

How to Photograph Autumn

Autumn is one of the best times of the year if you're a fan of photography. The changing leaves, unique light, and shifting landscape provide an exceptional opportunity to get some interesting shots. While there are no hard rules when it...

Method 1 of 4:

Capturing the Autumn Light

- 1. Head out during the first few weeks of fall when the leaves are changing.** The leaves don't change colors throughout the entire season, and you may only have 2-3 weeks to get those beautiful reds, yellows, and oranges as the trees begin to change. Pay close attention to the leaves and look at local weather reports to see if there is mention of leaves beginning to change. This will give you enough time to get out and take advantage of the changing colors.^[1]
 1. You don't have to go out to shoot the leaves changing, but that's generally the most popular way to get that autumn vibe to come through in your photos.
 2. The grass also tends to be greener in the early fall, so even if you aren't planning on shooting trees this is still the best time to go out.
 3. In the United States for example, the leaves typically change color in late September or early October. It all depends on the climate where you live, though.
- 2. Wait for a really sunny day if you're looking for the brightest colors.** If you're really looking for striking colors, shoot on a clear, sunny day. Full sunlight will give you the strongest light and the leaves, water, and colors will all pop a lot more than they normally would. Sunny days are generally warmer as well, which makes this the best choice if you're not a huge fan of the cold.^[2]
 1. You can also head out on a sunny day with a few clouds if you're shooting wide-angle landscape shots. A few distant clouds in the background can help add some depth to larger landscape compositions.
- 3. Go out on an overcast day to get even, soft lighting.** When picking a day to go out shooting, an overcast or cloudy sky isn't particularly a bad thing. This is actually a great time to get some smooth, even light to equally cover landscapes and subjects. The colors won't necessarily pop as much, but it'll be easier to get some lovely, charming light.^[3]
 1. If you're going out on an overcast day to shoot landscapes, you'll need slightly longer exposures. Bring a tripod with you to compensate for the lower amount of light and prevent blurry compositions.
- 4. Shoot during the golden hour to get the most dynamic lighting.** The golden hour refers to the periods in the morning or at night when the sun is lowest in the sky. These two timeframes are excellent if you're looking for the most dynamic lighting possible. When shooting during the golden hour, shoot with the sun on the side or at your back to get dynamic light and avoid washing out your shots.^[4]
 1. Look up the sunrise and sunset time the day before you're planning on shooting to make sure that you get there right before the sun comes up or goes down.

5. **Go out in the morning after a cool night to capture classic autumn fog.** One of the most popular elements of autumn photography is the early morning fog that coats the ground. If you're looking for that morning mist, go out in the morning after a colder night to increase the chance that you find that dense, thick fog.^[5]
 1. When shooting fog, use a slightly longer shutter speed than you normally use to capture it. Don't forget the tripod if you're going out in the morning looking for fog.
6. **Take photos with the sun at your back to illuminate your shots.** To maximize your colors and get the brightest shots, always keep the sun at your back when you're shooting. You don't have to do this if you're not trying to get the brightest colors possible, but if you're looking specifically for those brilliant shades of fall, this is the best way to shoot.^[6]

Variation: Shooting with the sun at your side is better if you're going for a deeper shot with a stronger perspective and more dynamic shadows.

7. **Use a polarizing filter for your DSLR to make colors pop and reduce glare.** A polarizing filter is a small cap that slides over your lens to filter out excess light and strengthen colors. The polarizing filter will make the sky a little deeper, colors a lot richer, and glares a bit softer. These effects will really enrich your autumn shots and make them feel more festive and seasonally-appropriate.^[7]
 1. DSLR stands for digital single-lens reflex. These are the bigger cameras you see with interchangeable lenses. If you're just getting into photography, buy a DSLR if you want to learn how to control your shots and give yourself a wide variety of shooting options.

