

What Makes A Good Photograph?

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If you want to capture and make good photographs, an attention to detail will serve you well:

- ***In capture***
- ***In photo editing***
- ***In presentation as a print or projected photograph***

Why do we MAKE photographs?

- Family Memories & Family History
- Travel Memories
- Pretty Scenes (Post Card views/Instagram)
- Something of Interest
- Document an event / subject / topic
- Favourite subject (I Like ...)
- To win competitions at club ... and beyond ...
- Artistic Expression

<i>What makes a good photograph?</i>	
<i>Technique</i>	<i>Subjective</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Camera Craft:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exposure• Focus• Depth of Field• Shutter Speed• Composition• Processing - basic• Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inspiration & Creativity<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Composition• Processing – creative• Photographic Style• Subject Matter• Presentation
<i>The Photographer's decisions and instincts</i>	

What makes a good Photograph? TECHNIQUE

1. Camera Craft:
 - a. *Exposure*
 - b. *Focus*
 - c. *Depth of Field*
 - d. *Shutter Speed*
2. Composition
3. Processing - basic
4. Presentation

A good photograph will be well

Exposed

- Highlights will not be 'burnt out' and have some detail;
- Shadow detail should not be blocked out with no detail – some detail in shadow areas is generally preferred unless the picture is a silhouette.

A good photograph will be well

Saturated

- Colour pictures may appear natural, moody or vibrant.
- The most important thing here is that the colours work together and do not clash or look obviously 'tweaked'.
- Soft or muted saturation in a picture taken on a sunny day needs to be managed carefully, as it could easily just indicate over exposure.

A good photograph will be well

Toned

- Monochrome photos rely on the gradation of tones for impact and to tell the story.
- Shadow detail and highlight detail is evident in the best monochrome pictures.
- Most often you will see "traditional" black and white photographs, but sepia toning and blue toning are also common.
- A picture that looks flat and lifeless will generally be lacking in tonal range and/or contrast and will lose the effect of light creating 3-d or mood impacts.

Is it well exposed? Normal Exposures

What makes a good photograph?

- Is it well exposed?



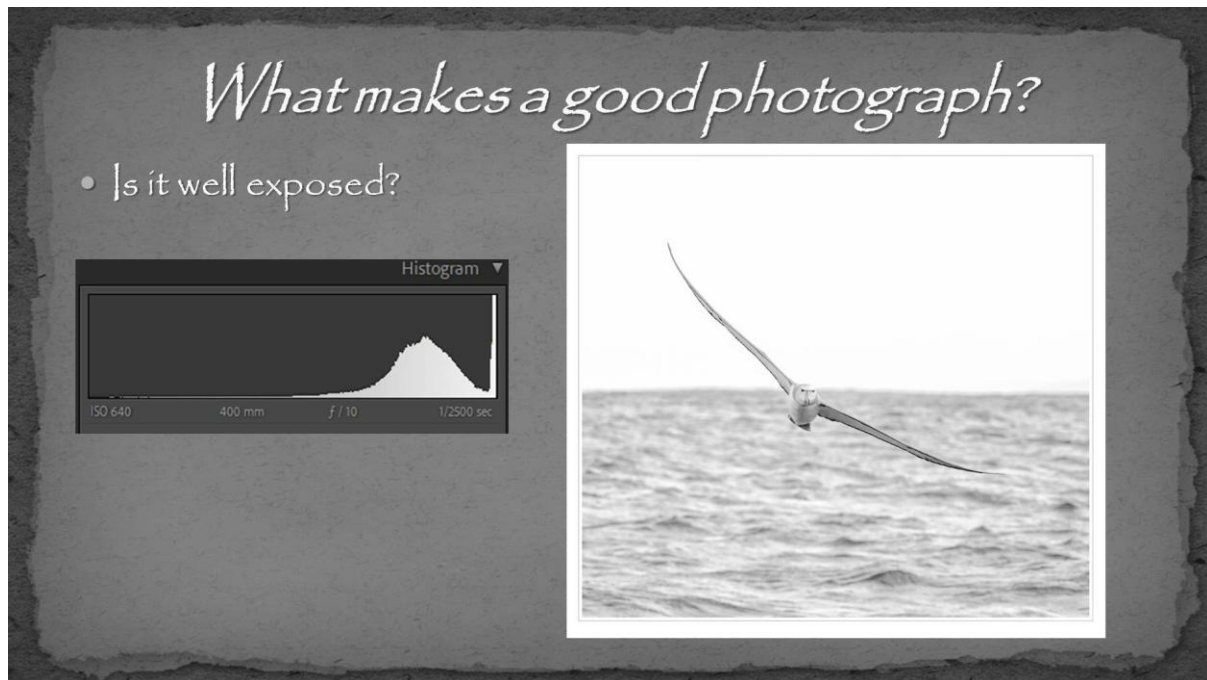
A well exposed, “normal” exposure has a good range of tones from light to dark, more concentrated in the mid tones of the histogram. For the statistically-minded, the histogram looks like a “Bell curve”.

