

Enjoying Street Photography – Discussion/Techniques/Tips

5 key considerations for creative photography:

1. The Thing

- The subject is only the start. The photographer has to make the image unique and different from the way others will make it.
- Make sure you capture and reflect your own experience, point of view, and impression.
- Consider personal feelings such as conflict, contrast, humor, beauty, etc.

2. The Detail

- Pay attention to fine detail that is not very obvious to the untrained eye.
- Look for special texture, colors, patterns, lines, curves.
- Also think of visual elements that the eye cannot see such as motion blur, selective focus, B&W, reflections.

3. The Vantage Point

- Choose unique vantage points that are not from the standard eye level.
- Show the subject from unusual angles and perspectives.
- Capture it in ways that others don't see (above, below, very close).
- Animal, birds, and people should be captured from their eye level for a natural look, but you may want to make a unique statement.

4. The Time

- Many subjects are not interesting unless captured at the right moment.
- Consider:
 - Light- quality, color, angle
 - Motion
 - Action
 - Composition of moving elements in the picture
 - Inclusion/exclusion of elements
 - Weather conditions- fog, clouds, sun, etc.

5. The Frame

- Composition affects dynamics, impact, and mood.
- Think about what to include in or leave out.
- Think about the best orientation (vertical, horizontal, diagonal).
- Keep the borders clean.
- Consider the placement of the horizon. High in the frame- gives feeling of depth and distance; low- feeling of space and volume.
- Use leading lines, diagonals, triangles, curves.
- Bright areas get the attention.
- Remember the Rule of Thirds; avoid the center.

Quick Tips

- Check the local paper or online for street events. Street fairs, parades, and events offer great photo opportunities.
- Don't forget other public locations such as bus/train stations, markets, flea markets, zoos, and parks.
- Less is More – don't take too much equipment and travel light. It'll make you less obtrusive and you will be able to move around for the best shot quickly.
- Don't limit yourself to the touristy spots and subjects. Go to side streets to capture the real life scenes.
- Anticipate action and interaction between people and be ready to capture the moment. Always shoot in color. You may consider black and white in post work.
- Watch the background. What's going on behind your subject can make or kill the shot.
- Buildings, people, billboards, signs, graffiti, and other visual elements can make a statement in a shot, but a busy background that distracts from the subject will ruin it.
- Experiment with camera angles. Don't limit yourself to horizontal and vertical compositions.
- Make it your own. Surprise the viewer. Consider unique perspective, composition, timing, and subject matter to make it your own image.
- Practice by going back to the same locations. Your ability to see creatively will improve, not just your technical skills.
- Always be ready. Things happen, so don't miss them. When I'm not shooting a specific subject, I set the ISO to 200 and aperture to F8.
- Stay in one spot for a period of time and wait for the right moment, action, and subject. Street scenes are busy. Be clear on whether your picture is of a single subject or the chaotic street scene. Frame accordingly. Make sure that there's a clear subject in your picture.
- Don't forget Depth of Field (DOF). This is your best tool when you need to separate the subject from a distracting background.
- Street scenes in rain, snow, or fog are very interesting. Wet sidewalks and pavements and small puddles often have beautiful reflections. Protect yourself and your gear but don't be afraid to go out and shoot.
- Don't stop at sunset. City streets at night offer great photo opportunities. Your safety must come first. Be smart about it.

My way of photographing strangers

- I introduce myself and give my card
- I explain what I'm doing and why
- I tell them what I intend to do with the picture. Maybe show a project checklist
- I explain why I want their picture. If I can't explain it, then I shouldn't be taking the picture. It has to be a positive reason
- I spend time talking to them and give complements as I shoot
- I offer to send the pictures to them. I ask them to send me an email. I don't ask for theirs
- I respect my subject's wishes and don't push my luck
- I prefer to walk the streets with a companion. Strangers are more comfortable with your intentions when you are not alone

Dealing with harsh light

- Expose for your main subject. Let the background go bright or dark.
- Get close to avoid mixed light and distracting backgrounds or get far to make the details less important
- Pick subjects that are in the light or shade, not mixed
- If portrait, have the sun behind the subject and have the head tilted down a little

