

Digital Photography 101

by Gayle Rock

Taking a good photograph starts with enjoying what you're doing. There are so many technical details to most things these days including digital photography. The thought of overcoming all these technical obstacles often times discourages people from learning photography. The fact is, you can get a very nice photo from a point and shoot camera if you use some basic principles. I am partial to the 35mm digital SLR camera with all the interchangeable lenses because I have learned to use it and can get many different types of images using this camera. I would like



This photo was taken at the Carlsbad, California flower fields in an open area on a fairly overcast day.

everyone to pick up a camera and experiment with it. Don't be afraid! Digital cameras have become affordable to most everyone and are efficient, easy to use, and give you instant feedback. If you don't like your shot, you know right away and can make adjustments.

I hope these tips - *Fill the frame*, *Change your angle*, *Rule of thirds* and *See the light* - will help you feel more comfortable using your camera and you'll end up with some pleasing images.

1. Fill the Frame

Concentrate on what you want in your picture and then fill your viewfinder with this image. Less is more! Your eyes can concentrate on what is interesting in a scene but a camera can't. The camera gives everything in the viewfinder equal prominence. So, try to exclude the distractions around your image. I call this visual cropping. You can do this by either physically moving closer to your subject or by



More of the gorilla's body was in the original photo but it was cropped to give it more interest.

zooming in with your camera lens. Zoom in until you have just what you want in your viewfinder. It's not necessary to have an entire object in the picture to know what it is. For instance, you can just take a picture of part of a flower but not the entire flower including the stem. I will give you another hint: I oftentimes will crop a photo even further in Photoshop or another photo editing program to further isolate the object, or to make it more pleasing to the eye.



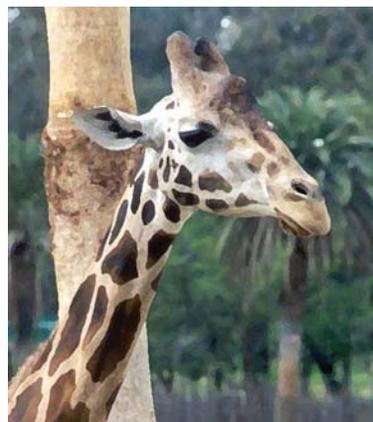
Getting in close with this shot makes it seem as if you're looking through the window. A dry brush filter was added to give it a painted look.



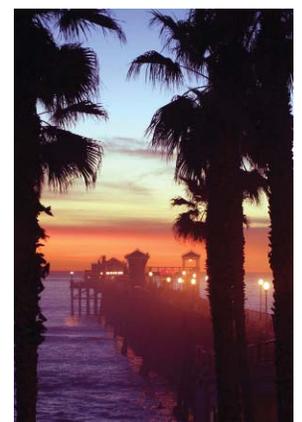
Changing the angle to shoot this flower so that it includes part of the leaves makes it more visually interesting.

2. Change Your Angle

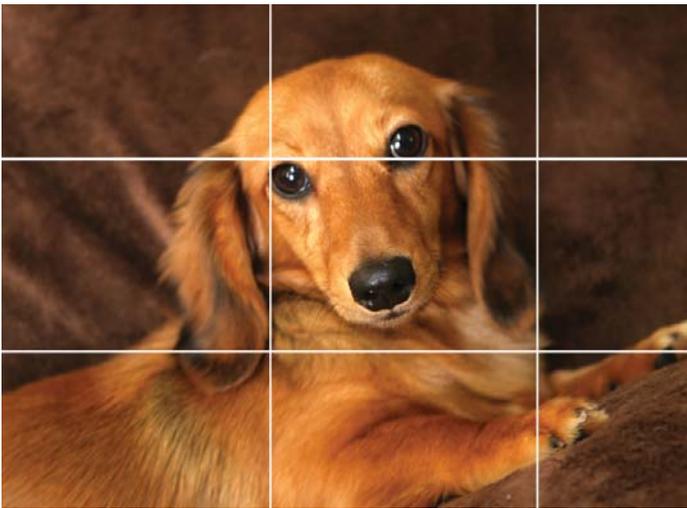
Move around your subject. Look at your subject from different sides to see if you get a more interesting shot or to help exclude unwanted objects. If you're photographing children or pets, get down to their level. Decide if you should shoot horizontal or vertical. Be creative – try different things. You can always delete the images if you are shooting digital.



