



photography  
**Monte Nagler**

# Viewing mask: a window on the world

Two weeks ago, I discussed the necessity of your pictures being more than just random snapshots. Your photographs should portray a

*Local photographers Monte Nagler and Larry Snyder are featured in a group exhibit at the Halstead Gallery in Birmingham. The show, which opens Tuesday, runs through August. Phone the gallery at 644-8284 for further information.*

calculated effort to express your feelings and share your photographic vision.

Your photos should convey the relationship between you and your subject—the two most important things in photography.

There is a very simple device to help you achieve all of this. It costs mere pennies, can be made in minutes, is easily stored in your camera case, and is an invaluable aid in helping you to "see" through your viewfinder.

It is called a viewing mask and is nothing more than a "window" cut out of a piece of cardboard in the proportions of your negative size.

Sound simple? It is; and you'll be amazed at its benefits.

For 35mm users, cut a 2-inch by 3-inch rectangle using thick cardboard so that your mask will be durable. By using your viewing mask to compose your shot while at the same time isolating your subject, you'll be able to better associate with your subject.

Extraneous, non-important items will not distract you and you'll find yourself being able to zero in on your subject.

Remember, simplicity in your pictures leads to greater impact. Previewing is enhanced and you will find it much easier to select vertical versus horizontal formats.

Going one step further, viewing masks can help you in selecting a lens with the proper focal length. This avoids numerous time-consuming lens changes. To the left of the "window" place a scale listing distances from your eye in inches and corresponding focal length lenses in millimeters. For 35mm users, the scale would be as follows:

distance from eye	size of lens
1 1/2 inches	24mm
3 1/2 inches	50mm
9 inches	135mm
13 inches	200mm

When you have a desired composition using your viewing mask, a quick glance to the scale will indicate the focal length lens required to produce the visual image on film.

For example, if your desired composition is attained with the mask 9 inches from your eye, use a 135mm lens.

At first, it may seem difficult to judge the distance from your eye to the viewing mask, but with a little practice you'll be amazed at your accuracy.

Take a couple of minutes and make yourself a viewing mask. You, and your photographs will be glad you did.

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MONTE NAGLER

Using a viewing mask to zero in on your subject and to eliminate unwanted background results in a picture with strong visual impact.

## Beware: utility scams

A new string of utility scams prompts Detroit Edison to remind its customers that utility employees never deliver cash refunds or rebates in person. If you're lucky enough to get one, a uniformed representative of the U.S. government will drop a check in your mailbox.

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