MY TAKE

HOW TO FIND BEAUTIFUL COMPOSITION IN PHOTOGRAPHY:

Mastering the art of composition elevates your image from ordinary to extraordinary.

By Mary Doo

Understand and Internalize the Foundations of Composition.

These are not rigid rules but foundational guidelines to help inspire creativity. Study and memorize these concepts and practice them until they become second nature. When you understand them thoroughly, then you will learn when to break away when appropriate.

Begin with these building blocks:

» **Rule of thirds.** Imagine a Tic-Tac-Toe grid that divides your frame into nine equal parts. Place key elements along these lines or at their intersections to create a balanced and interesting shot.

» **Leading lines**. Use roads, fences, boardwalks, rivers to guide your audience's eye through the image toward your main subject.

» **Balance and framing**. Experiment with negative space, windows, arches, or tree branches.

» **Foreground and background.** Incorporate interesting and aesthetic elements in the foreground or background.

» **Symmetry and colors**. Use these elements to add balance and vibrancy.

» **Combine Techniques**. Once you are familiar with the basics, blend multiple techniques. For example, guide the viewer's eye with leading lines toward a focal point that is positioned at a third of the "Tic-Tac-Toe" grid, while using framing or an aesthetic foreground to add depth. Use balance, symmetry, or space to create tension or harmony.

» **Storytelling**. A strong composition tells a story. So, identify your main subject (the "hero") of your image and consider everything else in the frame as supporting characters that either help or hurt your hero. For example, a tree standing in a stormy field becomes the hero, while dark clouds can be either supportive or distracting elements. Simplify your composition by removing distractions (villains) that do not contribute to the story. This can be done during shooting or in post-processing by cropping. To guide your audience to where you want them to look, enhance your hero with subtle adjustments like brightening, sharpening, or increasing clarity. Tone down busy or less important areas by darkening or reducing saturation. Observe how light interacts with your scene. Use natural light to create contrast, highlight textures, and add depth. Early morning or late afternoon (golden hour) often provides the most flattering light.

» **Adapt to your surroundings**. Photography is as much about adaptability as preparation. Light, weather, and unexpected conditions can shift your plans. Learn to work with what you have and incorporate elements like moody skies,

foggy landscapes, or use highlights and shadows for dramatic effect. These conditions can create memorable

» **Play with perspective and viewpoints**. Vary your angle and viewpoint to discover compositions that may not be apparent at first glance. Crouch low to create an intimate view or climb higher to add depth and show more of a scene. Move left and right to find the best composition. Changing perspectives may uncover beauty in a familiar or "boring" subject. For animals and children, shooting at eye level or ground level usually yields more pleasing results. Be aware of what is behind your subject – watch for undesirable distractions.

» **Keep it simple with intentional minimalism.** Sometimes, less is more. Compositions that are clean and uncluttered allow the viewer to focus on what matters most. Use negative space to create a sense of isolation or grandeur, and let simplicity guide the eye to your hero.

» **Master the flow of the view.** Think of your image as a path for the viewer's eye. Use lines, curves, and natural shapes to guide attention across your frame. These compositional tools create a rhythm that leads to a more enjoyable viewing experience.

Conclusion: Make composition second nature by practicing these steps and experimenting regularly. You will develop an instinct for composition that enriches your photographic style. See each shot not just as a picture, but as an opportunity to guide your audience's journey into the story you have designed. Review your photos critically. Look at successful images by others and identify why they work well compositionally.

Composition Concepts Illustra-

Elephant with Hitchhikers



Rule of Thirds, Supporting Characters, Balance: The elephant is positioned according to the rule of thirds, with smaller animals as supporting characters. Foreground and Background Harmony: The foreground grasses add depth and frame the elephant, while balanced, harmonious colors in the scene enhance the composition.

Elephant Parade at Sunrise



Rule of Thirds:

The elephants are positioned in the lower third of the frame, balancing the rising sun at the opposite third.

Perspective and Storytelling: Shooting from ground level unclutters the background, and the elephants marching together reveal their close-knit behavior and relationship with the vast landscape.

Color and Negative Space: These elements contribute to a harmonious balance and sense of depth.

Wild Oak Arch of Savannah



Leading Lines: The central path, lined by rows of trees, creates a strong leading line, guiding the viewer's eye toward the horizon.

Symmetry: The arching trees on both sides provide a near-symmetrical look.

Framing: The trees act as a natural frame, enclosing the path and drawing the eye toward the center.

Perspective and Depth: The converging lines receding into the distance enhance depth.

Backlit Alpaca and Pony



Adapting to Backlit Lighting: Adjustments to lighting create a dramatic effect. Darkening the background removes undesirable clutter, while adding clarity to the foreground enhances the play of light on autumn leaves and grasses.

Storytelling: The positions and interactions of the two farm animals create visual interest.

Cemetery with Autumn Leaves



Framing: Vibrant fall leaves create a natural frame that guides the viewer's eye through the scene.

Color Contrast: Bright orange and red leaves against the deep blue sky add a sense of seasonality and excitement.

Perspective and Storytelling: A low-angle perspective emphasizes the height of the tombstones reaching toward the sky, adding depth and a poetic sense of yearning for eternity.