

The Michael Andrew Photography School  
Homework: Beginner - Backgrounds

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This technique is a staple of excellent photography. If you learn it correctly, it will become second nature during every single shot you take, and you will stop thinking about it once you have mastered it.

To minimize background clutter, practice taking a clockwise glance around your subject, starting from the top right hand corner of your view finder and ending in the top right hand corner. (We use the top right hand corner because that is in the direction of the shutter button.) If you progress through your clockwise background check without seeing anything distracting, press the shutter button. If you catch something distracting in your background, move your subject or change your position to remove it from your composition.

Practice the "Background Sweep" on your shots from now on.

Controlling your Distractions -

Learn to become a master of controlling your backgrounds. By:

1. Moving your subject to block the distraction.
2. Moving yourself to recompose the subject to block the distraction.
3. Knowing when "something isn't working" and when to abandon the composition.

Exercise One -

Take a picture of a friend standing against a wall with a light switch to their left, (your right). Next, direct your model to block the light switch without changing your position. (ie move them to your right. I know that sounds overly simple but moving your subjects will help you

greatly to hide background clutter. Generally it is easier to move your subject a few inches to cover a distraction, than it is to find another background and recompose. Take another picture with the distraction hidden. Compare the before and after shots.

#### Exercise Two-

Repeat the exercise, this time include a second distraction in the composition on the opposite side. If you cannot find a second distraction, use a piece of colored paper or tape. Reposition your self and your subject to hide both distractions.

#### Exercise Three-

Repeat the exercise, this time include 3 or more distractions. Generally, 3 distractions should be enough to change your setting. True, you can always Photoshop if there is no other solution, but you will always want to minimize your Photoshop time.