



# PROFESSOR KEN KOBRE'S PHOTO TIPS

**THE FIRST STEP** in becoming a pro is to shoot twice as much,” says SF State Professor Ken Kobre, whose book “Photojournalism: The Professionals’ Approach” is a standard text at more than 125 universities around the country. “The difference between an amateur and a professional is the professional shoots and throws away more.” Professor Kobre offers these 10 tips for transforming ordinary snapshots into memorable images.

- 1. GET CLOSER.** This was the advice of legendary war photographer Robert Capa, who said, “If your pictures aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough.” Often the key to giving a photo pizzazz is to move in and capture the details of your subject, leaving out extraneous things in the background.
- 2. WHEN YOU’RE PHOTOGRAPHING PEOPLE,** have patience. Let people get used to you before shooting pictures. When they start to forget the camera is there, you can take more natural candid shots.
- 3. BEFORE YOU SHOOT,** look at the corners and edges of the frame, not just the center. Find interesting and complementary shapes along the edges to keep the shot from looking either dull or too cluttered.
- 4. AVOID THE “JUNGLE EFFECT.”** This happens when surrounding shapes and colors compete for attention with the subjects of the photo. One trick is to leave the background out of focus by staying close to the subject and moving them forward, away from walls or other distracting backgrounds.
- 5. DON’T USE FLASH IF YOU CAN AVOID IT.** It looks unnatural and washes out colors and facial features. If you’re using film, try 800-speed films, which are widely available and allow you to take sharp indoor photos without a flash.
- 6. AVOID OUTDOOR SHOTS IN BROAD DAYLIGHT.** Bright daylight, from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., is unflattering and washes out your subject. Instead try capturing your subject in the rich tones and long shadows at sunrise and sunset. If you must shoot during the day, move your subject into a shaded area out of direct sunlight.
- 7. TRY MORE NIGHT PICTURES.** Nighttime offers interesting shadows and light for taking unique shots. At night you can use flash, a street lamp or even holiday lights if they’re bright enough. In low light you can use a tripod to allow longer exposure.
- 8. FOR MORE INTERESTING SHOTS,** don’t insist on having people pose. Instead, capture them in the middle of an activity so the photo says something about their personalities or interests.
- 9. IF YOU WANT YOUR SUBJECTS TO POSE,** have them find a comfortable, natural position. Here’s when a little leaning or slouching is permitted. Avoid having someone stand or sit straight up, because these tense postures look uncomfortable and don’t say anything about the person.
- 10. IF YOU’RE TAKING A PORTRAIT,** include a telling item in the picture. A favorite toy or an item related to the person’s hobby or business will make your photo tell a compelling story.