

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION PDF, EPUB, EBOOK



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The Ultimate Guide to Photography Composition

Reducing the eyes in an image is to reduce the attention and focus your viewers will give a scene. Our article goes into how using visual weight can help the compositional value of your photography. Balancing an image is a great start to a successful composition. Symmetry can be an effective way to show a balanced scene. Right to left as seen in an architectural scene, or top to bottom which you see in a reflection. They are both powerful to draw your attention to the image. The placement, size and visual weight of the objects in the scene is important in creating a balance.

The opposite can also work. Unbalancing a scene on purpose can cause tension. It will have your viewer searching the image for understanding or meaning.

Our article gives you all the help you need in the act of balancing. This will help you focus on one subject or item. Forget about any distracting or complex arrangements. What you want from having a single point comes down to your own vision and what is available to you. It can even work alongside the rule of thirds, placing the face towards the corners of the image. Read more about using a single point in composition for photography. Choosing the right focus point is crucial for composition in photography. The right focus point helps convey the message you want to tell with your photography.

And helps the viewer to understand it. Before experimenting with the focus points to improve your photography composition, you need to understand the technical part. You have to learn how to select a focus point with your camera. And also decide if you want to shoot in manual mode or in one of the autofocus modes. To learn how to use focus points in photography composition, read this detailed article. Figure-to-ground is a form of composition. We can use it to differentiate between two opposing colours or contrasts. We often find that the simplest images work the best. This form of composition is taking an image of a subject in a way that gives them the greatest attention. If you were to photograph a white dog in the snow, it would be difficult for the viewer to place their focus on the animal. Read our article for all the tips you are ever going to need for this composition. The golden ratio is a composition guide. It is sometimes called the Fibonacci spiral, golden spiral, phi grid, or golden mean.

With two pieces, if you make one 1. Place other prominent areas of the image on the remaining curve, wherever possible. It will lead the eye of the viewer through the image. Read on here how to create images that fit this interesting compositional rule. It is a variant of the rule of thirds. Instead of using vertical and horizontal lines, you will be using diagonals to divide your frame. This way, you can add a more dynamic feel to your photo. As the name suggests, you are using triangles instead of rectangular boxes.

The golden triangle is an excellent composition rule to use for portraits, and photos of roads or mountains. To learn how to use the golden triangle, check out this article. Everything has a pattern if you are close enough or far away enough to see them. The best street photographers are apt at recognizing and often breaking patterns. They can be both man-made and natural. Architectural photography is an excellent genre for finding geometrically perfect patterns. Finding the patterns and showing them off is a challenge in itself. Read our article here on how to find and capture those defining designs. This composition hones your attention to the inside.

This is where the most interesting subjects lie. For all the tips on natural framing, read our article here. To fill the frame means that you make your subject occupy a large part of the photo. Beginner photographers often leave too much space around their subjects. This might be because they are too shy to get closer to their subject. But you need to do so if you want to fill the frame. But how can you learn to fill the frame and improve your composition in photography?

Learn here. Symmetry is attractive to the human eye. We gravitate to these visual imperfections like an ant to sugar. There is a comfort to these images. They offer a peaceful and calming mood. For portraiture, it might seem strange, but for landscapes, they work well. Start here and start now! We discussed a few rules of composition already above. But there are more to help you improve your final images. For example, you can use the rule of odds. For some reason, people find an odd number of subjects more appealing than an even number of subjects. Three is the magical number, but five and seven also work well. Or you could experiment with negative space.

It is the space between or around subjects. Negative space can highlight scale or express emotions. Therefore, filling the frame is not the only option when composing photos. Read the other 19 important rules of composition here, and make sure to try them next time you are taking pictures. Leading lines as an arrangement tool are one of the most used by photographers. They are very important photography compositions. These lines draw attention to a subject or scene. A leading line can be a path or a road, leading us off into the distance.

But where are these lines leading the viewer? They should bring you to the most interesting part of the image. To subjects, scenarios or something specific. Read all about them here, in our extensive article. We have looked at lines in previous articles above. Those that lead your eyes to an interesting area of your image, or the edges of the objects in the frame. These converging lines look at the bands that run alongside the image. They end in a point, far into the distance. In street images, they run along with the image horizontally. Our extensive article here will help you understand and use these lines. All in the cause of strengthening your images. Horizontal lines are everywhere we look. They form the basis of many compositional rules. This is a great way to group together with many other subjects together. It helps to give the scene a location or a direction. They also offer an impression of stability to the image as it runs parallel to the ground that we stand upon.

A horizontal line can be boring on its own, especially when unbroken. Squares have a feeling of permanence like the triangle, but they are not as strong or aggressive. Arches have similar emotional characteristics as circles. Arches are graceful, and have a feeling of authority. The arch has been a symbol of strength and grace since Greco-Roman times.

Look for arches both in nature and in human-made environments to give your viewer a sense of calm. Repeating elements simply means that there is a series of identical or similar objects that recede into the background. This type of composition has the feeling of harmony and depth, and allows your viewer to get a sense of distance when looking at your photo. In the photo above of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, each mountain has a similar appearance. The mountains are all roughly the same size but look smaller as they recede into the distance. Look for similar scenes in both nature and human-made locations. In the photo below of Buda Castle in Budapest, Hungary, each archway is the same size. Similar to the mountain photo above however, the arches appear to get smaller as they recede into the far side of the photo.

In your own city look for a series of similar sized doorways to practice this technique. The term leading lines refers to a photo that includes a visual pathway. A visual pathway helps the viewer feel that they can travel through the picture. Think of it as a line that visually leads people through your picture. In Bangalore, India, there is a stairway cut into stone that works perfectly as an example of leading lines:

When you looked at the above photo did your eyes follow the stairway upwards, through the picture? Look for leading lines both in nature and cities. Ask yourself if the pathway that you see in front of your camera will visually lead your viewer through your picture. It can sometimes have angles or even curves. Can you see yourself walking down this set of stairs? If so, the photo has a leading line. Look for any lines during your next photo shoot and create a path for your viewer to visually walk up, down, or through. By following these 12 composition guidelines a whole new world of photographic creativity will open up to you. Instead of just documenting a scene, you will be able to craft the scene, and watch your photography take off to new heights! You cannot apply all of these composition tips into one single photo, but with regular practice you will be able to instinctively know which rule to follow as soon as you turn on your camera.

Happy composing! Take a look at this photo of New York City: When you are composing your photo, imagine a line going through your picture while you are getting your shot ready. Compose People Intentionally When choosing how to pose people there are many excellent composition principles out there, but possibly the two most important are a centered placement and a thirds placement. Combine Several Composition Principles Into One Sometimes everything comes together in your photo and you can combine two or more composition principles in one single image.

If possible look for colorful scenes that have two, three, or five different color sections. In the following photo the Thai monks match the tent in the background. Create Panoramic Photographs Most cameras have a panoramic option that allows you to take a wide photo. Create Texture And Pattern Photos The unique thing about pattern or texture photos is that they never have a main subject matter. For high angle photos try shooting downward from bridges or windows. Should I add 27 people in the crowd? What if you have a wife and three kids making it four people in total? The answer is to arrange groups of elements. A group of items can create a single complex component of the composition. This way you can always end up with three objects in the photo. I know, this last image will raise a lot of questions.

The main idea here is that if you can visually group elements, they become a single element. It depends on the actual picture and visual weight of the items in it. This rule is a bit related to the breathing space. This rule is about creating closed blocked or open unblocked areas in the image. The two examples below show both. Open space allows the flow into infinity; the closed area keeps us inside of the area. The desired effect you want to achieve dictates how you need to compose a shot. Open space is optimistic and encourages us to get out of the current state, to move towards the future. The closed area is stable and dependable, and it prompts to stay and think, to recap. The wrong area type can ruin the shot. For instance, you have a dynamic and lively seascape with a rushing wave.

The closed area in this case could choke it, stop and cut the action. Sometimes, this effect is not strong enough to actually ruin anything but it affects the mood, and you should consider it. An open area encourages the viewer to travel beyond the edge, to elongate the image and to ponder about the unknown. One of the fundamental and most important techniques is to implement a contrast.

Some contrast examples would be: Colour theory may make another guide one day if the need arises. The traditional perspective for the isolation is the shallow depth of field. This way the subject is separated from the rest of the objects around it. You need to have the main hero in focus with everything else out of focus. The best way to achieve this is either open aperture on your lens or longer focal length or both. This approach hardly can be applied to the landscape photographer. However, there is another implementation that we can use. The other ways to isolate an object are: You need to find something that could form a frame around your main subject.

