How to Take/Make Better Pictures

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What do I know about good pictures?

• Not much: amateur photographer, mostly wildlife and candid portraits
Equipment
Equipment

- Do get an SLR, compacts are way too limited
- Don't worry about brand
- Don't worry about the body, get the cheapest one
- Worry about lenses
  - Zooms are convenient but quality can be a problem
    - avoid the basic zoom, but the one above is usually fine
    - Maximum aperture matters (the smaller the number, the better)
  - Get a prime in the 35-85mm range
    (cheap, high quality, wide aperture)
    50mm f/1.8 (both Canon & Nikon)

- Get a tripod
- Get an external flash if you want to take “event” pictures
  - And orient towards ceiling
  - Good flash photography is very difficult
- Count ~1k for camera+standard zoom+50mm
Nikon

Tends to be a tad cheaper

• D40 is a great body. D80 is better.

• 18-70

• 55-200 is surprisingly not so bad and super cheap

• Get the 50mm f/1.8
Canon

- Rebel XTi
- 17-85
- 70-200 f/4.0 (amazing lens)
- 50mm f/1.8
- 100mm f/2.8 macro (great also for portraits)

... I think that the fall crop of cameras will be a huge step in low-light sensitivity
Other brands

Not as big a range, future not always clear (see Minolta), have been slower to get to digital SLR

- **Olympus**
  - Good system, but smaller sensor

- **Pentax**
  - Good entry camera

- **Sigma**
  - Intriguing sensor (Foveon). One trick pony

- **Fuji**
  - Used to be one-trick pony (the sensor). I heard the S5 is better
  - Nikon body

- **Sony**
  - Interesting hybrid, the R1
    - Very silent, good images, crappy viewfinder, no interchangeable lenses
  - Alpha SLR. Range of lenses currently limited

- **Konica-Minolta**
  - Just announced they stop photography!
How to improve?
Anti-creativity session

• Addressed to those of us who are not talented photographers
• Set of heuristics, issues, that will help you get better photographs. Maybe not great photographs, but better
• If you are talented, good for you. Forget those rules, keep taking good photos.
View it as a vocabulary to talk about pictures

- It’s like wine: you describe taste with lots of poetic and metaphorical words
- It does not matter if they’re meaningful
- It gives you a support to think about it

- If you don’t need it: good for you, ignore what I say
Take pictures, critique your pictures

• And get them critiqued

• Give yourself a theme, constraints

• Look at contests online:
  – http://www.dpchallenge.com/
  – http://www.fredmiranda.com/

• Work with friends, critique
Tips
Technical points

• **Know your equipment**
• **Understand the parameters**
  – Shutter speed, aperture, focal length, depth of field
  – Debrief your photos, look at the EXIF metadata
• **Check your exposure**
  – Histogram, blinking highlights
  – Unless you shoot HDR
• **Sharpness matters**
  – Choose the right shutter speed
  – Use a tripod
  – Image stabilization rocks
  – Focus on the appropriate thing
• **Optics matters**
  – Use a good lens
  – Put the hood on
42 advice

• Collected from random books,
• Just guideline

• Simplify your picture
  – Pay attention to background

• Do or don't. No middle ground.
  – When you do an effect, exaggerate. In particular, if you break one of the following heuristics, do it frankly

• Manage dynamic range, fill in shadows
42 Photoshop advice

• **Shoot RAW, edit in 16 bits**
• **Try Lab, you might like it**
• **Use layers: not destructive, flexible**
  – There are very smart ways to create masks
  – E.g. copy the luminance, invert it, threshold it, blur it
• **Crop**
  – Avoid centered subject, simplify composition
  – Rotate when important lines are oblique
• **Manage contrast and brightness**
  – Use the curve and layer masks [http://luminous-landscape.com/tutorials/command_primer.shtml](http://luminous-landscape.com/tutorials/command_primer.shtml)
  – Highlights and shadow
  – HDR local adaptation
• **Correct colors and white balance**
• **Manage focus of attention**
  – Blur/sharpen
  – A tad of saturation/desaturation
  – Edge burning, vignetting
• **Remove distracting elements**
  – Clone brush, healing brush
• **Minor face makeup**
  – Remove harsh shadows
  – Red eye
  – Reduce wrinkles with the healing brush. Do it on a separate layer, partial opacity
• **Correct perspective keystone**
  – Use the perspective crop
• **Try black and white**
• **Whatever you do, do it less**
  – Opposite of previous page (it’s too easy to exaggerate with digital)
• **Soft focus vs. Gaussian blur** [http://luminous-landscape.com/tutorials/glow.shtml](http://luminous-landscape.com/tutorials/glow.shtml)
• **Improve the sky** [http://luminous-landscape.com/tutorials/white_sky_blues.shtml](http://luminous-landscape.com/tutorials/white_sky_blues.shtml)
Composition

