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# STANDING OUT IN A CROWD: POINT OF VIEW AND YOUR IMAGES

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Quick Guide  
Written by Leanne Cleaveley



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In one of my favorite middle grade novels (yes, I am a teacher), a character is reminded to “look up” by his mentor. Great advice for a forest ranger, who needs to be aware of his surroundings, but also good solid advice for photographers. Look up, look behind you, get closer, find a lower or higher vantage point – all of these are great pieces of advice for photographers, new and experienced.

Perspective is a powerful tool in any art form. In stories, it can show you a missing piece of a puzzle or shock you. In drawings, it can provide a sense of height and depth. In essays, it can change your mind about something by providing a different view that you never considered before. And in photography it can do all those things and more!

In this guide you will...

- learn how even a small amount of movement can change your images in big ways,
- discover how getting closer to a subject can make your image stronger,
- learn how getting lower or higher can offer a better vantage point and tell a completely different story, and
- find out how depth of field offers another way of changing perspective to strengthen your images.



**Recommended Reading:** Want to create gorgeous, perfectly lit flower photographs? Grab a copy of Photzy’s premium guide: [Photographing Fabulous Flowers](#).





Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

## GIVE A LITTLE, GET A LOT

Changes in perspective don't have to be huge to make a very big difference. Sometimes moving a step, or even a few millimeters, can make an everyday image quite powerful.


Take this image of a plant gone to seed, for example. When shooting this image, my thoughts were that I wanted to convey a sense of how delicate the papery textured seeds were. I didn't do a very good job of isolating the plant in my first shot and it was distracting with other plants in the background, even with a narrow depth of field.

For my second shot (the image on the following page), I moved a step to the right and angled my shot slightly so that the nearby river was in the background. I knew that the sparkling light from the water would change the background of my image quite a bit. It provided some lovely bokeh that mimicked the delicateness of the seed pods. The light also accentuated the seedpods by adding contrast, so that you can really see how fragile they are.



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Just a step – that is all it took to affect my image in some very big ways. And this can work when shooting larger subjects as well. With all subjects, being aware of what is in the background – that may detract or distract from your main subject – is very important. So, don't forget to move when this happens in order to find an angle that allows your subject to pop.

 **Key Lesson:** A small step, or even movement of a few millimeters when shooting macro, can make a huge difference in the composition of your shot. By changing your perspective a little, you can strengthen your image and really make it a standout shot.





Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

## GET CLOSER

Some solid advice for photographers is to “fill the frame.” Putting your subject in the frame, with a bunch of empty space around it, does less for your subject than having your subject hug or even overflow the frame.

Study this image, for example. Everyone has seen a cob of corn. But by getting closer and angling the cob for visual interest, you get a very different look at those kernels that accentuates the plumpness of the vegetable in a way that a more zoomed-out shot would not.

Getting just part of your subject in the frame is also a fun way to create tension and a bit of photographic mystery. I like to find a texture or shape that defines that subject and then really zoom in on it, as in the image on the next page. Again, many folks have seen a pumpkin, but if you can show a pumpkin to them in a whole new way, you have an image that really stands out.



**Key Lesson:** “Fill your frame” to create a shot that helps it stand out in a crowd. Getting closer to your subject, even to the point of showing only part of it, can make for an interesting and unique perspective.



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley






Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

## GET LOWER

When you shoot things from your everyday vantage point, you get everyday images that are very familiar and, potentially, quite boring. Most people have seen flowers from the familiar viewpoint of standing over them and looking down. Most people have seen a lake from the viewpoint of standing at the shore looking out.

For both above-mentioned shots, crouching down (you will want to work on those squats), kneeling, and even lying on your stomach (bring a blanket!) will give you a less common and more interesting perspective.

 **Key Lesson:** Plan to have some materials on hand to help you “get low” when shooting. I like using a waterproof blanket for laying on the ground when shooting flowers. You may want to pack kneepads. You must find what works and keeps you comfortable when shooting images from ground level.

Changing the angle of the shot also changes the story you are telling. Shot from above, the image on the left would simply be another pretty flower image. By shooting from below and including the long stem and a black background, the dahlia appears to be reaching, stretching for the light.

There are literally hundreds of thousands of photographs of Canada’s popular tourist attraction, Lake Louise, out there. This is one of the country’s most photographed places. So, how do you capture an image that is different from at least SOME of those hundreds of thousands of images?







Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

One of the things that really stands out about this lake is the color of the glacier-fed water. Getting low (and I mean right down at the level of the rocks on the lakeshore) allowed me to capture some foreground interest: the rocks leading out into the turquoise water.

If I had shot this same image from a standing position, then I would have failed to capture this beauty and my image would have been less interesting.

Now, I am not saying that I am the first or only photographer to do this (and you will still find thousands of shots like mine), but these shots really stand out compared to the images taken from a vantage point of someone standing at the shore.

 **Key Lesson:** A tilting LCD screen on your camera is another great tool for taking shots from a lower vantage point. You can put your camera in a spot that would be impossible for you to physically get into, flip your screen up, and view your shot from above.