You can use cliffs, tree branches, keyhole, broken fence, anything. It adds another dimension to the photo and adds context. Frame within frame gives an extreme accent to the centre. Also, more often than not, this type of composition works excellent with symmetrical shapes and central composition. Just how easy is it to see the white on black and the black on white? To make the main subject stand out, we need to separate it from the background.

The most commonly used way is to blur the background. Especially, in reporting. With this type of separation, you may still need one of the other types to have the best result. The repetition is obvious. Something is being repeated over and over again, like a row of marching soldiers. The repetition typically consists of the same elements. Our eyes tend to follow the lines and rest while browsing such photos.

However, simple repetition is relatively dull. It also works well as a subsidiary technique complementing the other elements in the picture. I must admit, I stumbled upon this topic and was stuck for over a week. The vast majority of material passing a repetition off as a rhythm. Of course, that is true but at an elementary level. We are not used to seeing and understanding visual rhythms beyond apparent repetitions. Imagine a piece of music made up of a single beat repeated over time, same beat, same silences in between. Does it sound like music? Does it sound any interesting at all? Make every third silence twice bigger.

It becomes rhythmic instantly! Now modify one of the beats to be different, we now have two rhythms at the same time. Simply saying, the rhythm is a recurring pattern of elements differentiating by strong or weak elements or varying conditions. This definition means, to form a rhythm, you need something repeating over time, and the repetition itself should create a pattern. You can build multiple rhythms in a single shot, and that makes a photo even more interesting. For example, a simple repetition of lines is a very sketchy rhythm. A repetition with decreasing length is already more appealing than a bunch of similar objects. Another modification to the initial example of repeating lines is to add a few longer gaps also repeated over some intervals. Think of it as music. Would your pattern form a nice sounding beat? The objects could have same direction trees or colours berries in the field or shapes shadows.

The eye should be able to perceive the resemblance and easily extend a visual pattern beyond the photo frame. You can build a rhythm around the lines, objects, groups of objects, colours, tones, flares, light and dark areas, etc. Anything goes. Rhythm is a repetition that encourages the eye to move in a particular direction. Sometimes we can incorporate our main subject into the rhythm, or it can itself be the rhythm. In other cases, we have some other type of subject, which is not strong enough to stand out. In this case, we need to break the rhythm to accentuate the subject. The other reason to break it is to draw attention to the imperfection or to make the viewer stumble and take a closer look at the picture.

The depth of field is a physical parameter of the photography process, and it dramatically affects your final shot. The general rule says that whatever you have in focus is the most important part of the photo, the blurred part makes a context or adds a nuance. The usual approach for the landscape is to have everything in focus. For the portrait, macro, etc — they have a background blurred. For the landscape, however, sometimes it makes sense to have the foreground blurred to increase the sense of volume. This little trick is often used in cinema, for example. The converging lines create Linear perspective. Our brain knows that they are parallel in reality, but they seem to point to a single vanishing point in the distance.

And such effect forces us to perceive the picture as three-dimensional. This type of perspective is the most natural and prominent and easy to create. The further the starting points in the picture are, the better effect it produces. Another trick to enhance linear perspective is to include similar subjects which go into the distance. Their size decreases, and we perceive it as depth. The way we perceive the reality is inevitably connected with masses of air between our eyes and different objects.

The atmosphere is never wholly transparent hence it affects distant objects more than those closer to us. Often, people tend to mix up things and make tonal and aerial perspective synonyms, which is incorrect. So, the less saturation and clarity the objects, the further away it seems to be. The perspective instantly adds volume to the photograph making it 3-d. The pictures, where distant objects have the same clarity and saturation as the closer ones, could look flat and those objects would look closer than they are. The worst light for revealing aerial perspective is the front light when the Sun is directly behind the photographer. The Sun brightens every object, and because solid objects have significant weight, they become much brighter than the possible haze out there, making it nearly invisible. The best light is backlight for it brightens the little particles flying in the air while most objects have their dark side pointed towards the camera.

This contrast increases and the haze becomes more prominent. There is not enough air to produce any sort of haze. Or it can be a perfectly crisp and transparent autumn day. There is no way to have an aerial perspective. However, we can achieve the same result by using tones or colours. Put darker objects on the foreground and brighter objects in the background, and you immediately have a perspective. This is a tonal perspective, and also this leads us to the conclusion that aerial perspective is a sub-type of the tonal perspective. Just like the Rhythm, the pattern is based on repetition. The difference is that it does not encourage eye movement in any particular direction.

The strong sides of the pattern are its geometry and continuation. If we cannot see the border of the pattern, then we assume it stretches on and on beyond the frame. The further away we move from the pattern element, the more they visually blend up until that moment when we can no longer distinguish each element. At this time they become a texture. So, for the pattern, we must be able to separate a single item from all others, and there should be some repetition. Typically, the objects should be grouped close to each other to form a pattern.

There is a way to accentuate one particular object among all others. For this, we should break the pattern. You can do it in many ways. Use a different colour, size, alignment, anything that goes out of order with the rest of the elements in the pattern. And such imperfection immediately draws attention to the rebel. But how to build it? What are the building blocks? In this chapter, I will outline the building blocks of the grey give some examples and hopefully give you some new ideas and gotchas. Important: you can easily combine elements and use various building blocks within a single composition. The most obvious composition element is a solid line. It can be anything — a wall, a rock, a crack, a tree. Anything solid and continuous. Due to the perspective, parallel lines converge at infinity, so, any parallel lines form diagonals in the photo. Unless you have an OCD for perfection, you can efficiently use suggested or broken lines.

As we know from the elementary maths, there is only one possible line between two points in space. I know this, you know this, our eyes know this. When we see two objects, we draw an imaginary line between them. Where there are three objects, there is a curve or a triangle. There is a convenient trick, which is somewhat related to the suggested lines. If there is eyesight or a prominent movement, our brain tends to prolong and extend it. So, eyesight or a movement form very strong composition lines. One important note here is to give enough breathing space for the direction of the eyesight. If, for instance, a person moves or looks towards the edge of the frame, it causes depressing feeling, sadness, hopelessness.

Feels like a dead end, end of story. As I have already said in the Balance section of the article, the fundamental balance elements are visual masses. In fact, anything on the photo resembles some visual mass. Another prominent feature, which can build the whole photograph or create some strong lines is a shadow. It particularly relates to the long shadows. Those you can see in the morning or evening.

Shadows are intriguing by themselves and being dark they make a decent visual weight. A saturated area is stronger than a less saturated one. Half-tones connect various regions and create a smooth transition between them. However, saturation is the easiest thing to overdo and ruin your shot. I prefer to de-saturate all colours except the main one or two if there is a contrast in place. Such area makes a logical and natural accent for the whole frame. Not every photo is coloured.

Many images are black and white, and some are just muted. This issue is easy to fix as the coloured areas are only a subset of the other type — high contrast areas. Any high contrast area draws attention. It works both for bright and dark tones as well as area edges. A really small chapter here. Any face even being small, carries a psychological weight for us, the humans. We can easily extend this concept to the whole figure, and it works equally suitable for both human and non-human characters. Take this — any living shape brings more visual weight and meaning than equal non-living one. Last but not least textures and patterns can also serve as building blocks for the composition. Typically, they do not have any direction. Therefore they are great for the foreground.

They create fantastic pleasing for the eye areas and can keep the viewer busy for some time. The pattern works equally well for other parts of the photo, for instance, for the sky. Typically, the pattern or the texture lacks dynamism and movement, so it should be used in conjunction with other composition building blocks. There are specific parameters, which significantly affect the composition. I believe I have already mentioned all of them in the article, but this is important enough to write a summary for better understanding. Focal length is the first and prime thing to decide before even taking your camera out. Different focal lengths have a different visual effect. The wide-angle stretches it and exaggerates the foreground. It is a commonly used general approach to have such lens for the landscape photography. This type of glass is less frequently used for

other genres of photography. The telephoto lens squeezes the perspective and distance, making it less stretched, forming a tighter image where all objects seem closer to each other.

Standard glass is anywhere in between and offers the most versatile range of possible compositions. There is no right or wrong choice here as everyone would have a different vision and approach to the photography. If you are just starting out, get an all-in-one lens and give it a go for half a year. Then look through your photos and take notes of the focal range used. Adding a story hero help a lot. It immediately starts to convey a story, to bring a sense of scale, to emphasise figure-to-ground relation. This approach applies to the landscape add a human or an animal, to nature add a single fallen leaf, to the still nature, to the macro, to anything. A little nuance changes a lot.

Long exposure surely affects a photography composition. There are numerous ways to implement and change the overall structure of the shot. Keep it in mind next time you are out there in the wild. Consider also the point of view, i. It may affect the composition and change the shapes of the objects. Also, it changes the look and feel of the photo. Psychologically, the towering object seems larger and more prominent.

