

### **A Special Note from IrisMasters:**

*How often do you see a great photo opportunity, pull out your camera, snap the shot, and end up with an amazing shot? If like most camera owners, not very often. I want to help you change that. The Takk Photo Formula is how I plan to do so.*

*Follow along as I share with you a unique approach to composition – the way you arrange the world around you into a picture. And while following the formula, I'd like for you to keep one thought in mind...*

*The way you compose your photo defines the way you view and interact with the world around you. If you are in-tune with the world...if you can really embrace all that is around you – the aroma, the feel, the ambience - then photography will be easy for you. You'll be what people call "a natural".*

*If you're not one of these "naturals" (most of us aren't), no need to worry. Our photo lessons are here to show you how. So let's begin.*

**To Mastering Your Photo Eye,**

**Alphonso S.**

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## Introduction

As I point my camera at the Point Loma Lighthouse in San Diego, a dude with a Hawaiian shirt and an enormous lens walks right in front of me to capture his own photo.

And then it hit me.

There are dozens of tourists around me trying to photograph the exact same lighthouse. Some have fancy SLR's, a few have point-and-shoots, and others are using their iPhones.

So why is it that only a few of these photo takers will end up with pleasing, professional looking photos and most won't?

That's what the Takk Photo Formula will help you uncover.



Photo by [Dennis Jarvis](#)

This photo formula is designed to end the hardship of this thing called photo composition. It's designed to end the struggle – the frustration of having to delete ugly photo after ugly photo when all you want is a good shot that you can save, be proud of, and confidently show off to others.

The truth is, framing photos that are beautiful, pleasing to look at, and 'pro' quality is easy. And this photo formula provides you with a step by step method to do just that. That way you can focus on the more nitty gritty stuff like exposure and lens selection.

There is no need to think or be creative with this formula. This formula does all the work for you. And that's why it's so powerful.

The best part? The more you use this formula approach to composition, the more ingrained this formula approach will be to you...and the more of a natural you become.

Anybody can take great photos – you do not need a degree, a formal education, or anything like that.

So let's not waste any more time and get into the formula.

## The Takk Photo Formula

In layman terms, composition is simply the act of arranging what's in front of you into a four lined frame called a "picture". How you compose your photo plays the most important part in how viewers react. Compose well and viewers will love your photo. Compose sloppy and you'll have yourself a boring, ugly picture.

Thankfully, composition is a very predictable, learnable activity. Humans have been "composing" for thousands and thousands of years. Recently, artists and scientists have carefully dissected what defines "pleasing" compositions and what defines "ugly" compositions.



Photo by [Skyloader](#)

**In our current day and age, we are ruled by the frame.**

The Takk Photo Formula give you a set of training wheels to make the framing process easier. Much easier.

### The Secret Lies in Cheating

MASTERS in every craft - *Michelangelo, Mozart, Picasso, Kobe Bryant* – they all got good by copying the other experts around them. After years of copying, they soon became experts themselves. This, however, was only the beginning. It was here, after years of imitation, when they began improvising, experimenting, and innovating.

**But not before. Never before.**

They copied the greats. They did exactly what they were supposed to do. Then, AFTER acquiring a solid foundation from the masters, they innovated.

That's exactly what I'm going to teach you to do with photo composition.

Now, I must be clear. I am NOT a master. I do not and will not ever see myself as a master. And that's ok because the Takk Photo Formula isn't about copying me. It's about copying other great photographers. And herein lies its power.

## Composition 101



*View.From.My.Hotel.Window- by [J.Kos-Read](#)*

The truth is that your camera is just like a gun. Both are used to shoot things, and both have to be fully loaded to work.

The difference is that most people with cameras have no idea how to use their weapons! No wonder so many people ‘miss the target’ when trying to take good photos.

Like a gun ,you must AIM! And have a specific target. In photography, the practice of aiming on a target is called “composition”.

You can learn to “aim” a few different ways:

## **The Experience Route**

Most amateurs and beginners take this route. Simply put, this route relies on the fact that, after taking thousands and thousands of photos, you'll automatically begin taking better photos.

While this does work to some degree, it relies way too heavily on “instinct”. If you are not naturally creative or intuitive, you may see little if any improvement – even after 10,000 photos.

## **Photo Composition Rules**

The other common route to take is to follow a set of composition “rules” as training wheels for framing your photos.

