

Happy summer! This is the time of year when most pictures are taken outdoors, where automatic cameras can yield their best results. As incredibly automatic as they are, you occasionally need to outsmart them.

If you are taking a picture of a person or a group of people on a sunny day, use the flash regardless of time of day. Bright sunlight is very harsh and contrasty, which leads to poor facial lighting. If you flatten out the lighting in the foreground, you'll get a good exposure on your subject(s) while keeping your background vibrant and contrasty. Most automatic cameras determine flash use on the basis of the amount of light in the scene, not the quality of the light. You have to take your camera off auto flash, and set it to forced flash (the symbol is a small lightning bolt) to achieve this.

When we are outdoors, we have background items we don't often encounter indoors, such as telephone poles, trees, phone wires, cars, etc. When we review pictures with many of you, we see trees seemingly growing out of peoples' heads, a parked car driving out of a person's ear, etc. Most amateur photographers spend all their energy looking at their main subject, and not the overall picture. Before you snap the photo, look at everything in your picture. You can often improve your picture by taking a step forward or to the side. Sometimes squatting helps improve the composition. Changing the relative position of the subject with reference to the background can dramatically change a picture. Changing from horizontal to vertical, likewise, can be an immense improvement. Spend a minute to look at your subject through the camera before snapping the shutter; you'll see how you can improve each of your pictures.

You've heard this before – **don't take your camera to the beach unless your camera was specifically designed for it.** Just a little bit of sand and salt will ruin it permanently. Use a one time use camera (with flash) instead. There are better investments to make other than buying and knowingly ruining an expensive camera.

Madison PhotoPlus is beta testing a new, high speed printer for printing pictures from digital input (digital picture cards, CDs, etc.). It also does business cards, calendars, greeting cards and more. This is an all new technology in that the prints are archival ink jet prints. A year or so ago, ink jet technology was much simpler than today, so we can share some of what we have learned.

For commercial purposes, a manufacturer creates a closed system where the printer, software, dyes (or inks) and paper are not interchangeable. By matching all the above components, image permanence and stability are insured. Finished prints are now waterproof and come out clear and dry. There is no "haze" over the surface that some people complain about.

The actual surface of some papers expands and contracts, trapping the inks inside the outermost layer of the paper, instead of pooling on the surface, making the prints more durable. Other papers require the pooling of inks. Some inks or pigments are designed to pool, others to be absorbed into the paper. Different paper and ink combinations may yield unacceptable results, because of several reasons. The ink may be a mismatch with the paper. The printer's software may put too much or too little ink out for the ink/paper combination, with poor or unstable prints as an end product. You don't find out, unfortunately, until it is too late.

Enjoy the heat and humidity. Before you know it, we'll be ready for snow!



There is still room for the September 3 day New Milford Photo Workshop. For more details, call Madison PhotoPlus (973-966-2900) or the Photo Summit (908-273-7427).