



SHUTTER SPEED: 1/400sec

F-STOP: F/10

ISO: 200

FOCAL LENGTH: 50mm

PHOTOGRAPHER: SCOTT KELBY

## Chapter Eleven

# Photo Recipes to Help You Get “The Shot”

## The Simple Ingredients That Make It All Come Together



Hey, it's the end of the book, and now is as good a time as any to let you in on a secret. There's really no way in hell we're going to get those really magical shots (like you see in magazines such as *Outdoor Photographer* or *Shutterbug*). That's because when we get out to that prime shooting location at the crack of dawn to hopefully capture one of these once-in-a-lifetime shots, carrying so much gear that our chiropractors are on speed dial, we'll soon find that it's too late—there are already a dozen or so photographers set up there waiting for that magical light, too. Since they were there first, the only spot left on that tiny plateau is behind them, and every shot you take is going to have some, if not all, of their camera gear fully in your frame ruining any possible chance of you getting “the shot.” But this chapter is all about recipes for getting the shot, and I've got a special recipe for this very situation. Just as the golden light appears over the horizon, you quietly slide your foot inside one of their tripod legs, then quickly pull your foot back, toppling over their entire rig, and as their thousands of dollars of gear begins to crash violently to the ground, you deftly press the cable release on your camera and capture that amazing vista as the sound of broken glass echoes off the canyon walls. Ahh, that my friends is the magical sound of you getting “the shot.” If you hear the faint sound of sobbing in the distance, it all becomes that much sweeter. Enjoy.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELLEY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** the water is very still; you can see through the water because there's very little reflection; the overall tone is blueish; the lighting and shadows are very soft; you get a full sweeping view.

- (1) This type of light doesn't happen at 5:30 p.m.—you have to get up early and be in place ready to shoot at 5:30 a.m., right before the sun comes up.
- (2) To get really still water, you also have to shoot at dawn. If you shoot this same scene at sunset, the winds will have picked up and the water won't be as smooth.
- (3) Set up your tripod without extending the legs, so your lens is close to the rocks for a low, more interesting angle (remember, most point-and-shooters would have shot it standing up—the average viewpoint we usually see, which would be boring).
- (4) To remove some of the reflection from the water and see some of those rocks, you'll need to screw on a polarizing filter and rotate the filter around until, like magic, the reflection disappears (that's right—polarizing filters are not just for skies).
- (5) Use a wide-angle lens to give the shot its "vastness." If you have an 18–80mm zoom, set it at 18mm (the widest setting for that lens).
- (6) Use aperture priority mode and choose an f-stop like f/22 to give you good sharpness throughout the entire photo, from the rocks to the mountains.
- (7) To further enhance that "blue morning" effect, if you're shooting in JPEG, change your white balance to Fluorescent, take a test shot, then look at the results in your LCD monitor. If you're shooting RAW, you can choose your white balance later in Photoshop.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



**Characteristics of this type of shot:** soft, natural light; shot on a black background, very close to the subject. This type of shot is easier than it looks.

- (1) You need a black background behind your flowers. These were sitting in a vase, with black poster board placed about 3 feet behind them. You can use black velvet (which works even better than what was used here) that you buy from the local fabric store.
- (2) You have to set up your tripod's height so it's level with the flowers. You don't want to shoot down on them—you want to shoot them at eye level, so put the vase on a table so they're up high enough, then position your tripod at the same height.
- (3) Use natural light. These were positioned about 4 feet from an open window that wasn't getting direct light. Don't shoot straight into the window, shoot from the side so your flowers are getting side lighting.
- (4) Use a macro or close-up lens to get this close to the flowers. When you use a macro (or close-up lens), the depth of field is very shallow automatically, so the flower(s) in the background will already be blurry, and that's what you want.
- (5) The f-stop was  $f/5.6$ , which again gives you maximum sharpness on the object closest to the camera, and everything behind will be blurry. It was shot in aperture priority mode (which is an ideal mode for controlling your depth of field). When shooting with a macro lens, the depth of field is much more shallow.
- (6) To get super sharp, you need to be super still; use the mirror lock-up trick in Chapter 1.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** your subject fills the frame from side-to-side; no visible sky; great contrast of color; interesting placement of subject.

(1) The star of this shot is really the contrasting colors—otherwise it would just be another “rowboat in the water” shot. There were dozens of boats in the harbor that day, but this one was the only one with such great contrasting colors. The white and salmon color against that blue water creates lots of visual interest through color.

