

# Your Photographs: Are the 1000 Words Good or Bad?

Peter Pelland  
*CEO & Founder*  
Pelland Advertising



# What are your photos saying?

- An inside joke is not going to appeal to new customers.
- Photos should not require captions or explanations.



# Style the shot!

- Trim weeds, replace that dead shrub, take down clotheslines, rake your beach, straighten out that bedding, replace that burned out light bulb or that ripped basketball hoop, put life vests on the people in that rental boat, and carefully choose the right “models” for both types of campers.





# Sell the sizzle!

- You are not photographing campsites, a swimming pool, a playground, or a mini golf course. You are photographing guests who are enjoying quality vacation time while enjoying those amenities. The amenities themselves are very important props.



# Be selective.

- Only photograph what looks perfect. Do not compromise. Either improve the scene or move on to the next.





# All clouds are not the same.

- Do your guests prefer to stay at your park when it is sunny or when it rains?



- Reschedule if the weather turns cloudy.

# Sunny days are for photos.

- Prime times are early morning and late afternoon light.
- Avoid harsh midday light, whenever possible. Use midday light for interiors.
- Plan the day in advance. Start early, taking a ride in a golf cart with a site map in hand.
- Most good photos require specific light.



# Know your limitations.

- Either you have a sense for style and composition, or you do not. Hire somebody who does.
- Your extremely talented son or daughter, that seasonal camper who always takes those great photos, or an employee who has other responsibilities is not going to deliver the goods.





# Yes, cabins are a form of architecture.

- *Architectural Digest* does not show photos of building interiors with dark corners and walls that look like they are collapsing. They also do not show appliance cords, wastebaskets, open toilets, or anything that detracts from – *rather than enhancing* – the scene.



# Take photographs, not snapshots.

- A snapshot is like a hot dog, while a photograph is the visual equivalent of a fine meal.





# Understand basic composition.

- Always try to see things using the eyes of the beholder.
- Generally speaking, you want to shoot at eye level (the most natural vantage point.)
- Shoot slightly to the side (20 to 45° from center) of the subject, showing its “good side”.
- Back off or zoom out. Show the entire scene.
- Wait for the sun and clouds to be positioned for ideal lighting.

# Thar's psychology in them there hills!

- What does a chain link fence imply? How about an empty swimming pool, vacant campsite, or a deserted playground?
- An empty swimming pool implies either cold water or a failed chlorine test, a chain link fence is a barrier between your guest and an amenity that you expect them to enjoy, and a deserted playground implies that your children are going to have no fun.
- Always include people as your primary subjects



# Thar's psychology in them there hills!

- Never show money changing hands.



# Stage your photos.

- Yes, there are candid shots that need to be taken in a fleeting moment, but most successful photos are carefully staged and made to look candid.
- Most guests will be surprisingly cooperative. Remember that flattery will get you everywhere!



# Stage your photos.

- Avoid images that look posed.
- Always keep liability in mind (such as guests kayaking without wearing visible personal flotation devices or children riding bicycles without wearing helmets.)



# Swimming Pools Are Special.

- Photograph swimming pools before they get too crowded, with the right ratio of adults to children, never showing horseplay or resorting to sexist clichés.
- Tidy up the scene by picking up stray clothing and towels.
- Open beach umbrellas. Rearrange chairs.
- Strategically pose people within the composition.
- The camera should always be inside the fence – unless the fence itself is a work of art.



# Swimming pools are special.

- ... but only when properly photographed.



