How to Take Good Photos of Nature

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Nature photography is a fun and fulfilling hobby, but it can sometimes be difficult to capture great images. If you want to improve the quality of the nature photos you take, start by composing a great scene to photograph. Then, use the natural light conditions to your benefit to get the best possible shot. You can also include additional elements to your photos whenever you have the chance, such as leading lines and long shadows. With a little practice and planning, your nature photos will start to look like professional shots!

| Method 1 | **Method 1 of 3:**
Composing a Scene |

1 **Choose an interesting subject or scene to photograph.**   Having an interesting subject to photograph is crucial for taking great nature photos. Be on the lookout for plants, trees, animals, insects, bodies of water, rock formations, and other nature subjects that you can photograph. Try going for a hike in a park or driving through the countryside to seek out an interesting subject.[1]

- For example, you might spot a beautiful tree, a flying bird, or a deer drinking from a stream that you want to photograph.

- Try to keep manmade objects out of your nature photos whenever possible. These will distract from your subject.[2]

- The best way to get great nature shots is to keep your camera with you everywhere you go. You never know when you'll find something interesting to shoot![3]

2 **Identify the most important element in your scene.** This might be something small, such as a bird or a flower, or it might be bigger, such as a mountain or river. Figure out what you are most drawn to in the scene so that you can highlight it.[4]

- For example, if you are looking at a field of flowers, you might want to highlight the whole field or just a single flower.

- If you're looking at a deer, you might want to focus on its antlers if it's a buck or the spots on its back if it's a fawn.
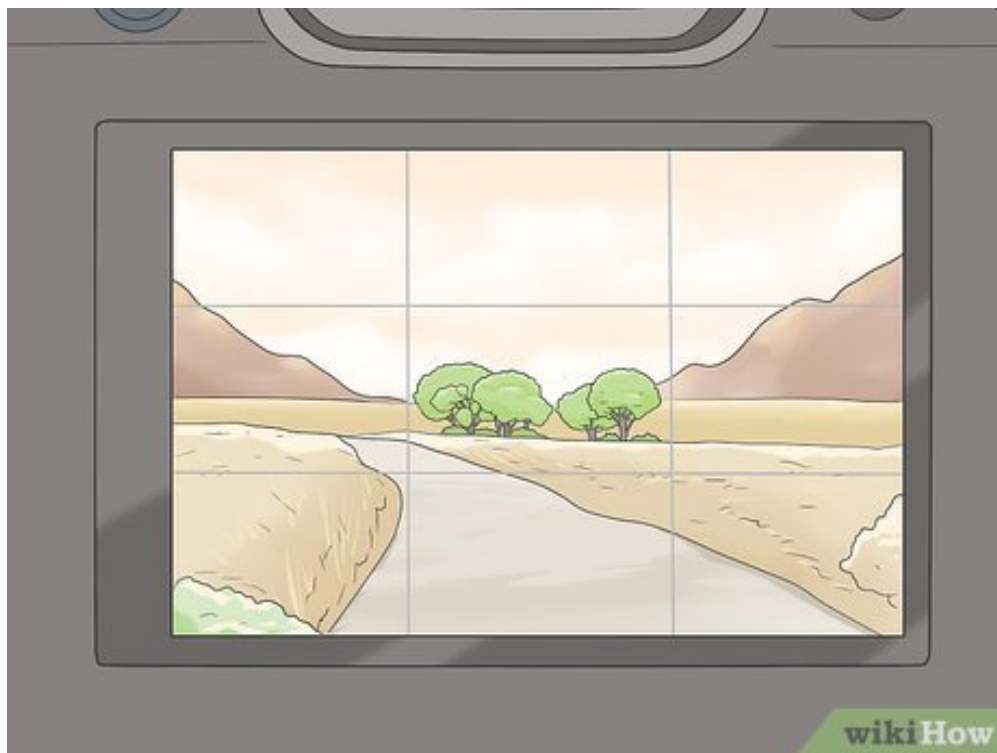
3 **Arrange your scene on an imaginary 3 by 3 grid.** Avoid centering your subject in the frame as this may result in a boring scene. Imagine that your scene has a 3 by 3 grid across it and move your camera lens to position your subject within the grid in a way that seems interesting to you.[5]

- For example, you could photograph a mountain with the mountain on the far right 1/3 of your frame and show what other natural features lay beyond the mountain in the center and far left 1/3 of the frame.

- Or, you could position a field of flowers in the bottom 1/3 of the frame and capture the vast sky in the top 2/3 of the frame.

