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#### **About the Author**

Sam Arnott is a keen photographer who loves to share his enjoyment and knowledge of photography with as many people as possible.

Sam said," I've had a lot of help from other photographers and know that my book can help save readers time, expense and frustration."

"They may think they need a new camera with lots of features. That's an expensive solution and may not solve their problem."

"Reading my book can improve the photos they get from their camera and help them make a better choice if they decide to upgrade later on."

Sam said," I've kept everything simple and practical with information that will help anyone, whatever camera they have and whatever type of photography they're interested in!"

"I've also included some suggestions to improve your results when taking particular types of pictures."

"My focus is to make you want to take more and better pictures and get more enjoyment from each one you do!"

"Digital photography has made the cost of taking photos almost nothing, so we can take more photos and share them as much as we like."

Sam's sure that his book, "Simple Ways to Better Photos", will help every reader get pictures they will be proud to share and their friends and family will love!

#### Introduction

Photography has always been a very popular hobby but the digital revolution has made it much cheaper and easier than ever before.

But, many people are disappointed with the results they get. They may decide to give up taking photos.

My book will help you get better results with your current camera.

Most people can probably get better pictures with the camera they already have but will rush to buy a new, more sophisticated camera.

But, they could be disappointed when their results aren't much better than before!

The truth is you don't always need an expensive camera to get good pictures. Many people don't use many of the features on their cameras.

This book will give you the knowledge you need in easy to follow steps so you get the best from whatever type of camera you use.

I'll give you some tips about using the camera on your smart phone and how to avoid problems taking pictures in public.

This is not a replacement for the manual you got with your camera. But, this book will help you enjoy using it more.

The best way to start your quest to become a better photographer is taking more pictures but if you keep doing things the same way, you will just get the same results.

The point of view used for the examples in this ebook are from the camera or the photographer. "The light is coming from the left", means that it comes from the left of the camera.

You can use this book to review some pictures you aren't satisfied with so you understand how to get better results next time. And, I've included some tips I've learned about taking particular types of pictures.

### **Light Fantastic**

The way that you use light in your photos is very important. I used to just check if I could see whatever I wanted to shoot clearly enough and that there was no distracting shadows.

But, you can get much better photos by looking more closely at how the main light source is affecting the image.

There are three directions which the light can come to the subject of your photos; front, back or from either side.

As well, the quality of the light and the height from which it comes to the subject will affect the photo you can get.

Always check where the light is coming from and take into consideration how it will affect the camera's operation.

#### **Teach Yourself about Light**

The effects of light will influence the results you get with every picture you ever take.

I suggest that you try to identify the type of light as you go about your usual activities and think about how you would set up photos in those conditions.

If you have someone with you, you might sometimes ask them to be the subject for a quick photo so that you can confirm what you thought about the conditions.

It could even be worthwhile to set up a session with a couple of friends to pose and also help you move the lights around so you can arrange some shots with different types of light.

Then, you will be aware of the effects and better prepared for a real photo opportunity. Instead of having to think through the possibilities, you will be able to concentrate on your subjects and getting them the best pictures you can.

All the tips and ideas I share with you in this book are intended to help you make better photos in a shorter time.

Being prepared to do exercises like this a few times will give you the

practical skills which cannot be learned entirely from just reading about them.

You will know how to deal with the varied situations and conditions.

That will mean that you get similar results each time and consistently better pictures.

Now, I will give you some tips about the most common types of lighting situations which you will work in.

### **How to Handle Different Light Conditions**

How you use light in your pictures can be a major influence on the resuts you get.

These suggestions may help you be more aware of the effect which the light conditions are affecting the shot you are about to take so you can avoid problems or improve how you have taken pictures in similar situations before.

#### Low Illumination

Most modern cameras can take pictures in reduced light.

This tends to reduce the area which is clearly in focus and give a softer image which can be great for some portraits.

You can compensate to some extent for the low light by adjusting the shutter speed or the F-stop for that picture.

#### Multiple Light Sources

Often, there are anumber of light sources in a street scene or a party.

You have to take a minute to find the best area for your photos where the light is balanced.

#### Powerful Light

For instance, if there is a strong light coming from behind the person you are photographing, they will be silhouetted.

Your camera will automatically set the exposure for the bright background and the subject you want will be in shadow.



If this is not the effect you want, you can either adjust your camera's controls or change position to give your subject more light.

Shadows can sometimes be used to make very interesting images if you study the effect of light and how your camera uses it.