# Declutter the scene.

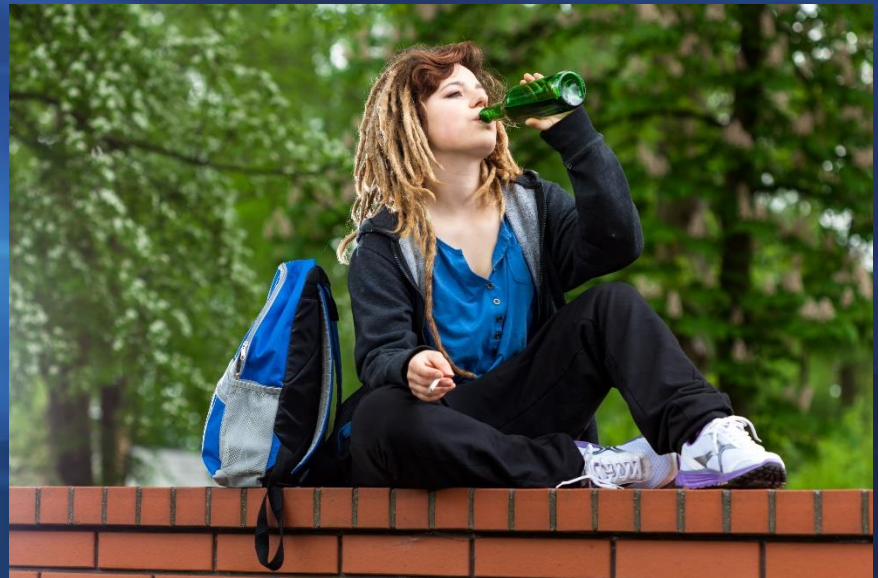
- Towels at a swimming pool should not be hanging on a fence or wrapped around a shivering child.





# What NOT to photograph.

- Older model motor vehicles or RVs.
- Cluttered campsites.
- Any violations of your rules or policies (such as dogs off leash or children holding sparklers if your rules ban fireworks.)
- Alcohol or tobacco consumption.
- Anything that requires an explanation to the average person.





# Never oversell your park.

- Represent your park for what it is, nothing more and nothing less.
- Every park has its market.
- A small park with a quiet setting and no planned activities should not try to look like a mega park with non-stop entertainment.
- You will only disappoint those guests who will never return, but will certainly pay a visit to the online review sites – probably with photos of their own.

# Releases and liability.

- **Never** photograph children without permission of a parent, preferably both parents. (*Not an uncle, not a neighbor.*) After obtaining that permission, **never** use a photo of those children without a release or waiver signed by the parent(s).
- No model release will ever hold up in a court of law, and blanket releases are totally worthless. The privacy rights of the individual will (and should) always prevail.

# More on releases and liability.

- Always tell people that you are taking photos, and **give them an opportunity to opt out.**
- Always get signed releases from any people who are prominently featured in a photo, either in the foreground of a group shot or in a photo that shows fewer than 7 people.
- Click on the following link to download, edit, and print a model waiver template in Microsoft Word format.

<https://pelland.com/ModelWaiverTemplate.doc>



# Even more on releases and liability.

- Images remain on the Internet forever. Imagine a cease and desist order requiring you to recall every printed directory where your ad appears using an unreleased photo. (*Then imagine your business bankrupt.*)
- Try to weed out potential problems. If a person balks at signing a release, mentions compensation (even jokingly), or takes too long reading a release, do **NOT** use any photos of that person, members of his family, or his friends. Err on the side of caution.

# Stock photos can save the day.

- Good stock photos of camping scenes are scarcer than hen's teeth, but you might want to use a generic stock photo if you have a swimming pool under construction or a new playground being built for the upcoming season. Nobody wants to see photos of bulldozers.
- If you buy stock photos, be sure that you purchase **royalty-free**, not rights managed, images, and ensure that the images are not indicated for editorial use only. Your rights will probably NOT include the right to use the photo on any merchandise for resale (such as postcards, posters, or t-shirts.)

