

Guide to

Street Photography

Do's and Don'ts





I'm Simon Ellingworth, an international award-winning photographer and educator, who specialises in street, available light portraiture, composition and black and white photography.

During my workshops I like to challenge people's thinking, change the way they see the world, and provide technical liberation from their camera with simple new ways and techniques to craft compelling images through a lens.

Welcome to my RPS quick guide to the do's and don'ts of street photography. I'm one of the many experienced tutors that support RPS members in their passion for photography.

This guide offers you some quick and easy advice for taking Street photography and getting great results. Find out exactly what street photography is, whether you need permission and I'll give you 6 tips to help you get great shots straight away.

If you enjoy this guide, take a look at some of the courses and workshops, I highlight at the end. These are all offered by the RPS to support your photographic journey. I'd also recommend becoming a member, there is a strong photographic community in the RPS, panning all levels of experience. You'll meet like-minded photographers who are also exploring the art.

Good luck with your adventures in street photography.

Simon Ellingworth



We're committed to photography for everyone.

Our commitment as an educational charity is to bring photography to everyone. As a member you'll be supporting an organisation that provides a platform for photographers of all levels, while following in the footsteps of 1000s of photographers.

The Royal Photographic Society is the earliest established international photographic society, and as the interests and needs of our members have evolved, so too has The RPS. However, our original aims of promoting the art and science of photography are as relevant today as they were back when we first formed.

We've been inspiring and supporting RPS members on their photographic journey for over 170 years. Let us do the same for you.

Join the Royal Photographic Society as a member at **rps.org/street**

What is street photography?

Let's start with a definition, as the name is totally misleading! Street photography is candid and unscripted moments captured in a public place.

That sounds simple enough, but street photography doesn't need to be on a street at all. In fact, if you look on Instagram, many of the pictures are taken in shopping centers and on public transport.

2 Do I need the subject's permission?

So, let's take a quick look at the law, which varies from country to country, but in the UK, you can take anyone's picture without their permission if they are in a public place. Now that's great but I've seen award winning pictures of people in the Tate Modern, which is private property, so how does that work?

The reality is, if you are discreet and moreover sensible, most locations tolerate street photography. If someone spots you and says 'no' then smile and move on. That said, you could be asked to leave by a security person. If so, don't take it personally, they're just doing their job, so be polite and comply.



Suggestion:

Commercial use will need a model release form so keep a model release form on your phone for easy access.

Candid and Street portraiture

Finally, let's challenge the term "candid" as most street photography except for Street Portraiture is candid and you will not need to approach people as such.

In the sub-genre of street portraiture, you would ask a random stranger if you could take their picture, and this would then be collaborative.

If you do fancy trying this, you'll find that touristic locations work better, and I'd strongly suggest a great time to try is during an event when people have got dressed up and are in the mood. Avoid people walking, you want people who are loitering, such as someone on their phone.

Street portraiture and approaching people is a very specific skill and here at the RPS we offer a **brilliant 3 week Zoom workshop called Natural Light Portraiture** which not only covers these topics in depth, but also allows you to organise a shoot and get feedback on the final week.

The **RPS also has a great model release form** if you need one, but, for street portraiture as you will not profit commercially from it, it is not required. However, do take their details so you can share the images and ask for permission by email should you wish to enter a picture of them into a competition as a courtesy.



💡 Suggestion:

Use reflections to add detail - They can add balanced symmetry and depth to a cityscape. Reflections in windows, shiny buildings, and puddles also help create abstract images. These added reflections make people see the city in new and exciting ways. Example: Using a polarising filter, on a camera, will help control reflections, as you rotate the filter reflections will appear and disappear."

Six top tips on how, when, where and what you'll need to get started:

1. Choose the best location

Let's start with the where. The easiest place to get started is anywhere where having a camera doesn't make you stand out. Tourist towns, cities, the zoo, events such as a county or country show, a horserace - anywhere where people are being people.

2. Experiment with light conditions

You can do street photography anytime and in any light conditions!
Top Tip: Go out in low light or the rain to get more unusual images such as reflections.

3. Revisit a location again to find new perspectives

Try going to a location several times and challenge

yourself creatively to find a perspective you haven't found before.

4. Start by using your camera phone

The easiest way to start is with your camera phone. Nobody will look twice at you and it's a great way to build your confidence and get closer than you might with a camera.

5. Try a compact or mirrorless camera

Once you graduate from the phone, the greatest style of camera for street is a compact or mirrorless, with a screen that flips to 45 degrees. Also, try different focal lengths, my current favourite is an 80mm and it's a complete gamechanger.

It gives you extra reach, so you don't have to get too close, a more intimate perspective and the ability to throw backgrounds out of focus to isolate a subject.

6. Most importantly, don't look at the subject

I've saved the best till last: You never look at the subject. (Unless of course, you want them to see you as part of your artistic intent.) To achieve this, you flip the rear screen to 45 degrees and shoot with the camera at waist height. Looking at the subject only through the camera's screen. This is absolutely transformative and as close to a cloak of invisibility as you can get.



Suggestion:

You can use exposure lock on a camera: Giving you the control over the exposure level. Allowing you to shoot multiple photos of the same scene or area without having to adjust settings each time.

