

GETTING STARTED

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A beginner's guide to seeing and capturing the world



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01** | the first frame
- 02** | a brief look into the history of photography
- 03** | understanding your camera
- 04** | composition & light
- 05** | practical use – settings in action
- 06** | photography styles & genres
- 07** | everyday tips & mini challenges
- 08** | editing essentials
- 09** | inspiration & what's next
- 10** | closing

THE FIRST FRAME

Photography can be many things: a creative outlet, a way to slow down, a tool to tell stories. But above all, it's a skill anyone can learn — step by step.

This booklet is a short guide for anyone curious about photography. Whether you're picking up a camera for the first time or want to understand the basics better, this is for you. No technical overload. No gatekeeping. Just clear, simple explanations and tips to help you get started — and inspired.

You'll find a brief history, essential camera knowledge, composition ideas, practical tips, and a few exercises to try out yourself. It's meant to be read in one sitting, but used again and again.

Let this be your first step into photography — with open eyes and a curious mind.

“*Your first 10,000 photographs
are your worst*”

— Henri Cartier-Bresson

A BRIEF LOOK INTO THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

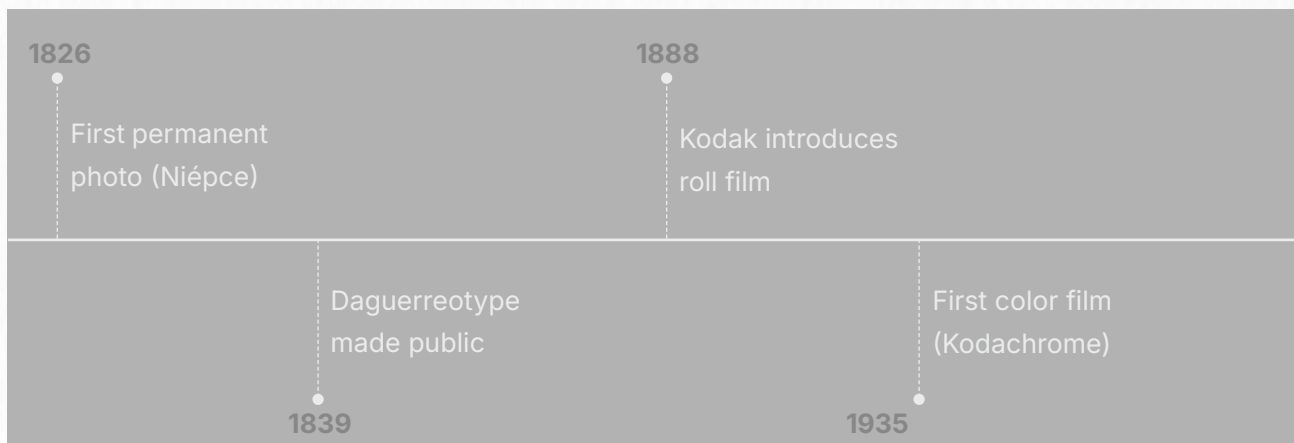
Photography started with curiosity — the desire to capture light, freeze time, and hold onto moments.

The very first photographs appeared in the early 1800s. In 1826, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce captured the first permanent image. They were blurry, black-and-white, and took minutes to expose. But they were magic.

In 1839, Louis Daguerre made photography faster and more practical with the daguerreotype. A few decades later, in 1888, Kodak introduced the first roll film camera, making photography accessible to a wider public.

Color came into play in 1935, with the introduction of Kodachrome, the first widely available color film.

After World War II, photography evolved not just technically, but culturally. In 1947, the founding of Magnum Photos, the first independent photographers' cooperative, helped redefine photography as storytelling and art.



The invention of the first digital camera prototype by Kodak in 1975 quietly began a revolution. Two decades later, by the year 2000, digital photography went mainstream, changing how people create, share, and think about images.

And the innovation didn't stop there. In 2012, mirrorless cameras gained popularity, reshaping professional and everyday photography once again with lighter, more compact designs.



Some names stand out along the way: William Henry Fox Talbot, who developed the negative process; Ansel Adams, who brought technical precision and drama to landscapes; Diane Arbus, who explored the fringes of society; and Henri Cartier-Bresson, who captured the decisive moment.

Today, photography is everywhere — but its essence is unchanged: To observe. To connect. To remember. A simple frame can say more than words ever could.

