

# **BLACK CAT PHOTOGRAPHIC RULES-OF-THUMB**

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*Rules-of-thumb are a kind of tool. They help identify a problem or situation. They are easy to remember guides that fall somewhere between a mathematical formula and a shot in the dark.*

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**1. FULL FRAMING** (taking a walk around your view-finder)- Scan the top, sides and bottom of your view-finder. Your main subject should nearly touch these boundaries. If it doesn't, move closer to the subject.

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**2. SUNNY 16-** On a bright sunny day, set your aperture on 16 and your shutter speed as close as possible to your films ISO rating. This will produce properly exposed pictures with all films and all film speed ratings.

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**3. FULL MOONEY 11-** For proper exposure of a full moon, set your aperture on 11 and your shutter speed as close to your films ISO rating as possible.

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**HALF MOONEY 8-** Use the above rule for shutter speed and use an aperture of 8 for pictures of a half moon.

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**QUARTER MOONEY 5.6-** Use the above rule for shutter speed and use an aperture of 5.6 for pictures of a quarter moon.

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**4. SUNSETS -** Meter the area of sky directly above sun and use this setting as the basis for exposure. Using one f-stop less light will produce the effect of a picture taken one half hour later.

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**5. PHOTOGRAPHIC GRAY CARD-** When the camera meters a mid-tone the scene will be properly exposed.

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**6. FILM SPEED-** Use the lowest film speed (ISO) you can to preserve sharpness, color saturation and reduce grain.

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**7. FLASH FILL -** For flash use outdoors, place the ISO setting for the film you are using on your camera meter. Double this number and place it on the flash ISO dial. Meter the scene with the camera and select an f-stop. Match this f-stop requirement with the automatic flash color mode controls. Shadows will be filled with flash lighting and appear one stop darker than the fully illuminated subject.

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**8. BRACKETING -** Expose for a mid-tone then adjust exposure to +1 and -1. For extreme lighting go one exposure step more each way.

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**9. "RULE" OF THIRDS -** Place your center of interest, vertically or horizontally, at the 1/3 and 2/3 points in your viewfinder for a stronger composition.

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**10. COMPOSITION -**

When the word rule is used, substitute un-rule, for there are no rules, only considerations.

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**11. CLEANING FILTERS AND LENSES-**

A well washed 100% cotton T-shirt is softer and more scratch resistant than photographic lens tissue. To clean filters and lenses simply "HUFF" (breathe on the lens until it fogs) and wipe clean.

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**12. PROTECTIVE**

**FILTER-** Always leave this filter on for lens protection.

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**13. SHUTTER SPEED**

**WITH FLASH-** Always use 1/60 second.

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**14. LOW SHUTTER**

**SPEED-** To prevent camera movement blur when hand holding the camera use a shutter speed which most closely matches the millimeters of the lens you are using.

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**15. DEPTH OF FIELD-**

Use f/16 for maximum depth-of-field and f/2 for minimum depth-of-field.

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**16. FILM-** Establish the amount of film that you think you will use, then multiply by a factor of two. When working for a client multiply by a factor of three.

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**17. PALM READING-** To select an average tone exposure reading, "read" the palm of your hand with your thumb extended. Then, using your thumb up reminder, open up your aperture (smaller number) one stop.

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**18 FOCUS-** Focus 1/3 of the way into the picture and use f-16 for the greatest depth of field.

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**19. FILTERS-** When using an 80A blue (outdoor to indoor) filter, open 2 stops when using a hand-held exposure meter.

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**20. PHOTOGRAPHING A**

**CAR -** A three-quarter front view makes the most effective photograph for selling a car (Paul Douglas, photographer).

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**21. PHOTOGRAPHING**

**LANDSCAPES -** Assume that a dramatic "photogenic" effect will rarely last more than one hour.

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**22. BUY A DURABLE**

**CAMERA -** If you want a durable camera, you should buy the simplest camera in the highest price range you can justify (Robert B. Yepson, Jr., editor The Durability Factor).

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**23. FREE-LANCE RULE**

**OF TWO -** If you want a merely adequate return on an untried free-lance photography project, decide what you think you can get away with charging, and then double it. The final expense and aggravation will exceed your original estimate by a factor of two.

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**24. FREE-LANCING -**

Free-lance photographers should expect to put in one un-billable hour for every billable hour.

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**25. SHOOTING FILM -**

One good shot per roll of film is a good take.

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**26. TAKING PICTURES UNDER WATER -**

Most leaks in an underwater camera housing show up at very shallow depths. If no leaks appear within 15 feet of the surface, there is a 95 % chance that none will appear at greater depths (Flip Schulke, underwater photographer).

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**27. EXPERIMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHY -**

It takes three tries to get a new process or effect right. The first try reveals any obvious shortcomings, and the second try cleans these up so you can see what you really need to do.

