

01

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Week

MAKING YOUR FIRST PHOTOS

This module will introduce you to some fundamental photographic principles and techniques, starting you on your journey toward capturing the perfect image.

In this module, you will:

- ▶ **assess what decisions** need to be made before you make a photo, and why a photo is "made" rather than "taken";
- ▶ **study different types of subjects** and their possibilities;
- ▶ **try it yourself** by importing images after a session;
- ▶ **experiment and explore different photos** through guided assignments;
- ▶ **review your photographs** and learn how to avoid some common mistakes;
- ▶ **enhance your images** with simple exposure fixes in post-production;
- ▶ **review what you've learned** about making a photograph and see if you're ready to move on.

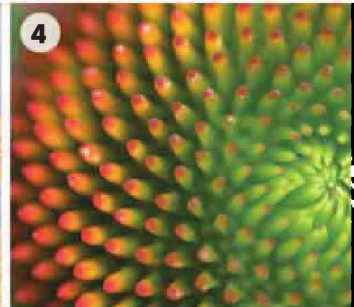
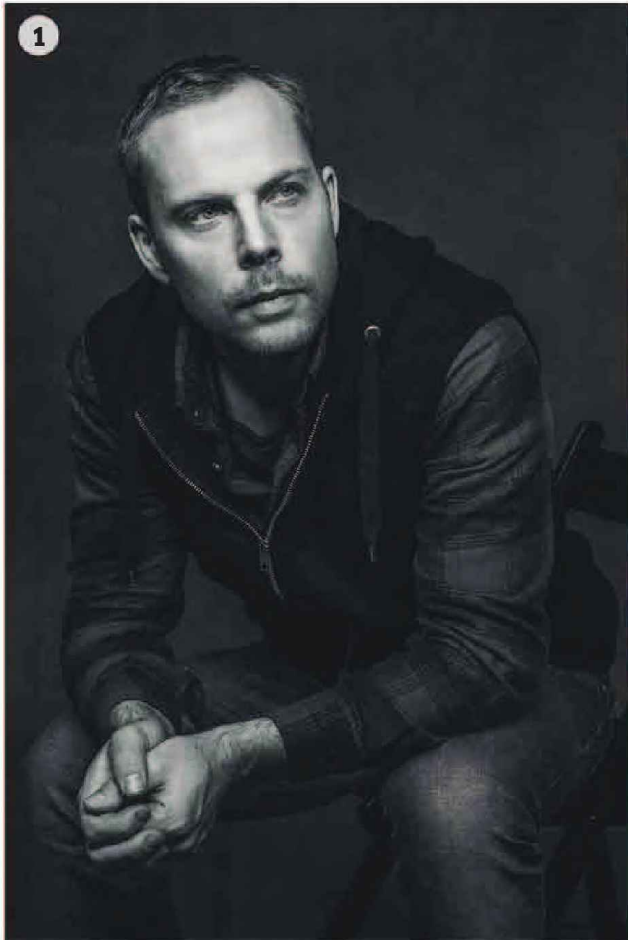
Let's begin...





▶ TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What makes a good photo?



The way you compose, frame, and time your photograph is critical in determining how successfully you will get your message across. See if you can spot which type, or genre, of photo is represented by each of these shots.

A Landscape: A broad image of a landscape can capture the beauty of nature.

B Moment or street shot: Crowd scenes can capture the dynamism of life on the street.

C Sports/action: Stopping the action at a key moment can emphasize the drama of sports.

D Portrait: A strong portrait can give real insights into the character of the subject.

E Close-up or macro: Making something larger than life can have great visual impact.

F Nature: The natural world is a rich source of dramatic subjects.

G Fashion: Shooting the glamorous world of fashion is exciting, but you need to develop a feeling for how to show clothes and accessories at their best.

H Architecture: The built environment can produce very dramatic images.

