

Digital Photography Tips  
from Leslie Fisher, NECC 2006  
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At the 2006 National Educational Computer Conference in San Diego, I had the opportunity to attend a presentation by Leslie Fisher titled, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly." Leslie, a huge favorite with MACUL Conference attendees, will be repeating this presentation at the 2007 MACUL Conference in Detroit.

In this presentation, Leslie discussed the most common problems with digital photography, and what we can do to eliminate these problems. Her first suggestion, one that was repeated frequently through the hour-long session, was READ THE MANUAL!!! Leslie stressed that getting to know what your camera can, and can't, do will prevent many of the issues you face when you try to take great pictures.

Some of the most common problems and the solutions given by Leslie are described below:

**Problem:** Too Much in the Picture, or the Picture is Too Busy

**Solution:** Get in closer or zoom in with your camera. Be sure that you don't use the digital zoom option in your camera, however, as this may result in pixelation and poor image quality.

**Problem:** Picture is not in Focus or the Photo is Blurry. This could be a result of camera shake or your subject moving. Another cause could be poor lighting.

**Solution:** Use a tripod. Hold the camera close to your body, bracing your arms for stability. Use artificial lighting, such as a separate flash. Change camera settings.

**Problem:** Missing the Moment

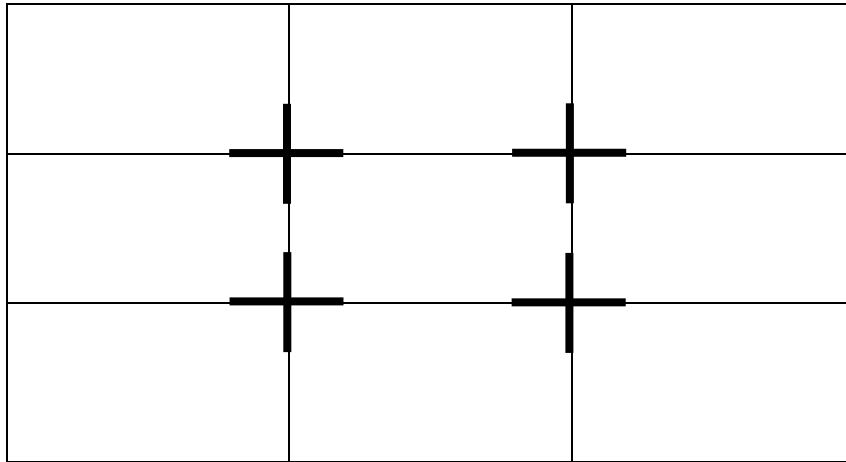
**Solution:** Make sure that your camera is always ready with charged batteries. Make sure you know all of the features of your camera and how to access the different features so that you don't have to scroll through menu settings getting the shot you want. If you have a Sports Mode on your camera, use it. The drawback to using this mode is that the faster the shot, the less light brought into the camera, but it can be fixed in Photoshop.

**Problem:** Busy or Distracting Background

**Solution:** Frame the photo better. Your subject is always the most important part of your photo, but if you ignore the background of the photo, you could be drawing the viewer's eye away from the focus area.

**Problem:** Boring Composition

**Solution:** Move around, try shooting from a different angle—shoot high or shoot low. Remember the “Rule of Thirds”—it helps the viewer’s eye flow through the picture.



In the Rule of Thirds, imaginary lines are drawn dividing the image into thirds both horizontally and vertically. You place important elements of your composition where these lines intersect. (See the drawing above.)

You can also place things along the imaginary lines. Using the Rule of Thirds helps produce nicely balanced, easy-on-the-eye pictures.

If you’ve taken a picture that you would like to make more interesting by positioning the subject in a different area of the photo, use your editing software to crop the shot. Look for lines—they can help draw attention to your subject OR they can ruin your photo. Leave empty space in your shot. Space makes you think. Instead of posed shots, take a picture of people doing something. Try shooting vertical if you are always shooting horizontal. Some cameras will allow you to rotate your shot in camera; otherwise, you can use editing software.

**Problem:** Too Much Flash

**Solution:** Use natural light whenever possible.

Use a flash when photographing people outside on a sunny day; it will take the shadows out of faces.

**Problem:** Too Little Flash

**Solution:** Most built-in flashes only work for 6-10 feet. Position your subject in the light, use an additional flash attachment if your camera allows, and/or use the night setting on your camera if it has one.