General Tips for Street photography

1. Less is More – don't take too much equipment and travel light. It'll make you less obtrusive and you will be able to move around for the best shot quickly.
2. Off the Beaten Track – don't just go to all the touristy shots – try to get behind the scenes' and real life' scenes.
3. Stolen Moments – anticipate moments between people before they happen.
4. True Colors – black and white is often where it's at with street photography but at times colorful situations arise and can really make a shot – be on the lookout for these.
5. In the Background – what's going on behind your subject can actually make the shot. Billboards, signs, graffiti and other visual elements can really make a statement in a shot.
6. Dare to Go Diagonal – don't just hold your camera horizontally – experiment with angles. Street photography is a less formal medium – make the most of it.
7. Opposites Attract – shots which challenge the norm in terms of composition and story/subject matter can be powerful. Look out for 'surprising' subject matter and composition.
8. What a Performance – street performers, parades and other street entertainment can be great subject matter on the street.
9. Off the Streets – other places where people gather in number can lead to great shots in this genre – zoos, fairs, shows, parks, sporting events etc all can be worth trying.
10. New Angle – find ways to get up high or down low – these new perspectives on subjects that are familiar can lead to eye catching shots.
11. Practice makes Perfect – over time and with practice your photography will improve. You'll not only get better at technique but also spotting the things to focus upon on the street.
12. Fortune Favors the Brave – sometimes the best thing you can do is to get close to your

- subject – this can be a little confronting but will produce powerful images
13. Fun in the Sun – often we try to avoid shooting into the sun and the shadows that direct sunlight can produce – in street photography breaking these ‘rules’ can lead to great shots.
 14. Ready to Pounce – have your camera out and ready to shoot at all times. Things can move quickly on the street so if you’re not ready you’ll miss lots of opportunities.
 15. Revise the Revisit – street photography is not all about spontaneity – if you see a scene with potential don’t be afraid to keep coming back to it until you get the shot.
 16. Frozen Motion – the street is a place of movement – to capture it and still get sharp shots make sure your shutter speed is fast enough. 1/125 or more with an ISO of 400 is what this article recommended as a base. I also think it can be fun to experiment with slower shutter speeds on the street – capture the movement as blur.
 17. Street Wallpaper – blend in with the scene – shoot unobtrusively and unnoticed.
 18. Life Through a Lens – ‘exaggerating perspective will help set your subject in context and provide a more ‘forgiving depth of field’ – use a wide angle lens (or even a fisheye).
 19. Expect the Expected – people can be suspicious of street photographers so shoot in places where people expect to see people doing photography. Smile, be polite and be willing to delete images if people protest.
 20. Location, Location, Location – really this is what it is all about. Choose places where people interact with one another and times when they are present.
 21. Learn to shoot from the hip, also I do the act like I’m aiming at something else, but watch my actual subject out of my left eye and when they have relaxed or are acting naturally very quickly recompose and shoot.
 22. Noise can add to the gritty feel of the picture – especially if it’s not chromatic.
 23. If I know I’m being intrusive I’ll smile and point to my camera to indicate that I would like to photograph the subject. A smile or nod will let you know it’s OK, a frown or black eye says back off.
 24. The beauty of street photography is that you catch people in their natural behavior. To get the main essence of the scene, using a zoom lens will help in not make your scene subjects uncomfortable and you can get a nice photograph.
 25. It is important is to sit back and watch scenes and not dive right into it. Follow human interactions, scout out potential shots, preset your camera, and when that magical moment open up just raise your camera and take the shot. Also pay close attention to the background and think about how it can enhance or detract from your shot.
 26. Takes practice becoming comfortable, but the results are some of the most true to life.
 27. No two situations are similar. Where adults are the subjects, it may be easier to take the

picture first then ask permission afterwards. No sense hiding if you're spotted. It will just create more problems. Explain yourself. In the instances where children are the subjects, that tactic may not work. There's bound to be a lot of hassle with parents, that's why I suggest asking parents first. Doing so may ruin the spontaneity of the moment, but can be the difference between having the cops called on you.

