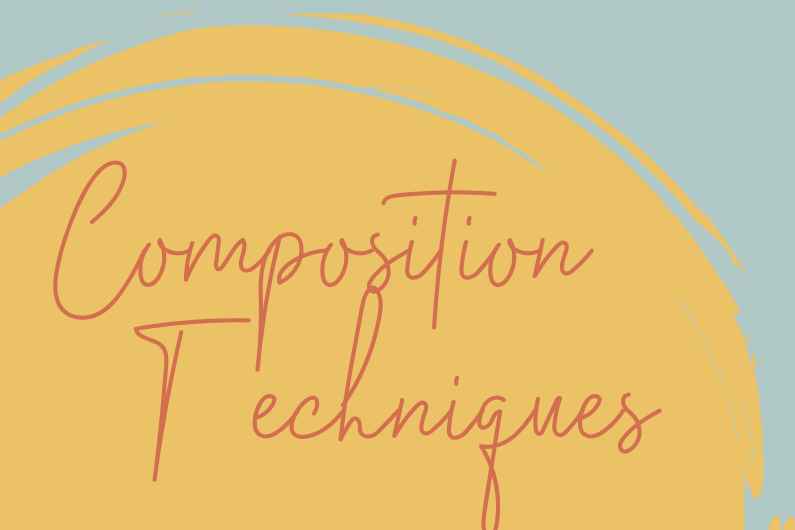
Leading Lines

- Frame the photograph so that lines within the photograph draw the viewer's eye
- They can draw the viewer's eye to the subject or take the viewer on a journey through the photograph



Perspective Shift

- Change the angle at which you're taking the photograph
- This can affect the mood of the picture significantly and is a great way to show an emotion



Demonstrate a
perspective shift

10.

Set it up, then photograph it from all angles

Once you've setup a photograph, take it from all angles - move your body around, move the camera up and down - try new perspectives to get interesting photographs.



11.

One subject or many layers?

Be conscious about whether you're photographing one thing - or layers of things.

Both are correct, and appropriate for different subjects, but being deliberate about it is important.





Better selfies/portraits

- Face a window! Or towards the light source (sun, indoor lights etc).
- Use a phone tripod so you're hands free
- Watch your background - is there a plant coming out of your head? (see left)
- Use portrait mode (unless you have curly hair)
- Move yourself until you have little bits of light in your eyes (called catch lights)
- Put your camera slightly above eye level
- What's closest to the camera will appear biggest... So sure it's not your hands, or any part of your body you don't like.



Take your best selfie



12.

Start a project

Since practice is the key to improving your photography, try starting a project.

- 100 happy days
- 365 project

This will keep you photographing, even on days when inspiration doesn't come easily - making it PERFECT practice!

13.

