

Photography
101

Malcolm McElvaney

Photography like any art form requires practice but the only way to start is picking up your camera and start taking pictures. You may be taking pictures already but need to shift into a photographers mind set to get better results.

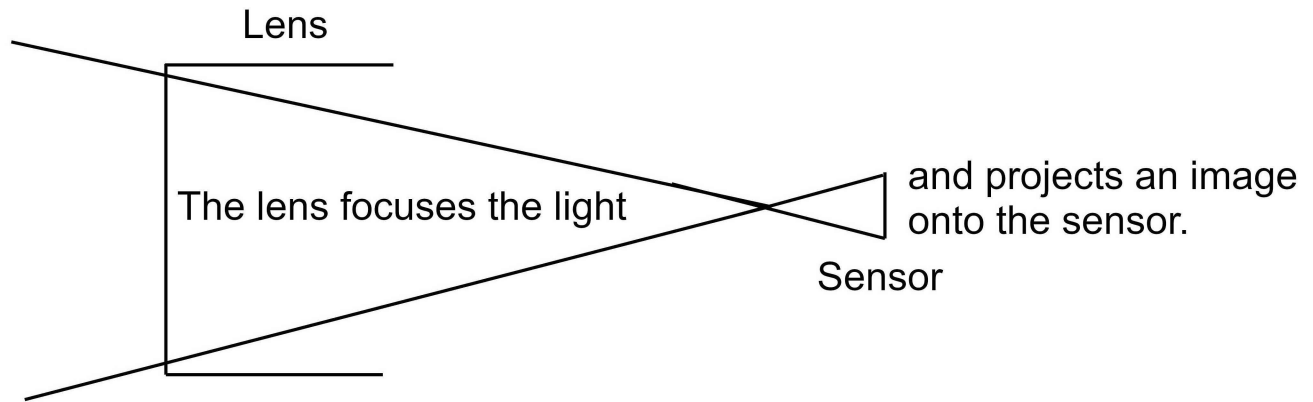
Thanks to the digital age your choice of camera can be a more traditional DSLR with a variety of lenses or use the ever present built in camera on the cell phone. The key is to learn the abilities of your camera gear and use them.

Finally while it may not be true all the time finding a reason to pursue photography is important. Whatever that may be it can help you want to practice and improve as you learn from your mistakes and successes.



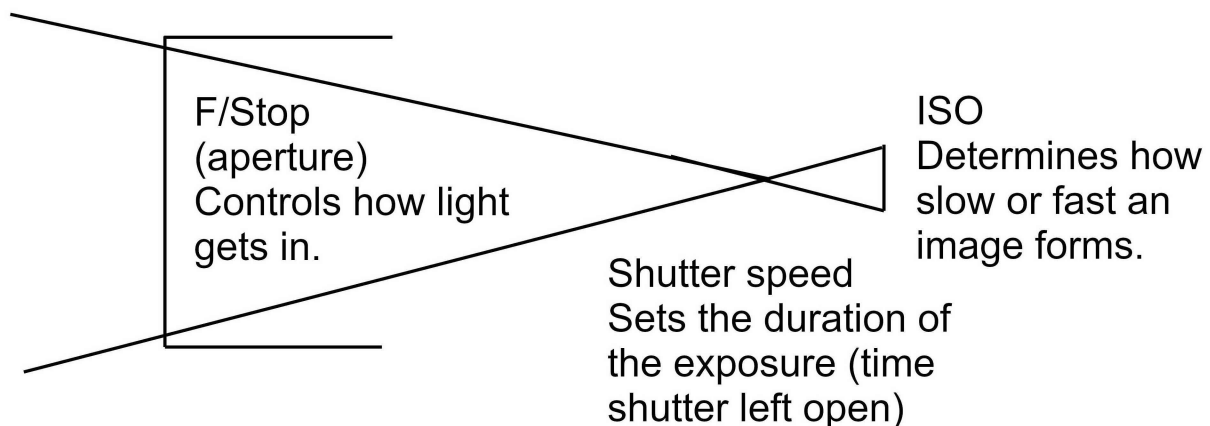
Practice is important. I shot this image more like a snapshot on purpose with its better composed version on the last page as an example.