28. Be a good sport about it. Respect your subject's wishes and don't push your luck.
29. The best street photography advice I received is to stay at one spot for a period of time like 1 hour. Fine an interesting spot and wait with your camera until interesting things happen in that interesting spot. It works...
30. One area in street photography that's often ignored is shooting at —literally— on the very street next to or below your feet. It could be a piece of gum, ant, common ordinary items dropped on the ground, or even a little oil spill from a parked car.
31. I dig taking pictures of street performers. My tip to other photographers: Before you start taking pictures of them, drop a few bucks into their bucket, and make sure they notice. They will be much more patient and permissive about you taking several shots of them. It is a small price to pay for a good shot.
32. Pay attention to the background. Try to avoid bright objects, especially large ones, such as a white truck or a big sign, unless they add to the story.
33. Expose for your main subject. Street scenes on sunny days make high contrast images. Make sure your subject is exposed properly. Let the background go bright or dark.
34. Street scenes are busy. Be clear on whether your picture is of a single subject or the chaotic street scene. Frame accordingly. Make sure that there's a clear subject in your picture.
35. Don't forget Depth of Field (DOF). This is your best tool when you need to separate the subject from a distracting background.
36. Be prepared to introduce yourself to strangers, explain what you are doing, why you want to take their pictures, and what you intend to do with the pictures. I spend some time talking to my subjects before I take the pictures. I also give them my card and tell them that I'll be glad to send them the pictures, if they choose to send me an email requesting the pictures. I don't ask them for their email.
37. I prefer to walk the streets with a companion. Strangers are more comfortable with your intentions when you are not alone.
38. Street scenes in rain, snow, or fog are very interesting. Wet sidewalks and pavements and small puddles often have beautiful reflections. Protect yourself and your gear but don't miss these great photo opportunities.
39. Your safety must come first. Be smart about it.

Street Photography Tips

1. Plan a street photography route

I have a street photography route. It's made up from the places in London that are most fruitful – these are the places with the most people and also where the pavements are widest so there's more room to work. Every now and then I'll go 'off-piste' and try somewhere new.

2. When NOT to take photos on the street

The key to not interrupting a scene is to be quick. The longer you've been shooting street photography, the easier you'll find it to take what you want and leave. It's important to know if an image is worth taking, though. Ask yourself if it's worth the hassle – for example, taking a picture of someone wiping a baby's bottom is bound to get you in trouble, as is photographing a drug deal. I have a gauge of the people I'm going to photograph and if it's

worth it. I used to try to photograph fights when I saw them but I don't now – it's not worth aggravating two people whose adrenaline levels are soaring. All the attention can easily be turned to you, the person with the camera.

3. Street photography and the law

Whether or not you should worry about including commercial elements in your shots depends on what you'll end up doing with them. If you sell them on to a stock library you may need to make sure that the image within the image is cleared. I don't sell my pictures to stock libraries so I worry less about these issues. I've had a few run-ins with the police when I've been photographing on the streets – I stay polite and try to explain to them what I'm doing.

4. What to do when confronted

When people spot you taking a picture of them, smile – it works! Sometimes just looking at anything but the person you're photographing is good too. A switched-off iPod is useful as if people ask you what you're doing you can pretend to be listening to music.

5. Do I need permission to photograph people on the street?

I don't get permission. I don't interact with the people I've photographed. You only need permission/releases if you're going to sell the picture for commercial use. I can't imagine asking the people I photograph for releases, as it would take forever and probably be quite awkward.

6. How to avoid being spotted when shooting street scenes

- Wear dark clothes. Bright colors will make you stand out.
- Keep your elbows in when you're shooting.
- Have the camera set. Don't play around with exposures too much. Be ready to shoot and go.
- If you wear the camera around your neck, keep the strap high so there's less movement between bringing the camera up to your face.
- Take the camera with you everywhere. Get so used to the camera that it feels like a second skin.

7. Learn from street photography books and websites

The best street photographs are moments, they contain a happening and usually one that, a moment ago, you didn't see coming – that's the difference between street photography and

reportage, you're not photographing a subject, you're simply out to see what comes your way in the busy change and flux of a public place. Generally, street photographs are self-contained. It's the humor, a narrative or some drama that makes them work without the presence of other images – they're one-offs. Look at a lot of good street photography in books and on the web. See why the pictures work. See how the photographer made the joke or framed the moment. See what devices photographers have used on the street.

8. Street photography locations

Don't try to look at and photograph a whole city, it's overwhelming. Instead concentrate on a small section of a street or a corner – that's where street pictures happen.

9. Choose interesting street photography subjects

Finding a subject can take lots of time. Often I'll find someone who looks interesting and hang around or follow them, in the hope that something will happen or come the other way that suddenly makes a wonderful scene. One day I followed two bald men in suits; they looked interesting but they weren't a picture on their own. First they went past a hat shop with lots of hats floating on poles that made an amusing Magritte-type picture. Then on a corner two workmen came in the opposite direction wearing hard hats and a lovely juxtaposition was made. I often create a picture like this – find one element and then try to add to it. Occasionally you'll turn a corner and find a picture just waiting to be taken and then you have a mad scramble to get into the best position to shoot it.

