

A man in silhouette is taking a photograph of the ocean. He is holding a camera up to his eye, and the background is a bright, clear blue sky and a turquoise ocean. The scene is captured from a slightly low angle, emphasizing the man's focus on his work.

# LEARN PHOTOGRAPHY 101

## COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

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# INTRODUCTION

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1. Camera Prep
2. Camera Use
3. Making Pictures
4. The Photographic Experience
5. Theory
6. Workflow
7. Editing
8. Business Basics
9. Commissioned Work
10. Final Thoughts

# 1. CAMERA PREP

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- A) Which camera should I buy?
  - Use vs Budget. Plan long term in single system. Lenses last longer (spend cash here) vs bodies (update every few years). Used gear is valuable ([reddit.com/r/photomarket](https://www.reddit.com/r/photomarket/)). [Rentals are great option too](#)
- B) Schrodinger's Camera
  - Clean lens, prep body settings, charge batteries, back-up and clear memory cards = activated camera
- C) Memorize Dials/Settings
  - Find/learn/master adjustments for Shutter, Aperture, ISO, Focus, white balance
- D) Manuals are your friend
  - Read them 5x with camera in hand, while taking picture adjusting settings
- E) Camera Simulator
  - Useful for understanding core concepts  
<https://camerasim.com/original-camerasim/>
- F) Practice
  - Photograph Family & friend, cliches (Feet/Cats/Mirrors/Sunsets). Flashes, other lenses, tripods & other peripherals. Review images, develop your workflow

## 2. CAMERA USE

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- A) Initial Settings
  - ISO: 100 - 400 in bright day; 400-800 more dynamic range; 800 - 1600 at night/more grain/ more sensitivity. Aperture: f1.8 - f2.8 low light/subject isolation; f4 - f8 bright day or flash use/mid focus depth/dynamic environment; f8-f11 tripod, long exposure,
- B) Light Meter
  - Dial showcasing the Exposure Value of setting. Use this as a guide to see how your image will be exposed.
- C) Exposure Compensation
  - Automatic adjustment of settings when in priority modes. Good to use when you need to focus on a single variable.
- D) White Balance
  - Each light source emits different color hues when lit. Auto works as base, or set according to each source. Kelvin temperature from 3000 - 6000.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color\\_balance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_balance)
- E) Aperture/Shutter Priority
- F) Manual Mode
- G) Lens Focus Settings
  - Manual vs Auto Focus: Back button/Shutter release
- H) ISO: Sensor Sensitivity
  - Sensor sensitivity to light. Set ISO first, depending on condition. Negatively affects image quality.
- I) Light: Fill, Key, Background
  - Golden Hour, Cloudy Days, Shade in bright day. Hand technique: Palm facing you at arms length, turn slowly watching light/shadow on palm.

# 3. MAKING PICTURES

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- A) Mantra: Light, Subject, Moment
  - Align these three points of interest to create maximum interest in a single image.
- B) Photo-Geometry
  - Using different shapes, angles of lines, to create the visual narrative
- C) Understand Equipment
  - Know the tool in your hand, when its at its most value, and where it falls short.
- D) Travel 'Light'
  - Refine gear used to carry only what is needed through repetition and critical review. Sticking to one lens, or focal length, will help you get creative.
- E) Restrict Variables
  - Too many options, ideas, concepts of interest in a shoot will conflict process. Keep it simple
- F) Peripherals
  - Important gear that help make the photo process easier, or help creativity: Tripod, External Flash, Memory Cards, Extra Batteries, Camera Bag, Water Bottles, sunscreen, comfy shoes
- G) Directing Subjects
  - Create a comfortable, secure, & open space for creative expression.
- H) Style/Continuity
  - Find what motivates you to go take photographs and how you enjoy showcasing them. Develop the look and feel through repetition and editing. Narrow down the creativity and use a historical understanding of craft.

## 4. THE PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCE

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- A) Having Fun
  - Simplify your goals, take chances. Master tools, understand 'rules', then ignore & push boundaries.
- B) Engaging Your Subjects
  - Empathy & honesty. Provide comfortable setting. Listen and be prepared for the critical moment.
- C) Making Mistakes
  - Enjoy taking risks. Learning comes with failure. Don't dwell, persist.
- D) Overcoming Fear
  - Use fear to prepare yourself. Get beyond by going through the experience. Again, persist.
- E) Shoot, edit, shoot, edit
  - Reviewing your work, process, result is fundamental to growth & maturity.

# 5. THEORY

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- A) 'Photographers Role'
  - To document contemporary culture. - Has not changed, probably wont ever.
- B) Technology
  - Variables have become automated allowing for deeper understanding/experiencing of craft.
- C) Gear
  - Too many options, reducing lens choice allows deeper understanding of concepts (ie. single prime lens). Then add when you find needs. - [Renting is a great way to find if its right for you](#)
- D) Light/Shadow
  - The light and shadow of a photograph with reveal all the secrets. -Intensity, direction, color (white balance) - Specular Highlights
- E) Composition
  - Key factor in creating visual narrative - Rule of thirds, layering information, arranging 3d objects in space. Visual geometry
- F) 'Critical Moment'
  - Peak action, aligning of elements to highlight subject & create strongest narrative.
- G) 'Creating Change'
  - Photography as tool to create change in society by highlighting certain conditions tending to humanity and its issues. It allows for conversation & dissemination of ideas destroying prejudices & lazy comfort.
- H) Photography = Math + Art
  - Exposure Value: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exposure\\_value](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exposure_value) - 'Photographic Geometry' balancing objects in-frame to create visual narrative. 4d to 2d
- I) Study & Destroy
  - Study concepts, analyze, and then ignore in the experience. Keep as only as useful.