• Find a center of interest
• Don’t center everything (e.g. rule of the thirds)
  – Careful with autofocus
• Change your viewpoint, move your feet!
  – Get close (if you can’t get it good, get it big [John Shaw])
  – Try unusual viewpoints
• Try different focal lengths
  – Telephoto, wide angle
  – Focal length allows you to control the relative size of elements at different depth (moon in particular)
• Careful what you cut off
  – Sweep edges of frame
• Build on lines and curves
  – But careful with near-parallelism
  – Careful with converging perspective
• Include framing elements
Negative space

• The ground defines the negative space
• Usually overlooked
• Fundamental for balance
  – Also for typography

picture  figure  negative space
Avoid cluttered background

• Move your feet

Avoid Cluttered Backgrounds
Don’t let a cluttered background overwhelm or obscure your subject. Move around, or lie down, to get a clear shot at your subject without the distractions.
More flexible with telephoto

Making the Subject Pop

Photos above: Swainson’s Hawk. Photos captured by D1H, 600mm f/4D ED-IF AF-S with TC-14E, on Lexar digital film.

Creating one big, blue slate. Close observation may reveal a background reflection of whatever is immediately behind the water, which could be dark shrubs, trees, a bank, and even clouds. This changes the reflection, giving depth and tangling to the water. Missing in the scene.

The contrary is true as well. The background can squelch a great waterfowl or shorebird photograph. The busy patterns of reflected reeds, tangles of cordgrass, or intertwined tree branches can interfere with a subject as effectively as the real things. Reducing the depth of field more.

Photo Moose Peterson
Distracting background
Shallow depth of field
Isolate using blur (Photoshop, layering)

• But maybe don’t over-do it
Problem...

Background distractions
In the chaos of a young child’s room, it is neither possible nor desirable to remove all the distractions, but toning them down would help to emphasize the main subject.

- Bronica SQ-A with 40 mm lens. ISO 64 film. Heidelberg Saphir II scanner.

...solution

Desaturated background
Applying Desaturate to the background, turning all the colors into gray has helped separate the girl from the numerous objects surrounding her. A large, soft-edged Brush tool was chosen and the printing mode was set to desaturation at 100 percent.

From Digital Photographer’s Handbook
Try black and white

- Tons of options in Photoshop
  - Gradient map, saturation, color channels, Lab, channel mixer
Photoshop & matting
Photoshop & inpainting
Simplify: Get close

- Our eyes tend to “zoom” and forget how small the subject is
- or crop (but then you lose resolution)

(On the other hand, this is not the best picture ever)

http://www.fotofinish.com/resources/centers/photo/takingpictures.htm
If you can't make it good, make it tight
Isolate detail (crop)
The rule of thirds is a guideline developed by artists centuries ago. When the subject—or its most important element—is placed near one of the intersecting points of an imaginary grid, the viewer’s eye is led through the frame. The result is an aesthetically strong image.
Centered version: not as dynamic
Don’t center, especially for motion
Warning: near-parallelism

- In particular, keep horizon level
- Use crop with rotation to fix this

Don't let lines unintentionally throw your photo off balance. When you shoot the horizon or a building, keep the straight lines level—unless you're shooting at a dramatic, intentional angle.

Keep the horizon level

http://www.fotofinish.com/resources/centers/photo/takingpictures.htm
Try unusual angles

• Do or don't:
  Either perfectly vertical or at least 30 degrees

Try Unusual Angles
Be bold! Try turning your camera to 45 degrees before snapping a picture. Or instead of snapping it from eye level, kneel down or lie on the ground to get a more interesting shot.

http://www.fotofinish.com/resources/centers/photo/takingpictures.htm
Correct perspective (perspective crop) + you control reflection and perspective independently
Quick fix Converging parallels

While the brain largely compensates for visual distortions – so, in effect, you see what you expect to see – the camera faithfully records them all.

Problem
Images showing subjects with prominent straight lines, such as the sides of a building, appear uncomfortable when printed or viewed on screen because the lines appear to converge. Regular shapes may also appear sheared or squashed (see also p. 109).