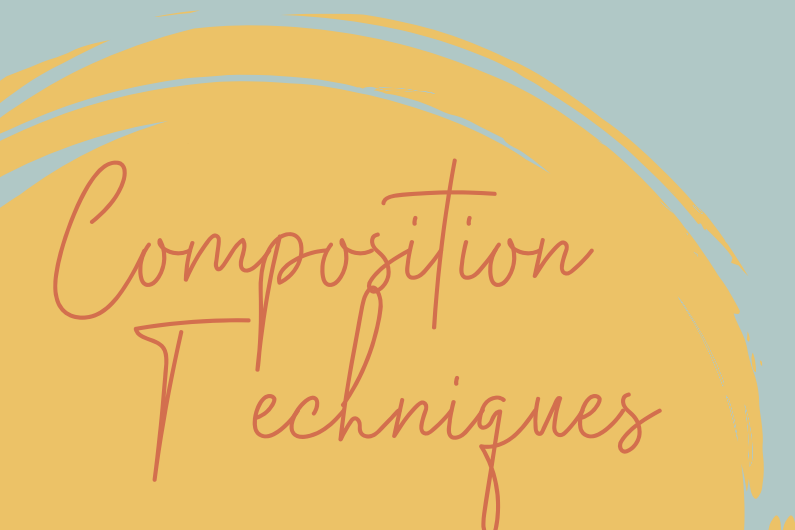
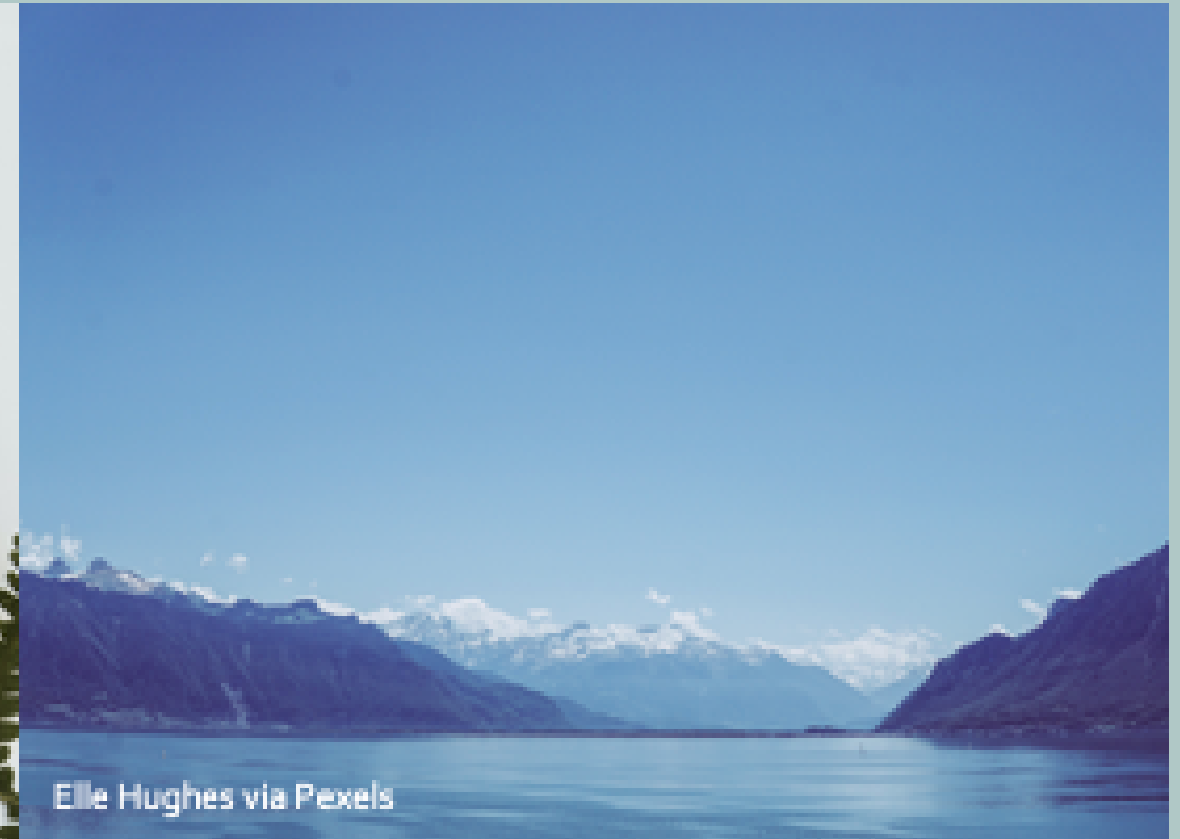
Capture details

Don't underestimate the joy of the details - your favourite pen, a piece of equipment, the way someone touches their glasses, or runs their fingers through their hair... All are details that SO often we miss!



