

Composition In Photography

What is composition in photography? In the most basic sense, photography composition definition can be said as how you put your subjects into your photo. It is how they are framed in the viewfinder and what you put around them. For example, if you had ten photographers take a picture of the same model in the same location, you would still get ten completely different images. The composition is where the artistry comes from in photography; it is where the human element overtakes the technical.

Even if you have the most expensive, top-of-the-line Hasselblad your photos will be nothing more than snapshots if you don't know the basics of how to compose a photograph. Alternatively, you could be shooting with a decade old smartphone and make [stunning works of art](#) with good composition. In other words, it's the composition that makes the photograph.



Before diving too deeply into photography composition techniques, a standard disclaimer must be given. Since photography is an art form, there really aren't any rules. Therefore, please consider these "photography composition rules" as guidelines and learning tools. Yes, rules are made to be broken. But before you can go breaking the rules, you must know what they are and why they exist.

Photography is a [visual art](#). While art appreciation is a separate subject, it is a worthwhile endeavour to study classic art, paintings, and [photography](#), to learn the basics of composition. The composition has been studied and pondered by artists for thousands of years now. Learning the history and the basics of art appreciation will make you a [better photographer](#).

If there is one overarching take away from these photography composition tips, it should be to slow down and make your photographs. Think about the image you want your viewer to see, and think about the movement of their eyes. You want them to take a journey through your photography, and you want them to spend a little while on that trip. The last thing you want is for them to see it and move on.

12 Photography Composition Techniques

Here are the top photography rules, tips, and practices. Remember, these photography rules are made to be broken! Also, remember that some of these concepts can be combined and used together. They are not mutually exclusive.

Rule of Thirds



The [rule of thirds](#) is the most talked up of the rules of composition and is one of the easiest ways to teach photography composition for beginners. It's not the end-all-be-all rule, but it's a fabulous starting place.

To practice this rule, divide the frame of your photograph with two equally spaced vertical lines and two similar horizontal lines. These lines and the four points at which they meet create areas on your frame for placing subjects and essential elements.

Probably the most important takeaway from the rule of thirds is that subjects generally do not belong centred in the frame. By placing them carefully using the rule of thirds, you can control the final image and the journey your viewer takes through the frame.

