

Workshop Smarts

Bonus Chapter PAGE 23.

viewbug





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Introduction

As a budding photographer, it's important you learn to identify what makes a great photo and even what makes a bad one too.

In this book, we're going to talk about the most important tips that will help you become a better photographer regardless of how much photography experience you have.

Whether you're a beginner or you've been shooting for a while, you'll likely pick up a few great tips that will help take your photography to the next level!

The tips are easy to grasp and you're going to be able to see almost immediate results when you put them into action.

Let's begin!

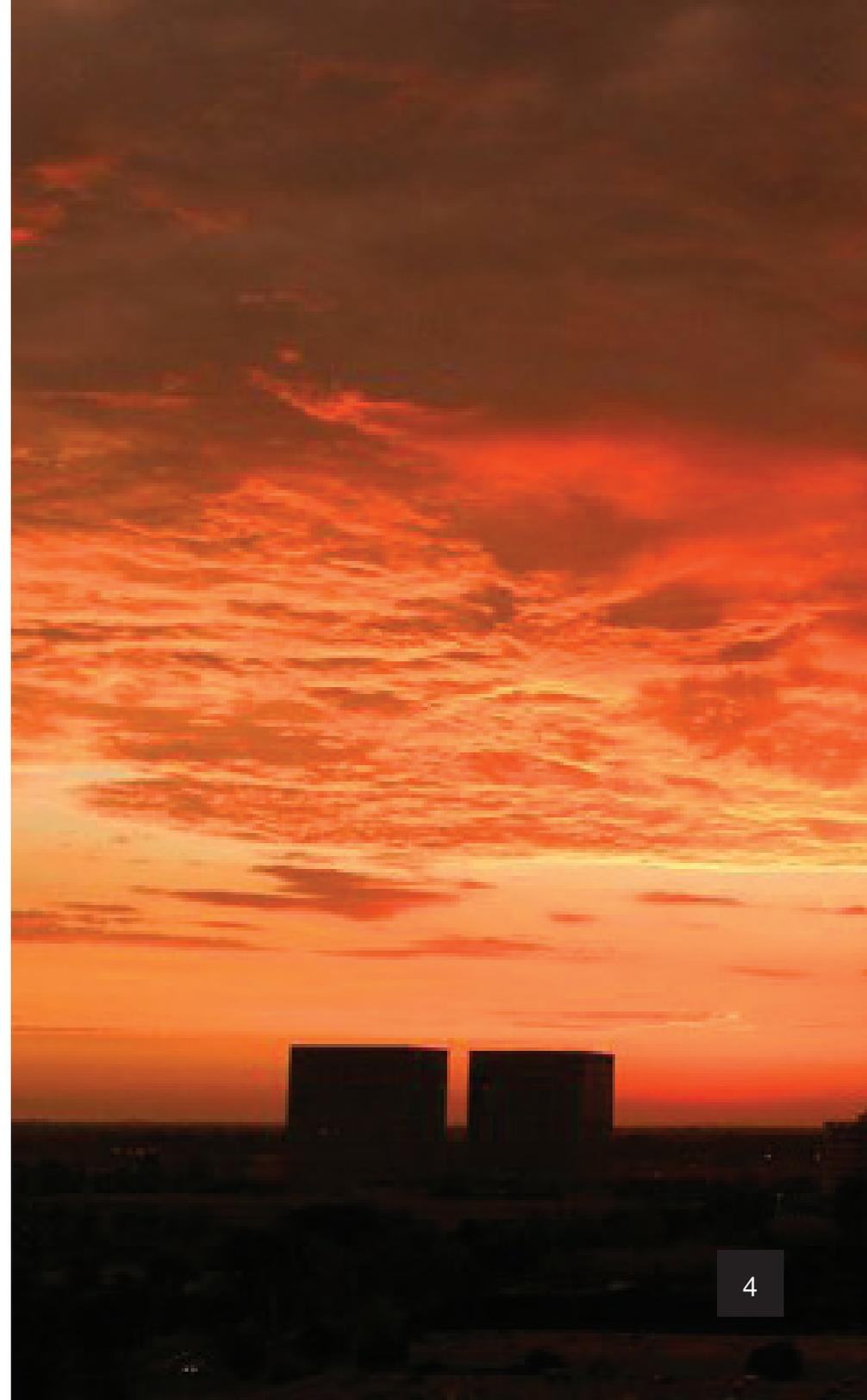


Identifying Light

This shot utilizes a lot of the main areas that we're going to talk about. It's just a beautiful view of Orange County, California overlooking John Wayne Airport from a high-rise project. Our first area that we would like to talk about is light and how important light is.

A lot of times we don't really notice the light itself; we notice the things that it's illuminating. We need to learn to really see light, understand light and its properties.

Light has direction. While the sun is 93 million miles away – it is still coming from a source. If there are no clouds or anything in the way, we see the direction that the light is coming from... whether it's low in the sky, high in the sky, or late in the afternoon there's a certain direction. So we are going to talk about the three main directions that light comes from as it illuminates the subjects.



Front Lighting



Front lighting occurs when the camera/photographer is in between the subject and the light source. Now, you don't want to be so close that you cast a shadow, that would cause an "eclipse" and that would be bad.

In the photo above, we have a front lighting situation... the light is falling on our subject almost completely straight on. There are very little shadows anywhere, but there is a slight shadow if you look at the upper right hand area of her forehead. (camera right)

When we talk about photos in this book, we're going to identify areas by camera right and camera left; not the subject's right or left because that gets all mixed up and we want to make it as clear as possible.

Let's move on to our next example which is side lighting.

Side Lighting



Side lighting is just that; it's light that's coming from the subject's side. In this example we are in a large building, in a foyer area, there's a bank of windows to camera right, and it's coming sideways from right to left.

We can see the model's face is illuminated and that there's a slight shadow behind her from that light source. There are many variations to side lighting... it could come from the left or the right, or from different heights but basically when it all comes down to it, it is all side lighting. It's coming from the side.

This is a very good lighting technique, depending on the quality of it which is something that we'll move onto in a minute, but it is a good light source, a good direction to photograph people from. One thing to watch for is that this type of lighting tends to emphasize wrinkles. If your subject wouldn't like that, try a different direction that will make more sense. For example, front lighting will not emphasize wrinkles as much as side lighting will.

That brings us to our next area of lighting and that is back lighting.

Back Lighting

Now, back lighting is where the brightest source of the light is coming from behind the subject. The light falling on the subjects is less intense and you end up with a silhouette.

This picture here is a perfect example of what happens to a lot of amateur photographers.

The subjects are standing underneath the shade of a tree and a lot of times we think, “stand in the shade of the tree, that’s a great place for the photo.”

The problem is that our eyes compensate and we don’t really notice how bright it is behind the subjects. The camera on the other hand, doesn’t have that compensation feature built in; we have to tell it what to do.

So it sees the bright background, exposes for that, which in essence under exposes our subjects.



Here's another situation where the light is coming from behind the subjects that are walking through a tunnel at a stadium – and the light source, the sun, is setting behind them creating this glowing effect. So while silhouettes are normally bad, they can be effectively used at times.

Those are the three main directions of light that we're going to look at – front, side, and back lighting, and it is something that we need to be thinking about and recognizing before, during and after our photo sessions.

You don't want to just pick your camera up and start shooting as a photographer. If you want to progress as a photographer you need to start noticing these things, looking for them. So begin by looking at the light. Start studying light wherever you are... what direction is the light coming from? Then you will truly start seeing the light and using it to create dynamic images.



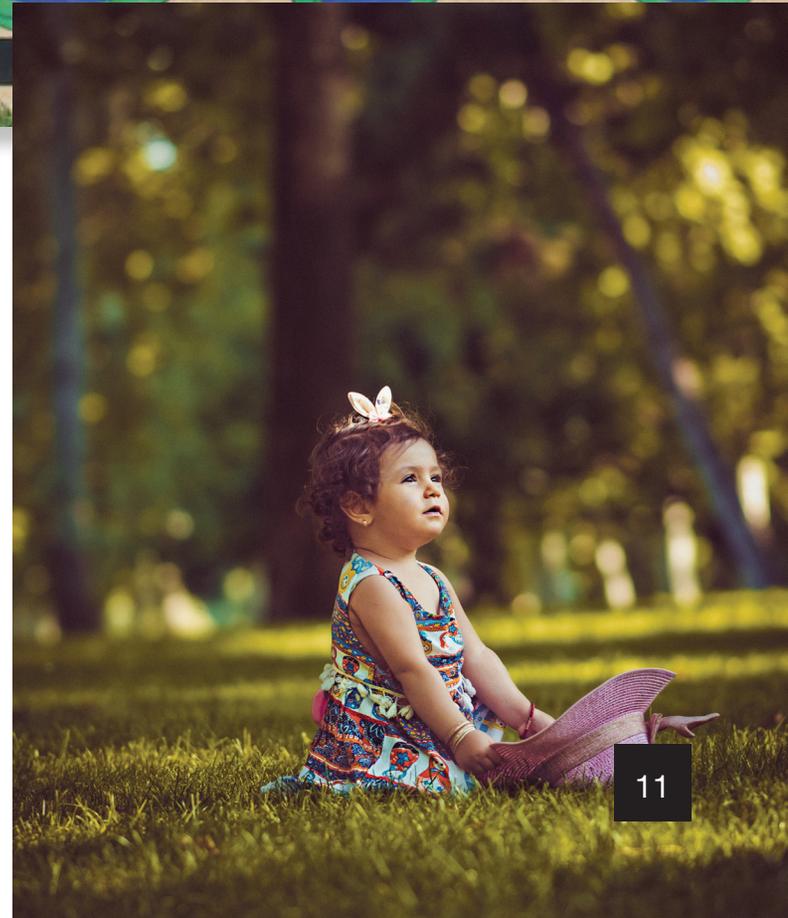
Quality Of Light

There's also something called the quality of light, and there are four different qualities that we're going to talk about. The first is bright light.

Bright Light

Whether you're outside in the middle of the day and it is bright or you're inside where there's a lot of illumination, that is where bright light can occur.

On this day there wasn't a lot of shadows, but it was bright. So we've got the kids in this little cut out here and it's a great example of bright light.



Dim Light

Of course, the opposite occurs whenever there isn't a whole lot of light present. This situation is called dim light and the next photo is a perfect example.



Because there's less light, the camera has to somehow get more light in, and it's usually done by either adjusting your shutter speed or changing your F-Stop.

Point and shoot cameras will do this for you automatically, and DSLRs will do it for you if you are in Program or Auto mode.

Just know that fewer parts of your photo will be in focus because of there being less light.

