

Scouting

PHOTO SHOOT GUIDELINES

The new Scouting Magazine has refocused its gaze squarely on the leaders. Photography should reflect the new priorities. Any type of shoot should capture the flavor of the location and a sense of the excitement in participating in the activity, but the story needs to be told from the leader's POV.

Here are the types of images that we want captured during a shoot:

1) A PORTRAIT OF THE LEADERS accompanying the scouts, either a group shot or individual portraits. Identifying the roles of the adult participants and their individual contributions provide an opportunity for individual "working" shots of the leaders doing their thing. These are meant to be portraits, directly addressing the camera and a central element in the composition. In taking these pictures, these factors will make our layouts more effective—

- **CAPTURE THE LOCATION** along with the portrait, but as a background.
- **COMPOSE VERTICAL IMAGES WITH NEGATIVE AREAS** above and horizontal images composed as a 1/3-2/3 structure to allow for possible type treatments, and to avoid images that will put the central focus of a large layout across the center gutter of the magazine.
- **PLAN FOR A COVER**, if an obvious shot presents itself. The ideal composition leaves space above and to the left of the subject, flat or soft backgrounds and plenty of extra space around the edges.
- **USE PROPS.** Rather than a straight portrait of the leader, have them using or manipulating important tools, objects or location artifacts for the portrait. For example, if the shoot is about snorkeling or SCUBA diving, having the leader pose with tanks, masks, a spear gun or some underwater "find" will create a strong cover image that sells the story inside.
- **FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE A PORTRAIT IN THE THICK OF THINGS.** Rather than a formal portrait, pull a participant out after an event and photograph them wet, dirty, sweaty, dusty—whatever. A portrait of a leader covered with mud or shoulder deep in water is more interesting than a formal shot in a pressed uniform. Do not confuse these with action shots, though. Think Annie Leibovitz.

2) LEADERS INSTRUCTING, counseling, building, planning, guiding, corralling, serving, or otherwise hobnobbing with their scouts. The through message on all the stories is the contribution that the leader makes to the troop, so demonstrating their participation is the photo-journalistic priority.

- **CENTER LEADERS IN GROUP ACTIVITIES**, if not by the composition, by their actions. They don't have to be the central subject or even the foreground image, but they should be the focus of the scouts in the image.
- **TAKE TIGHT SHOTS OF DEMONSTRATIONS.** If a leader is teaching a skill or demonstrating a tool, get close with a wide-angle shot on the demonstration focus, or shoot set-ups of the presentation later so that layouts can incorporate images with some "close-ups."
- Get the leader POV. Shooting behind the leader, or showing the scouts paying attention is as important as putting the adult in the center of the shot.
- **SHOW THE LEADER INTERACTING WITH THE SCOUTS** (but remember the one leader/one scout restriction.) Having a leader showing a scout how to use a bow, or start a fire or use a compass with a scout as the guinea pig will be an ideal place to begin.

3) TAKE ACTION SHOTS that have leaders in them. Sure, it's OK to put the scouts at the center of attention in many of these pictures, but be sure the coverage includes leaders participating, whether it's swimming, hiking, building a camp or just eating a meal, our stories are about the leaders and the scouts.

- **USE WIDE LENSES AND SLOW SHUTTERS**, pan the camera while shooting or change the zoom while taking a shot to convey action and involvement. Don't worry about the image being pristine. You can take plenty of those shots too.
- **SHOW THE ADULTS HAVING FUN TOGETHER TOO.** It's important to convey that the adult camaraderie and enjoyment of the event is just as important as the scouts'.
- **TAKE SOME TIGHT FACE SHOTS** that show the emotions of the event, even at the expense of context. There will be other shots for that.

- **GET SOME LONG SHOTS** with the action in the background but establishing the location, especially if it is exotic. These "establishing shots" make useful openers and can surprise readers as long thin "panoramic" image on a page.
- **CAPTURE THE BEFORE AND AFTER TOO.** The intensity or anxiety of performance, and the exhilaration of completing a challenge is part of the narrative. The images need to tell a story. Figure out the story and get all the images that are needed, even if some of them are individually uninteresting or trite.

4) SHOOT CLOSE-UP still life or scenic images that can be used in the layouts. A cluster of canoes at dock, a creel of fish, a sign in an old country store—elements that lend flavor and detail to the event.

- **LOOK FOR ITEMS THAT CAN BE EASILY SILHOUETTED** and have a one-to-one scale. These are great items to finish a layout.
- **CAPTURE REGIONAL ECCENTRICITIES** in signage, antiques or historical architectural or natural elements like bugs, flowers or geology.
- **TAKE SHOTS OF "SOUVENIRS"** the scouts or leaders bring back.

Getting the right shots for the story involve planning and communication, both before the shoot and during the shoot.

- **MAKE A SHOT LIST** reflecting the preceding guidelines in collaboration with the editor and the writer.
- **CONFER WITH THE LEADERS** on the trip about the best possible times and moments of the trip for getting the best shots.
- **FIND OUT WHAT SKILLS** will be tested, what will be learned and what aspects of the event reflect the leader's agenda.
- **ENLIST A LEADER "ASSISTANT"** to encourage the scouts' participation in the images
- email thumbnails of multi-day shoots to editors and see if they have the coverage they want.