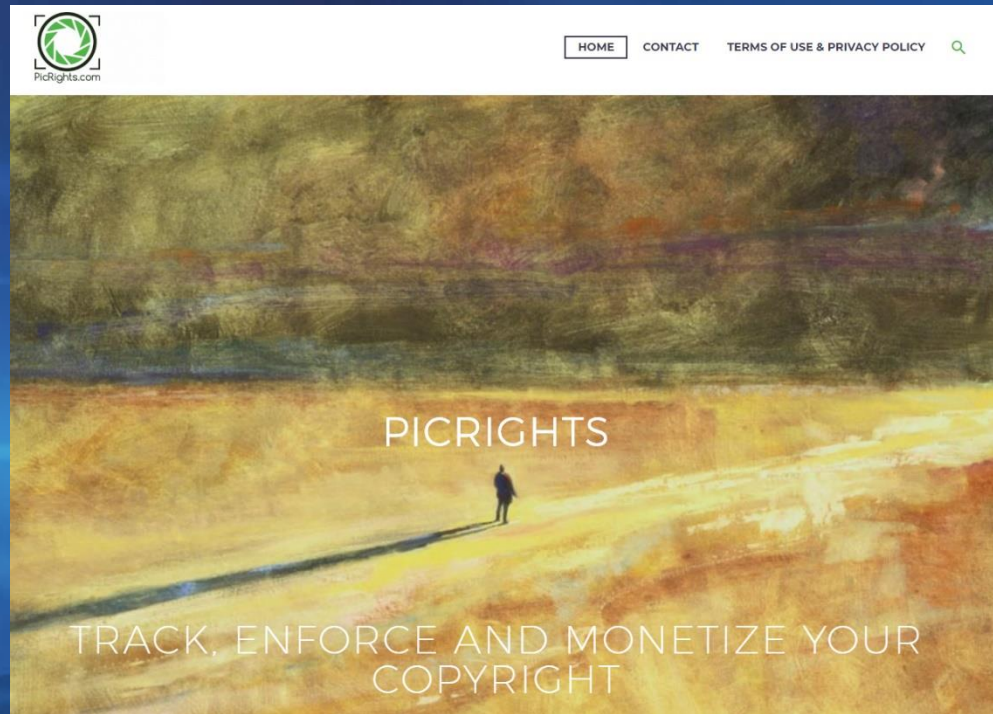
# Stock photos can save the day.

- Stock photo agencies are also good sources for royalty-free music to be used in any videos that you may be independently producing.
- Online stock photo agencies are your best bet, but you may first want to check for photos with equipment manufacturers or your local chamber of commerce.
- I recommend Shutterstock, but there are a number of online sources.  
<http://www.shutterstock.com>
- <http://www.123rf.com>
- <https://stock.adobe.com>



# Stock photos can save the day.

- A warning: Just because an image is online and shows up in a Google search or on Wikipedia does NOT mean that it is free from copyright. The same rules that apply to music licensing apply to photos. Being certain helps you to avoid becoming a victim of potential scams.



# Don't leave everything to Photoshop.

- Although every photo should be carefully enhanced in Photoshop, we are talking about cropping, adjusting shadows and highlights, and adjusting color balance.
- It is also okay to patch a bare spot of grass, remove a stray item that was left in a scene, or to patch that bald spot on the back of that man's head.
- Photoshop should NOT be used to “repair” something that will not be repaired in reality before that altered photo is used. That crosses an ethical line. Photoshop is not a substitute for a lack of maintenance, repairs, or landscaping.

# Image formats and resolution.

- All photography these days is digital. Memory cards are inexpensive, so shoot in high-resolution because you will need it for any photos to be used in print (and even large photos to be displayed online.)
- Avoid saving photos with JPEG compression. Your better options are TIFF or your camera's RAW or native file format.
- Nothing can be done to salvage a photo that was taken at too low a resolution.





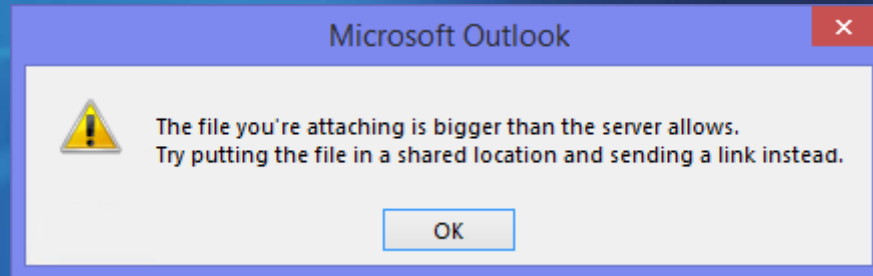
# Digital camera options.

