LA COUNTY LIBRARY

DIY Library Program

PHONE PHOTOGRAPHY

TAKE GREAT PICTURES WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

Recommended for Ages 13 – 18

Photography is more than just taking a picture. It is an outlet for creativity, vision, and imagination. It can give you a sense of purpose, a mode of storytelling, and a different perspective on things. It can even take you to new places and help you meet new people.

Smartphone photography is different from digital photography using a camera because it is so instant and accessible. You take a picture and see the results on a large screen, you can instantly edit it with a photo editor, and you can send or post it online to share instantly with your friends and followers. Something to think about: Instagram, a photo and video sharing app, has over 95 million photos uploaded to it every day! [1]

This program will teach you the basics of smartphone photography, and provide you with links to books, online courses, and helpful websites to help you grow in this skill.

Questions to Think About

- How many photos are stored on your phone right now?
- How many of those tell a story within one photo?
- Photography is an art form and as such, it will take a little longer than just point and shoot. Give some thought as to what you want to take – what would you like to photograph?

Three Photography Basics

1. Clean the lens. Make sure your camera lenses are clear! Ensuring they are dust and smudge free will result in a clear picture. You can do this by using a microfiber cloth and/or a lens wipe.
2. Turn on the Grid. This will superimpose grid lines on the screen to help you with composing your shot. They will not appear in the photo. You can turn on this option in the camera settings.

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[1] Smith, Kit. "126 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts". *Brandwatch*, 30 Dec. 2019, https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts/

3. HDR. HDR stands for High Dynamic Range. It is a setting you can turn on or off. When turned on, the camera takes 3 photos at different exposures and combines them into 1 photo. This could be used for photographing landscapes, sunlight portraits, and low-light/backlit scenes. It should be avoided for movement shots, high-contrast scenes, and vivid colors.[2]

SHOT COMPOSITION: Rule of Thirds, Leading Lines, Perspective

Rule of Thirds

Using the grid breaks up the frame into thirds horizontally or vertically. When you place a subject at the center of the frame, the viewer may focus only on the center and not see the background. Instead of placing the subject in the middle, you place the subject near the intersecting lines of the grid, drawing attention to the picture as a whole.

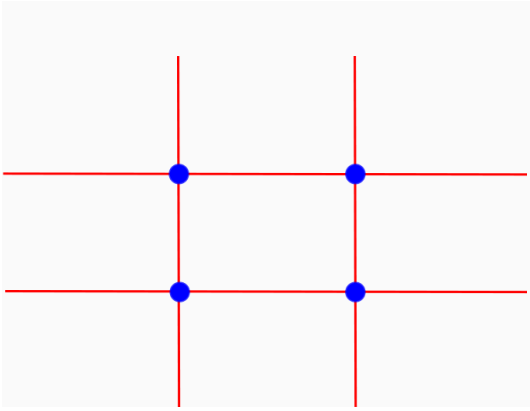

Figure 1

Figure 2

Leading Lines

When we look at a photo, our eyes can wander all around the frame. When there are leading lines, our eyes are drawn to the lines and what they lead to. Leading lines can be found in the city through streets and buildings, and in nature with mountains, reflections, pathways, etc. as seen in the photos below.

[2] Gordon, W. (12 June 2019). What is HDR and When Should I Use it in My Photos? *LifeHacker*. https://lifehacker.com/what-is-hdr-and-when-should-i-use-it-in-my-photos-5991508

Figure 3

Figure 4

Perspective

To create a sense of depth, you can use a few techniques:[3]

- Low angle shot - the camera is placed lower to the ground than the subject, and you are shooting up at it.
- High angle shot - the subject looks smaller because you are shooting above it, looking down.
- Lateral movement - you move to the left or right of a subject to get a better angle.
- First-person point of view - you can put a body part in front of the camera to give that perspective.

Tip: You can also get creative and stand behind some branches and take a photo of the landscape with the leaves in the foreground, as if you were peeking out of the tree. Those few leaves would be blurry, and your landscape would be in focus.

