

Photographic Tips

I recently got a library book, "Photography for the Joy Of It", written by Freeman Patterson and first published in 1977. Still an excellent book that you may have come across in the past, with some down-to-earth advice for us all. Written well before the Digital Era, it contains a list of 50 individual pieces of advice. However, as I was reading them I realised that quite a few could be updated and many could be discarded altogether..... indicating that Digital Photography really is easier and more forgiving of errors.

So, with acknowledgement to Freeman Patterson, here is my updated list..... (as I start to write this I don't know how many of the 50 original tips will remain - and I won't add any new ones).

1. When making a photograph, keep the letters C, D, E in mind, in that order. C = Composition, D = Depth of Field, E = Exposure.

2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 now redundant!

8. *(Deals with making 'sandwiches' of slides - but the advice is good, if adapted to layers used in editing!)*..... It's easy to sandwich two slides together by putting two frames together in one mount. Photographers have been using this technique for years to add sunsets to dull scenes or a bird to an empty sky. However, there are many unexplored possibilities for sandwiching, especially in the field of colour abstracts. Start experimenting with slightly overexposed slides which are not related in subject matter, but which may make interesting colour and design combinations. With the ideas you get, you can begin shooting pictures deliberately for sandwiching. Your purpose will be to make composite photographs which are compelling images when they are mounted and shown as one picture.
9. If you find yourself fussing over pictures, or simply spending far too much time finding something you want to photograph, set yourself an assignment. Give yourself exactly 5 minutes to make 5 photographs. You can choose a specific subject in advance, if you want, such as 10 abstracts, or 10 shots of a particular meadow. This exercise is a remarkably good way to zero in on the essentials of making a picture.
10. If you find that you are always photographing the same subject from the same point of view, deliberately set yourself the assignment of looking at the subject in different ways. For example, instead of trying to obtain lighting and detail in all parts of a person's face when shooting a portrait, try a series in which the person's face is illuminated entirely from one side. Or, instead of looking at a spider's web only from the front, try looking at it from the side.
11. Many photographers look for reflections of colours in calm lakes and ponds; but look in moving water too. You won't find definable shapes, but you will find streaks and masses flowing colour. Usually, the lower your camera position is the more likely you are to pick up these colours.
12. One way to improve your ability to make good compositions is to disregard the subject matter and its meaning, and to look at your material purely as graphic design. Pay special attention to the size, placement, and light value of every tone in the picture space, whether you are using black-and-white or colour.
13. Christmas lights can create marvellous effects. By moving in close and throwing

foreground lights out of focus, you will get overlapping circles of colour, which add mystery and merriment to Christmas scenes. If you breathe lightly on your lens before releasing the shutter, you will produce an aura or glow around each light. You can see the effect through your viewfinder and make the exposure immediately or as the mist on the lens starts to evaporate.

14. If you have an image in your viewfinder which you really like, shoot two or more identical exposures. (*I think we can remove the rest of this one, which says it's cheaper than duplicating slides*).
15. Fill-in flash is as useful on a bright, winter day as it is at any other time. For example, you can use it to show detail in dark objects which you are photographing against the sun. The snow may act as a reflector and bounce light into shadow areas, but if it doesn't, and you are confronted with very strong contrast, use your flash.
16. When you are making a portrait and need some light reflected on your model's face, give the subject a book, a newspaper, or white paper to hold as if reading it. This may provide the light you require. Ideally, the paper should not appear in the picture. (*The convenient, bendy, folding reflector wouldn't have been available when Freeman wrote this - it's a very useful tool*).
17. (*About using a handkerchief as a flash diffuser - still valid but there are better ways to do it now*).
18. *Redundant (White Balance)*.
19. When shooting through glass, you can avoid reflections if you fit your lens with a flexible rubber lens hood. By placing the hood against the glass, you will eliminate annoying highlights and unwanted colours reflected in the window. If you do this with long telephoto lenses, take care to have the lens perpendicular to the glass, or distortion may occur. (*Funny - I haven't seen those rubber lens hood for years!*).
20. (*About a camera's self-timer and the "B" exposure mode - not relevant*).
21. When making nature close-ups, the easiest way to remove small distracting objects is to cover them up with material indigenous to the area. For example, if a small piece of birch bark is wedged among fallen brown leaves, simply use another leaf to cover it. Keep your picture authentic; don't cover the birch bark with a fern frond, just because you like ferns.
22. Sometimes it is virtually impossible to photograph a flower which droops or hangs down, such as a bluebell or a pitcher plant, especially the centre of the flower. To overcome the problem, try using a mirror. Place the mirror on the ground under the flower, and shoot into the mirror. The blossom will probably have the sky as a background. If the centre of the flower is too dark, you can use a reflector to bounce light into the centre of the flower, and still shoot your picture by aiming your camera at the mirror.
23. You can usually photograph moving objects that are fastened at one end, such as a waving fern, at slower shutter speeds than unattached objects moving at the same speed.
24. (*Advice about stalking animals - I think I'll skip that part*).
25. You can reverse a short or normal lens to get a close-up lens of good quality. Most camera manufacturers have a reversing ring or adaptor available for their mounting method. Of course, when you reverse the lens, it loses its automatic diaphragm coupling, and you must use it as a manual lens.
26. (*About putting a clamp on the legs of a tripod so you could put a 'ball and socket' head on it - good point, but nowadays I'd recommend a 'GorillaPod'*).

