



**Aidan Bradley is highly regarded as a golf course photographer and is widely recognised for his ability to capture the excitement and mood of a golf course. His images have graced the pages of all the national golf publications and he is a regular contributor to golf coffee table books and magazines.**

*the art of great golf*

# Course Photography

What does it take to create a good golf course image? Well, before I commence to share my few words of wisdom with you (and please accept these at your own risk!) I thought it only appropriate to inform you as to the source of said knowledge.

My name is Aidan Bradley, I am a golf course photographer. Originally born and educated in Cork, Ireland, I presently reside in Santa Barbara, CA from where I travel to golf courses far and wide. I have been photographing golf course exclusively for the past twelve years and I am a regular contributor to Golf Magazines, Ad Campaigns, Books, and marketing materials for various golf courses on both sides of the Atlantic.

Definitions of what makes a good photograph are as varied as those personalities who offer up such advice. For me the rule is very simple, does the image stop me long enough to take a second glance or spend a few seconds reading the accompanying copy? If so, the creator has succeeded.

So how do you create such an image? It always helps if you start with something that is easy on the eye. In golf courses you have nature's very own palette to play with.

However, the secret missing ingredient is "light" and more importantly, the quality of that light. Without light you are merely documenting, with light you are creating. Early morning and late evening light are your friends.

Soft warm light is more appealing than the harsh realities of the mid day sun. The former helps to illustrate the undulations, shapes, and textures of the course.

A very important question to ask is "what is the purpose of this photograph". If it is merely to document, then go ahead point and shoot. The same applies if you wish to illustrate a certain feature of the design. However, if you would like to create an image to hang over your fireplace, include in your marketing materials or submit to a magazine representing your product or facility, simple, you hire a professional. However, if you don't wish to help send my kids to college, I have a few more ideas that may help you.

A good golf course photograph should be like a journey and you get to tell the story. There should be a beginning, a middle and an end.

Let's start at the end. What is the goal of the game? To put the ball in the hole in the fewest strokes. ♦

**Article by  
Aidan Bradley**



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What do we use to help golfers find the hole? A flag. The flag represents the end of the journey.

Rule #1, the flag should always be illuminated. It is the punctuation mark on the photograph. The beginning of the experience can be the tee box or 150 yards out or wherever you choose just as long as there is balance in your image. I try to incorporate as many elements in the image as possible without creating a busy scene.

behind the green looking backwards to the tee box. A view from the side will remind you of how many times you missed the green left or right, a position I know I have been at least twice! Don't be afraid, experiment, have fun.

Someone recently asked me to give them some tips on creating a good photograph. Like the game of golf itself, start with good equipment. How do you split the fairway with your drive? Get some instruction, practice, and have a little luck.



Remember it's just a walk to the flag and you get to choose how involved or how simple that stroll can be, just try and make it inviting.

With regards to equipment, just use what you are comfortable with. Analog, digital, it does not matter. Having different lenses gives you a choice in the perspective you can create in your images. The bigger the negative/slide or file size, the sharper the image should appear (in theory). I am not a big fan of special effects filters, for me the key is simplicity.

Do you always have to photograph towards the pin? Of course not. Sometimes its fun to see from whence you have come, shoot from

Taking good photographs is no different. These days with digital cameras you have no excuses. Keep shooting until you are happy. It doesn't cost you a penny. That said, it helps if you avoid shooting into the sun to minimize flare. If you must do so, try and hide the sun behind a branch or some leaves. If you shoot with the sun behind your back the image will tend to be a bit flat and devoid of depth. If you must shoot in this direction, wait until the last of the sun to get a really warm image.

Before you get ready to create some new photographs always check the settings on the camera.



You may have changed the ambient light settings recently to accommodate the lighting somewhere else. Failure to do so may alter the color temperature of the images. For clarity of the files always make sure you are shooting in the highest resolution mode. When in doubt about the correct exposure, bracket.

Always focus on that which is the object of your photograph. It may help to turn off the auto focus mode once it is initially locked in but don't forget to turn it back on for the next shot. Shooting at less than 1/100 of a second I would recommend a tripod or find something to brace yourself against to avoid camera shake and the subsequent soft focus in the image.

After all of the above the only other word of advice I would tender is, practice, practice, practice.

It works for Tiger, it works for Pdraig Harrington, it could work for you. Good luck, have fun, and don't forget to experiment.

In closing I would suggest that if you are serious about improving the quality of your golf course images look at what others have done. There are plenty of beautiful books and magazines that regularly illustrate the work of some very accomplished photographers, or you can even check out my website at [www.golf-coursephotography.com](http://www.golf-coursephotography.com).

Find some images that you admire and then ask yourself "what is it about this image that appeals to me"? That alone should help you in your quest to create better golf course images. Thank you for your ear and please keep in mind that the above is just the opinion of one Irishman. ■