Mobile Phone Photography 101

1. Get your **lines** straight and your **horizontals** horizontal. Stabilize your body to steady your hand. Scan the background and make a mental note about what lines in the background are the strongest and then line up your photo to make sure your lines are straight.

2. **Fill** your frame and **crop** for effect. Fill your frame with the most meaningful aspects of your subject. Zoom in or zoom out for effect; don’t overlook the way that certain details — like hands — can themselves convey the rest of a picture. If your subject is a pattern, crop the picture so that the viewer focuses on that pattern.

3. **Avoid** distracting backgrounds. Scan the background for colors and patterns that might detract from the focus of your photograph. When photographing people, avoid shots where it looks like there are large things growing from the top or back of that person’s head!

4. Use **framing** elements to draw focus towards center. Look for elements in the background — buildings, mountains, large structures — that can frame the center of the photograph and draw focus towards your subject.

5. Incorporate elements in the foreground, middleground, and background to add **depth**. Depth keeps the eye moving around and into the photograph.

6. Use **lines** to draw the eye through the photograph. Lines like roads and paths draw the eye through and into the photograph.

7. Balance the **weight** of objects in the frame. If your subject is off the side of the frame, consider whether you want to balance the weight of the photograph with another element along the other side.

8. Use **symmetry** or asymmetry to your advantage. Symmetry is naturally pleasing to the eye. On the other hand, asymmetry can introduce interesting tension or vibrancy to your photograph.

9. **Rule of Thirds** and **negative space**. Many photographers break up the photograph into three sections along both the horizontal and vertical axis (or 9 quadrants). Many say that aligning the elements of a photograph along the Rule of Thirds produces naturally harmonious effects.

10. **Lighting Lighting Lighting!** With cellphone photography, since you will likely not have access to professional lights, being mindful about lighting is critical. When photographing in outdoor lighting, the subject is best lit when the light comes from behind your back and is hitting the front or side of your subject. Keep in mind that sunlight that hits a person’s face from the front may wash out (overexpose) their features. Photographing into the sun (where the sun is behind the subject) means that you will not capture silhouettes and NOT the features of the subject’s side that is facing you.