

Your Name Goes Up There.

GUIDELINES FOR PHOTO COMPOSITION



Overview!

These guidelines will help you take more compelling photographs, giving them a natural balance, drawing attention to the important parts of the scene, or leading the viewer's eye through the image. These guidelines will also help you see why some photos "work" while others feel like simple snapshots.

RULE OF THIRDS

Imagine that your image is divided into nine equal segments by two vertical and two horizontal lines. Try to position the most important elements in your scene along these lines, or at the points where they intersect. Doing so will add balance and interest to your photo. Some cameras even offer an option to superimpose a rule of thirds grid over the LCD screen, making it even easier to use.

YES



NO



BALANCE

Placing your main subject off-centre, as with the rule of thirds, creates a more interesting photo, but it can leave a void in the scene which can make it feel empty. You should balance the visual "weight" of your subject by including another object of lesser importance to balance the space.

YES



NO



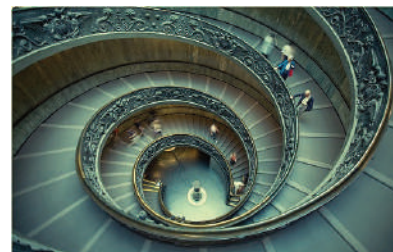
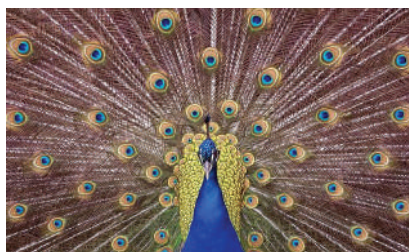
LEADING LINES

When we look at a photo our eye is naturally drawn along the lines within it. Leading lines pull us into the picture, towards the subject, or "through" the scene. There are many different types of lines that you can use - straight, diagonal, curvy, zigzag, radial, dotted, etc - and each can be used to enhance our photo's composition.



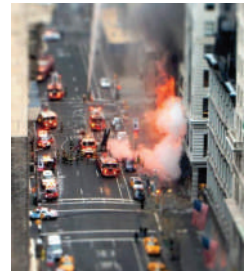
SYMMETRY AND PATTERNS

We are surrounded by symmetry and patterns, both natural and man-made. Symmetry can be horizontal, vertical or radial. These elements can make for very eye-catching compositions, particularly in situations where they are not expected. Another great way to use them is to break the symmetry or pattern in some way, introducing tension and a focal point to the scene.



VIEWPOINT (high, low, ground level, far away, close up)

Before photographing your subject, take time to think about where you will shoot it from. Our viewpoint has a massive impact on the composition of our photo, and as a result it can greatly affect the message that the shot conveys. Consider photographing from high above, down at ground level, from the side, from the back, from a long way away, from very close up, and so on.



BACKGROUND SIMPLICITY

The human eye is excellent at distinguishing between different elements in a scene, but a camera has a tendency to flatten the foreground and background, and this can often ruin an otherwise great photo. Thankfully this problem is usually easy to overcome at the time of shooting - look around for a plain and unobtrusive background and compose your shot so that it doesn't distract or detract from the subject.



DEPTH & OVERLAPPING (foreground, middleground, background)

Because photography is a two-dimensional medium, we have to choose our composition carefully to convey the sense of depth that was in the actual scene. You can create depth in a photo by including objects in the foreground, middle ground and background. Another useful composition technique is overlapping, where you deliberately partially obscure one object with another. The human eye naturally recognizes these layers and mentally separates them out, creating an image with more depth.



FRAMING

The world is full of objects which make perfect natural frames, such as trees, archways, hills and holes. By placing these around the edge of the composition you help to isolate the main subject from the outside world. The result is a more focused image which draws your eye naturally to the main point of interest.



CROPPING

Often a photo will lack impact because the main subject is so small it becomes lost among the clutter of its surroundings or fails to convey a mood because too much of it is shown. By cropping tight around the subject you eliminate the background "noise", ensuring the subject gets the viewer's undivided attention.



EXPERIMENTATION (breaking the rules!)

With the dawn of the digital age in photography we no longer have to worry about film processing costs or running out of shots. As a result, experimenting with our photos' composition has become a real possibility; we can fire off tons of shots and delete the unwanted ones later at absolutely no extra cost. Take advantage of this fact and experiment with your composition - you never know whether an idea will work until you try it.