Analysis
The change in size of different parts of the image is due to changes of magnification – different parts of the recorded scene are being reproduced at different scales. This occurs because of changes in distance between the camera and various parts of the subject. For example, when you look through the viewfinder at a building from street level, its top is farther away than its base – a fact that is emphasized by pointing the camera upward to include the whole structure. As a result, the more distant parts appear to be smaller than the closer parts.

Solution
Select the whole image and, using the Distortion or Transformation tool, pull the image into shape. If there are changes in magnification in two planes, both will converge, and so you will need to compensate for both.

How to avoid the problem

- Choose your shooting position with care and try to compose the image in order to keep any lines that are centrally positioned as vertical as possible. In addition, look to maintain symmetry on each side of the middle of the picture.

- Rather than pointing the camera upward, to include the upper parts of a building or some other tall structure, look for an elevated shooting position. This way, you may be able to keep the camera parallel with the subject and so minimize differences in scale between various parts of the subject as they are recorded by the camera.
Sweep the frame to check for trouble

- Cropped element, distracting object, non-parallel line
Careful with frame edges
Avoid accidental alignment

Avoid Mergers
As you position yourself to avoid a cluttered background, also look out for trees, lamp posts, and other background objects which might merge with your subject in unfortunate ways.

Don’t let a tree grow out of your subject’s head

Reposition your subject or yourself to avoid mergers

http://www.fotofinish.com/resources/centers/photo/takingpictures.htm
Special effects

• In general, accidental alignments are bad
• But sometimes they are fun
Build on lines
Recap: composition

- **Simplify**
- **Pay attention to negative spaces**
  - Accidental alignments
  - Cluttered background
  - Sweep the edges of your frame
- **Manage depth of field**
- **Avoid centering**
  - Rule of the thirds
- **Do or don't**
Light & color

- Avoid harsh light…
  - unless you want to play with shadows
  - Do or don't
- Sunrise & sunset are best
- Avoid direct flash
- Cloudy days are great as long as the sky is not in the picture
- For sunny days, shade areas are best
Try black and white
  - It’s cool
  - It might address confusing/messy colors
• Don't get married on a sunny day!
Add fill-in

3  Use flash outdoors

Bright sun can create unattractive deep facial shadows. Eliminate the shadows by using your flash to lighten the face. When taking people pictures on sunny days, turn your flash on. You may have a choice of fill-flash mode or full-flash mode. If the person is within five feet, use the fill-flash mode; beyond five feet, the full-power mode may be required. With a digital camera, use the picture display panel to review the results.

On cloudy days, use the camera's fill-flash mode if it has one. The flash will brighten up people's faces and make them stand out. Also take a picture without the flash, because the soft light of overcast days sometimes gives quite pleasing results by itself.

= Learn more about composing people pictures

Illustrated here are the lighting effects produced by *direct*, *wall bounce*, *ceiling bounce*, and *off-camera direct flash*. The location and quality of the subject’s shadow changes, depending on the flash technique used. Direct flash, although sometimes necessary, produces a harsh image. Bounce flash produces softer light and softer shadows. Wall-bounce flash is similar to ceiling bounce flash with the added benefit of better revealing the subject’s shape.

Direct, on-camera flash is harsh and unflattering. Removing the flash from the camera, or bouncing the flash light from a nearby surface produces different effects. Light bounced from a ceiling, although commonly used, causes dark shadows in the eye sockets and under the nose and chin. The most successful technique indoors is to bounce light from a nearby light-colored wall.
Add fill in light on faces: Photoshop
Add fill in light on faces
Paint light

From Digital Photographer’s Handbook
Landscape: HDR & Tone mapping
Portraits
Portrait (and animal)

- Exploit shallow depth of field
- Make sure the face is illuminated (flash, post-process with Photoshop)
- Focus on the eyes
- Shoot at eye level (unless you want a dramatic effect)
- Be patient, work with your subject, take lots of pictures
- Don’t ask people to look at the camera
- Ask your subject to do something silly to relax them. Take the picture afterwards.
Shoot at eye level

• Get low!
Shoot at eye level

• Important for small animals and kids

Not good

Better
Eye level

Not quite eye level

eye level
Sociable cat

Harmony of tone and hue come together in this image with contrasts in texture and line. But it is only a friend’s cat being sociable and wanting to sit between us. As a digital photographer, you can take as many shots as you like and simply discard the unsuccessful ones. You can clean them up, too: here, the boards could be straightened a little and the object near the tip of the cat’s tail could easily be removed.