4 **Get closer to your subject if you want to focus on its details.** While cameras have zoom lenses that you can use to see an object close up, walking closer to what you want to photograph will often yield better results. If you are photographing a flower, leaf, rock, or other natural feature, get as close to it as you can.[6]

- You can also adjust your camera for close-up shots, such as by choosing the close-up mode setting if your camera has one or adjusting the depth of field to make it shallower.[7]

Warning: Never get up close with a wild animal. The animal will likely flee and some animals may even attack you if they feel cornered or threatened.
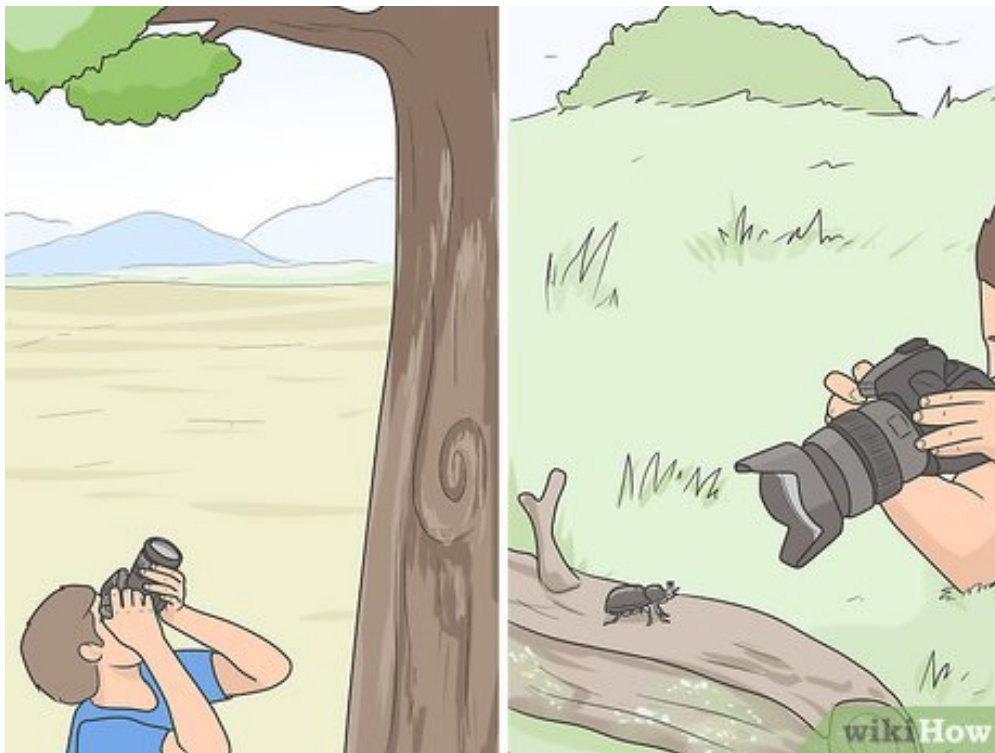
5 **Change your perspective by getting down lower or up higher.** Some subjects may appear more interesting if you photograph them from a low position on the ground or from a higher up position, such as on top of a hill or overlook. Try crouching down for subjects that you'd normally photograph standing up or look for a higher vantage point to capture a wider shot of your scene.[8]

- For example, if you want to photograph a tree, try crouching down by its trunk and taking a photo looking straight up at it.

- To photograph an ant, lay down on the ground and take a close-up photo at ground level.

