

12 Tips for Compelling Event Photos



These ideas for taking photos can help your pictures tell the story of a special event.

1. Pay attention to background & foreground:

- Look beyond your subjects to identify items that distract (remove them or move yourself)
- Pay attention to details
- Plain backgrounds often work best
- If you can't control the background, either move or open your aperture to bring only the subject into focus so that the background is blurred



The blue barrel is distracting.

→
This image is cleaner.



This shot is good, but the empty drink (left foreground) could have easily been removed.



Only the horse is in focus, thus setting him apart from the background, which is of similar tone.



2. Capture the story of your event:

- Every story/event has a beginning and an end—make sure your first and last photos convey this
- Opening photos should show what the event is about or consist of a highlight
- Closing photos should summarize the essence of your event/story or capture the relationship between animal/adopter

→
This is an example of an effective opening photo (as used on the cover of this handout)



↓
These are good closing photos.



3. Get complete coverage—from top to bottom—including:

- Wide shots
- Close ups & details
- Group shots
- Action shots
- Signage
- Media interviews
- VIPs

Note: Post your photos on your website and social media and share them with attendees on photo-sharing sites like SmugMug and Flickr.



4. VIPs/Celebrities/People:

- Create a list of VIPs whose photos you need
- If necessary, assign a staff person to accompany the photographer to help identify VIPs
- Collect details about people you photograph to ensure your captions will be correct. At a minimum get first and last name, title, associated organization/employer, city/state/country of origin.
- Anyone photographed, unless it's someone in your organization, will need to sign a photo release form. Parents/guardians must sign for children under 18 as well as horses or other animals they own that are photographed. Photo releases should be drafted by a lawyer or downloaded from a reputable legal website.

Note: Be sure to get contact information (email or phone number) for any follow-up questions you may have.



↑ Congressman Jim Moran (Retired D-Va.) speaks at the ASPCA-sponsored Horses on the Hill event in Washington, D.C.



← Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) visits the ASPCA to Urge USDA to Restore Public Access to Animal Welfare Data.

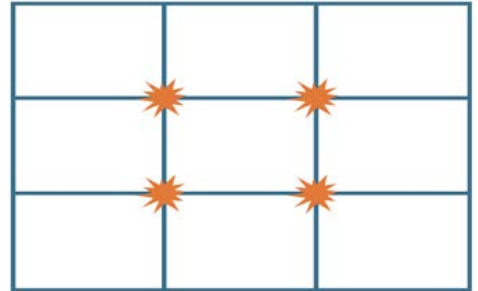
5. Look for repetition and patterns in photos:

- Repetition and patterns can be powerful elements in photography
- Look for these elements in subjects, colors and backgrounds



6. Follow the Rule of Thirds:

- Don't always center your subject in your photos
- Capitalize on the fact that the human eye is naturally drawn to a point about two-thirds up a page
- Place the main subject(s) around one of the starred intersection points



Note: Practice using this technique and get feedback from others before your big event.



This photo places the subjects dead center.



This photo uses the rule of thirds to make composition more interesting.

7. Pay Attention to Backdrops:

- Use murals, entrances or signs as backdrops to convey the setting of your photo
- Make sure the backdrop is identifiable in your shot
- Position your subjects close enough to you so that you see them and the background in the same shot
- When possible, position subjects at an angle and several steps or feet in front of backdrop—not up against it

Note: Make sure you have permission to use a business or organization as a backdrop in your photo.

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Subjects are at the forefront
with the backdrop farther
behind, but still discernible.

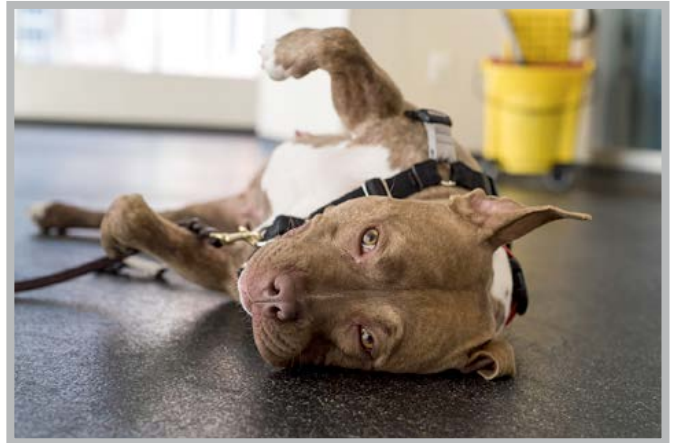


←
Subjects placed squarely
against this backdrop—
and a wrinkled one at
that—not recommended.

8. Find interesting angles and levels:

- Getting good pictures requires that you move
- Get on the subject's level
- Go where everyone else isn't to get a different point of view

Note: Unless you're photographing a formal event, dress comfortably and be prepared to get dirty.