You may have heard of some of them. Rule of Thirds, Leading Lines, and balance are a few.

The problem with these “rules”, however, is that they barely tap into the surface. Underlying these rules is a complex set of visual design and aesthetic theories based on human psychology and how we have evolutionarily evolved to use our eyes. The rules are like a bite-size summary of them.

They can and do help with your photography... however! It can take years of practicing and experimenting with these rules to make them work.



Thankfully, I think I've found an easier, more effective way.

A way that gives you a better understanding how these rules are applied with great looking photos.

## The Takk Photo Formula Route

With the Takk Photo Formula, you are going to dissect the composition elements used for other great photographs and apply them to your everyday photo taking.

As a result, you will not only be applying composition rules used in the photo, but replicating their application and usage.

It's like the difference between recipe A and B below:

### Recipe A:

- Flour
- Eggs
- Milk
- Licorice
- Coyote urine

### Recipe B:

- 1 Cup flour
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup milk
- 3 red licorice
- .5 ounces fresh coyote urine

Which do you think will be easier to follow and instantly get the desired dish? Most definitely it's choice B!

And as for the coyote urine ingredient above, yes that's correct. Just making sure you're paying attention.

So now that we know why we're going to be applying a formula to the photo taking process, let's start off by covering a few of the basics.

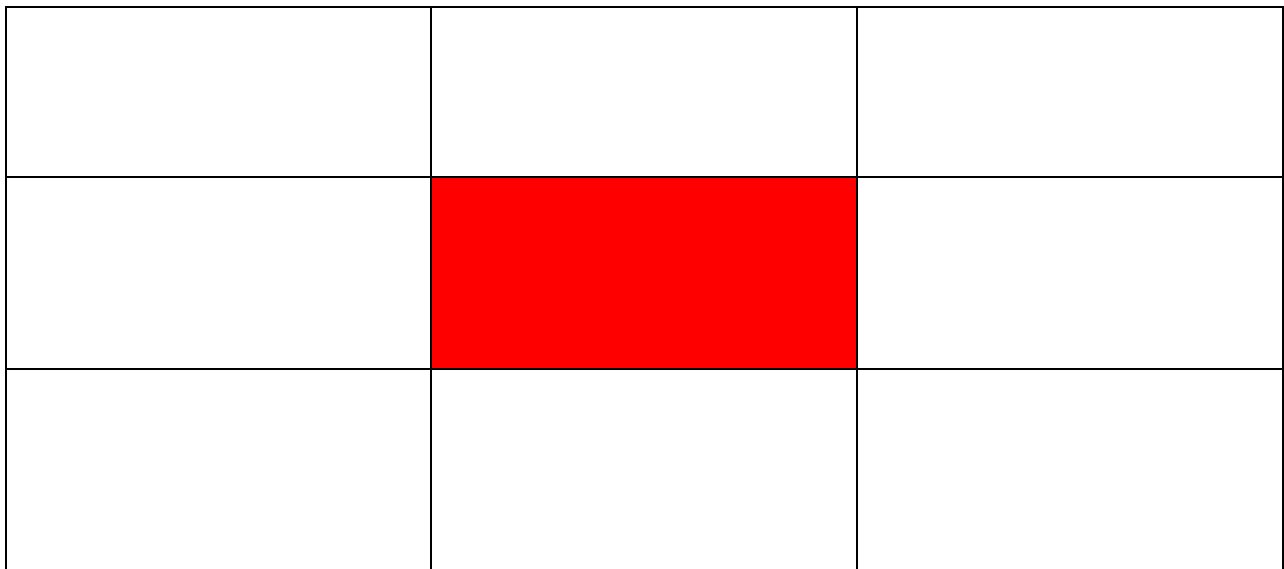
It's best to start out with the basic composition rules to ensure you know them. This may be a review for many but review never hurt anyone. As any professional performer in any field would say, **top performance is all about mastering the basics.**

Once these basic composition rules are covered, we'll then go into the templates you can start using to churn out great photo after great photo.

Ready? Ok. Here's composition rule #1...

## Rule 1: The Rule of Thirds

Divide the frame into three vertical and horizontal areas. When taking a photo, avoid placing the subject in the middle box.



Most people simply take their photos dead center. I know I can remember when I did this. Simply by changing where you place the subject can make your photo much more visually stimulating to viewers.



