

# Five Tips for Better Photos

(Especially for Novice Shooters)



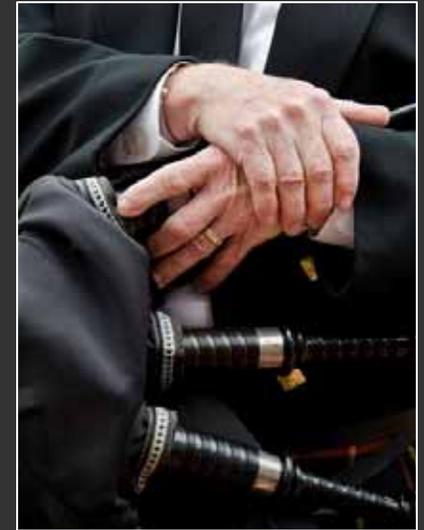
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Ver 1

# In Brief

- Shooting:
  - #1 Move in close
  - #2 Examine all angles before shooting
  - #3 Experiment with your settings
- Post processing:
  - #4 Crop smartly
  - #5 Boost the contrast



# Tip #1: Move in Close

=THE easiest and most impactful thing you can do to get better shots



# Tip #1: Move in Close

Moving or zooming in removes extraneous clutter and allows the viewer to connect with your subject



# Tip #1: Move in Close

- Fill the frame so there's no confusion as to what your subject is
- If you're less than 3 feet away, however, your camera may have problems focusing



# Tip #2: Examine All Angles

Loose rule of thumb:

Ordinary viewpoint + ordinary subject = so-so shot

Unusual viewpoint + ordinary subject = better shot

Ordinary viewpoint + unusual subject = better shot

Unusual viewpoint + unusual subject = better (maybe best) shot

# Tip #2: Examine All Angles

Loose rule of thumb:

Ordinary viewpoint + ordinary subject = so-so shot

Unusual viewpoint + ordinary subject = better shot

Ordinary viewpoint + unusual subject = better shot

Unusual viewpoint + unusual subject = better (maybe best) shot



Ordinary subject  
+  
Ordinary viewpoint  
= *boring*



Ordinary subject  
+  
Unusual viewpoint  
= *better*

# Tip #2: Examine All Angles



Ordinary viewpoint  
+  
Unusual subject  
= *better*



Unusual viewpoint  
+  
Unusual subject  
= *better*



Unusual viewpoint  
+  
Unusual subject  
= *better*

# Tip #2: Examine All Angles

- Things to check for as you walk around:
  - Sun angle
    - Shoot into the sun for sparkling water drops and graphic forms
    - Watch out for lens flare
  - Spacing
    - Separation between your subject and surrounding objects as necessary for your design
    - Ideally silhouettes should not merge into each other



*Merged figures detract from the shot*

# Tip #2: Examine All Angles

- More items to check:
  - Change in shadows on the face of your subject
  - Best backgrounds for what you're trying to achieve
    - No competing patterns or colors (like bricks, and background signs)
    - Good contrast that sets off your subject (simple is often best)
    - Other distractions that mar the composition at the perimeter (telephone poles, street lights, etc.)



# Tip #2: Examine All Angles

Examples of how the sun angle changes the look



*Front lit*



*Back lit*



# Tip #2: Examine All Angles

More examples of sun angle and background on the your subject



*Front lit dandelion against tree*



*Back lit dandelion against twilight sky*

# Tip #3: Experiment with Your Settings

- Expect to discard lots of shots



Source: Digital Photography School

- In this poll almost 40% of photographers said they threw away at least 90% of their shots

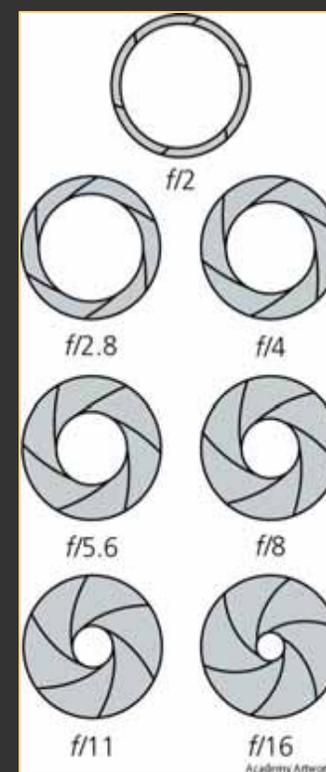
# Tip #3: Experiment with Your Settings

- But...as financial advisors say, diversify!
  - Plan how you'd like the final image to look but be open to other possibilities
  - Change your settings (you must be out of Auto mode)
    - Use a faster shutter to freeze motion  
*1/500 of a second or faster for water droplets*
    - Use a slower shutter to blur  
*1/30 or slower for people walking*