↑ Get down on the subject's level.

← Shoot from beneath your subject.



→ Shoot from above—utilize step stools, ladders, or in this case, standing on top of a box truck!

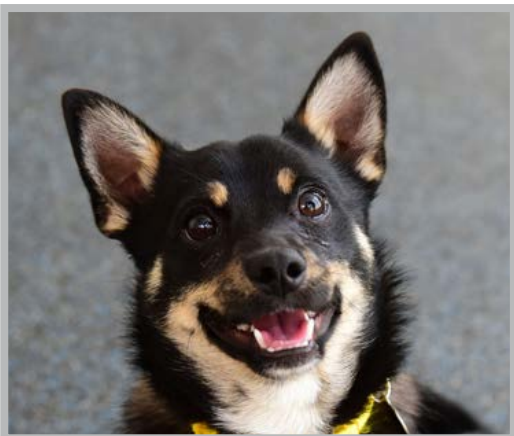


9. Make sure the subject's eyes are in focus so the viewer feels a connection:

- The subject can be looking directly at the camera or slightly away
- After taking a picture, use your camera's image viewer to zoom in on your subject's eyes to make sure they are clear and in focus
- Don't worry if other parts of the body or the background are blurry—concentrate on the eyes



Note: When shooting outdoors, try to take pictures in the morning or late afternoon—when the sun is directly overhead, deep shadows and pockets can form under the eyes.



10. Use your flash:

- Fill flash can improve outdoor photos by reducing shadows
- Bounce flash (vs. direct flash) provides even lighting and reduces shadows and red eye

Note: Consider taking an online photography class for help with mastering lighting techniques.



No flash was used.



Fill flash was used.



Bounce flash was used.



Direct flash was used.

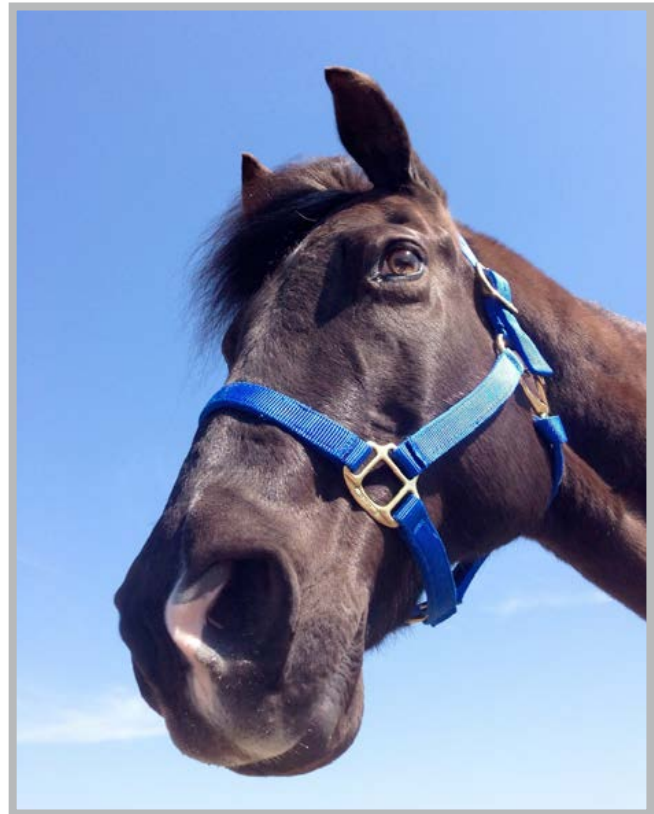
11. Don't be afraid to get close:

- Zoom in on your subjects with your lens
- Move closer to your subjects
- Zoom in on your subjects AND move closer to them—just make sure they are still in focus

Note: Some people and animals may be uncomfortable with you getting super close—be sure to back off if a subject expresses any verbal or non-verbal cues of discomfort.



Although close to the subject, this photo is poorly composed with background distractions, and eyes not visible.



→
Much better!

12. Make a checklist to ensure your photos tell your story from start to finish:

- **Who** (attendees, including VIPs)
- **What** (varied and complete coverage from beginning to end)
- **When** (time/day)
- **Where** (the setting)
- **Why** (event signage)
- **How** (effective photo taking techniques):
 - ✓ Did you keep distractions out?
 - ✓ Did you tell a story?
 - ✓ Did you capture patterns or repetitive elements?
 - ✓ Did you follow the Rule of Thirds?
 - ✓ Did you pay attention to background, foreground, and backdrops?
 - ✓ Did you take photos from interesting angles and levels?
 - ✓ Are the subject's eyes in focus?
 - ✓ Did you use your flash appropriately?
 - ✓ Are you close enough to your subject?