However, the lower position hides the middle-ground thus decreasing the prolongation effect going from the foreground into the background. The very low position will detach layers of the photo from each other.

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Photographers of all levels tend to worry first about their gear. Cameras, lenses, lighting set-ups, posing their models. Everything but composition. The photographic composition is what separates a well-taken image from a snap-shot. These rules will become second nature. But for now, read through our guide, take notes, and then go out there and apply these rules of composition. There are many different types of composition. It can be difficult to know when to use each one to boost the interest level of your image. Sometimes photographers overuse one specific compositional rule because they have limited knowledge about the possibilities. This is the act of placing the interest towards the corners of the image, rather than the centre. It needs to help reiterate and portray your concept or message. Read more about these abused rules of photography composition here.

Any photographs of people or with people in them will have eye lines. Eyes in an image are our go-to place to start. We then follow their eye-line to what they are placing their focus on. Read our article here on how to use them in your images. So, where do you put this dominant line into your frame? It might be symmetrical. Read our article here to gain a better understanding. The placement of the horizon can have a powerful effect. The rule of thirds is among the most essential rule of composition in photography. When you start taking photos, you get to know this rule very soon. The rule of thirds divides the frame with two vertical and two horizontal lines. The four lines intersect in four points. To create a visually appealing photo, you should place your points of interest around these spots. Read our detailed article on how to use the rule of thirds in photography. After taking many photos, you will find every spot has lines, shapes, and forms. Some images will have more than others.

Lines are the edges of a subject or an object that show the boundaries between two or more different items. It might be 2-dimensional. Yet the form is what makes it look 3-d through the use of shadows or perspective. Read our article on how you can use these design elements. They make for great photography composition. Triangles are very important shapes. Look at the pyramids for their strength and powerfulness. You will also find them in everything that you see and aim to photograph. They are powerful as they combine the techniques of lines and paths. They give the viewer the impression of stability. Or even instability. These triangles can encompass the leading lines rule. They point towards a part of the image with interest. Implied triangles are what you will find to be most common.

The lines make up an implied shape, rather than an exact triangle. Read our article here on how to turn them into a powerful tool of composition. The visual weight of an image is more than the sum of its parts. Every subject or object has a weight, visible in photographs of them. By understanding the weights of objects, you can have control over them. Eyes provide very strong visual weights in images. Reducing the eyes in an image is to reduce the attention and focus your viewers will give a scene. Our article goes into how using visual weight can help the compositional value of your photography. Balancing an image is a great start to a successful composition. Symmetry can be an effective way to show a balanced scene. Right to left as seen in an architectural scene, or top to bottom which you see in a reflection. They are both powerful to draw your attention to the image. The placement, size and visual weight of the objects in the scene is important in creating a balance. The opposite can also work.

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They form the basis of many compositional rules. This is a great way to group together with many other subjects together. It helps to give the scene a location or a direction. They also offer an impression of stability to the image as it runs parallel to the ground that we stand upon. The key to the composition is simplicity and clarity. I know, this sounds obvious and most likely you know this info already.

But looking at the photos posted by amateurs, I must repeat it. Check the background. Make sure your main subject is separate from any background, make sure it stands out and is clearly visible. Make sure there is no branch sticking out of the head, make sure no items are interacting or blending with the main point of interest. You got it right — include as little as possible. In fact, to build great compositions, you must learn to exclude with no remorse or regrets. If something is distracting, competing, overly bright, etc. Go for clarity. This process of eliminating things is known as Subtraction, when you subtract everything unimportant or distracting or competing with the main subject. Always aim to include as little as possible. It goes down to a convenient property of our eyes to filter out a lot of things.

We somehow learned over the years to focus our sight instantly on something exciting and ignore the rest. Therefore we must remove everything that our eyes would filter out automatically and help the viewer to grasp the concept of your photo in the first couple of seconds. Composition balance is a tricky concept. Sometimes, however, out of balance composition can deliberately increase the tension, the expressiveness and convey some idea in a better way. Join me for one of the private photography workshops in Gold Coast. Ask yourself a question — is it balanced or does it fall to the side? You can easily balance a dark mountain peak with a bright coloured cloud, for instance. The bigger the object you include in the scene, the harder it is to balance it with something. Sometimes a massive rock on the foreground chokes the whole photo. So, the balance also applies to the object-to-scene relation.

Please note, this is important for understanding, balance is not opposite to dynamism. Balance is contrary to off-balance. The decision to make a balanced or unbalanced shot is entirely up to the creator as they have a different influence on the viewer. Static balance is created by the same or similar objects located at the same distance from the visual gravity centre of the frame. Dynamic balance is created by two completely different in size objects positioned at different distances from the centre. Such difference establishes a balance. This segregation is essential and must make its way into your subconscious. The photo is a transformation of the 3-d world into the 2-d image. The first thing is to have three layers of your photo — foreground everything close to the photographer, background the most distant objects, i. If we have just one layer, it may look flat and dull.

If we have two, they could compete with each other. Three will allow the viewer to look smoothly deeper and deeper into the shot. However, take a telephoto lens and zoom heavily in the green hills with some trees and make a shot. There is just one distant plane with everything in it. This one is a special case, where it works. Another excellent example of the reduced number of layers is when the landscape is very graphical, like the foggy morning. In the photo where competition is part of the story, feel free to include two layers to emphasise it. Another way to approach it is to zoom in and have a wave as a foreground object with little to no middle ground. You could also go into the water and capture some water motion as a foreground. We made it through the composition concept and general implementation principles. Listen to your heart and to the Harmony inside of you to produce the best images. I have to warn you — none of these techniques will make you a great artist.

Practice and study will. How many years do musicians study? How many out of them become composers? Not to mention being a great composer. In this chapter, you will see a lot of layouts, grids and techniques. Important note: in landscapes, more often than not, the horizon is one of the significant lines that you should put somewhere near the grid line. It tells a story, leads our eyes across the image and helps us to understand it. There are numerous ways to form a leading line. The most basic one is just some solid line, like a fence or a cliff face. The more

advanced one is a broken line made of separate objects, which suggest a line between them. A critical note here: do not split the frame with a line in two. Most of all it applies to a vertical line in the middle of the shot.

Lines, parallel to the edges vertical and horizontal add a sense of stability to the scene. Diagonals and triangles add dynamism and tension. Our eyes have a habit of seeing everything in horizontals and vertices. The rectangle is the most used shape in the world. Simultaneously, it adds volume to the picture. Triangle is a geometric shape that has multiple diagonals and a feeling of perspective hence adding even more dynamism. It is possible to build the entire picture made of triangles, and such an image will look dynamic and lively. Take this: vertical and horizontal lines add stability, diagonal lines add dynamism. The best part of it is that you can have any number of lines in your shot as long as they all play together. If you want a lot of action and energy, add diagonals and triangles. Creating diagonals is easy and straightforward. Diagonals are everywhere, always look to include some in your shot.

A slight change of angle transforms a horizontal line into a diagonal, and the viewer will eagerly follow it with their eyes. The most obvious usage is to have some significant subject somewhere in depth of the shot and have a few diagonals leading right to it. The diagonals work best when they start from the corners. The way the elements are organised within a shot affects how we perceive it. For the majority of people in the world, the eyes scan the picture left to right. Even if something draws our attention in the middle of the shot, we still go back and scan it left to right afterwards. And that should be enough to mean it is right for some people. Ok, so what does it mean for the composition? We can show it in two ways — as a challenge, as a tough hill, someone should conquer, or as a smooth descent. Our body will react accordingly because we know both feelings — when we climb a tough hill or when we cycle down the road.

For me, the first one means a challenge, and the second one expects an easy walk. What about you? Getting back to the Storytelling for a bit as such a slope gives us an excellent example to fantasise. Now you see that an incline and the direction gives us a context and we can produce the story immediately. A good layout for the struggle to overcome like an uphill battle or a mountain climb. Rule of Thirds is typically the first rule newbies get to know about the composition. It is a straightforward and natural way to subdivide the frame. We split the photo as the name states into thirds producing a simple grid.

The rule says to put the main subject into one of the intersections. If you have several points of interest, put them into different intersections. Luckily, you have four of them. Such positioning allows for the smoother eye scanning. For the curious: Rule of Thirds originates from the Rabatment of Rectangle. This technique builds two squares for any aspect ratio rectangle.

Believe it or not, for the regular aspect ratio, this rabatment is precisely on the thirds. Golden Ratio has a long history. If you really want to, you can read more about it in Wikipedia. The application that we can use is similar to the Rule of Thirds. The grid lines do not split the frame into equal parts because they are closer to the centre. The rule originates from natural proportions, a lot of things are built around the golden ratio, including humans, to some extent. Draw one diagonal from corner to corner and then draw two lines from the remaining corners so that they make 90 degrees angle with the main diagonal forming four triangles as a result. Also, these triangles are not symmetrical, and you can flip it if you need to. Maths is amazing. When we look around, it may seem the world is chaotic and unorganised.