[3] McManus, D. (Udemy). (2019). *iPhone Photography: Take Professional Photos on your iPhone* [MOOC]. https://www.udemy.com/course/iphonephotography/

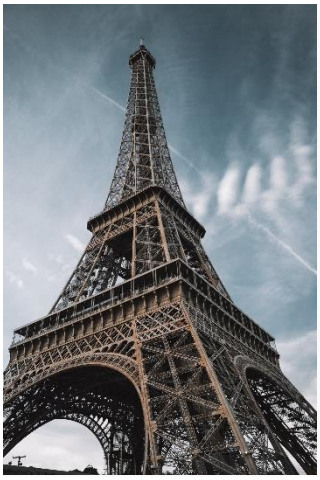

Figure 5 - Low angle

Figure 6 - High angle

Figure 7 - First-person

Activity

Time to try it out! Turn on the grid from your camera settings. Walk around looking for something to photograph using the Rule of Thirds, Leading Lines, and different Perspectives. Remember to be thoughtful about your shot!

- Did you find yourself thinking more about a shot than you normally would?
- Which technique did you find the most difficult to use?

Was the grid useful? Remember that you can always move things around for your shot, essentially "setting up" the look you want to photograph.

Photography Extras

Focus – There few things worse than a blurry picture in photography. You always want your subject to be clear. Most smartphones have an automatic focus, but you can also tap the screen to focus on your subject. You can lock your focus in place so the autofocus doesn't take over.

Exposure – How much light reaches your camera sensor affects how bright or dark the photo is. Generally, the camera phone will automatically adjust exposure, but you can also manually adjust the exposure settings.

Zoom – This refers to making a subject looker closer or farther away in an image.

- *Optical zoom* involves the use of a lens that physically extends from the camera to magnify a subject, achieving the same effect as if you moved closer. There is no loss of quality using this. This feature is found in the iPhone 7 and later (offering optical zoom up to 2x). For Android phones, check with your particular model.

- *Digital zoom* increases the size of the image, cropping the edges. This results in a poor image quality. If the zoom-in is small, the image quality may not really be affected. It is when a subject is far away and the more you zoom in, the more image quality drops.

Figure 8

Golden Hour – Considered a great time to shoot photos, golden hour is the first hour of light after sunrise, and the last hour of light before sunset. The natural light is softer and redder, and there are no sharp shadows as there would be with overhead sunlight. This light is popular for selfies and silhouette photos.

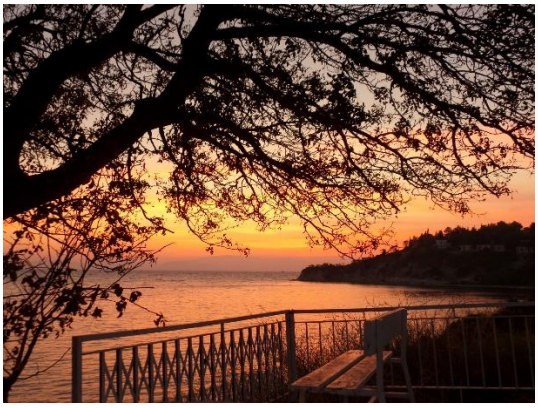

Figure 9

Figure 10

Macro Photography – This is extreme, close up photography. It is great for photographing the details of nature (bugs, plants, small animals), and capturing the texture of larger objects. You can buy separate lenses for your phone for this, or you can just get really close (a few inches away) and focus on your subject.

Figure 11

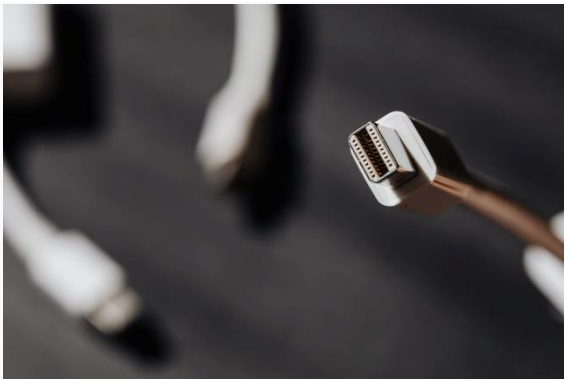

Figure 12

The Fun Stuff

Apps – Photo editing apps let you shoot, edit, organize, and share your photos. There are hundreds out there, check out Gurpreet Singh from Pixpa's evaluation of 35 photo-editing apps here[4] if you want to learn more!