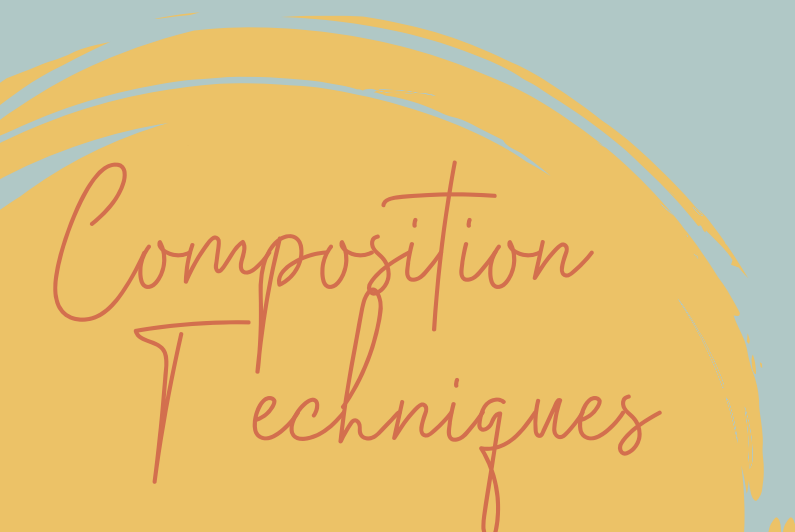
Simplicity and negative space

- The use of plain, uncluttered space to enhance an image
- Can create a sense of calm, of grandeur
- Gives the eye somewhere to rest



Pattern and/or texture

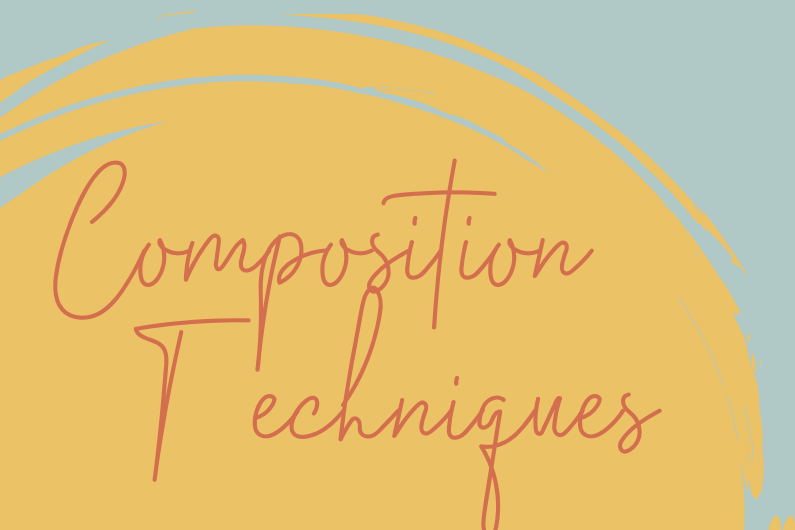
- Using pattern or texture
- Can be used to add depth
- To create interest
- To make an image more 3D
- Can either be the focal point or an addition to the image



Demonstrate the
use of pattern

Centred composition/symmetry

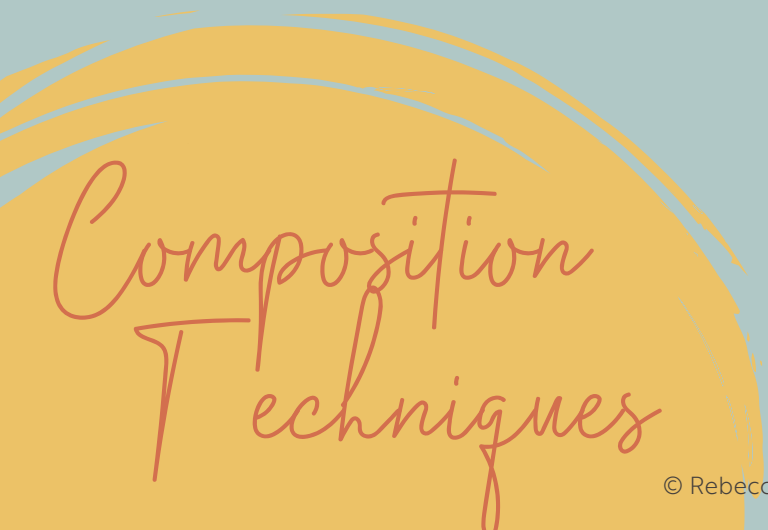
- Putting your subject in the centre either vertically, horizontally or both
- Using symmetry to balance both sides of your image



Demonstrate
symmetry

Diagonals and Triangles

- Diagonals and triangles add 'tension' to a scene
- It suggests a level of instability which makes a photograph more dynamic



Demonstrate the use of triangles



14.