You don't need to know it all to start. But understanding where photography came from can deepen your view — and your vision.

1947

Magnum Photos agency founded

2000

Digital photography goes mainstream

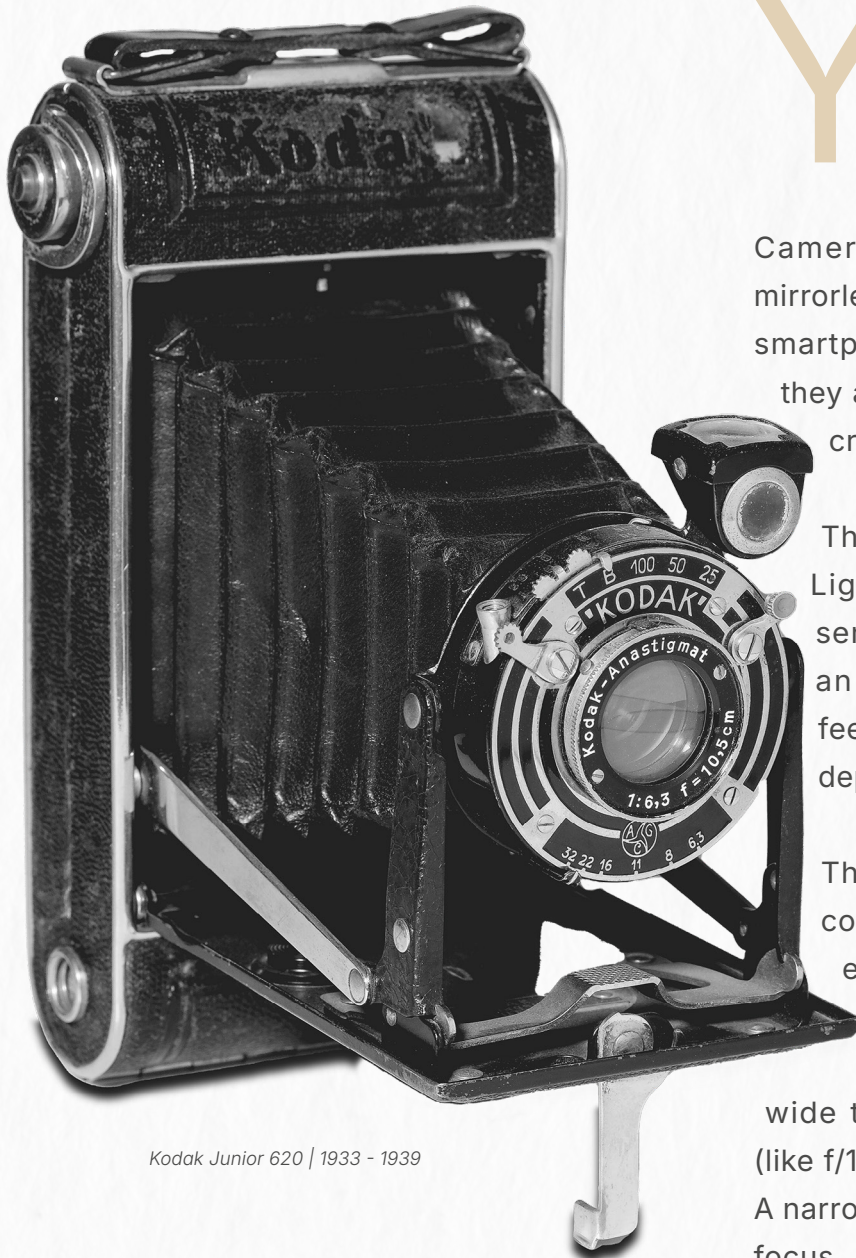
1975

First digital camera (Kodak prototype)

