

Scrap Your Day

Photo Fact Sheet #07 :: October 2008

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Each month as we near the 25th, there will be a new photo fact sheet to download. Although we all have different levels of experience and different styles, I hope you will find some photographic inspiration whether you're sharpening existing skills or trying something new for the very first time.

Things to remember...

- ★ Charge. Your. Camera.
- ★ The 25th is this Saturday.
- ★ Consistent shots for every month: clock when you wake, each meal, view from a window, self-portrait, clock when you go to sleep.

This month: Careful Composition

Ready to try a composition trick used by photographers and film directors to make the most of the frame? Check out movie posters and magazine advertisements and you'll find the subject off centre in the frame, creating an empty space in the photo to hold the words they need to include -- the name of the film or product, a slogan, release dates or details. If you ever get stuck in the middle of a scrapbook page wondering where you could add a little something extra, you can use the same trick to create empty space in a photo that can hold embellishment, title letters or the words of your journaling.

This month's photo challenge is to compose shots with the subject off centre, leaving a significant portion of the frame feeling relatively empty.

If your camera can shoot with an aperture that blurs your background (a low f-stop number), you can use the blur to create the empty feeling with pretty much any background, which is super handy. Every camera is different, so check your manual for settings on aperture or a macro mode -- macro often has a little flower symbol on the camera.

If your camera automatically creates a clear focus on everything in the frame (a high f-stop number), then you need to compose a little more carefully. When you start to take a photo, look around for the plainest background you can get by moving a few steps side to side, standing up tall or crouching down low. Walls, greenery, ceilings, sky, floors and table tops can be your friends but you'll also find other backgrounds that will work too.

Try this technique with people as well as inanimate objects. If your camera focuses on the centre of the frame, focus the camera with the subject in the centre then continue to hold the shutter button half-down as you move the camera to put the subject on the side of the frame that you want. It will keep your subject in focus even though the background is now in the centre. It's probably easiest to use this technique with a landscape photo with your subject toward the right or left, but try a few portraits too for a funky look -- feet at the top of the frame showing more of the ground than normal; face at the bottom of the frame showing more of the sky.