Be candid!

Posing is overrated.

Yes, really.

Be candid, approachable, relatable...
You! You'll get much better results,
more easily.

15.

Get comfortable with your kit

Whether you're using a phone, or a digital SLR camera, the more you know your equipment - the better your photographs will be.

READ YOUR MANUAL if you have a non-phone camera... You'll be surprised at how easy most of them are to work through, step at a time.



A word on editing

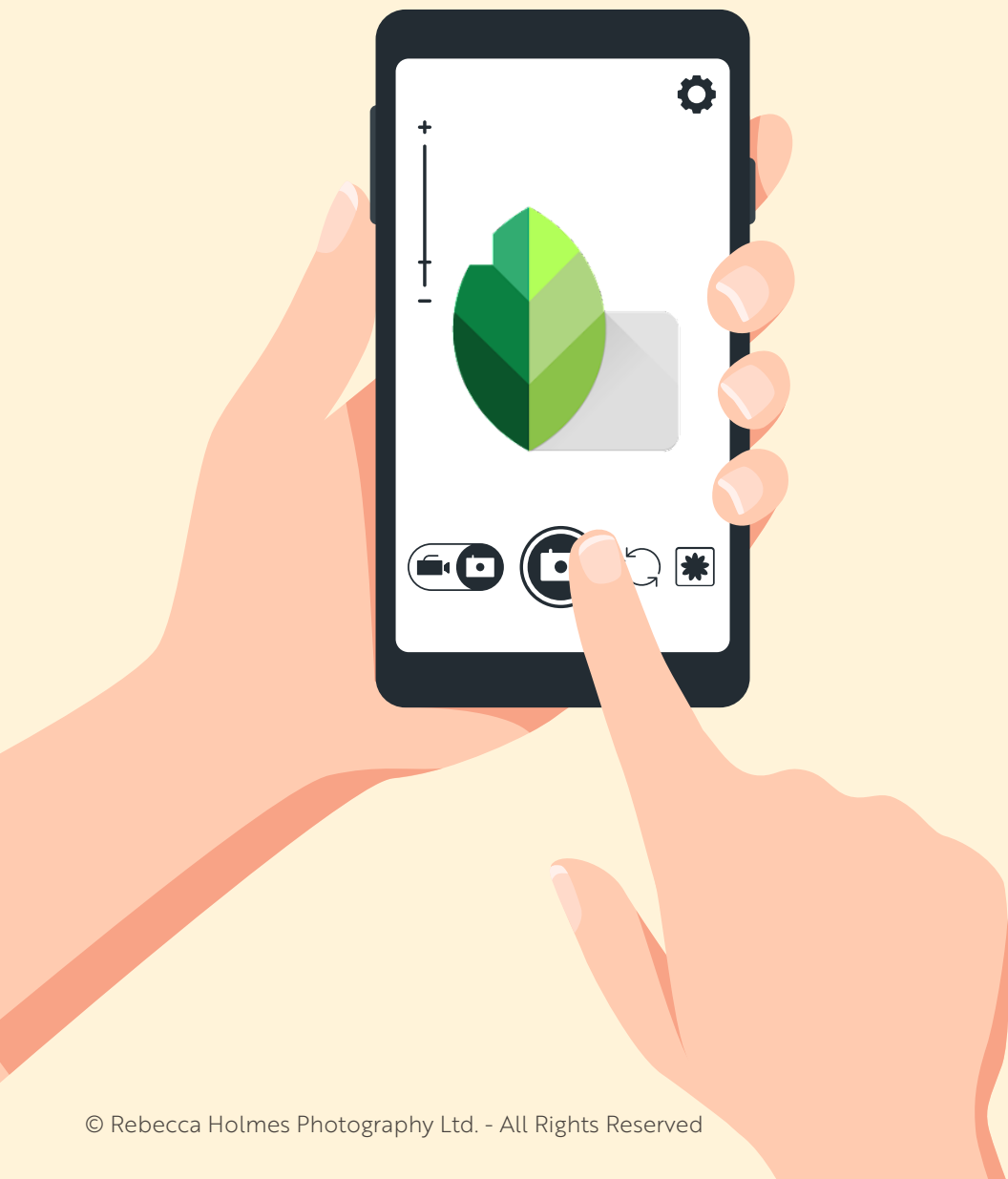
Edit your photos but don't go over the top!