(2) To get this wonderful light and the soft shadows, there are only two times of day you can shoot—either at dawn or dusk. This was taken at dusk, and that’s why the colors are so vivid (the colors are vivid because the sun isn’t washing them out).

(3) To get this close to the boat, you either have to be in another boat or on the dock with a long lens, which is the case here. Put on your longest zoom lens and zoom in so that the boat almost fills the width of the frame.

(4) You must use a tripod to get a shot like this for two reasons: (a) it’s dusk so the light is low and you really can’t hand-hold and get a sharp photo, and (b) you’re using a long lens. The further you’re zoomed in, the more any tiny vibration will be exaggerated and your photos will be blurry. You’ve gotta use a tripod for shots in low light with a zoom.

(5) The other key to getting a shot like this is composition. By putting the boat up top, rather than dead center, it creates loads of visual interest and draws your eye right to the subject.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** fascinating color; high contrast between the car and the background; the composition of the shot tells a story.

(1) This is one of those city life shots, and the best way to get them is to be ready for them to happen. As I mentioned in Chapter 9, when you're in a city, be ready for any shot by shooting in program mode. The flash won't pop up on you (ruining the shot), but you can basically point and shoot. This unexpected shot happened when I was walking back to my hotel in Stockholm, Sweden. It was graduation day for Stockholm's high school students, and many were riding around town in convertibles and open bed trucks cheering, waving Swedish flags, and celebrating their achievement. I had my camera over my shoulder and some incredibly delicious fries in my hands (it's a long story). Anyway, while carefully balancing my fries (so as not to lose a single delicious strand), this car pulled up beside me. My camera was in program mode, so with my one free hand I held up the camera—click—and got the shot. Had I been in aperture priority mode (my usual shooting mode), I would have missed it while setting the aperture because a split-second later the car drove away.

(2) By including just a little of the driver's arm, passenger's arm, and flag, the photo tells a story: What were they doing? Why were they carrying flags? Where are they going? However, an even better composition would have a little more room showing on the left side, in front of the car, so the car had somewhere to go.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** still water; close-up shot of the flower, but obviously not a macro shot; fairly soft light, but well-defined shadows.

- (1) This type of shot is taken in open shade (by that, I mean the water was in the shadows, under some sort of cover). That's why the shadows are pretty well defined—enough light was getting under the shade that the shadows were maintained. Look for open shade (or cloudy days where white puffy clouds act as your softbox, diffusing the light) to get shots like this, where the colors are vibrant and the light is still soft.
- (2) Use as long a zoom lens as you have to get the flowers to fill the frame as much as possible. In this case, I used a 300mm zoom, but this was a rare instance when I didn't have a tripod with me, and you generally can't hand-hold a 300mm lens steady enough to get a sharp photo, so I improvised. I shot this from a bridge overlooking a small pond, so I rested the lens on the handrail of the bridge to steady the camera and lens and it worked perfectly. In a pinch, rest your camera (or lens) on anything stable.
- (3) Everything in the shot is at the same depth (there is really no foreground or background—it's all at the same distance from the camera), so an f-stop like f/11 works well for shots like this when you want everything at the same distance in focus.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** you’re shooting a well-known subject (this lone tree in Zion National Park) in harsh direct light; it has surprisingly warm colors for a shot taken in noon-day sun.

(1) Sometimes you have to take the shot in less than ideal lighting situations (I was passing through Zion on my way to another shoot, so I could either take the shot in bad light or not take it at all). In cases like this, pull out your polarizing filter and rotate until it adds more blue to the lifeless sky.

(2) Make a composition decision that will make the shot interesting. Point-and-shooters would center the tree. You want to either: (a) make the rock below the tree have the most emphasis in the frame, or (b) make the sky above the tree have the most emphasis. (In the shot shown here, I made the rocks below the tree have more importance in the frame, but I shot it both ways—some with lots of blue sky above the tree, with the tree way down low in the frame, and then some like this, with the tree near the top, with lots of rock below it. I went with the rock shot, because I felt it was more interesting than the blue, cloudless sky.)

(3) Shoot in aperture priority mode and set your f-stop to  $f/11$ , which is a great f-stop when you want a really sharp shot and you’re not trying to put any part of the photo visibly out of focus. It’s kind of the no-brainer f-stop. So is  $f/8$ .



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** soft, directional light; visual interest through the composition; no flash used so skin tones look natural.

