



**Steve Davey** turned his passions into a way of life! The professional photographer and writer has published several books including his latest title: **Footprint Travel Photography**.

The simple answer to getting better pictures is just to stop and think: to work out what you are trying to do with your picture and then how to do it. To help you with this, I have set out a simple Six Point Plan to better, more creative pictures.

These don't necessarily have to be done in this order, nor will you always do every step, but this should give you an idea as to the creative decision making process for shooting better pictures.

### **Think about the angle:**

Most places have one view that everyone takes, but by walking around them and shooting from a different angle, you can often create something that is completely different. A good example for this is the Taj Mahal. Everyone shoots it from the front, but the most atmospheric views are from the rear, across the Yamuna River. Looking for a different angle doesn't just apply to buildings: you can shoot people from a different angle too. Instead of a face on portrait try moving to the side and shooting a profile.

### **Change your viewpoint:**

Most pictures are always taken from the photographer's eye level. The result is often rather repetitive. Vary this viewpoint by climbing on things and shooting downwards, or getting down low and shooting upwards. As well as giving a more interesting image, you can also completely change the background to a picture. Shooting down can let you remove a distracting horizon or overcast sky, whereas shooting upwards can cut out a cluttered horizon and place your subject against a perfect sky.

### **Combine objects in the frame:**

Composition is about more than just making a picture look nice. By combining different objects in the frame you can set up relationships, tell stories and even amuse. At the simplest level, it might be having an attractive object such as a flowerbed in the foreground of a picture for visual reasons. By placing a person in front of a recognisable background, you can show something about where they live or work. By placing two things that don't belong together – such as a beggar in front of a posh restaurant - you can convey a message.

### **Think about lens choice:**

Your choice of lens, whether it is a wideangle or telephoto lens (or the wideangle or telephoto settings on a zoom lens) will have a much greater effect than just altering the size of your subject in the frame, or the crop of your picture. After all, you can achieve a similar effect by walking closer or further away from the subject. Telephoto and wideangle lenses have markedly different characteristics that can enhance the way that your picture looks. By cramming a wider angle of view into the picture, a wideangle lens will create distortion in the frame, causing objects to appear to bend in the picture. It also exaggerates the distance between objects making more distant objects appear smaller and helping closer objects to stand out. A telephoto lens tends to make things look more flat, and makes objects appear closer together. This can be perfect for accentuating the density of crowds or making a subject blend in with a background.

### **Bias towards shutter speed:**

Your camera will use a combination of aperture (the size of the hole in the lens that lets in light) and the shutter speed (how long the light is let in for) in order to achieve the correct exposure. However, by taking control from the camera, you can decide which is the most important to you.

Shutter speed controls the way that movement is reproduced in your picture. If you use a fast shutter speed you can freeze movement completely, whereas a slower speed will allow your subject to blur. My advice is - if there is any movement in the picture then bias your exposure towards how you want this to be reproduced. For instance if you want to freeze movement in a skier, use a fast speed and if you want to blur movement in a waterfall, use a much longer speed and a tripod to avoid camera shake!

If there is no movement that you want to reproduce, then give precedence to the aperture in order to control the depth of field. This is the amount of the picture on either side of where you focus that is also in focus. A wide aperture will give a very shallow depth of field, making the subject stand out from the background, where as a narrow aperture will give lots of depth of field, making more of your picture in focus. Interestingly a wideangle lens inherently has much more depth of field than a telephoto lens, so lens choice will affect how much of a picture is in focus as well!

This can be done by setting the exposure in manual mode, or using the shutterspeed or aperture automatic modes. If you are using a compact camera, then there will often be an action picture mode that will give a faster shutterspeed or a landscape mode that will give maximum depth of field

### **Compose your picture:**

Lastly, decide what you are going to include in the picture and what the picture will look like! Most people automatically tend to slap the subject right in the middle of the frame, but you will find that you picture looks more balanced if you move it more towards the edge of the frame. The standard rule is that if you divide the frame into thirds, then the horizon, or the subject should be on one of these lines, but I prefer compositions that are more exaggerated than this, sometimes even placing the subject right on the edge of the picture.

You can also use diagonals to lead the viewer's eye into the picture, and frames, such as windows to frame your picture. Also don't forget that your camera works on its side as well: don't forget to shoot more vertical pictures as well!

**HAPPY SNAPPING!**



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