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Framing



In Port Au Prince, Haiti during a meeting.

The right frame enhances an already fine photograph. Framing a picture sets it apart from its surroundings.

Think about that for a moment. That's really what photography is... setting the subject apart from its surroundings; isolating what is important from what is unnecessary.

Just as framing a finished photograph isolates it, framing what is important (the subject) before the shutter is released may turn a picture into a fine photograph.

So, a good picture starts with a frame before it ends in one.

I sometimes wonder if my camera viewfinder had a realistic looking "picture frame" around it if my images would be better.

We hear a lot of talk about learning to see. Well, one of the first steps in that process is learning to really LOOK at the entire area within the viewfinder. If we see only the subject we'll miss the trees or telephone poles growing out of a person's head. We want notice the background or strange things sticking in from the side of the frame.

Sometimes, when I teach photography, I'll have a beginner in the class who wants project their photos for the entire class to see. If they are a good sport and before I look at the first photo, I'll tell the class some things to watch for; nearly every subject will be dead center, there will be few (if any) vertical pictures, strange objects will appear in around the subject and the one who took the photos may even say, "Oh there is Aunt Sue in the background. I didn't even know she was there that day" or express surprise at something in one or more of the pictures.



Little Haitian girl at her family members graduation in Port Au Prince, Haiti.

By the time we've viewed a few dozen photos we are usually all laughing and learning to look at everything that is in the frame.

The scope on a rifle is similar to a long lens on a camera. Our objective with a scope and firearm is to center the subject dead center. If we do

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 J. M. Huber Corporation
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 Landmark Christian School
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 World Council Of Churches
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Painters and photographers have used framing as a compositional tool within the picture rather than just the wood frame. Some of the many ways you can naturally frame a subject is looking through a window and keeping the window visible to frame the subject. Using tree limbs to frame also help give the picture depth. There are many more like doors, arches and the list is endless for a natural frame for a picture.



Street scene in Port Au Prince, Haiti.

Some people, when looking through the viewfinder of the camera, are so focused on their subject that they don't see things around it (the unnecessary) that detract from it. It's like they have tunnel vision.

this with a camera, we'll have the same results as the scope—we'll kill the subject.



Praying for seminary graduates in Port Au Prince, Haiti.

Centering the subject on the cross hairs is important to be sure the subject is in focus. Many of today's digital cameras allow you to move the cross hairs in the viewfinder around so you can compose and focus at the same time. With some cameras you will need press the shutter release half way down to "hold" the focus and exposure. Either way, once this has been done, the photographer positions the subject to capture what he or she is trying to communicate.

While the camera viewfinder and the riflescope can look a lot alike you use them totally differently. When looking through one or the other keep in mind what your goal is. Do you want something stuffed or framed to hang on your wall?

It doesn't matter if you are using a scope on a rifle or a lens on a camera if you place the subject dead center you'll be able to hang something DEAD on the wall either way!