

# MOVEMENT & TIMING

By Kent DuFault

There is no greater skill for the Advanced Composition Photographer... actually any photographer... than the development of their timing.

If you are a Nano-second off when the shutter releases, it can mean the difference between a failed shot, a ho hum shot, or an award-winning shot.

Timing is everything!



We often think of timing when it comes to sports photography.



However, it is important to almost every genre of the photographic endeavor: from wildlife, to street shooting, to your grandkids playing in the swimming pool.



#### Assignment:

Research through your existing portfolio of photography. Select five images that you believe represent the very best of your timing ability. Then, select five images that you believe represent the worst of your timing ability. Make a print of these ten pictures with your printer or at the local photo lab. Spread them out in front of you and make notes. Look for similarities or disparities. Write down why you like them? ? Are they related to your understanding and mastering of camera mechanics? Identify three weak points. Now, go out and photograph using the weak points as your prompt. Work on them until you see consistent improvement.





How is timing crucial to this photograph? It's the child's expression. Take away the smile, or even the fact that she is looking down at her father for approval, and the picture is lost.

How many pictures do you have in your portfolio where the exact best moment was missed?

Perhaps you kept the photograph anyway, because you liked the setting or the lighting. That's fine. But as a budding advanced composition photographer, you can't settle for that.



### Assignment:

For this prompt, I want you to attend a family function and photograph everyone in attendance. Practice your timing with the intention of capturing at least one image of each person that exhibits peak action and expression. It doesn't have to be wild action. Think of this girl on the climbing wall as an example.



When contemplating timing, as a component of advanced composition, these two images represent the best and the worst of a similar subject.

On the right, we have a well-composed, perfectly timed (peak action and expression), and nicely anticipated photograph.

On the left, we have a poorly composed shot that missed the mark for this moment.

Don't prejudge the photographer on the left by thinking, "Well, they didn't use the right lens." Using the right lens or selecting the appropriate shooting position that makes use



of the lens that you have, is a major step in the quest for advanced composition.

When concentrating on a particular learning point, many photographers tend to forget all the other aspects of photography that they've already learned.

Looking at the left photograph of the football game, the horizon line is a prime example. It's off-kilter and quite a distraction in the composition.

There is a key element that is tied to the timing of a photograph and that is 'anticipation'.





By cropping the photograph on the left, we can see that the timing wasn't so bad after all. The issue was the choice of framing.



Through cropping, we see a distinct piece of action, and that is the boy's hand. It brings meaning to moment.

The area within the red oval now becomes the subject.

The subject is given more visual weight through the use of 'line of sight', which is indicated by the blue arrow.

The purple trapezium shows a distinct sense of order within the frame.



### Assignment:

Go to an amateur sporting event. Pick an event where you will have complete access. You'll find this with most children's sporting events. Practice your timing for peak action. Think about anticipation. Don't forget about everything else you've learned. After you're done, do a critical review of your pictures. Ask yourself the following questions. Did you capture pictures more like the first shot of the boy's football game or the second cropped version? Did you capture peak action through facial expressions or body language or both? If you were to try this a second time... What could you do to improve your results?



In these two tennis photographs, one could argue that they both make good use of timing. One could also say that they each have peak action and capture a glimmer of expression. They both also use monochromatic color, lines as frames, and shadow as shape; these are all excellent advanced composition tools.

Yet, I feel that one photograph is stronger and more memorable than the other.



### Assignment:

For this last Creativity Prompt, take some time and study these two tennis photographs. Decide which image you think is stronger. Write down your reasons why. If you feel inclined, share the two photos with several people and ask their opinion on which shot catches their eyes over the other. A huge part of advanced composition is learning how to study existing photographs, break them down into elements of composition, and then identify their key features, not only to you, but also to the general viewing public.