

# Daido Moriyama: How I Take Photographs – Study Guide for Street Photographers

Daido Moriyama is one of the most important figures in street photography. His book *How I Take Photographs* offers not just technical notes, but a philosophy of seeing, walking, and reacting to the world.

This study guide captures his advice with **direct quotes** and distills them into practical lessons for anyone aiming to follow his way of photographing.

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## 1. The First Rule: Get Outside

Moriyama begins with his most famous piece of advice:

***“Well, the first thing I always tell anyone who asks me for advice is: Get outside. It’s all about getting out and walking. That’s the first thing. If you do that and photograph everything... just shoot. Take photographs – of anything and everything, whatever catches your eye. Don’t put time to think.”***

- Photography begins with walking.
  - No hierarchy of subjects: everything is fair game.
  - Instinct over planning: “Don’t put time to think.”
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## 2. The Street as Training Ground (Sunamachi)

***“I was so eager to go out on the streets with a camera and find something really way-out and exciting that I’d never experienced, that I’d end up doing it – essentially lying on the streets – for the next few decades.”***

- Ordinary streets are the best practice field.
  - Walk up and down the same street. The light changes, the details shift.
  - Choose subjects deliberately, then **give them your full attention**.
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### **3. Snapshots at the Water’s Edge (Tsukudajima)**

***“If you’re near water, try shooting against the sun. The surface hardens, the ripples gleam, and the whole scene becomes more vivid.”***

- Water is alive; reflections and silhouettes emerge when shooting into the light.
  - The street isn’t only asphalt—look for rivers, canals, shorelines.
  - Light and shadow against water create photographs with texture and depth.
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### **4. A Debut in Digital (Ginza)**

***“It doesn’t matter what kind of camera you use. Compact or digital, whatever. What’s important is to be free and unburdened.”***

- Tools are secondary; vision is primary.
  - Smaller cameras keep you nimble and unnoticed.
  - Digital allows endless shooting: embrace it, then edit later.
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## 5. Postcards and Neutrality (Haneda Airport)

***“There’s nothing wrong with postcards. A neutral photograph can express the smell of a place.”***

- Don’t fear clichés. Photograph landmarks and airports anyway.
  - Neutral, “boring” images can enrich the narrative of a series.
  - Even postcard shots have value—especially when sequenced with other images.
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## 6. Highway Speed (Shooting from the Car)

***“When the world rushes at you through the car window, you’re forced to respond at its pace. That’s also photography.”***

- Blurred, fast frames capture the speed of modern life.
  - The car window acts as a frame within a frame.
  - But when frustration builds, he insists: stop the car and walk again.
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## 7. Doubt as Philosophy

***“Am I really photographing freely? I want to be, but I wonder often whether that is true... Always questioning myself, and this is the doubt continually at the back of my mind.”***

- Freedom is never certain; doubt keeps you sharp.
  - Always ask: am I photographing instinctively, or repeating myself?
  - Photography should raise questions, not deliver final answers.
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## 8. Breaking Rules and Conformity

*“I’ve never felt that I should conform to any particular set of rules – and not just in photography. I have no truck with what passes for the normal way of doing things.”*

*“I’ve even considered doing away with the copyright symbol from my photos altogether.”*

- Moriyama rejects “photographer’s rights” codes and fixed traditions.
  - Originality comes from the instant, not from legal ownership or academic categories.
  - His motto: **no rules, no conformity, no safety nets.**
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## 9. Moriyama’s Attitude

*“Oh, come on, get real...”*

This is his refrain whenever someone becomes pretentious or overcomplicates photography. It captures his entire philosophy: photography should be raw, instinctive, direct.

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## Key Takeaways – Checklist of How Daido Moriyama Photographs

Here is a distilled list of Moriyama’s method, exactly how he takes photographs:

1. **Get outside.** Begin with walking. Photograph in the first five minutes.
2. **Shoot anything and everything.** Posters, shadows, strangers, puddles, cars,

signs.

3. **Don't overthink.** Instinct over intellect. Press the shutter.
  4. **Work streets twice.** Walk up and back, and always look behind you.
  5. **Pay attention.** When you pick a subject, give it full, deliberate attention.
  6. **Shoot a lot.** Volume matters. Take many frames, edit later.
  7. **Stay light.** Use small, compact cameras to stay quick and unburdened.
  8. **Shoot into the sun.** Especially near water—reflections and silhouettes appear.
  9. **Accept postcards.** Neutral or “boring” shots can be powerful later.
  10. **Experiment with speed.** From car windows, capture blur and rush.
  11. **Edit in sequences.** Think in books and series, not single frames.
  12. **Doubt yourself.** Question your freedom, avoid complacency.
  13. **Break the rules.** Reject conformity; the only criterion is that there are no criteria.
  14. **Stay real.** Don't complicate—just photograph.
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## Conclusion

Daido Moriyama's *How I Take Photographs* teaches us that the street is infinite if you have the courage to walk, look, and shoot without hesitation. His philosophy is not about perfect images but about **raw encounters** with life.

The essence of his message:

***“Get outside. Walk. Photograph everything. Don't think—just shoot.”***