

Freeze Frame

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Photography Resolutions for 2012

I know what you're thinking.

"Photography resolutions for the 2012? I can't even keep my own resolutions to (insert your own here) much less worry about photography resolutions."

Keeping any resolution is a chore. Last year, I decided to try one of those 'shoot a photo a day' for 365 days. I lasted about 25 days and gave up.

So in this month's tip sheet, I'm going to give you just six photography resolutions to work on this year. If you can master just one of these, pat yourself on the back then try another one.

Without further adieu here they are.

1 – Photograph at least one assignment on a 2GB or less card.

Now, at this point you probably think I'm crazy but that's O.K. Shooting on a 2GB card on say, a Nikon D300s, will give you 96 RAW frames to work with.

The trick here is to make every shot count!

I recently shot a freelance assignment this way and I was surprised with the results. I had think about virtually every shot before I pushed the shutter release. I shot 94 frames and transmitted 23 images to my agency. Well above the 10 percent rule which brings me to Resolution #2.

2 – Transmit your final image selections using the 10 percent rule.

Many years ago, I read an article about *National Geographic* photographers. The article stated that they would shoot as many as 1,000 slide images, to edit down to 100 images and from there the final 10 images were selected for the magazine – hence, the 10 percent rule. This really hit home with me when I was shooting film or slides.

How does this apply to you? If you go on a field exercise and you shoot 200 images, then you should have at least 20 good images as your final selects.

If you're uploading to DVIDS or your unit Flickr page, this is great. If you're publishing a magazine or newsletter and you're limited on page space, you may have to edit down again which would leave you with two strong images and then maybe one more supporting image.

Again, it makes you think about your shots and the messages you're trying to convey with your images. Thirty years into this profession and I still check to see if I'm hitting the 10 percent rule. It doesn't always happen but I try to get 10 percent every assignment.

3 – Work on your Depth of Field.

Let's face it, if you're still shooting on AUTO and letting the camera make decisions for you, then you're not doing it right.

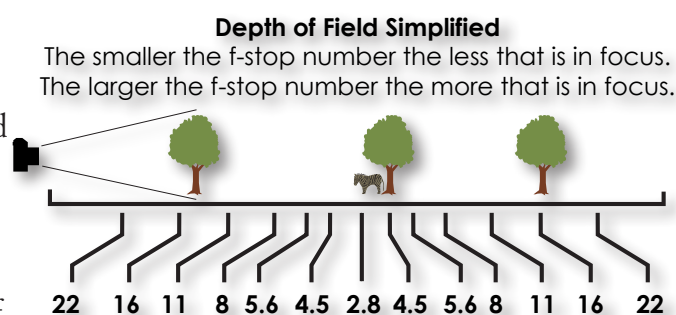
Too many times we receive images from the field where the background is a distraction because the subject is not isolated from it. If

the background is really busy, then a shallow depth field is the answer.

Understanding and using depth of field helps you separate your subject from the background. Conversely, sometimes you need to see the background in full focus to set the scene, especially in a medium to wide-angle shot.

This is especially true if you're shooting on long glass such as a 70-200/2.8. Long glass compresses the background so you really need to understand DoF. A shallower DoF will separate your subject from the background with long glass.

Remember the basic DoF rule. The smaller the f-stop number (1.4 or 2.8) the shallower the DoF, the larger the number (16 or 22) more background and/or foreground elements in the image will be in focus.



Practice with two objects on a table or get two of your friends to stand one in front of the other and practice different DoF settings.

4 – Zoom with your feet. This one will be tough, no kidding. Most of our kits have a 70-200mm lens. But they also have smaller focal length lenses as well.

The challenge here is this — shoot one assignment with one camera body of choice and one medium lens, preferably one that does not have a long zoom. A 17-55mm or even a 14-24mm would be ideal. If you have a fixed 50mm lens, this would be even better. Just leave the 70-200mm in the case or bag. Once you have made your choice, then shoot one event with that set-up and use your feet!

If you need to get wide, then back up as many steps as you need. If you need to get close, then step in there and make the image.

I once heard a retired Army Reserve PAO Sgt. Major tell a 46Q, "There is no such thing as a 1,000 yard close up. Get in there and get the shot!"

Never were there truer words spoken.

5 – Treat every assignment as if you're on a deadline.

Actually, you are on a deadline. The problem that many photojournalists fall into is they may only publish a magazine or newsletter four times a year.

You shoot the assignment, and say to yourself, "I'll get to that next week." Well next week comes and as I call it, "life gets in the way" and you have to push that story to the back burner.

Treat each assignment as if you're on a daily deadline. I've worked for both weekly, daily, monthly and quarterly publications. Deadlines are deadlines and they have to be met.

If you're at a two-week exercise and you wait to the end to post everything, it's sometimes hard to remember details or, in my case, read my own handwriting! Or, even worse, you lose your notes, names and locations.

Make it a point to edit and post your photos and write the story that day before you call it a night.

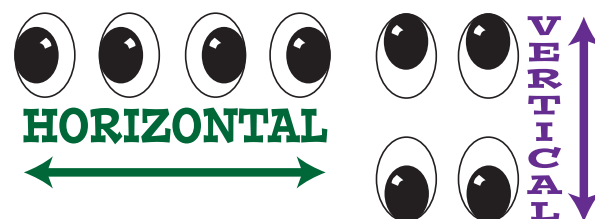
If you are writing an "around the world" story about the exercise, transcribe your notes from each day while they are still fresh in your mind. That way when you get ready to do your final story, you have everything right there in front of you.

6 - Shoot HORIZONTALLY. What? Sounds crazy but it makes sense when you start thinking about it.

In 2010, Sgt. 1st Class Mark Burrell and I were on an assignment at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. On the way there, we talked about our shooting styles and philosophies. He told me he shot almost everything horizontally, then cropped vertically in the edit if needed. I thought it sounded like a bunch of hooey at first, but you know what? He was right!

His reasoning was simple. If you shoot vertically, there may be something else that is important to the scene that you'll miss, unless you shoot horizontally.

Maybe even in more simpler terms, our eyes scan/look on a horizontal plane more often than we look vertically.



Since then, I have made an effort to shoot horizontally. Now obviously, there is a time and place for vertical framing in camera, like say, looking up a rappel tower or a climbing wall. But for the most part, I'm now shooting horizontal.

So think about horizontal versus vertical on your next assignment. It will help you see the whole scene with your eyes instead of with only the viewfinder.

I'm living proof you can teach an old photo hound like myself a new trick every now and then!

There you have it. Your six photojournalism resolutions for 2012. They're not that hard but if you try at least one of them, you'll be a better photojournalist than you were in 2011.

Besides, it's easier than dieting or exercising!



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