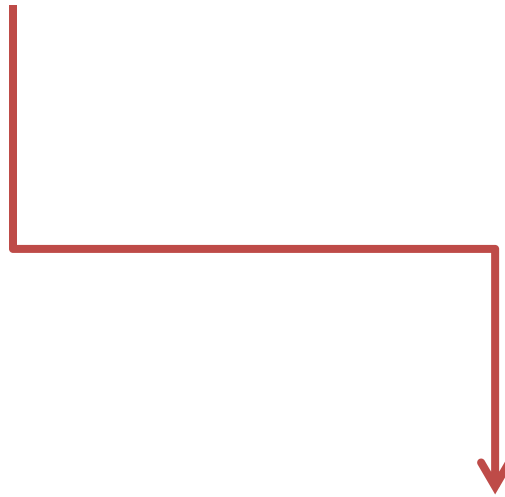
*Exploring by [Aurimas](#)*



*Do You Really Know Me? by Simon Takk*

## Rule 2: Leading Lines

What are leading lines?



Quite simply, lines that direct you to a specific area of the photo.

The rule of leading lines basically recommends that you use the lines in your photo to lead the viewer to a subject of interest. This makes it easy for viewers to instantly see the photo and know where to look, thus making visual communication much easier.

Let's compare photo A with photo B. Notice how photo B is much easier to understand.

**Photo A**



**Photo B**



Photo by Dragan Brankovic



Notice how the freeway lights lead to the city

## Rule 3: Simplicity

A common rookie mistake beginners make is attempting to capture everything in front of them into one photo. More often than not this results in a photo that's just too complicated.

Simplicity aims to help beginners solve this problem.

Simply put, simplicity advises that you compose your photo with minimal objects. Isolate and focus on one subject for each photo. The more subjects you try to photograph in one photo, the more cluttered and confusing it will be to viewers.

As with the rule of thirds, simplicity aims to make visual communication easier. When a viewer sees your photo, they know exactly what to look at.

Notice the difference between a photo of several flowers and then isolated to one individual flower.



There is, of course, a way to photograph several flowers in a pleasing way. This, however, requires a more skilled use of composition. By sticking with simple photographs, you make taking pleasing photos much easier.





Photo by Mark Freeth



Photo by Christopher Michel



## Rule 4: Symmetrical Balance

Cut an orange in half and place it dead center in your frame. You now have a symmetrically balanced photo. Yes, it's breaking the rule of thirds. But it's now following the rule of symmetry so that's ok!



While the orange example is extremely simple and obvious, there are endless opportunities to use symmetry in your photos.



Photo by MUSA ZERO



Photo by Magdalena Roeseler



Photo by Glacomo Carena

## Rule 5: Asymmetrical Balance

With symmetrical balance, it was clear that both sides to the photo are equally weighted (or very close in weight). By weight, I am referring to the shape, size, color, or any other element that is replicated in a mirror-like way.

With asymmetrical balance, inequality reigns. Cut the image in two and you will have two unique sides. Put them together, however, and, through the lines, shapes, colors, and other elements, the two will balance each other out. Think of the teeter-tot where five children sit on one side and a morbidly obese man sits on the other. The weight of the children balances with the weight of the man.



Photo by [Ray Lopez](#)



Photo by Simon Takk



## **So what do you do with all of these rules?**

The standard thing to do with these composition rules is to understand the basic concept and apply them out with your camera.

For most, however, this just doesn't work. The reason? These rules are just too simple! It's like having someone that doesn't know how to swim read a blog post on swimming and then throwing them into a stormy ocean.

Don't get me wrong, I think that every photographer should know composition rules. In my experience teaching, however, the composition rules don't really help newbies improve much.

Because of this inefficiency, I came up with the Takk Photo Formula as a "shortcut" to improving your shots – fast.

Think of the Takk Photo Formula as a "template-approach" to photography.

## **Here are the steps:**

1. You find a beautiful, mesmerizing photo that ignites your creative passions
2. You analyze the composition of the photo and carefully define the main objects and elements within the shot.
3. You create a "map" of the composition used.

