TECHNIQUE TIPS CARDS
CREATIVE STILL LIFE

USE THE RULE-OF-ODDS TO
COMPOSE A FRUITY
MASTERPIECE

SET UP YOUR CAMERA FOR
PERFECT
EXPOSURES

CHECK IMAGES TO
GUARANTEE
ACCURATE FOCUS

CONTROL LIGHTING TO
CREATE DRAMATIC
SHADOWS

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How to set up your camera for perfect exposures

- **USE APERTURE-PRIORITY**
  This handy setting allows you to adjust the aperture width (which is responsible for regulating the amount of light that comes through the lens), then the camera automatically works out the other settings you need. Set your aperture to f/8 in order to ensure that all the fruit in your composition is perfectly sharp and in focus.

- **WATCH YOUR SPEED**
  While aperture-priority allows you to control over your depth-of-field, your camera may react with a slow shutter speed, which could result in motion blur. To combat this, you can raise your ISO (which increases the sensitivity of the sensor). You can work up to ISO 800 before you start to see any noticeable noise in your image, so be wary of going higher than this. However, many JPEG modes will reduce the noise in-camera for better quality.

- **BOOST YOUR JPEG**
  We want to see your unedited JPEG straight from your camera, so you can’t process your photos in editing software before sending them in. However, that doesn’t mean that you can’t give your images a little boost in-camera. Go into your camera’s shooting menu and go to Set Picture Control. Select the Vivid setting to boost the saturation of the colours in your shot.

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How to use the rule-of-odds to compose a fruity masterpiece

- **USE THE RULE-OF-ODDS**
  When composing your food still life it’s best to conform to the rule-of-odds, which dictates that an odd number of objects are more visually pleasing than an even number. For our purposes, it’s really only the larger, more prominent items in the shot that need to conform to the rule, so make sure there are three or five strawberries instead of four or six. Smaller fruits can be used at will.

- **GO MINIMALIST**
  With the vast array of exotic fruit that’s available in supermarkets now that the summer has officially started, you may feel tempted to throw in as many different types of fruit as possible. However, you’ll soon find that the more you stuff into your composition, the messier it’ll look. A good rule of thumb is to compose your shot and then take away one element. This will save you from a cluttered image.

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How to control lighting to create dramatic shadows

- **USE NATURAL LIGHT**
  Wait for a cloudy day in order to make the most of the evenly diffused light. Then set up your fruit next to a window, aligning it so that the light casts a shadow to the bottom or to the side of the pieces of fruit, rather than from above them. If you happen to be working on a bright, sunny day, then simply ensure that your fruit still life isn’t in direct sunlight.

- **LIFT THE SHADOWS**
  If you find that the light in your shot is too unbalanced, you can use a reflector to lift the shadows. Reflectors are readily available at reasonable prices, but if you don’t have one you can also make use of white or silver pieces of paper or card. Simply place your reflective surface on the opposite side of your fruit, facing the window. This will bounce back some of the light, making the shadows less harsh and creating balanced lighting.

- **FLAG YOUR SUBJECT**
  Alternatively, if you think that the light in your image is too evenly lit, you may want to flag your fruit instead. Flagging is essentially the same as using a reflector, except you’ll be producing the opposite outcome. Place a black piece of card opposite to the window and position it appropriately so that it absorbs some of the light on the fruit, producing dramatic shadows.

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How to check images to guarantee accurate focus

- **USE SINGLE-POINT AF**
  Setting Single-Point AF will let you move the point of focus (as shown by a small red box) around your composition. As we are shooting with a mid-aperture of f/8, you have a relatively large depth-of-field to work with, which will help you make sure that everything is in focus. Place your focus point over an area of contrast, otherwise your camera will struggle to focus.

- **CHECK YOUR SHOT**
  After you’ve taken your first shot it’s imperative that you ensure that your composition is perfectly sharp. Luckily, many cameras allow you to zoom into your image when reviewing it. Press the Play button to bring up the image you’ve shot and then use the magnification buttons to zoom in. You can then use the D-pad to navigate around the image, which will allow you to double-check each part of your shot.

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