The flow of light

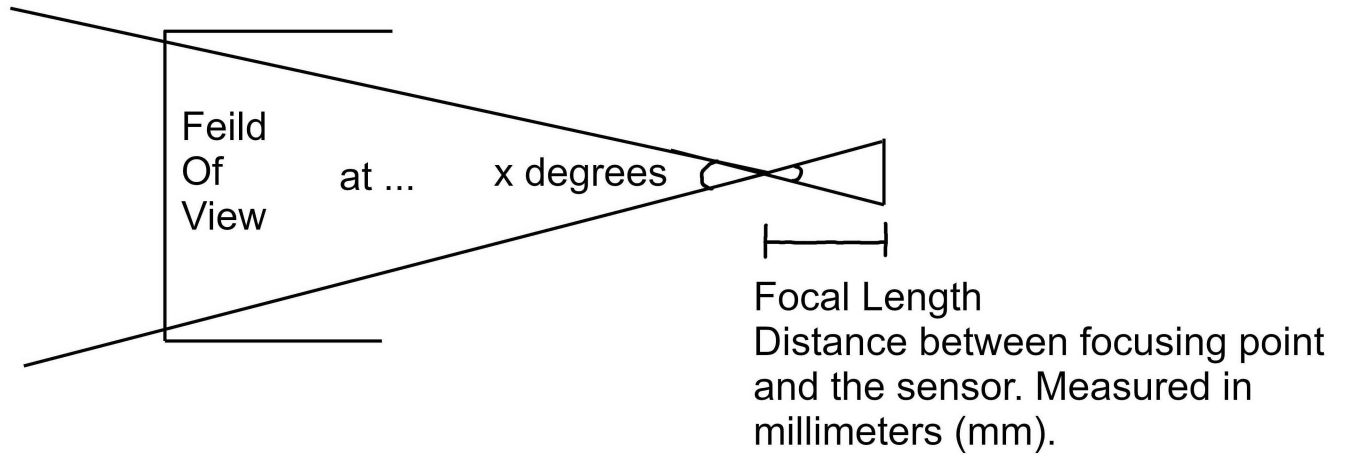


The camera is a system to manage the flow of light through the lens and onto the sensor to form the image. As the photographer you can influence the image produced by altering the exposure settings, type of lens used, etc. Based largely on the gear you use your limits and options will vary but this is what you have to work within.

Controlling the exposure



Area actually captured



The focal length used for taking an image will change the overall field of view captured in degrees. Perception of spacing between objects in the scene are said to decrease as the FOV decreases and widen as the FOV increases.



Taken at focal length of 18mm

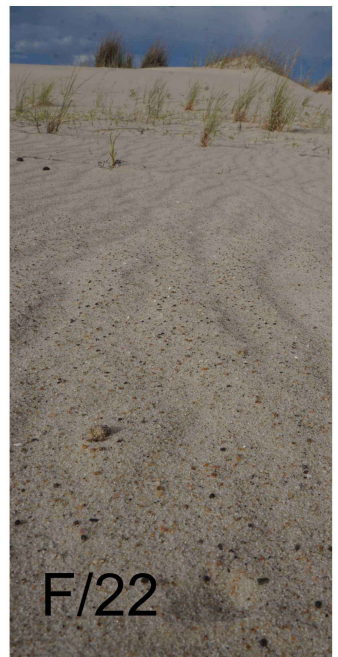


Taken at focal length of 55mm

F/Stop (Aperture)

F/smaller # = more light
F/larger # = less light

Effectively the degree of sharpness in the overall image is linked with the aperture used. The term to explore further is called depth of field (DOF) .



Shutter Speed

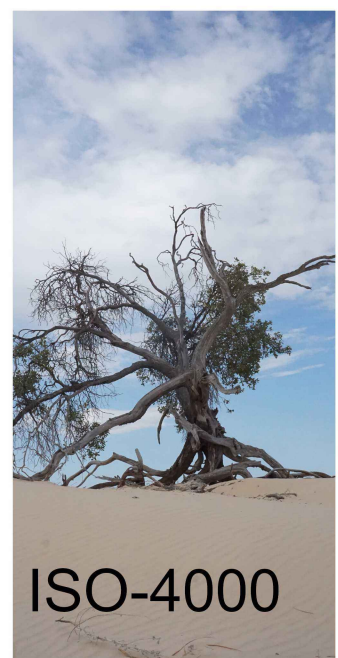
The shutter speed used is usually set to get the exposure you need only but if set too slow introduces motion blur. Effectively a faster setting captures motion in place and slower one blurs the motion.