# Tip #3: Experiment with Your Settings

- Change your settings (continued)
  - Force the flash and see what happens (if you're within your flash range)
  - Select a smaller aperture for more area in focus from front-to-back in the image (depth of field)
  - Select a larger aperture for less area in focus



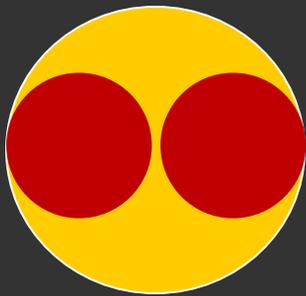
Larger aperture



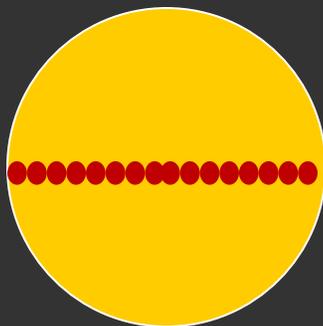
Smaller aperture

# Tip #3: Experiment with Your Settings

Tip: To keep the f stop relationships straight, imagine that the  $f\# =$  the # of times the lens opening could span the lens diameter



For  $F/2$  the openings would fill up half the space so they'd be LARGE



a fraction of the

For  $F/16$  the each openings would fill up space so they'd be SMALL

(like squinting print)

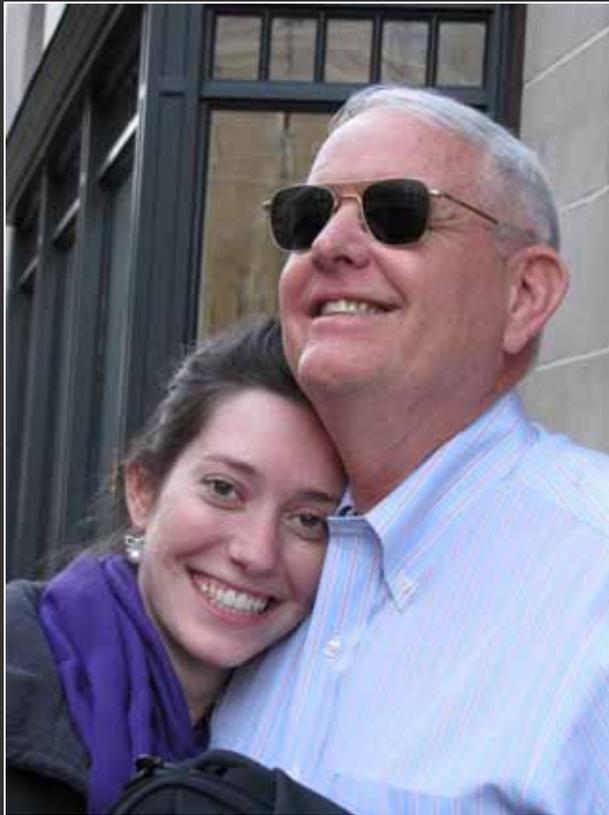
The smaller opening puts more in focus your eyes to read fine

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

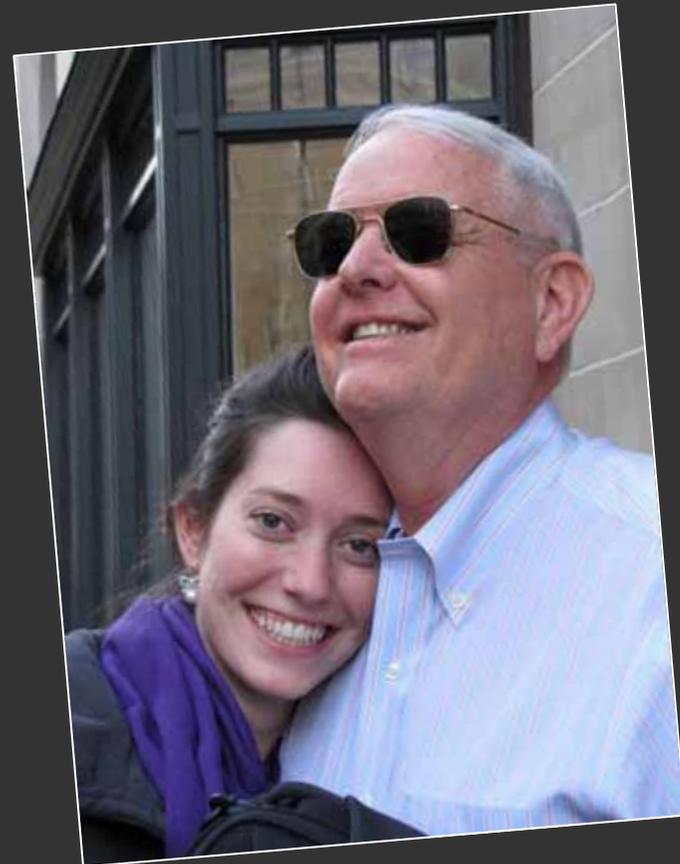
- 6 reasons to crop:
  - Trim after straightening
  - Move subject off center
  - Get rid of distractions
  - Print in a standard size (4x6, 5x7, etc.)
  - Force a vertical or horizontal orientation
  - Create the unexpected
- The higher quality (i.e. the more megapixels in) the image, the more you have to work with, since each crop removes pixels which can limit the maximum size of a printed image

