
10 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU SQUEEZE THE SHUTTER RELEASE BUTTON

Quick Guide
Written by Ľudmila Borošová



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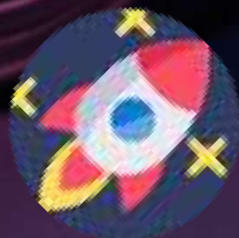
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Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Coming home from a photoshoot nowadays means being overloaded by thousands of digital files. But is each one of them worth it? How could we modify the number of pictures we take? Just imagine, in the past you could use one film consisting of 27 frames to create all of your holiday memories. Now, on a single photoshoot, you could take the same amount within seconds.

The digital era is great, and we all cherish what our cameras are able to do! But perhaps we could learn a thing or two from the past. One thing was for sure: back in the day, photographers asked a lot more questions before squeezing the shutter button.

Today, we'll cover the following:

- 10 questions to ask before taking a picture
- Why it is beneficial to think through your images
- When it can be a disadvantage to overthink

 **Recommended Reading:** Want to learn how to make your photos stand out from everyone else's? Grab a copy of [Photzy's Effective Storytelling premium guide](#).

So, what's the advantage? There are multiple advantages, but I find these to be the most prominent:

- **Understanding the art of photography** – This skill will make you more patient. You will find yourself reflecting on what you did right and wrong and deeply understanding your photography.
- **Improving the quality of your pictures** – This will allow you to better react in future situations when you only have a one-shot opportunity, such as at weddings. More confidence and less stress!
- **Making the process of selection easier** – We all struggle with choosing the best photograph, and I do, too. Often it happens because we mindlessly press the shutter too many times and even though we have hundreds of pictures, they all look the same.
- **Reducing the amount of space** – If you're storing RAW files on your hard disk, or just need to have more memory available on your photoshoot, thinking about each picture will save you lots of space!
- **Helping preserve your camera health** – Your shutter count will thank you later.

We just established why this might be a useful skill to learn, so let's move on to the questions!

1. HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY SETTINGS?

Even though this one might seem obvious, many photographers forget to double-check their settings. It's true that you can correct most of the mistakes in post-processing, but not all of them. The most common failures are completely blurry images thanks

to a long shutter speed. Always check this one, because even though your photos look amazing in your camera, they can actually be pretty blurry on a bigger screen! It would be a pity to miss so many good shots.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

2. DOES IT HAVE THE POTENTIAL?

Does this photograph have the potential to shine, or will it be forever covered in dust? This can apply to any type of photo, such as from your vacation. Can you imagine printing it out? Or sticking it on your fridge? Same goes with every shoot, so I usually like to ask: will I select this for further edits? From my perspective, I only look back at my edited photos, and others are completely forgotten and stored.

3. WOULD I CAPTURE THIS ON A FILM CAMERA?

If you're truly trying to minimize the number of pictures you take, this question does the job! It makes it very easy to filter out "boring" photos by keeping you more engaged in the photoshoot and

raising your standards. But don't be too hard on yourself! You aren't limited to 27 pictures with your camera.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

4. WHAT CAN I CHANGE ABOUT THE POSE?

Don't be shy to recommend a different pose to your model! You are the one to see the final photo through your camera, and often it can benefit from small adjustments. Different gestures or facial expressions can be a game changer and bring so much life to the image.

5. WHAT IS DISTURBING ME ABOUT THE PHOTO?

Chances are, you have to retouch the disturbing part later. And while this may take you seconds to adjust, it could take hours to retouch. Often these are the tiniest details like a hair tie on a model's wrist,

a small water stain, or your photography bag in the background. Be aware of these common enemies! It's not good to have anything else taking the attention.




Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Model holding a ring.

6. CAN I USE ANY ADDITIONAL PROPS?

If the model isn't holding anything, is there anything nearby you could use? This happens to me often, where I miss "something" when taking dozens of pictures. Later, I realize that empty or awkward hand gestures are what they have in common. This is something not to miss!

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Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Using a prism in front of the lens to create this light effect.

7. WHERE IS THE LIGHT COMING FROM?

There is always a possibility to take advantage of the light. If there's sun shining right on the wall, you can create beautiful artistic portraits playing with shadows. During the golden hour, it's possible to create fairy lens flares. But realizing the path of the light is also good to be aware of all disadvantages you have to cope with, such as unflattering shadows or different camera settings.

