

SPPC SUBJECT NOTES 2026-27

WIDE VISTA / PANORAMA

Capturing a wide vista panorama photo requires taking a series of overlapping vertical frames and stitching them together in software for maximum resolution and detail.

Essential Equipment and Setup

Camera Orientation: Hold your camera in a vertical (portrait) orientation to capture more vertical height in your final horizontal panorama.

Manual Settings: Switch your camera to Manual mode to lock your exposure, white balance, and focus so the lighting doesn't shift between frames.

Aperture: Choose a small aperture like f/8 or f/16 to ensure sharp focus across the entire depth of the scene.

Support: Use a sturdy tripod to keep the horizon level and straight as you pan across the landscape

Shooting Technique

Overlap: Aim for a 30% to 50% overlap between each consecutive shot so your editing software can match the edges seamlessly.

Direction: Start at the left edge of your vista and pan smoothly toward the right, making sure to keep the camera completely level.

Filter Warning: Avoid using polarizing filters on wide vistas, as they create uneven patches of dark blue sky across different frames

Editing and Merging

Stitching Software: Import your files into programs like Adobe Photoshop or Lightroom and use the Photo Merge / Panorama tool.

Projections: Select Cylindrical for single-row sweeps or Spherical for wide multi-row vistas

SHADOWS

Shadow photography uses dark shapes and contrasts to tell stories, build mystery, and create strong visual depth in an image.

Core Techniques and Tips

Use Hard Light: Hard, direct light from a small source (like the sun or a bare flash bulb) creates sharp, well-defined edges.

Find the Right Time: Shoot at midday for harsh, geometric shapes, or during the golden hours (early morning and late afternoon) for long, dramatic

Make the Shadow the Subject: Crop out the physical object entirely and focus only on the pattern or shape the shadow casts on a wall or ground.

Expose for Highlights: Lock your exposure on the bright areas so the shadows drop into deep, rich black tones.

Try Black and White: Removing color heightens the graphic contrast between light and dark elements

EMOTIONS / LAUGHTER / JOY

Emotional photography prioritises capturing a mood, narrative, or raw feeling over achieving technical perfection. Impactful photography relies on the intentional use of light, shadow, composition, and human connection to evoke a powerful response from the viewer.

Mastery of Light and Tone

High-Key Lighting: Bright, low-contrast setups imply happiness, safety, and comfort.

Low-Key Lighting: Deep shadows and high contrast introduce mystery, fear, or unease.

Backlighting: Shooting into the light creates dreamlike silhouettes and narrative intrigue.

Color Psychology: Warm tones evoke intimacy; cool blues and greens suggest tranquility or loneliness.

Monochrome Intensity: Removing color highlights raw contrast, expressions, and timeless nostalgia

Composition and Camera Mechanics

Isolation: Telephoto lenses or tight crops remove distractions to focus on raw details.

Shutter Speed: Long exposures smooth chaos into stillness; motion blur introduces panic or energy.

Perspective: Lower angles project power, while vast, empty frames imply insignificance

Human Connection Techniques

Ditch the Poses: Emphasise candid, unscripted interactions over stiff, artificial positioning.

Build Trust: Spend time talking to your subjects without a camera to lower their guard.

Focus on Eyes: Eye contact serves as the primary gateway to inner feelings.

OVERGROWN

Overgrown photography captures the aesthetic where nature reclaims human structures, landscapes, or objects, blending decay with lush new life.

Key Themes & Styles

Urban Exploration (Urbex): Abandoned factories, homes, and vehicles swallowed by vines, trees, and moss.

Nostalgic Landscapes: Wild, unmanaged grasslands and rural fields that contrast memory with modern development.

Architectural Reclaim: Historic ruins, crumbling stone walls, and overgrown courtyards where nature acts as a slow sculptor

Tips for Overgrown Photography

Look for Contrast: Highlight the rigid, geometric lines of man-made objects against the organic, chaotic shapes of plants.

Use Depth (Dirty Foreground): Shoot through hanging branches or tall grass to frame your subject and add layers to the scene.

Embrace Overcast Light: Soft, diffused light from cloudy days reduces harsh shadows and makes green foliage look rich and saturated.

ABSTRACT / ICM/ BOKEH

Abstract ICM (Intentional Camera Movement) photography is an artistic technique where you move your camera deliberately during a long exposure to turn real-world scenes into painterly, abstract images.

Recommended Camera Settings

ISO: Set to 100 or the lowest native setting to keep the sensor less sensitive to light.

Shutter Speed: Use slow speeds, typically between 1/4th of a second and 2 seconds, depending on how much blur you want.

Aperture: Use a narrow aperture like f/22 or f/32 to help block out extra light and lengthen your exposure time.

Image Stabilization: Turn off in-body and lens stabilization so the camera does not fight your physical movement.

Focus: Switch to manual focus, or lock autofocus before you start moving

Core Movement Techniques

Vertical Panning: Move the camera straight up and down, ideal for forests, trees, or tall architecture.

Horizontal Panning: Sweep the camera sideways across the frame, ideal for seascapes or flat horizons

Zoom Burst: Twist the zoom ring of your lens during the exposure for a warp-speed effect.

Rotation and Wiggle: Spin the camera in a circle or use small, erratic shakes for chaotic, energetic textures.

FARMING

Farming photography captures rural landscapes, daily farm work, livestock, and heavy machinery through visual storytelling.

Key Subjects in Farm Photography

Landscapes and Fields: Wide shots of crops, furrows, and seasonal changes.

Machinery in Action: Tractors, combines, and high-tech agricultural robotics.

Livestock and Animals: Close-ups of cattle, sheep, and poultry in working farm environments.

Portraits and Labor: Honest photos of farmers, shepherds, and agricultural workers.

Tips for Great Farm Photos

Use Good Lighting: Shoot during early morning or late evening golden hour for rich textures and soft shadows.

Mind the Background: Clear out clutter or position subjects against old stone walls and rustic barns rather than messy yards.

Capture Action: Photograph machinery and workers mid-task to show authentic movement and scale.

NEGATIVE SPACE

Negative space photography uses empty or unoccupied areas around a main subject to create balance, drama, and focus

The surrounding area that frames the subject, such as an open sky, a blank wall, calm water, or a large shadow. It does not have to be totally plain; textured elements like grass, sand, or clouds can work if they stay uncluttered.

Why Use It?

Draws focus: Guides the viewer's eye straight to the subject without competing distractions.

Sets the mood: Creates a sense of calm, airiness, isolation, or scale depending on how much space you use.

Simplifies composition: Strips away visual clutter to embrace a "less is more" approach

Tips for Beginners

Shoot off-center: Place your subject using the rule of thirds so the negative space has room to "breathe" in front of or around them.

Look for simple backdrops: Use clear skies, plain architectural walls, or smooth fields.

Control your depth of field: Use a wider aperture to blur busy backgrounds into soft, clean negative space

SPEED/ MOVEMENT

Speed and movement photography relies on controlling your camera's shutter speed to either completely freeze high-speed action or create creative motion blur.

To capture a sharp, crisp subject in mid-motion, use a fast shutter speed to minimize blur.

Walking: Use around 1/250s to 1/500s.

Running or Sports: Use 1/1000s.

Fast Vehicles or Birds: Use 1/2000s to 1/8000s.

Tip: Switch your camera to Shutter Priority mode (Tv or S) and turn on continuous autofocus (Servo AF) to track moving subjects.