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Straighten an off-kilter photo

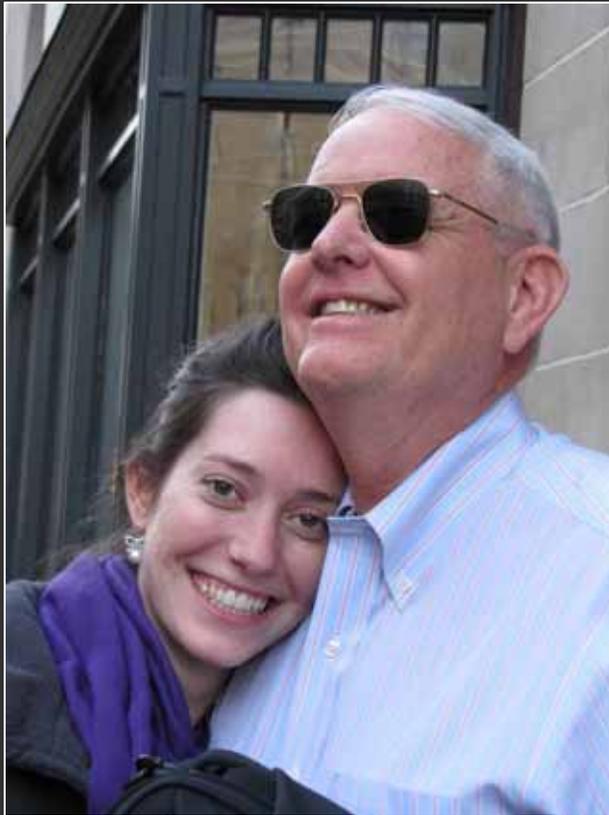


As shot

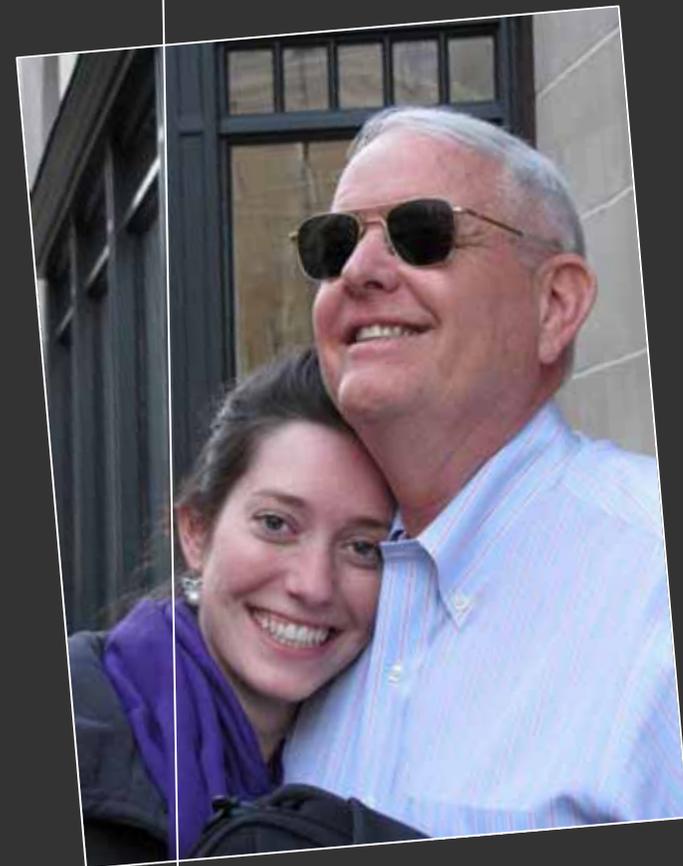


# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Straighten an off-kilter photo