ANSWERS

- E/4: Detail of an echinacea flower
- F/6: A flock of geese flying in formation
- G/7: Late afternoon fashion shoot
- H/3: Deserted modern office building
- A/2: Grand Teton National Park
- B/5: A busy street market in Bac Ha, Vietnam
- C/8: Rugby game, UK
- D/1: Black-and-white portrait of a man



NEED TO KNOW

- Try varying the angles and height from which you shoot, working around the subject to cover it in full. Sometimes changing your camera angle and position by just a small amount can make all the difference between an acceptable photograph and a perfect one.
- Shooting from a high position lets you get above the action, while shooting from behind the subject allows you to show what they see.

- Shoot at different times of the day to exploit the varying positions of the sun.
- With a digital camera, there are no limitations on the number of shots you can take, so make sure you shoot enough images to thoroughly explore every aspect of your subject.



Review these points and see how they relate to the photos shown here



► UNDERSTAND THE THEORY

Settings and subjects

Although cameras can give excellent results in fully automatic mode, it is important to understand how the various settings affect the final image. For real creative control you will sometimes need to override the camera's automatic settings. Depending on the type of shot you are making, you will need to concentrate on a different aspect of the camera's controls, using manual functions to set exposure and focus exactly how you want them.

SHUTTER SPEED

A high shutter speed (opening the shutter for as little as 1/5000sec) lets the sensor capture only a tiny fraction of your subject's movement, allowing you to freeze the action (see pp.188-189).

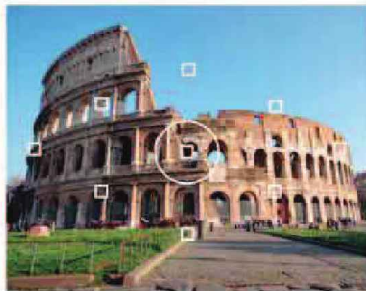


A slower shutter speed, such as 1/15sec, can be used to create blur for effect, or to allow you to use a small aperture to achieve a greater depth of field.

VIEWFINDER

When we look at a scene, we tend to see only the important elements and ignore the rest. A camera, on the other hand, sees all the details.

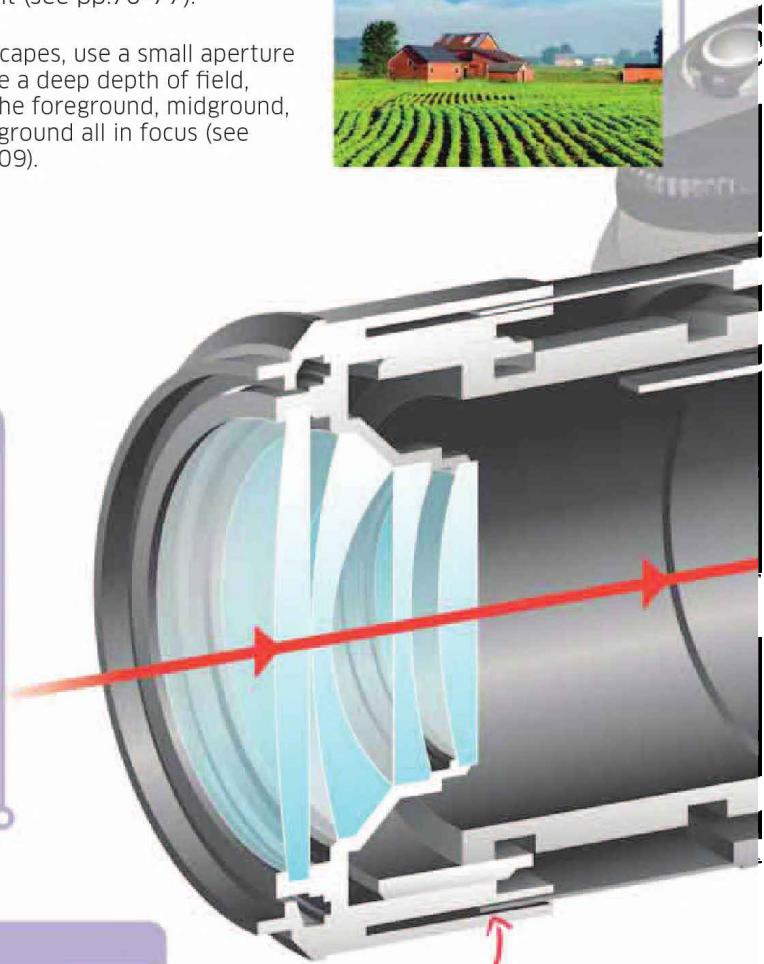
Elements we may not notice can become dominant when seen in print or on screen. Look through the Viewfinder in both horizontal and vertical formats to frame your images.