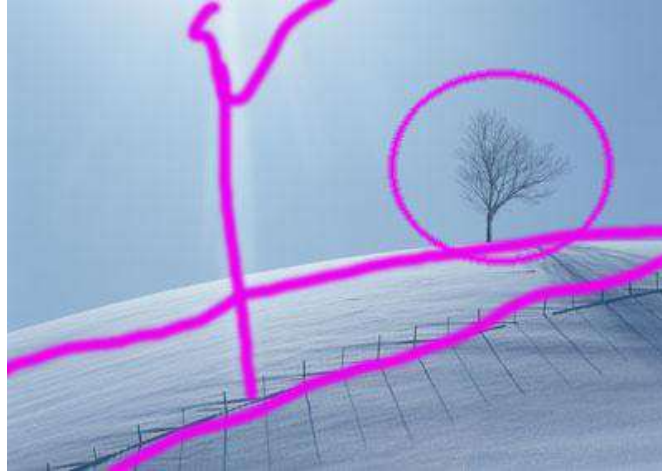
4. You apply this composition “map” to your own photographs.

*So let's start by taking a few photographs and dissecting them.*



Simple photo, right? Right off the bat, we can notice that it follows the rule of thirds, leading lines (the fence and mountain curves), and asymmetrical balance to some degree.

Now let's dissect its composition even more.



By drawing a few simple lines, we now have a general outline of the composition used for this photo. There are other lines (like the vertical lines of the fence and the tree branches), but we'll focus on the bigger picture.

Strip the image away and here's what you're left with.



A basic composition “template”. How much easier is it for you to go out with your camera, arrange the area in front of you to follow this framework, and then take the picture?

Very easy.

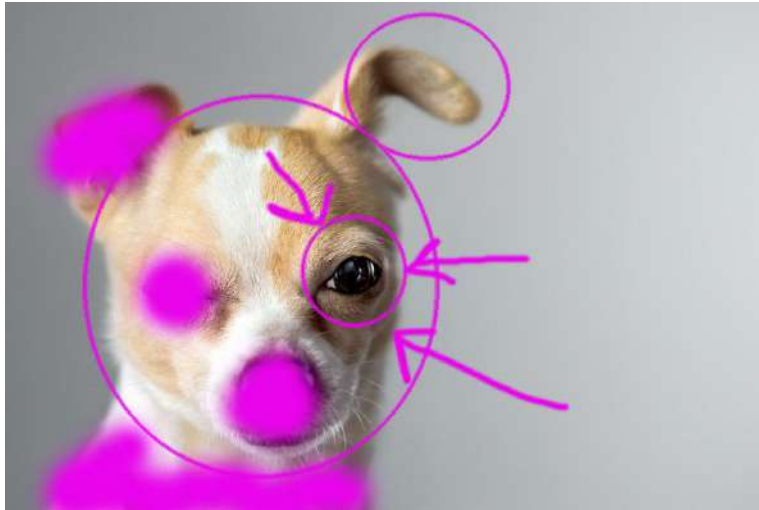
*Let's try another one.*



This photo is simple enough, right? Actually, it's more complicated than the previous one!

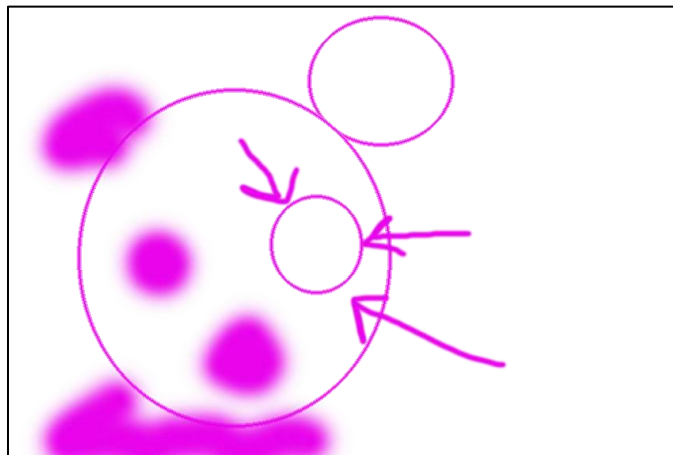
Just because there is a close-up shot of a face does not mean there is not a complex composition underneath. *Let's take a look.*





Here's a rough dissection. As you can see, there are several shapes. Eyes, which naturally draw viewers in, create leading lines in themselves. Within this photo are more complexities such as the shading of the dogs fur, the light and how it falls on the dog and the background, and a number of other aspects.

Let's just stick with the overall framework.



By outlining the overall composition framework of a photo, you get a useable template to try out on your own photos.

