

Among the highest compliments a photographer can receive is to have one's work described as "clean." There are several ways of achieving "clean," including shooting tight, creative use of depth-of-field and awareness of backgrounds.

The first step in creating a clean photograph is for the photographer to form an idea of what the message of the picture is to be. In doing this, the photographer decides which surrounding elements, if any, are necessary to include in the picture. Does the surrounding environment say something about your subject? Or does your subject's face alone convey what needs to be said?

On the technical side, creative use of depth-of-field, when properly mastered, is a great way to shoot clean photos. This works especially well with telephoto lenses. In my own photography, I rarely shoot at apertures smaller than f4, even in daylight.

A good all around daylight exposure of f11 at 1/125 with ISO 100 film easily translates into f2.8 at 1/2000, which yields out-of-focus backgrounds - that "clean" look.