The key to these photographs looking well-exposed lies with the use subtle tonal and colour variations in the mid tones without colour becoming overly obvious (i.e. oversaturated and cartoonish).

Highlights and shadows appear realistic, contrast is not noticeable.

It is not necessary to stretch the histogram from a true black to white whether producing a colour or monochrome photograph.

Is it well exposed? High Key Exposures



A well exposed “high key” exposure has its tones dominated by highlights. The histogram will be heavily concentrated towards the highlight end of the histogram. The lighter tones will generally frame the mid and darker tones.

The key with the exposure settings for high key photography are the decisions you as photographer make to restrict or allow some white areas to become pure white (blown out) for the visual effect you desire.

The key to these photographs looking well-exposed are the subtle tonal and colour variations evident in the highlight tones without colour or tone becoming overly dark except where the main subject is being separated from the lighter tones in the background.

Mid tones and shadows should appear light, but with sufficient contrast and tonal variation to be separated from the light background. How dark you take the dark tones depends on what framing of the subject looks realistic.

It is not necessary to stretch the histogram to a true black in this style of photography, whether producing a colour or monochrome photograph.

Is it well exposed? Low Key Exposures



A well exposed “low key” exposure has its tones dominated by dark/shadow areas. The histogram will be heavily concentrated towards the black (dark) end of the histogram. The darks tones will generally frame the mid tones.

The key with the exposure settings for low key photography are the decisions you as photographer make to restrict or allow some dark areas to become pure black (blocked in) for the visual effect you desire.

The key to these photographs looking well-exposed are the subtle tonal and colour variations evident in the dark tones without colour or tone becoming overly light, except where the main subject is being separated from the darker tones in the background.

Mid tones can appear light against a dark background, and indeed act as the highlights in this style of photography. It is not necessary to stretch the histogram towards a true white in this style of photography, whether producing a colour or monochrome photograph.

A good photograph will be well

Composed

- The elements in the picture will be pleasingly arranged and taken from an interesting angle; ideally a picture that looks 'right' to the viewer is well composed.
- Strong compositions and viewpoints that are not always at eye level usually have an impact – a 'wow' factor - that is evident on first viewing.
- The centre of interest (or main subject matter) is presented simply or without visual distractions.
- Distractions can include objects that partially obscure the centre of interest, or light/colour patches that take the eye away from the centre of interest.
- Be wary of strong highlights and bright colours that surround the centre of interest – the viewer's eye is always attracted to the brightest or most colourful part of a picture.

A good photograph will be well

Focussed

- By the use of either aperture (for depth of field), or point of focus, the photographer
- can direct the viewer to the most important part of the picture.

A good photograph will be well

Processed

- No noticeable errors or over-processing
 - Noise
 - Dust Spots
 - Over-sharpening
 - Cloning errors
- Saturation, Tone, Exposure all look "right"; no unnecessary clipping of highlights or blocking of shadows.

What makes a good Photograph? SUBJECTIVITY

1. Inspiration & Creativity
 - a. *Composition*
 - b. *Processing – creative*
 - c. *Photographic Style*
2. Subject Matter
3. Presentation

A good photograph will be well Created

- Alternative viewpoints and composition choices are deliberate choices.
- Creative and manipulated pictures often break some of the exposure and saturation guidelines above and should be encouraged.
- When making these pictures, a rule of thumb to use is that if you can see the detail of the technique used, more than seeing an overall enhancing effect to the final picture, then the technique has not worked as it should.

A good photograph will be well Presented

- Framing, matting and picture quality must not contain obvious errors or technical faults.
- Mats/borders must be straight, balanced; border colour must not clash with the picture.
- Print quality (or the projected picture) will have no obvious blemishes or technical faults that detract from the overall impact.
- Presentation quality can be used as one factor to separate equally rated pictures at the selection of awards in competitions and exhibitions.

A good photograph will be

Interesting

- A good photograph will be interesting to the viewer.
- That often means the subject (or style) is interesting to the viewer.
- That does not mean that a subject (or style) you like automatically makes it a good photograph.
- Equally, if you don't like the subject (or style) it doesn't make it a bad photograph.
- The challenge for all photographers is to appreciate a good photograph for that which makes it a good photograph.
- That challenge is greater for anyone asked to judge any visual art, but especially photography with its documentary and artistic traditions.

Finally:

A good photograph will not show these processing problems or errors

- Cloning Errors
- Dust Spots
- Digital Noise
- Blown Highlights
- Blocked in Shadows
- Over/Under Saturated colours
- Highlights/ Amputations near edge of frame (away from main subject)
- Overly contrasty, loss of mid tone contrast – when grungy goes too far