



Overview

Still life photography is a captivating genre that transforms ordinary objects into stunning visual narratives. By controlling composition, lighting, and mood, photographers can create art that evokes emotion and tells a story through careful arrangement and presentation of items.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the principles of composition in still life photography.
- Learn how to manipulate lighting to enhance textures and moods.
- Master the use of camera settings to achieve desired effects in still life images.

Related Reading

Before you start, read these related blog posts to deepen your understanding:

[What Is Still Life Photography](#)

[Composition In Photography](#)

Before You Shoot

- Select a theme or concept for your still life arrangement.
- Gather three to five related objects that complement each other.
- Choose a suitable background that enhances the visual appeal of your objects.
- Set up your shooting area with adequate space and lighting.
- Prepare your camera and check that it is fully charged with an empty memory card.

Assignment Tasks

1. Arrange a group of three to five related objects on a tabletop; shoot at f/8, 1/60s, ISO 100 in manual mode to achieve sharp focus and depth.
2. Create a still life scene using natural light from a window; set your camera to f/5.6, 1/125s, ISO 200, and use a reflector to bounce light onto the objects.
3. Experiment with different artificial light sources, positioning a softbox at 45°; shoot at f/4, 1/80s, ISO 400 in manual mode to create dramatic shadows.
4. Incorporate a white bounce card to fill in shadows; set your camera to f/8, 1/60s, ISO 100 in aperture priority mode while adjusting the card's position.
5. Take a series of photos from slightly different angles; use f/5.6, 1/125s, ISO 200 to maintain consistent exposure and focus.
6. Create a monochromatic still life arrangement using objects of similar color; shoot at f/11, 1/30s, ISO 100 in manual mode to enhance texture details.

Stretch Tasks

- Develop a themed still life series focusing on a specific color palette; ensure consistent lighting and shoot at f/8, 1/60s, ISO 100.
- Collaborate with another photographer to create contrasting still life images; experiment with different lighting techniques and camera settings.



DO / DON'T

DO

- ✓ Do use a tripod for stability and consistency in your shots.
- ✓ Do test different camera settings to find what works best for your specific scene.
- ✓ Do pay attention to the arrangement of objects and their relationship to one another.
- ✓ Do keep your background simple to avoid distractions from the main subject.
- ✓ Do review your images regularly to assess composition and exposure.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't overcrowd your composition with too many objects.
- ✗ Don't ignore the importance of lighting; it can make or break your still life image.
- ✗ Don't forget to clean your objects to avoid dust and fingerprints.
- ✗ Don't use mixed lighting sources without adjusting your white balance.
- ✗ Don't rush the setup; take your time to arrange and style your still life effectively.

Reflection Questions

- What emotions did you aim to evoke through your still life arrangement?
- How did the choice of lighting affect the mood of your photographs?
- What challenges did you face while arranging your still life, and how did you overcome them?
- In what ways did your camera settings influence the final outcome of your images?

Technical & Creative Focus

Technical:

- Use a tripod to stabilize your camera and avoid motion blur; set your aperture to f/8, shutter speed to 1/60s, ISO 100 in manual mode.
- Experiment with different focal lengths; try using a 50mm lens at f/4, 1/125s, ISO 200 to create a pleasing depth of field.
- Adjust white balance to match your light source; set it to 'Daylight' for natural light or 'Tungsten' for indoor lighting.
- Use spot metering to ensure proper exposure on the subject; set your camera to aperture priority mode at f/5.6, 1/80s, ISO 400.
- Take test shots and adjust exposure compensation to +1 or -1 as necessary to avoid clipping highlights or shadows.

Creative:

- Incorporate the rule of thirds to create dynamic compositions in your still life images.
- Experiment with layering textures and varying heights to add depth to your arrangement.
- Use negative space intentionally to draw attention to your main subject.
- Explore different angles and perspectives to find the most compelling view of your still life.
- Utilize props or additional elements to tell a story or enhance the theme of your arrangement.