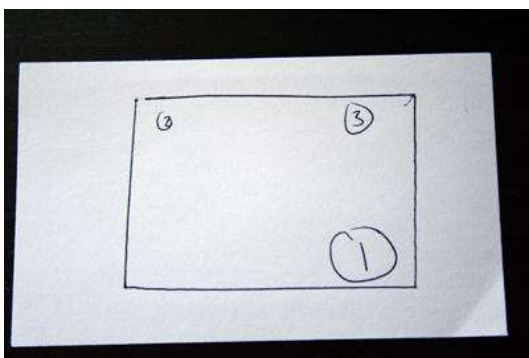
I could make the outlines much more detailed but I won't – and for a reason. The more detailed, the more difficult it will be to apply in the real world. It's better to leave a lot of the details up to the individual scene and what it brings to the table. That way there is still creativity and flexibility to the templates!

Now let's take a look at some doodle drawings of very common framing formulas. These are templates that I've seen over and over again in professional photography.

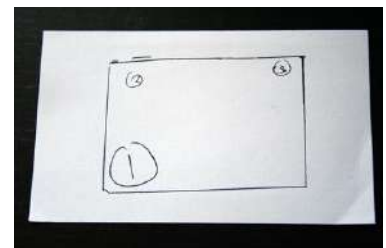
Use these as templates when you take photos. You can't go wrong.

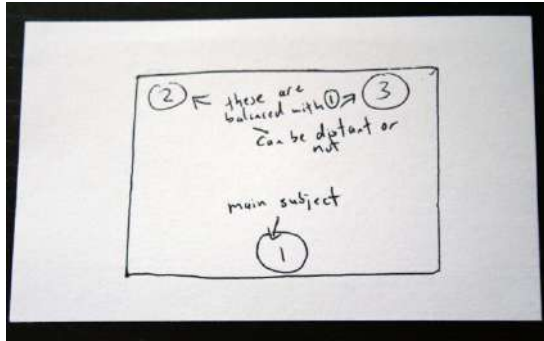
Things labeled numbers such as 1 or 2 represent objects – this could be people, dogs, anything that you photograph.

## Asymmetrical Balance

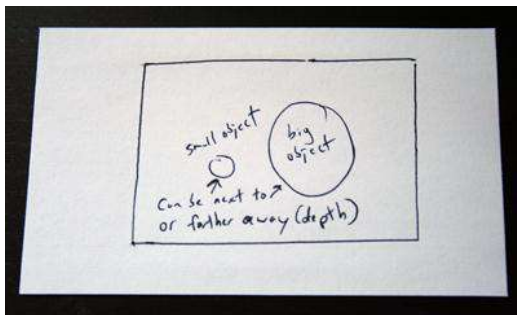
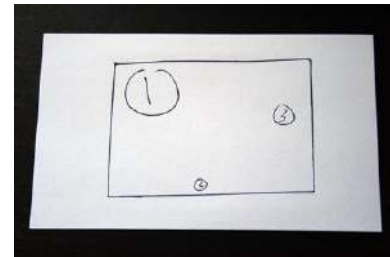


Notice the three numbers to the left. The first number represents the largest object. This creates asymmetrical balance with the 2 and 3 objects.





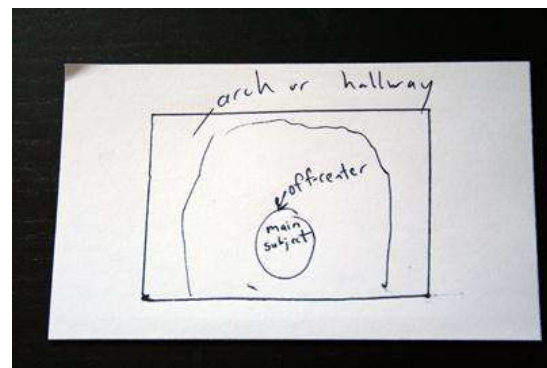
Another example of asymmetrical balance with 1<sup>st</sup> object placed differently. The second and third object can be right next to the first object or farther away.



