

# STREET AND CANDID PHOTOGRAPHY

By Kent DuFault

Street photography is one of the originating forms of photography that was based solely upon telling a story.

In our current state of affairs, I don't think any form of photography has become more diluted from overproduction than street photography.

Simply snapping a picture of someone crossing the street does not represent any clear story, nor does it create an unusually exciting street photograph.

I've included candid photography into this prompt because many of the techniques and ideas discussed apply to both candid and street photography.

I know many of us are not interested in going out and trying to capture images of random strangers on the street. However, you can take these ideas and apply them to candid image opportunities that you encounter in your everyday life, including family and friends.



Image 001 – Photograph by Dimitar Kazakov



Image 001a – Photograph by Kent DuFault

Image 001a is a candid photograph that I created during a birthday celebration for my wife. She is the ultimate cat lady, and that story comes through quite clearly.

Let's talk about how to convey a story in candid and street photography.



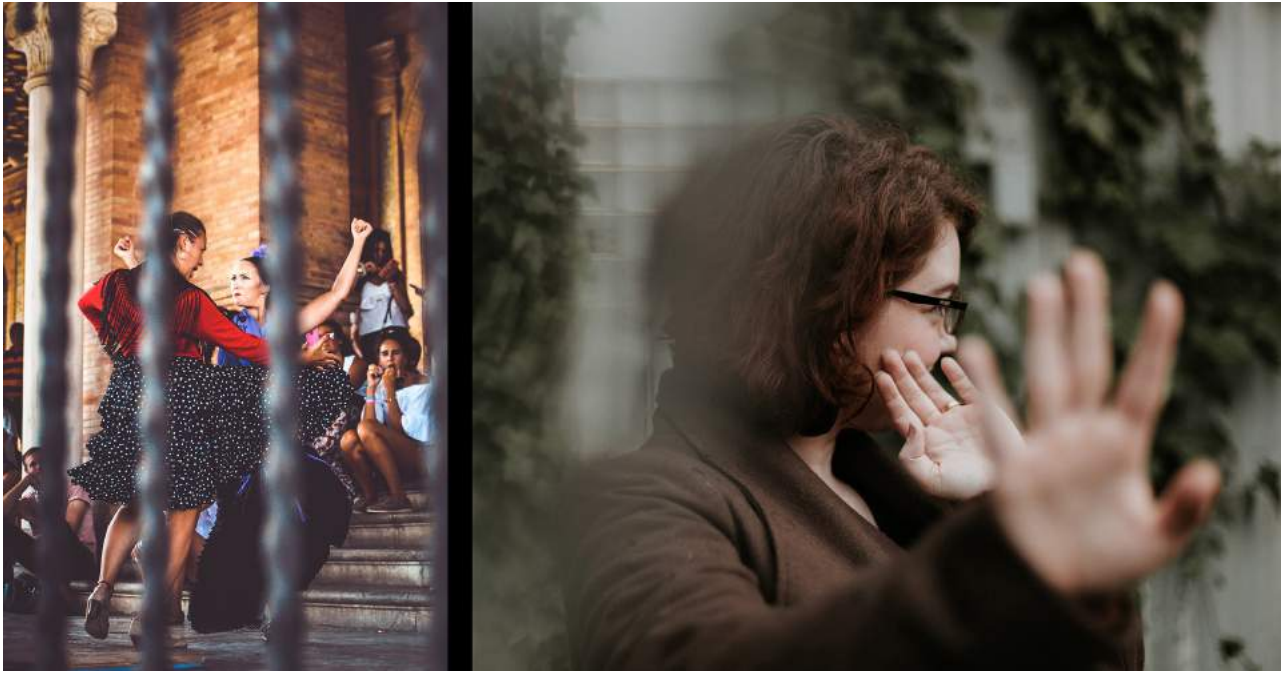


Image 002 – Photograph (L) by [Stephan Valentine](#) and Photograph (R) by [Priscilla Du Preez](#)

Outside of the face, the most expressive part of the human body is the hands. The hands can tell us much about what is happening within a scene. In other words, they are telling us a story.

Look at the left photo of Image 002. If the woman facing the camera had her arms down at her sides, we would be clueless as to the fact that these two people are dancing on the sidewalk. Her upraised hands clue us in on the story.