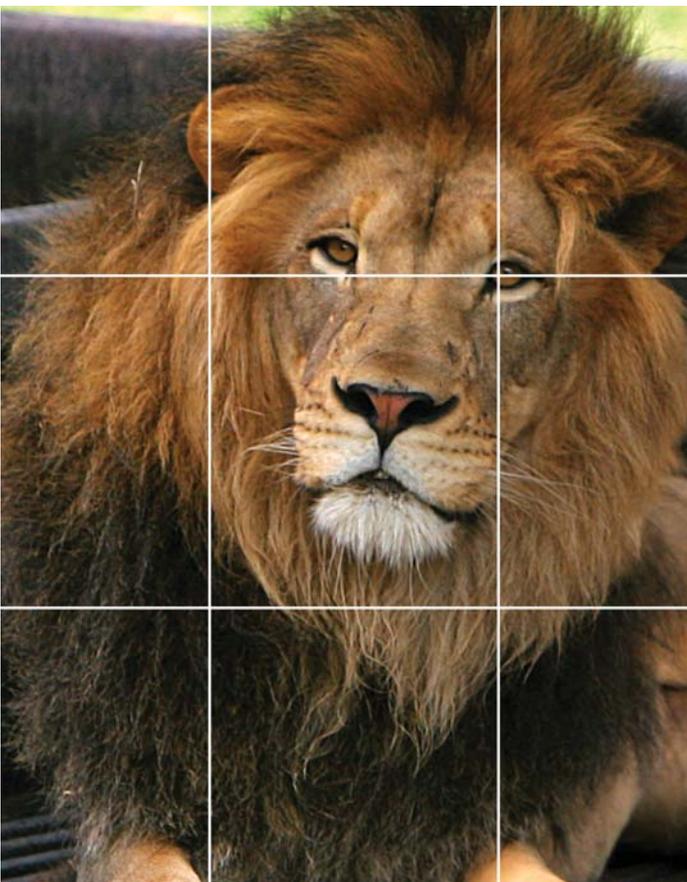
I changed my angle to capture the giraffe's neck crossing the tree trunk for contrast. I used a dry brush filter on this photo to give it a painted look.



Changing the angle and shooting through the palm trees gives this photo a nice framing effect.



Dachsund's eyes and body are located along the dividing lines using the "rule of thirds".



Lion's eyes are located along the dividing lines using the "rule of thirds".

3. Rule of Thirds

As you look through the viewfinder, imagine two horizontal and two vertical lines intersecting your image, basically dividing it into nine equal parts. Where any two lines intersect is an area of intense visual interest. These intersecting spots are an ideal place to position the main subject. It doesn't have to be exactly on that spot, but somewhere along one of the dividing lines. In a close up portrait the eyes are the focus and should be positioned on an intersection or dividing line.

4. See the Light

Direct sun can be your enemy. Flowers and people are two subjects favored by soft light. A lot of people assume that you need to have bright sunlight to have a decent photo. The fact is that you can get a great picture on an overcast day. Bright sunlight will cast unnatural shadows on your subjects and cause them to squint. If you have to photograph someone in the sun, turn them so the direct sunlight is backlighting or rim lighting them. As far as flowers are concerned, all the details can be rendered in the soft light of overcast days, with excellent results. Under the sunlight, the contrast is usually too strong.

Often, the best time to take photos is either on a cloudy day or early and late in the day. If neither of these is possible, then try to find shade. Good shade areas would include under big trees, umbrellas or behind the shade of a building. You will have to judge whether you'll need to add fill flash to obtain the correct lighting. Proper lighting is crucial to a great photo.

Natural light looks, well, the most natural and is the easiest to use. Natural light changes in quality and direction throughout the day and with the weather. Photographers usually prefer early and late in the day sunlight since it will generally look better to us because of its longer shadows and warmer tones. Cloudy days can be very soft and yield magnificent color saturation, but they can also be very harsh and have shadows similar to direct sun. It's important to think about what type of photograph you want to take and what you want the photograph to say. Think about how the light falls at different times of day, its direction, the length of shadows it casts, and its color characteristics. Then choose the time of day and weather that are suitable.



This wedding photo was shot in Portland, Oregon in between rain showers. Even though the sky was very cloudy, there was a beautiful natural light that I enhanced with a fill flash.