Simply brightening, raising contrast a bit to add depth, fixing squint horizons, and cropping are plenty.

Watch 'sharpening' - get it right in camera instead.

Be REALLY careful with filters. They are a short-term solution to a longer-term problem with having your face seen AS IT IS! They are totally inauthentic.

Recommended editing app - Snapseed

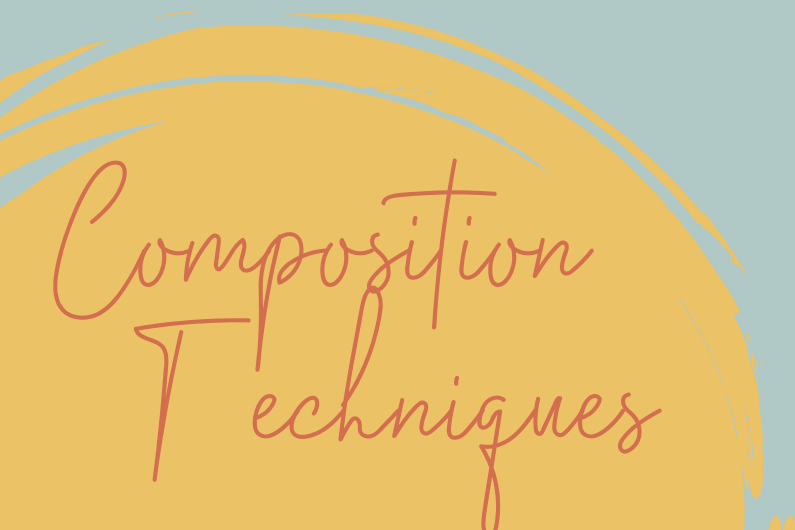


As one of my mentors would say - "Don't
polish a turd!"

You can't edit away rubbish

Rule of Odds

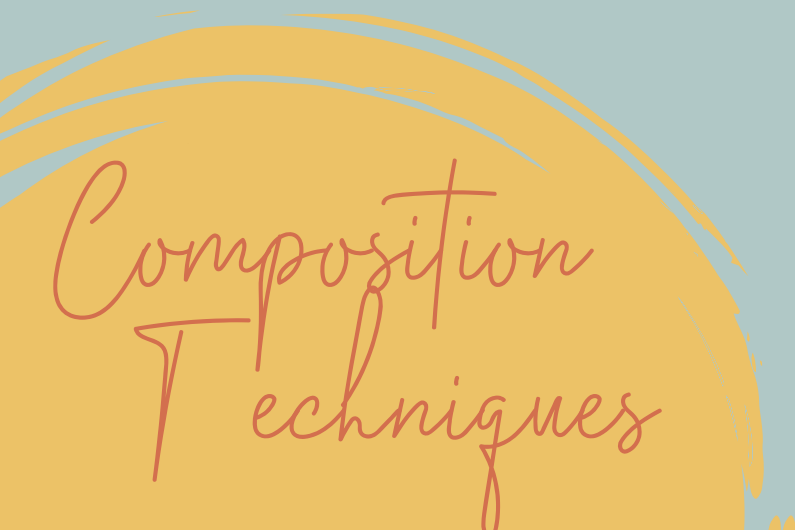
- Seen as more pleasing to the eye to have three, or odd numbers than even
- The theory is that with two, there is competition for which to look at
- Three is also a very balanced look – similar to a triangle