Now, study the picture on the right of Image 002. If the hands were down and the subject was simply looking off-camera to the right, this photo would tell us nothing about this person. There would be no story. However, with her hands positioned as they are, we learn something about her. A story has been conveyed. She is shy and doesn't want her picture taken.



Image 003 – Photograph (L) by [Appic](#) and Photograph (R) by [Nicole Baster](#)

Neither photograph in Image 003 is terrible. However, a simple hand gesture adds a significant story element to the photo on the right.



#### Assignment:

Create a portfolio of street or candid pictures that tell a story through hand gestures.



#### Key Point:

You now realize the importance of the hands to convey a story in a candid or street situation. The next critical storytelling component is body language.



Image 004 – Photograph by Kent DuFault

Study the body language in Image 004. It paints an interesting story. Imagine this same picture if the couple was just standing there and the woman's leg wasn't kicked up in the air. Would the story of enthusiasm and a fun time come through? Not really. What about the police officer walking into the street with his arm extended? It's evident

in the photo story that he has a concern for these two people. If he were simply standing there, would that story be told? Now, look at the two men on the left. Their body language says, "I'm utterly uncaring about what's unfolding in front of me," despite the absurdity of the moment.





Image 005 – Photograph by Kent DuFault



### Remember:

Body language changes quickly. A hug, as demonstrated in Image 005, might last only a second or two. Hone your skills of anticipation. Learn to patiently watch a scene develop. Practicing this technique of anticipation won't always lead to a fantastic shot, especially if you're just starting out. However, with time, you will begin to see that special slice-of-life story showing up in your pictures. It's so much more satisfying than just snapping away and hoping to catch something.



### Assignment:

Work on developing your skills of anticipation and capturing body language. Set a goal of, let's say, fifteen pictures, and in each photo catch a candid or street moment that relies on body language to tell a story. Use the included reference photos as inspiration.

## Using the Environment to Tell the Story



Image 006 – Photograph by Patrick Hendry

Image 006 is a visually appealing photograph. It has a good composition. The little bit of story that we get out of it comes from the environment, the boat.

However, the story is minimal because we cannot discern much beyond that. Why are the men on the boat? What are they doing? Where is it located?



Image 007 – Photograph by Rene Bohmer

Image 007 is similar to Image 006 in that we have a person in their environment. This example tells a fuller and more satisfying story.

Imagine if the photographer had framed up their photograph like this:





Image 008 – Photograph by Rene Bohmer

In this version, most of the story is lost. It becomes part of a bigger story, which is similar to Image 006.



#### Key Point:

Telling a photo story in street and candid photography is one of the more challenging projects that you will take on in this selection of creative prompts. The reason is that these subjects are in a fluid motion, and the very nature of this genre is that you don't stop the action and pose things. That ruins the spontaneity. So, your mind must process all of the story factors on the fly in real time.

## IDEA

As you develop your skills, follow this general pattern when entering into a photo situation:

- 1 Decide on the overall story element of the moment that you want to convey. For example, with Image 007, it's happiness at attending a gay pride parade. Or, in Image 006, two boys are tearing apart an old abandoned boat so that they can build a cart that will be useful to them.
- 2 Choose a subject that interests you within your moment.
- 3 Study the environment and select an angle that conveys what you decided in step one. For example, Image 007 solved this step, and Image 006 did not.
- 4 Get your camera technically ready: lens focal length (focus mode and focus points), exposure (ISO setting and metering pattern selection), shutter speed (no camera shake), aperture (depth of field), and white balance. (Always shoot in the camera RAW file format if possible.)
- 5 Observe your subject. Move with them.
- 6 Watch their face and hands.

- 7 Anticipate their interaction with other people, objects, or the environment.
- 8 When it all comes together, create your picture.

This may seem tedious at first, but with practice, it will become second nature just like riding a bike.

These eight steps are precisely what I did to create Image 005. In that case, the entire process took several minutes.

I also completed these eight steps for Image 004. The steps were completed in seconds while I ran across the street, searching for the best environment.

**Assignment:**

Take everything discussed in this creativity prompt, including hands, facial expression, body language, and environment and go out and create some fabulous candid and street photography. Use the eight steps and work on your anticipation skills for storytelling.