27. *(About problems you can face if you need glasses when photographing. You should be ok with the viewfinder 'dioptre' control and/or an eye-cup).*
28. *(About having two camera bodies available. Still true today, as a back-up and a ready-use extra lens, but here Freeman is talking about having different films in different cameras).*
29. If you want to reduce the possibility of your photographic equipment being stolen, use an inconspicuous camera bag. Don't have "Canon" or "Nikon" or similar straps on it - a bit of a giveaway!
30. *(Sadly, this one is starting to look like it might disappear).....* If you contemplate selling or trading in your cameras or other equipment, keep them in good condition. They will be worth more that way. However, you should always exercise reasonable care. *(...but if you expect to get even half the price you paid for a four year old digital camera - forget it! A good film camera could even increase its value over time, but not digital - the technology has a habit of built-in redundancy).*
31. To keep rain or snow off your camera, put it in a plastic bag which has a hole cut out for the lens.
32. Lightweight rain pants are excellent photographic gear for wet days and make kneeling in the grass easier than using a rubber or plastic sheet, which can be a bother to carry around.
33. If you travel in a car that has separate or bucket seats, you can secure your camera or camera bag against bumps or falls by looping the strap around the back of the seat. *(Better still, a child's safety seat, with its own straps).*
34. *Redundant.*
35. *Redundant.*
36. *(This is about securing your cable releases - good point but now I'd update it to suggest securing your 'remote release' to your camera or tripod).*
37. *Redundant.*
38. *Redundant.*
39. *Redundant.*
40. *Redundant.*
41. *Redundant.*
42. *Redundant.*
43. *(Talks about Slides but translates as digital images as well)....* When preparing a slide essay or sequence, avoid visual monotony by inter-mixing verticals with horizontals, close-ups with medium- and long-distance shots, front lighting with side and back lighting - and so on. A slide sequence will flow most easily if each succeeding photograph contains a point of similarity (colour, object, idea, etc.) with the preceding picture, while introducing differences. If you lay out your essay on a light-box, you can easily spot weak or ineffective transitions.
44. *Redundant.*
45. If you enjoy showing slides with music, never underestimate the capacity of your audience to appreciate a wide variety of musical forms. For example, people who normally listen only to country music will respond with pleasure to a Bach concerto (hey, Freeman said this, not me!), if it is in harmony with your photographs. Music may also be used as a background for live or taped commentary, but using music, words, and slides together in a single effective presentation takes considerable skill. Start with slides and music, or slides and words, and introduce the third element only when you feel fully at ease with the other two.

46. Every original artistic work is automatically protected by copyright from the moment of its creation. Original artistic works include photographs. Thus, no formalities are necessary to copyright a photograph in Canada, and this copyright is automatically valid in most countries. To be protected after publication, you must place a copyright symbol, the year, and your name on all copies available to the public. In Canada, protection for photographs by copyright is for 50 years from the moment the photograph is published.
47. The owner of the copyright for a photograph is the person who owns the original negative or transparency (*and now, the original digital image*). Usually this is the photographer. However, photographs made on assignment or commission belong to the person or firm granting the assignment, unless otherwise specified in writing. For example if somebody commissions you to make his portrait and agrees to purchase it on completion, the copyright does not belong to you, but to the person who commissioned you, even if you retain possession of the original negatives (*or digital images*).
48. When you sell a photograph, you do not sell the copyright. The only way you can transfer copyright is by a statement in writing. You can assign (transfer) copyright in whole or in part, subject to any restrictions you want. It's very important to be specific in assigning copyright. You can specify a stated period of time, a given geographical area, a particular medium or vehicle of reproduction. (For example, "One-time reproduction rights to two photographs of grain elevators at Menedosa, Manitoba; to be published in the annual calendar of Western Grain Growers; the year; for distribution in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta only"). You can be less specific and assign the buyer all North American rights, or all Canadian rights for a certain period of time, or simply All Rights. The greater the rights you sell, the higher your selling price should be.
49. If you intend to have a photograph published, consider whether or not you need a Model Release from the people who are in the photograph. As a general rule, you may photograph a street or other public area or anything without gaining permission from people in the picture. However, if one or just a few people are singled out, written permission must be granted by the individual(s) if your photograph is to be used in advertising matter - unless the person is a celebrity and has, as a result, surrendered that part of his right to privacy. If the photograph is used as a matter of public interest, as in a newspaper, and concerns something the public has a right to be informed about and is used in just that way, the public's right takes precedence over that of the individual. Remember, though that the law defends everyone against defamation. If a photograph defames a person's character, either through the image itself or in the way it is used by a publisher or advertiser, the photographer may be liable along with all others involved. A photograph that represents bare comment or illustrates a proven fact cannot be called defamation.
50. **Membership in camera clubs, photographic societies, and national photographic organizations, such as the CAPA, can be valuable. Usually the small membership fee will be paid back in a very short time in what you learn. (*So that's good, eh?*)**
- 51.

And around 20 of Freeman's Photographic Tips (40%) can be left out.... though I'm sure we could fill them up again with Digital Tips.