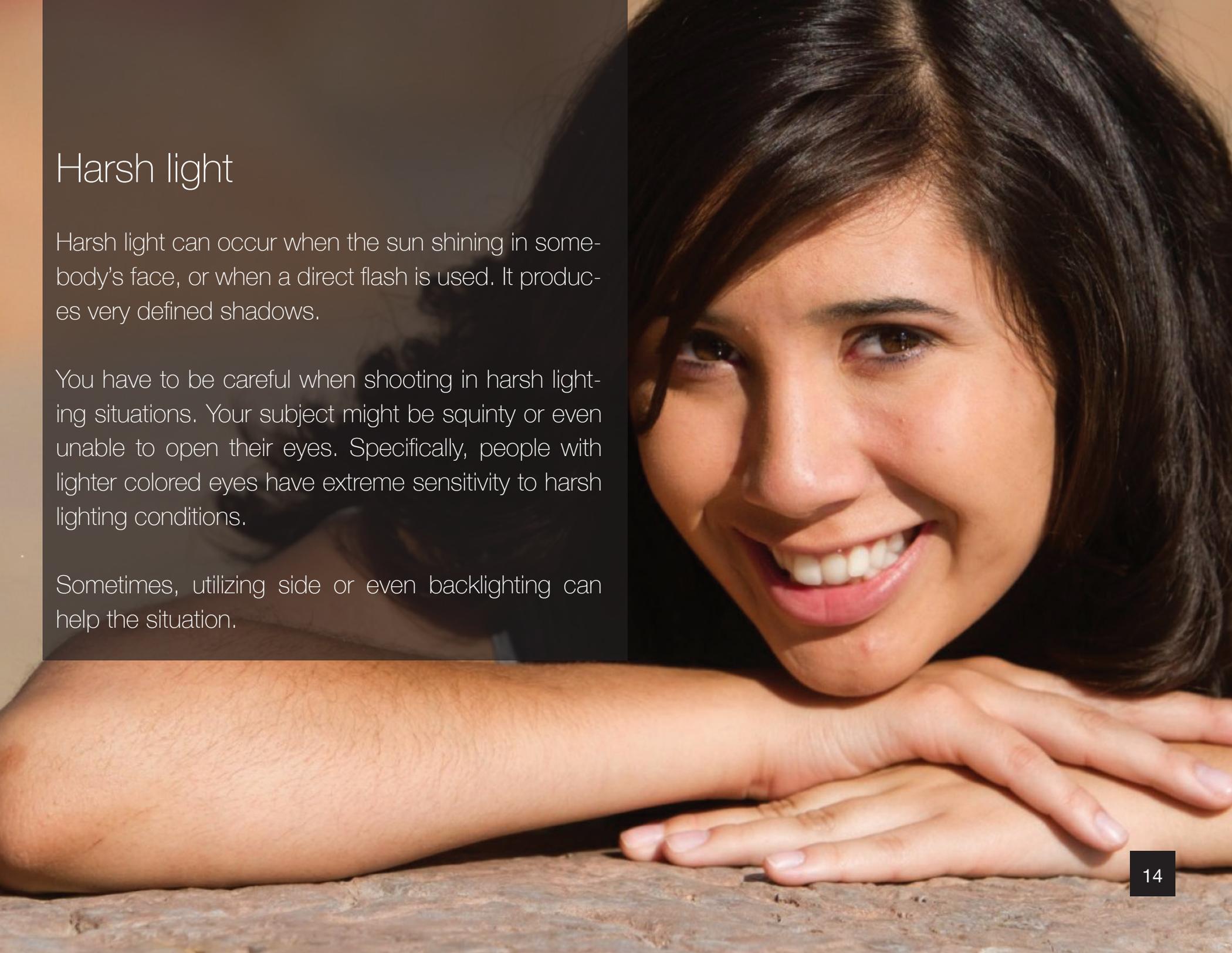
For example, in this photo the subject's eyes are in focus as is part of her hair. Notice that the tip of her nose isn't, but looking back at the bright light image almost everything near the train is in focus. That is one of the major differences in bright vs. dim lighting.

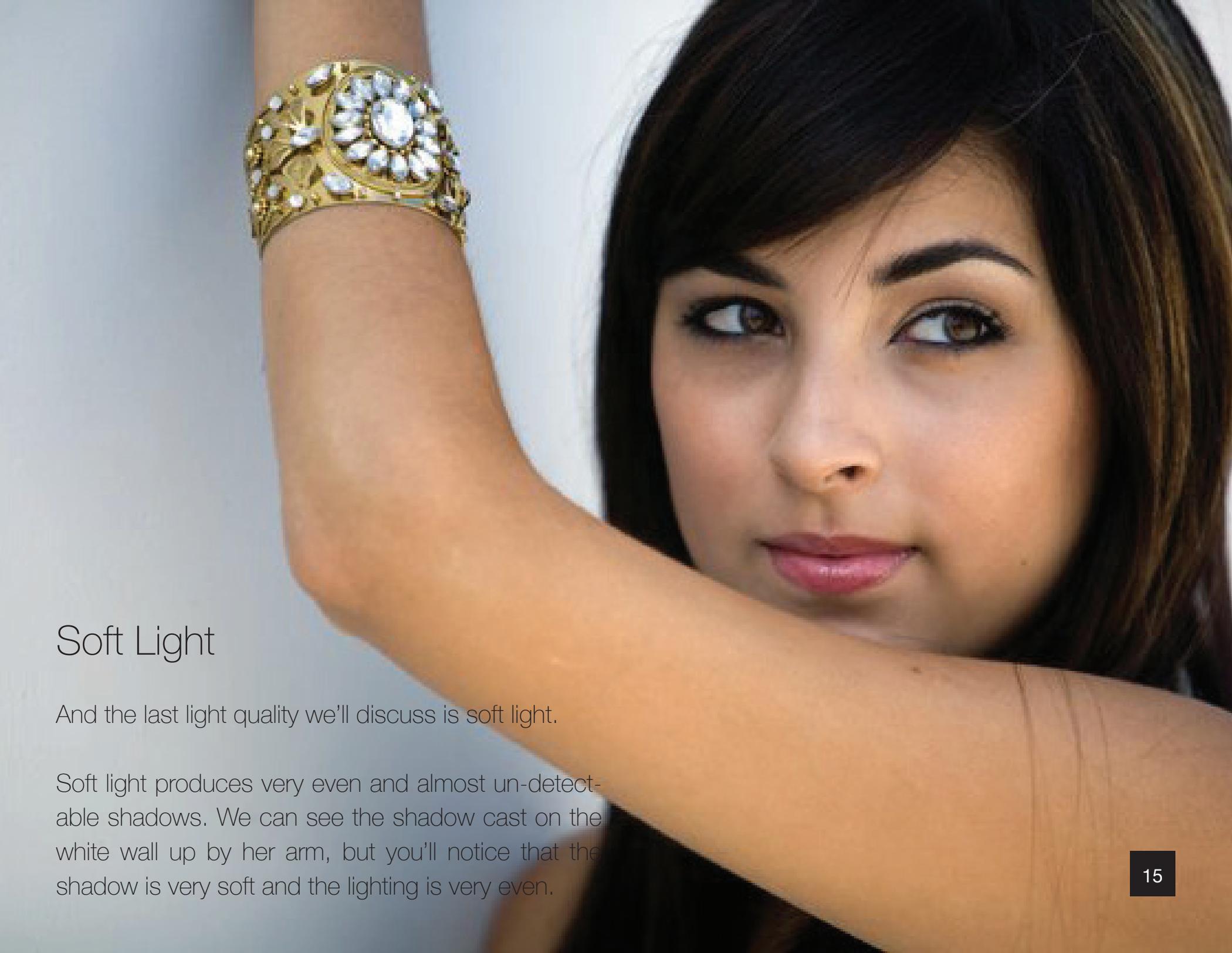
Harsh light

Harsh light can occur when the sun shining in somebody's face, or when a direct flash is used. It produces very defined shadows.

You have to be careful when shooting in harsh lighting situations. Your subject might be squinty or even unable to open their eyes. Specifically, people with lighter colored eyes have extreme sensitivity to harsh lighting conditions.

Sometimes, utilizing side or even backlighting can help the situation.





Soft Light

And the last light quality we'll discuss is soft light.

Soft light produces very even and almost un-detectable shadows. We can see the shadow cast on the white wall up by her arm, but you'll notice that the shadow is very soft and the lighting is very even.

These are our examples of bright and dim, harsh and soft. These are the main different qualities of light that you need to be aware of.

Obviously there are other factors to think about, but as you recognize these lighting situations it's only going to make your photography better.

Practice. Give yourself the assignment of identifying different kinds of light. Then put your subject in them and take note of the results.

We've got a question for you. Have you ever taken a great photo? Everyone wants to look at it and tell you how good you are, and how you should do this for a living, and then you go out to do it again and you can't reproduce it?

Well, part of that is being unable to recognize the various types of light, the direction and the quality, that were present when you took that photo.

As you teach yourself to recognize these different lighting situations, you'll be able to accomplish that much easier.

You will be on your way to becoming a better photographer.

Next, we're going to discuss a lighting situation we call "open shade." Open shade is a photographer's best friend and your photo quality will drastically improve when you learn to use it. If you're like most photographers, the majority of the photos you'll take will be of people and open shade is perfect for this.

Open Shade

We love to take pictures of our loved ones, of pretty girls, of good-looking guys, so what's the best light for an amateur to photograph in? Not all of us have access to studio lighting and even if we did, we probably wouldn't know how to use it.

Well, what is a good (and free) light source?

One of the **best lighting situations out there is called open shade.**





Where does open shade happen?
You guessed it... in an area shaded from the full
strength of the sun. In the shade.

So we need to look for it. In the picture above, we're using the shade of a tree, but notice unlike that earlier picture of the two girls (under a tree) that was silhouetted, we have enough light falling on the subject so that the subject is for the most part is brighter than the background.

We've got that tree trunk in the background, and we do have some little hotspots, but for the most part the camera saw the face of our subject and exposed for that. And you'll notice this open shade lighting is very flattering.

Very soft shadows, wrinkles don't show up – although this baby doesn't have to worry about this – but as people get older they do not want their wrinkles to show unless you're from National Geographic and you're shooting the 115 year old Chinese lady with 1,000 wrinkles.

**Here's another example
of open shade lighting...**

it's so complementary to the people
we're photographing and especially to their faces.



Open shade even occurs indoors. This photo was taken in the foyer of a large building by a window and the window creates this very soft light.

Remember this – even though you are in the shade, there's still light there and it has a direction to it and a quality to it just like we learned before. Look and see! The direction of this light would be from camera right, as it comes across from that bank of windows, and it's – **let me just ask you? Is it soft or harsh?**

Soft is the correct answer.

