**Tip 1: Get closer to your subject**

This is probably the biggest single thing you can do to improve your photos. To get closer, it’s important to move physically closer and not depend on your zoom. Just take a step or two closer to your subject. If you are using a smartphone, don’t use your zoom, because that will degrade the resolution of your image and make it unsuitable for publication. Don’t count on a photo editor to crop out garbage from your picture.

**Tip 2: Avoid a lineup**

Try to avoid lining people up in a straight line. They seem friendlier and more approachable when they’re not in a line-up. Photos come to life when the viewer’s eye moves from one corner of the picture to the opposite corner. By arranging your subjects on the diagonal, your pictures can suddenly come alive.

**Tip 3: Find a better angle**

Good photographers are always looking for a better angle on their subject. You can move around to avoid distractions in the foreground or background and to find a flattering angle on your subject. Try shooting from unexpected angles—from below, from above, or even at a tilt for a whimsical feeling. Don’t be afraid to ask a group to move or to pose for a photograph. Most people understand the importance of good publicity and are happy to cooperate.

Sometimes, you will have to ask your subjects to move to get into better lighting. Flash seldom produces a satisfying result in a dark space. So, try to position your subjects so that light is falling evenly on everyone. High-contrast shots combining bright and dark or shady areas are often a photographer’s headache.
Tip 4: Frame your subject off-center

Try moving your subject to the right- or left-hand third of the frame, and see how much more interesting the shot becomes. Perhaps you’ve noticed a set of cubes that divide your smartphone camera into a 3 x 3 grid. The grid is designed to help you employ the “Rule of Thirds,” a compositional guideline that recommends placing important elements along the lines. The second photo of the woman seated at the piano (below) was composed using the camera’s compositional grid, placing the subject on the line on the left.

Linda Everhart is a member of the Pittsburgh AGO Chapter, a church music enthusiast, and a television/video producer-writer. She serves on the national AGO Marketing Committee.

Tip 3: The photographer probably should have moved to a different angle.

Tip 3: The subject is closer and we do not have to look at the back of the heads of the audience.

Tip 4: Moving your subject to the right or left of the frame can make your shot much more interesting.

Tip 4: This dead-center framing feels flat.