- Canon D30 with 28–135 mm lens

From Digital Photographer’s Handbook
When most people first start to smile, it is enormous (A). A moment after a person smiles that laughing smile, the expression starts to relax (B). This is the expression clients prefer.

The only clients that don’t have a problem with expression are the cheerleader-type girls or the few people that have that perfect “Colgate™ smile.” Although these types of clients will smile easily, the smile can have a “pasted on” look—one without feeling or emotion. I call it a perform-
Enhancing and Brightening Eyes

This is another one of those “30-second miracles” for brightening eyes, enhancing the catch lights, and generally drawing attention to the eyes by making them look sharp and crisp (crisp in the “sharp and clean” sense, not crisp in the “I burned my retina while looking at the sun” kind of crisp).

**Step One:**
Open the photo you want to retouch. Go under the Filter menu, under "Sharpen," and choose Unsharp Mask. When the Unsharp Mask dialog appears, enter your settings (if you need some settings, go to the first technique in Chapter 11, "Professional Sharpening Techniques"); then, click OK to sharpen the entire photo.

**Step Two:**
After you’ve applied the Unsharp Mask filter, apply it again using the same settings by pressing Command-F (PC: Control-F), and then apply it one more time using the same keyboard shortcut (you’ll apply it three times in all). The eyes will probably look nice and crisp at this point, but the rest of the person will be severely oversharpened, and you’ll probably see lots of noise and other unpleasant artifacts.
Step Four:
Go under the Image menu, under Adjustments, and choose Hue/Saturation. When the Hue/Saturation dialog appears, choose Reds from the Edit pop-up menu at the top (to edit just the reds in the photo). Now, drag the Saturation slider to the left to lower the amount of saturation in the reds (which removes any bloodshot appearance in the whites of the eyes).

Step Five:
While you’re still in the Hue/Saturation dialog, from the Edit menu, switch back to Master. Drag the Lightness slider to the right to increase the lightness of the whites of the eyes (as shown here). Click OK in the Hue/Saturation dialog to apply your adjustments, and then press Command-D (PC: Control-D) to deselect and complete the enhancement. The enhancement appears fairly subtle in the capture shown below, but when you try it yourself at full size, the effect appears much more pronounced.
Glasses highlight

- Clone brush
When You Forget to Use Fill Flash

Step One:
Open a photo where the subject or focus of the image appears in shadows. Go under the Image menu, under Adjustments, and choose Levels.

Step Two:
Drag the middle Input Levels slider (the gray one) to the left until your subject looks properly exposed. (Note: Don’t worry about how the background looks—it will probably become completely “blown out,” but you’ll fix that later. For now, just focus on making your subject look right.) If the midtone slider doesn’t bring out the subject enough, you may have to increase the highlights as well, so drag the far-right Input Levels slider to the left to increase the highlights. When your subject looks properly exposed, click OK.

Wouldn’t it be great if Photoshop had a “fill flash” brush, so when you forget to use your fill flash, you could just paint it in? Well, although it’s not technically called the fill flash brush, you can create your own brush and get the same effect. Here’s how.

Step Six:
Choose the History Brush tool from the Toolbox (as shown here), and choose a soft-edged brush from the Brush Picker in the Options Bar.

Step Seven:
Begin painting with the History Brush over your subject, avoiding the background area entirely. (Here, I’m painting over the left side of the subject’s face.) As you paint, you’ll notice that you’re actually painting in the lightened version of the subject you adjusted earlier with Levels.

Step Eight:
Continue painting with the History Brush until your subject looks as if you used a fill flash. When you’re painting, if it appears too intense, just lower the Opacity of the History Brush up in the Options Bar. That way, when you paint, the effect appears less intense. You can see the final repair here, with the background unchanged, but the subject in shadows is “brought out.”
Trick #1: diffuser

Diffusion

I hate to say “always,” but 98% of the time we diffuse each portrait that is taken. Since we are working with subjects who are at an age when skin clarity can be a problem, we recognize that their complexion can’t handle the clarity of today’s lenses. We use the Glamour Softs by Sailwind (#1). It softens the portrait without losing the critical sharpness in the eyes. I like to use a drop-in filter for easy focusing, especially as I get older.

