



PSNZ HELP SHEET No 6

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## Floral Photography

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Probably the most important element in floral photography is patience, I am going to base this article on the word patience.

**P - Patience** - Flower photography demands heaps of patience, if you are not patient this hobby can assist you towards becoming a more relaxed person. As you absorb the subject and prepare to express yourself with creativity, many hours can slip by with only a couple of images captured. I am a perfectionist myself and like to believe that once I have completed a shoot the images I have made are the very best I can achieve. One should always look through the lens before pushing the shutter for any distractions such as over powering highlights, insects that can just arrive as one is about to record the image, damaged or wilting leaves or petals. Also run your eye around the edges of the frame for any light areas that could distract and draw the eye away from the centre of attention.

**A - Attention** to detail - A damaged bloom or a leaf with a insect hole will immediately attract the eye, leading it away from absorbing the total image.

**T - Time** - Give yourself plenty of time, don't try and rush this type of work. At times my best blooms burst forth during 40 knot winds, this is a challenge, but believe me I never miss an opportunity to get that shot, there is no such words as (I will have to wait for another day) its now or never. Camera on tripod, I sit and wait as there is always 1 second of calm in every minute, I have used this theory for 30 years and believe me its correct.

**I - Ideas** - Most of my successful images I have mentally created before I commence, generally I plan my shoot in advance, sometimes I via away from the original conception, I look at it through the lens then move around the set and look at it from other angles, often I end up with several different images of the same flowers from different perspectives. Preplanning ensures I have all the required backgrounds and props at hand. I grow most of my own flowers but sometimes I have a bright idea and the blooms I wish to use are out of season, a trip to a well stocked florist soon provides the required flowers and more often than not a selection of other beauties.

**E - Equipment** - I am a strong believer in only purchasing the equipment I have a need for, when that wears out or breaks down I then consider replacing it. Get to know your equipment well, as my job demands that I work to the clock and can work under all circumstances the last thing I need is a situation where I'm wondering what's that button for and should I under or over expose. Also learn to use the aperture exposure and manual modes and forget about automatic, we need to know our F Stops well, we then have more control over all aspects of photography with these two modes. Read your manual thoroughly and put your camera to the test by being prepared to use a couple of rolls of film experimenting. A test I always set my students when teaching is, take 10 shots of the one subject i.e. a flower, a hat, a bracelet, an animal, a watch, a piece of fruit, the list is endless, this can be done using a variety of lenses, filters and/or from different angles using different lighting and so on, in the beginning they're sceptical and want to put it in the too hard box, but in the end when the results are shown on the last night of the course its simply amazing what some of them have come up with, they have all said it was a challenging exercise and made them think and enjoyed doing it once they got started. Floral photography requires a Macro lens or a set of tubes, a longer focal length lens can be useful on Floral Decor set-ups where we create the scene with props. A reflector, a sturdy tripod, stakes for propping a stubborn stalk and of course a camera and film.

**N -Notes** - A notebook and pen are useful to carry as we should record exposures under different lighting situations and the type of film used if we are in the habit of using a variety of brands. We all have our favourite film and I find some better for different colours another works well in bright sunlight, but I believe the choice of film is a personal matter what works well for me may not be your favourite. I always use 100 asa film for the fine grain.

**C - Complimentary Harmony** - To me this is one of the most important elements of floral photography coupled with impact of colour and design. Keep it simple and uncomplicated, the more colours you use the harder it is to work with, I try to keep to 3, making sure they compliment each other, for instance I would probably think twice about using orange and pink together, an artists colour wheel is very handy if you require assistance in selecting complimentary colours and even paint charts can have other uses.

**E - Exposure** - I believe once set-up I should be able to achieve a good image with 2 exposures, one at normal exposure and the other half a stop under exposed for trannie or one half a stop over exposed with neg. I work the F Stops depending on what I'm doing but F8 is a good general exposure.

I hope you enjoy experimenting with floral photography and achieve as much enjoyment from it as I do, feel free to check out my Website at [photo-trio.co.nz](http://photo-trio.co.nz) - and drop me an e-mail should you require further assistance.

Good shooting

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