

DUTCH ANGLE

BLUEPRINT

The Dutch angle is, in fact, a cinematic technique. However, as you know, cinema and still photography are very close cousins. The techniques used in film making will often translate well to photography.

The origins of the Dutch angle are rooted in the German Expressionism movement of the 1920s. The concept was to use a canted angle where the camera has been rotated relative to the horizon. Hitchcock used these angle shots to great effect on his main protagonists.

A canted angle in a still image can be used to give the sense of dread or unease. There are, however, other reasons to use the Dutch angle in photographs. It is commonly used in portraiture when you have subjects of different heights. It's used in fashion, architecture, travel, and street photography.

An angled camera shot can be used to draw attention to a subject or to eliminate distractions from a shot. Using the Dutch angle can be a way to shoot taller buildings and induce converging verticals. A canted camera angle looks more deliberate, more composed than a shot with obvious converging verticals.



Examples of Dutch angle in photography

1 PORTRAITS

The Dutch angle is often used in street style fashion photography, especially when shooting full-length portraits.



By angling the shot and including some interesting foreground, the viewer's eye is immediately drawn to the model and not their surroundings. The Dutch angle can provoke the viewer to think more about a particular image. They question why the photographer has used this particular camera technique. What story or mood is the photographer trying to convey?

TIP:

The Dutch angle can help us separate the subject from the background. This is particularly true if you shoot from a low vantage point.

2 COMPOSITION

A good way to think of the Dutch angle shot is not as a compositional rule but as a way to complement or even break the traditional rules.



You can and should still apply compositional rules to your shots and then tilt the camera for the Dutch angle. If that works well with the composition you have chosen – that's great! If the angle breaks the composition but still looks like the winning shot then that's fine too!

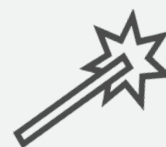
TIP:

The only time you should step back is if the angled shot is both breaking the composition and not looking good through the viewfinder.

THE ESSENTIALS

3 CREATIVITY

The Dutch angle should be seen as a supplement to composition, not part of a compositional rule. There are some rules that work really well with the Dutch tilt, such as the rule of thirds and leading lines.



Keeping your subject on one of the thirds and then applying the Dutch angle can give your shot a feeling of space. This space allows the viewer to see the juxtaposition of the framing and the horizon.

TIP:

Another creative technique that works well in Dutch angle shots is the slow shutter speed zoom. It can give a great sense of dynamism.