

# Peter Struik's Photo Tips

*February 2025 Volunteer Coordinators' Forum*

The first rule of photography is: *there are no rules!* If you like an image that is the end of the matter. However, if you are taking pictures for other people and want to create a good impression then there are some simple things to consider before you press the button.

I use 'phone' throughout, but the same applies if using a camera.

In no particular order:

**Take more pictures:** the more you take, the more good photos you'll have (and for the rest, delete is your friend).

**Look at what you are taking the picture of:** not just the main subject but what else is included (distracting backgrounds, unwanted signs, computer screens you don't want to share etc).

Is the picture tilted – ie is the horizon horizontal (the clue is in the name!) and verticals vertical?

**Find out what your phone can do:** take pictures of what is in front of you using the settings you have never tried. How close can you get to an object and it still be in focus?

**Turn the phone round:** the camera works with the phone on its side as well as upright so choose the format which best suits your subject. The lens can be at the top, bottom, left or right which can give a surprisingly different view.

**What do you want the picture to say?** What story are you telling? Is it just a portrait of someone or are you showing them in a particular location or doing a particular activity?

**Portraits:** don't have to be like passport pictures. If you have time chat to the subject(s) so they are relaxed. Bright sunshine makes the picture look washed out and people will be squinting – move to the shade. Lighting can add drama and interest to a picture – it creates the mood. Take several pictures quickly (someone in a group will always have their eyes closed) If people are self-

conscious get them to look away for a few seconds, then say 'now' and take the picture as they have turned back to look at the camera. Where possible take the picture at eye-level not looking down, or up, at them. I show the pictures and let the subject choose which one they like best.

**Is the person looking into the picture?:** If the subject is looking out of the frame the viewer will tend to follow their gaze. If they are looking somewhere inside the frame it engages people.

**The intersection of the thirds:** imagine a noughts and crosses grid. The most interesting points are said to be where the lines cross. You don't have to have the subject of the picture mathematically at these points but pictures are often more interesting if it is not always in the centre of the frame.

**Consent:** *here there are rules.* Respect and consideration for others' feelings and privacy are essential. In public spaces you have the right to take photos of people without their permission. In private property you can be breaching privacy laws.

It is good manners and sensible if you are taking pictures of people at an event etc to explain why you are taking the picture and ask their permission.

Repeatedly photographing someone without their consent causing them distress can be considered harassment or stalking.

Special caution is advised when photographing children. While it is not illegal to photograph children in public, obtaining parental consent is good practice, especially if the photos will be shared publicly or used commercially. [The Law](#)

Now you know as much as I do off you go and start snapping away.

If you want to see some of my pictures (for interest not as an example): [Peter's pictures](#)