2012

Mirrorless cameras reshape the market

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CAMERA



Kodak Junior 620 | 1933 - 1939

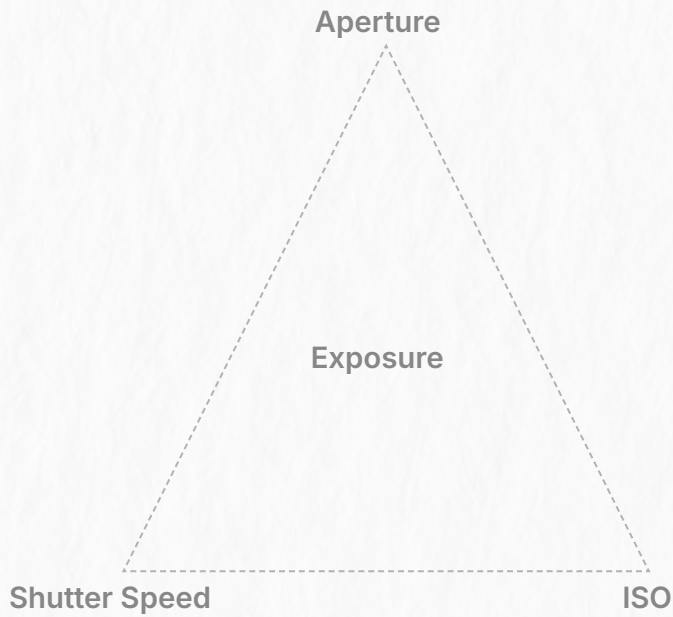
You don't need the best gear to take great photos — but knowing your camera helps you unlock its full potential.

Cameras come in all shapes: DSLRs, mirrorless systems, compact models, and smartphones. Despite their differences, they all share one job: capturing light to create an image.

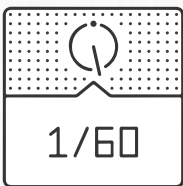
Think of your camera as a light box. Light enters through a lens, hits a sensor (or film), and is recorded as an image. What makes one photo feel bright, blurry, sharp, or dramatic depends on how you control that light.

That's where the Exposure Triangle comes in — three settings that shape every photo:

Aperture (f-stop): Controls how wide the lens opens. A wide aperture (like f/1.8) creates a soft background blur. A narrow aperture (like f/11) keeps more in focus.



Shutter Speed: Controls how long the sensor is exposed to light. Fast speeds (1/1000) freeze action. Slower speeds (1/30 or longer) blur motion or capture light trails.



ISO: Controls the sensor's sensitivity to light. Low ISO (100–200) gives clean images. High ISO (1600+) works better in low light, but adds noise.



Most modern cameras and phones have automatic modes that balance these for you. But trying manual mode (M) or aperture/shutter priority (A/Av or S/Tv) lets you experiment and learn.

Try this: Take the same photo three times — once in auto, once in aperture priority, and once in full manual. Compare the results. Notice how depth, brightness, and sharpness change.

The goal isn't to memorize settings. It's to notice what changes when you tweak things. That's when you move from taking pictures to making them.

COMPOSITION & LIGHT

A good photo starts with a good eye. That means learning not just what to shoot, but how to see.

Composition is about arranging what's in your frame — not just what you include, but also what you leave out. It's your way of guiding the viewer's attention.

Here are some composition basics:

Rule of Thirds: Imagine a tic-tac-toe grid on your screen. Place your subject off-center, near an intersection point — it feels more natural than centering everything.

Leading Lines: Use lines (roads, rails, fences, shadows) to draw the eye into the photo or toward your subject.

Symmetry & Patterns: Humans love balance. Look for reflections, repetitive shapes, or mirrored elements.

Framing Within the Frame: Use windows, doorways, arches — anything that naturally creates a border around your subject.

*Light writes the photograph —
composition reads it.*

Negative Space: Give your subject room to breathe. Empty space can be powerful.

Then there's light — the most important element in photography. Light affects contrast, emotion, mood, and color.

Golden Hour: Just after sunrise or before sunset. Soft, warm light = dreamy tones.

Blue Hour: The cool, soft light after sunset — great for moody scenes.

Hard vs. Soft Light: Midday sun is harsh and direct; cloudy days offer soft, even light.