Study the type of light and where it is coming from each time you take

some pictures.

Work **with** the available light is a better first step rather than trying to change the situation.

Of course, you can also improve your ratio of good photos by thinking about where you intend to take pictures and take a few accessories with you where that's possible.

Many photos are spoiled because the area being included in a picture has several sources of light. You need to be sure that you have focused the camera using the main source.

#### Diffused Light

This is a soft even light which only produces faint shadows.

To understand the difference from natural sunlight,, just compare a bright day with well-lit objects and sharp-edged dark shadows with a cloudy day or the light under a tree where everything is softer.

You can get diffused light by shining your light through a material which diffuses the light before it reaches the person or object you are photographing.

Another way is to bounce the light off some white object like a sheet of Styrofoam<sup>®</sup>. This needs a powerful light because the sheet may take a lot of the light's strength away.

It's a very flattering type of light when used correctly. So, you will see it in fashion photography and portraiture.

### Direct Light

This is strong light which causes sharply defined shadows and puts everything in bright light.

To reduce the effect, you can use back or side lights. This will need careful setting up or you will have other problems.

When there is strong direct light, many people move everything under a tree. That often works, but you need to check that the camera doesn't still focus on the strong light and put the area you shoot in the shade!

You can use someone holding an umbrella or even a piece of heavy

material to shade the area you shoot.

With digital cameras, it only takes a minute to do a test shot and check it so you know you have the tight area in focus and properly lit for the photo.

### Privacy and the Photographer

If you put anything, anywhere on the Internet, you can never be sure that you can erase all traces of it.

For an example of that, look at www.archive.org which stores copies of web pages and complete sites going back years.

These are great for research but also can contain embarrassing material which people never expected to see again.

Add to that all the material which has been mined and stored by the search engines and private companies and individuals who mine data.

If you don't want your worst enemy or your employer to see a picture or some information about you, don't ever put it on the Internet!

The problems which have been caused to people because off ill-judged exposure of their pictures on the Internet are featured in the news regularly.

Some of the problems can be much worse than what we usually hear about. Ridicule from friends and acquaintances is not much of a problem but some risks are much worse.

Many children are bullied or even blackmailed over pictures which they impulsively shared on the Internet. Some have committed suicide as a result!

I know a young female model just starting her career who had some bikini pictures on her web site. Within a week, she was being followed by someone and had to contact the police and also her web site host to have the pictures and the web site removed.

She did not realize that her pictures may also have been copied and used for false advertising on dubious web sites anywhere in the world.

The misuse of pictures is very common and is one reason that many countries have strong laws to try to protect people's images from misuse.

You need to check and be aware of any restrictions which you may have about taking pictures in public and where those pictures may be used.

Generally, people must give permission for anyone to use their picture

where they are recognizable in any commercial activity.

There are restrictions about taking pictures of children anywhere too.

### **Smart Ways to use Your Smart Phone Camera**

1] The best results usually come when you get close to the subject rather taking a long-distance picture or using the zoom feature.

Taking a few steps and getting close cuts out any distractions in the picture around your intended subject.

2] Long distance pictures can be okay in the right circumstances. They will often work better than using the inbuilt digital zoom.

That sort of zoom effect usually enlarges the central part of your picture and blurs the area around the edge. Taking the picture without zooming will not distort the details outside the center of the image so much as the zoom would have.

3] Using filters will often mean your photos end up looking much like other people make with the same filters. You can get more individual effects by learning to use the options provided by many of the cheap or even free computer programs out there.

I will include some suggestions of low-cost or free programs in the resources section at the end of this ebook for you to consider.

- 4] I prefer a natural look for most pictures I take and so do most people. If you change the look of your photo try to have the result look natural unless you are deliberately wanting it to be more of an art object than photo.
- 5] Phone cameras usually have flash which provide light for too long and that tends to wash out the image. They're only intended for "spur-of-the-moment" use, after all.
- 6] Lens flare is an overdone effect but you can get great photos if you use it right. The right silhouette with a flaring background can be eyecatching, even when using a low-cost phone camera. And it's not like you're paying for film so you get a few quick pictures and just keep the best of them!
- 7] Keep the lens clean. Although you want quick access to your phone, try to keep it somewhere that it won't get dust or grit on it. The lenses are fairly tough but debris on the lens will spoil those quick pics when you

have a once-ever opportunity.

Give the lens a gentle but thorough clean with a proper lens wipe occasionally (read your manual first).