Here is another example with two objects right next to each other and balancing out

## Framing

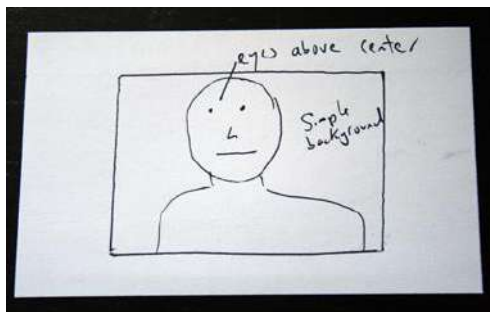
Use an arch or hallway with the main object inside of the arch.





## Standard Profile Photo

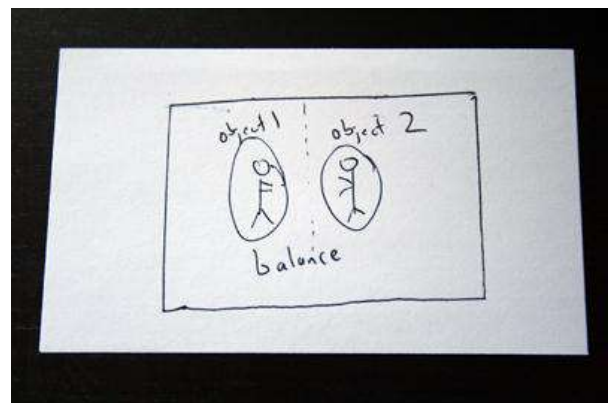
A standard way of photographing people, placing the head to the upper area of the photo, angling the model so their shoulders create lines.



Another good way to photograph someone up close is to place them right in front of the camera and offset their eyes to the top of the image.

## Symmetrical Balance

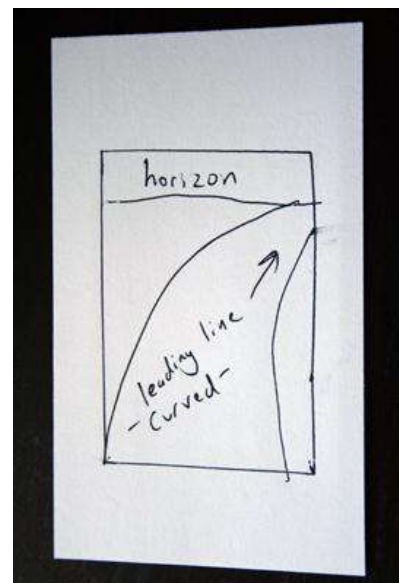
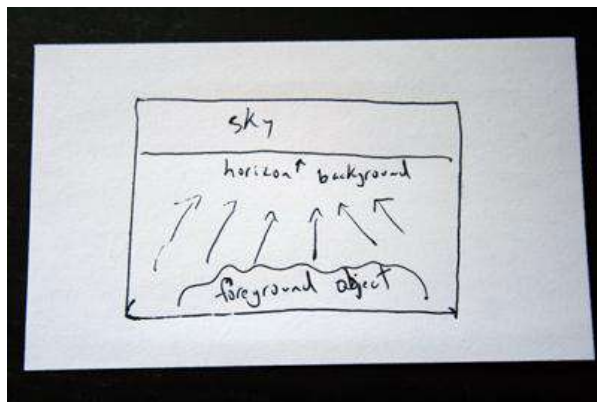
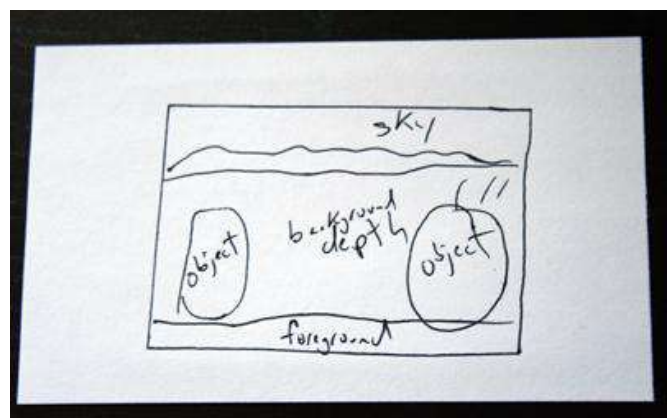
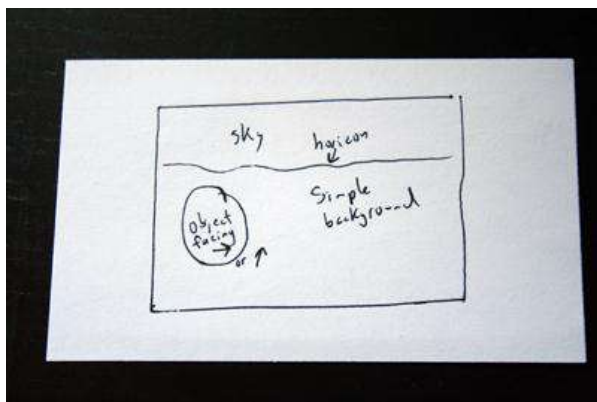
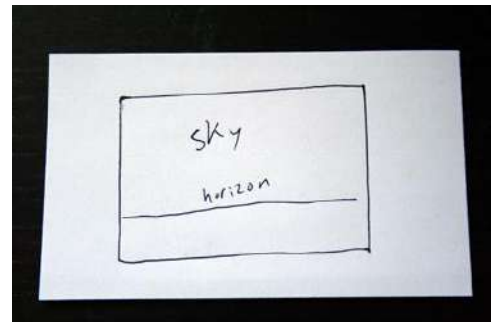
Place two similar objects right next to each other to create a mirror like effect.