Next Steps:

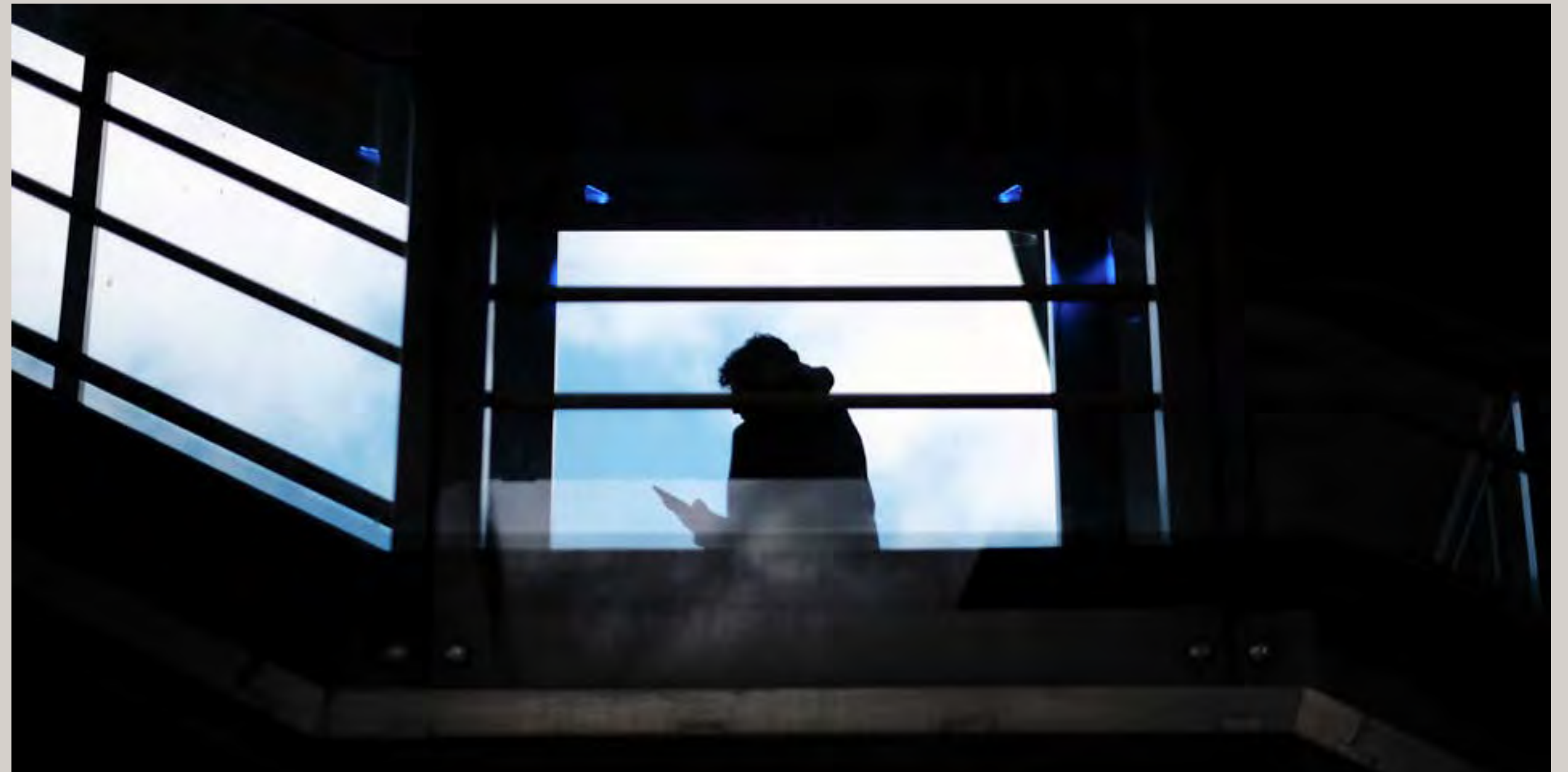
The RPS is dedicated to bringing you world-class photography education in a variety of forms to suit your personal needs and lifestyle.

Our program starts with either an **on-demand video beginners' workshop** that you can watch as and when you like.

Or, our very popular brand new **2 hour interactive Zoom street photography taster** with me 17 times international award-winning photographer, **Simon Ellingworth**. These are in the evening to make access as simple as possible and only have a nominal charge to attend.

If you get the bug, I run a **6 week Zoom foundation course** to equip you with the right mindset and everything you need. These lead onto 3 levels of **16 week programs** where you will shoot a project every other week and present it to the group for feedback.

So, if you have a mild street itch or want to take a deep dive, we have the perfect solutions made with you in mind.





About the RPS

Everything you need for your photographic journey

Whether you simply enjoy taking photos and want to learn more, or you're a professional looking to raise your profile, this membership has everything you need.

Get photographic inspiration, community, recognition and knowledge with RPS membership.

Become a member at rps.org/street

Expand your skills and knowledge.

With over 200 learning experiences to learn every year, our members trust us to develop their skills and knowledge.

Find inspiration and stay inspired.

Through our journals, awards, exhibitions, newsletters, community, and more, we've been inspiring photographers for over 170 years.

Be part of a thriving community.

Almost 600 members volunteer to connect with member communities, driving discussion, sharing experiences, and supporting learning.

Get recognition as a photographer.

We recognise 1000s of photographers every year through distinctions, competitions, exhibitions, awards and financial support in the form of bursaries.