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Following these 10 simple rules will not make you a pro, but they will improve your photography.

**Pre-visualize.**

Before clicking the shutter, mentally visualize the final photograph.

**Use a gray card.**

Use a gray card for critical photographs to ensure your exposure is accurate. (Tip: if a gray card isn't handy, meter off green grass.)

**Shoot tight, tighter, tightest.**

Determine just what the subject is. Then, when you're shooting the subject so tight that you're afraid you've gone too far, shoot a little tighter.

**Speed limit = 1/60.**

Any longer shutter speed and you need a tripod.

**Focus on lighting.**

Painters use paint. Potters use clay. Photographers use light. Where are the shadows? Where are the highlights?

**Remember composition.**

Check out a book from the library and read up on the Golden Mean, leading line, formal and informal balance, framing, horizon line placement, etc.

**Vary lens position.**

Don't shoot all photographs standing up from eye level. If you're photographing a child playing in a sandbox, kneel down. Better yet, lie on the ground and shoot up.

**Use the 1/focal length shutter speed rule.**

For a 200mm lens set the shutter speed at 1/250 or greater. Violating the rule results in camera motion – unless a tripod is used.

**Photograph before 10 a.m. or after 2 p.m.**

Daylight color changes from a deep orange in the morning to blue at noon to orange in the evening. The blue cast at midday makes photographs appear harsh and cold while the redder morning and evening color warms a photograph.

**Eliminate "red eye."**

Buy a camera with a hot-shoe flash or one with a flash that is distant from the lens' optical center.

There's a photographic rule that states: "The angle of incidence equals the angle of reflectance."

If a flash is located close to the lens then the light from the flash goes straight onto the retina (and a highly reflective retina it is) and reflects back through the lens. Badaboom, bad-abing – red eye.