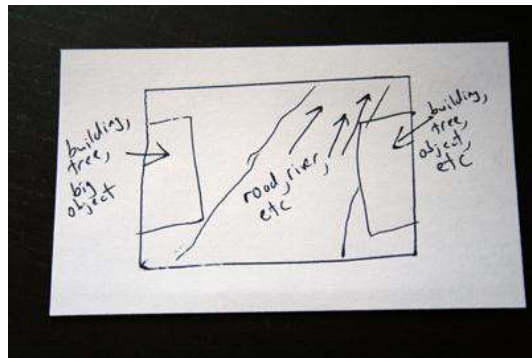


## Horizon Photography

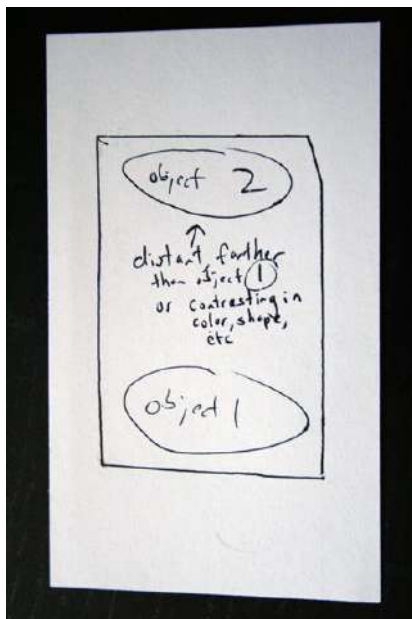
When taking photos of the horizon, be sure not to place the horizon line dead center. Either place it to the bottom or the top.

Here are a few other ways to shoot images with horizons using objects as points of interest.

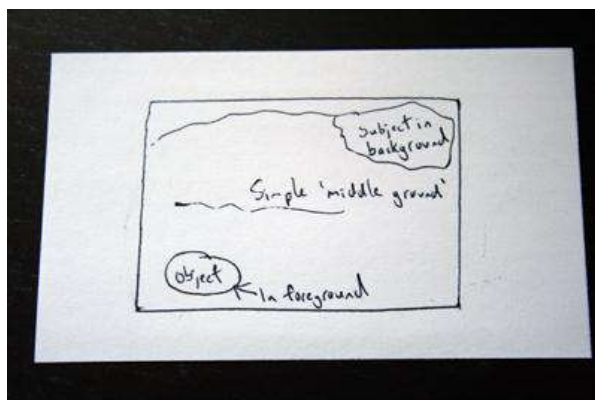
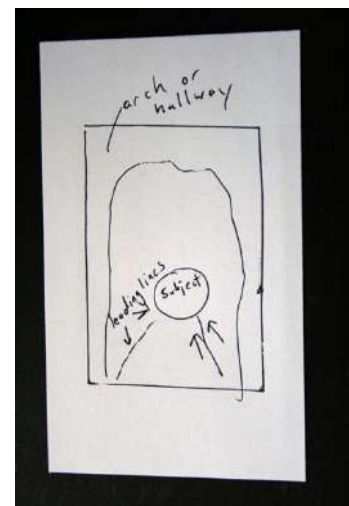




The buildings or objects to the left and right are used to 'frame' the river and leading lines in the middle of the photograph.