From Corrective Lighting and Posing
- Scars, monsters, etc.
- “Creative” make-up
  - Fancy!
- Corrective make-up
  - Hide wrinkles, etc
  - Balance the face
  - Not limited to the face!
- Make-up for pictures
  - Avoid highlights
Shading and highlighting

Snapshot-Perspective-Speed, aperture-Filter-Lighting-Processing & Print-Make up-Retouching
Corrective Make Up

- Depending on the shape of the face

Snapshot-Perspective-Speed, aperture-Filter-Lighting-Processing & Print-Make up-Retouching
An example

Snapshot-Perspective-Speed, aperture-Filter-Lighting-Processing & Print-Make up-Retouching
Lighting

• E.g. 3-point lighting
  – Reduce dynamic range
  – Emphasize silhouettes
  → 3D cues

• Goals of lighting:
  – Manage dynamic range
  – Reveal shape, layout, material
  – Tell story
Portrait lighting

Main light
Fill-in light
Accent light
Background light
glossary of lighting terms

Lighting, like any other craft, has its own jargon and slang. Unfortunately, the different terms are not very well standardized. Often the same object may be described in two or more ways or the same word used to mean two or more different things. For example, a sheet of black card, wood, metal or other material that is used to control reflections or shadows may be called a flag, a French flag, a donkey or a gobo – though some people would reserve the term “gobo” for a flag with holes in it, which is also known as a cookie. In this book, we have tried to standardize terms as far as possible. For clarity, a glossary is given below, and the preferred terms used in this book are asterisked (*).

**Acetate**
see Gel

**Acrylic sheeting**
Hard, thin plexiglass sheeting, usually made of methacrylate, used as a diffuser (“spool”) or in a range of colours as a background.

**Barndoors**
Adjustable flaps affixed to a lighting head that allow the light to be shaded from a particular part of the subject.

**Beam**
Extension arm allowing a light to be cantilevered out over a subject.

**Bounce**
A passive reflector, typically white but also, for example, silver or gold, from which light is bounced back onto the subject. Also used in the compound term “Black Bounce”, meaning a flag used to absorb light rather than to cast a shadow.

**Continuous lighting**
What its name suggests: light that shines continuously instead of being a brief flash.

**Cookie**
see Lighting ratio

**Diffuser**
Transparent material used to diffuse light. Includes fringing paper, scrim, umbrellas and translucent plastics such as Perspex and Flexiglas.

**Effects light**
Neither key nor fill; a small light, usually a spot, used to light a particular part of the subject. A hair light on a model is an example of an effects (or “FX”) light. It is an abbreviation of “gelatine filter”.

**Fill**
Extra lights, either from a separate head or from a reflector, which “fill” the shadows and lowers the lighting ratio.

**Fish eye**
A small Soft Box.

**Flag**
A rigid sheet of metal, board, foam-core or other material used to absorb light or to create a shadow. Many are painted black on one side and white or brushed silver on the other, so they can be used either as flags or as reflectors.

**Flat**
A large Bounce, often made of a thick sheet of expanded polystyrene or foam-core (for lightness).

**Frost**
A light source, whether continuous or flash. A “standard head” comes fitted with a plain reflector.

**Hair**
Light source that produces an effect very similar to that of a “hairlight”.

**Honeycomb**
Grid of square-aperture hexagonal cells, so called because it closely resembles a honeycomb. This increases the directness of light from any head.

**Incandescent lighting**
see Tunestra

**Inky, dinky**
Small reflector spot.

**Key or key light**
The prominent or principal light, the light which casts the shadows.

**Kit**
A large flat that is used to black spot.

**Light**
see Soft Box

**MIL**
Rapidly cooled and effectively continuous light source approximating to daylight and running at far cooler temperatures than tungsten lights. They are most commonly used in studios that have daylight scanning backs.

**Murphy**
Flexible light brush holder; often used for casting a clear image of a subject or subject. Used to create textured lighting.

**Re**
Extra

**Set**
Large, diffused flash source made for casting light through one or two layers of diffuser. Soft boxes come in a variety of shapes and sizes, from about 30x30cm to 1.0m by 1.0m, and are made of fabric, cloth or a combination of cloth and plastic.

**Soft Box**
A brand name for acrylic sheeting.

**Projector spot**
In a projection head with projection optics for casting a clear image of a subject or subject. Used to create textured lighting.

**Reef**
Flexible light brush holder; often used for casting a clear image of a subject or subject. Used to create textured lighting.