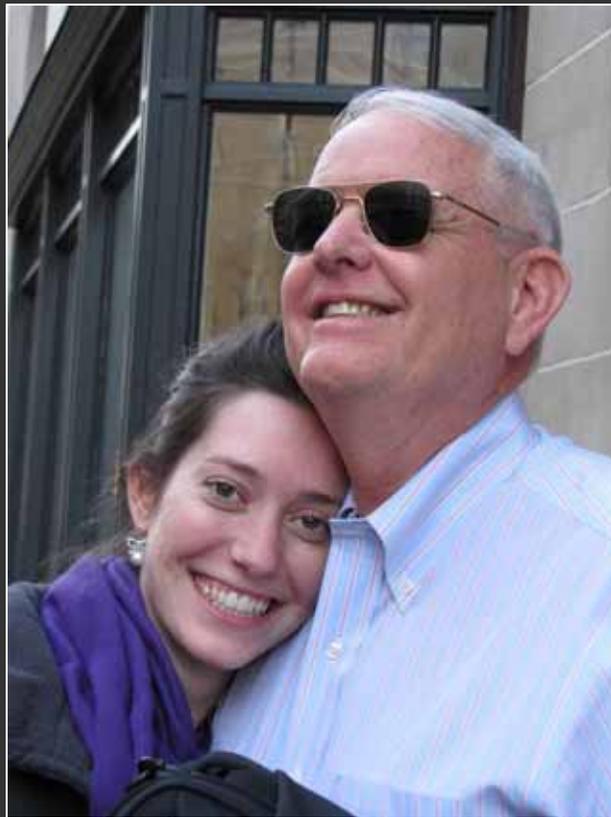
As shot



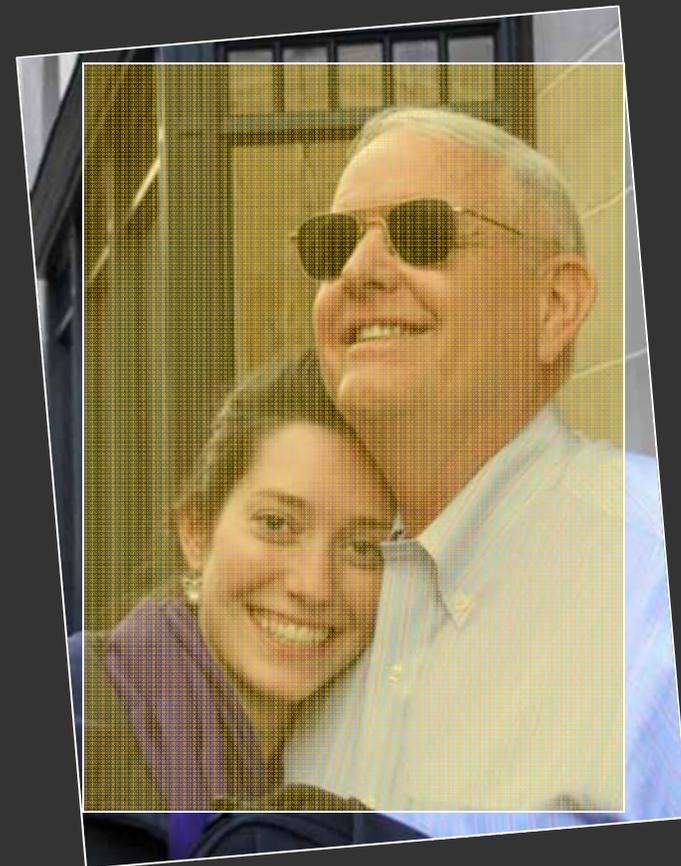
Perpendicular

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Straighten an off-kilter photo