10. Always carry your camera

I think most street photographs are made during the course of an ordinary day. Of course I go to the city specifically to shoot, but the number one rule is to carry your camera at all times, always be ready to make a picture... this improves your luck vastly.

11. Learn to work fast

I get the most satisfaction from shots taken so quickly that I barely had time to think about why I was taking them; pictures that are a raw reaction to a small trigger. I took one shot of a man running fast, outside Liverpool Street Station, predicting roughly where he'd be by the time I'd raised my camera. It was over in a second but the photograph reveals a fleeing mugger being chased by the young businessman, whose phone he'd stolen. It's this 'revelatory' aspect of street photography that I find appealing.

12. The best time for street photography

The moment is always paramount, good light can add or detract from it but it rarely makes the picture in itself. I'm more concerned with quantity of light than quality of light because I need upwards of 1/250th of a second and a decent bit of depth of field in order to freeze my subjects. Having said that, the morning and evening are particularly nice times to shoot, especially in the summer months.

13. Where to shoot from in street photography

Stand close to people and shoot with a small, slightly wide-angle lens – you look more conspicuous when you're standing across the street.

14. Shoot plenty of frames

When something is good, don't take a single frame and leave. Watch the scene develop and change, picking out the best moments to make your picture.

15. Street photography in crowded places

Put yourself in a place where there are plenty of people about and you should be able to make a good street picture at pretty much any moment. You'll develop a sense of whether a particular place is going to deliver or not – it's a bit like getting a few bites when you're fishing. If there's a buzz, then hang around. The trick is to maintain your focus and concentration and not let a photographic trip turn into a shopping or drinking excursion.

16. Always have plenty of memory available

I've mostly missed shots where I didn't have my camera with me or it was lying in my bag. In the film days, most pros – especially press and sports photographers – would burn off the last few frames of a roll and reload in case they missed out on an important moment. Much of street work involves taking a single frame of a specific subject matter but it's important to try to work at any particular scene as most of the time you're unlikely to get the best shot first time.

17. Pick the best focal length for street photography

Any small portable camera is suitable for street photography and the camera of choice has historically been a Leica, though I've never used that system. I've mostly used SLRs and other rangefinders like the Contax G2 and a Ricoh GR1. I think using a fixed focal length of between 28mm and 50mm encourages more discipline as it forces you to be more active and thoughtful in your composition.

18. How to avoid confrontation when shooting street photography

I think trying to remain unobtrusive as opposed to unseen is important. People become more suspicious if you try to take pictures sneakily or if you look nervous, whereas if you act as though you're doing your job and you project a more positive body language, then you're less likely to encounter problems.

19. Which camera mode to use for street photography

In most situations, I find using the camera's Program mode to be very reliable and it certainly gives you one less thing to worry about in terms of reacting quickly to subjects. Because I've shot a lot of transparency film in the past, however, I've learnt where certain tricky lighting situations can fool the camera's metering, so when I encounter that I switch to Manual. The great thing about using digital is that you can review exposures immediately and adjust accordingly. A quicker method is to use the exposure compensation setting if I feel I need a quick adjustment in P mode but, of course, you need to remember to zero it again when you've finished.

20. What type of lens to use for street photography

Using a long lens isn't a good option as it isolates a subject from its environment and produces a very different type of shot to traditional street photography. Many interesting situations in the street involve more than one or two subjects, so that should be a major consideration when deciding how much of a scene you include in your pictures. Long-lens shots don't allow for a wider, more intimate viewpoint, and the vast majority of memorable street work has been shot with lenses between 28mm and 50mm.

21. Quick reaction times

I think you have to take into consideration where you're taking pictures. For example, when I'm in London I'll always have my camera in my hand as opposed to hanging on my shoulder as I know that events can unfold very quickly so it's important to be able to react fast to things. In really busy areas such as Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus, I'll sometimes just put the camera

to my eye for 10-15 seconds at a time and if I see anything interesting come into frame – I know I can react to it within half a second. I think in a less congested area it's not as important to go to those levels but I'd say it's always good to have a small point-and-shoot compact to hand wherever you go.