

Backgrounds

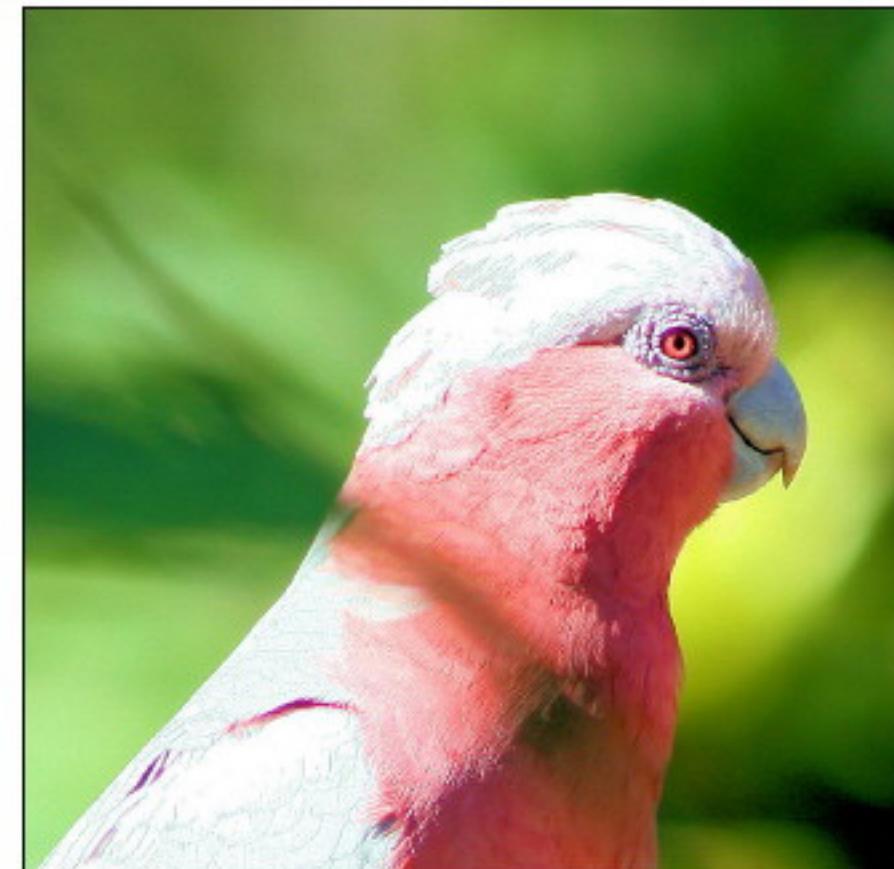
In this lesson, we'll be taking a look at
Backgrounds.

Estimated Completion Time: 18 minutes.

Backgrounds

Every photo that includes a main subject, like an animal, human, plant - even cars, or a building, for example, needs to be shot in such a way that it is clear what the subject is.

Generally, as we've discussed elsewhere, this can be done by ensuring you get in close, get down low, or use techniques that ensure the background is blurred out.



In this photo, it is clear what the subject is.

