

Just for **Beginners!**

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The fourth in a series of short instructional articles for beginning photographers, the following is intended to help those that want to go beyond snapshots. Watch for the series each month.

Outdoor Lighting

Lighting can make or break an outdoor photograph. Images will improve when the effects of the lighting are noticed by the photographer and chosen on purpose. It is difficult to take an extraordinary photograph when the lighting has not been chosen for its quality and effect. Let's consider the time of day, the weather, and the kind of the light.

The sunlight at different times of day produces images with a range of coloring and "feeling." Morning and evening sunlight is warmer than the middle of a sunny day. The effect of the light's coloring can be seen with a self-assignment of photographing the same scene at various times of day (even if it is the front of one's house or the view out the window). Since beginning photographers tend to take pictures in the middle of the day, their photographs do not have that special look of warm light.

Weather also contributes to the look and feel of a photograph. A photographer can take a picture in sunlight and then wait a few minutes for a cloud to block the sun, for the rain to stop and a rainbow to appear, or for some sun rays to pop through storm clouds. Foggy mornings are good times to photograph moody scenes. When skies are bland and have nothing to contribute to an image, it is best to eliminate them from the composition.

The kind of the light influences the way the subject matter looks. There is direct, indirect, diffused, back lighting and side lighting. Direct sunlight creates a noticeable contrast between the lights and darks with intense shadows. Indirect lighting from an overcast sky or shade produces little contrast between lights and darks. Side lighting brings out textures. Back lighting produces a silhouette. Beginners will find it instructional to experiment with a flower or a person.

When the photographer cannot choose the time of day or the weather, it is all right to take the photo anyway. If the image is merely a "record" shot that documents what the scene looked like, it may be used in a travelogue or in one's own photo album. The record shot can be later compared to photos taken in other lighting situations. Once a beginning photographer has noticed the sunlight's changing colors on the outdoor scenes, he or she will be able to capture more appealing images. 🌸