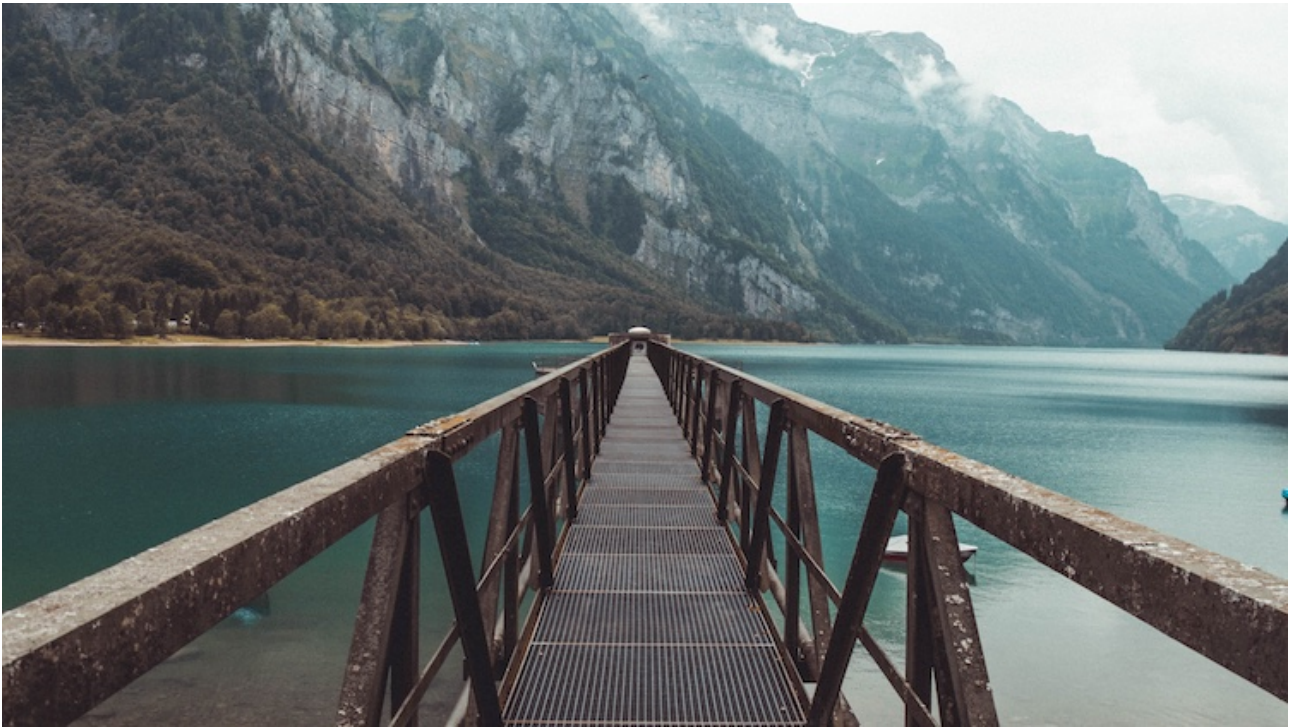
The Golden Spiral

The golden spiral is a [modification of the golden ratio](#), or 1:1.6. Greek mathematicians studied the golden ratio over 2,000 years ago, and some believe that the Ancient Greeks used it in the architecture of famous buildings like the Parthenon. It is also found throughout nature, from the spiral of seashells to the arrangement of leaves on plants.

Similar to the rule of thirds, the golden spiral can be applied to your photography by imagining the spiral shape overlaid on your image frame. The curves of the spiral move inward towards your central point of interest. These photos might seem more complicated at first, but they do lead to a visually interesting composition!

Just like the rule of thirds, this rule of composition sets the central subject outside the centre of the frame. But the spiral leading to the subject introduces us to another composition style that's very important in photography. The elements that make up the spiral lead our eyes to the subject.

Lead Lines



Once you start looking for them, [lead lines](#) are everywhere. A road, a rough footpath, a shoreline, a distant mountain range, the vertical trunks of trees in a forest, or even the arms and legs of a model can all be used in the composition of a photograph. At first, straight lead lines are the easiest to identify and follow. But as soon as you realise that a lead line simply leads your eyes, it becomes clear that even curved lines can get the job done. Leading lines are photography composition basics, which needs to be mastered.

The idea of lead lines is that the photographer arranges these elements in the photograph to lead the viewers' eyes to the subject. Once you know what to look for, you'll see lead lines everywhere.

Give Moving Objects Space to Move



When shooting moving objects, be they people, planes, trains, or automobiles, it is preferable to compose your image in a way that gives the object somewhere to go. If the object is leaving the frame, it leaves the viewer with a sense of wonder, "Where is it going?" If you position the elements of a photograph so that it is moving into the frame, you are telling a story.

There's another rule here that should be mentioned. Since we read from left to right, it is most common to place moving objects moving from left to right. You can also accentuate the effect of motion by slowing down your shutter speed and widening your focal length to [produce motion blurs](#). This technique is part of what is known as [Bokeh in Photography](#).

Cropping



Just like in post-processing, cropping refers to cutting something out. The art of composition is all about cutting stuff out. But know what goes and what stays in the frame is an important line.

Generally, the goal is to crop distracting elements. Street signs, extra people, or excess cars are examples. All of these things may require the photographer to reposition themselves to better focus on the subject. You can crop photos with almost any photo editor. Smartphones nowadays have inbuilt picture editors to achieve that but if you are looking to explore more photo editing software do [check out these alternatives](#).

Capturing Symmetry



Symmetrical scenes can make beautiful photographs. Think of reflection pools near monuments or calm mountain lakes reflecting fall colours.