- If you want to capture a long, winding river, try finding a hill that you can climb and take your photo looking down on the river.
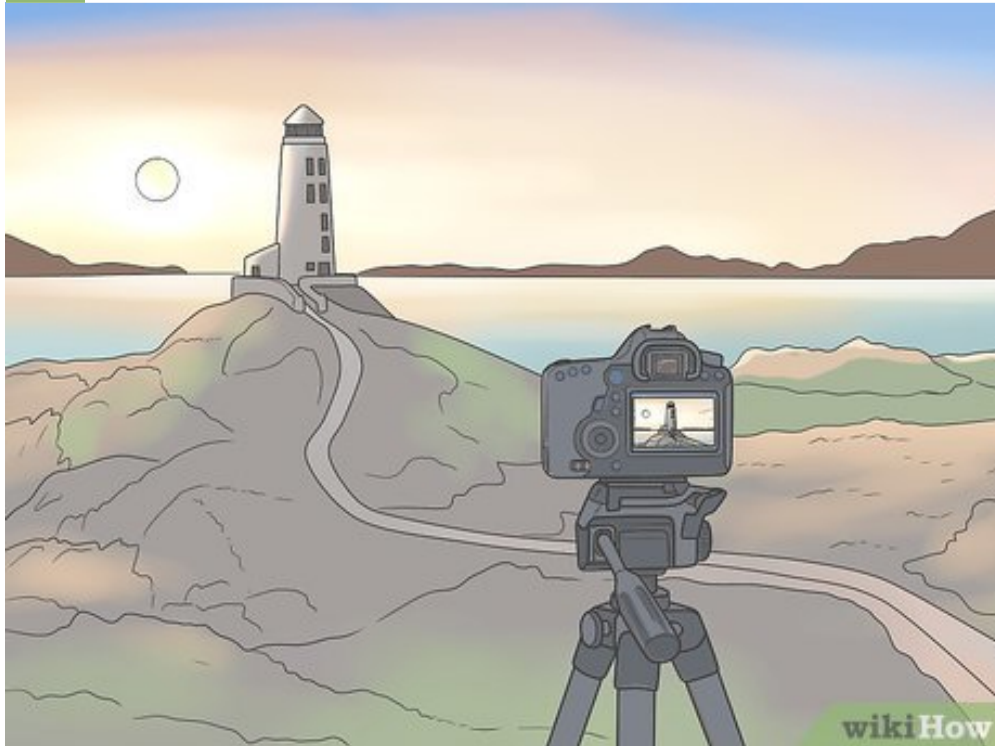
1 **Plan to take photos at dawn or dusk whenever possible.** These times are known as golden hours and they are often the best time to take photos because of the quality of the light during them. The sky may also take on beautiful hues of pink, orange, yellow, and purple, which you can use to your benefit when composing a scene. If possible, arrange your photography around these times of day.[9]

- For example, you could get up before the sun rises and take nature photos in a local park, or go out on a nature photography expedition just before sunset.

Tip: Popular tourist spots are also often less crowded early in the morning, so arriving at dawn can also help to ensure that you don't have to work around lots of people to get your shots.[10]
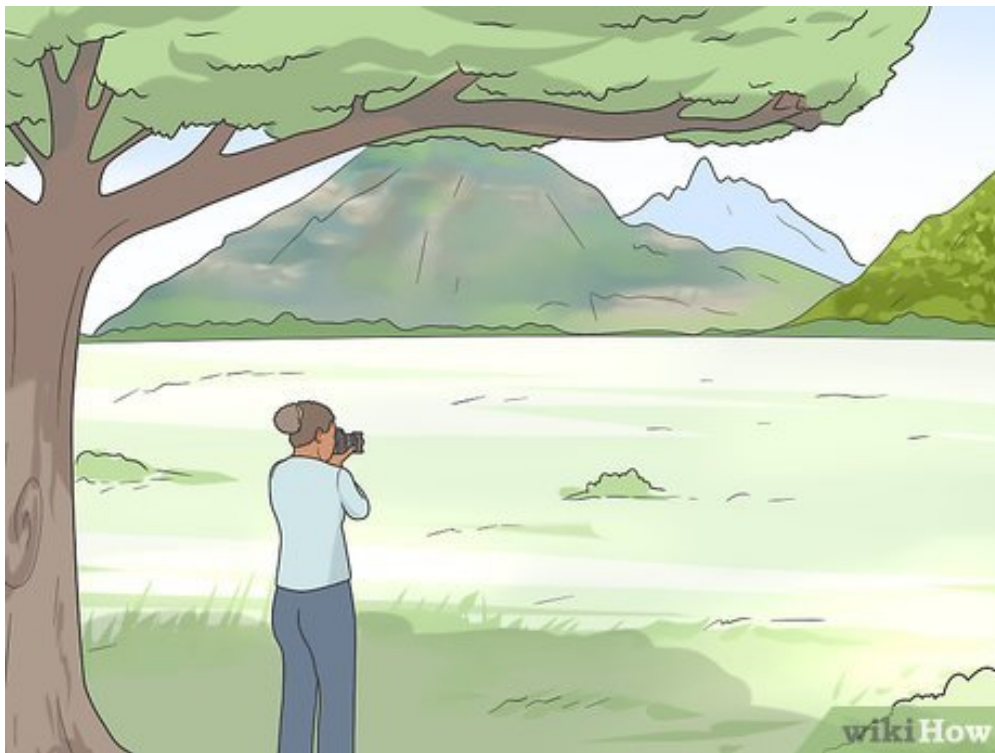
2 **Go into a shady area or wait for cloud-cover to take your photo.** If you're out in the middle of the day and the light is not ideal, try going into a shady area or wait for a cloud to pass before snapping a picture. This will reduce the harsh quality of the light and help to ensure that you have a more diffuse level of light.[11]

- For example, you could walk under the canopy of a tree to photograph a flower or leaf.

