

Your photographic task is to get inspired and take photographs. Go online and type in “fun photo assignments with your camera”. You will discover a lot of different sites that are out there that offer many suggestions (and have images to go along with them as examples). After looking at some, pick 1 or 2 or 3 sites and read the article and look at the images and challenge yourself to try some of the photography. It does not matter if you do not own the type of camera (a DSLR) we use in class. Use your phone. Use an old digital camera that might be laying around. Use a friend’s camera or phone. The point is...take pictures. Challenge yourself to come up with a theme or idea and see what you can create photographically. I am eager to see your images. I want you to submit the images to me at jhurdus@cloverpark.k12.wa.us When you do email them to me (your goal should be to complete 1 assignment per week), only send me your 1 best photo for that assignment. Make sure you tell me the assignment you were photographing and who you are (your email address will probably not give me enough information about who is sending in the photo). I will grade the images and give you feedback.

This is a unique way to tackle school (and photography), but we are all in this together. We want to be able to give you credit for the time you are away from school and this seems way more fun than asking you to write papers. I want to see your best work. Let’s all make this time count.

Below is an example of one website and the ideas that are listed there. The pictures can be found on the site.

10 Photo Assignments to Inspire and Challenge Your Skills

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The best way to learn photography is to practice, though sometimes you can get stuck in a rut and not know what to shoot. That is why photographers love assignments; they give us a purpose and an idea of what to photograph.

Why Are Assignments Important?

Self-assignments are key to any photographer's growth. Even professionals with decades of experience will work on personal assignments that they may never get paid for. The goal of any self-assignment is to spur creativity, solve problems, learn new techniques, and challenge yourself.

As you start out in photography, you're probably filled with excitement and ready to shoot anything you can. That being said, sometimes a little direction and guidance are necessary.

Below, you will find ten photography assignments. Each covers a new topic, skill, or concept and they were chosen to help you learn how to see as a photographer. They are meant to be a personal challenge that you can complete at your own pace and with no outside judgment, simply as a means to practice and improve your photography. Hopefully, you will learn something new with each assignment and be able to use that in every photograph you take in the future.

Remember when composing your images to keep in mind the basics: the rule of thirds, [shutter speed](#), [aperture](#), [depth of field](#), and [exposure](#).

Assignment #1: Up Close

This assignment encourages you to get close and personal with your subject. It is an exercise in viewing a common object in a new way and examining its finer details.

- Choose an object that you see or interact with every day.
- Focus on a small part of it, get as close as your camera will allow you to focus, and shoot away.
- Try to capture different angles and unusual lighting to add to the mystery of this tiny world.

From the whiskers of your cat to a fragile Christmas ornament, and even common soap bubbles, there is an entire world that we often overlook because we don't get close enough.

Assignment #2: Motion

Photography is a static medium which means that it doesn't move. Conveying a sense of motion is often crucial to capturing a scene or emotion and it is an essential skill for photographers to practice.

The goal of this exercise is to understand how shutter speeds can be used to convey motion.

- Choose a subject or series of subjects that will allow you to convey motion in your images.
- It can be slow motions, like that of a turtle, or fast motion, like a speeding train.
- Blur it, stop it, or simply suggest that there is motion in the photograph.

Challenge yourself to capture the same motion in different ways. For instance, you might go to a race track and stop the movement of the cars completely in one image, then leave the shutter open and allow them to blur out of the frame in the next.

Assignment #3: Shadows

Shadows are everywhere and they are vital to photography because this is the art of capturing light. With light comes shadows and when you begin to look at shadows as a photographer, your world will open up.

- Take a look around for shadows and record them with your camera.
- You could show the shadow as the total focus of the image. Perhaps the shadow is incidental to the subject.
- Is the shadow natural or created by flash?

Shadows are integral to creating depth in a two-dimensional medium such as photography. Take some time to seriously explore the "dark side" of the light.

Assignment #4: Water

Water is everywhere in photography and it presents many challenges. There are reflections and movements to work with and in this exercise, you will take a deeper look at water.

- Find water anywhere: lakes, streams, puddles, even the glass on your kitchen table.
- Pay attention to reflections and use them to your advantage in the photographs. Use this opportunity to get familiar with a polarizing filter (a very useful tool in your camera kit) so you can accentuate or eliminate reflections.
- Play with the motion of a stream or the crashing waves. Notice the difference between stopping the flow of water and allowing it to blur to create a real sense of movement.

Be sure to make water the subject and not an accent to the image. Water alone is beautiful and mysterious and your challenge is to explore all of its potential as a subject.

Assignment #5: Leading Lines

A classic assignment in photography schools, 'leading lines' is a popular and fun subject. The goal of this assignment is to learn how to direct the viewer to your subject using lines.