Backgrounds

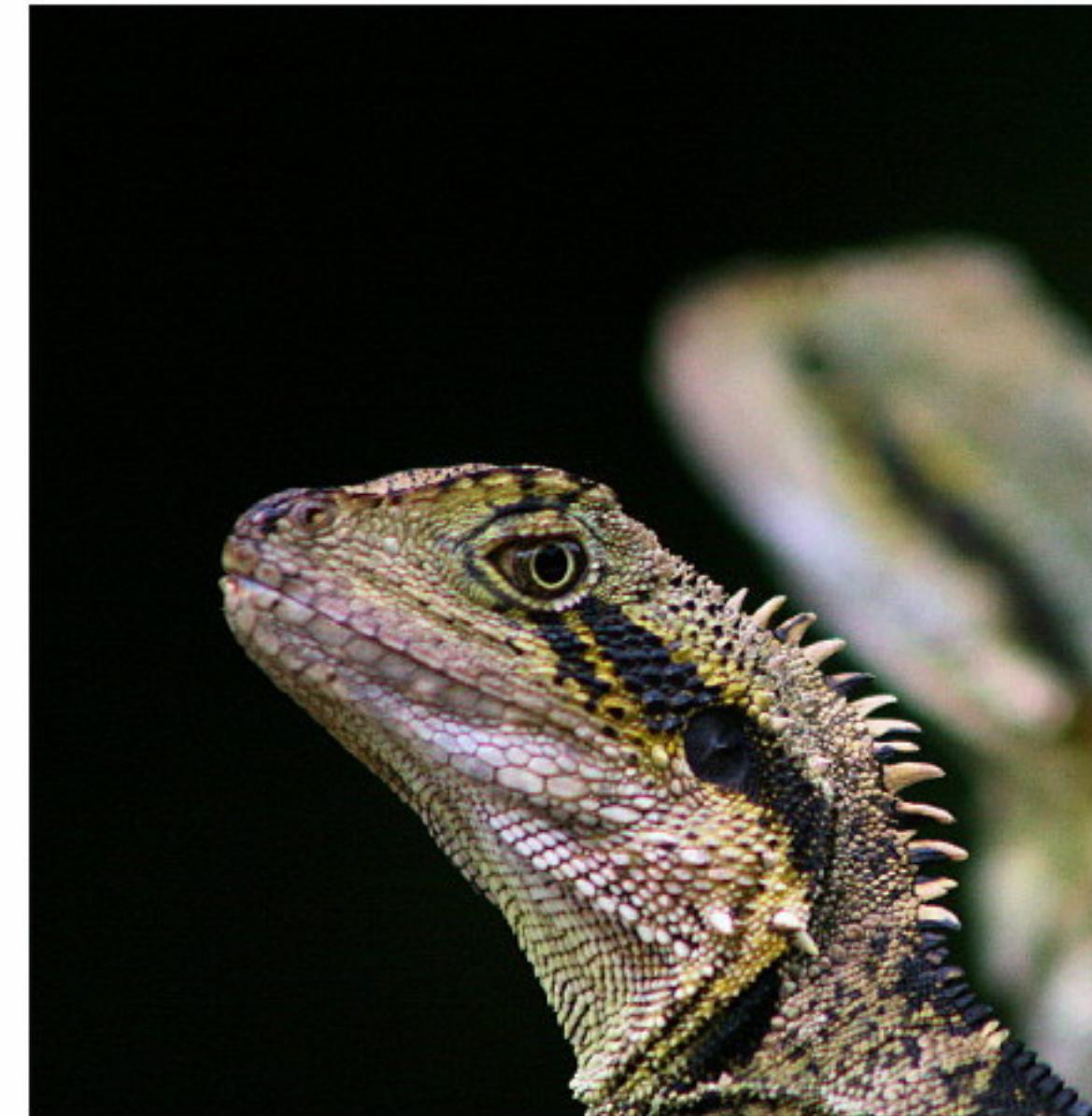
And in every photo you take, you not only have the frame the subject, but you have to make sure the background is appropriate.

Some simple rules apply. Let's have a look at some of those here.



Avoid complex, or busy backgrounds. In this shot, the background is very busy - so busy, in fact, it is difficult to even make out the subject of the photograph.

Backgrounds



On the left, we've reframed the subject so that we have a clear background.

On the right, we've still improved things (although on the left is better) by creating a much more simple background.