But then we find yellow chamomile clearly showing spirals arranged with Fibonacci numbers. Or the human X chromosome inheritance tree also shows these numbers. Some galaxies are spiral, fetuses resemble it too. Golden Spiral is a self-repeating spiral shape with a constant growth ratio. Surely, no one will calculate these values precisely, especially when the sunset light is quickly fading. Luckily, this rule is not strict either, and the objects should roughly follow the spiral. Fibonacci numbers are one way to approximate the golden spiral. Lucas numbers are another. Just follow the general principle. The objects should form something resembling a spiral with a primary subject close to the small twisting point. Every time I post anywhere about this ratio, I hear someone disagreeing.

There is a lot of dispute about this topic. First of all, the golden ratio is believed to be at least years old. It is found in a lot of statues and even Pyramid of Giza. The main argument against it is saying that all humans are different, how can there be any constant harmony? But somehow we have that internal feeling — that guy has short fingers, the other one — long arms. What are we comparing to? We have that inner sense of harmony.

And this ratio speaks Harmony. I believe there are some universal Harmony Rules and we have a candidate to describe this rule right here before us. No one is perfect, while the Golden Ratio describes perfect proportions. I feel that these ratios and rules correlate with a sense of Harmony I have built-in. Side note — the absence of harmony can also be pleasing for the viewer. The conflict and dynamism attract attention. This shape is very dynamic and pleasing. It curves through the shot giving the ability to browse all parts and leading to the main subject. Unlike a diagonal, which is very direct and straightforward, the curve is more gentle and catchy.

Such compositions look most natural, and the viewer has zero chance to escape the flow. Such lines work particularly well for the S-shaped curve as well as any other rule. The general idea here is to keep the whole line within frame if possible. If the line goes beyond the frame edge, it stops being a good curve. Every single guide to composition suggests for the reader to avoid central composition at all cost and put your subject into the grid intersections using the Rule of Thirds, of course. But is it right? Absolutely not! You can safely put an object into the centre if the photo is about this subject solely and everything else is complimentary.

As opposed to other rules, where we try to blend it into the scenery. Take this as a more centrist, egoistic approach. This composition, however, needs some strong composition lines pointing at your subject. It must be the centre of gravity. This is true when foreground and background compete and are of equal weight. You can put it in the middle in the following cases: Everyone knows what symmetry is. Look for it anywhere — architecture, reflections. Symmetry is closely related to the balance and to the way humans are made. Humans are symmetrical, and we have binocular vision, we have two parts of the brain, etc. Symmetry is everywhere. Symmetry is good for the central composition when the image is symmetrical relating to either vertical or horizontal line going through the image. A very cool technique is to find a resemblance between entirely different objects. The key is to see similar shapes and accentuate them with the composition.

Once you have noticed similarities, use other composition rules to build the photo. The more significant the difference between the objects the better is the visual effect. The resemblance could be straight or mirror; it can be of a different size but with the same shape. The resemblance is somewhat similar to the Repetition covered later in this article but typically requires a more complex shape that is easy to distinguish between other forms. The radial composition is easy. This particular shape has one main subject and a lot of lines pointing towards it. It is essential not to have any other centre of gravity or significant lines to make the effect even stronger.

The whole layout resembles the Sun and the sun rays. This rule shatters the filling concept into pieces. We deliberately leave a lot of empty space around our hero to emphasise the feeling of the loneliness or emptiness or The Big Unknown or something similar. Sometimes, such a photograph can also convey a sense of the smallness of human. Negative space is the perfect example of breaking the rules tastefully. The rule of odds suggests that we find an uneven number of objects in the photo more appealing than an even number. The reason for that is again stability vs dynamism.

The even number of objects suggests balance and lack of movement and of course, the bigger the number, the harder to spread attention between all subjects. Also, two elements imply competition, opposition, and tension, or just a dialogue. Three elements convey a story and produce a dynamic balance. There is always something in the middle surrounded by other items thus giving a visual anchor. The rule seems pretty simple but is it the case? Can I include five elements? Should I add 27 people in the crowd? What if you have a wife and three kids making it four people in total? The answer is to arrange groups of elements. A group of items can create a single complex component of the composition. This way you can always end up with three objects in the photo. I know, this last image will raise a lot of questions. The main idea here is that if you can visually group elements, they become a single element.

It depends on the actual picture and visual weight of the items in it. This rule is a bit related to the breathing space. This rule is about creating closed blocked or open unblocked areas in the image. The two examples below show both. Open space allows the flow into infinity; the closed area keeps us inside of the area. The desired effect you want to achieve dictates how you need to compose a shot. Open space is optimistic and encourages us to get out of the current state, to move towards the future. The closed area is stable and dependable, and it prompts to stay and think, to recap. The wrong area type can ruin the shot. For instance, you have a dynamic and lively seascape with a rushing wave. The closed area in this case could choke it, stop and cut the action. Sometimes, this effect is not strong enough to actually ruin anything but it affects the mood, and you should consider it.

An open area encourages the viewer to travel beyond the edge, to elongate the image and to ponder about the unknown. One of the fundamental and most important techniques is to implement a contrast. Some contrast examples would be: Colour theory may make another guide one day if the need arises. The traditional perspective for the isolation is the shallow depth of field. This way the subject is separated from the rest of the objects around it. You need to have the main hero in focus with everything else out of focus. The best way to achieve this is either open aperture on your lens or longer focal length or both. This approach hardly can be applied to the landscape photographer. However, there is another implementation that we can use.

The other ways to isolate an object are: You need to find something that could form a frame around your main subject. You can use cliffs, tree branches, keyhole, broken fence, anything. It adds another dimension to the photo and adds context. Frame within frame gives an extreme accent to the centre. Also, more often than not, this type of composition works excellent with symmetrical shapes and central composition. Just how easy is it to see the white on black and the black on white?

To make the main subject stand out, we need to separate it from the background. The most commonly used way is to blur the background. Especially, in reporting. With this type of separation, you may still need one of the other types to have the best result. The repetition is obvious. Something is being repeated over and over again, like a row of marching soldiers. The repetition typically consists of the same elements. Our eyes tend to follow the lines and rest while browsing such photos. However, simple repetition is relatively dull. It also works well as a subsidiary technique complementing the other elements in the picture.

I must admit, I stumbled upon this topic and was stuck for over a week. The vast majority of material passing a repetition off as a rhythm. Of course, that is true but at an elementary level. We are not used to seeing and understanding visual rhythms beyond apparent repetitions. Imagine a piece of music made up of a single beat repeated over time, same beat, same silences in between. Does it sound like music? Does it sound any interesting at all? Make every third silence twice bigger. It becomes rhythmic instantly! Now modify one of the beats to be different, we now have two rhythms at the same time. Simply saying, the rhythm is a recurring pattern of elements differentiating by strong or weak elements or varying conditions.

This definition means, to form a rhythm, you need something repeating over time, and the repetition itself should create a pattern. You can build multiple rhythms in a single shot, and that makes a photo even more interesting. For example, a simple repetition of lines is a very sketchy rhythm. A repetition with decreasing length is already more appealing than a bunch of similar objects. Another modification to the initial example of repeating lines is to add a few longer gaps also repeated over some intervals. Think of it as music. Would your pattern form a nice sounding beat? The objects could have same direction trees or colours berries in the field or shapes shadows.

The eye should be able to perceive the resemblance and easily extend a visual pattern beyond the photo frame. You can build a rhythm around the lines, objects, groups of objects, colours, tones, flares, light and dark areas, etc. Anything goes. Rhythm is a repetition that encourages the eye to move in a particular direction. Sometimes we can incorporate our main subject into the rhythm, or it can itself be the rhythm.

In other cases, we have some other type of subject, which is not strong enough to stand out. In this case, we need to break the rhythm to accentuate the subject. The other reason to break it is to draw attention to the imperfection or to make the viewer stumble and take a closer look at the picture. The depth of field is a physical parameter of the photography process, and it dramatically affects your final shot. The general rule says that whatever you have in focus is the most important part of the photo, the blurred part makes a context or adds a nuance. The usual approach for the landscape is to have everything in focus. For the portrait, macro, etc — they have a background blurred. For the landscape,

however, sometimes it makes sense to have the foreground blurred to increase the sense of volume. This little trick is often used in cinema, for example.