APERTURE

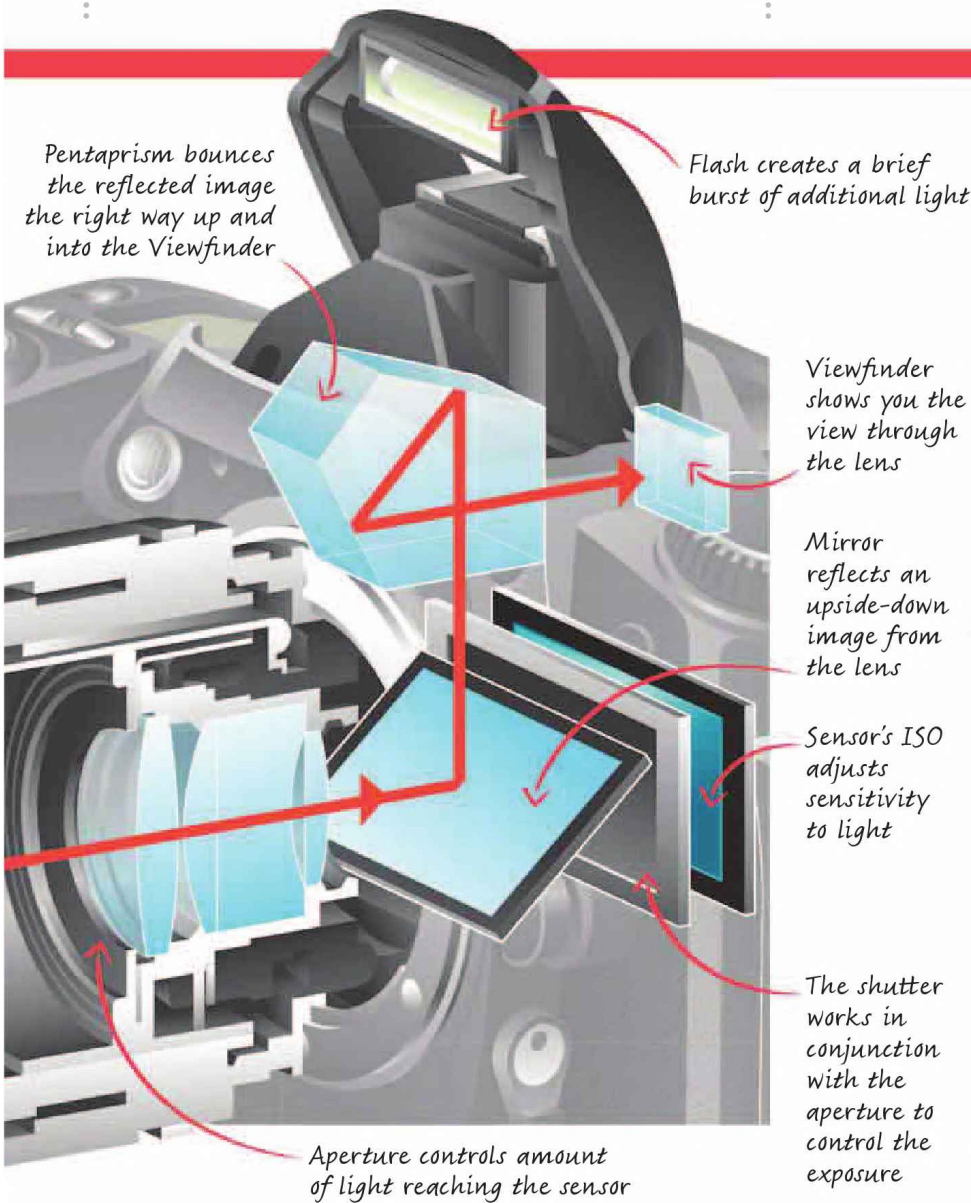
A small aperture lets in less light and gives your images greater sharpness; a large one lets in more light (see pp.76-77).