Backgrounds



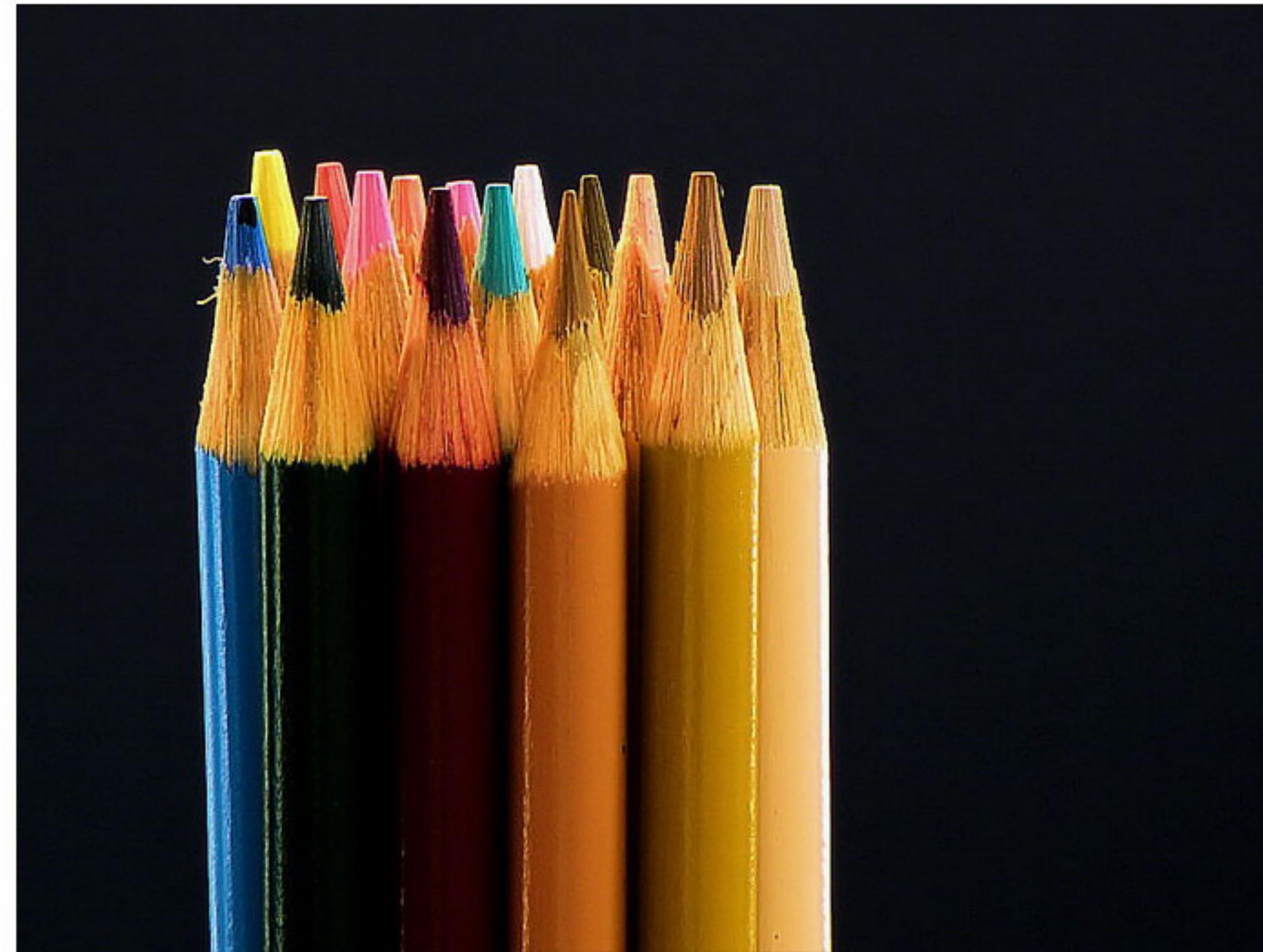
The most simple of backgrounds - we placed this leaf insect on to a white sheet of paper before taking the shot.

Backgrounds



On the left, the background is way too busy. On the right, we've taken a similar shot, but again framed it so that the background is very simple.

Backgrounds



Here the color, and consistency of the background help to draw attention to the subject.

Backgrounds

In a later lesson, entitled **Taking Photos for Online Auctions**, we discuss how to create unobtrusive backgrounds for items you want to sell online.