(1) Set your subjects up about 6 to 8 feet from an open window with natural light coming in. The key is to make sure the light coming in through that window isn't direct sunlight, so the light is soft—not harsh beams of light. Don't use flash. Let the natural light do all the work.

(2) Put your camera on a tripod. Although there is natural light, the light is lower than you'd think, and for maximum sharpness you want your camera on a tripod.

(3) Position your subjects so the light comes in from one side (in the photo above, the light is coming from a window to the right of the bride).

(4) Focus on the subject's eyes (in this case, the bride) because if her eyes aren't in focus, the shot goes in the trash.

(5) Shoot in aperture priority mode with your f-stop at f/11, which is great for portraits.

(6) By not positioning the father and bride in the dead center of the photo, it makes the portrait that much stronger and more visually appealing. Kick them over to the left or right a little bit, so they don't look dead center.

(7) The glow around them was added in Photoshop. To see this Photoshop technique step-by-step, visit [www.scottkelbybooks.com/glow](http://www.scottkelbybooks.com/glow).



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** smooth, silky water; dramatic skies; sharp detail from front to back; contrast of color in the sky and the water.

- (1) To get a shot like this, with the silky water look, requires a number of things. First among them is you have to shoot it in very, very low light (before the sun comes up or well after it goes down—this shot was taken more than one hour after sunset) because you have to leave the shutter open long enough (10 seconds or more) so the waves can wash in and out while your shutter is open—that’s what gives it the silky look. Normally, leaving your shutter open for 10 or more seconds will totally blow out your sky. That’s why you do it well after sunset—so there’s little light in the sky—but don’t worry, the long exposure will capture what little light is there, giving you a shot like the one above. If you have a neutral density gradient filter, you can also use this so you don’t have to wait quite as late to shoot, because it darkens just the sky for you.
- (2) Set your camera to shutter priority mode, set your exposure to 10 seconds, and try a test shot to see if the ground is light enough (the sky won’t be the problem). Your camera will automatically choose your f-stop in shutter priority mode.
- (3) If your camera has a feature called long exposure noise reduction, turn it on before you take your shot and it will help reduce noise in your shadow areas.
- (4) Shoot low by setting up your tripod very low to the ground (don’t extend the legs), and use either a cable release or your camera’s self timer to reduce camera shake.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** flower fills the frame; the background is out of focus; contrasting colors; visual interest through composition.

- (1) Shoot with a zoom lens—use your longest zoom to get in tight and get the flower to fill the frame. This was shot with a 200mm lens, and the flower was actually a few feet away in a garden.
- (2) Shoot at flower level. Set up your tripod so you are level with the flower (remember, don't shoot down on flowers), which requires you to squat down (knee pads are great for getting shots like this—I wish I had remembered mine that day).
- (3) Shoot in aperture priority mode and use the smallest number f-stop your lens will allow (in this case, on this particular lens, it was f/5.6) to keep the flower in focus but the background out of focus.
- (4) Now, bee patient (okay, that was lame). Actually, I saw bees flying around from flower to flower, so I sat there with my camera focused on the flower until a bee actually landed on the flower. Then all I had to do was press the shutter button.
- (5) The shot was taken in natural light, but it looks fairly soft because the sun had tucked behind some white fluffy clouds, which are great for flower shots because it diffuses the harsh direct light. I didn't set up my tripod until the sun actually went into a large bank of clouds, so patience (for the right light, and for the bee to land) pays off.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** nice light; vivid colors; soft shadows; motion, which adds excitement and interest to the photo.

(1) To get motion in the shot, you have to shoot with a slower shutter speed. Set your mode to shutter priority and choose  $1/8$  of a second or slower, so your shutter is open long enough to capture any movement as a blur. With this slow of a shutter speed, you'll need to be on a tripod so the rest of the photo remains sharp.

(2) To get the rich, vivid colors and soft light, you'll need to shoot a shot like this in the late afternoon when the sun is low in the sky, or in open shade, and this shot had a little of both. If you look closely, you'll see the sunlight is coming from the right (as seen on the singer's face) and that adds some dramatic lighting, but because this was taken downtown on the side of a building that was already mostly in the shade, the light is very soft. By the way, you'd think direct sunlight would make the colors more vivid, but it usually does just the opposite—it washes the colors out.

(3) You can shoot a shot like this in aperture priority mode, choose a play-it-safe f-stop like  $f/11$ , and in the low light of the late afternoon/early evening your camera will automatically choose a slow enough shutter speed for you that will exaggerate any motion in the shot.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** perfect light reflected on the side of the car; beautiful color in the sky; it's a sunset shot that's not just about the sunset.