The converging lines create Linear perspective. Our brain knows that they are parallel in reality, but they seem to point to a single vanishing point in the distance. And such effect forces us to perceive the picture as three-dimensional. This type of perspective is the most natural and prominent and easy to create. The further the starting points in the picture are, the better effect it produces. Another trick to enhance linear perspective is to include similar subjects which go into the distance. Their size decreases, and we perceive it as depth. The way we perceive the reality is inevitably connected with masses of air between our eyes and different objects. The atmosphere is never wholly transparent hence it affects distant objects more than those closer to us. Often, people tend to mix up things and make tonal and aerial perspective synonyms, which is incorrect.

So, the less saturation and clarity the objects, the further away it seems to be. The perspective instantly adds volume to the photograph making it 3-d. The pictures, where distant objects have the same clarity and saturation as the closer ones, could look flat and those objects would look closer than they are. The worst light for revealing aerial perspective is the front light when the Sun is directly behind the photographer.

The Sun brightens every object, and because solid objects have significant weight, they become much brighter than the possible haze out there, making it nearly invisible. The best light is backlight for it brightens the little particles flying in the air while most objects have their dark side pointed towards the camera. This contrast increases and the haze becomes more prominent.

There is not enough air to produce any sort of haze. Or it can be a perfectly crisp and transparent autumn day. There is no way to have an aerial perspective. However, we can achieve the same result by using tones or colours. Put darker objects on the foreground and brighter objects in the background, and you immediately have a perspective. This is a tonal perspective, and also this leads us to the conclusion that aerial perspective is a sub-type of the tonal perspective. Just like the Rhythm, the pattern is based on repetition. The difference is that it does not encourage eye movement in any particular direction. The strong sides of the pattern are its geometry and continuation. If we cannot see the border of the pattern, then we assume it stretches on and on beyond the frame.

The Ultimate Guide To Photography Composition (78 Best Tips)

Remember to look at a colour wheel from time to time. Study the different colour theories. Complementary colours, analogous colours The complementary colour scheme works here with blue and orange. If you head to color. This app will also show you other colours that work well with a dominant colour in your photograph. This might help on the backend as you process an image, when you want to process a certain colour a little warmer or cooler to help fit in with a predetermined aesthetic. Texture refers to the tactile element of something. In the case of a photograph, there isn't any one tactile feeling. All photos feel the same. As such, the texture refers to the look of how something is perceived to feel, in reality. Compositionally, making texture a big part of a frame can really give the viewer a sense of a place. Rhythm creates movement by repeating patterns and shapes throughout the frame of an image in random or highly organised arrangement.

I always refer to balance as a 'teeter-totter'. If you split your composition in to halves top and bottom or left and right, does it feel like they belong together? Does one side feel like it has too much going on? Balance within a frame helps. In this case the dark trees balance well with the white of the waterfall. The fog was accentuated slightly in post-processing to help create unity. Unbalanced images can hold the viewer's eye on one side of the frame instead of allowing it to take in and flow through the whole composition. Proportion refers to the size of objects within a frame as they relate to one another. It can be utilised within a successful composition by exaggerating proportions in one way or another by changing the camera angle. The photographer can also position the subjects in such a way to make the differences in proportion the focus of the image.

Emphasis refers to how the elements of your composition guide the viewer to an intentional subject within the frame. To do this, the photographer can employ a variety of techniques. Playing with selective lighting helps to emphasise the subjects being lit. Other ways to emphasise a subject include leading lines and proportion. Even the way that the photographer dresses or groups subjects can place emphasis within a frame. Harmony uses colour, texture, line and other aspects of art to point out the similarities of subjects within an image.

Harmonious images will often showcase how different objects are all the same, and utilise something that all the objects have in common to do so. Variety is the opposite of harmony. Not to say that it is chaos, but variety juxtaposes different objects together so that their differences are what brings interest to the photograph and the story being told. Obviously, nothing within a still image is actually moving, but by the use of creative shutter speeds, panning or zooming with the camera, you can create an implied feeling of motion. Showcasing how things are alike can be a powerful tool within a composition. This can be done by grouping things with likeness together, such as texture, shape, colour, value or size. The viewer is often looking for a sense of unity within an image, so putting many things together that share common traits can help convey that satisfaction. Continuity refers to how the shapes and lines within your image work together to lead from one to the other.

The end of one shape should lead directly into the next shape or shapes. Essentially, continuity describes how the objects within your composition flow from one position to the next. Closure is a difficult principle of composition to realise in photography, but the way that a composition is laid out can make the viewer see a more complete picture. A good example may be when you are photographing a large crowd of people who are mostly all wearing similar attire. Within that group, there may be several people not wearing the same attire... but the perception at first is that the entirety of the group is all the same. When you put things together within an image, they will appear to be part of a greater whole or group. An example is when you are photographing something using a telephoto lens. In doing so, you are able to compress the scene to make all parts of the frame appear closer in proximity.

Two separate mountain ranges can look like they are part of the same mountain range, when in fact there may be hundreds of miles separating them. Typically, these objects may be people, wildlife or a product. Traditionally, the goal of the photographer is to put these subjects in a place where they clearly become the dominant part of an image and stand out from the background. In portrait, wildlife and product photography, the approach of blurring those lines or camouflaging the separation between figure and ground is often achieved by using depth of field or bokeh.

In landscape photography, the approach is quite different, in that most people often seek front-to-back sharpness from the foreground to the background of an image. Oh, how we love order. These type of images are a little unnerving. If you cannot do this in the field, then giving yourself room to do it in post-processing can work just as well. When the symmetry is off by just a little bit, it can make your composition look lazily constructed. For me, I was an art major in college, and my exposure to the arts began when I was very little. I was interested in painting and drawing throughout my life.

As a result, I was exposed to a variety of different art mediums, artists and their works. None of this was directly related to photography, yet it all helped to shape the way I see. As such, I encourage photographers to look at other forms of art. Take a painting class at a local gallery, or college. Learn how to create and to be creative with different mediums. Look at classical paintings and try to envision what the environment looked like when the artist created that painting. How would you compose something similar with a camera? How did they use light? Even though the people in the paintings might be centuries old, what ideas can you incorporate from the work into your current photo shoot? What times of day have you seen lighting that is similar? Which locations have you visited that remind you of that particular place? You can even find inspiration in abstract or impressionist painters as well.

Look at the work of painters like Richard Diebenkorn and Jackson Pollack... I bet you can start to see things in nature or man-made subjects that might look similar. What about if you shoot aerial photography with a drone? I constantly see things that remind me of a certain painting or painter. Once I see these, I am able to start envisioning how I will compose them so that they look like the style of that painting. My advice is that you look at more artwork outside of photography... it will help you with your compositions.

The more I photograph, the more I enjoy the spontaneity of just showing up somewhere and making the most out of whatever shooting situations present themselves. What we thought was an easy mile and a half hike ended up taking us minutes, with much of it being a steep uphill slog. Needless to say, we missed a nice sunset as we were sweating and heaving somewhere below the summit. The last thing that you want is to be looking for the best spot to shoot when your client is ready to have their picture taken. This can be a waste of time and result in you losing the best light. Planning can help save a lot of preventable headaches later. I love looking for that different angle or unique perspective. For me, the hunt is almost as fun as the final product. So always plan to arrive at your destination ahead of time.

If you or I were sharing a scene with Brad Pitt, it would be hard to showcase us with him being on screen too, unless we did something to really put the emphasis on ourselves! Selective focus is a great way to have something iconic in your frame with something that is less iconic in the background. By putting one subject in focus and having the other blurry, you can place importance on one subject more than the other. This is usually done by experimenting with depth of field and can really help make a composition more concise and interesting.

Needless to say, this technique is great for wildlife and portrait photography. When you have a single point of focus where the image has one main subject and everything else is very subdued, it can guide the viewer's eye straight into your composition. Keep it simple... show the viewer JUST the thing you want. Not every image has to have a killer foreground with three or four subjects leading into an amazing sky in order to keep your viewer interested.

These ratios divide the frame into the key areas by using lines and curves where your eye is naturally more likely to go. The point of these ratios is to help you to place elements within a composition where the eye of the viewer is most likely to gravitate, as well as to put subjects in angles and positions where they may help to draw the eye around the frame. Lightroom and Photoshop both have overlays for all of the different ratios that I will mention below, so you can see how your photos line up with them. The Rule of Thirds uses key intersection points and breaks the scene up into thirds vertically and horizontally. In the grid where these lines intersect are the points where you should try to put your main subjects. The golden spiral is another method that people often use to compose a shot.

A curve starts from the corners and goes across the upper portion of the frame, spiralling towards the middle and the bottom. The concept is that movement and subjects should all fall on the curve and your most interesting portion of the frame should align closely with the middle of the spiral in the lower quadrant of the frame. The golden ratio works here, and the spiral ends where the little lighthouse is situated. Golden Triangles are yet another composition technique that photographers use to break the scene up and put emphasis on certain areas of the frame.