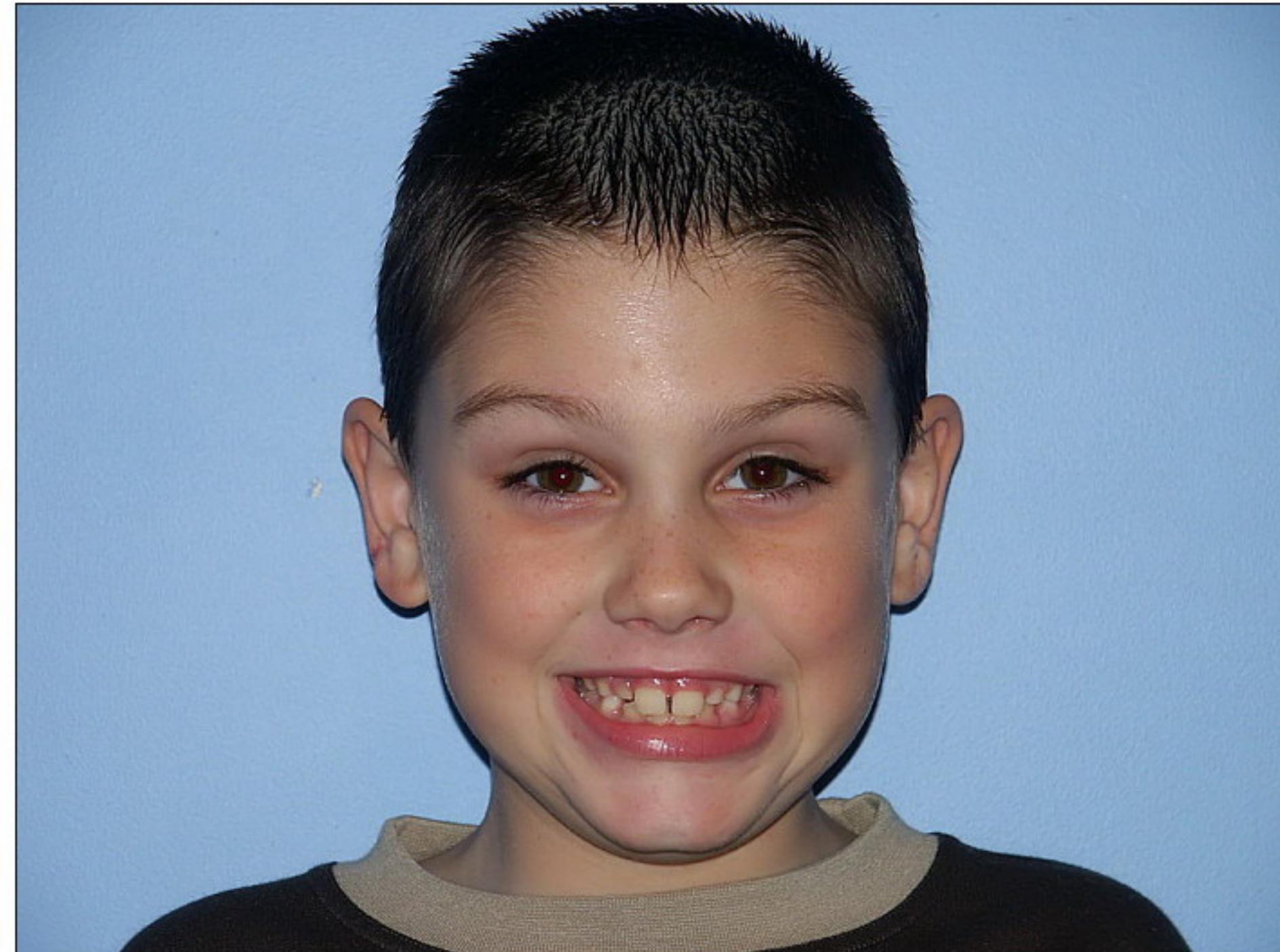


Backgrounds



On the left, the background is way too busy. On the right, we've taken a similar sort of shot, but again framed it so that the background is very simple.

Backgrounds



A perfectly clear background makes the subject pop out...

Backgrounds



We've got down to just the point where the background is pure grass, nothing else.

