

## 16 Things a Beginning Microstocker should know

### [16 Things a Beginning Microstocker should know](#) [1]



**1)** Think 'Designer', how will the end user make use of this image? How can I emote some feeling or an idea? Is there space on this photo for me to place some text (known as good 'copyspace'). [A list of the top searches on a major microstock site](#) [2] makes some interesting reading. One thing I can't teach on this site is 'gaining an eye for a photo', something that comes through experience, through browsing magazines, looking at other photographers work and sales stats.

**2)** Your fellow microstockers are your friends, even mentors NOT your enemies or 'the competition'. Some healthy competition is a good thing, but microstock for most people involves community, exchanging ideas, [getting help from others](#) [3] and [sharing information](#) [4]. Forging a relationship with another microstocker can benefit both parties as everyone's skill set is different, don't go pestering one of the 'microstock celebrities' for help. It's better to get in touch with someone local with whom you can bounce ideas and exchange knowledge, even as a complete beginner to microstock you still bring some skills and knowledge that others don't have (that's often outside the microstock world but comes in very useful for exploring niche photography subjects).

### **3)** Tripods, Tripods, Tripods

(three times, get it?... ahem, sorry) I know they feel like they obstruct creativity, you don't want to carry it around with you, you feel like people are looking... get over it and use the tripod unless you have sufficient light to work hand held, and until you progress on to mastering studio and portable strobes (off camera flashes). More [beginners tips on tripods](#) [5].



**4)** Get in close on the subject, and don't be afraid to crop some of it out. Designers traditionally love lots of [copy space](#) [6] but microstock best sellers seem to be images that have a simple uncluttered subject often central to the frame.

**5)** You can't just photograph everything you see. There are lots of things like well known products / designs, people in t-shirts with logos, protected architecture and artworks which are virtually off limits to stock photography because a [property release](#) [7] is not available or very difficult/expensive to obtain - [more about trademarked subjects](#) [8].

**6)** If you are photographing landmarks/locations or frequently photographed subjects then try going for a non conventional image, photograph when it's raining or foggy, use a wider angle and make things distorted. [More on travel photography](#) [9] and microstock holidays.

**7)** Good keywords are probably more important than you think... and also probably the most un-enjoyable aspect of stock photography [read more here](#) [10] also make sure you [embed your keywords in the IPTC fields](#) [11].

**8)** While you are learning you should take more images than you think you could ever possibly need, one from each angle, some landscape some portrait format, some close-up, some with the 'whole picture', some with different exposure settings (bracketing) some with different aperture settings, some with a different point of focus. but don't upload them all and....

**9)**....Don't go 'madly snapping' everything you see in the world, take some time over choosing the subject of each photo or you will end up spending way too much time sorting through rubbish images afterwards; only 'snap' if you have only a limited time at a location or with a model etc. or while the light is fading and there is no choice but to work fast or you will miss it. Practice will allow you to work faster with your camera and mean that you can get great shots even when pressured by time.

**10)** Don't try to upload to every site, focus your efforts on the [best performing sites](#) [12] that you are accepted by. If your photography and subjects are good, then there should be no problem being accepted by any microstock agency. If you are still learning the art then part of your microstock journey and personal goals might be getting accepted by each of the top 5 agencies.



**11)** Remove the clutter from all your photos, preferably before you shoot, but if you can't then do it afterwards in photoshop. Microstock is a place for bright, clean, almost 'too perfect' looking subjects. Use your camera's lowest [ISO](#) [13] setting (or 100 ISO) to guarantee low [noise](#) [14] images. [Read more about noise and ISO](#) [15].

**12)** Photo what's around you! Stop musing at all those exotic locations and expensive model set-ups. Since I moved to Australia, Paris has become an exotic location, when I lived in Manchester it was a weekend Euro break! The things you own and locations on your doorstep can be just as evocative to someone from overseas as those overseas images are to you. [Shoot local landmarks in new ways and capture local community life in your home town](#) [16].

**13)** If your images are getting rejected because they are not 'in sharp focus' then read everything you can about photography technique. If you shoot in program mode then the camera will help you by selecting an F stop in the lens's sweet spot for best sharpness unless it's too dark, then it will try to use F5.6 or lower. This will not produce the best results. Try taking a few photos at F8 or F11 and compare them to those taken at other apertures. [Full article on f-stops for sharp images](#) [17].



**14)** Don't get upset if a photo is rejected, and don't waste hours trying to prove 'I'm right, you are wrong'. Many years ago I had what I thought was a nice image of some foxgloves (flowers) and I noticed that one of the major agencies had no portrait format images of foxgloves so I submitted mine, it was rejected on grounds of 'we have enough of this type of image already' (I assume they just reject all images of flowers for that reason!) so I sent emails and resubmitted and it was all basically a waste of time. Take good photos, keyword them and submit. Read and act upon any technical rejections and don't get into a 'if they accepted this image then why not mine'. More on [common rejection reasons and how to deal with them](#) [18]

**15)** Concentrate on what you enjoy photographing, It's fine if you don't have any food, people or landscape photos in your collection, if you are not interested in those subjects then leave them to other people who enjoy that. A great way to motivate yourself is to take images related to your hobby or create a niche style for yourself. Another motivator is creating a series or 'a project' and setting yourself the goal of taking say 50 photos related to a specific subject. Ideas might be 50 images that represent summer, autumn and winter etc, and in each collection have 5 textures, 5 images which represent joy or fun, 5 that represent something unpleasant about the season etc.

**16)** Don't get obsessive about microstock. It's too easy to turn what was an enjoyable hobby into, "No I can't shoot any more flowers they don't sell well". Remember what you enjoyed doing when you started out in microstock, and continue doing if you still enjoy it. Every photo you take does not have to be one that has potential for earning money. Taking a photo not intended to sell can spawn new ideas that do sell, allows you to practice your skills so that your stock photos are better, or might just bring you personal enjoyment while taking it or looking at a print you made.

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[1] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/16-things-a-beginning-microstocker-should-know>

[2] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/most-popular-microstock-keywords>

[3] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/ask-microstock-online-community>

[4] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/microstock-blogs-and-photography-links>

[5] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/tripods-are-your-friends>

[6] <https://microstockinsider.com/glossary/term/75>

[7] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/what-are-property-talent-model-releases>

[8] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/copyright-and-trademarked-subjects>

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[11] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/keyword-setting-software-iptc>

[12] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/recommended-microstock-sites>

[13] <https://microstockinsider.com/glossary/term/11>

[14] <https://microstockinsider.com/glossary/term/62>

[15] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/noise-and-artefacts-reason-rejection>

[16] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/exotic-photo-locations-your-backyard>

[17] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/in-sharp-focus-reason-rejection>

[18] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/5-common-reasons-microstock-rejection>

[19] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/contemplating-starting-out-a-microstock-photographer>

[20] <https://microstockinsider.com/guides/what-kind-images-sell-best>

[21] [https://microstockinsider.com/guides/beginners\\_index](https://microstockinsider.com/guides/beginners_index)