As shot



You will need to crop out the excess

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Move the subject off center



As shot

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Move the subject off center



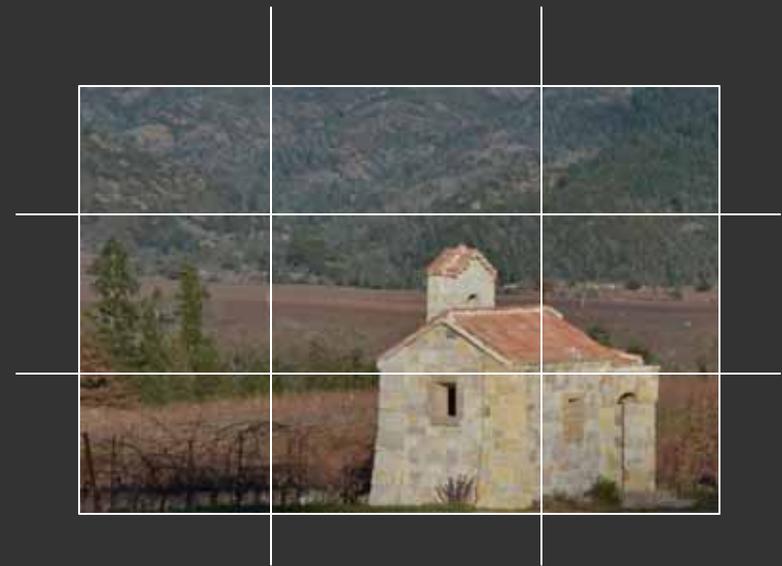
As shot



Cropped

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Move the subject off center



*Rule of thirds*

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Eliminate distractions



As shot

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Eliminate distractions



As shot



Cropped

Don't be afraid to cut off a small amount of your subject.

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Force the composition into the vertical, horizontal or square



As shot



Cropped

A better approach to verticals, however, is to turn your camera so you avoid the pixel loss that results from cropping

# Tip #4: Crop Smartly

- Crop to create the unexpected



As shot



Experimental crops

# Tip #5: Boost the Contrast

- Contrast = the difference between lights and darks
- Low contrast pictures are subdued/flat/boring/calm



Low contrast



High contrast

- High contrast pictures are bright/loud/energetic/garish

# Tip #5: Boost the Contrast

- Just a bit of contrast adds punch to your shots



As shot

# Tip #5: Boost the Contrast

- Just a bit of contrast adds punch to your shots



As shot



After contrast added

# Tip #5: Boost the Contrast

Contrast is especially effective for misty or foggy shots



As shot

# Tip #5: Boost the Contrast

Contrast is especially effective for misty or foggy shots



As shot



After contrast added

# Tip #5: Boost the Contrast



As shot



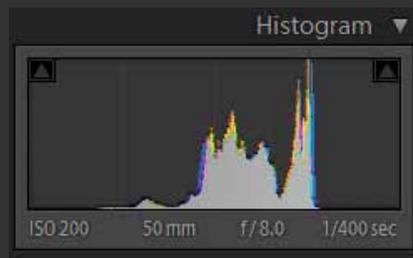
After contrast added

You may need to adjust the image brightness up or down as you adjust the contrast

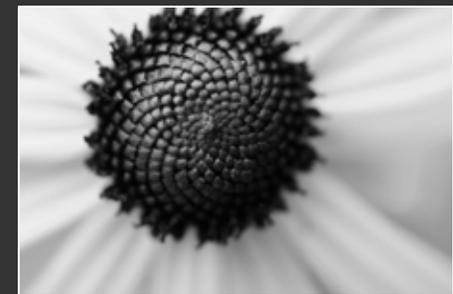
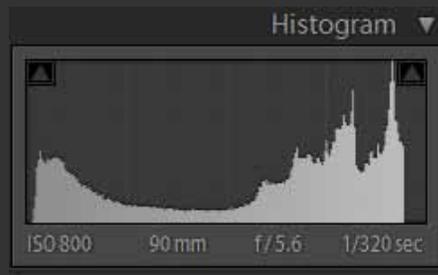
# Tip #5: Boost the Contrast

- Your histogram (a plot of the tonal values in your image) will give you some clues:

- Bunched together  
= low contrast



- Spread out  
= high contrast



# Resources

- Photo editing programs:
  - Microsoft Picture Manager (part of Windows)
  - Apple's iPhoto (with Mac computers)
  - Google's Picasa (free)
  - FastStone (free)
  - Software you may have received with your camera
  - Adobe Photoshop Elements (v10 new: \$75, v5 used: ~\$12 on Amazon)
- YouTube videos
  - A search on Cropping and Photography yielded 81 results
- Scott Kelby ([www.kelbytraining.com](http://www.kelbytraining.com))
  - Lots of training videos
  - Free 24-hour pass to test drive
  - \$199 a year/\$24.99 a month

Let your ideas take flight!