Many of my photos have been used on my greeting cards. I use the Strathmore® Photo Mount Cards and Strathmore® Creative Cards. The Photo Mount Cards are high quality blank heavyweight cards with a beautiful embossed front where a regular 4" x 6" print mounts perfectly. The Creative Cards are also high quality blank note cards that I mount 3" x 4" photos on. They are heavyweight, have an attractive deckled edge and come with matching envelopes. These cards are very popular with my customers because of the quality and the fact that they are blank allowing them to add their own sentiments. I also set up my printer to run the cards through and print my logo on them.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Gayle Rock

Gayle has been using a Canon 35mm camera for 24 years and of course is now using the digital version, adding professional "L" series lenses. She is trained in the use of the professional Adobe programs and uses them daily in her business, Dream Weaver DeSigns. This business includes a vinyl sign shop, graphic art design, freelance photography and website. Services provided are vinyl window graphics, car & truck advertising, signs and graphics, magnetics; logo, brochure and business card design; freelance photography including weddings, high school senior portraits, pets, family portraits, children, etc. On Gayle's successful website, she sells original photo greeting cards with exclusive use of the Strathmore® Blank Cards, many different styles of stickers, custom sticker design for non-profits, clubs and schools and all types of custom vinyl signage. The website address is: www.dwde-signs.com.



Gayle's original greeting cards using Strathmore® Creative and Photo Mount Cards.

Questions from our Website:

Many consumers use our website to ask questions about paper and we felt that our eNewsletter was good way to respond to several of these frequently asked questions.

My dad talks about Onion Skin Paper, what is it?

Your dad is dating himself a bit. Onion Skin is a very light weight translucent bond paper. It was mainly used to produce duplicate typewriter copies. It was also used in the interleaving of “order books”. The paper was named Onion Skin because it resembled the dry outer skin of an onion.

I’m confused about the term *vellum* as it relates to paper. Can you explain what it means?

There is always confusion with the term *vellum*. Vellum is not one but two distinct paper terms: vellum as a Paper and vellum as a Finish.

Traditional vellum, like parchment, was an early writing surface. Traditional vellum was made from the skin of calves, goats and lambs. The vellum was prepared by a lengthy exposure to a lime bath and then the skins were scraped down with a rounded knife and rubbed smooth with a pumice stone. Vellum was known as a better quality of parchment with grain and hair marks producing a somewhat irregular surface.

Over time vellum was used to describe a high rag paper, usually with a creamy white color and smooth surface that imitated traditional vellum. It was used for the printing of diplomas and certificates. Today the term vellum is often used with a very clear translucent paper with a smooth surface.

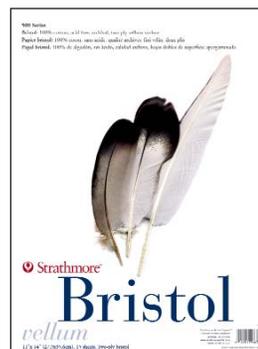
Vellum finish is used to describe a somewhat toothy finish on drawing paper or bristol. Over time several like terms have been used to describe this toothy finish: vellum, medium, regular and kid.



Onion Skin was often used for producing typewriter copies.



Vellum paper was an early writing surface.



Today's uses of the term vellum.

Featured Product

New Strathmore® Greeting Cards

It's card season again! Expand the scope of your card projects this year with new bulk packs from Strathmore! Not the traditionally artistic type? Try our new Inkjet Watercolor Cards!

Finally, Strathmore's watercolor card in bulk! This popular item is now available in both 50 and 100 count packages! Still the same quality card made specifically to hold up to any wet media including watercolor, acrylic or gouache. These high quality cards are made from 140 lb. cold press watercolor paper.

You've been asking for this one, White Photo Mount Cards in 100 count packages! These beautifully embossed cards are perfect for mounting photos, artwork or designs. Double stick tabs are included to make the project easier.

We are also introducing Inkjet Watercolor Cards! This true watercolor sheet has been specially coated on both sides to produce rich, vibrant colors in any inkjet printer. Because it is a true watercolor paper it allows you to duplicate both the visual and tactile experience of a watercolor painting.

Try these and all of our other specialty greeting cards for every artistic style.

Strathmore cards are perfect for any creative application!

