

HOW TO SEE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER

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Dear friend,

As a photographer — your most valuable asset are your eyes and vision.

1. Flashing lights

We are constantly blinded in today's world. Flashing screens. Popup advertisements.

We are constantly distracted. Our phones are buzzing. We don't know how to focus, because we are over-stimulated.

2. How to increase the ISO of your eyes

How do you learn how to see as a photographer?

First of all, we need to reset and recalibrate our eyes.

How do we do that?

As an experiment, go into a pitch black room. Then stay in there for several minutes. Then turn on your phone. Note that even at the lowest brightness setting, your phone will blind the shit out of you.

Yet, if you look at your phone at maximum brightness on a bright and sunny day, it is hard to read what is on your phone.

What's the deal?

Well— we become more *sensitive* to the light in the darkness. Our eyes increase their “ISO sensitivity”— your eyes are like night vision, they pick up even minute patches of light.

The analogy is in real life, in modern life — our eyeballs are constantly over-stimulated by screens.

3. Do you look at your phone in the shower?

Consider, when are you *not* looking at a screen?

You wake up to the phone alarm clock. You start off the day (half asleep) checking your email or social media.

Then you might have your morning coffee at home, checking your phone.

Then you commute to work. If you take public transit, you’re probably on your phone, reading a Kindle, or maybe a book. Maybe an iPad. If you’re in a car, you’re looking at your Google Maps or Waze, or listening to Spotify or a podcast.

At work, you’re probably staring at a computer or laptop screen. If you’re stuck in a (boring) meeting, you’re looking at perhaps a PowerPoint screen.

You have lunch, you’re probably eating a sandwich or salad (at your desk) checking your phone, or perhaps checking email or doing work.

Then you commute home, and what do you do at home? Netflix and chill? Surf the web? Play some video games?

Then set your alarm clock, perhaps check your email once before you sleep, and then try to fall asleep ... just to start over the entire process.

4. Photography is the answer and solution.

Now, our eyes are desensitized. It isn't really our fault — it is the disease of modern life. If you work in the tech sector, *not* looking at a screen for longer than an hour is uncommon.

But, photography is our savior.

5. How to re-calibrate your eyes

Trust me, I spend most of my waking day on a screen. But when I walk around (camera in hand), I use that chance to *NOT* get distracted by another screen.

Instead, I let my eyes rest. I walk 25% slower than I think I should, and I use that opportunity to partake in “walking meditation”. I enjoy every step. I look up at the clouds, and the buildings. I look down on the pavement. I walk and look at people, or I enjoy people watching at a local coffee shop.

And I got a camera. So whenever I spot something that interests my eye, I make a picture of it.

Photography gives me a reason to SEE the real world around me — rather than being trapped in the black mirror prison of false reality, Netflix specials, and endless social media streams.

Photography is a reminder to us:

It is great to be alive. Life is a blessing.

Why live “false reality” through TV, movies, and media? Why not experience the real world — with #nofilter? Just you and your camera.

6. The phone is the enemy.

To see when you're taking pictures, turn your phone off, to airplane mode, or just leave it at home.

Don't listen to music, so you can give more focus and energy to your eye balls.

7. How to walk

When you're shooting on the streets, walk slowly and gracefully. With each step considered and firm.

Look around you, and pan— slowly. Be like a child, don't feel rude to stare at people. If you make eye contact with a stranger, don't just turn away in embarrassment. Rather, meet their eye, and smile gently and give them a nod.

8. What to look for

Look for color combinations or textures which interest you.

Look for shapes, triangles, diagonals, curves, and other lines and compositional elements which excite your eye — and put them together in novel combinations like Minecraft.

If you see a person you find interesting, either approach them and ask them for permission to photograph them, or just take a picture without permission — do it crisp, briskly, and without hesitation. Smile and keep on moving.

9. How to strengthen your vision and visual acuity

When you're not on the streets taking pictures, always train your eye and keep it muscular and fit.

Study pictures of the master photographers, or any master painters from history. Study Bauhaus, Renaissance art. Learn how to draw, sketch, or trace visual artwork which interests you.

Your eyes and vision are a muscle: **Use it or lose it.**

10. Never stop training

You want to build your visual acuity and strength. The only way is through discipline and constant training.

Watch great films like Akira Kurosawa (Seven Samurai, Ran), or Stanley Kubrick.

Never stop training. You're a visual soldier. Always be ready, and keep your vision strong.

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