

Characteristics of a Good Photograph

Emotional Impact

Does the subject matter elicit a favorable response? Does it suggest a story? Is it a beautiful scene or is it just a shot of something? Does the image exhibit a fresh or creative approach?

Central Focus

Is the central focus apparent? Where does your eye lead? The eye should lead into the part which you regard as the important part of the picture and should lead into the picture.

Examples: Distracting light areas along the periphery of the photo take the eye out of the image. A subject looking out of the frame instead of in leads you out. A leading line is helpful to take your eye into the picture, a line going out leads the eye away which is not desirable. **Slightly** darker tones around the edge of the image—vignetting—helps keep the eye in.

Composition

Is the image balanced? Are prominent features in one part of the image offset by some significant features elsewhere? Is there an absence of prominent areas without any detail--such as a totally black or light foreground which attracts your eye--a prominent element on one side which by itself would be awkward?

Technical Excellence

Proper lighting: No blown out highlights (except for specular flare); some detail in darker areas other than small pure black areas; mid-tones appropriately middle dark with good tonality and texture if possible unless the image is **intended** to be a high-key or low-key image.

Good to Dramatic Lighting: Generally avoid flat front lighting such as on-camera flash (except for fill lighting) or direct overhead harsh mid-day lighting.

Appropriate Depth of Field: Sharpness where the subject needs it and lack of sharpness where it enhances the appearance and effectiveness of the image (such as backgrounds). Generally, unless there is a reason, landscapes are expected to be sharp throughout. Portraits may have soft backgrounds. Macro close-ups frequently have more limited depth of field due to the limited depth possible with the lens.

Contrast: Historically, black and white images are expected to range from pure black to virtually pure white with as many gradations of tones between as possible. In color images that is also true except that the dark areas may be a color rather than black. An exception to this rule is for deliberately "high-key" or "low-key" images. Of course, the effectiveness of a particular image as high-key or low-key is appropriate when evaluating an image. In the absence of the range from dark to light in an image, the image will lack crispness and looks "soft."