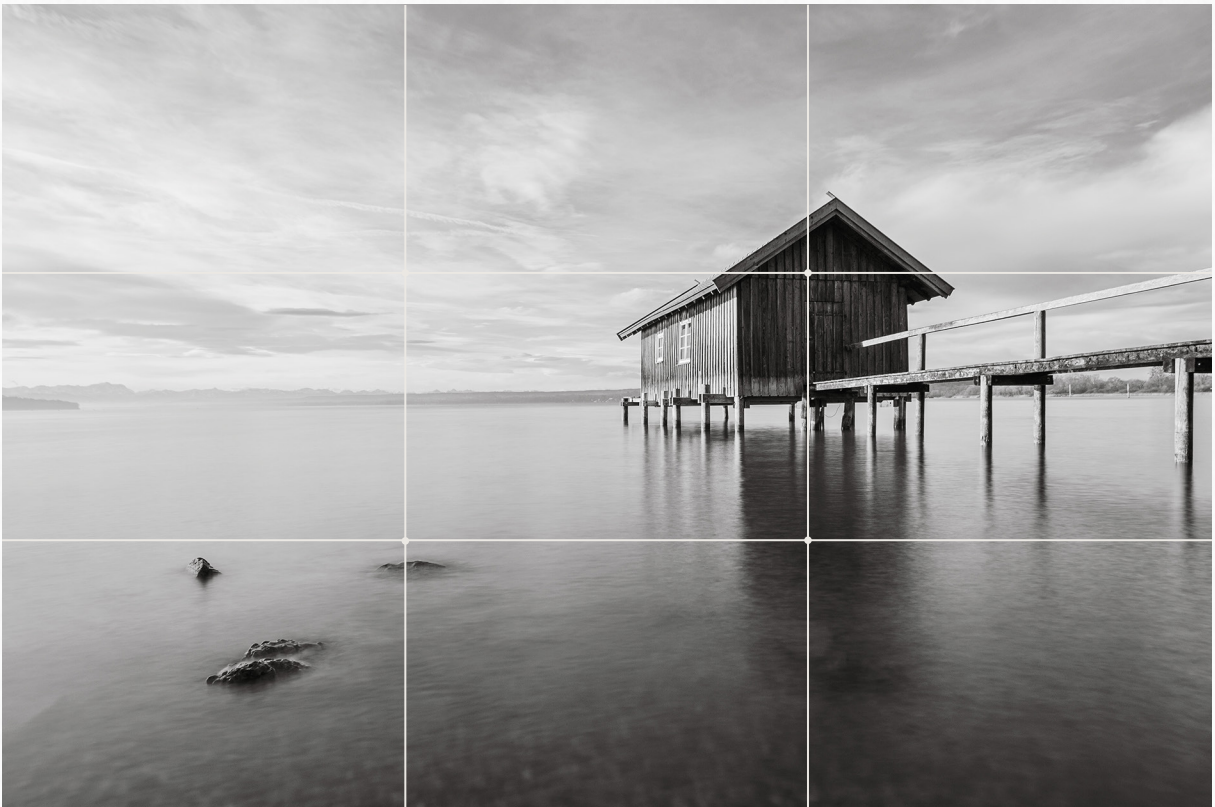
Try this: Find a simple object (like a cup or book). Photograph it in different light throughout the day. Indoors, by a window, under a lamp. See how the light changes the image's mood.

The more you observe, the more intentional your photos become. Composition and light don't require fancy tools — just practice and presence.

Framing the moment – Portrait of Elisa, Munich | Autumn 2024



Silence by the lake – Ammersee | Winter 2025







PRACTICAL USE – *SETTINGS IN ACTION*

Theory is useful — but photography is learned by doing.

Try these exercises to connect settings with real results:

Shallow Depth of Field: Use a wide aperture (f/1.8 or f/2.8). Focus on a nearby subject. Background will blur.

Freeze the Moment: Use a fast shutter speed (1/500+). Capture motion — jumping, walking, movement.

Show Movement: Use a slow shutter speed (1/15 or longer). Hold steady and photograph moving subjects like lights or water.

Low Light Challenge: Raise ISO, open aperture, and turn off flash. Try night or indoor shots.

Backlight & Silhouettes: Place subject in front of the light. Expose for the background. Create dramatic silhouettes.

Each test will help you understand how the exposure triangle shapes your photo.



PHOTOGRAPHY STYLES & GENRES

There's no one way to photograph. Explore different genres:

Portraits: Focus on emotion and connection. Use soft light and a wide aperture.

Landscapes: Use narrow apertures and foreground elements for depth.

Street: Be discreet and quick. Capture candid life and light.



Above the valleys — Großer Traithen, Autumn 2024



Autumn "Wiesn" — Munich | 2024

Macro: Get close. Focus carefully. Explore textures.

Still Life: Compose like a painter. Use simple light, neutral backgrounds, and strong shapes.

Try different styles to discover what you enjoy most.