Demonstrate the
rule of odds

Fill the frame

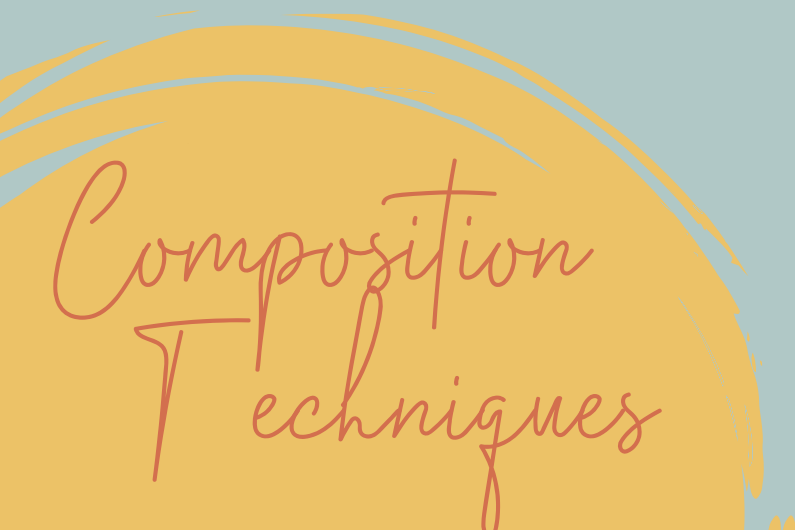
- Leaving little or no space around the subject
- Great for focusing the viewers eye on details or emotions



Demonstrate filling the frame

Centred composition/symmetry

- Putting your subject in the centre either vertically, horizontally or both
- Using symmetry to balance both sides of your image



Demonstrate
symmetry



Photo by [Oleg Magni](#) from [Pexels](#)

16.

Play with colour

Have a play with restricting the colours in your images - it helps them to stand out and creates a clarity that looks wonderful.



Photo by [Nida](#) from [Pexels](#)



Photo by [Johannes Plenio](#) from [Pexels](#)

A man with a shaved head and glasses, wearing a red and white plaid shirt, is seated and playing an acoustic guitar. He is looking down at the instrument. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The entire image is framed by a large, irregular orange shape that resembles a torn piece of paper.

17.

SLOW DOWN!

We're so used to snapping a mile a minute with our smartphones.

By simply slowing down and being more intentional about your photography you'll improve the photographs you're taking.

Make the process mindful; take your time.



18.

Movement

Adding movement to a photograph is a great way to capture a more 4D feeling image. Movement of water, movement of a person, of objects. Perhaps try slowing down your shutter speed on your camera. (if on iPhone you'll need a third part app to do this)

19.

Done is better than perfect

There are very few people who put images into the world without critique (and this includes professional photographers).

Ask an award-winning photographer and they'll tell you the 'flaws' in their award-winning image.

Put your photographs out there EVEN if you're afraid they're not good enough.



20.

Back up, back up, back up

And just in case you missed that...

BACK UP YOUR PHOTOS!!!!!!

At least one hard disk that isn't your phone/computer AND a cloud backup too.

One day you will thank me for that bit of advice!



Key points for better photos

Purpose - What is the purpose of taking the picture? What do you want to convey?

Expression/Emotion/Value - What does the photograph express?

Light - Where is it coming from, what quality is it, what colour is it, and what is it doing to your subject? Can changing the light improve how the subject looks?

Composition - Check all four corners of the frame - anything that doesn't need to be in there? Anything you could add to make the picture better?

Quality - Blur, enough light, grain? (clean your lens!)



What have you learned?

Write down the top five 'ah-ha' moments you've had from this talk.

What is key for you in taking an updated 'post lockdown' photograph?



Resources

- PDF of this presentation to download and keep
- 'How to Take Wall-worthy photos: 30 tips for novice photographers'

All of these resources can be found for free at
www.rebeccaholmesphotography.com/resources

Further study with me

- 'From Auto to Manual in a Day' - one day in person course for digital SLR users
- One-to-one photography training and mentoring, either in person or on zoom

Get in touch or checkout the website to find out more



Stay in touch

I mostly hang out on Instagram or LinkedIn

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Questions?



