



## **The Path to Dramatically Improve Your Photography**

### **Learning shall be your way to enlightenment and photographic bliss**

No matter where you are within your level of photography skills, learning new things will always be rewarding and help you realize your dreams. Through education, you'll be able to overcome obstacles that seem to hold you back from getting to the next level and achieve the satisfaction of creativity you seek. Riders say, most people don't need a \$35,000 horse, they need a \$1,000 horse and a \$34,000 lesson. With photography it's sort of the same thing.

### **Know your tools**

You know you need to learn how your camera works. When you know enough about it, it becomes way more fun to work with it. But that's not my only point.

You know the situation: you are on location trying to capture a beautiful moment - or something else that struck you as gorgeous and totally worth taking a photo of - only to find that your camera has one of its stubborn moments and won't do what you want it to do. Now you have to argue with it, and as has happened so many times before, the camera may win the argument. And even if it doesn't, by now you have lost your moment of creative bliss and maybe even the opportunity. The moment that you tried to capture has gone forever.

It will take some learning, and it will take some practice, but there is no other feeling quite like it when you get to a level where you are no longer at the mercy of your tools. Only then can your creativity flow, without being stopped by technological curve balls.

### **Engage with the world**

When you know your camera enough that it won't trip you up as badly anymore, you may want to engage with what's in front of the camera. Ultimately, it is your interaction with the real world that will make you a better photographer. You'll have to learn about composition, camera angles and where to stand, all to master the art of creating a great photograph in whatever location you find yourself in. It will be this engaging with reality and your reaction to it that will ultimately propel your photography to new heights.

### **Commit to a Workflow**

And stick to it. Workflow is a word we use to describe what to do with photo and image files. From the card in your camera to emailing them to your aunt Mildred, or printing them and selling them to clients. The benefit of having a functioning workflow is that you'll be able to find any photo you took within a few seconds, even if it was taken a few years back, and that you'll know exactly where any photo or image file needs to go. Workflow is the most underrated segment of digital photography that causes the greatest amount of headaches. But there is help. There are workflow systems available that will fit different levels of needs and requirements. The one we frequently teach is professional strength and as such would have the benefit of being able to grow with you.

### **Find your style**

Once you find what you love to photograph and how you love to photograph it, it will help you to stay motivated to learn more and become better and better. And it's quite uplifting when you see the photos that you love to take come out the way you want them to. That would be much harder to do if you were working with a style of photography that you do not connect well with. So, find your style and get really good at it.

### **It's about the photo; it's not about the equipment**

Yes, you'll need decent equipment to take decent photos. In fact, my dad always said to do professional work you need professional tools. But I see so many photographers focusing on equipment and getting entangled with all the gear, all to the detriment of the ability to craft a great photograph. If you are Nikon or Canon or Sony, perhaps, you need to focus on equipment, because that's what they sell. If you rent out equipment you need to focus on it, because that's where you



make your money. But if you are working hard to become a better photographer, equipment is a means to an end and needs to bend its knees to the end-game: the better photo. It's about the art; it's not about the paint brush.

### **Learn from those who came before you**

Amazingly enough, you do not need to make the same mistakes everyone else seems to have made before you. That is what education is for. You'll learn how to do something and hopefully, how to do it the right way. So, look for photographers that have taken photos you love. Analyze how they might have gone about it. Think yourself through the creative process that may have lead to the photo and try it out for yourself. Adjust as needed.

### **Understand light**

Lighting can be the greatest cause for frustration and the greatest cause for elation in photography. And you can learn it. There are only 4 properties of light that you need to worry about. Quantity, quality, direction and color. That's it. Don't let it scare you. Start somewhere. Learning how to deal with lighting starts with learning how to see light. How it shapes a surface. How it falls off a cheek. How it shows you the perfectly smooth skin of a baby. Seeing starts with looking. Keep looking.

### **Find a good teacher**

Kudos to you if you can learn photography from books or Youtube. The reason that won't work for most people is that you can't ask questions and a video doesn't slow down if you don't understand something. Plus, there'll always be blank spots that won't connect well. And it's hard to know what you don't know. All you experience is that things don't make sense.

So, find a teacher that you can work with and that you can learn from. If you want to become a better photographer, your teacher should have more than just knowledge of equipment. Look at the work they've done. Is it compelling enough that you think they'll have something to teach you? If you can, go talk to them and see how they treat questions. Find out if you think you'll get along with them. We've heard plenty of horror stories of photographers trying to teach classes when they don't understand the subject matter, teachers that feel threatened by questions, teachers that use the classes to push more equipment on students who don't fully comprehend yet what they just bought, teachers that try to rent equipment rather than show you how to use what you own, teachers that try to push studio rental space or memberships. It is a jungle out there. You have been warned.

Look for testimonials or recommendations. Look who has credentials and a track record.

I cannot stress this point enough, make sure that your teacher is genuine and helpful. If you need a little extra help, he/she needs to be patient with you. Keep in mind that you may get what you pay for.

### **Keep having fun**

Having fun exploring your camera and learning how to become better at taking photos is vital to keep you motivated. The greatest creativity blossoms when stress is low. If anything throws you for a loop and you feel stressed, your creativity goes right out the window. So, when you feel stress coming on, stop. Take a breath. Think things through. Use what you've learned. If you've studied with us, you may have a C1M quick reference card that will keep you out of trouble. Use it.

Whatever you do, it is your responsibility to keep your photography fun and exciting. Only when you do that will your creativity stay at its peak. And you'll feel the level of fulfillment that you are looking for from your art. Keep playing. Don't be afraid to fail. Nobody dies if your picture doesn't turn out. Learn from your mistakes, fix them, and try again. You'll reap the greatest rewards if you can make your failures part of your creative process. And most importantly; no matter how; no matter what; keep having fun.

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Now go and shoot something,  
Walt