

Learning How to Evaluate an Image

The best way to learn about images is to look at other people's images, and ask yourself what it is about those images that works, or even inspires you.

For your this activity you are going to find five images that you like and then think about why the images work for you. To find the images you will use the Flickr photo-sharing website. This site contains millions of images from all around the world, taken by people of varying levels of skill, from beginners to professionals. On the site there is an area called 'Explore', in which the 500 most interesting images of the day are presented.

Ask yourself these 3 questions and note down the answers...

What images did you choose?

Can you see any pattern to your choices? For example, are they all pictures of the same kind of subject or pictures that are shot in similar ways?

How are the images you have chosen similar and how are they different?

A positive response to a picture is a good start for critiquing it. Consider what you like about the image and then say why it works for you. If your response is negative then you need to think why that is and how to offer some positive comments to help improve the image, or assist the photographer next time they have a similar photographic opportunity.

Here is a chart showing some of the things that you might look for in an image. You will see that one column is headed 'positive' and another 'negative'. These are really different ways of looking at the same aspects of a photograph. I have given an example of the kind of comment I might make for each aspect. Your ability to make meaningful comments on each of these aspects will develop as you go through the course.

Now revisit your 5 chosen images and using this table note down how each image has, or not as the case maybe, any of the following attributes.

If there are multiple problems with a picture it may be most helpful to prioritise your criticisms and focus on one or two things that could be changed. It can be a bit dispiriting to have a long essay of comments, no matter how helpful they are!

Aspect	Positive	Negative
Composition and framing	<p>Is the subject of the image clear?</p> <p>Is this an interesting composition?</p> <p>Is the subject well placed in the image?</p> <p>Is the subject well framed by the foreground?</p> <p>Is the subject well placed in the frame?</p> <p>Is the image cropped well?</p> <p>Does the chosen view point enhance the composition?</p>	<p>Is the photo too busy?</p> <p>Could the composition be improved?</p> <p>Is the subject placed in such a way that it is not clear what the subject is?</p> <p>Does any foreground framing dominate the picture rather than frame it?</p> <p>Is the subject too centred or too near the edges?</p> <p>Could the image be cropped more tightly to improve it?</p> <p>Does the view point detract from the composition?</p>
Interestingness	<p>Does the picture demand your attention?</p> <p>Is the image quirky, humorous, or breathtaking? – in other words does it evoke emotion for the viewer?</p> <p>Does the image show something in a new light, or give an insight into something you have not seen before?</p>	<p>Is the point of the picture unclear?</p> <p>Is this a picture that you would skip over very quickly?</p> <p>Has a photographic opportunity been missed?</p>
Light and shadow	<p>Does the light reflect off the subject in a particularly pleasing way?</p> <p>Do the shadows in the photo add to the texture of the image?</p> <p>Is the exposure in the whole image good?</p>	<p>Is the light highlighting details that detract from the subject?</p> <p>Are the shadows too heavy or too distracting?</p> <p>Is the whole image too light or too dark?</p>
Technical quality	<p>Is the image sharp and crisp in all the right places?</p> <p>Is there an appropriate depth of field?</p>	<p>Is the image blurred or fuzzy in important areas?</p> <p>Is the depth of field too short or too long for the chosen subject?</p>
Colour	<p>Is there a good balance of colour?</p> <p>Are the colour tones well balanced?</p>	<p>Are there colour clashes in the image that distract from the subject?</p> <p>Do the tones in the image look natural?</p>
Editing	<p>Is any photo editing subtle enough not to be distracting or unnatural?</p>	<p>Has the image been over-edited, for example over-sharpened, or adjustment made to colour or light that look unnatural?</p>