

What is composition?

Simply put, **composition refers to the framing and arrangement of visual elements used in an image or photograph.**

Many decisions go into making a photograph: what will be photographed, how it is placed in relation to other objects in the image, and how well the subject matter is expressed. There are many “rules” of composition, but they should be viewed as guidelines: Visual elements we as human beings tend to find universally appealing. Using these elements can visually enhance your photograph, draw attention to your subject matter, and enhance your vision. But it is important to think of them as tools at your disposal rather than strict rules to follow. Rules of Composition can perhaps better be referred to as **elements of design**.

Your goal this week is to be aware of those decisions while not being afraid to experiment! You are encouraged to both shoot with intention (be aware of the decisions you make on how you take your photographs) and to get out there and experiment (play).

RULE OF THIRDS



Imagine that your image is divided into 9 equal segments by 2 vertical and 2 horizontal lines making a sort of tic-tac-toe grid. The rule of thirds says that you should position the most

important elements in your scene along these lines, or at the points where they intersect. Some cameras even have the option to overlay rule of thirds guidelines in the viewfinder or lcd screen.

Why rule of thirds? First, we are used to seeing subjects placed in the middle of the screen. By placing your subject somewhere else, you can instantly add visual interest to your photograph. Second, it gives us an opportunity to use that space in interesting ways...



BALANCING ELEMENTS



Try evening out a scene using by adding something of similar visual “weight” (how much the eye is drawn toward an area). You can add in less important subject matter, or draw the eye toward your main subject using leading lines...

LEADING LINES



When we look at a photo our eye is naturally drawn along lines. By thinking about how you place lines in your composition, you can affect the way we view the image, pulling us into the picture, towards the subject, or on a journey "through" the scene. There are many different types of lines - straight, diagonal, curved, zigzag, radial etc - and each can be used to enhance our photo's composition.

examples of leading lines:

- A winding river
- Fences
- Wood planks
- Columns

DIRECTION



Every image has direction- the natural journey your eye travels through a photograph. Use that direction to tell a story. Use a variety of elements of composition to create direction in your photograph.

SYMMETRY AND PATTERNS



We are surrounded by symmetry and patterns, both natural and man-made. Don't be afraid to get up close to nature to look for those patterns and really pay attention to how patterns, symmetry, and geometric shapes are used in man made structures.

FRAMING (sub framing)



Use available objects to surround your subject, drawing the eye toward it.

Example uses of framing:

- Placing your subject in the inside of a tunnel
- Placing your subject in the outline of a door frame.
- Shooting through a hole
- Shooting through a window
- Shooting through a fence
- Shooting through foliage

FILL YOUR FRAME



Filling the frame with your subject, leaving little or no space around it can be very effective in certain situations. It helps focus the viewer completely on the main subject without any distractions. It also allows the viewer to explore the details of the subject that wouldn't be possible if photographed from further away. Filling the frame often involves getting in so close that you may actually crop out elements of your subject such as the top of their head to create a more intimate image.

And now a big list of things to consider when making a photograph...

- How close to my subject do I want to be?
- Is my subject's surroundings important?

- How do I want to portray my subject?
- If my subject is a person, do I want them looking at the camera? Why or why not?
- Is there an emotion or feeling I want to capture?
- Is there a story I want to tell with this photograph?
- What inspired me to take this photo?
- How does the eye travel through this photograph?
- How many different ways can I shoot this photograph?
- How is the photograph I am taking different than what anyone else would take?
- Am I paying attention to my background as much as I am to my subject?

Assignment

Make 10 images. Each should employ at least 1 of the above “rules.”