This involves drawing a diagonal line from one corner to the other of the image, and then from that line, two more lines come from the remaining corners to connect them together. Where the shorter lines touch the larger middle line are the areas where the most interesting parts of your composition should be lined up. Baroque diagonals are lines going from right to left across the corner.

The Sinister Diagonal goes from left to right across the corners. This image of a grizzly bear is a great example of how the baroque diagonals work within a frame. Also, again keeping the subject looking within the frame. Two of my favourite things to look for when composing a shot are reflections and a dynamic foreground. TWO of them! What's even better is if the foreground contains lines that will lead towards my subject. While these types of foreground are associated mostly with landscape photography, with a little creativity, they can be great in urban, wedding and portrait work as well. This reflection image shows how just a reflection can be its own powerful composition. Using complementary colour scheme and the framing of the foreground ice also helps this composition. People usually think of a balance between light and dark when they think of contrast. There can be contrast in the form of big and small, old and new, alive and dead, hot and cold, fast and slow.

There are so many different ways to tell a story with contrasting elements other than light and dark. Look at your subject, find things that contrast with it and try to use them as a part of your composition. Patterns and repeated shapes are an amazing way to make interesting photos. The key is to really fit them in the frame well fill the frame! Repetition of shape, and the continuity help to make this image work well. I really try to push my workshop clients to keep moving and not settle for shots of the same composition.

Even though you may have found the perfect angle for your shot, you need to see what other options are around. You can always come back and take that iconic shot again when the lighting changes. In the meantime, experiment by getting higher, getting lower, even laying down! Change the

angle of your camera so that you get a different perspective of the scene. Almost anytime that the sky opens up and gives you wonderful rays of light, an interesting shot is just waiting to be captured. Focused light automatically gives you a point of interest due to the contrast it creates between light and dark areas within a scene. Focused light in the form of a rainbow helps push the viewer into the frame.

Once you find your subject, you can look for ways to frame that subject within the image. Maybe there are some trees that can bend around the subject, or a hole in a wall or rock that you can use to make an interesting frame. Perhaps you can even utilise parts of a wall or old buildings to create a frame around a subject. The rocks make a great frame for the mountain and atmosphere behind it. The little tree even helps point inward to make the composition more cohesive. This is different to just filling the frame. This technique requires you to find the most interesting parts of a scene and make the image about that section of the image.

Sometimes, powerful images can be made by compressing a scene and zooming in, thus eliminating possible distractions from your composition. On the flip side, sometimes your lens won't give you the ability to incorporate all the best parts of the scene into a single shot. The best image might be made by zooming out and going wider.

Zooming in can be an effective way to utilise the conditions you are presented to make something visually appealing. When it comes to landscape images in particular, people get very stagnant with shooting horizontally. Remember that you can shoot vertically also, and compose that way too. Similar to shooting in horizontal format, you can compose using the rules, ratios and techniques that I've outlined above.

Each of the above compositional techniques are great to help you start making images that are more visually appealing, but they can be combined for an even better effect! The more ways that you can draw a viewer's eye into the image and keep it there, the better the image will be. Single point focus, Rule of Thirds, and a black and white processing are all helping to make this image work.

Give yourself room. Eleven years ago, I was shooting in Iceland and captured incredible images of the glacier and mountains beneath a beautiful sunset. I used my bubble level. I was stoked. The problem was that even though the camera was perfectly level, the glaciers were all at pretty intense angles and when I got home later on, the images all felt like they were tilted sharply to the right.

When I straightened them in post processing, they felt better, though the crop was way too tight for most of the compositions that I had so carefully put together. So always look at your images and see if they feel tilted in the camera. You may very well be dealing with an uneven horizon line. Many new photographers are afraid to get right in and fill the frame with their subject. Get closer, zoom in. Don't be afraid to fill the frame. Remember with images that have people or wildlife in them, that the viewer's eye is always going to follow the gaze or direction the subject is moving. In street images, they run along with the image horizontally.

Our extensive article here will help you understand and use these lines. All in the cause of strengthening your images. Horizontal lines are everywhere we look. They form the basis of many compositional rules. This is a great way to group together with many other subjects together. It helps to give the scene a location or a direction. They also offer an impression of stability to the image as it runs parallel to the ground that we stand upon. A horizontal line can be boring on its own, especially when unbroken. The horizon is a perfect example. Read here on how to use these horizontal lines. Vertical lines are not as important as horizontal ones. Yet they are still good compositional tools. Our eyes are more used to horizontal lines, moving from left to right. This is clear in how we read and look at the scenes presented to us. Our tip here is that if you are focusing on vertical lines, photograph in a vertical orientation.

Read our article here on how to use vertical lines to your benefit. There are many different forms of photography composition to choose from. It is hard to make the right choice. Every scene needs something specific. One of the biggest problems that people seem to have is in connection with weighted images. Beginners tend to try and weigh both sides. What you will find it that this style of composition favours neither side. So it subtracts from the image. You should have one side weighted heavier than the other. To learn more about common composition problems, check this article.

Food photography is easy. It is true, and Instagram already has millions of these images. To make a photographic masterpiece, you need to know about lines, textures, and colours. These three tools are part of a larger system of photography composition. By considering the angle and orientation of how you capture food, you can incorporate lines into your photograph. A line is a basic element of the composition, and also powerful. They have the potential to lead your eyes to important areas of the photograph. Read here for all the information you will need.

It also covers techniques to use the Fibonacci spiral in your food photography. Architecture image capturing needs a different set of photography composition skills. Buildings come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. The composition is key in this area. Some buildings are leading lines if you shoot from down-up. The converging lines disappear into the sky, leading your eye into a clever use of negative space. One of the most important tips on what to look out for is to capture the details. A staircase captured from the top looking down makes for a great composition.

Read here for more architecture photography composition tips. For the other nine tips, read our extensive article here. Negative space refers to the area that surrounds the subject s in your image. The technique of using negative space is about creating the right balance. Here, you concentrate on the relationship between the subject s and the background. You can make the background almost feel like it is receding away. Positive space refers to the primary subjects of a photograph. Positive and negative space can dance well together. For more information on how to create and use negative space, read our article here. Travel photography is a mixture of documentary, street, and landscape photography. There are compositional techniques that fit all these elements. One of the best ways is to change your perspective. Get high and look down, or start low and look up.

They might be the best images of your trip. For more ideas, read on here. You find a stunning landscape, hike for hours, take the shot. This is a common problem, and there might be a quick fix. Think about your composition first, all other settings later. All genres and fields of photography benefit from the right composition. The trick is to experiment and find the right ones for the scene. This is true for fashion photography as well. It will all depend on the mood and concept behind the image. You are free to follow or break any compositional guideline. As long as the subject is

interesting, you can place them right in the centre of the scene. Read here for composition tips to improve your fashion photographs. They will be for you, an extended member of the family or for a client. Compositional rules help you achieve stunning images everyone will be happy with. And you, as the photographer. There are composition tips that might surprise you.

For example, not everything has to be in the frame. Read here the 12 most important composition tip for family portraits. Capturing the skies above is interest enough. How can you put a bunch of little lights in a sea of darkness in a composition? We are here to tell you how. The sky houses more than just a few sparks. Read our list on how to frame and compose these majestic scenes.

Following the rule of thirds or golden ratio might work wonders for landscapes. But what about still life photography? There are different approaches to this field. You can, of course, use others. But try the ones in our list as well. For example, using overlapping materials creates depth in your scene. It brings a 3-D and realistic quality to your images. For more ideas, you know where to look. He worked for the early version of Associated Press, then moved on to work with Time magazine. His work has been critiqued for all the compositions he used. Henri-Cartier Bresson was a French photographer. He pioneered the genre of street photography. His view on photography was capturing a decisive moment. Try and capture a composition that repeats itself. Or where the foreground copies the background.

The diagonals in the example here go from left to right. It is the same way our Western eyes move over an image or text. It follows our natural eye movement, guiding us. Read more about the master of composition techniques here. They might sound like rules, and, heck, we even call them rules. But these compositions are more like guidelines. The medium of painting helped to create and mould other forms of composition. There is no composition police. We use these to help us create the best possible photograph you can. Get out there. Shoot, check and shoot again.

Click here to learn how to break the rules of photography composition. Because rules are meant to be broken. A central composition can work well. It helps to isolate the subject, utilizing negative space around them. This also takes importance away from the background. It makes the subject in the centre more powerful. Read here for more information on how a centre composition can help you. The most important thing is to use your creativity. It is also what gets your message out there. You are the sum of all your experiences. Creativity is way more important than composition, so focus more on that.