For landscapes, use a small aperture to achieve a deep depth of field, keeping the foreground, midground, and background all in focus (see pp.108-109).



Focus ring is used to focus the lens on the subject

Pro tip: Try to get to the location early to give yourself time to find the best position to shoot from, then wait for the action and the light to come to you.



FLASH

Your flash allows you to light the subject (see pp.284-285). It can be built-in, attached, or fired remotely.

You can use your flash to “fill in” the shadows when shooting in sunny conditions with high contrast, or as a main source of light for a portrait.



CAMERA MODE

Most DSLRs have several shooting modes from which to choose (see Week 3). Program mode is good for general use or when you are shooting fast in changing light conditions. Aperture Priority is best for landscapes and static subjects, and Shutter Priority is perfect for action and sports. For ultimate control, switch to Manual to set the exact settings you want.



FOCUSING

Depending on the situation, you can use the camera’s built-in autofocus (AF) mode, or switch to Manual focus and choose the focus point yourself (see pp.44-45).

In a portrait shot, you generally want to focus the lens on the subject’s eyes—usually the eye closest to the lens.



SENSOR SENSITIVITY (ISO)

Setting your sensor’s sensitivity (or ISO) to a high number will let you shoot in low light (see pp.300-301), a common situation in documentary photography.

Using a lower ISO will give maximum image quality, which is great for landscapes, but you may need to use a tripod to hold the camera steady.



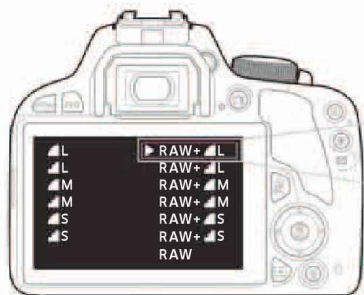


▶ LEARN THE SKILLS

Importing images



In order to properly view and work on your images, you will need to copy them from your camera onto a computer. There's no set way of doing this, so try to develop a system that works best for you.



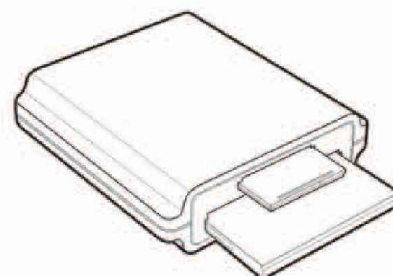
1 Decide on your image capture resolution

You should choose your preferred image size on your camera before taking any photographs. The smaller the file size you choose, the more images you can store, and the faster they will write to the card, but the image quality will not be as good.



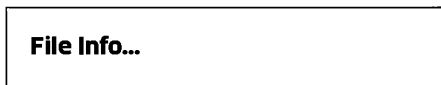
2 Transfer your images to your computer

Remove the memory card from your camera and use a card reader (shown below) or connect the camera directly to your computer using a USB cable to transfer your images.



5 Add a caption and copyright information

Using the File Info command, add a caption and your contact details so that your image can be identified in the future.



Adding information to your images allows you to organize and find them quickly (see Week 20 for more details).



6 Save the image

You will need to choose how you want to save the image. Saving as a RAW file will give the best quality, but a larger file. If you are saving as a JPEG, you need to select the compression level depending on what the image is going to be used for, such as print or web design.

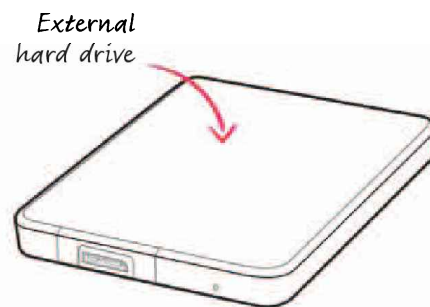


JPEG image quality ranges from 1 to 12



7 Back up your images

You should back up your images onto some form of external storage so that there are duplicate copies in case your hard drive fails or you lose your computer. Many pros will back up onto several formats, such as a large external hard drive, a DVD, or even a cloud-based server.



Where to start: You will need your camera, a memory card, a card reader or a cable to connect your camera to a computer, a computer, and a backup system, such as an external hard drive.