- If you're trying to photograph a landscape in harsh light, set up your shot and wait for a cloud to pass before you snap it.

Tip: An overcast day is a great opportunity to take a photo expedition since you will have diffuse light to work with all day long.[12]
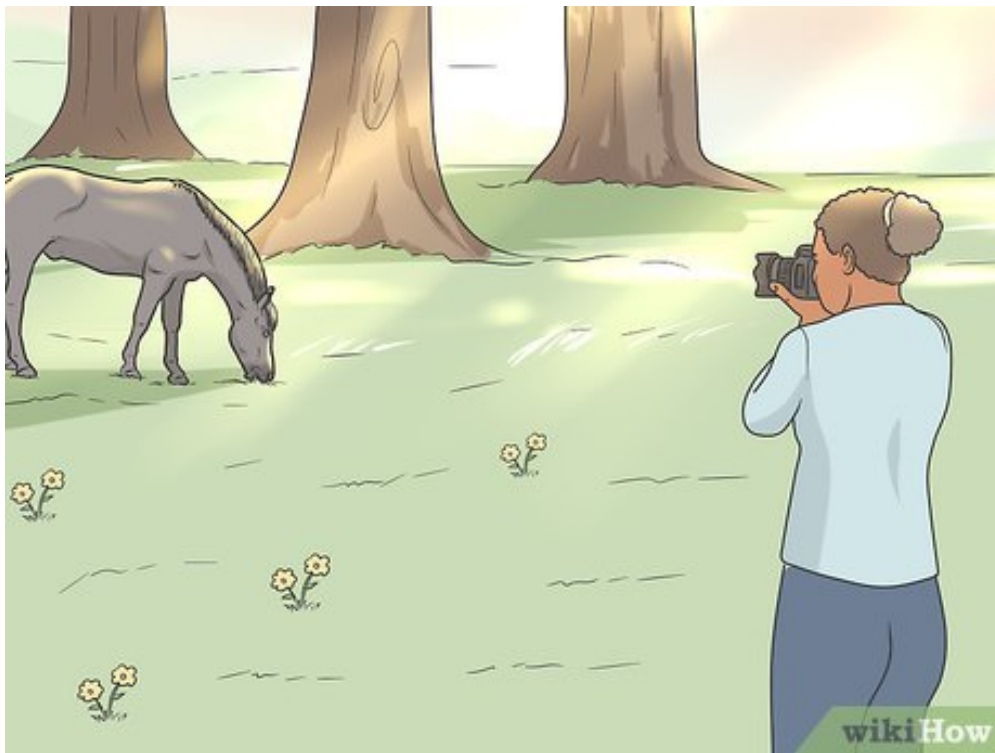
3 **Shoot photos in the direction that the sun is shining.** Instead of shooting your subjects with the sun behind them, get on the other side of them and shoot with the light of the sun behind you. This works well later in the morning or in the afternoon, but it might not work at midday since the sun will be directly overhead.[13]

- For example, if you're trying to photograph a large tree, walk to the side of the tree that the sun is on and then turn towards the tree. Photograph the tree with the sun behind you.

4 **Take backlit photos to create contrast with your subject.** Usually, it's best to avoid taking backlit photos since this type of lighting can result in dark images. However, you can sometimes use it to your benefit. Try to position yourself so that your subject is blocking the sun. This will cause the subject to look darker and it stand out against the sky and other surrounding features.[14]

- If taking a photo in the direction of the sun does not yield the desired image, you can always use photo editing software to adjust the lighting later.[15]

- Backlighting can be useful when you are photographing a subject that blends into its surrounding area, such as a game animal or an insect.[16]

1 **Watch for features that you can use to emphasize your subject.** Surrounding
elements can help to frame and emphasize your subject, so be on the lookout for
anything in the area that you may want to include in your photo.[17]   You can use the
surrounding landscape, clouds, trees, leaves, or a prominent geological feature to emphasize
your subject.[18]

- For example, if you spot a groundhog sitting on a mound of dirt, including the mound in
  your photo may help to emphasize the groundhog's position.

- If you spot a flower on a lily pad on a pond, including the water surrounding the lily pad
  can help to demonstrate where the flower is located.

2 **Look for leading lines that you can incorporate into your photos.** Leading lines guide people who look at your photos and draw them deeper into the image. If you spot a natural feature that could serve as a line or series of dots, look for a way to incorporate it into your picture to emphasize your subject.[19]

- For example, if you want to photograph a far off mountain, incorporate a stream or river that runs away from the mountain.