Method 2 of 4:

Finding Subjects to Photograph

1. **Find a serene park or forest reserve to take some great shots.** For a wide range of classic autumn shots, swing by a large park or forest reserve and take a walk. These areas tend to be the best for a variety of autumn shots, especially if you're looking for bodies of water or animals to shoot.^[8]
 1. Bring a friend or partner and treat it like a comfortable hike if you want to passively look for photos.
 2. State parks tend to have more variety than local parks. If you're looking to make a day out of it, pick a state park near your home and take a short road trip to find a wide array of subjects to shoot.
2. **Shoot some portraits using the autumn colors as a backdrop.** The fall colors and crisp light makes a phenomenal background for portraits. Take a friend out while the leaves are changing and shoot a variety of portraits from a wide array of angles. You can even have a third person throw some falling leaves up over the subject and shoot with a faster shutter speed to recreate the classic look of falling leaves raining over the subject.^[9]
 1. Fall weddings and engagements are popular for a reason. The changing leaves give off a comfy, intimate vibe that feels quite romantic. This is great opportunity if you're shooting couples or heading out with your partner. Put the timer on and shoot some self-portraits with your loved one to have some fun while you're shooting!
3. **Stop by a lake or river to catch reflections or moving water.** The contrast between water and the bright autumn colors can create a stunning look. Look for lakes or rivers to shoot some powerful landscape shots. Keep an eye out for dynamic reflections or running water to mix your shots up.^[10]

Tip: One popular move is to set the camera on a tripod and set the shutter speed to 2-5 seconds in front of a river in low light. Then, take your shot with the camera on a tripod. The long shutter speed will give the

flowing river a mesmerizing, hazy look while everything else will be perfectly defined.

4. **Keep an eye out for animals to get some impromptu wildlife shots.** Squirrels, deer, raccoons, and birds tend to be highly active in the fall as they're preparing for the winter months. Keep an eye out when you're shooting to look for candid wildlife shots. Look for movement in your peripheral vision while you're framing a landscape or portrait up and be ready to shoot on a moment's notice.^[11]
 1. Keep your head on a swivel if you're out wandering through a secluded forest or nature reserve. You never know when a great shot can present itself.
 2. Early fall is also a great time to head to an outdoor zoo and shoot some animals before they're taken inside for the winter.
5. **Get close to the ground and find those little autumn moments.** Your first inclination during autumn may be to shoot the changing leaves and striking sky, but the changing season impacts the ground as well. Look for mushrooms, fallen leaves, or mossy rocks that may make for excellent shots.^[12]
 1. You can shoot perpendicular to the ground, or cast a subject near the earth in the foreground with a low aperture setting (like f/2-5) to blur out objects in the background for a stunning shot.
6. **Shoot wide-angle landscapes with the sky dominating the shot.** You can use a real wide-angle lens, but you can also recreate the wide-angle look by zooming all the way out, shooting further away from the subject, and arranging your shot a little differently. In most landscape shots, the ground takes up 2/3 of the frame. By swapping your focus to the sky and making the ground take up 1/3 of the shot, you'll capture a wider, fuller landscape.^[13]
 1. Shoot with no clouds in the sky for a more surreal, artistic look. If there are a few clouds in the background, it'll give the shot more depth and look more natural.
 2. An overcast sky will give wide-angle landscapes a more ominous vibe.
 3. Keep the aperture as high as possible for these shots.
7. **Compose elegant landscapes with the trees towering in the frame.** For softer, more intimate landscapes, shoot a traditional landscape. Autumn is a great time for classic landscape shots and there's nothing wrong with these shots. Orient the camera so that the sky takes up 1/3 of the frame. Look for openings between trees or gaps in the forest to shoot landscapes with an opening in the composition to create a sense of depth.^[14]
 1. Landscape shots are popular in autumn for a reason. This is the best time of the year to get those brilliant landscapes!

Method 3 of 4:

Using the Best Camera Settings

1. **Choose the lowest ISO possible to keep the colors and textures rich.** If you're looking to capture striking colors in their full clarity, use the lowest ISO speed possible. Ideally, keep the ISO at 100 or 200. The lower the ISO is, the smoother your image will be. The higher the ISO is, the more noise and grain will appear in the shot.^[15]
 1. ISO stands for International Standard of Organization. It's basically how your camera interprets light when you press the shutter button.
 2. The lower the ISO, the higher the shutter speed needs to be. You can compensate a little for this by lowering the aperture, though!
 3. In really low-light conditions, feel free to move up to 400 ISO if you just can't get enough light for a clear shot.
2. **Use a high aperture for landscapes and a low aperture to isolate subjects.** For landscapes, get everything in focus to create a rich shot by keeping the aperture as high as possible. Anything higher than

f/18 will be ideal. If you're shooting a subject in the foreground and want to make it pop against a blurry background, choose the lowest aperture setting in your camera.^[16]