Because they're easy to take and almost effortless, people don't value their phone camera shots. But, it's worth looking through them before you wipe them off in case there's just a few you, or someone in your family, might like an actual printed copy of. That's especially true if it's of a pet or older relative.

### **Nine Squares for Better Composition**

This simple method of laying out pictures and even more complicated designs such as book covers is widely used by professionals.

Yet, you can learn the basics in a few short practice sessions and improve the layout of your pictures forever!

The basic idea is to distribute the main parts of the picture or other design so there is a sense of balance across the whole area.

The best way to start is to look at a quality picture which you admire. If you can do so, make a photocopy of the picture and use that to follow the description below.

Then, imagine the surface is divided into nine squares like the playing area for Tic-Tac-Toe.

With most good pictures, you will see the elements of the picture are not all in one square but distributed so that the main parts are centered on the lines of the diagram.

These are the points where the viewers' eyes will tend to rest.

Using this simple plan will help you make a great impression on people who see your pictures.

This will take some practice because you can't draw the squares on your lens.



But, try to imagine them and place the main parts of your picture away from the center.

Also, use the imaginary diagram to balance the objects on the left side of the picture with the area and "weight"

of the objects on the right.

Now, check if there is balance between the objects on the lower half of the picture with the area and "weight" of the objects on the upper half of the picture.

These will rarely balance exactly but this simple guide will help your

pictures create a better impression on everyone that views them.

## The Rule of Thirds for Scenery!

If you want to improve your pictures of city scapes, mountains and other scenic features, there is a variation in the way we use the rule of thirds to help you.

You still divide the picture area into three sections from left to right and top to bottom.



But, you place the horizon on one of the horizontal lines of the grid.

If you want the focus to be on the land area, set the horizon on the top line. The sky etc., will take up the top third of the picture and the focus will be on the land in the lower two thirds.

If you want the focus to be on

the sky region, set the horizon on the lower line. The sky etc., will take up the top two thirds of the picture and the land will be subordinate in the lowest third of it.

You can give the major portion of the appropriate major or subordinate section to one part of that which you want to focus on such as an important building or something moving through the sky.

You can also give it further emphasis by giving it more than two thirds of the total area.

### Break the Rules when Necessary....

It's important to understand that the rule of thirds can be broken very successfully at times.

It's usually done by someone that has experience of the rule's value but finds some situations where breaking the rule gives a especially good result.

It's the same with almost any customary rule in design or art of any kind.

Most pictures we take of any person will include their complete body but you can create a particular impression of some individuals by only showing, for instance, their appealing eyes or large feet to make a point.

Be careful, of course, that you don't cause offense to them or the people who see the picture just to promote your skill with pictures.

You may get paid for making good pictures but less people will want to be in them if you don't respect them.

### **Making Memories**

There are good pictures and great pictures.

The difference is seldom because of the cost of the camera used for each.

If you give an average happy snapper a fully equipped DSLR kit and a thinking photographer something lesser, the one that thinks about what picture they want will probably produce better results.

Think about taking pictures at a sporting event.

You want an action picture where the player hits the ball.

You don't want to get the shot two seconds after she sent the ball to the other end of the court.

The snapper's best chance is to use the option to get a quick burst of pictures instead of relying on his reflexes to press the shutter at exactly the right moment.

He has a chance that he will get the picture he wants but it won't be as finely focused as he hopes as he has no control over the automatic process.

The other photographer realizes that he must be ready for the shot in time so that he can press the shutter and the camera will catch the right moment (most of the time), because he knows and allows for the time the camera needs to actually focus and take the picture.

So, he watches the player make some earlier shots. He knows their action and he can focus on the right moment to get the perfect picture.

You can use this same method to get the picture when the child pulls an Easter egg from the basket or the happy couple cut the cake.

Think and be ready ahead of the moment to ensure you get the best possible shot!

You can also take multiple shots so that you increase the chances of getting the one you most want with the ball, and the player both in it!

## **Better People Photos**

Most of the photos we take have people in them.

You probably find it easy to get cooperation from the people you snap because you know them and they probably want the pictures to turn out great as much as you do.

Who can help you improve your pictures even further?

Those busy professionals that are paid to take pictures where the subjects are not always cooperative.

I mean those who take pictures at public events, parties and other affairs where it can be hard work getting a smile for the camera.

The first step is to remember the rule of thirds.

That gives you a framework which helps compose the picture almost automatically.

Next, you wait for the right moment. If someone is moving around a lot, you take some pictures whenever you can as insurance in case they slip away before you can get them to stand still long enough for a few set pictures.

