

## 7 Tips for Creating Great Backgrounds

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### 1. Check your background before hitting the shutter release

Always scan the background of your shots before taking a shot. **Find the distractions.** Look for colors that don't fit with the rest of the image, bright patches that might distract the eye, lines that clash, people that don't belong, objects coming out of people's heads.



### 2. Move your subject

This is probably the first thing you should consider when facing a distracting compositional element. Quite often asking a portrait subject to take a step to the left or right will fix things either by putting the distraction behind them or by putting it out of frame.

### 3. Change your perspective

If you have distracting elements in the background of a shot but can't move your subject, try moving yourself and shoot from a new angle. This might mean rotating around your subject but could also include getting down low to make the sky the background or even getting up high and shooting down onto your subject to make the background the ground.

### 4. Use aperture to blur backgrounds



Utilize the power of your lens to throw the background out of focus using depth of field. What you're trying to achieve with is a nice soft background which the viewer can't make out.

Use a wide aperture (the smaller the number the wider the aperture). The wider your aperture the more blurry your background will

become.

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As a good exercise, switch your camera into aperture priority mode and take a number of shots at different apertures. Start at  $f/22$  and work your way down — one stop at a time. Once you get down to under  $f/4$  you'll start seeing the background in your shots disappear.

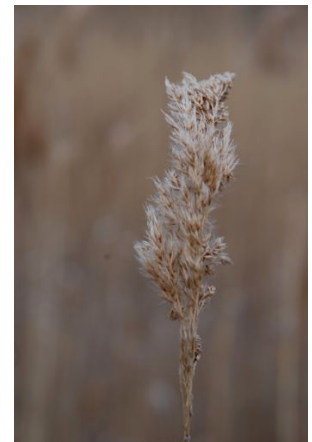
### 5. Use focal length to blur backgrounds

Another way to help get your backgrounds nice and blurry is to use a lens with a long focal length. Longer telephotos will help get a narrower depth of field. The shot to the right was shot at 220mm.



### 6. Place subjects in open spaces

Placing your subject a long way in front of other objects will also help to make those objects more blurry. For example if you have the choice between shooting your subject standing right in front of a brick wall or standing in front of an open field - the open field shot will have a much more blurred background simply because the brick wall is just centimeters from your subject and inside the focal range whereas an open field stretches off into the distance where everything will be out of focus.



### 7. Fill your frame with your subject

One of the most effective ways of removing distractions from backgrounds is to remove the background altogether by totally filling the frame with your subject. Get up close and/or use your zoom lens to tightly frame the shot and you'll not only remove distractions but could end up with a high impact shot as well.

