

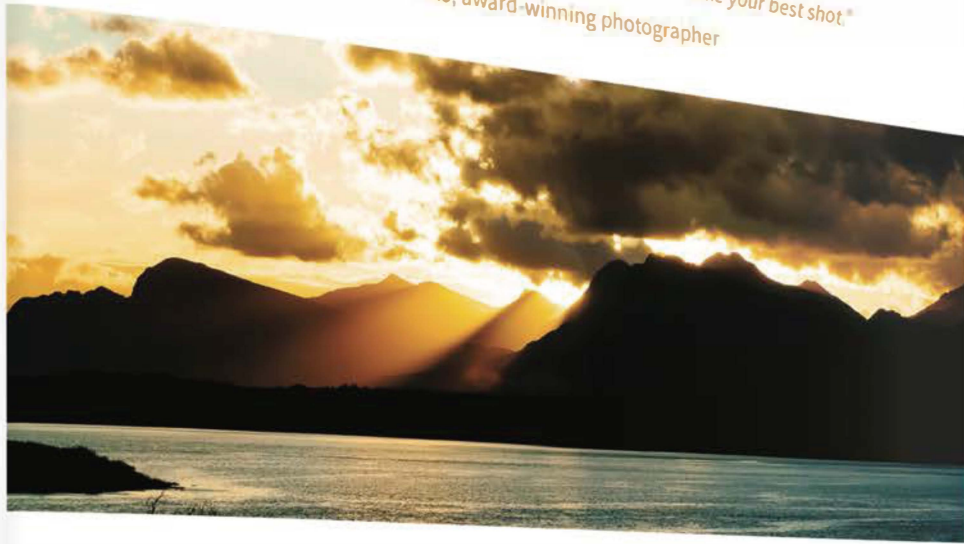
ADVANCING YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY

Secrets to Making Photographs that You and Others Will Love

Marc Silber



"This book will show you how the pros do it. Study this and take your best shot."
—Chase Jarvis, award-winning photographer



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For a **Free** copy (you just help with shipping and handling) of the **entire book** go to advancingyourphotography.com

MARC SILBER



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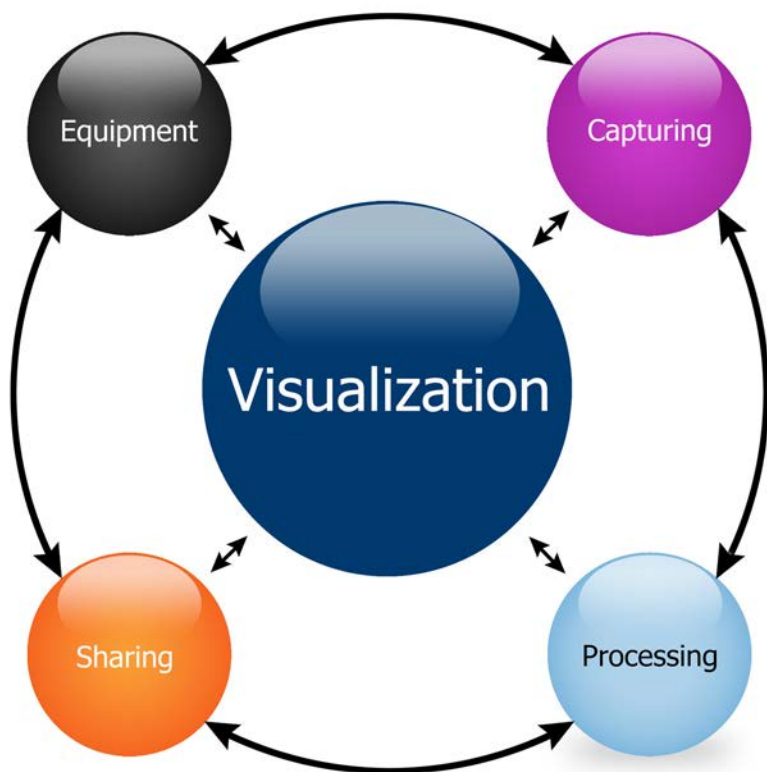
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The Five Stages of Photography



» **Five Stages of photography:** Visualization is at the center as it is involved with each of the other stages. Each stage is interactive (with arrows going both ways) since by improving one, you improve the rest. For example: by improving your skills in Processing this will improve your ability to Capture and vice versa. The same is true for each stage of photography.