The quality of the light is in the dim realm. But it's very nice, very beautiful light. Our subject has a slight shadow on camera left side of her face, but we can see into that shadow.

One other little tip here...

Look into the eyes of your subject. And you see how the iris reflects/mirrors anything that's bright? These are called specular highlights. The iris is reflecting the light source. It is a great way to figure out what type of lighting was used.

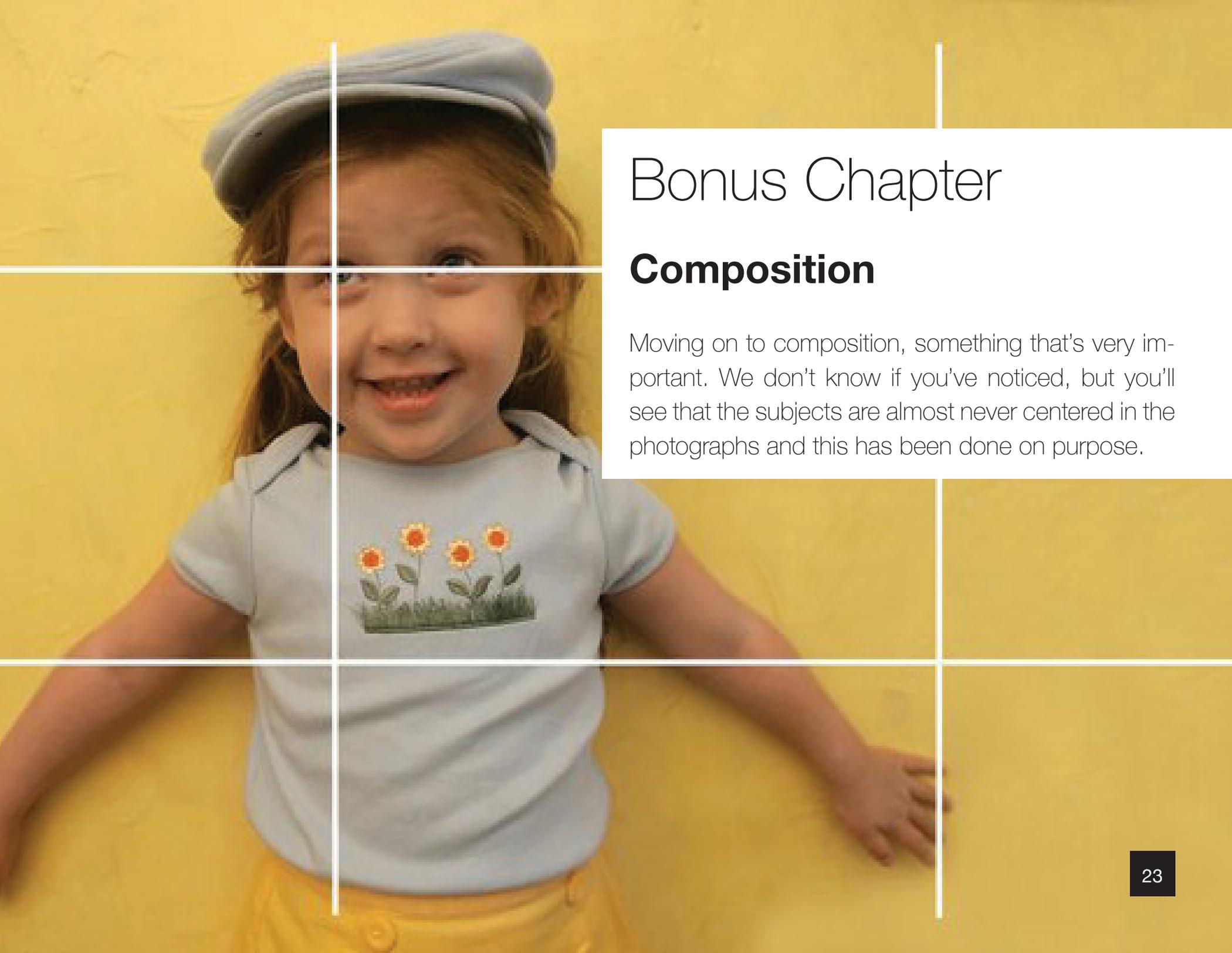
A great way practice this tip is to go to the makeup counter at the department store where they have those giant pictures of their models wearing the makeup and looking all cool. Look in their eyes and you can see the studio type lighting that they used reflected in their eyes.

Here's another example of open shade.

We have our light source coming from camera left washing across our model from left to right. She has a slight shadow on the camera right side of her face. Very soft, very complimentary to the model, and regardless of their age this would be great light to put anyone in. Next time you're looking to photograph someone, see if you can put them in that light.

Open shade tends to be soft because there's not the harshness that you get with direct light. And again, it's very complimentary in most situations.





Bonus Chapter

Composition

Moving on to composition, something that's very important. We don't know if you've noticed, but you'll see that the subjects are almost never centered in the photographs and this has been done on purpose.

Dead center in a photograph is basically death to your photograph for the most part. It is boring, our eyes don't like to see it. There are exceptions to the rules, but for the most part our eyes are drawn to certain areas within the photograph and we're going to talk about that right now.

The most referred to rule is the rule of thirds, and that's why we have these lines placed into this photo. We have carved it into thirds, not exactly but close enough, we carve it into thirds both horizontally – there's the top, middle, and bottom third – and also vertically – there's our left, center, and right areas.

Where these lines meet, these are areas of convergence. The areas of convergence are where the eye of the viewer naturally tends to go. If you want your viewer to look at your photo you need to arrange the elements of your photo within those areas as close as possible. Not exactly, but as close as possible to make it interesting.

There are exceptions to that. Where you might want to show symmetry or something like that, but generally speaking, you'll want to put your subjects in one of the areas of convergence.

So again look at this – we have a picture of this little girl against a yellow wall, and she has a yellow skirt on, and there's some yellow in the flowers on her shirt, it's all complimentary.

But, if we look at the composition, you'll see we've got her head near that area of convergence and actually her eye-line is dead on in that area of convergence. Her body is also in the left vertical third, which just makes this a very strongly composed photo that you would want to look at. And that's the goal of every photographer, to have people look at their photo for as long as possible. To enjoy it, to convey a message, anything like that.

Here's another one of a little boy.

We haven't put the lines in, but let's look at the composition.

If you carved those lines in both vertically and horizontally, you would notice that his eyes fall in the convergence of both the upper left and upper right areas of those thirds.

And because of that, you have to look at those eyes. You have this little boy, he's got this little pouty look on his face, but as a photographer try to do that on purpose to draw the viewer's eyes to his eyes.

Notice how the top of his head is chopped off; we're going to talk about that in a bit, but you don't always have to show the whole entire body. You emphasize those things that you want to emphasize as a photographer, as the artist. Don't forget that; you're in control.



Now there are also some composition rules for landscape photography.

Some people just love to photograph landscapes, and this is a shot of Half Dome in Yosemite... one of the most beautiful places on earth.



For landscape photography, you don't carve it into equal thirds, you take the horizon and put it in a third spot, either one third or two thirds. Showing more of whatever you want to emphasize. Here we're emphasizing the land. So we've got two-thirds of the land showing, with only one-third of the sky. It's most important that you put the horizon on that line.

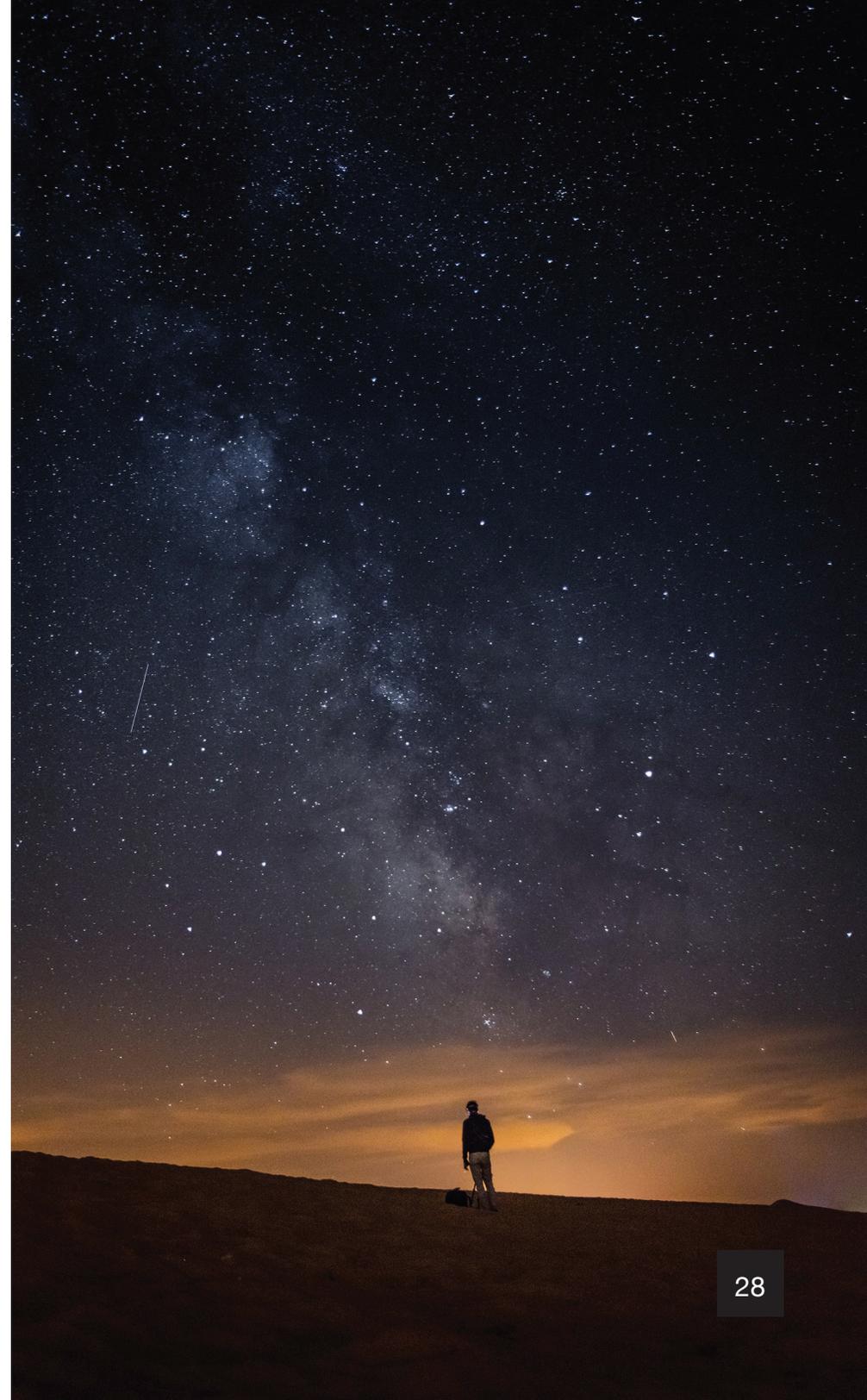
These composition rules are huge. If you can get those two basic concepts down, your photography will grow by leaps and bounds.

