



SUBJECT GUIDELINES

Number of SubjectsA single dominant subject is usually best. If you have multiple subjects an odd number such as 3 or 5 will almost always be better than 2 or 4.

Two SubjectsIf you have 2 subjects try to overlap them, in effect creating a single subject. Arrange them at different heights. Light them differently. Anything to prevent them from competing with each other for the viewers attention.

Very Common SubjectsUse a different pose or an unusual composition in order to hold the viewers interest.

ComplexityKeep the subject simple. The last comment you want to hear is "what am I supposed to be looking at?"

LIGHTING GUIDELINES

Scenics.....The best light for scenics will be the 2 hours after sunrise and 2 hours before sunset.

Outdoor PortraitsThe best light for flowers, people and wildlife will be in the shade or on an overcast day. Block the sun or move the subject into the shade and then add back just the right amount of light with a flash or reflectors.

Bad WeatherUse bad weather to your advantage. It will allow you to shoot in the middle of the day.

Back LightingTry this technique if you cannot avoid a harsh sun. Use natural light or a reflector or flash.

Infra-Red.....If your camera does not have a blocking filter you may shoot BW infra-red directly using a tripod and a #87 wratten filter. For a pseudo infra-red shoot in color, select either the green or red channel and do one of the following.

1. Filter/Distort/Diffuse Glow and adjust the sliders or 2. Select/Color Range/Sampled Colors/fuzziness = 50/ click on a white area /Select/Modify/Expand by 2/Select/Modify/Feather by 20/Edit/Fill/White/Normal/80%. Repeat with different settings until you get the result you want. Infra-red works best in bright sun. To test your camera shine a TV remote into the lens. If you can see the light you do not have a blocking filter.

Night Simulation.... Set your camera on full manual mode. Use a small f-stop (F22) and a high shutter speed (>1/500) to eliminate all ambient light. Use just enough flash to light the subject and not the background.

COMPOSITION GUIDELINES

Place your subject at a 1/3 pointbut do not discard "bullseyes" completely. There are times when they can be effective.

Backgrounds must be unobtrusive. The single biggest fault is a background that draws your attention away from the subject. Moving a few feet (or in the case of close-ups a few inches) sometimes makes all the difference. Better no background than a bad one. If you cannot eliminate a bad background in the field use image software.

ForegroundsEstablish "depth" with techniques such as framing, leading lines and foreground objects.

Horizon LinesShould be kept out of the middle of your image. Put them high to emphasize the foreground, low to emphasize the sky. A horizon line in the middle creates two images confusing the viewer.

DiagonalsAdd action and excitement to an image. If that is your intent place your subject on a diagonal.

CurvesAdd grace and relaxation to an image. Always try for a curved road, fence line, river, etc in a scenic.

Repeating Patterns Can add a special interest to your images. Compose them left to right.

Reflections.....Reflections add a whole new dimension to an image but you may have to lay on the ground to find one.

Vertical CompositionsVertical compositions imply power and strength as opposed to.....

Horizontal Compositions which imply peace and quiet. Always try both.

MotionLeave a little more space in the direction that the subject is moving than behind. For still subjects that are looking out of the frame leave more space in the direction they are looking.

WaterfallsYou must shoot at 1/2, 1/4, 1/8 and 1/15 second and pick the best one. If you cannot get to those speeds naturally use a neutral density filter. (sometimes a polarizer will do the trick). Shoot when the sun is not on the waterfall.

AnticipateStay alert. Watch for might happen as well as what is happening.

Shooting through glassFind a clean spot and put your lens against the glass to eliminate reflections. If you must use a flash get it away from the camera with a cord. If you are shooting through water you may have to focus manually. Try not to shoot at an angle through the glass.

Shooting through wireGet as close to the wire as possible. Make sure your subject is as far away from the wire as possible. Use a wide open f-stop. Get the subjects eyes in an opening. If you need a flash get it off camera with a cord. Avoid situations where sun is on the wire.

SummaryThe word guidelines means exactly that. They will result in the best image most of the time but there are situations where ignoring them may also produce excellent results. Do not be afraid to experiment, particularly now when it costs nothing to shoot dozens if not hundreds of images of the same subject. PFLI Seminar Series March 2007