

CRAFTSMANSHIP CHECKLIST

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The most pervasive problems are **bold**

ATTRACTORS

Great subject

Great composition

Great light

Great colors

Or great tonal control (B&W photos)

DETRACTORS

Subject

No wow factor

Ordinary subject - no special reason to look at this photo

Have seen it many times before (a “mature subject”)

Viewer’s eyes are drawn away from where the photographer intended

Not clear where to look

Hard to read the photograph

Busy-ness, but sometimes this works

Specific Cases of Subject Detractors

Someone else’s art

Nature scene with man-made objects

Just a sunset/sunrise

Ungraceful silhouette

Composition

Visual weight is off balance

Dead space – big areas that don’t contribute anything

Bulls-eye - except for rare cases

Dominant horizontal, vertical, or diagonal line going through the center

Merges and near-merges

Squeezed framing

Cutting off objects - except big cuts through some “known” shapes like circles

Subject moving out of or looking out of photo – works sometimes

Multiple competing and/or unrelated subjects

Distracting backgrounds that compete for attention with the main subject

Cropping through areas that are interesting

Symmetry – close but not quite

Disruption of key objects – such as a twig coming out of Grandma’s head

Small triangles in corners

Text partially cut off

Lighting

Under- or over-exposed

Flat lighting

Wrong time of day

Distracting bright areas

White sky

Featureless sky

Burnout

Blocked up (featureless) shadow areas

Colors

Unpleasant and/or conflicting colors

Blue shadows, blue snow

Color cast

Sharpness, Focus, Depth of Field

Inadequate sharpness where needed

Focus not on target

Out-of-focus objects in foreground

Depth of field not appropriate

People and Animals

Hidden faces

Hidden eyes

No catchlight in eyes

No interesting animal behavior

Belongs in family album

Shutter Speed

Water not frozen or no flow lines

Leveling and Keystoning

Rotated image

Tilted horizon

Keystoning - unless obviously intentional

Cleanliness

Sensor dust spots

Junk – e.g., in the corners and edges

Digital Problems

Over-processing - such as saturation

Over-sharpening

Noise

Pixelation - sometimes caused by excessive cropping
Processing artifacts – like edge glowing, quantization
Non-artistic use of HDR
Cheesy filters

Other

Chromatic aberration
Lens distortion
Defective matting