- Choose a subject then look around for lines in the scene that you can use to 'lead' the viewer to the subject.
- Find an interesting line then determine what the subject of your photograph is.
- Remember that lines can be man-made or natural. For instance, the yellow line down the middle of the road or a tree branch. Even a person's arm can be a leading line of their face.

Use this assignment as an excuse to take an afternoon photo excursion. Walk downtown or in the woods and look around you for interesting lines that lead the eye to a subject. There is an amazing assortment of lines out there in the world and once you begin to see them, you won't be able to stop.

Assignment #6: Perspective

How do you normally stand when you shoot? If your answer is straight up like a 5-foot-something human being then this assignment is for you. The perspective assignment challenges you to view the world from an entirely new perspective, which in turn gives the viewer a new look at the ordinary.

- Take another afternoon or evening for a photo excursion wherever you like.
- This time, every time you find something to photograph, stop!
- Ask yourself: How would a squirrel see that tree? How would a robin view that birdbath? How would a snake view that log?
- Take your photographs from very high or very low angles. Get on your belly or stand on a chair, whatever you have to (safely) do to get the 'right' angle on your subject.

If you pay attention to professional photographs, many of the images that have the WOW factor are photographed from extreme angles. People enjoy these photos because they've never seen an object from that viewpoint. It is new and unique, and you can train yourself to shoot with this in mind.

Assignment #7: Texture

You may have captured a few textural details in the 'Up Close' assignment, but this assignment takes that to the next level. The goal in this one is to study textures and forget about the object itself: the texture becomes the subject. You will also begin to realize how light affects the appearance of texture.

- Find a few objects that have very detailed textures like trees or rocks, even knit sweaters or woven rugs.
- Photograph them as close as your lens will allow.
- Use different angles and capture the same texture as the light changes. Notice how the different lighting directions and camera angles can change how much texture appears.

Textures are all around us and many of the best photographs in the world play up the textural element. This assignment should teach you how to recognize and accentuate those elements in your photos.

Assignment #8: Color Harmony

Color is important to photography because the world is full of color. This exercise requires a bit of study in color theory, which you will then put into practice in your photographs.

Do you remember art class in elementary school? You may have learned that yellow and blue make green, but color theory goes beyond that. There are cool and warm colors, complementary and contrasting colors, neutral colors, and bold colors.

It can get quite complicated, and photographers should have a basic understanding of color so you can use that when composing photographs. You don't have to study color like a painter would but can use tricks used by interior designers to influence your [color decisions](#).

- Once you have an idea of color theory, take another photo excursion and put what you've learned into practice.
- Capture photographs with the primary or tertiary colors.
- Look for complementary colors then contrasting colors to photograph.
- Try finding a scene to photograph that is filled with neutral colors, then one that uses a bold color to 'pop' from the scene.

This is an advanced lesson, but one that any photographer working with color images will find useful. As you practice working with colors, it will become second nature and you will know how to work with color to change the feel of your images.

Assignment #9: Emotions

Take a photo of a person smiling or scowling, right? Not so. The intent of this assignment is to convey emotion in photographs *without* a face.

- Take photographs that express each of the basic emotions: happy, sad, and mad.
- How would you express the feeling of anger with no person? What about happiness? Sadness?

This is a purely conceptual assignment, but it is important to be able to relay emotion in your photographs and you might not always have a person available to do that with. Challenge yourself to think deeper about this one.

Assignment #10: Don't Look!

Are you ready to put your photography skills to the test? In today's world of digital cameras and the ability to see image captures right there on the LCD screen, photographers are losing some of the skills needed to visualize a photograph.

In this assignment, your challenge is to shoot as if you were using a film camera. That means that you will not look at the photographs you've taken until they are downloaded on your computer. Instead of relying on the camera's screen to see if you 'got the shot' you will rely on your instinct and knowledge, just like photographers did before digital photography. Can you do it?

- Plan a photo excursion to a particular location and permit yourself to photograph only 36 images (a roll of 35mm film).
- Turn off your camera's LCD screen so it does not show you the image after you have taken it.
- If you cannot turn off the camera's screen, cut a piece of thick paper and tape it over the screen. Use masking or painter's tape so you don't leave a residue on the back of your camera.
- Go out and shoot your 36 frames, thinking carefully about each image because you don't have an endless number of shots. Bonus points if you turn your camera to completely manual settings for focus and exposure.
- Don't peek at your photos until you get home and download them.

How did you do? Were you able to get good exposures on your own? How did it feel to be 'blind' and not know how your image turned out right away?

This is similar to what it is like to shoot with film and it does require you to think harder about every image you take. Next time you shoot, slow down and pay attention, pretend that the screen is not there and rely on your own skills to create a great image. You will be a better photographer in the end.