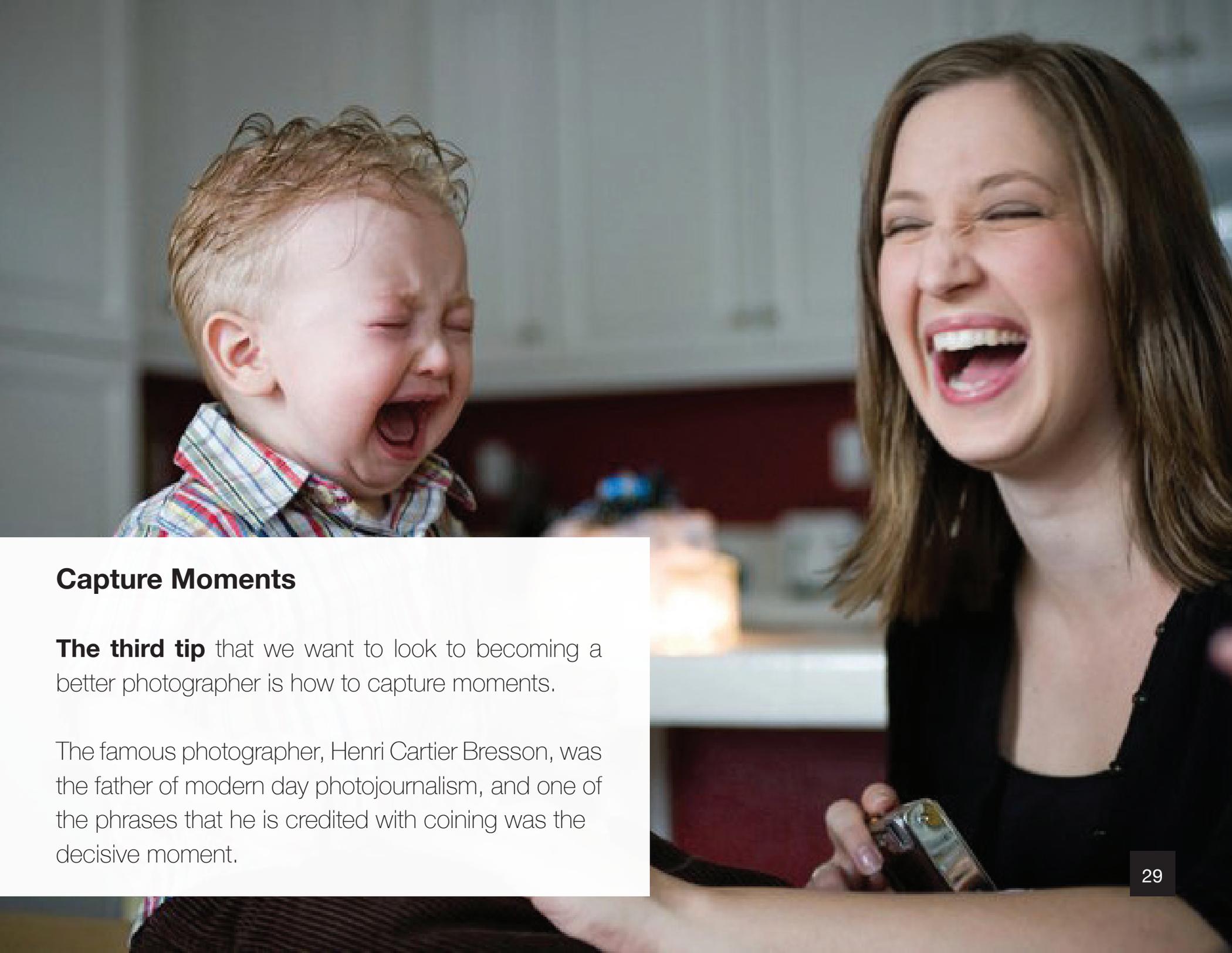
This landscape rule also equates to buildings. You can think of buildings as landscapes, trees as landscapes, so you put two-thirds/one-third. One-third sky, two-thirds grounds, and it doesn't have to be just thirds, it just needs to get away from half and 40 percent. If you really want to emphasize the sky or the ground do seven-eighths sky or seven-eighths ground.

The sky is the limit, no pun intended there, to make your photography better.

For example, look at the placement of the building and palm trees in the lower third of this image to emphasize the sky and the clouds.

Apply this compositional rule to make more effective images.





Capture Moments

The third tip that we want to look to becoming a better photographer is how to capture moments.

The famous photographer, Henri Cartier Bresson, was the father of modern day photojournalism, and one of the phrases that he is credited with coining was the decisive moment.

He said whatever scene you're watching, whatever scene you're looking at, there's a decisive moment. It's made up of hundreds or thousands of moments but there are a couple moments in there that really tell the whole story. And he believed there was one decisive moment that wrapped up in one succinct little summary, told the story of exactly what's going on.

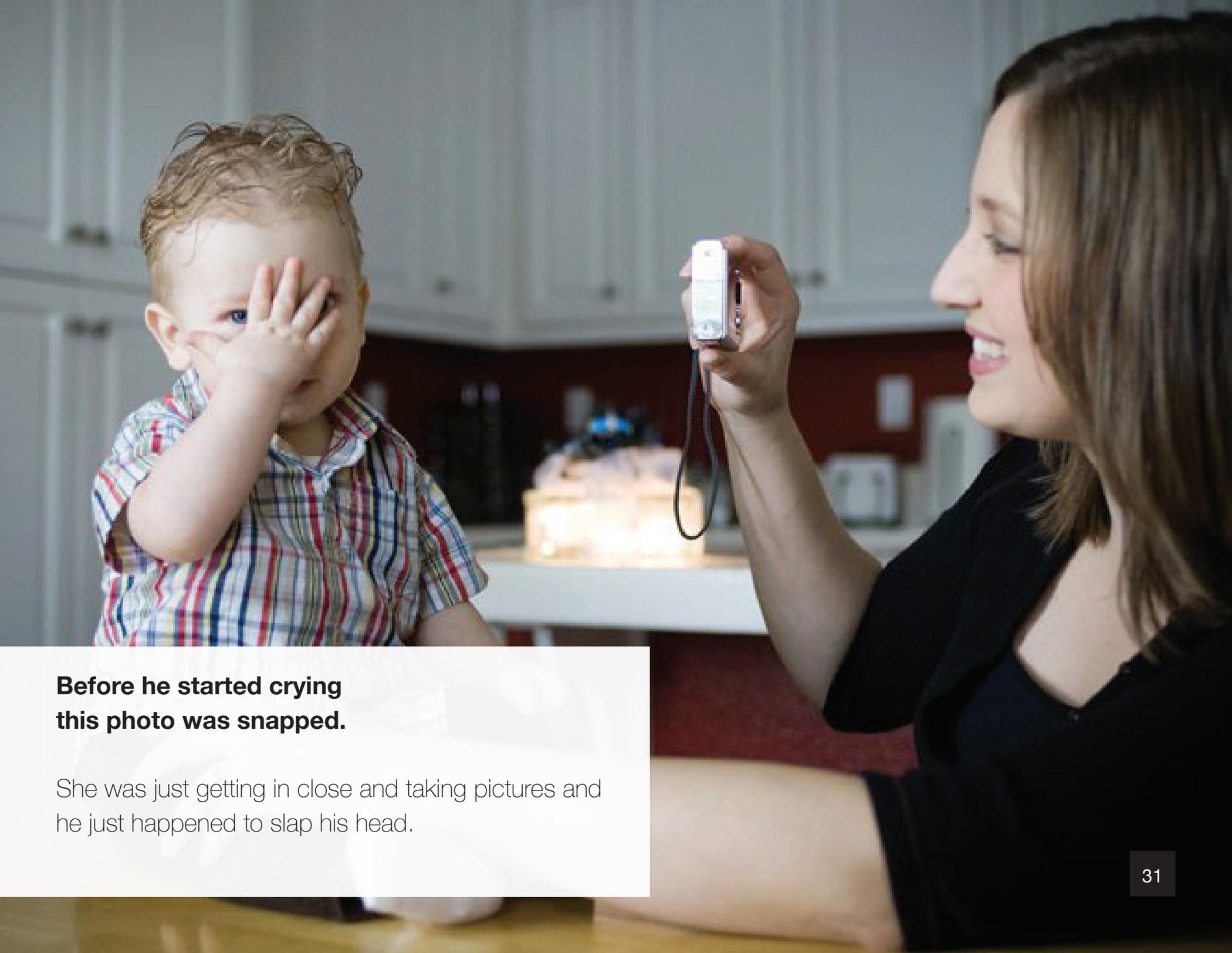
So when you photograph something and someone yells out 'say cheese' you should give them a dirty look because that is not what we're trying to capture – the posed, frozen smile of somebody. You're trying to capture life.

We are trying to become a visual storyteller.

The picture above was taken of a mom trying to photograph her son. She was teasing him with a little toy and she took it away. He started crying, she started laughing, and it was a great moment.

We love the range of emotions here. We've got laughter and sadness, we've got happy and sad, and we've got grief, and we love how their mouths are open about the same amount and their eyes are closed in the same way, but we've got the huge spectrum of emotions here.

That is what we're looking for. We also have great composition with both of their heads in the upper left and upper right areas of convergence. Their bodies are in the left and right vertical. We've got a lot of things going on here, we've got nice soft lighting coming from a bank of windows that is camera left. You almost need to be detached as a photographer – as you're observing what's going on at any one moment as you are pressing the shutter. Let's get away from cheese and let's start capturing moments. You have to have the right mindset and be ready to click the shutter at a moment's notice.



**Before he started crying
this photo was snapped.**

She was just getting in close and taking pictures and he just happened to slap his head.

We're waiting, waiting, waiting, for those great moments.

You see photographers with the camera to their face for long times – it's because they're waiting for a moment. They're not just saying say cheese, stand against the wall, whatever, they're looking to capture life and these are – you can't fake these moments.

This was not fake; this was real as was the image beforehand. That is definitely something to think about the next time you're just pulling out your camera to photograph life.

Capturing real moments is what it's all about.

One thing you need to learn about capturing moments is anticipation and preparation.

A great example is shooting a tennis match.

We have all seen the great images of the tennis matches at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open. Tight faces with the racket and the ball all in the same frame.

It isn't easy to do.