- Smartphones take better photos than ever, but the professional you hire should take photos using a DSLR (digital single-lens reflect camera), usually mounted on a tripod.
- Remember that your phone can be turned sideways and take landscape-format images!



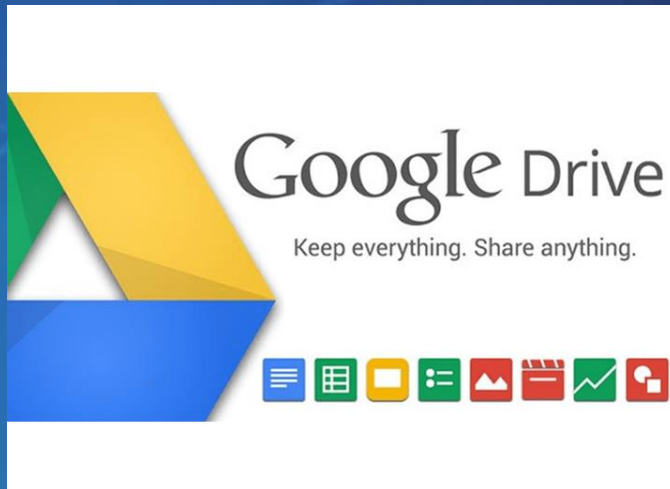
# Random, but important, photo tips.

- Turn off your camera's time and date stamp. There is no reason to ruin the corner of a photo with information that is already contained in the digital file itself.
- Do not send large files as e-mail attachments. Email was not intended to be used for sending large files.



# Random, but important, photo tips.

- Use an FTP client such as FileZilla, or use a cloud-based file sharing service such as Google Drive or Dropbox. <https://www.dropbox.com/>



- Default settings on iPhones reduce the quality of images sent via email. Check your settings!



# Keep online file sizes small.

- Large photos can be resized in browsers, but this wastes bandwidth, and will slow down the loading of the image, particularly unpopular with people using smartphones with limited bandwidth or people in remote areas who lack high-speed Internet connections.
- Resize your original photo to its largest intended size, then save it in JPEG format with a limited amount of compression.
- Use PNG format if your online image requires transparency. Transparent TIFF for print.

# Use JPEG for online photos.

- Photos to be used online will usually be saved in JPEG format. JPEG is a file algorithm that involves compressing images to make the file size smaller, then uncompressing them when they are viewed on a remote computer.
- You can control the amount of compression, and it is always a balancing act between file size and image quality.
- The greater the amount of compression, the more image quality that is lost when the photo is viewed.