ISO

ISO-smaller # - Slower light sensitivity
ISO-larger # - Faster light sensitivity

The increase in speed comes at the cost of noise introduced into your image. In low light situations the trade off is needed.



Who controls the artistic vision? Which camera mode to use?

	Auto	(P)rogram	(A)perture	(S)hutter	(M)anual
Aperture	camera	camera	you	camera	you
Shutter speed	camera	camera	camera	you	you
Iso *	you	you	you	you	you

* Iso can also be set to automatic

Let the camera help you initially as it can take the picture while you focus on the composition or another aspect of photography. The camera has a built in table to create the "best" image possible.

Once your comfort levels begin to increase try taking more control of the process by getting off the automatic modes and alter your exposure settings manually. Subtle changes make a big difference in how images look.

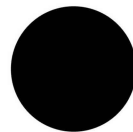
The camera is only a tool to capture light and assist you in capturing a scene. It doesn't know what effect you are trying to achieve or where your artistic vision is going so gaining full control of your camera is important.



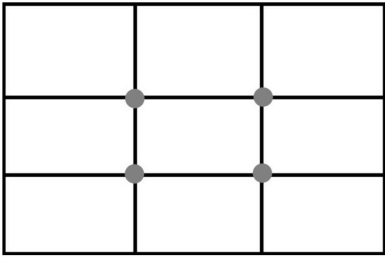
"Program Normal"
1/80, F/13, Iso-100



Manual mode
1/1250, F/3.5, Iso-100



Where the subject is placed matters and is usually done on a slight offset to improve composition. Center your subject because it fits your composition.



The rule of 3rds as illustrated above and the previous page is a grid that you can turn on and display over your screen on your camera

As any general rule goes it is more helpful than not and visually you have four points slightly offset (the grey dots) to place your subject rather than just centering the subject.

The eyes are drawn into a scene or attracted to certain details for a reason. One of those guides is called a leading line and in the example on the right it is the area between the mountains that pull you along.



In composing an image what you select may be more like instinct but the advantage of knowing why and what terms are used to describe composition will be helpful.



Foreground



Background

The example on the previous page shows how combining the foreground and background elements make for a stronger composition. Also note that by using a lower point of view (angle) those elements interact differently now.

A stronger context is also established when the foreground elements can help define the sense of scale and depth when compared to the background elements.

How do you select a scene? I have found picking a background or foreground you like and then matching the opposite to suit it yields some artistic results.

Leading Lines

Golden Ratio

Balance

Rules are meant to be followed or broken but exist to help compose a image. As the photographer you are free to express yourself however you like. With the help of guidelines and inspiration from other artist your own unique style will develop.

Negative Space



When recomposed the scene from the first page could have been taken this way.

With time I have learned to improve my composition and photography skills overall but I started out documenting a place and discovered I became a photographer in the process. I found my passion and project so practiced one picture at a time without it feeling like a chore but the reason to hike and record my new discoveries. Find your place and reason to pursue and enjoy photography and see what happens.

My name is Malcolm McElvaney and I can be reached at malcolmm9789@gmail.com if you have any further questions. In making this guide I kept it at a very basic level to at least reduce some of the mysterious elements you may encounter as you explore deeper into this art form. I call photography an art form for a reason and when compared to its visually related cousins like painting and drawing the goal is to capture something in a more permanent way. Our medium is light and the camera the tool at hand to capture it in some form to be shared or manipulated as needed to fit the artistic vision. In trying to understand other art forms to better understand photography mostly an appreciation of art overall is achieved but inspiration can occur to. This guide came from trying to understand the way comic books work and how to write one myself which would require a new way to think and organize information. Keep an open mind and you never know what might find you to inspire you as well.

With the exception of the cover art I used pictures taken while walking the Fort Davis mountains area and Monahans Sandhills State Park. The photograph on the cover was taken in Odessa, TX at the Comanche Trail Park after it had rained and is proof that fleeting moments of beauty are to be appreciated when found.

Finally since I did only covered a small amount of information I would encourage you to search online for resources to help you continue learning more about photography. While I appreciate the internet and how information is only a few clicks away I also belong to the Sibley Nature Center Camera Club which can be contacted at sibleycameraclub@gmail.com and is in the Odessa / Midland area. I remember the days before the internet when clubs and user groups provided contact with other people to share knowledge, there is a value in interacting at this level. I have learned much from my fellow photographers and pass on what I know in turn so come join us.