The ball, it moves so fast off that racket; remember they serve at 120, 140 miles an hour, that if you see it in the camera viewfinder you've missed it.

Here's a great example of that. The subject has hit the ball and it's gone; it's not in the frame and you've got nothing. So without the ball you don't have a great picture.





**There's the shadow of the ball;
it's already gone.**

Sometimes we have winders and motor drives on our cameras, but it's best to anticipate and shoot before you think something is going to happen and you'll find that you get a higher percentage of great moments rather than missed moments.

Read on for the tip.

Here it is before she's even beginning to hit it.

You have to start shooting before the ball even gets there to obtain an image with both the ball and the player in the same frame!

Another great example of this is the sport of boxing where we've talked to other photographers— if you wait to try and capture the guy punching you're just never going to get it.

It was always anticipation.

They punch so fast the other guy doesn't even know what's going on. Well the same thing with the photos of that. You get this sense of when they're going to punch and you shoot. Its anticipation and learning to know what it is that you're shooting.

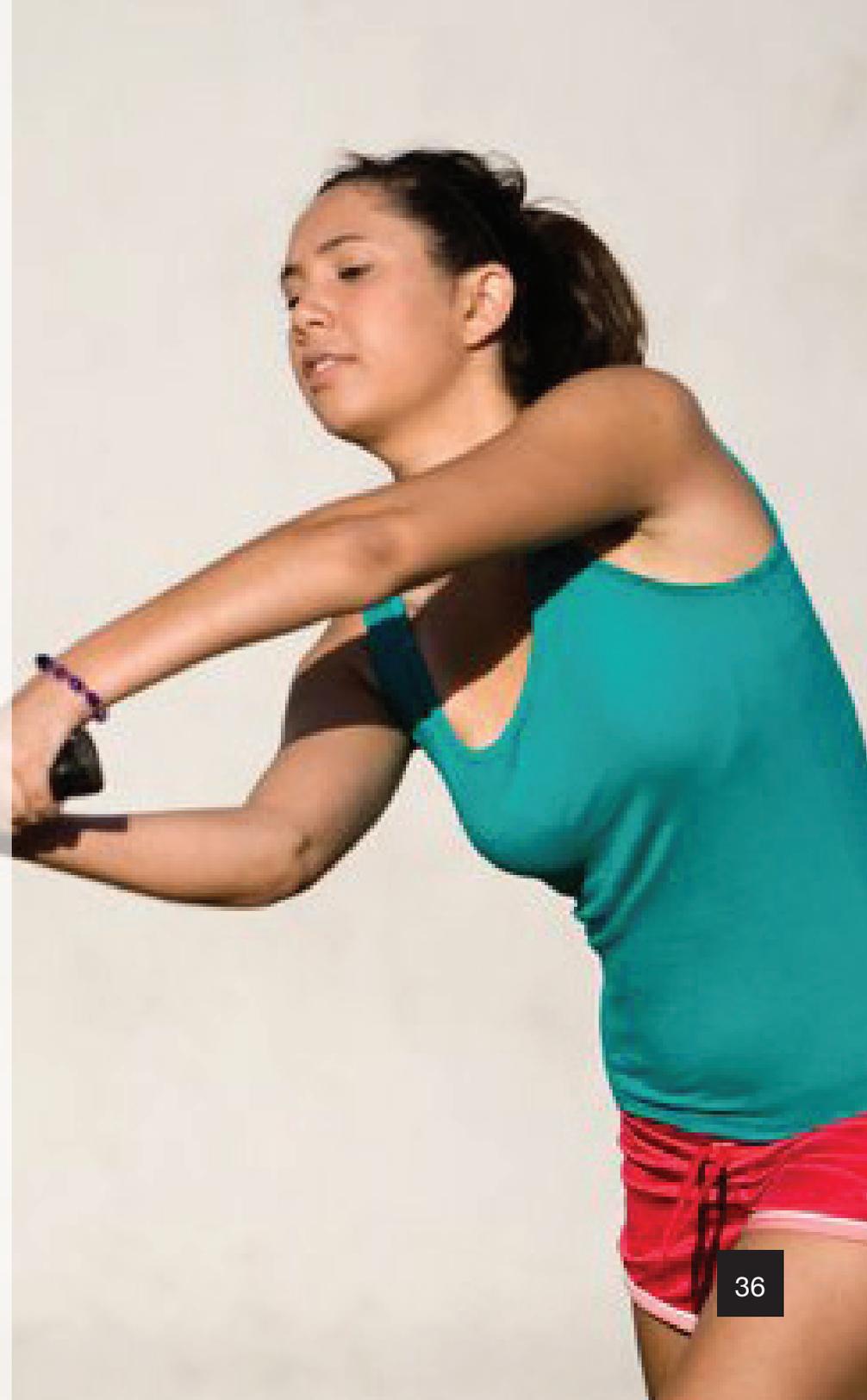
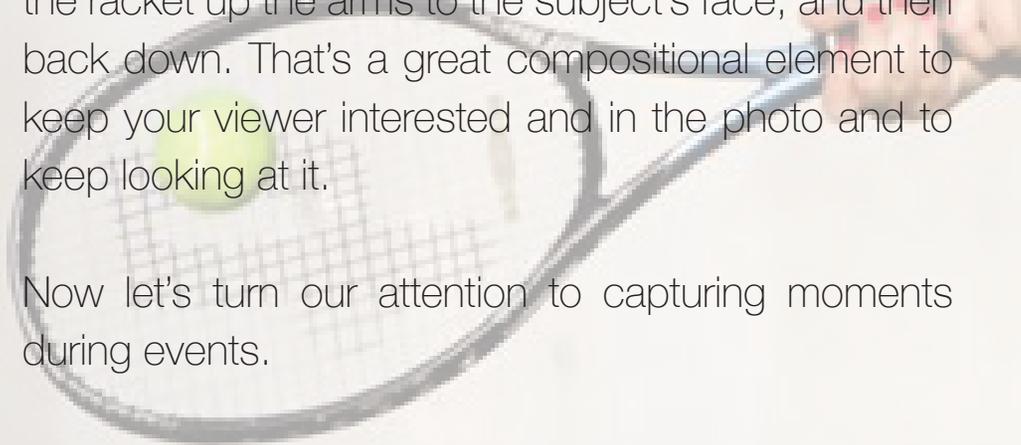


Here we have the shot of the ball actually leaving the racket because the shutter was pressed long before the ball ever was struck by the racket.

Be prepared.

We've also have her head near that upper right area of convergence, the ball in the lower left area of convergence, we have what we like to call diagonality – It's just made up word – but if you go back and forth, the viewer's eye first goes to the ball, then goes up the racket up the arms to the subject's face, and then back down. That's a great compositional element to keep your viewer interested and in the photo and to keep looking at it.

Now let's turn our attention to capturing moments during events.



Here's a first birthday party.

Those of us in America know the tradition when you turn one years old, they put your birthday cake in front of you and you get to smash it all over yourself.

Do we want a nice picture of him saying cheese and smiling at us? No, we want his face full of cake and all the stuff that's going on. Anticipate this and wait for it. Notice the nice lighting coming from camera left coming across from a big window, and he's digging into the cake and you've got this great moment. And that's what it's all about. We want to document those events.

We also want to document everyday life.

We all want to capture everyday life.



**This is a great photo
of a mom and her little boy.**

The moment is forever captured. Let us take a look at the different components.

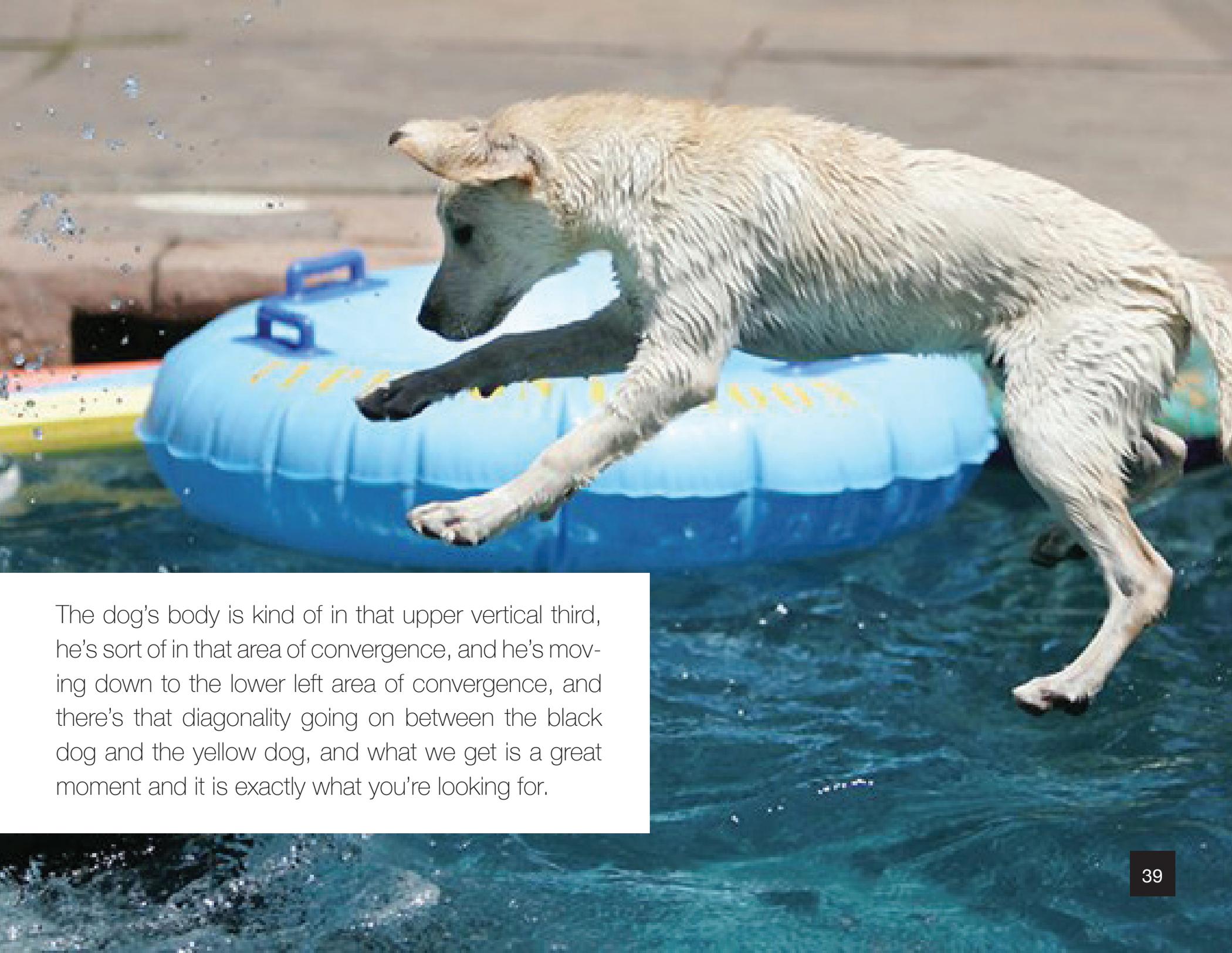
The heads of the boy and the mom are in the upper left and right areas of convergence.