The photography composition will come later. Check out these unusual composition ideas to find inspiration and your own style. Composition is essential for becoming a successful photographer. Everyone can learn the technical part and press the shutter button. But it takes an excellent composition to turn your photographs into art. This used to be quite difficult to grasp, but Intuitive Composition allows you to master it in no time at all. Josh Dunlop. Hillary Grigonis. Petras Gagilas. Megan Kennedy. Natalia Robert. Share with friends Share. Show Comments 0 Hide Comments. Related Articles. Use Converging Lines to Improve Your Composition If you've been following my basic composition technique tutorials, you'll already know how effective the use of lines can be when composing a photo. It can make or break an image. Understanding the principles of landscape photography composition. ...

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Photography Composition: The Definitive Guide - Landscape Photography | Real Estate Photography

Negative space like this can become a beautiful part of your photo! When composing your shots, it is vital to determine how you want the photograph to look. Are you trying to capture an object up close, but want it to look farther away? Do you want to bring an object in the background closer? To do this, you have to understand how to adjust for background and foreground depth of field. When composing your photograph, be sure to examine the background and foreground around you and use it to your advantage. If you want a close-up subject to appear farther away, try different angles for your photo and be sure to include other close-up objects, such as flowers, grass, or a road. While arranging the shot, be sure to keep your focus on the main subject. This will help you take great pictures of people, pets, and other items. This will ensure your photos have good composition. A wide-angle lens can be very helpful for these types of photos.

This is a commonly used technique when taking photos of pets or people. Symmetry in composition tends to be appealing. Photographing landscape or a person can be appealing if centered. Imagine a line down the center of your frame, and from there, adjust your composition so that both sides are symmetrical to each other. This technique can add artistic balance to your photos. For example, a symmetrical photograph of an ornate staircase can fill the frame in a way pleasing to the eye. Using complementing colors in your photography composition is a great way to create eye-catching images. With a color wheel, you can determine which colors are complementing colors, by viewing which colors are directly opposite from one another on the wheel.

By using complementary colors, both in landscape photography composition and portraits, you will see quite the difference in the quality of your photos. Now and then, a photo that you think worked pretty well may not turn out as impressive as you hoped. In most cases, this can be fixed using an editing program. Lightroom is a wonderful program that is great for editing photos and making changes, such as cropping, tilting, zooming, and filtering to make the photograph look better. Cropping your image allows you to easily cut out any part of the picture that you want to exclude. For example, if you took a picture and later found there was an unwanted tree at the edge of the frame, you can crop it out. This is a great way to eliminate too much negative space, as well.

You can use the tilt tool to easily change the perspective of your photograph. When your subject is too small or far away, you can easily zoom in on your photo, cutting out unneeded extras that can be found in the background. In many ways, this process is similar to cropping. In Lightroom, there is a tool that allows you to select an area on your photograph and straighten its angle. This is extremely useful if you have a photograph that features a crooked landscape, as you can straighten it out a bit, and the straight line will make it more appealing to the eyes. If your photo is a little

bland and needs some sprucing up, you can always use the filters that come with Lightroom to change the entire look of the picture.

For example, the black-and-white filter and the antique filters are both interesting and can change the image. The right filter can often draw focus away from subtle problem areas in the picture. You can also change the color of the photo, adjust the brightness, contrast, saturation, and sharpness, which can make your images pop. Photographic composition is how you arrange the items in your picture.

The rules of composition are incredibly important and can make the difference between good photos and great photos. There are many ways to achieve proper composition in your photos, including things like using negative space to make the photographs appear more attractive, framing your subject properly, and even making sure that you have the right complementing color scheme in the photograph. The focal point of your scene is important, as well. You want to be sure you capture it properly, but not always centered, and be sure to use a different point of view from time to time. This will help you capture angles you might not have otherwise considered. Learning photography composition basics is an important step towards improving your photography skills.

It can truly help you to achieve great pictures each time you snap the shutter button. To make a photographic masterpiece, you need to know about lines, textures, and colours. These three tools are part of a larger system of photography composition. By considering the angle and orientation of how you capture food, you can incorporate lines into your photograph. A line is a basic element of the composition, and also powerful. They have the potential to lead your eyes to important areas of the photograph. Read here for all the information you will need. It also covers techniques to use the Fibonacci spiral in your food photography. Architecture image capturing needs a different set of photography composition skills.

Buildings come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. The composition is key in this area. Some buildings are leading lines if you shoot from down-up. The converging lines disappear into the sky, leading your eye into a clever use of negative space. One of the most important tips on what to look out for is to capture the details.

A staircase captured from the top looking down makes for a great composition. Read here for more architecture photography composition tips. For the other nine tips, read our extensive article here. Negative space refers to the area that surrounds the subject s in your image. The technique of using negative space is about creating the right balance. Here, you concentrate on the relationship between the subject s and the background. You can make the background almost feel like it is receding away. Positive space refers to the primary subjects of a photograph.

Positive and negative space can dance well together. For more information on how to create and use negative space, read our article here. Travel photography is a mixture of documentary, street, and landscape photography. There are compositional techniques that fit all these elements. One of the best ways is to change your perspective. Get high and look down, or start low and look up. They might be the best images of your trip.

For more ideas, read on here. You find a stunning landscape, hike for hours, take the shot. This is a common problem, and there might be a quick fix. Think about your composition first, all other settings later. All genres and fields of photography benefit from the right composition. The trick is to experiment and find the right ones for the scene. This is true for fashion photography as well. It will all depend on the mood and concept behind the image. You are free to follow or break any compositional guideline. As long as the subject is interesting, you can place them right in the centre of the scene. Read here for composition tips to improve your fashion photographs. They will be for you, an extended member of the family or for a client. Compositional rules help you achieve stunning images everyone will be happy with.

And you, as the photographer. There are composition tips that might surprise you. For example, not everything has to be in the frame. Read here the 12 most important composition tip for family portraits. Capturing the skies above is interest enough. How can you put a bunch of little lights in a sea of darkness in a composition? We are here to tell you how. The sky houses more than just a few sparks. Read our list on how to frame and compose these majestic scenes.

Following the rule of thirds or golden ratio might work wonders for landscapes. But what about still life photography? There are different approaches to this field. You can, of course, use others. But try the ones in our list as well. For example, using overlapping materials creates depth in your scene. It brings a 3-D and realistic quality to your images. For more ideas, you know where to look. He worked for the early version of Associated Press, then moved on to work with Time magazine. His work has been critiqued for all the compositions he used. Henri-Cartier Bresson was a French photographer.

He pioneered the genre of street photography. His view on photography was capturing a decisive moment. Try and capture a composition that repeats itself. Or where the foreground copies the background. The diagonals in the example here go from left to right. It is the same way our Western eyes move over an image or text. It follows our natural eye movement, guiding us. Read more about the master of composition techniques here. They might sound like rules, and, heck, we even call them rules.

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But it takes an excellent composition to turn your photographs into art. This used to be quite difficult to grasp, but Intuitive Composition allows you

to master it in no time at all. Where there are three objects, there is a curve or a triangle. There is a convenient trick, which is somewhat related to the suggested lines. If there is eyesight or a prominent movement, our brain tends to prolong and extend it. So, eyesight or a movement form very strong composition lines. One important note here is to give enough breathing space for the direction of the eyesight. If, for instance, a person moves or looks towards the edge of the frame, it causes depressing feeling, sadness, hopelessness. Feels like a dead end, end of story. As I have already said in the Balance section of the article, the fundamental balance elements are visual masses.

In fact, anything on the photo resembles some visual mass. Another prominent feature, which can build the whole photograph or create some strong lines is a shadow. It particularly relates to the long shadows. Those you can see in the morning or evening. Shadows are intriguing by themselves and being dark they make a decent visual weight.

A saturated area is stronger than a less saturated one. Halftones connect various regions and create a smooth transition between them. However, saturation is the easiest thing to overdo and ruin your shot. I prefer to de-saturate all colours except the main one or two if there is a contrast in place. Such area makes a logical and natural accent for the whole frame. Not every photo is coloured. Many images are black and white, and some are just muted. This issue is easy to fix as the coloured areas are only a subset of the other type — high contrast areas. Any high contrast area draws attention. It works both for bright and dark tones as well as area edges. A really small chapter here.

Any face even being small, carries a psychological weight for us, the humans. We can easily extend this concept to the whole figure, and it works equally suitable for both human and non-human characters. Take this — any living shape brings more visual weight and meaning than equal non-living one. Last but not least textures and patterns can also serve as building blocks for the composition. Typically, they do not have any direction. Therefore they are great for the foreground. They create fantastic pleasing for the eye areas and can keep the viewer busy for some time. The pattern works equally well for other parts of the photo, for instance, for the sky. Typically, the pattern or the texture lacks dynamism and movement, so it should be used in conjunction with other composition building blocks. There are specific parameters, which significantly affect the composition.