You will learn: How to set up a consistent and coherent workflow so that you can quickly shoot, import, retrieve, and publish your images.



3 Select the best images

Open your image-viewing program and choose the images you want to work on.



4 Adjust the image

Open the image you want to work on using image-editing software, such as Photoshop. If you are shooting in RAW, you will need to open the image in the Adobe Camera RAW plug-in or something similar. You can then make some simple adjustments, such as altering contrast and exposure, cropping, and retouching the image (see pp.38-39).

You can crop in tight to show just the subject



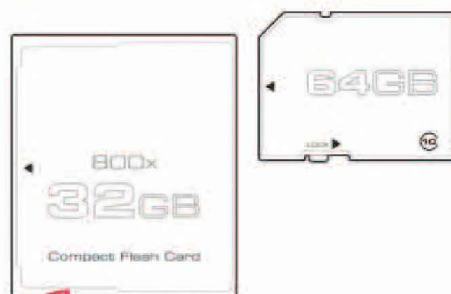
The Crop tool allows you to crop in on an image, removing any unwanted parts



i GEAR: MEMORY CARDS

The memory card is the part of the camera where your images are stored. They are usually removable and come in a variety of capacities.

Ideally, you should buy a memory card that has enough capacity to capture files in RAW format, as this will give you the best quality. If you can, use the RAW plus JPEG mode on your camera so that you can use the JPEGs for quick editing and then work on the RAW files for the final image processing.



The capacity of memory cards is getting bigger all the time, so make sure you've bought one big enough to store all the images you want to take

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- You need to select the most appropriate image size and type, such as RAW or JPEG, before you take a photograph.
- Add information to your image so that you can find and identify it later on, and include copyright data should you want to sell it to other people.

Always make sure that you save and back up your images





▶ PRACTICE AND EXPERIMENT

Shooting different subjects

When taking photos, try to make detailed notes about the settings of your aperture, shutter speed, and ISO. Even in automatic mode, digital cameras will embed these details in every image, and this information will help you to determine whether certain settings work or not, so that you can either continue to use them or adjust them later.



Streets can be portrayed as quiet and lonely...



ON THE STREET



EASY



2-3 HOURS



BASIC



OUTDOORS



A WELL-LIT SCENE

The street is the stage for much of everyday life, and a street scene should give the viewer a sense of place and of how life is lived. It also gives you an opportunity to work at making a visually complex and challenging image.

- **Find** an interesting backdrop and wait for something to happen. Patience is important, since you might stand in a particular spot for a long time waiting for the right combination of things to occur.

- **Concentrate** on people's body language, and how they relate (or don't) to each other and their surroundings. Pay special attention to eyes and hands, since they can say a lot about someone's attitude toward those around them. Look for juxtapositions and contrasts, and, if you can, make some humorous images too.

- **Think** about the light and how it changes during the day, and how this changing light will affect your scene.



... or as chaotic spaces full of life.

Pro tip: Be aware of the impact you may be having on your environment. Is your presence changing the situation? Are people acting for the camera, or are they behaving normally?



EASY

INDOORS

2-3 HOURS

A MODEL

BASIC

Shooting people engaged in an activity is a common theme in photography. Learning how to work your way around a subject to find the best angles and lighting will help improve your skills.

- **Hold** your camera so that you are able to move around your subject easily and without too much fuss.
- **Take** photos from as many angles as possible, but try not to disturb the person while they are at work.
- **Think** about the nature of the job and the relationship of the person to their work. Does this affect the photograph you take?



This sculptor could be easily disturbed—be careful when taking photos of someone at work.



