Transition Times

SPRING 2012

Dear Transition Times Participant,

After working with you for 10 years, the Transition Times Study is drawing to a close. Once again, your participation has made the study tremendously successful. We have published a total of 14 scientific articles from the study (list is attached), and will be sending you some of the more recent results this summer. If you would like a copy of any of these articles, please contact us.

Today, we are pleased to announce the new REACH study – Research on Emerging Adults Changing Health. In this study, we are reaching out to you – we hope to visit you wherever you are. We will be talking with you about how you are doing, and you will have the opportunity to complete a brief physical exam. We will be doing this once a year for three years. You can earn up to $200 each year for this single visit. And, we promise no more 24-hour recall phone interviews!

Some of you will be eligible to start this study this year, and others of you will not start the study until either 2013 or 2014. **You will be eligible to participate in this study starting July 1, 2012 IF you will be 22 years old by that date and had a high school graduation date of 2008 (or expected date).** If you are part of this group, we have not spoken to you in a couple of years. Please drop us a line by email or phone with your current phone number and address. Also, please let us know if you plan to move out of the area, so that we can interview you before you leave. Regardless, I would love to hear from you!

For your leisure, we have put together a newsletter on how to take fantastic photographs. One of our staff, Jamie Vance, has been working in the area of photography and has shared some of what she has learned in this newsletter. We hope you enjoy it.

Sincerely,

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Digital Photography-The Golden Composition Rule

The first composition rule any photographer first learns about is the **rule of thirds.** The reasoning behind that is it is the basis for well balanced and interesting shots.

The basic principle behind the rule of thirds is to imagine breaking an image down into thirds (both horizontally and vertically) so that you have 9 parts. (see below)
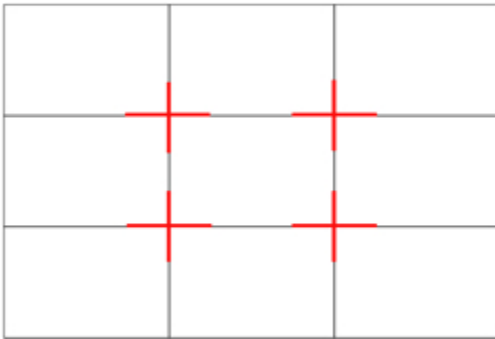
With this grid in mind the 'rule of thirds' now identifies important parts of the image that you should consider placing points of interest in as you frame your image.

Theoretically, if you place points of interest on the intersections of lines, your photo will be more balanced and will enable the viewer to interact with it more naturally.

When people view images, their eyes naturally go to an intersection point rather than the center of the shot. The "rule of thirds" works with rather than against our naturally occurring way of viewing photographs.

Most digital cameras can display this grid on the LCD display to assist with framing the shot.
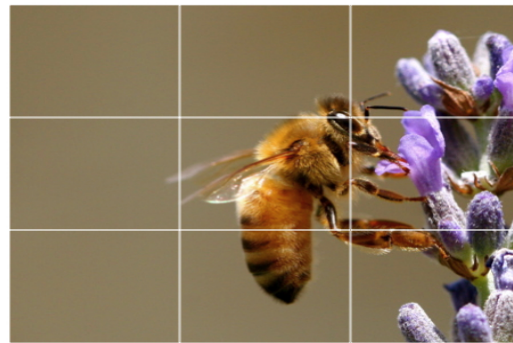
In this example, the bee's eye becomes the point of focus

Top 25 photography composition tips

One of the biggest struggles of new and old photographers is finding great composition. Here are 25 tips to follow to take an awesome photograph.

1. Be clear on your subject. What story are you trying to tell with the photo?

2. Draw attention to the subject. This can be done by simply getting closer, by using selective focus, by using color, by lighting only the subject, by framing the subject in a doorway or window, etc.

3. Simplify. Simple is best. Remove anything that doesn't help you tell the story.

4. When in doubt, leave it out. If there is something in your field of view that is not relevant to the subject or doesn't somehow support the subject, get rid of it.

5. Check your negative space. Don't leave too much negative space and when you do have negative space, be sure you use it right. Leave room for the subject in the frame unless you have a specific reason not to.

6. Fill the frame. You can rarely go wrong by filling the frame with the main subject. Many of the best pictures are the simplest ones. You don't have to add background for the sake of adding background.

7. Check the edges of the frames. Don't cut off feet or hands of your subject. If you want to exclude those appendages, make sure we know you meant to do so. Make a clean crop well above the wrist for instance if you don't want to include the hands.

8. Check for intruders. Is there something popping into the picture from the side? Is there a tree branch, power line, telephone poll, etc., that creeps into the shot and steals attention from the subject? Recompose and remove it.