Photo Hosting – There are websites where you can post your pictures online for yourself or to share. You can make albums, send out links, and store photos all on a photo hosting site. Jamie Spencer at Make a Website Hub reviewed 13 free image hosting sites[5] if you want to share a photo or gallery with friends, family, the Internet, etc.

Accessories – If you want to spend the money, you can purchase extras to enhance your photography experience. Some things include a tripod to keep the camera steady, lenses that clip onto the phone for better zoom shots, a remote shutter control that lets you take a picture when you are standing away from the phone, microfiber cloths to keep your lens clean, and LED lights for better lighting.

Activity

- Focus on something using the exposure settings to adjust how much light is allowed in. You can also tap to focus on different parts of the screen at this step.
- Play with the zoom feature! Walk up to something and take a picture. Then walk away and zoom in and take another picture of the same thing. Compare the two for image quality.

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[4] Singh, G. (6 March 2020). Top 35 Photo Editing Apps - Best Photo Apps of 2020. *Pixpa*. https://www.pixpa.com/blog/photo-apps

[5] Spencer, J. (n.d .). Best Free Image Hosting Sites Guide For 2020. *Make a Website Hub*. https://makeawebsitehub.com/free-photo-hosting/

- Get up close and personal with a macro shot! You might have to focus a few times, or even zoom a little bit to get it to focus correctly. Nature shots are great for this since the sunlight is very bright.

Additional Tips

1. Photography is an art that is learned. Get some inspiration by using a Google image search, look up photography styles, or search for the concepts learned in this program and look to the images.

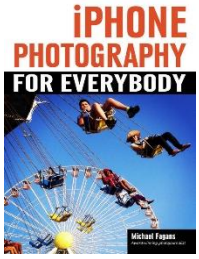
2. Get to know your phone camera and the built-in photo editor! You will learn what your phone is capable of and will understand how external editing apps may help.

3. Start your journey at home! Move things around and set up your shot to practice the concepts we covered. Hit the yard during golden hour to take a selfie (don't look directly at the sun!) or photograph the clouds.

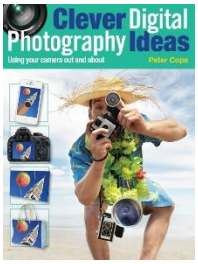
DIGITAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH LA COUNTY LIBRARY

eBooks & Audiobooks

LA County Library offers numerous resources that can help you learn more about photography. Here are just a few, all of which are available as eBooks on OverDrive and Libby:

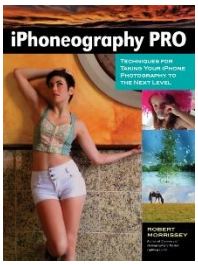


iPhone Photography for Everybody **by Michael Fagans**
Along with some technical information, the author has included insightful information about his mind-set when shooting, his approach to composition, and how he handles other creative aspects of the photography process.

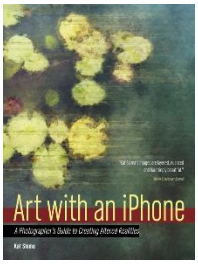


Clever Digital Photography Ideas **by Peter Cope**
A guide to the ingenious and creative things that can be done with a digital compact camera or camera phone. This book provides a variety of simple ideas for getting more from your camera or camera phone when you are out and about, beyond your travels and holidays. Some ideas might be obvious, but many are more obscure and fun.

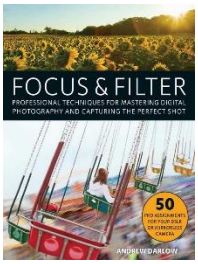
InstaStyle **by Tezza**
InstaStyle is your visual guide for transforming your Instagram feed and showcasing your life, while remaining true to your brand. From the moment you create your handle to get started, this book provides content inspiration, advice on curating shots, and editing instructions to keep your grid captivating and professional.



iPhoneography Pro **by Robert Morrissey**
In this book, commercial photographer Robert Morrissey investigates the photographic capabilities of the iPhone, advanced uses, apps, and accessories. Armed with this book, you'll learn to create technically sound, artistically inventive photos of any subject for any end use—from web use, to wall-size prints, to gallery presentation.



