

# Photography masterclass:

## 4. Photographing people

Professional photographer **Zak Waters** originally started out as an assistant to several Magnum photographers and now freelances for the quality UK press and news agencies. Here he has some advice on photographing people



Photographing people is all about confidence. It should also be fun, something you enjoy doing and have a passion for.

There are many different ways to photograph people – whether it's family snaps, a celebrity for a magazine cover, someone you stumble across on your travels, or an unfolding news event.

Whatever the context, try to approach everything with energy, creativity and belief.

To start, it's good to have an idea about which lenses suit your needs and style. You should understand the difference between f2.8 and f11, telephoto and wide angle. If you don't, read up on it and do some tests.

Finding people to photograph is actually the easiest part; there are millions of us out there. Always have respect for the people you take photographs of. If you catch someone unaware as you wander the streets, shoot your picture and then go talk to them, be polite – even offer them a

print in return. Being tactful and respectful will go along way with people whether you're in Battersea Park or a nightclub in Madrid. In general, people don't mind having a camera stuck in their face as long as they're approached in the right manner.

Developing a style is something which will come naturally as you learn, and as you progress your style will develop. I am forever learning as a photographer, mainly from other photographers. You're never too old to learn a new trick. To quote Robert Mapplethorpe, "The more pictures you see, the better you are as a photographer."

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If photographing people interests you, look up a few photographers and learn from them. For portraiture, there's the brilliant Harry Borden. For me, it's his technique which makes the shots not the subject matter. For his use of colour and light, there are few better than Alex Webb.

Many of my colleagues spend years producing studies of one particular subject matter. Why do they do it? Desire, intrigue, hunger? Maybe to educate? Who knows – we're all different. You will only ever find the answers out if you pick up your camera and get out there.

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