- If you are photographing a rock formation in the desert, incorporate a crack in the ground that seems to be pointing towards the rock.
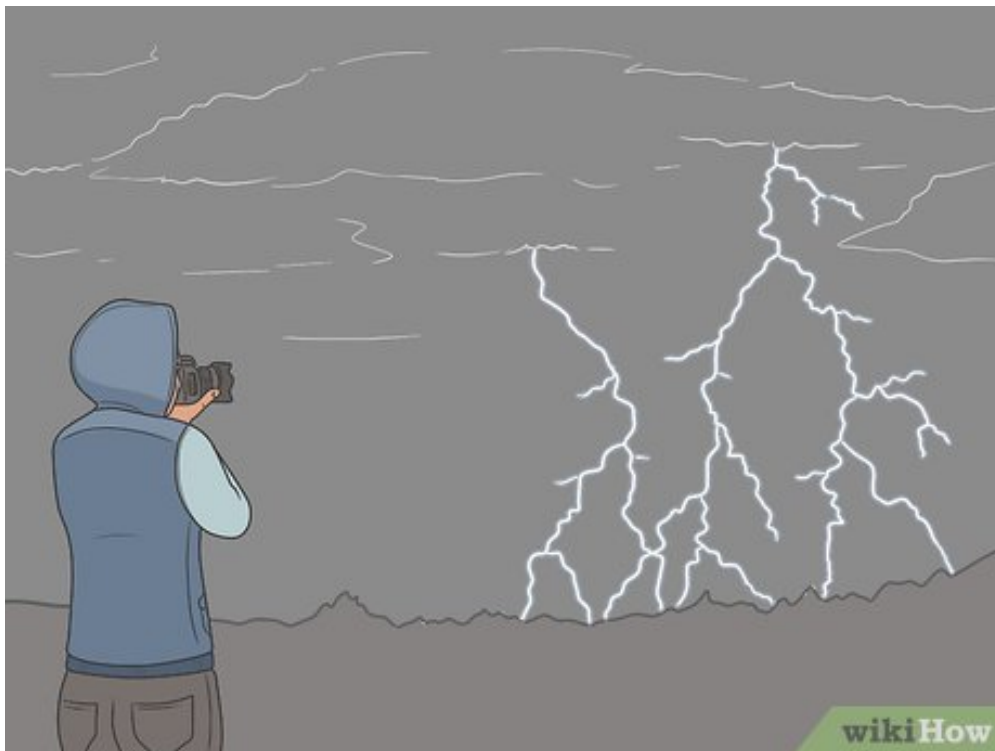
3 **Plan to take photos when the weather is bad or unusual.** Cloudy skies, thunderstorms, and thick fog can all help you to create interesting nature photos, so don't shy away from taking pictures in less than perfect weather conditions. However, always be careful and don't go out in dangerous conditions. But if you think it's safe, grab your coat and umbrella and head out to capture some cool images![20]

- For example, you could photograph a valley with fog sitting in the lowest points like water.

- Or, you could photograph distant clouds as lightning strikes.

Tip: It takes patience and good luck to capture lightning, but watching and waiting long enough may be worth it.[21]

4 **Include long shadows to create dramatic contrast.** Although capturing shadows in your pictures is not always desirable, sometimes you can use shadows to make your subject look more dramatic. This is usually easiest to do early in the morning or later in the afternoon or evening when the sun is low.[22]

- For example, you could photograph a deer drinking water with its shadow filling the ground in front of it.

- Or, you could photograph a flower and include its shadow on the grass in the shot.

- Interesting textures may look especially prominent when the shadows are long, such as sand dunes or waves.[23]

⑦ Expert Q&A

Question

How can I take good photographs of nature?

Richard Engelbrecht
Professional Photographer
Expert Answer

The most important thing about taking nature photographs is to take your camera with you everywhere you go. Also, you need to develop an eye for where the sun is, where the shadows are, and what your subject is.

Helpful 3   Not Helpful 1

Question

What if I don't have a good camera?

Community Answer

Even if you don't have a good camera you should still be able to use color, play with lighting, and use techniques in the composing a scene section of this article, such as the rule of thirds, to take good pictures.

Helpful 5   Not Helpful 1

☀️ Tips

- If you're shooting a landscape, use a tripod to ensure the camera is steady enough to stay in focus.[24]

- Avoid taking pictures on a windy day, unless you are looking for waves on the water or palm fronds blowing in the breeze.

- You may want to use a tripod if you want to photograph something over a long exposure, but it's also possible to get good results by holding your camera during long exposures.[25]

⚠️ Warnings

- Always pay attention to your surroundings when you are taking photos of nature. Be on the lookout for hazards, such as cliffs and wild animals.

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★★★★☆
7 votes - 86%

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