

HACK

Snapshot

Photography can be a powerful medium to tell a story. In this activity, we'll look at how to take some stunning photos that have meaning and help to tell your story.

Time required: 20-45 minutes

Learning objectives

- Photography techniques
- Photography as storytelling

Materials

- Camera or smartphone
- Objects and backgrounds available around the house, per project
- 1-2 lamps for lighting (preferably with incandescent bulbs or warm fluorescent)

Context

Sometimes an individual photo doesn't tell us very much, but when we see it in a photo set (or collection or album), it can be part of a bigger story. In this activity, we're going to create a set of photos that use objects you own to give a visually interesting snapshot of who you are and what your life is about. The photos might not be great individually, but together as a set, they'll

start to paint a picture of the texture of your life.

There are a few things that you'll pay attention to while creating the "scene" for your photographs. To make the set representative of you, you'll pick objects that mean something to you and that you like looking at. To make it visually interesting, you'll pick intentional backgrounds that are high contrast and colorful, and be deliberate and consistent about how you take each photo. To make it a high-quality photo, you'll pay attention to lighting, resolution, and blurriness. There are many factors that can make a great photo and it can get very technical but get creative and play with it! The guidelines in this project are just that: they're guidelines, not absolute rules. The most important thing is that you take the photo that looks good to you. Trust your creative instinct. Let's start!



Activity

1. Pick (6) objects that are yours that are your favorite things to look at. They should look visually different from one another.

(Stop and take a photo)

2. Find a colorful/contrasting background for each object. Choose a background color that looks good with the object's color. If an object has a strong pattern/texture, try to find a solid color background. If an object is solid colored, try to find a background with some texture. If an object is a mix of solid and patterned, use your judgment to find a background that feels like it has the right balance.

(Stop and take a photo)

3. Okay! Now to the photos. Set up your first object on its background. Arrange/place it to look nice on the background. Try to take a photo that follows these guidelines:

- a. Take it straight on, not at an angle
- b. The only things visible in the frame are the object and background (fill up the frame completely).

- c. Use a close up view. You do not need to include the whole object in the frame. Someone looking at the photo doesn't need to understand exactly what the object is (but it's ok if they do).
- d. Pay attention to the composition (how everything is arranged in the frame.) If you want to highlight symmetry, you can place the object in the middle of the frame. Most of the time, we want to have the object off-center (about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way from the edge of the photo - this is called the "Rule of Thirds").
- e. Pay attention to your lighting. Bright, natural light is often best, if possible. Otherwise, you might need to set up a lamp nearby to illuminate your scene. Try to avoid using a flash.
- f. No shadows. Sometimes shadows are great to play within photography, but let's try to minimize them here. If you're getting shadows, you might need to mess around with the direction that your light is coming from or try to add a light that you can shine from a different direction.
- g. No blurriness. Again, blurriness can be fun to play within photography, but let's keep a clear focus here. If you're getting blurriness, you could try to use a close-up setting or take the photo from slightly further away. Try to keep super still while you take the photo (rest your arm against something while you take it to minimize movement). You could also try adding more light to your scene - if it has low levels of light then it is slower to take the photo and that can add more blurriness.
- h. High resolution. Find the settings that have to do with the photo resolution. Set it to take photos at a medium or high resolution, especially if you might want to print these photos later. Make sure to reset this back to lower resolution after this project so you don't eat up all the memory on your phone or camera!

(Stop and take a photo)

4. Great! Now repeat this process with your other (5) objects so you have a total of (6) shots that you're happy with.

(Stop and take a photo)

5. Look at the (6) photos as a set that you'd show all next to each other. These photos might not say too much individually, but together they should look cohesive and

tell a story: giving some sense of who you are through these objects. If you'd like, you can touch up your photos digitally or add filters to them. If you do this, try to be consistent and add the same filter to all (6) photos so they look like they are the same style. You can increase the saturation to make the colors brighter and more eye-catching.

(Stop and take a photo)

6. Once you're happy with your photos, feel free to display or post them! You can post them to your social media as a photo set or album. You could get (6) of the same frame and have the photos printed to hang up on your wall together in a 2x3 grid. Share your photo story with us and see what other kids have created by posting to #MadeToHack.

Reflection

How does it feel, looking at the final photo set altogether?

What do you think someone else would learn about you by looking at your photo set?

What did you learn about photography from this activity?

What would you do differently next time?

Happy Making!

-Team Hack