



Take Less Photos

Developing these new shooting habits will bring more meaning to every photo you take.

Your precious memories, your photos, your stories, are getting lost in the digital clutter - and that's a shame.

Are you feeling overwhelming by your digital photos? Do you find yourself constantly scrolling to find the one you want?

This may not seem like a big problem, it's easy enough to delete the screenshots and recipes and other digital clutter - but that clutter isn't what I'm talking about. Nope, the main culprits under discussion here are the everyday photos we shoot with little thought and which have **no real meaning**. Photos we almost certainly would not take if we had to spend money to get them developed.

As a professional photo manager I've seen first firsthand that as soon as my clients begin sorting through their photos, the ones they decide not to keep often fall into the same few categories - have a think about what they might be...

Why does this matter?

Because, while smartphone photography is undoubtedly free, creative and fun, it's also just too darn convenient. This convenience has led to a new habit, one we never had before, of shooting way too much.

We're trying to capture every moment. We're shooting every hike, every flower, every meal, every little triumph, every second of our vacation, every sunset, everything our kids do, and on and on. We're essentially trying to hang on to too many moments, too many memories, and as a result **we are actually holding on to less.**

What's happening is the meaningful photos, the ones that tell **stories** that become **treasured memories**, are being **lost** within all the other photos we take without thinking but which are given the same importance in your photo collection.

Can't I just delete the ones that don't matter?

Deleting isn't the answer here. You do need to delete, don't get me wrong, and there are programs and apps to help you do this, but if you want to make a difference to your photo collection **starting today** - then I'm going to make the case that you should take less photos, and in some cases (gulp) plan to take **no photos at all.**

How do I decide what 'not' to shoot?

First, whatever situation you're in when you decide to start taking pictures - remind yourself there is no point in trying to capture every moment and if you do you're making your photos *less* meaningful, *not* more.

Then ask yourself one simple question:

Will this photo tell a story?

No matter the situation, if you don't overthink it, this simple question will help you to reduce the number of photos you take. If your photo isn't telling a story or becoming part of a story then why spend the time to take it?

Sure you can delete it later, but will you? Why give yourself the extra work? Just don't shoot it in the first place.

This new way of thinking becomes easier with practice. You'll quickly realize you have no regret over the views and sunsets you didn't record. You'll also see the benefits reflected in a less chaotic camera roll since it will now only contain photos that are meaningful and tell the stories of whatever is going on in your life. These in turn will become the memories you look back on later on in your life. Less really is more.

Possible scenarios

Not sure how to tell if your photo 'tells a story'?

With practice - I find you actually *do* know, but if you need a bit of nudge to get aboard the 'shoot less or none' program, the following scenarios might help you out. These are the categories that clients eliminate from their collections the most easily, usually keeping only a few which have memories attached.

You'll notice there aren't any obvious photo-ops such as births, birthdays, graduations, weddings in my examples. Clearly there are stories attached to all these photos so they aren't part of this discussion.

To get warmed up, I recommend going through a month's worth of photos, and noticing what types of photo you tend to delete. See if they match the following examples...

Landscapes

Situation:

A hike taken with friends. You've reached your picnic destination, the top of a cliff with a great view of the sea and the sky.

What we usually do:

- ◆ Immediately pull out the phone. Take a few shots, maybe a panorama.
- ◆ Take photos of friends in front of the view.
- ◆ Get a selfie with friends in front of the view.

What we'd be better off doing:

Approach your spot with the intention that you aren't going to take any photos unless you have a compelling reason to do so.

Think:

Will any of these photos tell a memorable story? One you'll want to look back on in 10 years time?

Only you know the answer to that. The truth is though, that while views like this truly lift our spirits, they rarely make for good photos. Green fields or the sea and sky are certainly appealing but if that's all there is to the photo then there's no need to shoot, just **enjoy the gift of nature** and eat your sandwich.



Why take this?

Photos with friends lined up in front of a view are usually pretty dull too - an unflattering row of big heads with a bit of view in the background.

That said you'll have to decide if your shot still tells a worthy story or whether it's better to sneak some shots when you're actually hiking. Shots that show your friends personality or all their favourite hats. Something interesting. Something you'll want to remember.

Sunsets



Not bad but not necessary

Situation:

Any sunset you witness . . .

What we usually do:

- ✦ Immediately pull out the phone.
- ✦ Spend the entire sunset shooting and checking our screens
- ✦ Post a sunset photo on social media that forces your friends to type things like “beautiful” as if the sun going down and causing the sky to turn pretty colours is a complete surprise.

What we'd be better off doing:

Again. Just watch the sun go down. Have a cocktail. You don't need your phone.

Think: Will any of these photos tell a memorable story? One you'll want to look back on in 10 years time? Unless there's a compelling reason to take this particular sunset on this particular day, the answer is no.

Food

Situation:

You go out to dinner, the food is attractively presented . . .

What we usually do:

- ✦ Immediately pull out the phone.
- ✦ Take 2 or 3 pics, maybe have someone shoot one with you and your dinner.

What we'd be better off doing:

Enjoying your dinner.

Think: Will any of these photos tell a memorable story? One you'll want to look back on in 10 years time? We eat dinner every day - so unless there's a story involved, please. . . put the phone down, your food's getting cold! (Applies to your own creations too.)

Flowers

Situation:

You visit a house or venue with beautiful gardens

What we usually do:

- ✦ Spend the entire time taking photos

What we'd be better off doing:

- ✦ Enjoying the design, sight and smells of the gardens

Think: Will any of these photos tell a memorable story? One you'll want to look back on in 10 years time? No, no, no.

It's hard not to shoot flowers. They are fabulous subjects after all. But again I would shoot flowers with stories, such as bouquets you receive or the first flowers of spring.

If you find yourself in a lovely garden - literally just stop and smell the roses - no need to get out your phone.

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SAW IT,
SHOT IT,
LEFT

Don't let this be you!

Situation:

Any vacation, anytime, anywhere

What we usually do:

- ◆ Spend the entire time taking photos of absolutely everything

What we'd be better off doing:

- ◆ Enjoying the trip!

Think: Will any of these photos tell a memorable story? One you'll want to look back on in 10 years time? **YES!** Most certainly. About 10% of them will, but the rest will just clutter up your phone and **lessen the meaning** of the photos that tell the story of your travels.

Our vacations contain many of our most memorable moments. It's such a shame then that we're returning home with stories lost amongst hundreds, if not thousands, of photos we did not need to take. It's sad that we spent so much time taking photos instead of appreciating what was right in front of us. And it's a burden now we're home and have a ton of photos 'to go through' which present such a chore that we never get around to doing it.

If this resonates but you're not sure how to stop yourself from taking so many 'just in case' — I'd say give yourself a limit you can manage. Start with 30 shots a day and see how you get on. Always ask yourself if the photo will tell or be part of a story.

It's unbelievably freeing to just walk around on vacation and not keep taking photos, and I promise it gets easier with time. Personally, I now have a reason for every photo I keep and this makes them a joy for me to look back on instead of a chore I have to tackle. And that feels great.

If it doesn't tell a story - put the phone down.

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You can do it!

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You really can.