9. Remember POV – Point of View. Shoot up on objects to make them more powerful. Shoot down on subjects to diminish them or make then look less imposing. (example below)

Photo composition tips continued

10. Don't forget about the rule of thirds. Use the rule of thirds.

11. When making portraits, always keep the eyes above the center line in the photo. (see below)

12. Strive for balance. Look at the composition and determine if there's something out of place that tilts the viewer's attention one way or the other.

13. The eye goes to the brightest part of the scene first. So don't let anything in the photo other than the main subject be brighter than the subject.

14. Add depth by including strong foreground objects in shots where the background is also important.

15. Shoot vertically to enhance tall objects or to emphasize height. Shoot horizontally to emphasize width.

16. Use patterns, particularly repeating patterns to make pictures more interesting.

17. Use lines to attract the viewer's eye where you want it to go.

18. Use S-curves or shapes as a more relaxed casual way to lead your eye through the composition. A road or a stream are good examples of this approach. (see example to right)

19. Start by shooting at your subject's eye level. For example, get down low when making a child or animal's portrait rather than standing over them and shooting down on them.

20. Make sure there is separation between multiple subjects to avoid unsightly merges.

21. Don't center everything unless there's a reason.

22. Don't let the horizon fall dead center in the picture. (see below)

23. Don't let the horizon cut through the head of any human or animal subject. (see above)

24. Don't let the horizon merge with objects that are important to your image (see above)

25. Right before you make the photo take a look around to make sure there's nothing you're missing.

Free Photo Editing Software

Not every picture is going to be perfect. Overexposure, underexposure, red-eye problems, white balance issues and other visual issues may occur so it is handy to have a decent photo editing application on your PC. Adobe Photoshop is the best known, but is pricey. Here are some photo editing applications that are free to download.

Windows Live Photo Gallery
Pros

- Face recognition. Geo-tagging. Blemish removal tool. Panorama stitcher. Easy interface.

Cons

- Can't adjust camera raw files. Only works in Windows 7 and Windows Vista.

Bottom Line

- Now with face recognition and retouching, Windows Live Photo Gallery can stand up proud against iPhoto and Picasa.

Apple iPhoto 11
Pros

- Full-screen editing and viewing. Facebook integration. Rich e-mail and other output options. Histogram editing for exposure fine tuning. Works well with camera raw files.

Cons

- Too modal—e.g., you can't zoom unless you're in Edit mode. MobileMe galleries don't offer geo or people tagging.

Bottom Line

- iPhoto '11 is an elegant, easy way to import, organize, improve, and produce quality output from your digital photos, but it falls short of Picasa when it comes to integration with online galleries and face recognition.

Google Picasa 3.8
Pros

- Superb integration with online galleries. Excellent face recognition. Geo tagging. Polished interface. Support for RAW camera files. Syncs local edits with online images. More photo embellishments with Picnik integration. Mac and Linux versions available.

Cons

- Facebook upload requires plug in. Histogram not editable.

Bottom Line

- Not only is Picasa the best entry-level photo editor, organizer, and sharing tool you could ask for, it's also free, *and* it runs on every major desktop operating system.

Picnik
Pros

- Wealth of image-editing features. Connects to a number of social networks.

Cons

- Can only upload five images at a time with a free account. No layering. Limited printing options. Can't simply click an image and open it in Picnik.

- Picnik is being integrated in Google + on April 19, 2012

Bottom Line

- Picnik is remarkably simple to use and yet feature-rich; it packs in nearly every feature (and more) that non-professionals desire. Its Web-based nature won't let you open an image on your desktop without uploading it first, but should you find that a non-issue, there's much to like.

GIMP 2.6.1
Pros

- Windows, Mac, and Linux versions. A multitude of tools and features. RAW compatibility. Plug-ins. Device support.

Cons

- Potentially complex for the uninitiated. Somewhat cramped interface. Requires plug-ins to match Photoshop's features.

Bottom Line

- The OS-agnostic GIMP brings high-end photo editing to users for zero dollars, but only the dedicated should walk this deep, complex road.

Photo Editing Tips

Photo editing software is for taking boring photos and making them pop. Even professional photographers edit their photos. Here are some basic tips to get you started. **Do not edit the original.** Copy it in the photo editing program and work on the copy. Then if you make a change you do not like, you can always start over. **Enhance dull photos.** Go to the color menu and increase the intensity of the colors to make a dull photo look more vibrant. You can also adjust the brightness on photos that are too dark or too bright. You might also want to increase the sharpness on pictures that are blurry. **Crop uninteresting elements.** Many times a photograph will have an interesting subject on one side and a wide space of boring parking lot or empty sky on the other. Get rid of the uninteresting portion by cropping it.