Their bodies are in the left and right verticals and the wagon is in the lower horizontal.

To capture moments like this, you have to prepare and be looking and watching. Start bringing your camera to family outings, bring it when nothing is planned, that's when you will start to capture the moments of your lives.

That is what we're looking for. We're looking to capture everyday life and everyday moments.





The dog's body is kind of in that upper vertical third, he's sort of in that area of convergence, and he's moving down to the lower left area of convergence, and there's that diagonality going on between the black dog and the yellow dog, and what we get is a great moment and it is exactly what you're looking for.

Photographing People

Now let's turn our **attention to people photography.**

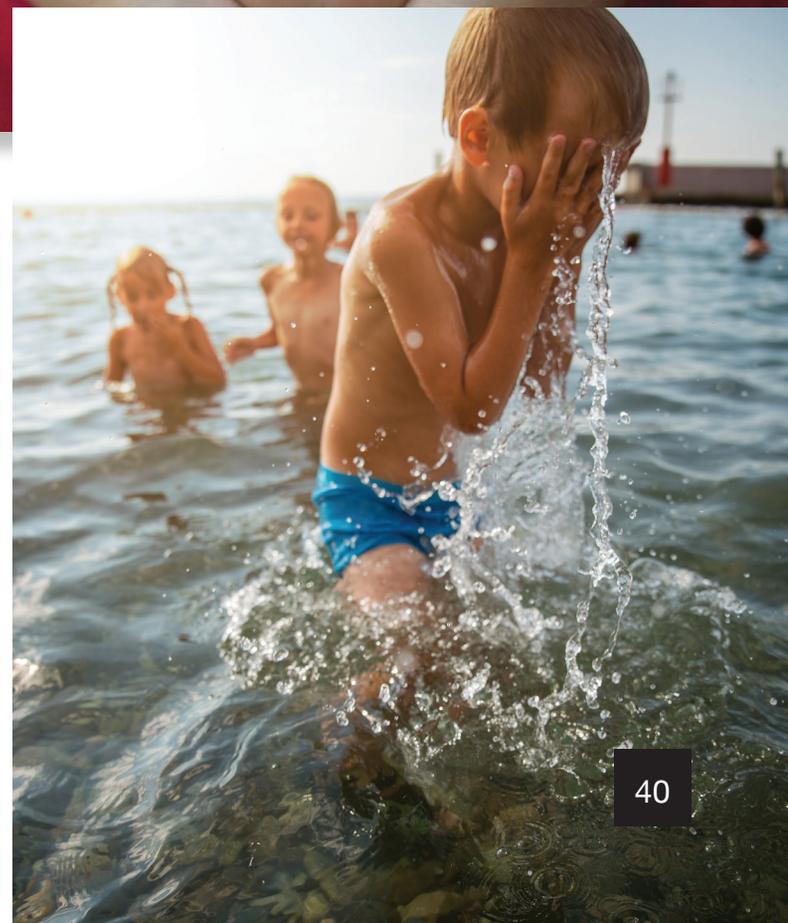
This is point number four, how to make people photography even better.

One thing that we do is we get stuck photographing the entire head of a person, the entire body of a person.

Too often we stand way too far away from our subjects. There is no intimacy.

No connection with our subject.

Moving closer changes a lot of those things.



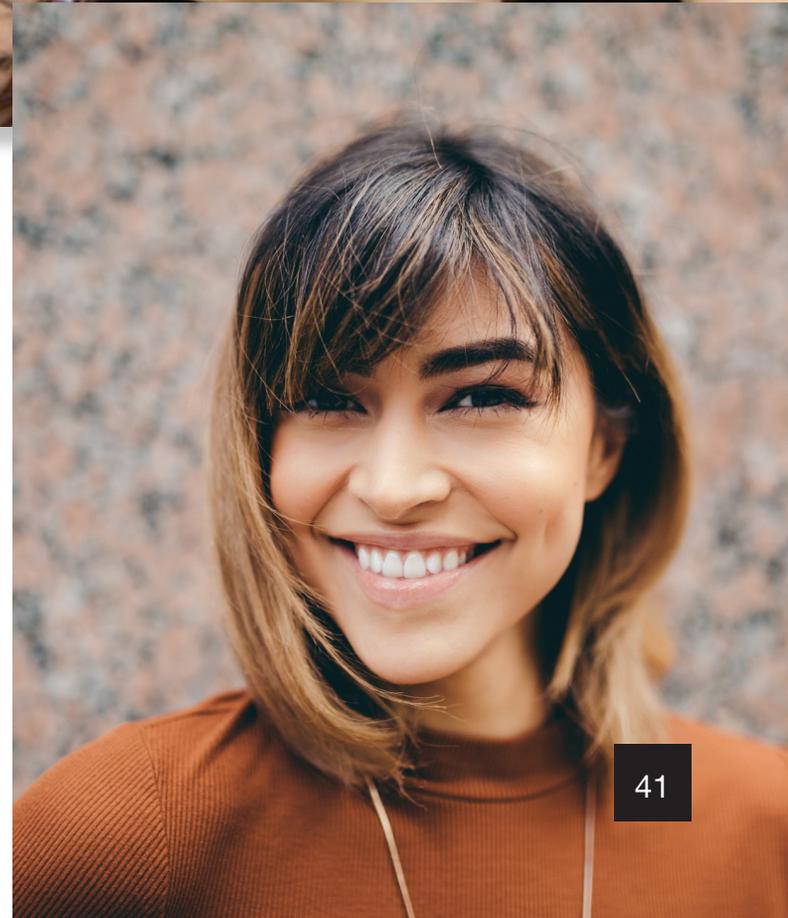
The model's left eye... the camera right is placed in the area of convergence – the upper right area of convergence.

Look how much stronger this is than if I were backed up and shot her whole head?

Which we know the top of her head is there, we just make those assumptions, and it would have moved her camera right eye lower and she would have been in the middle.

It would not have been as effective of an image. This is a typical weak point for most beginning photographers. Practice and make yourself get closer.

So every chance you can just get closer.



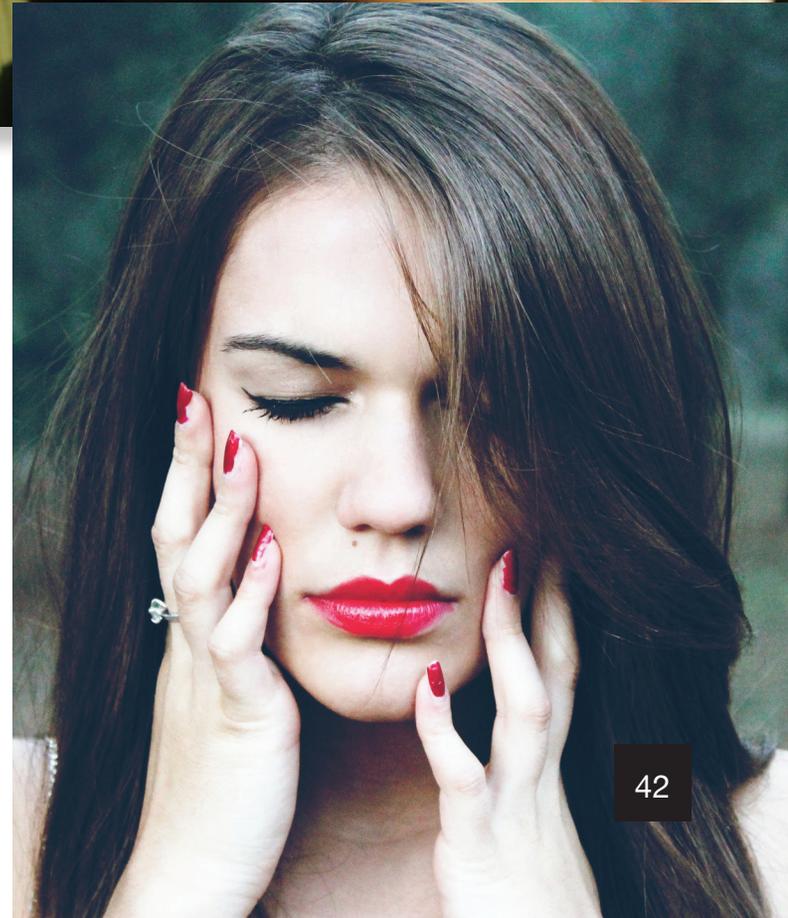
**Here's another example
of being able to get closer.**

Look at the light source here. We have very directional light, it's sunset coming through a window, we can see the specular highlight in her eye, we have the shadow here going sideways, the shadow on the side of her face, we have this wonderful red wall that's illuminated, we've just got some beautiful light going on and we pull in closer to put the various elements of her face in those areas of convergence in the right vertical to make it that much stronger of a photo.

All of that to say, "Get closer."

So get closer.

Then try it, even closer!



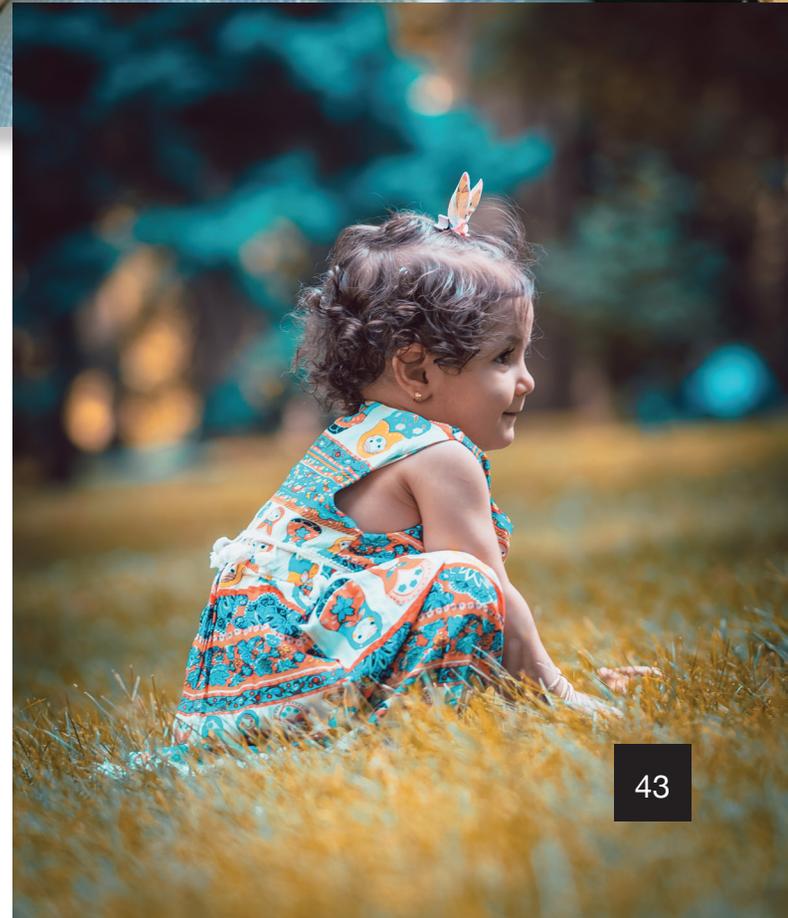
Another great tip is patience.