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Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

## BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Some folks are lucky enough to own a drone and capture images from the perspective of an eagle or hawk. For the rest of us, shooting an image from a bird's-eye view can be a way of making your image really stand out, especially if what you are shooting isn't viewed that way normally.

Part of finding great perspectives or viewpoints is *noticing* things around you. A great way to take some time to really notice things is to go for a walk (or drive) with only photography in mind. Look for opportunities to capture images of things in unique or interesting ways.

I shot this image on a lunch hour. We have a walking path and river near my workplace, and I went out with the sole purpose of shooting what I saw along the river path. The river ice and rocks made for an interesting shot and created an almost abstract image when shot from directly above, as I did.





Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Taking an everyday object, such as a teacup, and capturing it from above is another great way to make your images stand out. Because people don't typically view teacups from that vantage point, it provides for a fresh perspective.

There is one more thing I did with the image on the left that allowed for that image to stand out. Photographers are lucky to have another tool in their kit that allows them to influence where the viewer's eye will land when looking at an image, and that is depth of field.





Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

## ISOLATE WITH DEPTH OF FIELD

I include depth of field (DOF) in this discussion on point of view because every photographer has the ability to utilize depth of field to isolate or accentuate things in their image. This is quite a powerful tool if used well.

Think of this: when you view a scene, with typical 20/20 vision, everything within your line of sight is in focus. Photographers can change the DOF, or what is in focus and not in focus, in an image to direct a viewer to what they want them to see.


In the image on the previous page, I wanted the rim of the teacup and what was inside of it to be what the viewer focused on. So, I made sure that I used a narrow DOF (but not too narrow as I needed to capture about half an inch in focus) for that area to be sharp, while the plate and yellow flowers provide a blurry background.




How to get that narrow DOF varies somewhat depending on the focal length of the lens you are using (a longer focal length will allow for more blur). The key ingredients are the proximity to your subject (you want to be as close as the focal length allows), the distance between your subject and the background (the farther away the background, the more blur), and a low f-stop.

The same technique is used to capture great portraits with soft backgrounds, as in the image on the previous page.

I highly recommend you get comfortable working with a narrow DOF and utilizing background and even foreground blur, as it is a wonderful tool for creating interesting images that really stand out.

 **Key Lesson:** Recipe for creating a narrow DOF with background blur:

- 1 lens with a long focal length (around 100mm is sufficient for most images unless you are shooting wildlife from a great distance)
- 1 subject that you are close to
- 1 background that is far away from your subject (the farther, the blurrier)
- 1 wide open aperture (or low f-stop)

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## GET ON THE GROUND AND UNDERNEATH

Photography often brings out my inner child and I find myself doing odd things like lying on the ground in the garden observing things from a different vantage point. Some of my favorite images have come from these moments of exploration.

This image of a huckleberry was taken on a berry picking trip with my family. I had taken a few images of the outing and the some of the berries, but it was when I got underneath this berry that I discovered something interesting about its design. I also really liked the bright green blur that the vegetation above created.

As mentioned earlier, your vantage point when shooting can really change the story that you tell. I shot the image on the next page, of a girl crossing a playground chain bridge, from the ground looking up. She had been very cautious, and I wanted the bridge to look daunting to bring out that sense of challenge. Shooting from below was a great way to make the bridge look 'larger than life' and show the gaps between the planks.



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Again, if I had shot this image from beside the jungle gym, the story would have changed, and the image would have lost its strength. Where you place yourself when creating an image can strengthen your shot and really make it stand out.

Looking straight up, in the woods or the city, can provide you with a very special perspective that not many people notice. As the rangers in my middle grade novel are taught: Don't forget to look up! You will be rewarded.

So, don't be afraid to get out there and move when you are shooting! Try photographing your subject from different angles to better tell the story that you want to convey or to surprise and challenge the viewer. Your images will really help you stand out in a crowd when you change your perspective.





Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley



## Self-Check Quiz:

- 1) True or false: You must move significantly to change the perspective in a photograph.
- 2) Name two items that would be helpful in allowing you to capture a subject from a lower perspective.
- 3) The key ingredients for creating a narrow depth of field with a blurry background are \_\_\_\_\_ f-stop, close proximity to your subject, a \_\_\_\_\_ focal length, and a big distance between your subject and the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) Changing your perspective can also change the \_\_\_\_\_ you tell when creating images.
- 5) What feature on some cameras is helpful for capturing an image from a low vantage point?
- 6) Think of five objects that you don't normally shoot using a "bird's-eye view" that might be interesting to capture in a photograph.
- 7) How could you change your perspective to make a tree look very tall in an image?
- 8) What does the adage 'fill the frame' mean?



# 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



Leanne Cleaveley is a hobby photographer, part-time elementary school teacher, and full-time mother and wife. She loves reading, gardening, crafting and music – and contemplates ways to find more time in the day to pursue her hobbies. Her photographs can be found at [Flickr](#).

Congratulations! You've completed this Photzy guide!

If you liked this photography tutorial from Leanne, you may be interested in her other books. Check out Leanne's premium guide on how to turn disappointing flower images into gorgeous and perfectly lit flower photographs: [Photographing Fabulous Flowers](#).



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