# 6. WORKFLOW

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- A) Ingesting
  - Photomechanic: Organizing images into separate folders (usually by date, location). Process of batching metadata to files.
- B) Metadata
  - Photomechanic, Exiftool: Text details within image files including - Caption, Location, Settings, Copyright Information, etc
- C) Culling
  - Photomechanic: Narrowing down many images to selects efficiently.
- D) Editing/Raw Processing
  - CaptureOne, Affinity: Adjustments of images to most accurately reflect intention.
- E) Delivery
  - Dropbox: Cloud services providing long term solutions for ease of access, self and clients.
- F) Back-up Organization
  - Double redundancy copies for long-term storage solutions, plus cloud services for selects. - Working off SSD cleared after 2nd backup, selects to cloud. - 1st copy to travel, external HDD. Remains on HDD. Purchasing new drive after filled. - 2nd copy to larger, external, desktop HDD. - Selects (culled, edited images) are uploaded to cloud services for ease of access and long-term offsite storage.



# 7. EDITING

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- A) Color Correcting
  - Histogram-matching white balance.
- B) Highlights/Shadows
  - Adjustable bright and underexposed sections of images.
- C) Masking
  - Layer overlay used for covering certain portions of image.
- D) Clone Stamping
  - Removing of small dust issues, removal of certain elements.
- E) Exporting
  - JPEGs for most use, printing, web & social media. Compressed, best for most clients. TIFF high res, low compression images, best for printing, and certain clients requiring highest resolution.

# 8. BUSINESS BASICS

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- A) Freelance Mindset
  - Weekends, office hours are gone. Always never not working. Program relaxed time regardless of day
- B) Creating Value
  - Business to business commissions imply your clients will benefit from the work you provide. Keep expenses reasonable and prorate them throughout the year. Use expenses to reduce taxable income. Be wary of subscription models.
- C) LLC
  - Single-Member LLC can provide certain benefits when dealing with issues working on commission.
- D) Diversify Income Streams
  - Starting a new business is difficult, making a profit is even more. Broadening the services provided for clients within your knowledge base is easier to make profit than beginning from scratch.
- E) The Photographer Community
  - Connect with other photographers and build each other up. - For every new photographer there are X number of new clients. - Hire younger photographers as assistants who are motivated by experience and compensate properly. They'll keep you young.
- F) Savings
  - A Roth IRA is a great way to use compounding daily interest to your advantage. Deposit a percentage of each check into savings. Diversify according to risk profile. Don't be afraid to take chances on companies you are inspired by and have a strong understanding of. When in doubt, US treasury bonds.
- G) Taxes
  - Make quarterly payments. Keep track of income and expenses. Use quickbooks and hire a tax preparer to make sure your business is reporting properly. IRA's can help reduce taxable income. Plan for a 35% tax bill.

# 9. COMMISSIONED WORK

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- A) Landing Clients
  - Portfolio, Networking, Showcase Expertise, Advertise, Promos
- B) Qualifying Questions
  - Understanding client needs, while providing clear work requirements
- C) Negotiating
  - Rate, copyrights & licensing, gear rentals, assistants, deliverables, deadlines, etc
- D) Rates
  - Cost of doing business, divide by workable days of year. Adjust according to client needs, licensing (copyright buyouts?).
- E) Deliverables
  - Amount of images, file types you are expected to produce and deliver.
- F) Contracts
  - Be transparent about use, deliverables, and costs. Allow for indemnification in case of accidents, and protect your labor/image rights. Use standardized copies and update for each client.
- G) Gig Prep
  - Deposit payment. - Gear prep/rental orders. - Scouting location/light. - Physical/mental wellness
- H) Post Gig
  - Start immediately, take focused time editing, deliver on time.

# 10. FINAL THOUGHTS

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- A) My Background
  - Photojournalist training in college. Cultivated passion for culture and people.
  - Public Relations & Event photography for agency for 5 years in Miami.
    - GREAT & Terrible experiences. Over-worked, under-paid, stripped of employment rights while W9 employee. Be mindful of your rights as a contract worker.
- B) My Passion
  - Sharing stories and moments of our everyday lives that reveal the magic we all experience. - Going outside, learning from strangers & broadening my perspective.
- C) My Fears
  - Understanding my fears as the gateway to making images. If I'm living a fearful moment, that's probably the exact moment to make a picture.
- D) 'Money is Time'
  - My passion for photography became a way of life. Money is not the driving factor, being able to continue my career as a photographer is.
- E) Short, Medium, Long-term Profession
  - Strategy should follow goals set up on three timelines: Short-term; what can you do today, that would accomplish a monthly goal, which sets-up medium term goals- next year, which sets a foundation for long-term career goals.- Photography is a long process of learning, experiencing, and reviewing. Taking a long term approach, and working hard in the short-term is key to overcome fears, insecurities, and inexperience.
- F) Diversify Passions
  - Use other passions and hobbies as a release from the stresses of the day. For me, playing guitar is a great way to relieve stress.
- G) Critical Feedback
  - Be open to others, even less experienced viewers critique your work. Then use it to determine if your assumptions were correct, or need modifying. Something like the scientific method.
- H) Work/Life Balance
  - Life becomes work, work becomes life. Make space for repose, reflection, & renewal. Be patience & persistent.