# Use JPEG for online photos.



Original image: 26.7 MB



70% JPEG: 56.6 kB



PNG 24: 56.6 kB



256 color GIF: 66.53 kB



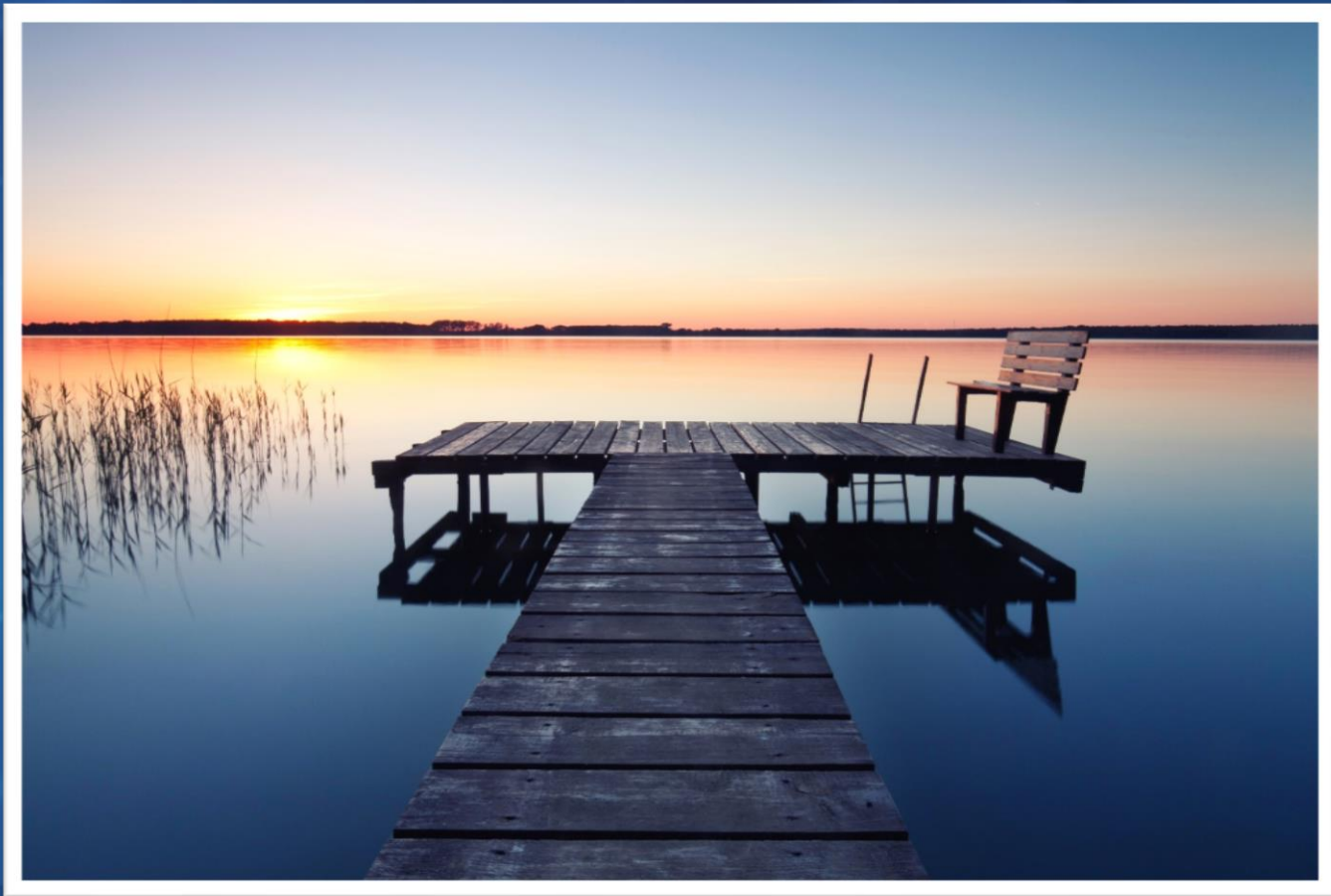
# Know when to bring in the cavalry.

- Hire a photographer, but hire the RIGHT photographer for the job.



# Hire a commercial photographer.

- Review portfolios, negotiate a day rate for an on-location shoot.



# Hiring a commercial photographer.

- You should not pretend that you are a professional photographer, and the photographer you hire will not pretend to know how to run a campground.
- Check the photographer's portfolio before committing to a day of photography. If it looks the photographer needed to attend this seminar, find somebody else.
- The portfolio should be filled with images that are better than what you expect to be taken at your campground.

