

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

6 tips for capturing and sharing great photos



Photo courtesy of Donnie Rosie



Telling your story is more important than ever these days! However, when it comes to creating marketing materials, this is very difficult to do without good pictures. Print media, social media and websites all require great photography. Every picture tells a story, but it's important that your photos are telling a *great* story. In this article, I'm going to focus on several things that will help you take your photography to the next level. ►

Why

I know photography is easy for some, and it is downright frustrating for others. My team began their journey with a few pictures shot on automatic settings and worked their way to posting over 1,000 professional-quality pictures each week for our camp. Through a painstaking investment of time and training, the ability to “tell the story” of a week at camp to those not attending effectively markets our camp program. As camp marketers, we need pictures for storytelling, marketing and promotion for the next season.

The results for us have been amazing. Thousands of people follow our content, and our social media engagements and summer camp attendance are up. Because of our camp photography, we are attracting talented artists and starting a photography fellowship program to train others in the off-season. Taking pictures can be easy; it just takes training in technique, precision and lots of practice!

Beyond marketing, good photos can be part of your ministry’s customer service. We all know parents love (and often demand) to see pictures of their children at camp. They’re wondering, “Are they safe? Are they happy? Is your program engaging?” Creative, professional photos assure parents that your program delivers all that it promised.



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How

Seeing the need for good photography is more than half the battle. Now let's look at a summary of the process. This is not all you need to learn, but it is a great starting point or a refresher if you are already a pro.

1. Don't just take a picture — tell a story.
2. Know the principles of photography and review them regularly.
3. Understand your camp's photo privacy/permission policies.
4. Make photo delivery easy.
5. Keep taking pictures, review and repeat.
6. Have an overall goal and pursue it.

Tell a Story

Do your best to understand the principles, but most of all, tell a great story. The best pictures, the most famous pictures, are not always perfect from a “principle of photography” perspective; however, the moment they captured mattered. Sometimes, any picture is often better than no picture at all.

When it comes to posting Stories on Instagram and other platforms, I would add that you don't want to tell one story per month; you want to tell stories daily to keep your viewers interested. Many want to follow your cause regularly so they can stay connected. Your story is evolving every day, so tell it every day.



Photo courtesy of Donnie Rosie



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Clear subject

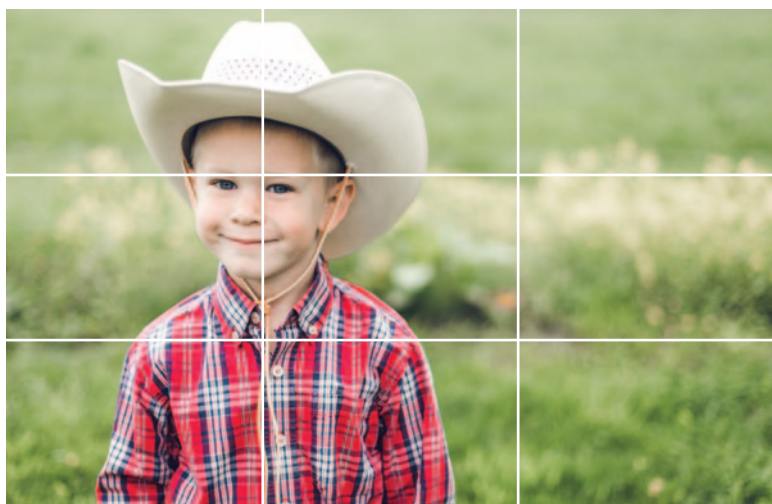


Photo courtesy of Donnie Rosie

Rule of thirds



Photo courtesy of Donnie Rosie

Leading lines

Principles

Good photography involves several fundamental principles, such as the rule of thirds, depth, framing, balancing elements and more. If I had to focus on one principle, it would be to have a clear subject. In general, your subject should be the clearest, brightest, largest and most captivating part of the image. If you cannot easily identify the subject, which is the element that tells the story, then you have probably missed an opportunity.

