



Taking a photograph is one way to tell a story. Some photographs tell stories about moments in time, places, or events. Other photographs tell stories of how things happen.

To create a good photo, a photographer must decide what to photograph (the subject) and how to frame the subject(s) (composition). To give a broader view of a topic, a photographer might take a series of photographs (the story).

Below, you will learn more about what makes a good photo. Follow the guide and learn how to plan and take great pictures. The steps were adapted from the *Geography Action!* Project Guide article "The Art of the Interview" written by Kirsten Elstner, Director of National Geographic Photocamp.

PREPARE

STEP 1: The Camera

Before you begin, learn how your camera works. You should make sure that you do the following:

- Make sure that your camera has fresh batteries and film.
- Learn how to use the flash and zoom.
- Practice taking pictures. To find out more about taking pictures, look at the National Geographic Path to Adventure Photography Tips <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/pathtoadventure/phototips/>

STEP 2: The Place

Choose the place before you start taking pictures. Follow these tips to help you choose your place:

- Do prep work! Plan your route; know the area. Brainstorm pictures that might best tell your story.
- Show an overview of the neighborhood from up high (a hill, the top floor of a building, etc).
- Take your time. Spend an entire morning in one place, if possible (a bakery, barbershop, café or park—find a place that describes the story you would like to tell).
- Notice details!

CAPTURE

STEP 3: The Subject

The first step to taking any photograph is choosing a good subject. Look for physical landscapes, cultural markers, and people that can help to tell a story.

- ❑ Photograph large scenes (such as a river scene with buildings in the background) or small objects (such as a flower) to tell one part of a larger story.
- ❑ Look for subjects that show culture—cultural markers—that tell a story about the people who live in a place:
 - Restaurants, businesses, stores, etc. tell the histories of those who built them.
- ❑ Put a "face" on the story. Find a person who can make a good photographic subject.
 - Talk to people. Get to know them and your portraits will become more interesting.
- ❑ Look at these subjects to find one which best tells the story as a whole.
- ❑ Don't try to tell the entire story with one photograph.

STEP 4: The Composition

The composition, or arrangement of subjects in the picture, is a very important part of telling the story.

Use these photographers' "tricks" to help the picture come alive:

- ❑ *Try Different Angles* — Take a photograph from different sides of the subject.
- ❑ *Get Closer* — Getting closer will help you see details you might miss from far away.
- ❑ *Frame the picture* — As you photograph, be aware of how much of the subject appears in the photograph.
 - You don't need to take a picture of the entire object or person.
 - Sometimes taking a picture of a door instead of the entire building, or a face instead of a whole body, will tell a different story.

SHARE

STEP 5: The Story

A story can be told in a single photograph, but it can be told more fully by showing several photographs together.

- ❑ Group photographs together. Think about photographs you have taken on a vacation. One photograph might share one part of the story of your trip, but several photographs taken on the same day can share more of the story.
- ❑ As you take photographs of your community, think about how a group of photographs can tell the history of that community.
 - Take photographs of different types of subjects (landscapes, cultural markers, and portraits).
 - Or, you might choose to show one type of subject (such as all photographs of people) which will tell a different kind of story about your community.

Suggested Resources

National Geographic: Photo Guide

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/index.html>

National Geographic: Path to Adventure—Adventure Photography Tips

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/pathtoadventure/phototips/>

National Geographic Traveler: Photography Tips

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/traveler/photos/phototips0507/pt.html>

National Geographic: Photography Field Guide for Kids (hard copy book)

<http://shop.nationalgeographic.com/shopping/product/detailmain.jsp?itemID=64&itemType=PRODUCT&iMainCat=121&iSubCat=199&iProductID=64>

National Geographic: Xpeditions—Jimmy Chin's Adventure in Extreme Photography

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/06/g35/jchin.html>

ARTSEdge: Kevin Bubriski, on Photography and Place

<http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3289/>

ARTSEdge: The Language of Photography

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3531/>