**Strip or strip light**
Lighting head, usually flash, that is a larger version than is usual. Dutch roll

**Snoot**
Conical reflector, lying over a lighting head. The light can

**Tunestra**
Incandescent lighting.

**Umbrella**
Flexible light brush holder; often used for casting a clear image of a subject or subject. Used to create textured lighting.

**Vanity**
Flexible light brush holder; often used for casting a clear image of a subject or subject. Used to create textured lighting.
Hair lighting

From Corrective Lighting and Posing

The number one complaint from clients with dark hair is how, in many previous portraits, they seemed to blend into the background (A). With all clients who have hair (not bald), we typically use a strip light overhead to add soft separation to the head and shoulders. For someone with long hair like this, we add two accent lights with barndoors at a 45-degree angle, and a final light is placed directly behind the subject’s head. This light is angled back through the hair toward the camera (we call it a halo light). This can cause stray hairs to become very visible (B). In Image C, stray hairs have been reduced by reducing the intensity of the halo light. Sometimes this isn’t enough, and we eliminate the halo light (D).
Lighting & nose

Butterfly lighting can reduce the apparent size of the subject’s nose.

From Corrective Lighting and Posing
child
photographer Dolors Porredon

The face, the pose, the colours: all are reminiscent of a Victorian chromolithograph. The effect is achieved in large measure by careful control of the lighting ratio, while retaining as much chiaroscuro as possible.

The key is a snooted spot to camera left, fairly close to the child's face and very slightly backlighting her. Opposite this, to camera right, is a 60x80cm (2x3ft) soft box. This is set to give quite a close lighting ratio, but because it is diffuse and the key light is highly directional, the impression of modelling is very clear; modelling is all the more clear, of course, because of the very careful angling of these two lights.

A white reflector to camera left, just out of shot, provides a little more fill to the front of the face but also creates the catchlights in the eyes. They would not be there otherwise: the key is a back light, and the fill is shaded from both eyes.

key points
- Catchlights in the eyes are not essential, but sometimes a picture that is lacking them will look curiously dead.
- Traditional portraitists touched out all but a single catchlight. Today, multiple catchlights are acceptable if they are not too obtrusive.

Plan View
susan
photographer Massimo Robecchi

This picture well illustrates that an overcast day can be vastly superior to sunshine, especially if you are shooting in monochrome. With light coming more or less evenly from all directions, the tonality can be exquisite.

key points

► Exposure is a subjective art; arguably, everything in this picture is just a tiny bit darker than it “really” is, but this holds the tones in the white clothing

► A 300mm lens, used wide open at f/2.8, allows the background to be subtly suggested rather than too clearly delineated

Even so, Massimo Robecchi added a white bounce in front of the model to even out the light still further: the white drop of the table-cloth is thereby brought nearer to the tone of the clothes and the background, and the dark stockings are made to read just a little better. This is one of those cases where a collapsible reflector such as a Lastolite or a Scrim Jim can be extremely useful - and where the effect is completely different from fill-flash, touted by camera manufacturers as the answer to everything.
niña detrás de la ventana

photographer: Dolors Parredon

A perfect moment, captured by chance - or careful planning?
The latter, of course. The window is part of a built set, transilluminated with a 100x100cm (40x40in) soft box, supplemented only by a white bounce to camera left.

key points

- Soft yet directional lighting is often very effective with children.
- Flash is usually best for children, as they may screw up their eyes against tungsten lighting.
- Some photographers believe that flash can damage the eyes of young children, but there is absolutely no evidence to support this; it seems to be an old wives’ tale.

Although this was designed for a poster, the same techniques (and forethought, and organisation) could equally be applied to a picture for less public consumption. Window sets are not particularly hard to build; a selection of flowers can be kept at hand; the rest of the clothing is easily elaborate, though the light colour emphasizes purity and innocence; and the lighting is elegantly simple. It is true that, often, surprisingly complex lighting set-ups are used to mimic simplicity; but it is also true that a simple lighting set-up can (if it is well executed) be remarkably effective. Diffuse light generally works very well with children, emphasizing the delicacy of their skin texture and the roundness of their features. “Character” lighting is considerably more difficult before the features have reached their adult lineaments.
smile

photographer Jeff Manzetti

A large assortment of lights contribute to the dazzling look of this beautiful cover shot.