Try incorporating these principles on your next photo:

1. Isolate your subject from the background and surrounding elements. Look for lines and curves that lead toward the subject. We call these leading lines (another key principle), and they can help draw focus to your subject.
2. Place your subject on a third or an intersection of thirds (as shown in my example). It is a well-known principle that will help you compose great pictures.
3. Watch out for random elements (such as distracting items) in your background. These can ruin a great picture or waste an editor's time. If you move your feet to one side or another, you can often eliminate distracting elements through good composure.

As you take pictures throughout the seasons, keep reviewing these and other principles. Everyone is taking photos these days, but not everyone is getting better at it. You will get better if you work at it and learn from others, so find a few great photographers to follow online, as well.

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Tools for Success

What to use for great pictures

Knowing the principles of photography can help you take amazing pictures, but having the right gear can make those photos even better. Here are a few of the tools I use and recommend:

Camera Gear

- Canon 6D Mark II Camera
- Canon 50 mm f1/4 lens
- Canon 24-105 f4 L lens
- Canon t7i Camera
- Sony a7iii Camera
- SmartPhone (If you can't afford a pro-level camera, get a great phone. I am recommending this in more and more situations. The newest iPhone with portrait mode or the new Pixel phone are great options.)

Editing Software

We edit on Adobe Lightroom 99% of the time, and it also keeps our pictures cataloged. It is what most pros are using, and it is affordable at about \$10 per month.



Photo courtesy of Donnie Rosie

If you're going to be posting pictures of kids on social media or using their images in your print or online marketing, you must have permission from their parents.



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People and Privacy

With photography (and video), we bless people by capturing once-in-a-lifetime events so they can be shared and remembered. Keep in mind that the goal is to bless people and serve them. Look to capture unique moments instead of just taking a picture.

Your camp should have a photo release form that all campers and guests sign (go to page 54 for more about photo release forms). If you're going to be posting pictures of kids on social media or using their images in your print or online marketing, you must have permission from their parents. Be aware of any guests who have requested that their picture not be taken, and respect their privacy.

Delivery

All the best pictures in your camera mean nothing if others do not see them. Find a way to easily deliver photos to parents so they can see the joy and fun their children are experiencing at your camp.

We use SmugMug to share all of our pictures. The pictures are in an online gallery so people with a provided password can view them. People can see the pictures for free, and also have the option to buy them. SmugMug is not a big moneymaker, but it brings in more than enough to pay for using the platform. During one month in the summer, we might have our pictures viewed more than 1 million times. We know parents love seeing them, and it gives them peace of mind.

We also post regularly to social media. We are more careful about what we post here, but we regularly post. We use pictures for short stories and share images that others can share. During camp, we might post 50 photos to social media out of the 1,000 to 2,000 we have on our distribution site.

Repeat

This is a journey. Keep going. Continue learning and keep taking pictures so you can get better at it. If you start working toward taking better photographs and keep learning from others, you will get better. Ask others for help, and you will find partners in your quest for better pictures.



The Goal

Know why you are taking a picture. Start with an idea of what you want to do with a picture before you take it. Think about where you plan to use a photo, since that may inform how you compose it. For example, a picture you plan to use on an Instagram story or in a social media post may be set up differently than one you intend to use for a print brochure. Does the photo need to be taken in portrait or landscape? Is the subject a single person, a group of people or an activity at camp? Consider creating a shot list for you or your team at the start of the season to help ensure that you're getting the types of photos you want and need for the various marketing channels you use.

You may also want to set a goal to work toward consistency in your style since these pictures will represent your brand. As you take more photos, you may find certain elements become part of your camp's photography aesthetic.

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The added benefit about learning all of this is if you get better at taking pictures at camp, you will also get better at taking your own photos! You might find that you love photography and discover that you would like to become a lifelong photographer. God bless your journey and remember that in Christian camping, all we do is to His glory. We are taking pictures for the glory of God and for the love of others. This will help give your photographs a moral compass and a higher purpose than just making you or your camp look good. ■

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For the past 17 years, Donnie Rosie has been marketing national events, producing media projects, speaking and helping businesses and organizations grow. He has a degree in business from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania and now serves at Miracle Mountain Ranch (Spring Creek, Pennsylvania) as the marketing director and owner of ROSIE Marketing. Donnie is an FAA-licensed drone pilot and enjoys using photography as a marketing tool.