We need to learn patience.

Here's a picture of these kids giving their sibling a kiss, and he gave the reaction that most seven or eight year old boys are going to give.

And it was just patience and waiting, waiting for that moment.

Here's another one just waiting.



Most kids don't really want to pose.

So patience is the order of the day. You need to put a long lens on and put them in a confined space.

Then they start showing off, just like this one did here.

Her eye is near the area of upper right convergence, her body is in the right vertical convergence, you have a nice clean background and she really pops out. It's all patience and waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting – that's kind of the name of the game for photography.

One last area that we want to talk about to help you take better people photos are props.



People Photography and Props

You give someone a prop who's normally sort of self conscious of having their picture taken, they're not a model, they're not used to it, and all of a sudden their transported to another place.

Her head is in the area of convergence, her body is in the left vertical, the guitar isn't quite but it works.

One quick last tip. Your subject is either looking at you or away from you.

Having your subject(s) look away allows the viewer to look deeper into the image. Look at the image above.

The subject is lost in a moment and we get to view that. If she was looking into the camera, the moment is gone and we would probably lose the emotion of this image.



Props, props, props, props, we cannot say it enough how great they are for the photographer and for the subject to kind of forget that they're being photographed.

Reality shows are really big and people think wow – did they really do that in front of the camera?

Well a lot of times you just forget the cameras are there.

You wear the subject down, and that's probably one of the greatest traits to learn as a photographer is to wear your subject down. Just make them feel at ease. Chat them up, talk to them, get them excited.

Props help to speed that process up.



Let us look at the light in her eyes. There is a large light source coming from camera right and some smaller ones that seem to be in front of the subject.

The prop is the butterfly. The subject is giving the slightest smile.

This is a great picture.

Props can make the day for you.



Point Of View

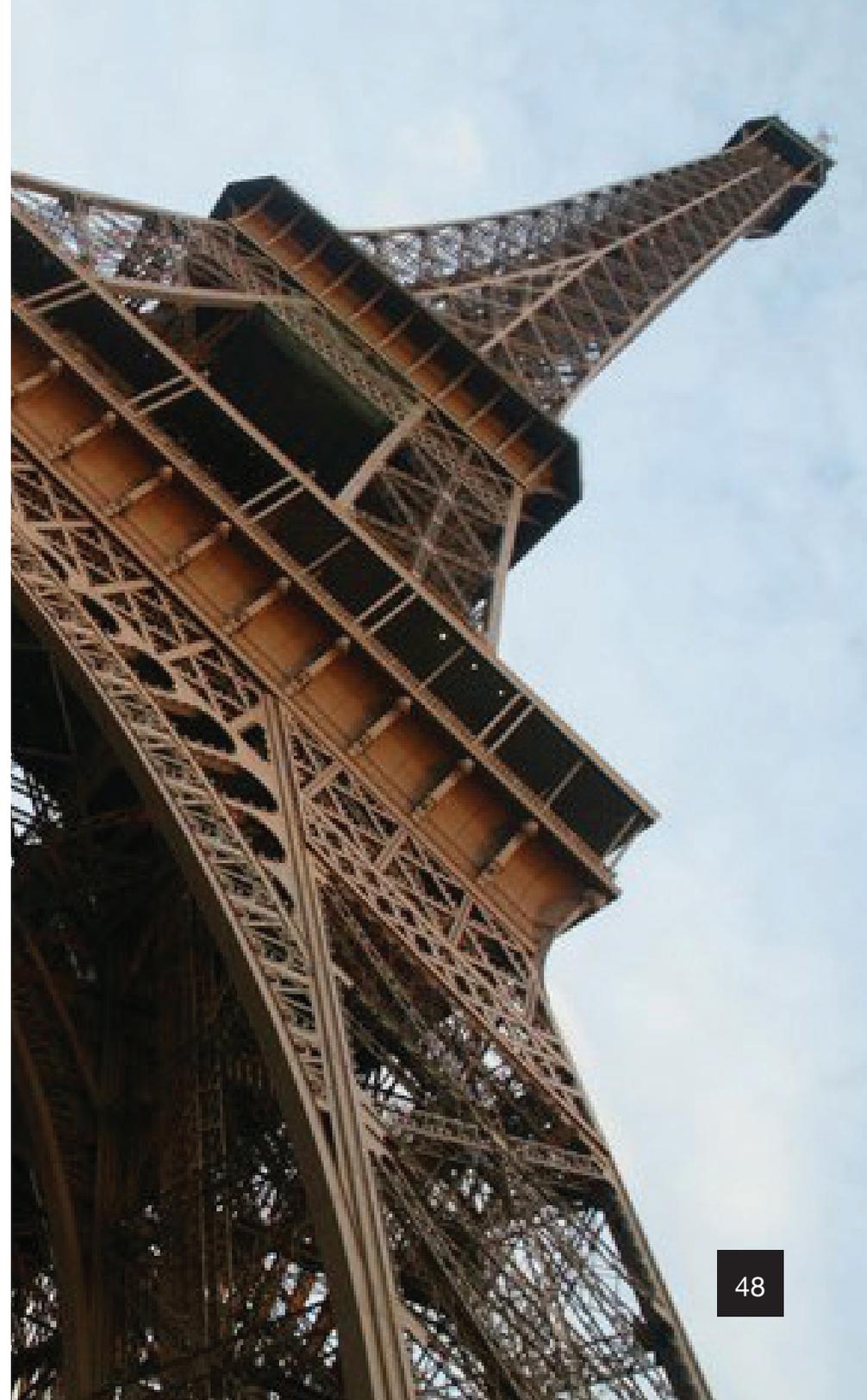
Okay now this brings us to our last point.

Point five of our five tips for digital photography today. Point of view, or something I'll call POV.

Point of View basically means when you look at a photo, or when the viewer looks at it where are they looking from?

Where was the camera? Was it high, was it low, was it in the middle? This is something that most people never think about, but as you flip through a magazine and you look at where they put the position of the camera, it makes us think and feel certain things.

Here's the Eiffel Tower shot from very low looking up to make you feel like you are an ant. Look at the man down in the very left hand corner. So small. This thing is incredibly large, especially in person. So you get this point of view, and you need to think about where you're going to put the camera.

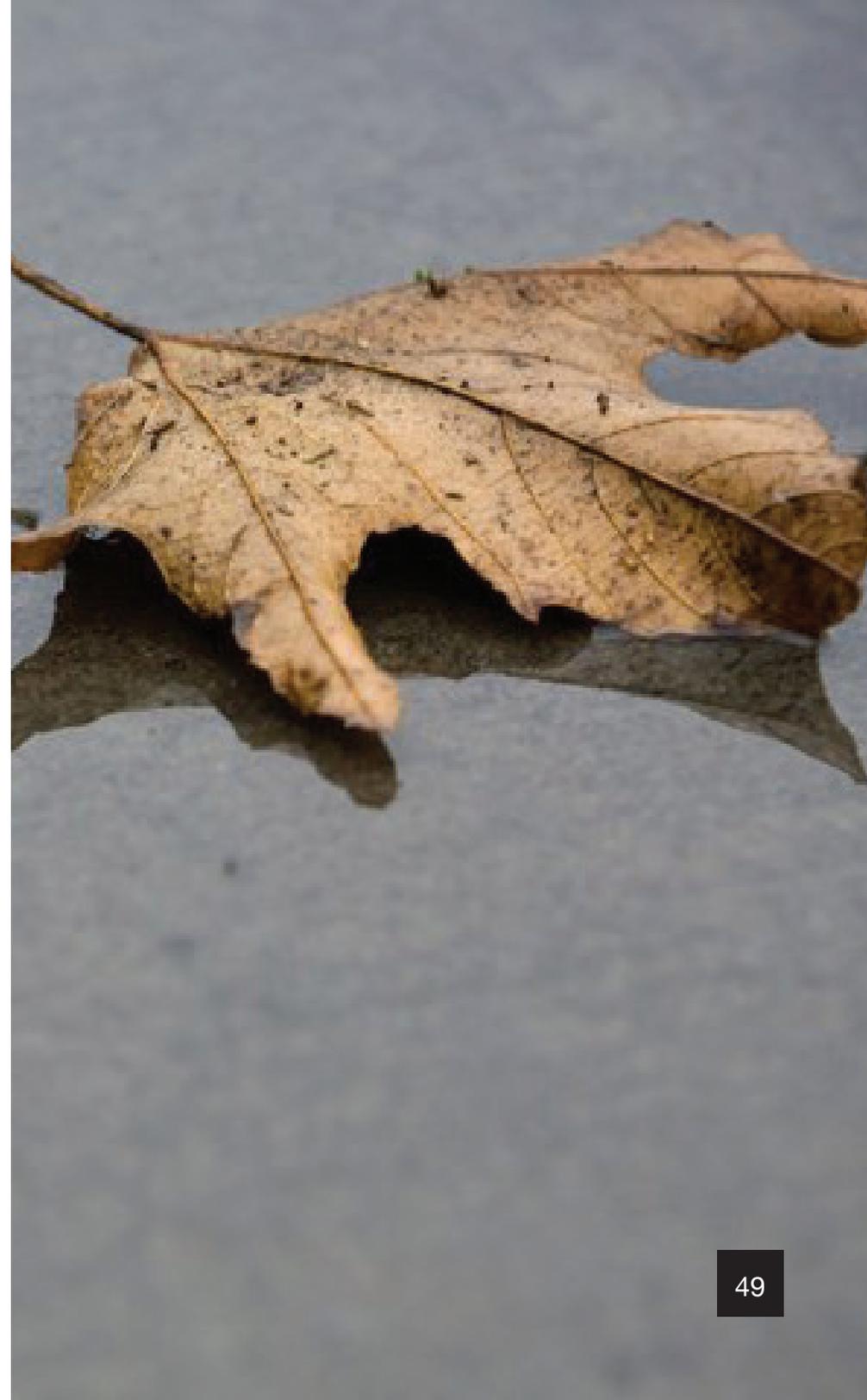


We have the leaf in the area of convergence, the upper right hand area of convergence and we have a lot of negative space around the leaf that kind of supports it, but the camera is not quite on the ground but it's very low.

