



PHOTOGRAPHING Your Layout

By Sue Sykes

So you've just created the perfect layout—photos are crisp and clear, paper matches impeccably, and every embellishment is in place. You want to submit it to your favourite scrapbooking magazine or to an online contest, but you don't have a scanner! Now what?

Don't panic—it is possible to create a beautiful copy of your layout to submit. All you need are the proper tools, the right location, a little know-how, and a fine balance of patience and perseverance.

Tools

Whether you are shooting film or digital, your requirements are the same: a camera, film or memory card, a tripod, a table or a stack of sturdy books, and some adhesive. To avoid damaging your layouts, I would recommend using a repositionable adhesive or putty. Just remember to remove it immediately after photographing because the oils may stain your paper if left on too long.

Location

The most important element to photographing your layout is proper lighting. Therefore, a good location is essential.

Outdoors

If weather permits, take your photo shoot outdoors. Ideally, your location should have indirect sunlight, thereby minimizing shadows. Under the shade of a tree, on a covered porch, or even inside your garage with the garage door open are all ideal locations.

Indoors

When photographing indoors, look for a large window. Patio doors work wonderfully, letting in all kinds of natural light. The same rule applies indoors: indirect sunlight, minimal shadows. Take a day to observe the lighting in your home. By doing this, you'll be able to determine the optimal time of day to photograph.

Neutral Backdrop

It is important to have a neutral backdrop for your photo shoot. For outdoor shoots, I suggest using a large piece of foam core, preferably grey. Grey is used as an industry standard by graphic artists because it allows for optimal viewing of the image's colours. If you do not have grey, black or white will also work. Affix your layout to the foam core and place it perpendicular to the ground. This ensures that your layout will not be distorted in the photograph. If you are indoors, prop the foam core up against a door, sofa, or chair. If your wall is neutral in colour, the layout can be affixed directly to the wall.

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If you do not have foam core, improvise with a bed sheet.

Set-up

Whether or not you use a tripod will depend on several factors: Is there sufficient light? Do you have a steady hand? What size of lens are you using? Remember, you will never go wrong by using a tripod. A good rule of thumb in determining if a tripod is necessary is the inverse ratio rule. This rule states that your shutter speed should not be slower than 1 divided by the focal length of your lens. Huh? In layman's terms, this means that if you are using a lens with a range of 18 mm to 70 mm, then your shutter speed must be faster than 1/70 of a second to avoid needing a tripod. Conversely, if you are using a 70 mm to 300 mm zoom lens, you will

Let's Get Technical

need to shoot at a substantially faster shutter speed of 1/300 of a second or faster, and you won't need a tripod.

If you do not have a tripod, don't fret. You can use anything that will stabilize your camera and prevent it from shaking. A deck rail, a fence post, a counter top, or even your kitchen table can be used. You can also position yourself so that you are leaning against a solid surface, such as a tree or wall, to prevent shaking.

Position your camera directly in front of your layout to avoid distortion. Take the time to ensure that your tripod is level. This will allow you to avoid having to manipulate the photo in photo-editing software later.

Camera Settings

You are now set up for your photo shoot. Be sure to turn off your flash to avoid an unsightly glare on your layout photo. The exception to this rule is if you have a flash that has bounce capa-

bilities. By bouncing your flash off the ceiling, you diffuse the flash, eliminating the glare but providing the proper amount of light. A setting of f5.6 and 1/125 is usually sufficient.

If you are using a manual camera, consult your manual. If you are using a digital camera, take several test shots.

Once you have finished your set-up, it is time for the final step: taking the photograph! Mentally review your checklist:

- Foam core is perpendicular to the ground or floor
- Layout is positioned straight and at eye level to the camera
- Tripod (or other solid surface) is level and secure
- Camera settings are set for optimum exposure
- Layout is focused and centred in the viewfinder

Now, go ahead and press the shutter gently. Do not press so hard that you shake the camera and cause the photo

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Indoor Photo Tips

Be wary of cross panes on windows, which can leave shadows across your layout.

If shadows are a problem, hang a thin, white sheet over the window to diffuse the light.

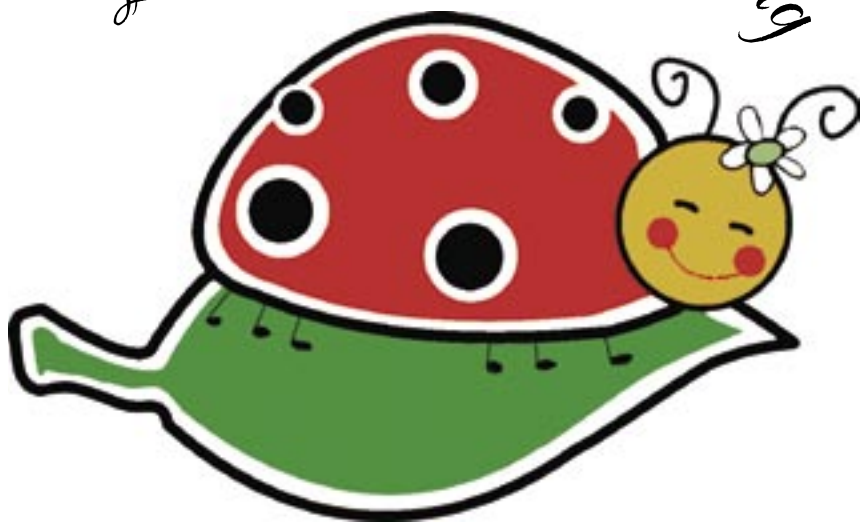
Outdoor Photo Tips

An overcast day is ideal weather for photographing.

to blur. A good rule of thumb is to take a deep breath and hold it while releasing the shutter.

A final tip—keep a log book with you while photographing, and record the time of day, type of weather, and the settings used. This will enable you to spend less time adjusting camera settings for future photos—and it will free up more time to create some incredible layouts! ❄️

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