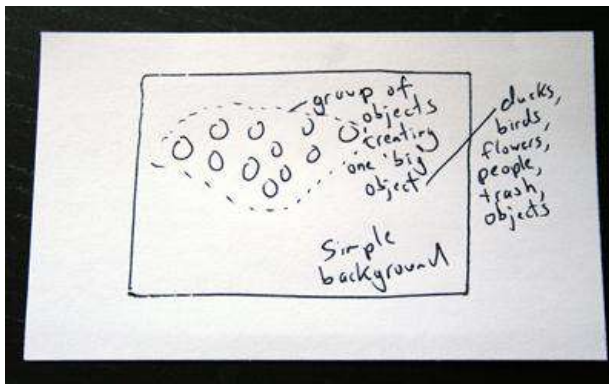
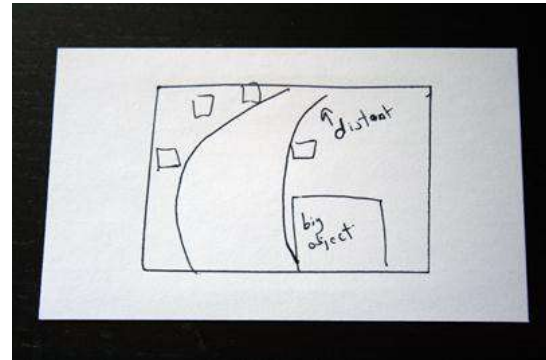


Somewhat symmetrical balance is used for the template to the left. The top and bottom object create symmetry even though they can be different in color, shape, and completely different objects.





Notice how in the template to the right asymmetrical balance is used as the big object is balanced by the small objects in the distant. And leading lines are used to lead to the distant objects.



The template here uses a group of similar objects to create an overall 'big' object. The dotted lines represent the big object shape. A simple background is needed for this to work.

Start paying attention to every great photo you see. Try to dissect the photo and figure out the general composition structure of it. There are countless other composition frameworks out there. Consider this guide as the starting path to your adventure to discover the others.

Thousands of amazing photos are out there. Each one has a lesson within itself. Imitate the great shots you find. Let their beauty guide you on

your own photo adventure. It amazes me how many newbie photographers cringe at doing this, out of fear of not being “unique”.

Again, to be truly creative and unique, you must first understand and duplicate what greatness first is. Most important, you must see and recognize greatness!

For most, photography is a mystery. If you're good at it, others will think you're naturally talented or creative – even if you spent twenty years getting to that level of expertise



*Another Central Coast Sunset - [Steven Corey](#)*

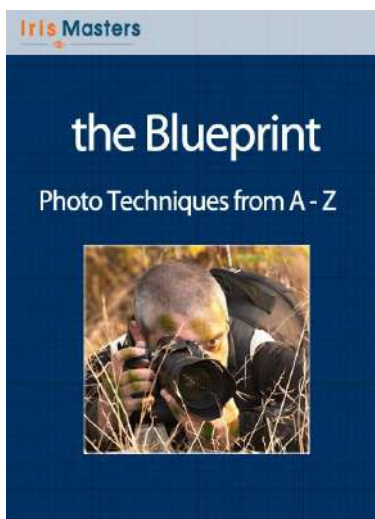
The reality is, just like anything else, it's learnable. My goal is to make photography easier, more fun, and help you improve fast! The takk photo formula is a great start as you can use it no matter what camera you have.



As you know, of course, photography is much more than just composition. There's exposure, focal length selection, and a number of other details.

If you'd like to continue learning more photography tips and tricks in an easy-to-digest, effective way, then I recommend checking out our complete photo guide, [“The Blueprint: Photo Techniques from A-Z”](#).

### In this eBook, you'll get:



- Over 250 pages of powerful tips for using your camera and improving the photos you take.
- A super fun activity that'll improve your photos (If you don't enjoy this exercise, you shouldn't be a photographer) Page 17.
- Worst camera fails of all time. Bad execution. Poor planning. And how to avoid this.
- Simple trick makes you wish you had your camera on you 24/7 – Page 26
- And much, much more!

**You can learn more about what's inside my guide at the link [here](#).**

With that said, I look forward to giving you more tips and lessons on photography in the coming days via email.

***To Mastering Your Photo EYE,***

**Alphonso S.**  
**[contact@irismasters.com](mailto:contact@irismasters.com)**