Image 009 – Photograph by Ban Yido

This is a perfect storytelling street photograph. It has a unique expression (peak action), use of hands, body language, and environment.

Virtually anyone can look at this photograph and make a reasonable assumption of where it was created because the storytelling elements are strong. That's right. Cuba!



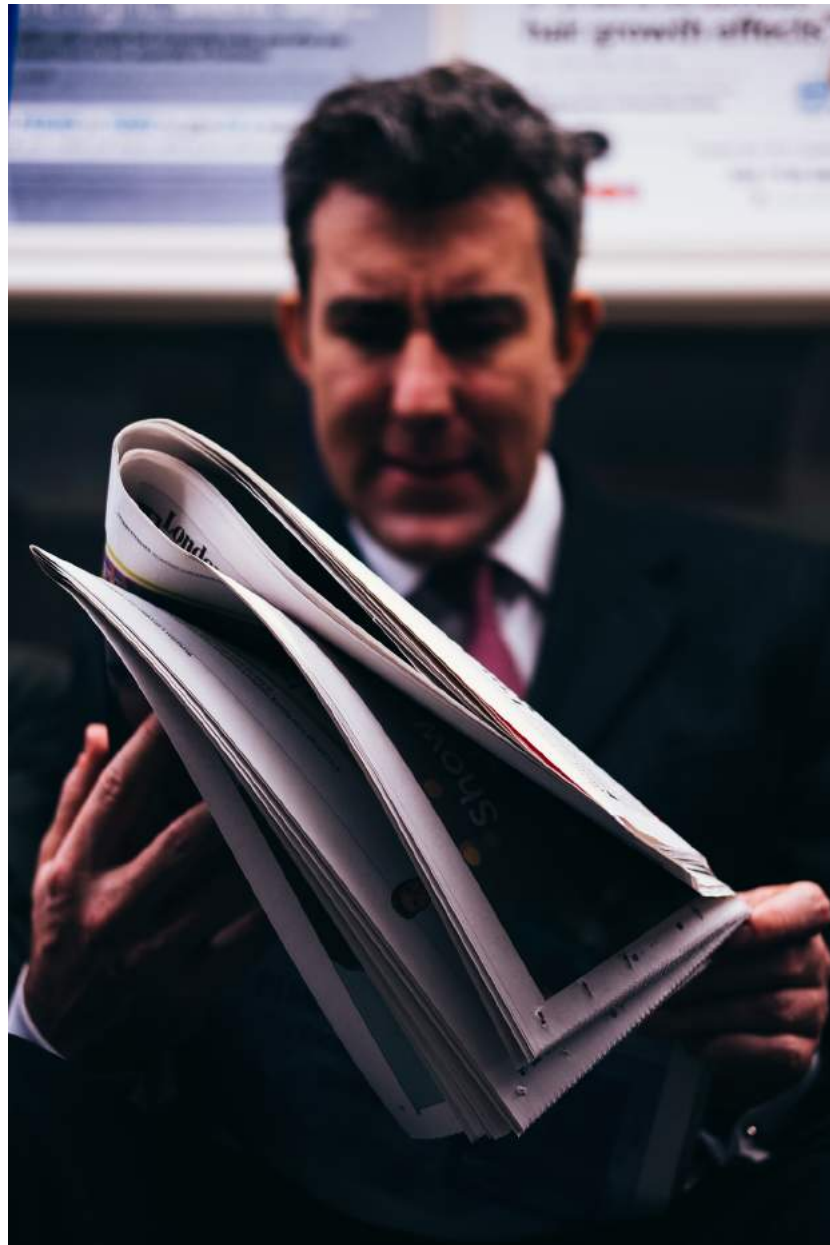


Image 010 – Photograph by Jay Clark

Image 010 is a very sophisticated example of a storytelling picture in a street setting. We are given minimal information – just enough to realize that the man is standing outside on the street. The focus of the picture is in the newspaper. However, it's the lighting on the man's face which dramatically accentuates his expression and the positioning of his hands that really tells the story. He's a businessman who isn't happy about what he's reading, and all of that comes across in a straightforward composition.



#### Assignment:

Play around with focus placement and lighting to tell a street or candid story.