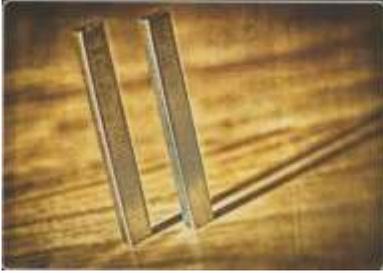


January – Book, Movie, Song Titles: This is an OPEN competition. Enter your favorite photo, your best photo or both! The sky's the limit here...just be sure to find a title that fits the topic and describes your image...it does NOT have to be a popular title...just find one (Google is our friend!). No example for this month...only YOU can choose your best or favorite photo!

February – Still Life:



One of the best ways to learn your camera and gear is through still life photography. You have total control over everything from your subjects to your lighting to your story. Get set up on a tripod and start snapping. Check your composition and adjust as needed. Do this enough and soon you'll have a feel for everything that's possible with your gear. (NOTE: for this one, there is no excuse for getting it wrong. You really DO have total control!)

March – Machinery:



Subjects like machinery are fantastic because, more often than not, you have complete control over everything from lighting to composition. A tripod will help you hone your composition into a very compelling image...and if you fill the frame with your subject, all sense of perspective can be lost, which creates a fantastic photograph.

April – Letters:



Including words in your images introduces a graphic element for your viewers to interact with – further revealing the story of your image. Words can lend a particular voice to the composition – whether whimsical, like the sample below (on the card) or something with a bit more gravitas. Don't be afraid to go in tight and give us just a simple letter!

May – The Color Red:



The color red is probably one of the most challenging colors to photograph because it over saturates very easily. You'll know when you've got it when you can see the dozen shades of red in your subject. Don't take the easy way out and do a limited-color effect in post. Red is a passionate color = let your imagination run wild! (NOTE: The image does NOT need to be all red. Red is a warm color and usually moves to the front of the image, depending on the other colors around it, so it doesn't need to be a large part of the image...just needs to stand out.)

June – Texture:



The challenge here is to infuse your images with texture. Taking a two-dimensional print and giving it the feel of a 3D experience by introducing texture is a sure-fire way of distinguishing your work from those around you. It's all about the angle of your light and working with the shadows to take full advantage of the existing textures. Textures that compliment your image can be added during post-processing to enhance the image and for creative expression.

July – Bugs:



Bugs are probably the most popular subjects to photograph in close-up or macro – next to flowers, of course. The challenge: show off something we haven't seen yet – as in the example below (on the card), a praying mantis making a snack of a poor, little lady bug. The most successful image will be one that evokes some sort of emotion from your audience.

August – Shadows:



Shadows are something a lot of photographers try and avoid, but the challenge here is to make them work to your advantage. Pay attention to the shape of the shadows – or how they can separate your composition. Use them as subtle, graphic elements to help tell your story. You might even use your flash to create some of your own.

September – Circles:



This challenge is solely reliant on your going out and finding the shot before you snap a single image. You're on the hunt for anything circular – that's a broad range of subjects at your discretion. The circle can be your actual subject – or the circle can frame your subject. It won't be long before you are seeing circles everywhere! (NOTE: The image must include full circles...arcs, semi-circles, etc. alone are not what we're looking for. These can be included provided there's at least one full circle in the image.) (NOTE2: A circle seen at an angle may not LOOK fully circular, but everyone knows wagon wheels and car wheels are circles, so don't make yourself crazy trying to shoot head-on! That wouldn't make a very pleasing photo in many cases, anyway!)

October – Landscape:



Another challenge for anybody with an interest in photography is the landscape genre. There's one critical ingredient for any successful landscape photograph and that's clouds. Clouds add instant drama to landscapes – nothing says drab more than a boring sky. What if you don't have an interesting sky? Crop as close to the horizon as possible!

November – Trash:



It is amazing what people throw out – one man's trash is another man's treasure – and what terrific photographic opportunities! The challenge is to keep your eyes open for those diamonds in the rough, especially when you're going through places like junk yards or abandoned locations. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder!

December – Fences:



When you're shooting outside, fences make wonderful elements for use in your photography. They can help you divide your image into the rule of thirds, give your subjects something to interact with and even offer some leading lines for stronger compositions. Be it wood, iron or wire, you can't beat a good fence to help improve your image!