1. The aperture, or f/stop, refers to how wide the lens opens when you take a photo. The higher the aperture is, the wider the lens gets which results in more definition. The lower it is, the more subjects in the background will be blurred out.
2. Higher aperture isn't better than lower aperture and vice versa. It's more about what type of shot you're looking for.
3. **Select the lowest shutter speed required for a crisp composition.** For most shots, aim for a shutter speed between 1/60-1/400. However, you may need to increase this speed if you're shooting in low light or using a low ISO with a high aperture. Generally speaking, opt for the lowest shutter speed you can to avoid blurring out objects in the photograph while still getting enough light in the shot.^[17]
 1. Shutter speed refers to how long the lens is open. The longer the lens is open, the more time light has to illuminate the shot. However, high shutter speeds result in blurry images if the camera moves at all.

Tip: The trick with autumn photography is finding the right balance between ISO, aperture, and shutter speed. Since you need a low ISO and you often want a high aperture, you'll often need a higher shutter speed. Finding the right balance between these three settings is essential to getting a great shot.

4. **Set the white balance to the warm or landscape to get the colors right.** White balance refers to the way your camera interprets light to capture colors. Since different wavelengths require different white balances, set the white balance to 'warm' or 'landscape' to capture the softer reds and yellows of the fall.^[18]
 1. If you take a photo and the colors are completely out of whack, it's probably the white balance. White balance can dramatically modify how colors look.
5. **Use a tripod to stabilize the camera and avoid blurriness.** A tripod will keep the camera from moving around while you're taking your shot. Putting the camera on a tripod will dramatically reduce the odds that the camera moves while the lens is open. This is especially key for landscapes that you're shooting in low light since you'll likely require a longer shutter speed.^[19]
 1. This is less important for candid shots in high-light conditions with a lower aperture.
6. **Shoot without flash to avoid washing out the colors.** Flash is great if you're shooting at night or want a strong front light, but it's not ideal for autumn shots where the colors are really important. Since flash only illuminates the area 2–16 ft (0.61–4.88 m) in front of the camera, it'll ultimately damage the color clarity of the background.^[20]

Method 4 of 4:

Taking the Photo

1. **Change the settings on your camera based on the light and your goal.** Once you select your subject and decide to take your shot, adjust the aperture, ISO, and shutter speed based on how much light you have and what you're trying to accomplish. Take 5-10 seconds to adjust the settings before lining your shot up.^[21]
 1. For example, for a landscape shot during the golden hour, you may start with an ISO of 100, aperture of f/23, and shutter speed of 1 second.
 2. If you want an intimate portrait with a blurry background in full sun, you may start with an ISO of 100, aperture of f/6, and shutter speed of 1/300.

2. **Take 2-3 shots using the multishot mode on your camera.** Instead of taking a single shot, adjust the shooting mode to take multiple photos when you hold the button down. This will give you multiple options and prevent a single gust of wind from ruining the clarity of a shot as the leaves move around on the ground. Hold the shutter button down for 1 second to take a handful of shots.^[22]
 1. Unless you're shooting on film, you're not risking anything by taking multiple photos. You'll give yourself more shots to choose from when you take multiple shots.
3. **Review the photos and take new shots with fresh settings.** After the first round of photos, review the shots that you've taken. Look at the colors, composition, and clarity. Make a second round of adjustments as needed to improve the shot and take a second set of images. Repeat this process as many times as it takes until you get a shot you're happy with.^[23]

Finding the Perfect Shot:

If the colors are dull, increase your shutter speed to get more light in the shot. Toy around with the white balance settings if the colors are totally off.

If the shot is blurry, try raising the shutter speed first. Then, if it's still blurry, lower the aperture. In dire situations, raise the ISO to compensate for a blurry image.

If the depth of field is wrong, adjust the aperture to change how the camera reads the foreground and background.

If you're not happy with the light or composition, try shooting from a different angle where the sun is resting at a different angle to the camera.

You finished reading the article "**How to Photograph Autumn**" edited by the [TipsMake](#) team. We hope this article has provided you with many useful tech tips and tricks. You can search for similar articles on tips and guides. Thank you for reading and for following us regularly.