Likewise, [architecture](#) is full of symmetry. In some ways, human brains are programmed to respond to symmetry, so it always makes a captivating and exciting capture.

[Symmetrical photos](#) seldom follow the rule of thirds or the golden ratio. More often than not, the horizon bisects the frame equally, and the subject is centred. Sometimes it's okay to break the rules, but only if you realise why it works.

Framed Shot

Frames add a touch of drama and story to any photo. The view out of a window in a lighthouse or the view between large trees in a forest tell more than just the picture of the view itself. Another photo composition example can be garden



archways which frame beautiful gardens or the way elaborate brick gates frame the vista of a distant grand mansion. The concept can easily be applied, and it can be combined with symmetry and lead lines too.

Find Balance



Images should have depth. This means that there is a foreground, a middle ground, and a background all clearly present. The subject can be in any of those places, but it's important to balance one with the other. This is especially useful when [capturing landscape photography](#). Too often, the easiest photo to take is a simple snapshot of mountains in the distance. More often than not, these wind up on the editing room floor (an old school term for the delete key).

A better technique to emphasise the distant mountains is to find something interesting nearby to place in the foreground. Maybe a small creek could be in the frame, or perhaps a tree with some character. This is a bit like the last rule of framing things, but in this case, we just need some object in the foreground to give the photo depth. Practicing this can significantly improve your photography composition.

The same rule can be applied in reverse. Say you are taking a photograph at the beach. The ocean goes on and on and doesn't provide much depth to the image. A ship offshore, however, adds some interest and drama. Clouds also make great elements to add interest in the background.

In studio work, backgrounds are usually kept as plain as possible. But there is still



something there, something showing that the model or subject is not hovering in space. Background lighting is essential to avoid flat and uninteresting photos.

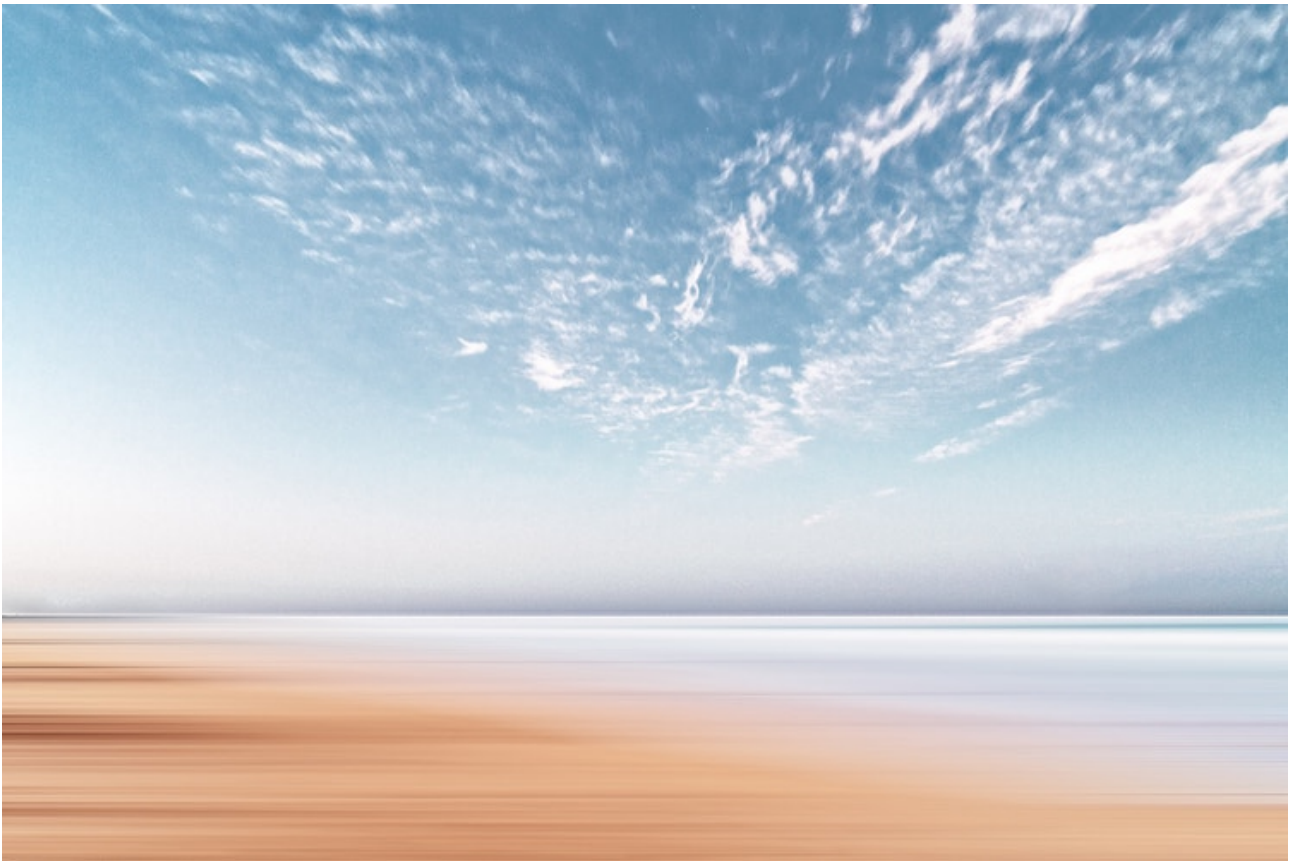
Balance does not always refer to the foreground and background relationship. It can also refer to the actual subject in the frame. For example, if you're taking a full-length portrait and using the rule of thirds, what is along the other line and filling the other