(1) Shoot with a wide-angle lens, and turn your camera vertical (portrait orientation) to capture both the subject (in this case, a car) and enough of the sky to make the shot visually appealing. This was taken with a 24–120mm wide-angle lens, with the lens length at 24mm.

(2) To get a shot like this, once again you have two choices: (a) shoot at dawn, or (b) shoot at dusk (this particular shot was taken at dusk, just after the sun dipped into the ocean in the Marin Headlands overlooking San Francisco).

(3) In lighting this low, you'll have to shoot on a tripod to get a sharp photo.

(4) Compose the shot with your subject (the car) at the bottom of the frame to add visual interest, rather than centering the car in the frame which would give this more of a snapshot feel.

(5) The rest is just positioning your camera to make the most of the reflection on the side of the car. The beautiful light is really doing all the work—you're just waiting for the right moment to press the shutter release (actually, you're better off in this low light either using a cable release or your camera's self timer to reduce camera shake and give you a sharper photo).



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** interesting point of view; great contrast of colors; interesting composition.

(1) To get a shot like this, you need a very low angle to shoot from, and that’s what really makes the shot interesting—the angle isn’t one you’d see very often because your average photographer would take the shot standing up (in fact, I was surrounded by photographers doing just that. Just in case you were wondering, this shot was taken outside a Lamborghini dealer located in a downtown area). To get this shot, which was hand-held, I sat in the middle of the street while my buddy looked out for cars.

(2) To get the red car in the center in sharp focus and make the other cars softer in focus, shoot in aperture priority mode, choose a low number f-stop (in this case, it was  $f/5.6$ ), and shoot with a zoom lens (this was taken with an 18–200mm zoom, with the lens at 180mm). The reason the yellow car in front is out of focus is because of how depth of field works:  $1/3$  of the area in front of your focus area (the red car) will be out of focus, and  $2/3$  of the area behind your focus area will be out of focus.

(3) Another thing that makes this photo work (besides the interesting angle of view) is the close-up view of the cars, leaving more of the story (the rest of the cars) out of view.

(4) The rest is just the luck of coming across a row of brightly-colored Lamborghinis on an overcast day.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** colors; visual interest inside the window; composition that shows details.

- (1) The key to this shot is composition in the viewfinder. Don't try to capture the whole building or the entire wall. What makes this shot interesting is that you're not trying to capture everything—you're just showing one detail of the building, which suggests the whole. Plus, by getting in close, it begs the question: "What's inside that window? Who put those things there? What's in those blue boxes?" It makes the viewer think. Also, the window isn't dead center—it's off to the left, which adds to the visual interest.
- (2) To capture a window in a city life shot like this, you're going to need a zoom lens (this was shot with an 18–200mm zoom, with the length around 100mm).
- (3) You can shoot this in program mode and have the camera do all the work (as I mentioned earlier in the book, I often shoot in program mode while shooting city life so I can quickly get the shot without having to make any adjustments to the camera).
- (4) A polarizing filter will help you see through the glass by reducing glare.
- (5) City life is usually hard to capture with a tripod, because the shooting is often spontaneous and if you set up a tripod in a downtown area, the only spontaneous thing that will probably happen these days is the response of the security guards, so it's often best to hand-hold your shots.



## The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

**Characteristics of this type of shot:** the classic sunset shot, but not shot in the classic snapshot way.

(1) Use the widest wide-angle lens you’ve got (this was taken with a 12–24mm zoom, with the length set at 12mm for maximum wideness).

(2) What makes this work is the fact that the horizon line isn’t dead center (and sadly, dead center is where amateurs work so hard to get the horizon line). When shooting a shot like this, make your choice between these two: (a) you want to emphasize the beach, or (b) you want to emphasize the sky. In most cases, since you’re shooting a sunset after all, make the sky the star of the show by putting the horizon line in the lower third of the frame (as shown above). Now, most people shooting sunsets don’t include the beach at all—they’re attracted to the sun and the horizon, so their sunset shots are usually made up of just sea and sky, but by including a little bit of beach, it helps lead the eye and tell the story.

(3) It doesn’t much matter which shooting mode you use, because there’s no important object to focus on—you pretty much want it all in focus, so you can use program mode or aperture priority mode with your f-stop set to anything from f/8 to f/16 and everything will look sharp from front to back.

(4) I know I’ve beat this to death, but you’re shooting in low light; it’s tripod time.