Art with an iPhone **by Kat Sloma**
Learn how to harness natural light, both indoors and out, to create high-quality images, how to choose and use apps that take control over focus and exposure, and discover apps that boost your camera's resolution, improve stability, and more.



Focus and Filter **by Andrew Darlow**
Though not specifically for smartphone photography, this book includes all the technical advice you need to hone your skills, from choosing your equipment and setting up your studio to mastering camera settings, working in the field, and building rapport with your models.

Online Learning

- *Lynda.com*. Check out *Photography Foundations: Mobile Photography,* a 90-minute course on mobile photography with an in-depth exploration of photography basics and how to adjust camera settings for the best results in different conditions. Also covered are more advanced photography concepts.

- *Universal Class*. Sign-up for *Digital Photography with the iPhone*, a 5-hour course that covers basic concepts like how to take pictures, troubleshoot, and use photo apps. More advanced concepts include techniques for amazing images, lighting, exposure, and more.

- *Kanopy*. Watch *Smartphone Photography*, an episode of a 24-episode series called the Fundamentals of Photography II.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- Getty's *Unshuttered* has quick tutorials explore photography concepts, especially for teens! http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/photography-fundamentals-for-the-creative-teenager/

- If you wish to share you work on a bigger scale, you can enter photography contests that are for teenagers! Remember though, most contests require an entry fee. https://www.socapa.org/articles/photography/top-teen-photography-competitions

FIGURE CITATIONS

Fig 1: *Rule of 3*3 Composition: Art Photography* [Illustration]. (2006). Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Rule_of_thirds#/media/File:Photo_3x3.svg

Fig 2: Moondigger. (1999). *Rivertree* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rivertree_1_md.jpg#file

Fig 3: SplitShire. (2008). *People in the Middle of Street Under an Orange Sky* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.pexels.com/photo/city-italy-pedestrian-precinct-pedestrian-zone-1415/

Fig 4: Viclove22. (n.d.). *Leading Lines* [Photograph]. Retrieved April 20, 2020 from https://www.needpix.com/photo/884898/leading-lines-lines-that-lead-to-a-point-leading-line-point-free-pictures-free-photos-free-images-royalty-free

Fig 5: Azabache, A. (2019). *Low Angle Shot of Eiffel Tower Under Blue Sky* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.pexels.com/photo/low-angle-shot-of-eiffel-tower-under-blue-sky-3848416/

Fig 6: *High-angle photograph of vegetable dish on bowl* [Photograph]. (n.d.). Retrieved April 20, 2020 from https://www.pikrepo.com/flevv/high-angle-photograph-of-vegetable-dish-on-bowl

Fig 7: Broesis. (n.d.). *Bike First Person Handlebars* [Photograph]. Retrieved April 20, 2020 from https://www.needpix.com/photo/944215/bike-first-person-handlebars-bicycle-tour-tour-recovery-bicycle-trip-bike-ride-locomotion

Fig 8: Genetichazard. (2007). *Digital Zoom vs. Optical Zoom* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Digital_zoom.jpg#filelinks

Fig 9: Sezgin, A. (2015). *Beautiful Sunset* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.pexels.com/photo/beautiful-sunset-beauty-dawn-loneliness-1753367/

Fig 10: Elliott, T. (2019). *Hot Air Balloons Flying over the Mountains* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.pexels.com/photo/hot-air-balloons-flying-over-the-mountains-3889704/

Fig 11: Harrydona. (2019). *Butterfly Macro Photography* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://pixabay.com/photos/butterfly-macro-photography-4282569/

Fig 12: Grabowska, K. (2020). *Silver USB Cable* [Photograph]. Retrieved from https://www.pexels.com/photo/industry-connection-technology-computer-4219864/