CHAPTER 1

THE CYCLE OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND ITS PARTS

**“PHOTOGRAPHY IS A WAY OF FEELING, OF TOUCHING,
OF LOVING. WHAT YOU HAVE CAUGHT ON FILM IS
CAPTURED FOREVER...”**

—AARON SISKIND, PHOTOGRAPHER

There is a natural cycle to photography, as there is to all parts of life. For example, if you want to learn to cook a certain dish, you follow a natural cycle of first getting an idea of how you want your dish to turn out, consulting the recipe, and getting out your kitchen equipment—pans, cheese grater, etc. (learning how to use each if needed), then cooking the dish, which hopefully comes out how you visualized it, then you share it with others!

I’ll be covering each of these parts in detail to help you break down the whole subject into its components to understand them easily.

Now, before I dive into these, I want you to promise me you won’t stop taking photographs until you learn all these parts. As I mentioned in the introduction, I want you to take at least one photograph every single day, no matter what camera you use or how you do it. The point of *AYP* is to advance your photography, and that is done by learning and photographing continuously, okay?

Let’s begin with the word “photography” and see how each part of its cycle fits into this definition from the Oxford American Dictionary: “the art or practice of taking and processing photographs.” It comes from two Greek words: “phos,” meaning “light,” plus “graphein,” “to write.” Put them together and

you have the art of *writing with light!* Just as we write with words to tell stories that communicate ideas, feelings, and emotions, with photography you use light to convey those same ideas and feelings, but depending on your skill, perhaps even more deeply. Remember this derivation as you go through each stage of the cycle of photography: Step by step, you're improving your ability to write with light and thus tell stories with your images.

Now, where does the cycle of photography start? It turns out it doesn't start with the camera, it starts with you!



» **Visualize how you intend to create your photograph**

“LOOK AND THINK BEFORE OPENING THE SHUTTER. THE HEART AND MIND ARE THE TRUE LENS OF THE CAMERA.”

**– YOUSUF KARSH,
PHOTOGRAPHER**

That leads us to the first and most important part of the photography cycle: it's what we call **visualization**, or the process of forming a mental image of what you are going to photograph and how you

intend it to look as an end result of all the stages of photography, that's why it is in the center of the cycle. After all, to even pick up a camera, you had to first have some idea of what you wanted to capture, no matter how brief or vague. I will teach you how to

develop your powerful sense of visualization, which in itself will make you a better photographer almost instantly!

A big part of visualization is looking at others' work, both photography and other art forms. You get ideas from others about how they were able to tell the story with their camera or paintbrush. But it's not good enough to look at a photograph and say, "I like this, I don't like that." That won't let you into the inner workings of that image. Go deeper: if you like it, look at the image and see why you like it. Did it have an emotional impact on you, and if so, what was it?

If you don't like it, see if you can dig in and find out why. Maybe there was something distracting about it or it had a technical flaw. Or it simply didn't interest you.

This kind of careful looking will help you when you go out to capture your own images. You're building a kind of visual collection in your mind from which to work.

When I was learning photography as a pre-teen and teenager, I looked at a few photographers and their books over and over, and I recommend you do, too. Google them to see their images:

Edward Weston: He is the master of capturing the beauty of forms, often everyday objects, whether a pepper, a tree or even a toilet. He also captured the form of nudes and landscapes, many times woven together in his unique and powerful way. Look at his work and you'll see why I was so inspired by him.

Henri Cartier-Bresson: He was the master of “capturing the moment”—shooting the events of the day, whether it was a formal ball or the man on the street. He had the ability to make art out of everyday events and bring us into direct contact with them. Cartier-Bresson used a Leica, a small handheld camera.

By closely studying the work of these two master photographers, you will get some insight into two of the most prolific and popular photographers of the twentieth century, and by looking deeply, you can find out why they became that way. I also invite you to search for photographers you admire and study their work as I’ve described.