Backgrounds

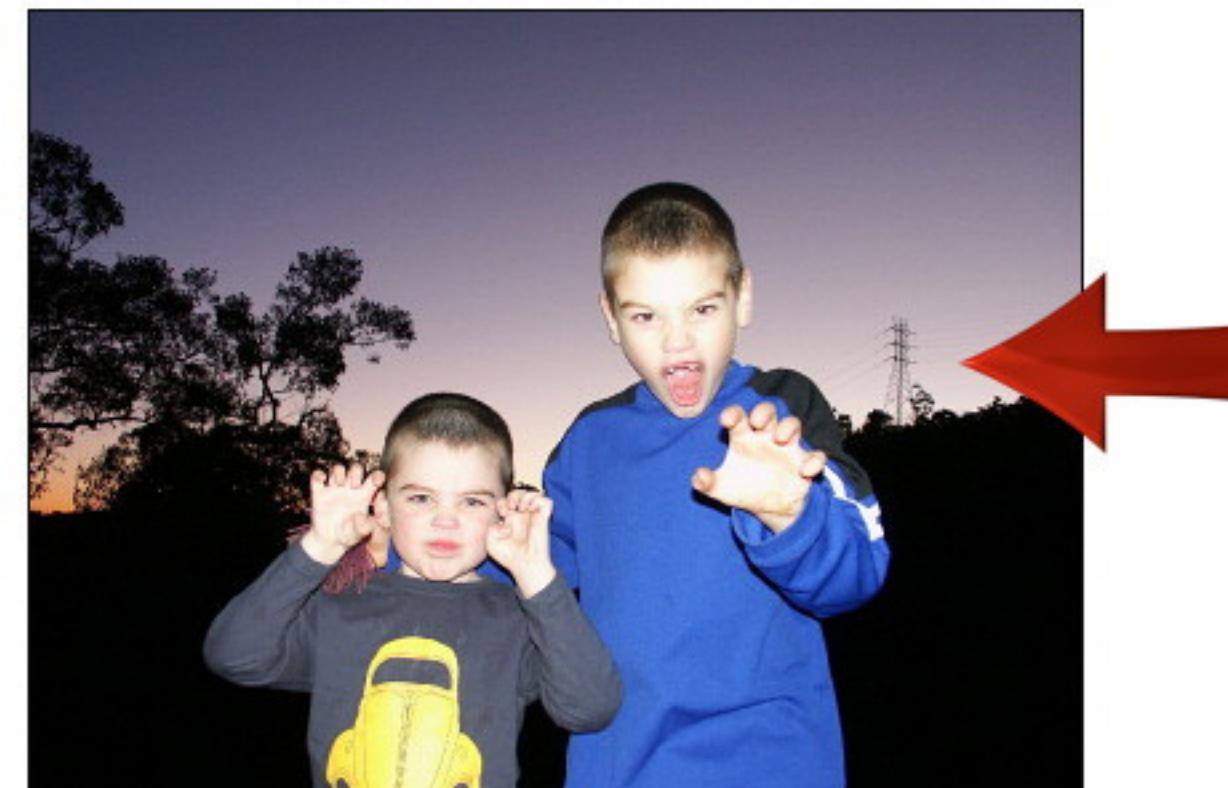


In the same manner as the last shot, we've got down to just the point where the background is pure ocean, nothing else.