I believe I have already mentioned all of them in the article, but this is important enough to write a summary for better understanding. Focal length is the first and prime thing to decide before even taking your camera out. Different focal lengths have a different visual effect. The wide-angle stretches it and exaggerates the foreground. It is a commonly used general approach to have such lens for the landscape photography. This type of glass is less frequently used for other genres of photography. The telephoto lens squeezes the perspective and distance, making it less stretched, forming a tighter image where all objects seem closer to each other. Standard glass is anywhere in between and offers the most versatile range of possible compositions. There is no right or wrong choice here as everyone would have a different vision and approach to the photography.

If you are just starting out, get an all-in-one lens and give it a go for half a year. Then look through your photos and take notes of the focal range used. Adding a story hero help a lot. It immediately starts to convey a story, to bring a sense of scale, to emphasise figure-to-ground relation. This approach applies to the landscape add a human or an animal, to nature add a single fallen leaf, to the still nature, to the macro, to anything. A little nuance changes a lot. Long exposure surely affects a photography composition. There are numerous ways to implement and change the overall structure of the shot. Keep it in mind next time you are out there in the wild. Consider also the point of view, i. It may affect the composition and change the shapes of the objects. Also, it changes the look and feel of the photo. Psychologically, the towering object seems larger and more prominent.

However, the lower position hides the middle-ground thus decreasing the prolongation effect going from the foreground into the background. The very low position will detach layers of the photo from each other. So, use the lower position wisely — it has an excellent expressiveness potential. The higher point of view stretches everything between foreground and background, shows all objects on the level surface and makes a harmonious picture. However, it lacks a bigger punch of the lower point of view. The side light is the best — lighting the objects on the angle, it reveals all structure and texture, produces light and shadow and adds a lot of volume. The morning and evening light casts long shadows, which are great for the composition too. The backlight has different properties. It lightens up haze and dust particles in the air producing the glowing filling effect. Such photos have the most magical look. Also, the objects show their dark side to the viewer adding to the overall tonal contrast.

And lastly, all these objects could have a brightly lit edge. The front light is the worst. First of all, it renders any haze much weaker, often making it disappear altogether hurting the perspective. Another kind of light is the daylight when the Sun is up above. Typically, the photographers try to avoid it, but we could also make some use of it. Shoot the water without any solid objects rocks, etc. Include just the water and the sand and maybe something in the distance. It makes all those paradise shots. Blur your photo heavily in your editing program. The significant lines, areas, shapes and colours should still be visible.

All you composition blocks should stay and form the skeleton of your composition. You probably know about the crop tool in Lightroom and Photoshop. But not many are aware of the hidden composition assistant grids it contains. Once you select a crop tool, there is another button on the tool strip at the top. It includes a range of grids for your composition. Select a different grid from the drop-down menu or by pressing O on the keyboard. There are even sites dedicated to this topic in full. All these materials claim that most of the known composition rules are either nonsense or simply inherit the dynamic symmetry principles. In short, this composition is based upon a large number of major and minor diagonals forming various grids and pretty patterns. Also, some of the articles claim that the classic painters like Leonardo da Vinci used these laws in their works. Leonardo lived more than years ago, and Dynamic Symmetry principles were formed by Jay Hambidge Surely, Leonardo and others used diagonals and gestalt principles, but it has nothing to do with those nice grids and modern theories.

It could be right as an arranging principle as it uses lots of diagonals and is based upon the same principles. Disclaimer: this flowchart shows how my brain works more or less. But I thought it could be interesting and helpful to my readers. I know many photographers who use another workflow. It works just as good sometimes, especially when you have a good eye for the composition!

It needs practice and careful thinking and analysis. My best advice here is to take some rule and create a few dozens of photos with it. Then

proceed to the next one. Level two is to combine some rules, etc. Average rating 4. Vote count: No votes so far! Be the first to rate this post. Privet, Anton! Very well done! A very comprehensive guide with excellent illustrations as examples. Now... to store it all in the old memory banks... then be able to retrieve it when needed! As always, with landscapes, the art lies in being able to capture the essence of it. You stand on a mountain top or on a beach, looking at a magnificent once in a lifetime sunset or sunrise. Overwhelmed by the beauty of it as it surrounds you. Standing there with a camera, you wonder how you can adequately capture the moment. Forget all that — just get the settings right on the camera, then think of how to get the best composition. Despite that frustration, the picture you ultimately decide on creating, keeping all the factors you mention in mind, will tell you the story.

It will have the ability to replay the whole journey, the final location and bring back the memory of being there and seeing everything outside the boundaries a frame imposes. If a picture I take can do that, then I am well pleased with it. Always, it become a very personal, emotive and subjective matter. Some aims can be achieved in situ, in camera, with a bit of careful thought and pre-planning, the rest can be done — once again with thought and planning, during post editing. Most of my pictures probably fail the compositional perfection test if there be such a beast.

Thanks a lot for your thoughtful comment. There is no such thing as perfection, there is only a way towards it. That was never my intention! The social icons you have repeatably appear and disappear in your photos is just driving me mad. I assume you are using a mobile phone? Otherwise, the icons appear on the side, not at the bottom. I just had to disable this plugin altogether because it froze. Hopefully, you can now finish an article. Hi Anton, very well written and illustrated. I came here from a link from The Luminous Landscape website, I expect you will get many more visits. Again, well done sir!! This is great to know! Thanks a lot. In fact, getting finding images alone took over a month. Really happy it worked out. Holly cow, I kept trying to get to the bottom to leave a comment, but the content kept going.

Your layout and examples provide a lot of thoughts — the process flow is a great idea. Anton, thanks for this tutorial — you do give me a lot of inspiration, and I am still glad after so many months that I met you that one early morning on the Maroubra Beach Seascape Tour! Keep going!! Greetings from Germany, Ingrid. A very interesting and informative read Anton. I love your photos and wish I was in Sydney to be able to participate in some of your workshops. Staggeringly detailed and useful post, Anton. Well done. I will share it on our social accounts for Light Stalking. Thank you. Thanks for pointing it out. Feels so good people enjoy reading it! Anton, That is a great work, I have saved to my file, so I can keep coming back to read it.

How do we pay you back, for such great knowledge, not just well written, easy understanding with your sample pictures, demonstratin Thank you very much. In my world motion picture, and Canada it is the opposite: backlight is from behind the subject relative to the photographer. I would argue that with light sources other than the sun, the distinction becomes important. If a person is lit at night from a shop window, but walks a few steps forward, they would go from being frontlit to backlit in my terminology in a few steps. Your terminology would describe the person silhouetted in foreground as frontlit. For landscape photography, where the sun is your only light source most of the time, your way of saying it makes some sense. Thanks for bringing it all up!

Anton and Cineman: On the subject of lighting: My understanding of back lighting has been where the light source is at the back of the subject and any shadows are coming towards you, or even creating a silhouette. Painting vs. Photography Composition Both painting and photography are visual arts. ISBN : Composition Concept and Principles Before going deep into the techniques, we need to understand what the photography composition actually is, how it is created, what key points it has, how it affects our perception and what its capable of.

Frame Shape Obviously, we need to start with the frame shape as it is the first thing affecting the photo and the general perception. Vertical And Horizontal Alignment The rule of thumb is to choose a horizontal frame when the majority of the compositional lines are horizontal and vice versa. Fill The Frame This filling principle is easy to understand and implement. Visual Storytelling Storytelling is the whole point of any photograph. The point of interest here is the comparison, the relation between dead and alive vegetation Breathing Space The first thing you are going to wonder is where to put the main subject. The first one fills the frame nicely and has a great diagonal but the frame blocks the movement and the cliff becomes too massive and dominating because it nearly reaches the edge.

The second shot looks airier and suggests the movement Check The Corners Just like with positioning high contrast objects near the frame edges, the corners are even more critical. The first shot has a lot of sand and the dark cliff on the right — all of it is distracting from the main idea, the storm It goes down to a convenient property of our eyes to filter out a lot of things. Balance Composition balance is a tricky concept. Check out my quick guide on Desert Photography.

Do you like these seascapes? Check the guide on Seascape Photography. Throw in even more psychology by reading my explanation on human perception Gestalt Perception. Pro Tip: Go really low for the wide-angle lens. It makes any land feature huge and prominent. How useful was this post? Click on a star to rate it! Comments Good work! This is very useful content for a beginner landscape photographer. Articles such as you have presented will give me a nudge in the right direction. What a great tutorial. Your visual examples really drive home your points. Now you see why it took me so long to finish! Good to see a fellow Sydney sider killing it. By continuing to use this website, you agree to their use. To find out more, including how to control cookies, see here: [Cookie Policy](#). Follow me on Instagram

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