

Photography Tips from Alan Roland-Price

- Subject matter. This can be anything - landscape, portrait, wildlife, still life. But generally, the subject matter has to be in focus, sharp. In a portrait or wildlife this is generally taken to be the eyes. Also bare in mind when taking a portrait, the background should normally be blurred (narrow depth of field (aperture setting <math><f4.0</math>) depending on distances and composition).
- Composition. Composition is vital. A landscape looks so much better if there is something in the foreground (you will need a big depth of field (about $>f8.0$ to get foreground and background in focus). A creative shot is always better than a normal shot, look for the unusual or different angle. Try to capture 'mood'. Think about framing a photograph with trees or a door frame. Symmetry can be a powerful tool, especially when photographing indoors (castles, cathedrals). Always take time and think about composition. Make sure the horizon is horizontal and water / sea doesn't run uphill. Use the rule of thirds - divide the photograph into thirds, your main subject should be on one (or more) of the dividing lines. People and animals should look into the centre of the photograph rather than looking at an edge.
- Lighting. Again, vitally important. My preference is for natural light, especially at dawn or dusk (the golden hour). Sunlight is fine but beware of deep shadow out of the sun. Your subject should always be in the light. Don't be afraid to use flash in daylight to lighten your subject. Indoor photographs, using natural light from windows can have good effect.
- Camera. All cameras, including mobile phones, can take excellent photographs. However, it is important to know the limitations of your camera. Most iPads and mobile phones will take good photos of static objects / people but are not capable of taking moving objects in low light (people dancing for example). It is important, whatever your camera, to know how to use it. Play around with the nobs and buttons. Learn what they do. Take the camera off 'auto' and change the aperture, exposure and ISO.
- Focus. I have already mentioned focus. Focus can be improved by holding the camera steady (elbows tightly in to the body) and using a fast exposure (if light permits). Also, as a general rule if you are using a 100mm lens, use an exposure of at least 1/100th of a sec - the inverse rule. This means that if you have a zoom lens of say 400mm, then you need to be using an exposure of at least 1/400th of a sec or faster. The bigger the lens, the more susceptible you will be to camera shake.
- Film format. Most cameras shoot in jpeg format. This means that the camera processes the photograph as best it can before you see the photo. In other words, it is ready to be posted on-line or printed. More expensive cameras can shoot in RAW format which captures all colours but does expect outside editing (from software like photoshop or lightroom). Beware of over-photoshopping. The art is to try and improve the photograph rather than falsify the colours.