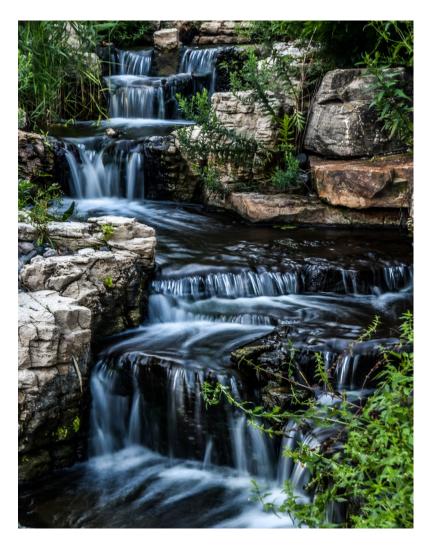# How to Get the Shot

Revealing the Secrets
Behind Unforgettable Photography

Blog #108:

Freezing the Stream

There is something satisfying in seeing a brook or a stream cascading over rocks downstream. If you can capture a photo to freeze the motion so the water seems to stop in time, it can be an unforgettable shot. The secret to getting this shot is finding a picturesque brook or stream to photograph and playing with the camera's f stop settings when taking the shot.

I happened on this stream in Chicago near the Lincoln Park Zoo at Café Brauer, a landmark building with a great outdoor area on the edge of the Lincoln Park lagoon. The stream was behind a five-foot fence, but you could still shoot the stream from the other side of the fence with a telephoto lens.

You can spend a lot of time determining how you want to crop the image you're taking. A photo taken further back can capture a beautiful setting, showcasing how the stream moves downstream from level to level. Moving in and cropping the image closer will bring the stream and the movement of the water more prominent in the photo, which can be very dramatic. Take lots of options from a number of angles. Be sure to take some wide shots. You always have the option to crop a photo when you are in editing. Also be aware of getting extra parts to the left and right of the photo you like. You may decide later to crop the photo as a square photo and you'll need that extra space to put the central image in a square crop.

The most important thing is to make sure the photos you are taking are in focus. Out-of-focus photos can't be corrected in editing. Especially when you are taking photo that require long exposure setting to capture the water movement you are after. It's important to keep the photo stable. The best option is to use a tripod. My Nikon camera has an app that works with my smart phone, allowing me to control my camera remotely so I can take photos without having to touch the camera or start and stop video capture. If you don't have a tripod with you, or it's not feasible to set one up, another option is to find a stable place to position your camera. For this photo, I was able to set the camera on top of the fence so it would not move. If there is not an obvious place to rest your camera, a second-best option may be to brace yourself against a wall or a tree to limit your movement and keep your elbows down and close to your body to further minimize movement.

I've taken photography classes before and there are lots of places online that can demonstrate the difference that different f stops can have on photos, so I won't take space to cover that. (Google "understanding f-stop settings") for lots of guidance. You can see the difference in the sidebar below between the same shot taken at a f13 setting vs an f8 setting.

2.5 sec @ f/13

1.6 sec @ f/8.0

1.6 sec @f /8.0
Adjusted contrast
and exposure

Once you determine the setting to capture the water at the right level of movement, you can use photo editing software with a program like Lightroom or Adobe Creative Suite that lets you adjust contract, exposure, white balance, tint, temperature and saturation to adjust the setting to produce the best possible photograph. The second and third photos above demonstrates how much a difference these adjustments can make on the photo taken at the same f stop after adjustments are made.

TAKAWAYS
1. Focus on making sure your photos are in focus.
2. Experiment with f stops on you camera to see how changes impact your resulting photos
3. Use a tripod or a phone app to reduce movement, especially when taking photo with long exposure times.