

# 3. How To Be A Great Photographer

**Take one camera (digital or analog) and film as needed. Put film into the camera (if necessary).**

Snap shutter. Before snapping the shutter, point the camera at a subject that will give the viewer a meaningful aesthetic experience. For someone who has no idea of what a camera is, learning how to carry out the first part of the prescription should take anywhere from a week to a month. However, the second part will take from a few years to forever. It's this part that I want to discuss.

***There are several approaches to developing as a photographer:***

## Study Web Pages That Have Tips For Better Photographs

These will often help to tighten up your pictures. If you want to get a few ideas in a few minutes, this is the place to look.

## Get Your Photographs Critiqued At An Appropriate Website

This is a good way to learn how others respond to your pictures. But be careful. Not all criticism is equal. Some of your evaluators may be experienced, professionals, and other beginners.

If you are going to rely on this method, it is important that you learn enough to evaluate the evaluators.

## Study The Work Of Acknowledged Great Artists

By taking this route you can learn what elements contribute to a fine photograph. This takes time and study. Don't simply look at a few photos but read art criticism to find out what professional educators think and why.

One drawback here is that you won't be able to see how your work measures up. If you plan to take this route and also join a critique website, you will be in a position to know which criticism to ignore and which to pay attention to.

## Join A Photography Club

Clubs often have lectures, workshops, and juried shows. This can be a good hands-on learning experience.

## Take A Class (Online Or In Person)

There are all sorts of classes. If you choose one that has assignments and feedback, you can be guided through the fundamentals by an experienced photographer.

## Get A Coach

At this point, I have to say a few words about the difference between a competent photographer and a person who uses photography as an art form. The competent photographer will be able to produce pleasing postcard- or calendar-quality pictures that look like postcards and calendar pictures.

The artist will be able to take photographs that represent his or her vision of the world. If you are after the former and not the latter, you should choose among methods 1 through 6. A good coach should help you develop your unique way of seeing.

☐ **\*\*Taking Professional Quality Pictures\*\***

By now I'm sure you've used Either a digital or film camera.

You've taken pictures and had them developed and just weren't satisfied with the Quality.

**You don't need to be a professional or have a really expensive camera to take good photos.**

*Here are some tips that can help you take your photos from 0-100 in no time:*

- Master your camera (Focus, Flash, Red-Eye, Shooting Modes, etc.)
- Take more pictures (especially with Digital).
- Mix up your photos (portrait/Landscape).

- Center your image around your target.
- Never shoot into a source of light.
- Try to use non-distracting backgrounds
- Get Close - Zoom with your feet, not with a button.
- Take advantage of shadows and reflections.
- Try different angles.
- Pay attention to vertical/horizontal lines.
- Shoot at the highest resolution available.
- Use appropriate film for shooting scenarios.
- Pay a little extra to have photos developed at a quality shop.

These are several tips that you can use to take higher-quality pictures. It's important to take time to learn how your camera works, and to test different shooting scenarios (light, etc.)

Try some or all of the above tips and I'm sure you will be satisfied with the quality of your photos.

## Go To An Art School

This, for people who have the time and the money, is by far the best. I studied at the San Francisco Art Institute. Here's how it worked. I went to a photography class two or three times a week. At every class meeting, each student pinned 20-30 photographs to the wall and, under the supervision of an accomplished professional, we criticized our own and one another's work. We also took photography history classes as well as courses in other fields of art.

Mine were film, drawing, sculpture, and printmaking. There were frequent guest lecturers. We never learned any rules. In fact, rules were never mentioned. But through a combination of years of exposure to all types of art, classical through contemporary, and having to produce 50-60 new photographs every week, we eventually learned what art was about. There are many ways to improve your photography. Before you make your choice, you should decide on your goal. If you have little time and just want to tidy up your pictures a bit, read the tips pages. On the other extreme, if your goal is to be an artist, there is nothing close to attending art school. Most people fall between these extremes.

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