Another book of the time that I looked at often for inspiration is “The Family of Man,” which began as an exhibition and later became a book. It is a collection of 503 images by 273 photographers from 68 countries; each image tells its own story, but like pages of a book, they fit together to tell a whole story about mankind.

There were many, many other books and exhibits that inspired me, and I’m sure you have your own favorites too. These will all help you to develop your own “voice” as a photographer. Let’s talk about how to use visualization when you go out to take a photograph. Instead of being someone who just pushes the shutter and snaps a lot of pictures (snapshots), a photographer first visualizes the image he or she wants and then goes through the steps to capture it. The moment I really learned to visualize is when I became a photographer, and it has been a lifelong love affair ever since.



The next stage of the cycle is **knowing your camera** and equipment. To bring to life what you have visualized, you have to know your tools and know them well. I will demystify your camera and make it an easy-to-use set of tools that will help you create the images that you love.

You might have felt intimidated when you first picked up a professional camera, it seems like there are just so many knobs, buttons, and menus and things. How could you possibly know them all? The good news is you don't need to!

For over 100 years cameras have had only four or five key controls that you had to know how to work with. The same is mostly true today.

Let's go back to the kitchen and imagine you were learning to cook in a well-equipped kitchen—which made your head spin with all the appliances, cooking utensils, pans—and on and on!

But let's say you decided to watch and follow a good cook at work who made it look easy and simple. You noticed they also used the same key "tools" over and over, no matter how many dishes they cooked: They used knives to cut with, they used pots and pans of different sizes, spatulas and spoons—and hey, they seemed to do all their work with just a few key tools of the same kind! Then it really hit home that it's simple and that you too could learn to cook!

The same is true with photography: once you learn the five or so key controls, you will simply use them over and over again, no matter what type of photograph you're creating. When we get to that section, we'll cover them all so that you know how to use them, then with practice, these will become instinctive for you.

When your visualization is coupled with your ability to use your camera, you will then be able to capture the image that you want, so **capturing** the image is a blend of those two stages, but forms its own stage in the cycle. When you go to the next stage of processing you may find you will change how you develop an image, but you must know how to expose it and capture it correctly in the first place with your camera and your other tools.

As an analogy, if you were recording music, you would need to do so in a way that captures it faithfully and clearly, so when you play it back you hear clear sounds that are harmonious with other instruments and sound pleasing. Have you ever been to a concert where you were so totally captivated with the performance, you shot video of it on your phone and played it back the next day for a friend? I doubt they had the same experience you did—your friend may have smiled weakly and tapped their foot a bit and hoped you turned it off soon!

I'm sure you've had the same experience with a photograph of a sunset. Standing there, you were completely surrounded by a moment so beautiful that you knew you couldn't help but get a killer image of it. You took the photograph, but then looked at it the next day and thought. "Why are the colors so muted? The sunset itself is so insignificant! I'm ready to delete the whole image!" Then maybe you might see a pro's shot of the very same sunset that blows you away!

What happened? It's all about knowing how to use your camera to make it capture (record) the image you visualized. That's where we'll be going, and that is what is so captivating about photography: you will continuously learn to tell your stories by writing with light with increasing effectiveness.



» Processing your images in Lightroom

The next stage is **processing** those images. This is where you play the music that you captured in the last stage. In our modern world this is mostly done digitally, so we will focus on the use of Adobe Lightroom, which I highly recommend as your

processing platform. But if you're using another processing platform, you'll find instructions when you get to Chapter 5.

Remember, the process of visualization is at the center of and carries through each stage in the cycle of photography: What you first visualized and then captured with your camera now needs to fully come to life as your final image. This is where you learn to interpret your image and have it express what you saw and felt and what you want your viewer to feel when you share it in the next stage.