Layers of silence — Heimgarten | March 2025



Nezelle — Munich, 2025

EVERYDAY TIPS & MINI CHALLENGES

Photography isn't just for special occasions. It's for the everyday, the unnoticed, the ordinary moments that quietly shape the way you see. Here are some ways to keep your eye sharp and your creativity growing:

Use natural light

Find the beauty in soft window light, the glow before sunset, the shadows at midday. Let the light guide your story.

Turn off auto mode

Take control. Choose your aperture, shutter speed, or ISO consciously — even if it's just for one photo a day.

Pick a theme

Focus on a color, a shape, a mood. Let it be your thread for a walk or an afternoon.

Limit yourself

One lens. Ten frames. One hour. Constraints fuel creativity.

Recreate a photo you admire

Study its composition, light, emotion. Then make it yours — not by copying, but by understanding.

Photograph the "boring"

A chair, a puddle, a street corner. Challenge yourself to find beauty where others might not look.

Photography is like a language. The more often you speak it, the more naturally it flows.

Make it part of your daily rhythm — even on slow days. Especially on slow days. That's how your eye grows.



EVERYDAY TIPS & MINI CHALLENGES



Photography is a language.
The more often you speak it,
the more naturally it flows.

*Photography isn't just for special occasions.
It's for the unnoticed, ordinary moments that
quietly shape the way you see.*

◆ **Use natural light.**

Find beauty in the everyday — window light, golden hour, even midday shadows.

Photograph your morning coffee lit by a soft window.

◆ **Turn off auto mode.**

Choose aperture, shutter speed, or ISO consciously — one photo at a time.

Try setting your camera to Aperture Priority (A/Av) and take a portrait with shallow depth of field.

◆ **Pick a theme.**

Focus on a color, a shape, a feeling. Let it guide your lens.

Spend an hour photographing only the color red.

◆ **Limit yourself.**

One lens. Ten shots. One hour. Creativity loves constraint.

Use only your 50mm lens and make exactly ten photographs — no more, no less.

◆ **Recreate a photo you admire.**

Not to copy, but to understand — and to see differently.

Find a portrait you love and recreate its lighting with a friend at home.

◆ **Photograph the "boring."**

Challenge yourself to find beauty where others pass by.

Turn an everyday object — like a chair or a puddle — into your subject.

EDITING ESSENTIALS

Photography doesn't end with the click of the shutter. Editing is part of the process — a way to refine the mood, the light, and the voice of your frame.

Good editing doesn't transform a bad photo into a good one. It fine-tunes an already strong image, bringing it closer to what you felt when you captured it.

Focus on essentials

Light — correct exposure, preserve highlights and shadows.

Color — enhance natural tones, try to keep skin tones realistic.

Mood — contrast, clarity, warmth — subtle adjustments that align with the story.

Tools

There's no one perfect tool — only what fits your flow. Lightroom, Photoshop, Capture One, Afinity, and even mobile apps can all serve the same goal: helping you bring your vision to life.

Work non-destructively. Use layers, virtual copies, and preserve your original files.



Still structure — Ammersee | January 2025



Framing quiet – Nadia, Munich | September 2024



RAW vs JPEG

Shooting RAW gives you more flexibility — more detail in highlights and shadows, better color control. JPEG is faster and simpler, but limits your editing potential.

If you aim to shape the final image yourself, RAW is your best starting point.

But in the end, choose what fits your workflow and makes you feel confident. The best file format is the one that lets you focus on creating — not worrying.



Exploring product shots – Home setup | April 2025



Editing isn't about fixing mistakes. It's about finishing the frame you already created — with intention and care.

INSPIRATION & WHAT'S NEXT

Photography isn't about mastering every technical setting.

It's about paying attention. It's about showing up — even when nothing seems special. It's about seeing more clearly, frame by frame.


Gear matters. Technique matters. But being present matters most.

Sometimes it's luck
Sometimes it's pa-
tience. Sometimes it's
simply being ready
when light, subject, and
moment align.

Keep your eyes open.
Carry your camera.
Trust your instinct.
The more you see, the more
you'll find.

Photography grows quietly —
in everyday moments, in small
risks, in the way you notice the
world around you.





*Photography is part skill, part patience — and
part being there at the right moment.*

concept & idea: shutter_speed | 2025

IG: shutter_speed_20

www.shutter-speed.eu



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