8. ARE THE LINES ANGLED AS THEY SHOULD BE?

Even though this can be easily fixed in post-processing, you should get your lines as fine as you can on the spot! Use the grid feature inside of your

camera for better estimation. In fact, I have it always turned on. This always makes me alert if there is a better angle I could use!



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

In this photoshoot, our aim was to highlight the makeup and be featured in a magazine.

9. WHAT IS THE MEANING BEHIND THIS PHOTO?

Not all photos in the world need to have a deeper meaning. Some are just for fun or beauty. What's the reason behind the photo I want to take? Does the image in my camera viewer represent it well? Is my aim to upload this to a high-end fashion magazine? Or is this a documentary shoot full of emotions? Maybe it's just a family capture on a vacation? Does it make me feel like I'm traveling back in time?



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

10. AM I MISSING ANY IMPORTANT MOMENTS?

Especially in events, you might get caught up in one frame while missing another fantastic opportunity. Just imagine that you're too focused on taking a shot of a beautiful bride (your 100th one), while there are two cute kids playing hide and seek in the corner. Or maybe the mother of the bride is tearing up. Always look up for other important moments around you, and don't be too focused on one scene!



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

DON'T FORGET, THE QUESTIONS AREN'T EVERYTHING!

Even though there are many advantages to thinking your image through, I would recommend you use this skill wisely and only to some extent. There are a few moments where this would be counterproductive.


When you combine easy-to-miss shots and valuable moments, it's not a great idea to ask millions of questions beforehand! A great example is the bride and groom walking down the aisle. What you want to do is run to the best spot available, put the couple in a nice composition, focus, and shoot as many pictures as you can. Why? Because everything goes so quickly, and you need to be able to compromise your decisions!

Sure, if this were a staged photoshoot, the result you got wouldn't be the best one. But you need to be able to work with all of the inputs and restrictions, such as time, light, and people around you, as fast as you can. The situation needs to be spontaneous!

What I like to do with a shot of a wedding kiss is to ask important questions beforehand: where should I stand? What is the best angle? Which lens works the best? And after I quickly analyze the best possible scenario, I get my camera ready. When it comes to the right moment, I shoot, because it's too late to ask questions.

And most importantly, remember that too much of anything is enough. If you're working with an unexperienced model or a client, you can make them feel uncomfortable by too much "thinking" and too little "action." You need to ask these questions quickly and create an invisible formula in your head, so it looks like you're not overthinking squeezing the shutter.

Your model needs to feel comfortable to create beautiful poses. If you take too long to process your questions, their poses can be paralyzed, they might be cold (if you're shooting outdoors), or they may even lose passion for the photoshoot altogether. Don't worry if you're just learning – you will find the sweet spot!

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Photographs by Ludmila Borošová

Remember, make sure your model is relaxed!

Self-Check Quiz:

- 1) What are the advantages of thinking before acting in photography?
- 2) What is the common result of bad camera settings?
- 3) How can you determine if the picture has potential?
- 4) Why did we think differently about film images?
- 5) What are some common things photographers usually have to retouch and could avoid?
- 6) How can we easily fix awkward hand gestures?
- 7) What are the advantages and disadvantages of light that you need to consider?
- 8) Can you use a feature in your camera to help you with the right angle?
- 9) Why shouldn't you be too focused on just one scene?
- 10) Are there any disadvantages to overthinking these questions?

Assignment:

- 1) Look at your favorite photoshoot. What would you have done differently if you had time to ask yourself the right questions?
- 2) Create your personal list of three questions that matter the most to you. Practice them, so you can make the process in your head as fast as you can! When you master these, you can add more.
- 3) Arrange a photoshoot with a friend and give yourself a limit of RAW images you can take according to your liking. I recommend 50. Did your routine change? How?



Hey there!

Let's get real for a minute... Learning photography can be super challenging! But we're here to help you every step of the way! Here are 3 of our most useful (*and FREE!*) photography resources:



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ludmila is a Slovak photographer focusing on portraiture. She does photography while finishing her Master's degree in Business Administration, specializing in Entrepreneurship. She is based in Prague, Czech Republic but loves to travel around the world and share her stories, as well as her photoshoots, on her blog.

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