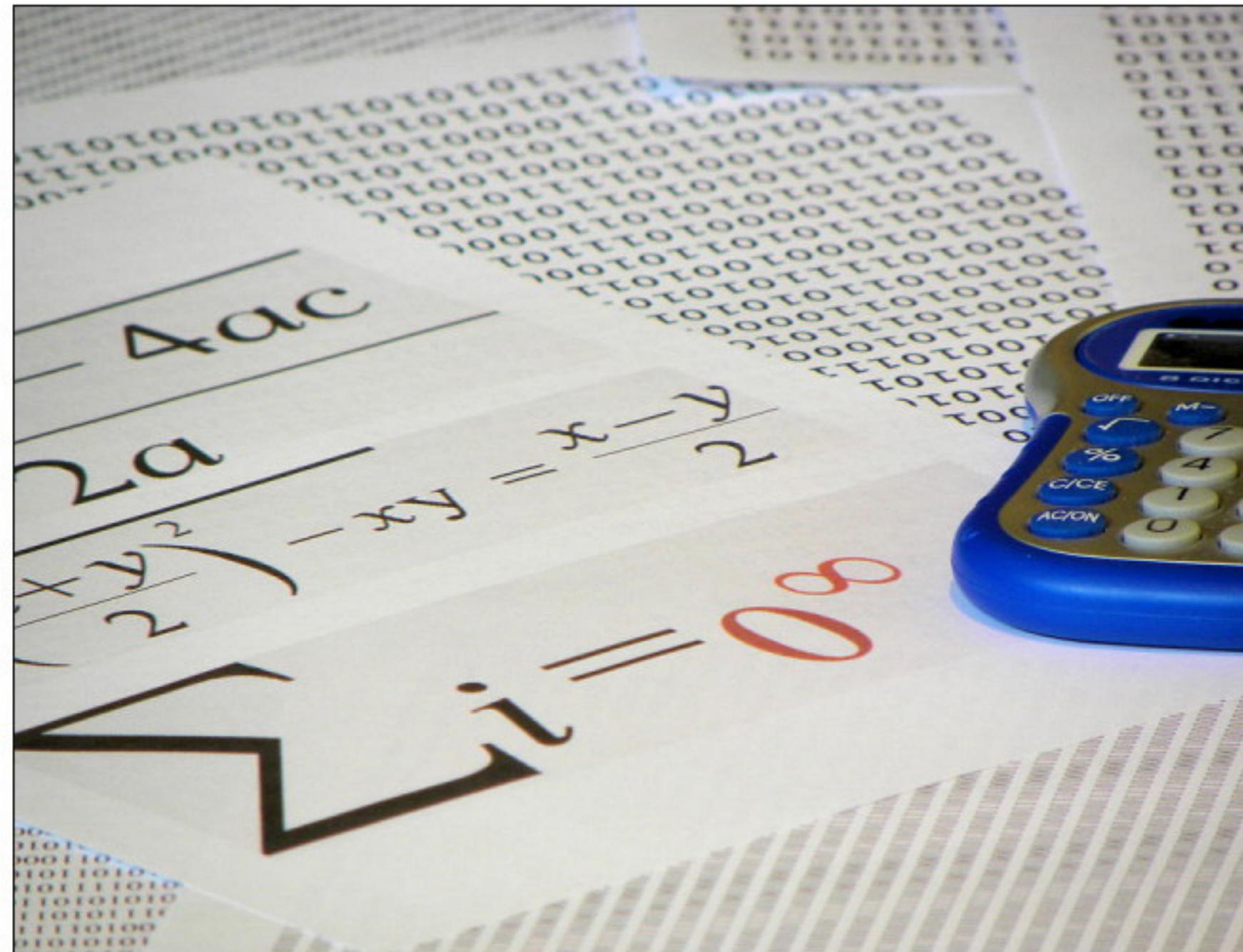
Backgrounds

This does not mean the background has to be removed - in some cases, it really enhances the shot.

What you can do is ensure that unwanted elements are removed from the frame. Look at the shot below. A great shot, except for the power pole at the bottom right. Sometimes when you concentrate on the subject, you forget to look around to ensure that elements like this are not in the frame.



Backgrounds



*This is not really a simple background, but this background of numbers was created deliberately.
The gradual blurring also makes it feel as though it goes on and on...*

Backgrounds



This shot could really have been improved if the fence were not visible in the background...