HEAD-AND-SHOULDERS PORTRAIT

EASY

INDOORS

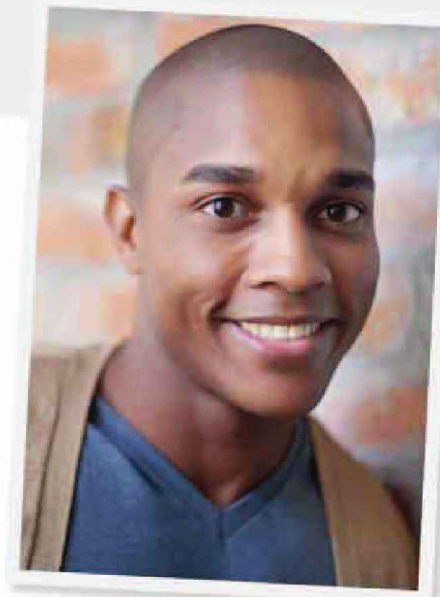
1 HOUR

A MODEL

BASIC

The human face and figure have always fascinated photographers, and different poses can convey different characteristics of a person. See if you can find a pose that best suits your model's personality.

- **Ask** the model to sit so that they are directly facing the camera. Take a variety of photos from different heights and using various lighting.
- **Get** the model to turn slightly toward the camera. Repeat the sequence using different heights, angles, and lighting.



Ask your model which of your shots best captures their character.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- Your presence may make a subject behave in a different way and cause them to appear unnatural, so try not to interfere, especially if they are going about their lives.
- Changes in light and weather during the day will affect your photo. Think about how the light will be in the morning and at midday. Will your image look better when it is sunny or overcast?



A BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE

EASY

OUTDOORS

2-3 HOURS

A WELL-LIT SCENE

BASIC + tripod

Lines, such as this mountain ridge, help to guide the viewer's eye around the image

Learning how to shoot amazing landscape images that give a dramatic sense of place is an essential skill.

■ **Be prepared** to do a lot of walking to find the perfect viewpoint. Go out in good light—at dawn or dusk. Think in advance about where the light will be coming from and choose the right time of day to be there.

■ **Set** your camera on a tripod so that it is nice and steady, to reduce any blur caused by camera movement.

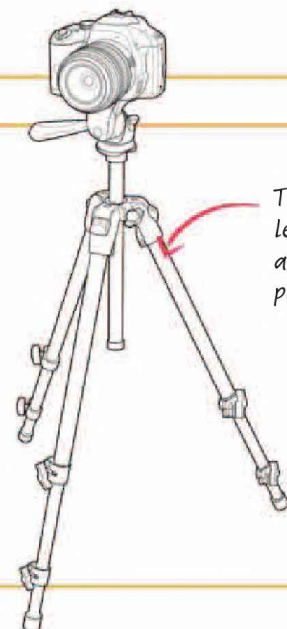
■ **Play** with your composition. Landscapes often work well with the horizon line positioned either in the top or bottom third of the image, rather than in the center.



KIT: TRIPOD

Using a tripod will help to avoid camera shake when your shutter speed needs to be slow due to the light, or because you want to use a small aperture to get a large depth of field (see Week 6). Tripods are also useful for making very precise compositions as you can make small adjustments to the camera position. You can also use a tripod to make a time-lapse exposure, or a panoramic or 360-degree image.

Choose a tripod that is strong and sturdy—it needs to be able to give stable support. However, there is a trade-off between weight and stability; if it is too heavy, you won't want to carry it around, but if it is too light, it won't support the camera.



The three legs provide a good, solid platform



SHOOT A STILL LIFE

EASY

INDOORS

2-3 HOURS

OBJECTS SUITABLE FOR
A STILL LIFE

BASIC + tripod

The **detail shot or still life** makes us pay attention to something we might otherwise have overlooked, and can often be used to make an interesting picture from something that would usually be considered rather dull.

■ **Take** a number of everyday objects and set them up on a table near a window so that they are lit from the side.

■ **Shoot** a series of photos, taking them from different angles. Try to get above the objects or as low as possible. Move as close as your camera will let you and then move farther away.

■ **Look** carefully at the images you have made, and see how the different positions have affected your image. You can also rearrange the objects to see what effect this may have.



Detail shots can make small objects, such as these asparagus spears, appear larger than life



GET IN ON THE ACTION

EASY

OUTDOORS

2-3 HOURS

A MODEL

BASIC

Learning how to photograph fast-moving subjects will help improve your reaction time and your ability to focus and shoot quickly.

■ **Find** a sports or action event—a soccer game would be a good choice, or a race on a lapped course such as mountain biking where you can find a good vantage point and shoot the riders as they come past each time.

