

# Basic Shooting Tips

**Overview** New to shooting? This short little guide covers some of the basic pointers for improving your images.

**The first two things** Virtually all new photographers can dramatically improve their pictures by making three basic changes:

- Watch your background. A cluttered background can distract the viewer from the main focal point of your image.
- Change your perspective; not everything needs to be shot at eye-level. Stand on a chair, lay on the ground, kneel...
- Watch your horizon line. Unless you are intentionally shooting at an angle, make sure the horizon is level. Nothing is more disconcerting than feeling like the ocean in your picture is about to spill from the left hand side of the image because it's sloping.

**Next steps** Once you've started implementing the first three changes, here are some other basic shooting tips to follow. Of course, these are only guidelines and not strict rules!

- Shoot from shaded areas into light areas for proper exposure.
- Don't handhold your camera when your shutter speed is greater than your lens' focal length. E.g.- if your focal length is 60mm, use a tripod if your shutter speed is slower than 1/60 of a second.
- Use a tripod whenever you need a sharp-focused image.
- Move in closer, when safe to do so, to your subject. A major problem with many people's pictures is too much in the image.
- Shooting a portrait? Keep the subject's eyes in the upper-third part of the image.
- Try placing your subject away from the center of the picture.
- Are you most of your pictures horizontal? If so, immediately turn your camera vertical and shoot the same scene again. You'll be amazed at how different a vertical composition of the same subject will look.
- Learn to use your camera on the manual (M) setting and give yourself total control over your images.

**Finally...** Shoot, shoot, and shoot some more. When you're done, shoot some more.