Backgrounds



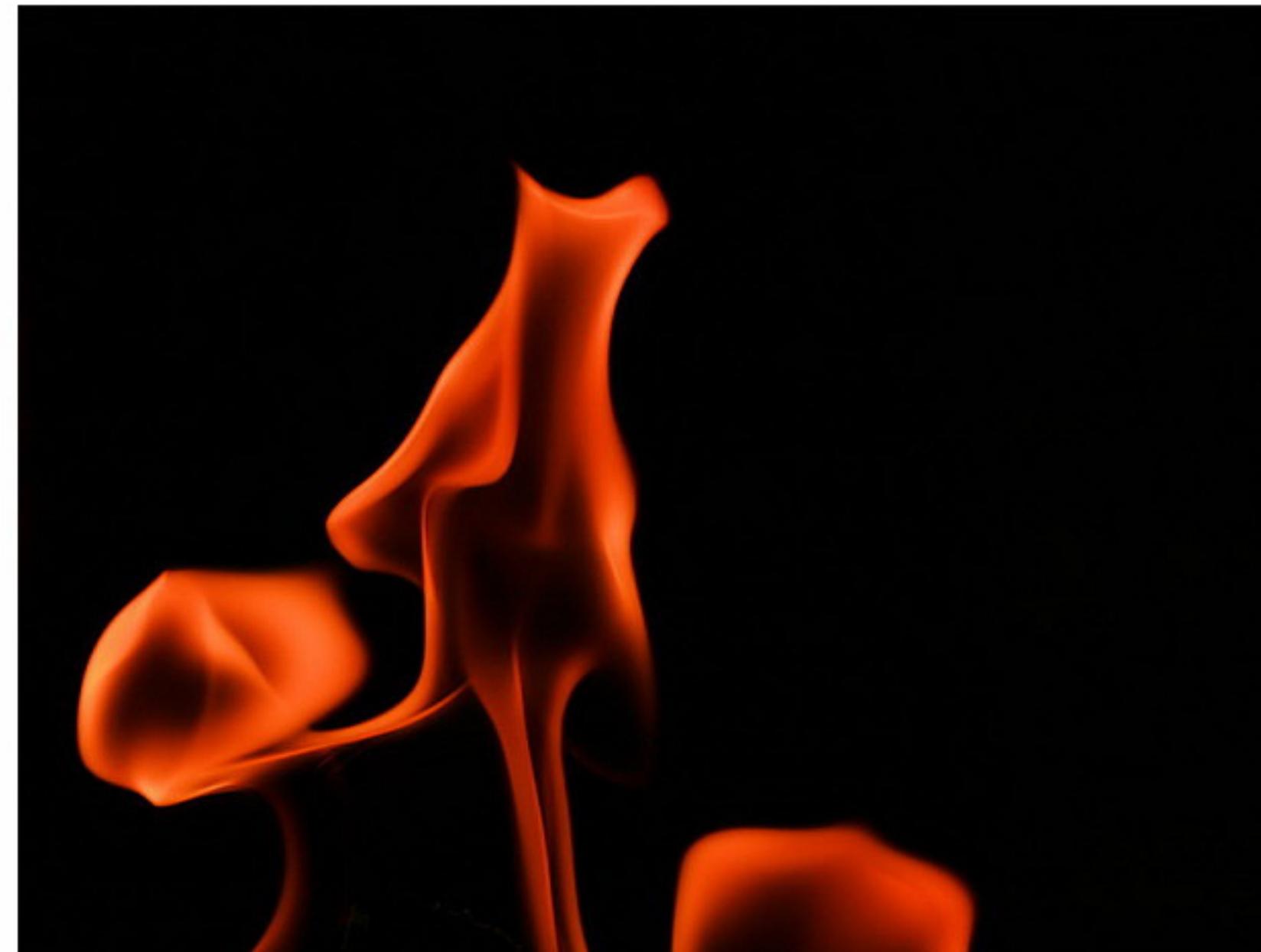
Here, we've been able to frame this shot so there are no people, and nothing man-made in the background.

