

Assignment

Street Photography

With street photography you either love it or hate it! So why don't more people do it? The answer is quite simple. It can be difficult unless you are prepared to put into place some really simple steps. Follow these key steps and in no time you will be shooting great street photos.

So what is street photography? A simple answer would be, anything goes. Basically it's to get out onto the streets of your city and shoot anything that attracts your attention. Look for things that are different, quirky or need to be shot from a fresh angle. Be prepared to break the rules when necessary.

1. Plan your route

If you plan, as with anything in life, the likelihood of more success will increase: the same goes for street photography. I would even go as far as saying that a dry run without your camera can be helpful, just to observe the possibilities. This will allow you to plan for the correct light or how busy you want the streets to be. Think about what you want to achieve and then execute the plan. You'll find that you will develop favourite routes but try to go off the beaten track and look for areas you haven't been before. If you've got limited time in one location, though, it's good to be prepared and have your camera ready.

2. Travel light

If you shoot with a DSLR take just the lens on your camera and no bag or extra baggage. By travelling light all you will be thinking about is the image. You won't stand out as much which is key to street photography. You'll be able to fit in smaller places and get up higher or lower without worrying about extra kit. Many DSLR users prefer a good compact camera for street photography as huge zooms attract too much attention and are bulky. But, if you're planning to shoot a lot of people a zoom may be better to help keep your distance and not bug your subjects. A quality compact 'Point and Shoot' is ideal - if it was good enough for Henri Cartier-Bresson, it's good enough for us.

3. Blend in

A little like nature photography, one of the keys to effective street photography is blending in and not standing out like a sore thumb. Wear dark clothes that won't make you stand out like the bold colours will. There again, if you're on holiday in the Caribbean, dark clothing may not be appropriate. You want to capture street life as it happens without people seeing a camera ... in most cases they will either pose or try to avoid it. As with all genres of photography, you want it to be as natural as possible when people are involved. With the different terror laws in place in many countries, standing out can often attract the attention of law enforcement officials who will create unnecessary interruptions. There again, in your home city or at a holiday destination people taking pictures would be a more normal sight.



4. Change your angles

Most amateur photos tend to be taken 1.5m above the ground and are boringly similar. Change your position or viewpoint so that you are either shooting up at an interesting subject or looking down on it. Look for interesting positions without becoming too obvious. (Lying on your back in a town square will create some amazing photos but will attract unnecessary attention or even mean an ambulance being called for). Turn your camera at a 45 degree angle and look for lines in the shot that will travel diagonally across the viewfinder. These are all good for making striking images.

5. Choose interesting subjects

As with all photography, choosing an interesting subject is going to help create a better image. So, keep an eye out for anything interesting that may seem a little out of the ordinary. If you see one don't just shoot it and move on but rather give it a little thought first and find a way to get the best possible angle or viewpoint. Look for people doing things that are different like having fun or trying on shoes or a hat on the sidewalk. Look at how shadows affect people walking around in sunny places, and don't worry too much about blur caused by subject movement. If you spot a really good composition, get it right and wait for people to pass across the scene.

6. Shoot abstract

Getting in closer and shooting details or parts of a larger object, results in weird and wonderfully creative images. A yellow taxi becomes a flash of yellow and chrome while a piece of garbage becomes an 'objet d'art' fit for a gallery. Get creative and look for images within images and find parts of the whole that will make an interesting abstract image.

7. Capture activity and movement

This requires a little technical know-how and you need to go beyond Automatic. Change your shutter speed settings so that you can freeze action with a fast shutter speed or blur movement with a slow shutter speed. By doing this you add the dynamic element of activity and action to your images. Crowds start to move and vehicles are no longer static objects frozen in time. The key here is to experiment with several different shutter speeds.

Street photography is full of life and interesting images just waiting to be captured so experiment with ideas and concepts and create photos you normally wouldn't attempt. Some of the most interesting images have been created on a street corner amidst the hustle and bustle of city life.

Follow some examples from other photographers.

We constantly see the work of fine photographers - use them as inspiration, mimic their work if you like - you're not going to end up with *exactly* the same results and your own style can evolve. The web is full of them but maybe you can start with our 'local hero' [Richard Martin](#).