Take Better Photos — Cheat Sheet

Bonus one-pager for uniquestoremarket.com's “How to Take Better Photos” guide

The six chapters, in order

1. **See the light (Ch. 1)** — before shooting, work out which direction it comes from and whether it is hard or soft; if it is bad, move.
2. **Decide what to leave out (Ch. 2)** — choose one subject, get closer by moving, check the background and all four edges, keep the horizon level.
3. **Control what is sharp (Ch. 3)** — choose the focus point yourself; near eye for portraits; distance first, portrait mode second.
4. **Get the brightness right (Ch. 4)** — use exposure compensation deliberately; protect highlights by exposing darker and lifting later.
5. **Photograph people without making them stiff (Ch. 5)** — give a task instead of a pose, talk, keep shooting past the posed moment, use soft light.
6. **Edit lightly, choose ruthlessly (Ch. 6)** — five adjustments at most, look again the next day, then keep a handful and delete the rest.

Do this week

- Look at a person or object near you and name the light direction in five seconds. Do it ten times today (Ch. 1).
- Photograph one subject from five distances, ending closer than feels comfortable, and turn on your camera's grid (Ch. 2).
- Tap far away, then tap something close, and watch what happens to the rest of the frame. Then take three portraits focused on the eye, the nose and the ear (Ch. 3).
- Find the exposure compensation control on your camera and use it twenty times today (Ch. 4).
- Photograph someone doing an ordinary task for two minutes without asking them to pose (Ch. 5).
- Pick this week's best five photos, delete at least half of the rest, and edit one using only the five controls (Ch. 6).

Pitfalls the guide names

- A sharp nose with soft eyes — in a portrait the focus goes on the near eye (Ch. 3).
- Highlights gone pure white: they hold no information and cannot be recovered, so expose a little darker (Ch. 4).
- “Act natural” — the least actionable instruction there is; give a task or a specific small direction instead (Ch. 5).
- Overdoing the edit: saturation until skin goes orange, shadows lifted until the picture turns grey, clarity until there is a halo (Ch. 6).