Backgrounds



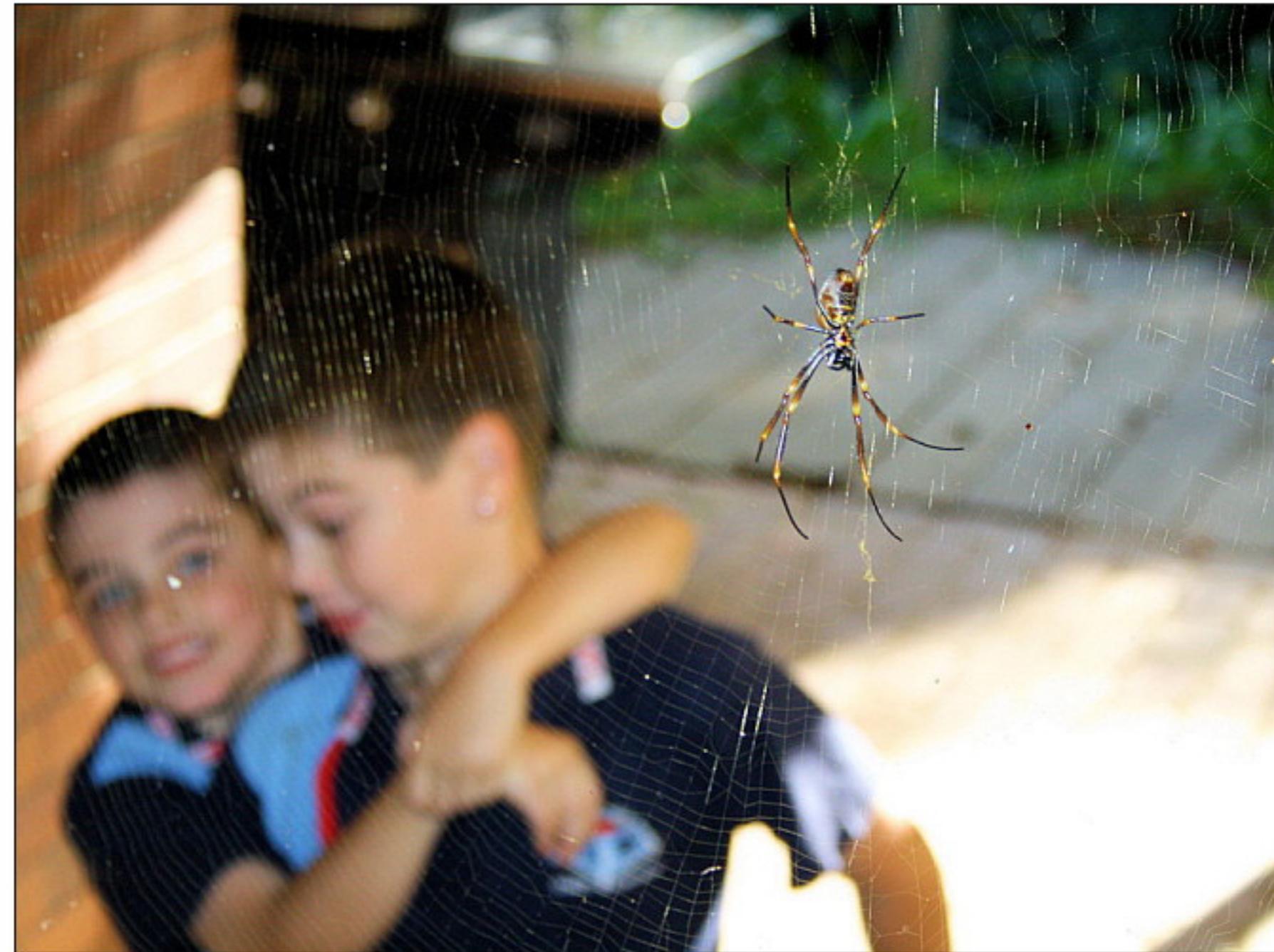
Top-right hand corner, we have power lines. We should have framed this shot so that they were not visible.

Backgrounds



In order to get the completely black background for this shot, we hung a large, black sheet behind our target fire. Shutter speed used here was 1/2000 of a second, and a small aperture (F/5.6) helped to ensure the black background was out of focus.

Backgrounds



Backgrounds don't all need to be uncluttered or blank - this background lends some humour to the image of the spider.

Backgrounds



In this case, the kitchen background added to the fresh loaf of bread - so we chose to include it. By making it slightly out of focus, it is still clear that the loaf of bread is the subject.

Backgrounds



Again, the background was selected intentionally to put the pole in context.

Backgrounds



*In this case, the background **is** the shot.*

Backgrounds



Here, not much effort has been taken to remove the background. Professionally, probably distracting. However - I think shots like this, that pick up incidental things around the house - the car, the ornaments, the furniture, the plants...

Backgrounds



We didn't want to put the background too out of focus here - the colors matched the hair so well.

Backgrounds



A bit of in camera cropping, and shooting from the right angle ensures that only water appears in the background of this shot.

Backgrounds



The sky, and the sky alone, provides the perfect background for this pelican. Nice looking clouds also help.

Backgrounds



On the top, some unintended elements have been included. A roof in the top left, and a roof in the bottom left. In this case, we can save the photo with some judicious cropping, bottom.

Backgrounds



*If you have a horizon in the photo, try and keep it straight. It can be easy to focus your attention on the subject and forget about this background horizon. Your camera may have a **grid function** (superimposes a grid onto the viewfinder) to help align horizons and other elements.*

Luckily, this sort of thing - straightening photos - is quite easily achieved in programs like Windows Live Photo Gallery. On the right, we've straightened this image.

Backgrounds



Many cameras allow you to overlay a grid on the viewfinder - making aligning a horizon much easier.

Backgrounds



A little bit of interesting foreground adds a kind of frame, but the shot has been taken such that behind the bird highlights the bird well.

Backgrounds

You've now completed this lesson.

In this lesson, we took a look at
Backgrounds.