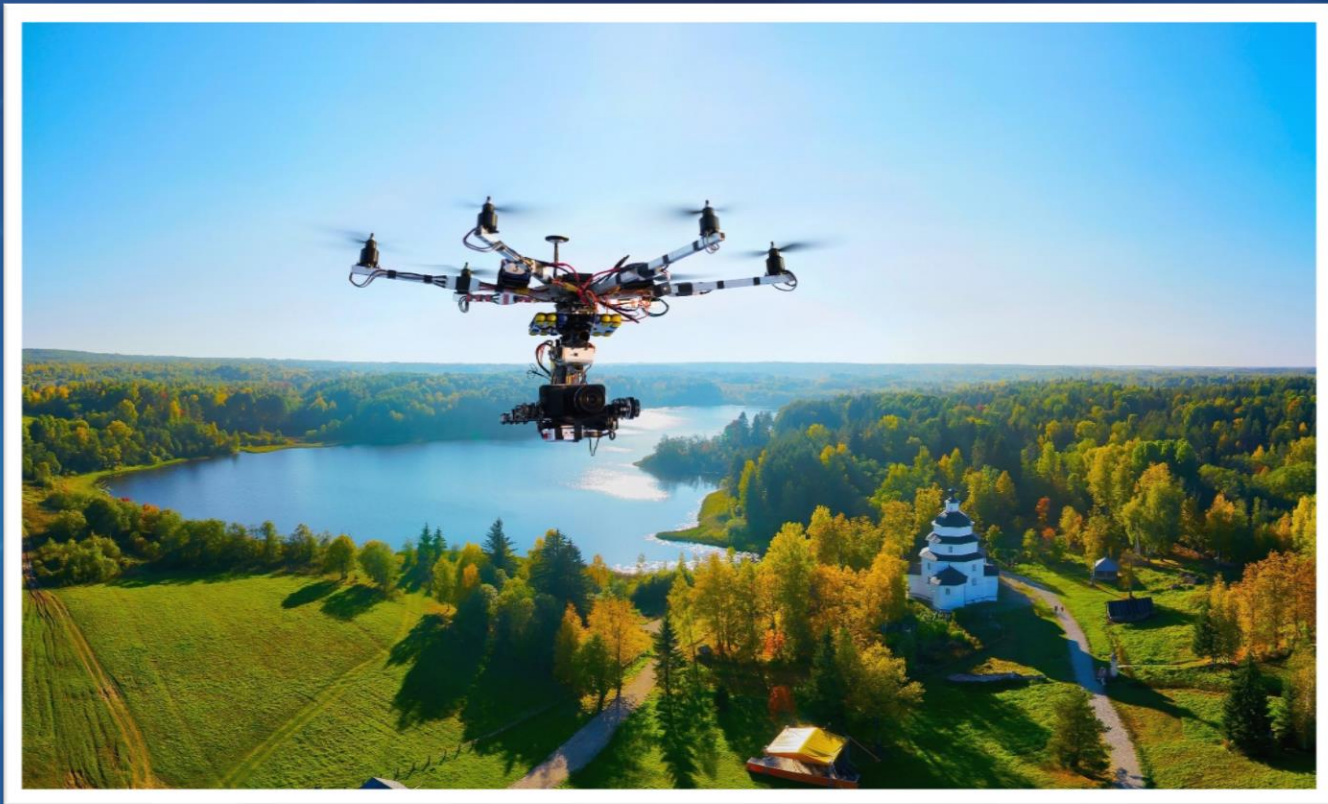


# Hiring a commercial photographer.

- You will want somebody who is flexible, willing to go the extra mile, and understands the list of essential images that you expect. If your photographer shows up without a tripod or model releases, send him packing.
- Negotiate the fee in advance; however, expect to pay anywhere from \$1,000.00 - \$1,200.00 (or more) for a day of professional photography.
- If a photographer quotes you half this price or offers to trade for a campsite, thank him and move on.

# Get a bird's eye view on the cheap.

- An inexpensive alternative to aerial photos, if your photographer has a drone, that is a plus.



# Take it to the next level with Google.

- Consider hiring a Google Certified Street View photographer to produce a series of **Google 360 Virtual Tours** of your campground, including interiors of your rentals, store, restrooms, registration desk, and more.
- Along with many SEO advantages, Google 360 has rendered expensive virtual tours obsolete.
- Learn more about this program, and locate a photographer in your area, using the following link:  
<https://www.google.com/streetview/hire/>



**Thank you for your attention!**  
**Feel free to contact me at any time,**  
**with any questions.**

Peter Pelland

[plpelland@pelland.com](mailto:plpelland@pelland.com)

Pelland Advertising

25 Depot Road, Haydenville, MA 01039

(413) 268-0100 / 1 800 848-0501

<https://pelland.com>

<https://blog.pelland.com>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/Pelland>

<https://www.facebook.com/PellandAdvertising>