General Themes

Here are a few of the themes that have occupied photographers over the years.

- People
- Landscape
- Architecture
- Action and Sports
- Nature
- Abstractions

Each has its own techniques and skills.

People

- Natural Life
- Casual portraits
- Children
- Formal portraits (won’t discuss)

Natural Life

- People going about their everyday activities
  - Unposed pictures generally are better
- Observation important
  - You must see something to photograph it

You can observe a lot by just looking around. -- Yogi Berra

References:
Natural Life: Camera Technique

• What are the advantages of different lenses (or zooms)?
  – Normal
  – Wide angle
  – Telephoto

Natural Life: Planning Ahead

• Taking pictures of strangers requires forethought
  – Some cultures do not want pictures taken without permission (e.g., Indians of the SW)
• Should you ask permission in general?
  – Some photographers do, some don’t
  – I generally do
  – Pointing at the camera usually is sufficient

Casual Portraits

Goal: Capture something about the person or their character

• Camera technique
  – A slightly compressed “flat” perspective is flattering
  – What kind of lens?
• Light
  – Why are bright high sunlight (with no clouds) or gloomy gray skies not ideal for portraits?
• Composition
  – What do you want to capture?
  – Don’t be afraid to get close
Children
- Take a lot of pictures
- Toys or a parent may make it easier
- Get down to their level
- It helps if they are having fun

Landscape
Goal: Capture a sense of place

Landscape: Scale
Grand and scenic scale: large expanses

Landscape: Scale
- Intimate scale: The scene within a scene
  - Isolate what is important and capture a sense of being there

Landscape: Composition
• What interests you about the place?
• Emphasize or isolate it

Landscape: Composition
• Don't include too much stuff in the picture.
• Telling a story can be effective

Landscape: Composition
Why was a different horizon line chosen for these two pictures?

Landscape: Light
• Grand and scenic scale photos
  – Often look best at sunrise and sunset
Landscape: Light

- Intimate scenes
  - If a scene relies on detail, then indirect or diffused light is better
  - Direct sunlight can produce too much contrast and wash out detail

Landscape: Weather

- Be aware (not beware) of the weather
  - Rain and storms can be good times to take pictures
  - If you can keep dry, anyway

Landscape: Camera Technique

- Your lens or zoom can help compose the landscape.
  - What if you want deep depth of field?
  - What if you want to isolate the subject?
- How can camera aperture help?

Architecture

- Goal: Tell a story about a building or buildings
Architecture: Light
  • At what time of day was this photo taken?
  • Why role do the shadows play?

Architecture: Viewpoint and Composition
  • Consider different positions
  • Look for novel viewpoints that add interest to the photo

Architecture: Camera Technique
  • Try to keep vertical lines vertical
  • What kind of lens can cause problems with perspective?
    – Photoshop Elements can correct this.

Architecture: Don’t Forget Detail
  Detail can inform about a building
**Action and Sports**

- Goal: Capture a crucial moment in time in a sport or similar activity

**Freezing Action**

- Camera Technique
  - Be prepared! Things happen fast.
    - Pre-focusing is one way of being prepared
    - Use manual focus rather than automatic
  - What kind of shutter speeds do you need?
    - Sports and action usually take place at a distance
  - What kind of light allows the shutter speeds you need?

**Freezing Action Not Only Way to Go**

- What kind of shutter speed here?
- Pre-focusing (and manual focus!) is essential for this kind of shot

**Nature**

- Goal: Portray nature and wildlife

[Image of a vulture](http://www.nature-photography.co.za/bearded-vulture-015.jpg)
Nature: Light and Composition

About the same as for landscape photos

Nature: Camera Technique

- Consider close-ups
- What secrets are hidden unless you look closely (three feet from camera or less)?

Nature: Close-Ups

- A tripod (or possibly an image-stabilized lens) is essential
- To do extreme close-ups, you need an SLR camera and a macro lens
- What kind of camera aperture will maximize a limited depth of field?

Abstractions

- Goals:
  - Emphasize colors, texture, patterns, and composition
  - Create abstract pictures independent of subject matter
Abstractions: Camera Technique

• Flatten the photo and isolate the subject
  – Shoot straight at the subject
  – What kind of lens?
  – Get as close as possible
• Using a tripod or image-stabilized lens helps