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**28. TAKING PICTURES INTO THE SUN -**

When back-lighting is apparent, open the aperture an extra one and a half stops.

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**29. SETTING YOUR RATES -**

Free-lance artists should determine their hourly rate by dividing their annual income requirements by one thousand (Mike Rider, art director).

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**30. BETTER EXPOSURES**

-If you are using negative film and can't take several exposures, overexpose the metered value by one stop. You will have a better chance of recording your information.

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**31. THRESHOLD BLACK**

- You should expose your prints in the darkroom just long enough to get a black through the clear edge of the film. When exposure is very near solid black or at the threshold of black, your good negatives will look good and the bad ones will look bad.

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**32. SUPER BLACK** - The observable difference between the apparent solid black look of threshold black and super black is the addition of one f-stop of light.

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**33. DARKROOM**

**GREMLINS** - In every first quarter photography class, 25% of the students will have unexplainable results occur 50% of the time. During these times increases in light will produce lighter pictures and decreases in light will produce darker pictures.

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**34. DOUBT** - When in doubt open your aperture one stop. When in serious doubt open two stops.

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**35. GOOD**

**COMPOSITION** - Mentally divide your view-finder into four areas. Look into each area and eliminate anything that isn't necessary.

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**36. HEADS** - Look at the top of your view-finder and ask yourself if heads are included. If you don't ask yourself this, then 50% of the time heads will be partially or totally missing.

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**37. FEET** - Look at the bottom of your view-finder and ask yourself if feet are included. If you don't ask yourself this, then 50% of the time feet will be missing.

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**38. HORIZON LINE** - A picture taken at a slight angle to the horizon will look out of balance somewhat like a painting which isn't hung straight on a wall. Look in your view-finder and ask yourself if the horizon line is parallel to the top and bottom of your view-finder. If you don't do this, the horizon line in your pictures will be tilted 90% of the time.

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**39. WILDLIFE** - Final image size and sharpness will decrease proportionately as the desirability for the picture increases. To reverse this effect, look through the view-finder and ask yourself how many times you could stack your subject on top of itself, moving from the the bottom of the frame to the top. If the number is greater than four your picture will lack impact. Move closer to your subject or use a stronger lens.

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**40. CENTER** - There is a natural tendency to place all subjects in the center of the picture, known as the "bulls-eye syndrome." Place the main subject or center of interest anywhere but the center of the picture. The center is a very important place in a picture; however, when the subject is placed in the center it becomes so powerful that nothing else can compete with it (Roger Baker, art teacher, Clark College).

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**41. GOOD COMPOSITION** - When cropping a print, use four sheets of typing paper, one for each side of the print. Move the paper to eliminate unwanted parts of the picture. The result will be good composition.

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**42. CLEANING LENSES** - A well washed cotton T-shirt is softer and more scratch resistant than photographic lens tissue.

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**43. BLUE SKY** - A clear north blue sky is a middle tone. An exposure reading using the blue sky as a source will produce a proper daylight exposure.

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**44. WATERFALLS** - Use an average exposure reading as a base then reduce the exposure by one f-stop for detail in bright sunlit water.

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**45. FOCUS** - If your subject has eyes, focus on them.

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**46. GOOD PICTURES** - Twelve significant photographs in any one year is a good crop (Ansel Adams, photographer).

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**47. PHOTOGRAPHIC SEEING**- Seeing simply is seeing significantly ( Jack Wilkinson, artist).

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**48. PORTRAITS**- When taking portraits, squint, look at your subject and ask yourself if you still see detail in the shadows around the eyes. If you do, shoot. If not change the lighting or have the subject change position.

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#### **49. CHROMOGENIC**

**FILMS-** Chromogenic films contradict most rules of black and white photography. This film is a dye based film which is processed as a color negative film (C-41 process) and produces black and white images. ISO settings may be varied between 50 and 800 for different lighting conditions. Exposure at high ISO ratings produce very fine grain results.

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**50. SOLAR/LUNAR-** The size of the sun/moon will cover one half of your little finger nail when your hand is held at arms length.

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**51. IMAGE SIZE -** When using a 50 mm lens, the image height of a subject, as seen in your view-finder, will increase one height of the original image for each additional 50 mm that is added to the lens. Thus a 100 mm lens will double the image height.

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**52. MORE LIGHT -** When you want to add light to make your final print or slide look lighter, use the following rule: WHEN YOU WANT MORE SUN MOVE TOWARDS ONE. This rule applies to the camera numbers that affect the aperture, shutter speed, and film speed.

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#### **53. REDUCTIVE**

**VIEWING -** A more appropriate term for photographic squinting, used to increase the contrast in a scene. (Ken O'Connell, Chairman, University of Oregon Art Department).