Help a Horse Day: Resources for Amazing Events

Top 10 Tips for Compelling Event Photos

These ideas can help your pictures effectively tell the story of Help a Horse Day or any other special event.

1. Get complete coverage of the entire event, including pictures of the following:

- As many guests as possible, especially animals

- Close-ups

- Media interviews

- Group shots

- Action shots

- Event signage

- Wide shots

- Small details

Note: Post your photos on your website and social media and share them with attendees on photo sharing sites like SmugMug and Flickr.

All photos courtesy of Anita Kelso Edson, Mike Bizelli and Stacey Axelrod.

2. Cater to VIPs:

- Create a list of VIPs whose photos you need

- If necessary, assign a staff person to accompany the photographer to help identify VIPs

- Collect important details about the people you are photographing to make sure your captions for post-event coverage are correct—include name, title, age, town/city of residence

Note: Be sure to get contact information (email or phone number) for any follow-up questions you may have.

3. Keep distractions out of photos:

- Zero in on the subjects

- Politely ask people to move out of your shot

- Crop out unwanted distractions in the background

Note: When cropping or editing photos, make sure that people, backgrounds and venues are not altered in ways that are deceiving.

Although this is a nice photo, the main subject (the cat) is lost in this composition.

This image zeros in on the subject.

4. Follow the Rule of Thirds:

- Don't always center your subject in your photos

- Capitalize on the fact that the human eye is naturally drawn to a point about two-thirds up a page

- Place the main subject(s) around one of the intersection points starred below

Note: Practice using this technique and get feedback from others before your big event.
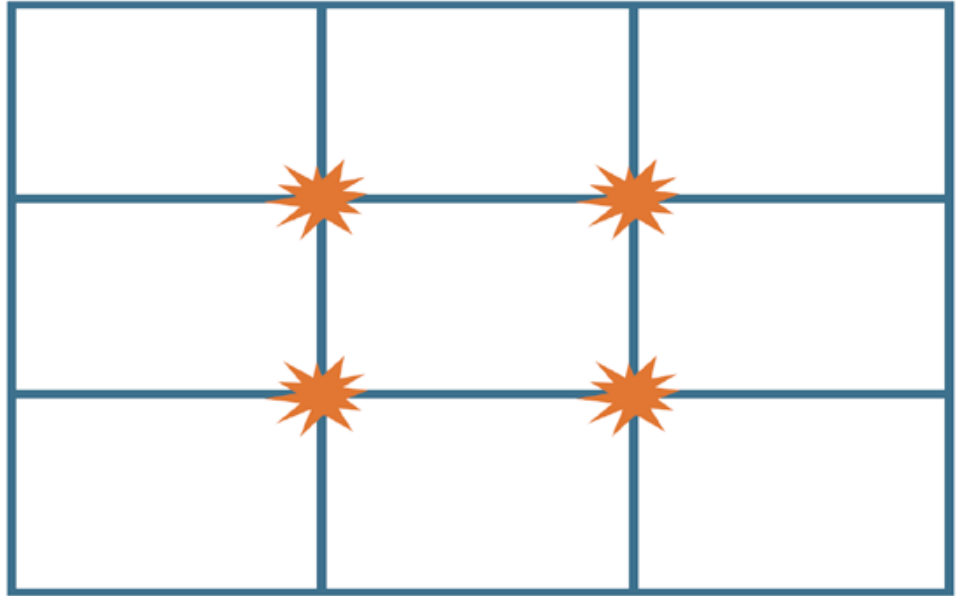
Example of a photographer following the Rule of Thirds.

5. Pay Attention to Backdrops:

- Use murals, entrances or signs as backdrops to convey the setting of your photo

- Make sure the backdrop is identifiable in your shot

- Position your subjects close enough to you so that you see them and the background in the same shot

Note: Make sure you have permission to use a business or organization as a backdrop in your photo.

6. Find interesting angles and levels:

- Getting good pictures requires that you move

- Get on the subject's level

- Go where everyone else isn't to get a different point of view

Note: Unless you're photographing a formal event, dress comfortably and be prepared to get dirty.

→ *Get down on the subject's level.*

← *This interesting photo was taken from the point of view of the cat.*

7. Make sure the subject's eyes are in focus so the viewer feels a connection:

- The subject can be looking directly at the camera or slightly away

- After taking a picture, use your camera's image viewer to zoom in on your subject's eyes to make sure they are clear and in focus

- Don't worry if other parts of the body or the background are blurry—concentrate on the eyes

Note: When shooting outdoors, try to take pictures in the morning or late afternoon— when the sun is directly overhead, deep shadows and pockets can form under the eyes.

8. Use your flash:

- Make sure your flash is turned on

- A flash can improve even outdoor photos

- A bounce flash can be used indoors to diffuse light and prevent "glowing eyes"

Note: Consider taking an online photography class for help with mastering lighting techniques.

No flash was used.

A flash was used—and the photographer zoomed in on the subject, making it an even better picture.

A bounce flash was used, reducing shadows, glare and "glowing eyes."

A direct flash was used.

9. Get closer:

- Zoom in on your subjects with your lens

- Move closer to your subjects

- Zoom in on your subjects AND move closer to them—just make sure they are still in focus

Note: Some people and animals may be uncomfortable with you getting super close—be sure to back off if a subject expresses any verbal or non-verbal cues of discomfort.

This picture is good...

But this closer one is even better!

10. Use a checklist to make sure you capture photos that tell the story of your event in a compelling way:

- **Who** (attendees, including VIPs)

- **Why** (event signage)

- **Where** & **When** (the setting)

- **What** (varied and complete coverage from beginning to end)

- **How** (effective photo taking techniques):

  ✓ Did you keep distractions out?

  ✓ Did you follow the Rule of Thirds?

  ✓ Are your backdrops visible?

  ✓ Did you take photos from interesting angles and levels?

  ✓ Are the subject's eyes in focus?

  ✓ Did you use your flash appropriately?

  ✓ Are you close enough to your subject?