

# COMPOSITION IN PHOTOGRAPHY

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Composition is “the controlled ordering of elements in a visual work as means for achieving clear communication. A good composition conveys the photographer’s intended meaning.”

Three simple suggestions

1. Select a subject

The subject is whatever attracted you to make you want to take this photograph.

2. Decide how to emphasize the subject

Emphasis can be achieved in many ways, or by using several means to call attention to the subject.

A) Select a vantage point

B) Decide on which lens to use

C) Decide on the format

D) Lighting, size in the frame, placement in the frame, color, contrast, leading lines, creative use of depth of field, framing are some of the ways to draw attention to the subject.

3.

Simplify

A) Eliminate any element that does not support what you are trying to convey.

## LIGHTING

Lighting has direction and color, and the size of the light source in relationship to the subject determines whether the light is harsh, soft, or somewhere in between. Light has a color temperature, with warmer tones present during the early morning or evening hours, and the whiter light being mid day with bright sun. Shade tends to have a blue tone, and artificial lighting varies with the type of light used.

Direction of light can be direct, from the side at various angles, from behind or from above or below. Changes in the direction of the light and its color greatly affect the mood of the image.

## LINES AND COLORS

When you are trying to convey a feeling or idea through your photography, it is helpful to realize that lines, shapes, colors and contrast have an impact on the viewer.

- A) A horizontal line has a feeling of peacefulness.
- B) A vertical line is strong
- C) Diagonal lines imply movement, as do wavy lines
- D) Warm colors come forward and have energy
- E) Cool colors tend to recede and are serene
- F) Colors opposite one another on the color wheel emphasize each other and abutting colors tend to be harmonious.
- G) Having some balance between dark and light areas within an image helps to keep the viewer's eye within the frame. Light areas attract, and it is best to keep the brightest areas away from the edge of the frame.

## SIZE

Emphasis can be made by choosing the size of the subject with relationship to the frame. A large subject commands attention, but a very tiny subject in an uncluttered space can also make a strong subject.

## PLACEMENT

The rule of thirds: The division of the frame into 9 equal parts by making a grid. Horizontally, divide the frame into 3, and do the same vertically. At the intersections of these lines lie the "sweet spots" which can help in placing subjects for a good composition. This rule should be considered a guideline, not a hard and fast rule.

## COLOR AND CONTRAST

The eye will be drawn to bright colors or areas of sharp contrast. Use

that concept to emphasize your subject.

## LEADING LINES AND FRAMING

A subject can be emphasized by using leading lines which draw the viewer from some place within the frame toward the subject. Having the subject framed, such as within a window frame, or by tree branches can emphasize. Be careful that the framing supports the theme of the image and does not become overpowering.

## DEPTH OF FIELD

Controlling depth of field can help to emphasize a subject, such as having the background out of focus while the subject is sharp.

## SIMPLIFICATION

Try to include only the elements that support the mood or meaning you intended to convey. Simplification often creates a stronger image.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Horizons should usually be above or below the center of the image to avoid dividing the picture into two with equal emphasis.
2. For moving subjects, try to allow room in front of the subject for it to go.
3. For people and animals, it is important to focus on the eyes.
4. Try to avoid mergers with the frame, or other elements within the image.