When I was twelve, my teacher, who happened to be a photographer, asked if I wanted to see how negatives were developed and printed. I jumped at the chance, but really had no idea of the magic I was about to experience. He showed me how to develop a roll of film. That was exciting, but it wasn't until it was dried and he put a strip in the enlarger that I began to realize that this was going to be a passion. I stood by in amazement as I watched him expose the paper with the enlarger and then place the paper in the developing tray. Moving it gently back and forth, with only faint yellow light to see by in the darkroom, I could gradually perceive an image forming on the paper, stronger and stronger as the seconds ticked by. Then there it was, fully formed, so he placed it briefly in the "stop bath" to do just that—stop the development. Then into the fixer bath, so it would remain fixed in the process and not fade in the light. And finally a long rinse in water to wash out all the chemicals, which completed the whole development cycle.

Once I had experienced this magic, I was hooked! It wasn't long before I had convinced my parents to allow me to convert the laundry room/shop to do triple duty as a darkroom. Now the magic was complete because I was fully in control of the process!

When all this came together for me and I compared my new final prints that I had made myself to the washed-out, muddy, tiny prints that the drugstore had previously provided me, I never looked back. I was now the master of my own ship as a photographer, and it didn't matter if I hit the rocks: I learned from every failure, and my successes as a photographer far outstripped the failures.

When I learned to process my images and turn them into prints, I became a "Photographer" with a capital P!

Although the process is far easier in the digital darkroom (and believe me, I don't miss breathing chemicals and getting them on my skin), the darkroom process is mimicked in the process of creation using Photoshop and LightRoom.

Here's more good news: It's far easier to become skilled at LightRoom than it ever was to work in a darkroom. Also, once you work out the settings for your "development" they remain that way until you change them, making the process so much easier.

"But Marc, what about all those sliders, panels, and menus? How will I ever learn all that?!" Hold on, just as I told you that there are only about five key control points for a camera that you need to master, there are a limited number for processing that you need to understand and be able to control.

The number of these comes to about a dozen or so, but taking it step by step, you'll get there with practice so that you can develop images that you're really happy with, and hopefully love!



Now you're ready for the final stage of **sharing** your photographs. The key point is that it's not enough for you to be in love with your own photographs, you need to share them and show the world what you have created!

The process of visualization guides your sharing as well: when you first had the idea for your image, what did you intend to do with it at the end of the cycle? You might have thought it would make a cool post for Instagram or Facebook, or perhaps during the processing stage you realized it would make a great print for your wall.

Now you're going to decide where and how to share it. It's easy to share to social media using Lightroom. This is made even easier because you can sync the desktop version of the software with your smartphone, which makes it really simple to post your images. I also want you to make your best images into prints, in keeping with the long heritage of photography. There is something so satisfying about having the photographs you have envisioned printed and in your hands. You'll never have the same feeling from looking at them on a computer screen. Then take the ones you really love and have them framed, or frame them yourself, and hang them well, sharing your work in your environment. It fully completes the cycle of photography when others view your work and experience an emotional impact from it.

Before you get discouraged by now having yet another whole new set of skills to learn to make professional prints, let me tell you we're not going there. I use a lab to make these prints. It's far easier and more cost-effective to send photos to a lab to get high-quality prints without the hassle and expense of setting up your own printing. Some will argue with me on this point, and those who do can certainly go ahead and make their own prints. But for most of us, it simply doesn't make sense. I'll give you some options for working with your lab in a hands-on way when we get to that chapter.

I feel the same way about framing. I used to do it myself, but for many years now I have teamed up with a professional framer to help me carry out this final stage of visualization of my image. We'll talk about these options as well later on.

What if you want to get your work into shows, or into stores? Yes, I'll give you some easy advice on how to get started. You may well

find that you want to go professional and make photography your career or a second job. Once you have mastered the above steps, you can go in that direction.

Think of moving along on these stages as a spiral staircase rather than an elevator that goes one floor at a time. By climbing the staircase, you will find yourself back at the position where you started, but at a higher level each time you climb up. Each step of the cycle of photography operates interactively with the others. For example, you'll find learning to process will help you to improve your visualization skills. Also, by sharing with others, you'll find out what they see and feel when looking at your images, and of course that helps you refine the whole process to better communicate your vision.

I'm happy to be here to help you with your lifelong journey of learning and improving your skills as a photographer.

For a **Free** copy (you just help with shipping and handling) of the entire book go to advancingyourphotography.com