intersection points away from the subject? This would be a good spot for something that helps tell your story, be it a prop or background element.

Odd Numbers Rule

This rule applies to a lot of things, but in photography, it can be distilled down fairly simply. Try to keep things in balance by using odd numbers. Three trees, five people, or seven geese are examples of setups that could make great images. There's nothing very technical here other than the interesting fact that the human eye is attracted to odd numbers, so it makes a more pleasing composition.

Use Negative Space



The negative space in a photograph is the empty bits. These might have empty blue sky or water. Controlling that space can create powerful results. A lot of negative space can provide an openness or a feeling of freedom from the photo. A lack of negative space results in a focused crowding of the frame. Images that fill the entire frame are more intense. It's not a one or the other situation since

they both have their place depending on the sort of photo you're trying to capture.

You can also amplify the effect of the negative by [using photography props](#).

[Stock and marketing photographers](#) love negative space because it provides a space for text. This doesn't necessarily make or break the photo, but it's something to think about.

Move Your Feet



Changing your physical position is one of the best photography composition tips you can get. Get the camera down low to the ground, or hold it up over your head. Changing your perspective often changes the entire mood of the photo.

Say it with Colour



Colour is the topic of entire courses. Painters and [graphic designers](#) give careful selection to the colour used in their artwork with good reason. Colours invoke moods and emotional reactions, and they communicate with the viewer on a very fundamental level.

Photographers don't always give too much thought to the colour used in their photos since they are usually capturing what is already in the scene. But sometimes a scene is so striking that the colour stands out and the shutterbug wants to accentuate and emphasise it.

Having a foundational knowledge of colour helps. A colour wheel is a standard tool found in graphic design studios and every art classroom. It quickly shows which colours can compliment each other or which do not. There are also many apps and websites that offer the same functionality. While the landscape and

street photographers might not be able to pick their colours, studio, product, and still life photographers certainly have a level of control over it.

Conclusion

Photography composition for beginners is a learning exercise. These tips and techniques are a starting point. There's certainly more to know and more things to think about, but from here you have the basic idea. The only way to master any art form is to practice it. And the way to practice is to keep in mind these rules and try them through different angles and locations. You will know if a rule is working or not. This will keep you from capturing random pictures quickly, which would be less appealing and take up memory. Now that you know what is composition and what are its types, it's time to go out and write your own story.

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Original text can be found at the link below

<https://www.pixpa.com/blog/photography-composition-techniques>