Get as close as is reasonable without pushing into their personal space.

Remember that using a zoom will usually give you less area of a focused image to work with.

## The Sun is a Nuisance (sometimes)

The sun is an invaluable resource but it can give so much light to the area where you are taking photos, it overpowers your subject or creates big shadows in all the wrong places.

You will actually find it's often easier to get good shots when there a few clouds about.

Don't think that putting your subjects under any shady tree will always fix the problem.

If the camera picks up the bright direct rays' effects, it will shade the subjects.

Avoid this problem by carefully checking the settings just before taking the picture.

You can also use reflectors or diffusers to redirect some of the light where you want it.

### **Treat Your Subjects like Royalty**

The most important person in a picture is your subject, not you.

If you keep that thought in mind, you will get more cooperation than otherwise.

I know some photographers don't act like that but they usually have some experience at getting their way and then moving on.

You want to get good pictures and keep a good relationship with the subjects.

It's often worth investing a few minutes in helping them to relax so that they are more cooperative during the session.

#### Aim for the Eyes

The eyes are one of the most powerful contact points for us in both business and personal situations.



When you begin to do portraits, a good way to start a session if you have your camera set at the same level as your subject's eyes.

You will usually get an acceptable image at least.

But, looking directly at the camera can be uncomfortable for some people.

Or, they may seem aggressive to

viewers which will reduce the empathy between them and the subject.

Ask the subject to look slightly off to one side or to put their body at an angle to the camera while maintaining the same relationship between the lens and their eye level.

This simple step can make more interesting pictures.

You could learn some good ideas just by taking a series of pictures of a subject in the same pose and just moving the camera enough to alter the

relationship between their eye line and the lens.

If your subject is much shorter than you, adjust your tripod so that the relationship between camera and lens is "on the level".

#### Let the Subject direct their view.

Some of the most powerful pictures are where the photographer focuses on the subject, but they are pointing or looking at something in the picture which becomes the focus of the viewers.

This can have a double effect on them because they see the effect of whatever it is on the subject which influences their own reaction.

#### Do a Burst of Photos

Another tip for child photos is to set the camera to take a burst of consecutive pictures. These can be fun to view as they are but can also be easily made into a slideshow.

### Help with Reluctant Subjects

#### Take Away their comfort Zone

Although I emphasized that you always give your subjects respect, you can try taking them out of their comfort zone to get better pictures.

That could be asking them to jump up and down if they don't look the jumping type.

At least one famous photographer took pictures of well-known people doing that for a number of years.

Another way to get a fresh impression of some people is to wait until they think the camera is not pointed at them – take a few candid pictures.

Show the pictures you get which you think are the best and that may encourage them to suggest some other pictures which you could take of them.

This is very good when snapping children, especially if you use a small camera which doesn't make a noise when it takes a picture or changes settings.

#### Get Them to Act

Some subjects are too set in their ways to show emotion in a photograph.

Sometimes, you can get them to bend that reserved attitude by giving them an item and asking them to act like they were using it.

That might be a musical instrument or an artist's brush.

Or, ask them if they ever used something like that or if it reminded them of something in their life.

You are trying to connect to their emotions and usually this sort of thing works.

When they focus away from their regular role, they usually become more animated and less formal so better pictures are possible.

### Another way to get a Connection

A simpler way to encourage a connection between the subject of your

picture and a viewer is to just ask the subject to move around a little while you take a few pictures as they look different ways.

You can ask them for different expressions. Let them decide what expressions to use – no acting required.

Then ask them to sit again and just turn their head slightly to one side.

This takes them out of the direct camera view and, combined with the moving around they just did, should relax them a little.

The sideways look will also help to make it easier for the viewer to feel a connection to them.

## More tips from Real Life!

### Turn it Up!

One simple tip which helps you to focus on a person's face or just part of them is to turn your camera sideways. Their head will take up more of the picture area and your subject will be the focus simply because there is less area for distracting items around them.

Also, remember to move close and fill the frame with the subject.

#### Smile!

Most pictures of people look better if they smile. The simplest way to encourage your subjects to smile is to smile yourself.

It's a good idea to check your smile sometimes.

After a busy day at the office or behind the camera, yours might have slipped into a scowl.

And, some people don't realize their smile looks bad!

The best tips I have about producing a genuine smile is to get plenty of practice and imagine that your smile is lighting up your eyes.

