



Photographing People, Children and Your Family



1. P is for Perfect Photos of Pretty People

Actually, P stands for Program mode - which is a semi-automatic mode on your camera. When you are in P mode, the camera looks after the exposure balance for you meaning that it is extraordinarily difficult to get an over or under exposed photograph, (That means too light or too dark.) Your exposure is made up of three main components: ISO, Aperture and Shutter Speed. For people photography, we generally want to ensure our shutter speed is fast enough and the quality of our photos is as good as can be.

Where is the P?

Let's start off by locating the P setting on your camera. All D-SLRs and many Point and Click or Compact cameras will have access to the P setting. If you cannot locate the P, your workshop instructor will be able to show you where it is.

ISO

Changing the ISO is a very simple task - however can be different camera to camera. Your camera may have an ISO button on the top or back display of your camera. It might be accessed through your cameras menu system. If you need help locating your ISO button, please ask your workshop instructor.

When you have located the ISO button - we can then change the ISO for your camera.

As a rule with people photography we want to set our ISO to 400 which will give us a high quality image but and also be sensitive enough to light for a slightly faster shutter speed.

SHUTTER SPEED AND APERTURE

One of the great things about "P" mode is that you can generally change both settings at the same time with one very simple movement. This ensures your shutter will always be fast enough to take a quick photograph without blur - but we retain some control over the aperture.

And because we're in P mode, our exposure will already be balanced!

2. Zoom, Zoom, Zoom

There is a danger when photographing people that we are either standing too close to the subject, zoomed too far out - or a combination of both.

Perspective can play a part in whether or not our photo looks good or is a true representation of our subject. The subject of our photograph should be the main subject in our frame. Fill the frame and zoom in.



Notice in the photo on the left, our subject looks distorted, her head seems larger than her body and the perspective looks unnatural. When we stand a little further back and zoom into our subject, the photo becomes more pleasing.

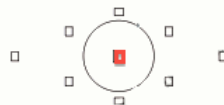
35mm is the minimum safe zoom for photographing people to maintain perspective, though the more you zoom - the better the photo.

The human eye is a 50mm prime lens.

3. Focal Points - Where are you aiming?

Your focal point is the most important thing in the photograph. Most cameras default to multiple focal points - or the camera deciding what is important. Now your instructor will show you how to set a single focal point - so we can tell the camera what is important!

By selecting the centre focal point as our single point of focus on our camera, you will always know where to aim the camera at when starting your photograph. You can then reframe your photo at will!



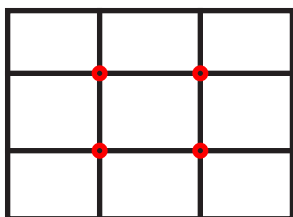
When photographing people, we want to focus on the eye closest to the camera. We half-press our shutter while aiming at the eye and without letting go of the button, reframe to fill the image how we want the end result to look. If you have a group of people, pick the most important person in the photo: the bride, the birthday boy - or if you have more than one child - pick your favourite. Just kidding. You can also pick the centre person in the group - or the person closest to the camera.

4. Rule of Thirds

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.

As you're taking an image you would have done this in your mind through your viewfinder or in the LCD display that you use to frame your shot.

With this grid in mind the 'rule of thirds' now identifies four important parts of the image that you should consider placing points of interest in as you frame your image. Not only this - but it also gives you four 'lines' that are also useful positions for elements in your photo.



TRY AND HAVE EVERY ELEMENT OF YOUR PHOTOGRAPH ALONG ONE OF THE LINES (OR THIRDS).

FRAME YOUR IMAGE SO THAT YOUR FOCAL POINT - THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT/S OF YOUR PHOTOGRAPH ARE PLACED ON ONE OF THE INTERSECTING POINTS

REMEMBER THE RULE OF THIRDS IS **NOT** A SUICIDE PACT

5. Angles and Perspective

Different angles can give a completely different outcome to your photograph. Shooting a photo from above the subject can give the person a meeker appearance, shooting from below can give them an appearance of power. Experiment with your angles depending on your desired outcome - but remember, when we have a conversation with someone we try to maintain eye contact to build a relationship. Shooting straight into the eye of our subject will provide a relationship between the viewer of the photograph and the subject.



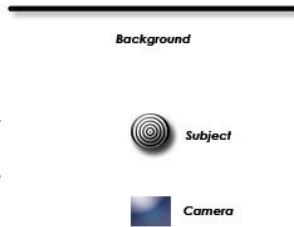
Notice how photographing from eye level - even without the eyes in the photograph provides a more pleasing angle of the subject?

6. Depth of Field (How to blur your background)

The depth of field in your photograph is a lot more than blurring a background - but that is the most commonly used application - and one of the most asked questions in people photography.

A wide aperture (F4, F5.6 etc.) will blur your background whereas a narrower aperture (8, 9, 11, 13 etc.) will bring your background into focus.

Also remember, the more you zoom the more effective your blur and the distance between the camera and the subject has to be LESS than the subject and the background.



Ask yourself - is the background important in the final image. The use of a background is often the difference between a portrait and a photograph - in a portrait it's just about the person - though in a photograph, the background is part of the story.

7. Lights ... Camera ... LIGHTS!



Most people think the best time to take photos of people is outside in the sun. Bzzz. Wrong. While the natural light can be fantastic it can also provide very harsh shadows on our subject.

One of the ways we combat that is with Fill In Flash. We turn our flash ON outside in the sun and use it to fill in the shadows caused by the natural lighting. This provides a more evenly lit photograph and a better end result.

8. What story are you telling?

The story is what it is all about. You can tell a story in your people or portrait photograph in two different ways. The first is purely through expression. Expression and the eyes can tell the complete story. Look at the photo below and take note of the look in the eyes of the subjects and look at the expression in the context of the bigger picture.



The other way of telling your story is through position. If done correctly you can leave expression out of the photo altogether and purely depend on how the subject is sitting, standing, tilting, leaning, etc. to put the story together.



Three photos with almost a complete lack of expression that tell three very different stories.

9. Make it Personal

The best photographs of people are going to be the personal ones - and we mean this in two ways.

1. Is what you're capturing personal to the subject? Is it emotive? These are the moments worth capturing.

2. Is it personal to the photographer? You will always get better results, photographing the people you love rather than strangers!

10. Capture Unaware

The best photos are the ones when the subject isn't posing or expecting a photo to be taken. This is perfectly acceptable for photographing friends and family ...

It is NOT always acceptable for photographing strangers. Sometimes the opportunity is just too great and the result too perfect. If you do photograph a stranger, show them the photo afterwards and ask for permission to keep it.

If a person is NOT the subject of the photo but is however in the photo, eg. you are photographing a public landmark and someone walks in your photograph - this is perfectly acceptable.

11. Be Different - Take photos no-one else is taking

Try to not pose the subject in traditional ways. Make your photos more interesting. A raw moment or a different style will be much more striking than something everyone has seen a million times before.

12. Take LOTS of photos

Turn your camera on to continuous shoot. The more photos you take, the better results you will invariably have. There is a saying in photography - you can always tell a professional by how many photos they delete. It is not uncommon to delete 90% of your shoot - but by ensuring you're taking more photos than you need, you're ensuring that at least one of them will be what you're looking for.