The dazzling smile and gleaming complexion are shown to good advantage as they are bathed in an even spread of light emanating from a virtual wall of light in the form of a series of umbrellas arranged in an arc behind and around the photographer. These all shoot through a curtain of diffusion material, softening and evening the effect on the subject. In addition to this is a key light, a daylight-balanced HMI to camera right, which is the only direct light on the model. It is positioned just high enough to give a gentle amount of modelling below the chin.

On the background are four more umbrellas, one pair on either side. The resulting lightness and evenness of a large part of the final image makes a good background against which the necessary cover text can ‘read’ clearly. A very mottled or light-and-dark image makes it difficult for text to show up well, and this is always a major consideration for a cover shot.
chinese hair
photographer Frank Wartenberg

There is no shortage of lighting equipment here. Frank Wartenberg has assembled an impressive array of soft boxes and silver styro reflectors, above, below and around the camera.

The main light is a large soft box (used with the modelling light only) positioned behind the camera. Six smaller soft boxes are arranged on either side and below this, again using only the tungsten modelling light. These combine to give an even sheet of light across the subject.

On both sides is a selection of silver reflectors, effectively forming a wall to either side.

The resulting bright and even background provides a foil against which the strands of the model’s hair, tousled by a wind machine, stand out in stark silhouette.

key points

* Modelling lights are normally tungsten, so bear this in mind when balancing sources
* Silver reflectors will produce more focused light than white reflectors

From Photographing People, Portrait, Fashion, Glamour
Hardcore Photoshop for portrait

• View before/after
Step Six:
To keep from simply painting in a blurry version of our photo, go up to the Options bar and change the History Brush’s Blend Mode to Lighten. Now when you paint, it affects only the pixels that are darker than the blurred state. Ahhh, do you see where this is going? Now, you can take the History Brush and paint over the acne areas, and as you paint, you’ll see them diminish quite a bit (as shown below). If they diminish too much, and the person looks “too clean,” press Command-Z (PC: Control-Z) to undo your History Brush strokes, then go up to the Options bar and lower the Opacity of the brush to 50% and try again.

Before.

After.
Chapter 9  Portrait Retouching

figure 9.47  BEFORE

figure 9.48  AFTER
Step Three:
Press the Left/Right Bracket keys on your keyboard to adjust the brush size until it's about the size of the person's cheek. Place the brush near the corner of the mouth (as shown here), click and "tug" slightly up. This tugging of the cheek makes the corner of the mouth turn up, creating a smile.

Step Four:
Repeat the "tug" on the opposite side of the mouth, using the already tugged side as a visual guide as to how far to tug. Be careful not to tug too far, or you'll turn your subject into the Joker from Batman Returns. Click OK in Liquify to apply the change, and the retouch is applied to your photo (as shown).
Step Four:
Press Command-T (PC: Control-T) to bring up the Free Transform bounding box. Hold Shift-Option-Command (PC: Shift-Alt-Control); then, grab the upper-right corner point of the bounding box and drag inward to add a perspective effect to the nose. Doing this gives the person a pug nose, but you fix that in the next step.

Step Five:
To get rid of the “pug-nose” effect, release all the keys, then grab the top-center point (as shown) and drag straight downward to make the nose look natural again, but now it’s smaller. When the new size looks about right, press Return (PC: Enter) to lock in your changes. If any of the old nose peeks out from behind the new nose, click on the Background layer and use the Clone Stamp tool to clone away those areas. Sample an area next to the nose, and then paint (clone) right over it. Below, see the difference our 30-second retouch made in the image.
Hardcore Photoshop for portrait
figure 9.37
Selecting the entire left side of the image avoids potential artifacts.

figure 9.38
Dragging a Free Transform handle to narrow the selected area.

figure 9.39
The Liquify filter's Warp tool pushes pixels forward as you drag.
Step Three:
Get the Push Left tool from the Toolbar (as shown here). It was called the Shift Pixels tool in Photoshop 6 and 7, but Adobe realized that you were getting used to the name, so they changed it, just to keep you off balance.

Step Four:
Choose a relatively small brush size (like the one shown here) using the Brush Size field near the top-right of the Liquify dialog. With it, paint a downward stroke starting just above and outside the love handle and continuing downward. The pixels shifts back in toward the body, removing the love handle as you paint. (Note: If you need to remove love handles on the left side of the body, paint upward rather than downward. Why? That's just the way it works.) When you click OK, the love handle repair is complete.
Touch-up: stretch and arm
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