That was suggested to me by a coach and it is worth trying.

#### **Trees and Other Backgrounds**

You probably have seen pictures where people have trees and other things sticking out of their heads because the photographer didn't notice when he snapped the picture.

Trees, poles and the like are not the only unwise choice for an accessory in a picture.

The sky may be especially bright and distract from the subject of your picture.

There might be an inappropriately worded sign in the background or a "helpful" person adding a rude gesture just for fun.

Take a moment to think about the best alternative background. A plain wall in a neutral color usually sets anything off fairly well.

BTW, if you get that helpful character, don't cause a fuss and possibly ruin the whole session. Just take their picture and then delete it after you've taken one of your subject without the helpful bystander.

## Change Your P.O.V. for better Photos

When you change your P.O.V. (point of view) that you take some pictures from, you are likely to get more interest from people that view them.

If you give a little thought before setting up the pictures, you can get a greatly improved impact on those people.

Instead of sticking to the common wisdom of aligning your lens with a subject's eye line, try bringing them right up to the camera or photographing them from an angle which makes them look either much smaller or very large.

'Always keep their well-being in mind. You might want them to pose again and you also need them to tell their friends they enjoyed the experience this time so they also might want to pose.

Props are often useful to get people more comfortable. I think it makes them feel they are not the whole focus of the picture.

Taking a picture of the subject's reflection in a mirror can give you a great picture and cause them to be more interested in the session.

Get their interest and ask them questions about their hobbies or sports as that can get some valuable animation in the pictures.

#### Do You Need a New Camera?

Camera stores depend on us changing up to a later and possibly better camera regularly.

But, surveys indicate that many of us do not use many of the new features after the period following the new purchase.

We stick to what we know works for us.

In other words, we probably should not have bought the new camera until the old one broke.

What are some good tips when we start to think about our next camera? Here are a few.

What do you need the new camera to help you do?

Can you get a part or a program which will make it possible for your current camera to do that?

Most people wonder at some time whether to get a pro-level camera just in case they get the urge to get serious about their photography.

But, the truth is that most would never take the big step and a less complex camera would probably be a wiser choice.



One benefit from buying a DSLR is that you can change to different lenses if you buy them. Most DSLRs just come with one lens. Some DSLR bodies cost much the same as other cameras which are supplied with a lens, but all lenses are at extra cost! Those cameras are for the rigch enthusiast and the professional who knows how to use them to get pictures which will repay the investment.

They will give you great photos if you put in the time and sweat to learn how.

And add the sweat to carry the large pack which protects the DSLR's body, lenses and other bits.

A DSLR usually takes multiple pictures with less delay between shots which makes it a great choice for taking pictures of sport and other fast

moving subjects.

The top compacts are catching up and they weigh a lot less.

You can use the screen on the digital compact to compose pictures like an artist. Older DSLRs required you to just use the tiny viewfinder.

New models have special software which gives a similar facility but it's a bit pricey on top of the basic DSLR cost at this time.

Most DSLRs are better for taking photos in low light.

The DSLR system means you can switch your optional lenses but they all tend to attract dust and need careful cleaning and special padding when being transported.

For most people, apart from the really serious hobbyists, DSLRs are probably only a good investment for those who earn money from them or want to play with them enough they can justify their cost.

The RULE should be to buy a camera which will give you the features you need to successfully do the pictures you want and include some features which will let you get better than you can do with your current camera.

Beforee you invest in a new camera, ask yourself if you are using all the relevant features it has? Many people buy cameras which can take professional quality pictures and never change the lens or many of the settings.

Whatever your choice, you must use the camera and share the pictures you make.

Get with other photographers and have fun!

## **Don't Buy The Latest!**

When you decide to buy a new camera, don't buy the "latest" – buy the best quality you can.

The one with the newest features will be superceded within a week.

The compact cameras are becoming less popular but there are some models which you might consider because the quality is good enough for your needs.

There are compact and mid-size cameras available which have interchangeable lenses and can be a lower-cost alternative to the DSLRs.

Some DSLR's are offered with optional screens as well as viewfinders and some upper-range compacts have viewfinders available.

There are likely to be more phones and smart devices with much better cameras in them as the sales for the few already offered have generally continued well after initial surge by those who always must have the newest item.

# **Keep Smiling and Sharing Your Pictures**

Photography is one of the world's most popular hobbies.

You don't have to buy a DSLR or the latest super powerful compact.

You just need a camera that works and friends to take pictures of and share the results.



#### Sam Arnott

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