■ **Stand** in a good spot on the course or field and shoot a wide-angle shot with the subject moving through the frame.

■ **Look** for peak moments in the action, and try to fill the whole frame for the greatest impact.



Try to position yourself where an impressive piece of action is likely to occur.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

- Action shots look best when you capture a key piece of movement.
- A tripod is essential when using slow shutter speeds to avoid camera shake and a blurred image.
- Landscapes work well when the light is good, so check the weather forecast beforehand.



▶ ASSESS YOUR RESULTS

Reviewing your shots

After you have spent a week taking and experimenting with these early photos, edit them to select the best images from each assignment. Look carefully and think how you could have improved each of them.



Did you get close enough to the subject?

Does your subject fill the frame? This image has been composed so that there is something going on all the way across the frame.



Is your image well-composed?

In this shot, the horizon line is positioned less than one-third up from the bottom of the frame and the sun and boat balance the composition with the trees on the right-hand side. Read more about composition in Week 12 and Week 13.



Is the image sharp where you want it to be?

The dog's eyes are sharp in this image, while the rest is out of focus. Week 6 will show you how to create this effect.



Did you get the exposure right?

This photograph has been deliberately underexposed so that the figures stand out as silhouettes against the sky. Turn to Week 4 to learn how you can vary exposure.

“You don't **take a photograph,** you **make it.**”

ANSEL ADAMS

01

WEEK



◀ **How is your cropping?**

Is everything inside the frame there because you want it to be? This shot is tightly cropped to exclude any background that would detract from the impact of the image.



▲ **Have you used the light well?**

Waiting for the right light has made these buildings stand out against the background. Read Week 16 to see how you can use different angles of light.



▲ **Is the image sharp from front to back?**

Everything in this image is in focus. Turn to Week 2 to see how setting the right aperture size can create this effect.

◀ **Did you catch all of the action?**

Is your image blurred or have you been able to freeze fast-moving action, such as the stones flying off the wheel of this bike? Turn to Week 11 to see the effects different shutter speeds have on movement.



▶ ENHANCE YOUR IMAGES

Using post-production fixes



To get the best from your photos, make a consistent and coherent post-production workflow part of your routine. You can use the automated features of image-processing software, such as Photoshop, for quick results. Here are some basic post-production enhancements.



1 Assess your image

Create a duplicate of your image to work on so you can always return to the original and start again. Study the photo carefully and see which elements could be improved.



Image is poorly cropped

Sky lacks contrast

Horizon is not level

Colors appear dull



5 Crop the image

Go to the Crop tool in the menu. Select Original Ratio to keep the format of the image the same as you shot it, or Unconstrained if you want to change the ratio of length to height.



Unwanted part of image appears gray



6 Save your image

Keep adjusting your image until you are happy. Make sure you save the end result.



Pro tip: Save images at a variety of settings and resolutions for different uses, such as web design, printing, or screen resolution.



2 Set Auto exposure

You can alter the brightness and contrast levels in your image quickly and easily using the Auto levels tools to boost the highlights and shadows.



3 Increase saturation

To boost the colors in your image, use one of the image saturation presets—but be careful not to overdo it, or your image may start to appear artificial.



4 Rotate the image

To level the horizon, select the Crop tool, click on one of the corners, and rotate the image until you are satisfied.

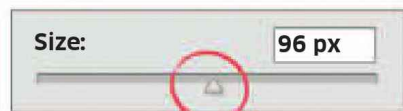


Rotate the image by clicking and pulling one of the corners

i DODGE AND BURN

The corrections shown above make changes to the whole image, but you can also alter specific areas. Making part of the image darker is called burning it in, and making it lighter is called dodging.

Zoom in on the area of the image you want to adjust. Set the brush size to match the size of the area you are working on and set the level to about 10–15 percent—it's better to make a series of small changes rather than one large one. Every now and then, zoom out to make sure the effect looks natural and not overdone. Keep doing this until you are satisfied with the end result.



Select brush size

Burn tool icon

Dodge tool icon

Sky has been darkened to make it stand out more against the clouds

Details on pier have been lightened