We are similar to a toddler's point of view, sort of the young looking at the old. And you can read into it quite a bit, as much as you do or don't want, but it's important to think of that. Be the visual storyteller.

That's the whole point of moving the camera to different vantage points or POV.

It creates a feeling that transports the viewer to a certain place as they view the image.



Here's another point of view photo.

It's just kind of street level looking up.

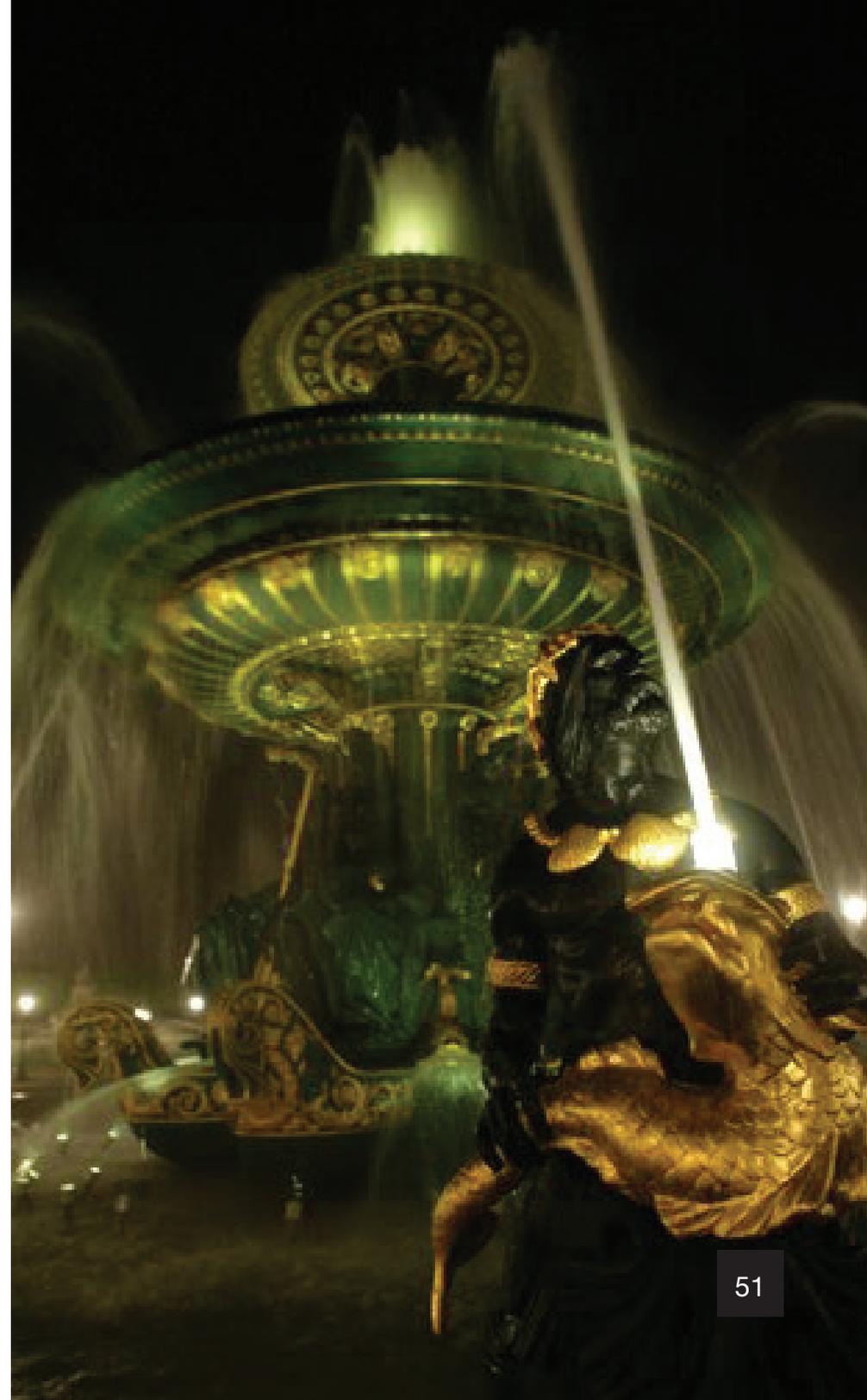


**Here's a very famous fountain
in the Plaza de la Concorde in Paris,**
and a night shot.

There's Poseidon in the right lower area of convergence and conveniently the water is shooting up the vertical right, and there's just got a lot of things going on here. But the camera is very low.

Create a mood with POV.

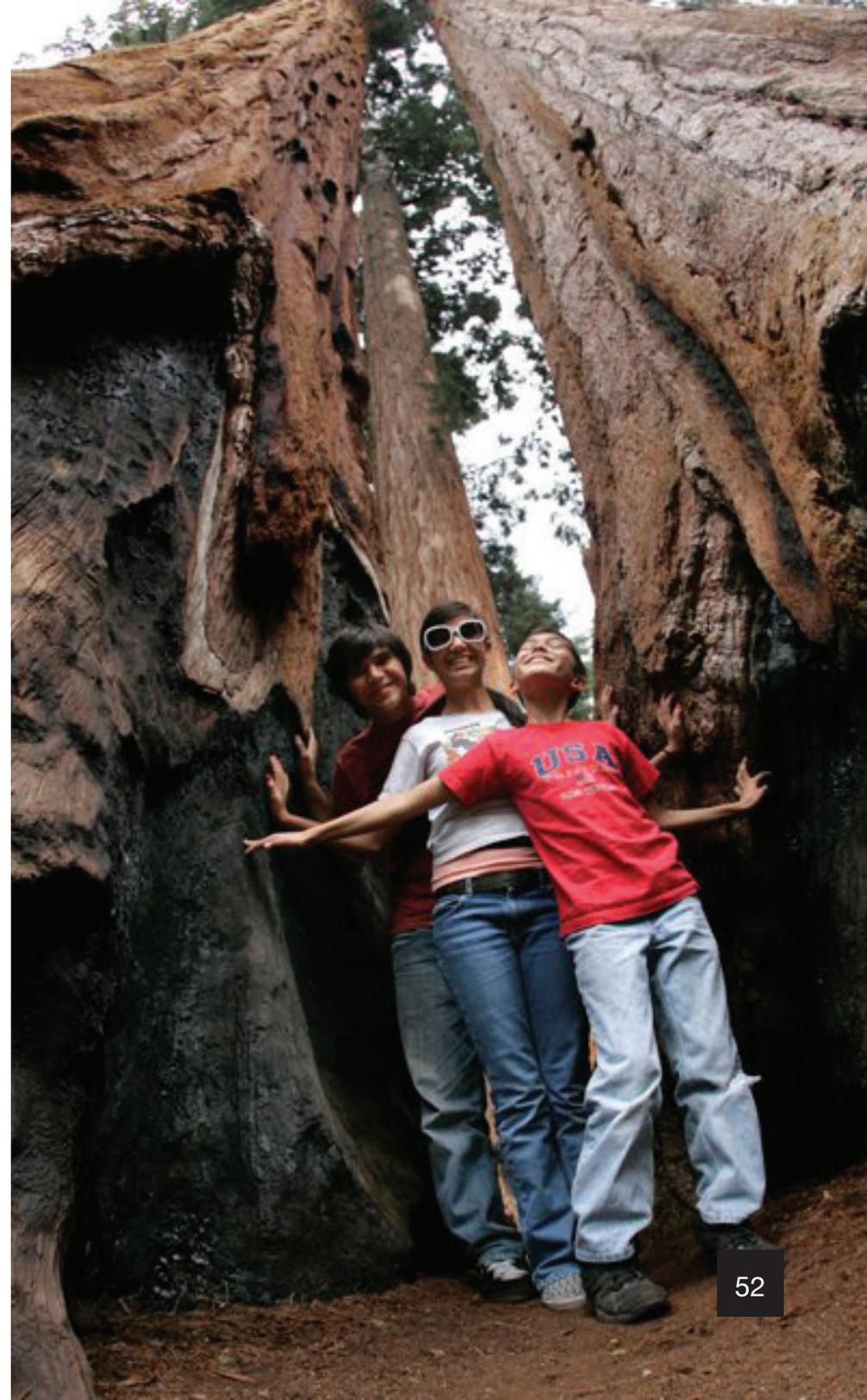
Similar to POV is angles.



Where do you put the camera?

To emphasize the height of the Sequoia trees, the kid's feet is in that area of convergence. Now where's the light coming from? It was a cloudy day and so the light, if you look at it, is coming from straight up. Look at the face of the smallest boy and he has tilted his back.

The light is hitting him straight on. The other kids have their heads bent down and the light is hitting the top of their head, but not quite their face; just their noses and part of their cheeks. So very soft light, low angle, emphasizes the height of the trees and how small the kids are.



Is the photo composed perfectly?

No it isn't. There is a little plaque near the area of convergence. We have the line going up to the top of area of convergence, and we have the boy on the line. That gives us that diagonal thing we talked about.

We just have an interesting angle, sort of shot from above down because people don't normally lay on the ground. A visual record of a family's vacation and their life.

Something to treasure, to store and keep for later generations to show how they documented their lives.



Here's another way that we can contrast our point of view.

That would be to contrast the size of the subject with whatever else might be in the photo.

Here was a Sequoia tree that had fallen over. Look at the little kids down there. This thing huge!

The tallest kid is over five feet , so it's maybe 15, 20 feet high. It's just incredibly large and so it gives that contrast of size that gives us some context of what's going on.

If the kids were not in this shot, you'd have no idea of how large the tree is.



One of the last things regarding point of view

is that we don't always have to have that normal view of you standing up. You have knees, bend them. Get low, get up higher, there is another way, too.

Getting closer, a lot closer.

If you have the ability to use a macro type close in lens or you have that feature on your camera, use it to get closer.

These are two Yucca fronds. It is a different view of the world. Getting closer all falls under that point of view.

Just to review that, where do you put your camera and why? You have to think about angles and sometimes we need to contrast the size of our image and lastly, get closer. Get super close; get macro close to create some thoughtfulness for your viewer.



We went over our five main tips for digital photography.

1. Light – How we need to see and recognize it.
2. Composition
3. Capturing Moments
4. People Photography
5. Point of View

We hope these little thoughts and these tips will make you a better photographer immediately. Take the time to give yourself little assignments to accomplish each one of these points and you will see immediate results that will take you to that next level of your photography.

Be inspired!



