

Composition

Learn to use the basic techniques in creating a Focal Point

Introduction

What is the key to taking interesting photographs that people want to look at?

- Directing the eye to a focal point
- Creating harmony between the colours
- Use of lighting for draw attention to certain areas
- Separating your subject and its setting

Learn the rules like a pro...
So you can break them like an artist!





Composition

Topics

1. The Rule of Thirds
2. Leading lines
3. Colour Harmonies
4. Framing

The building blocks for good composition are:

3. Balance

The visual interaction between Subject and Setting.

2. Structure

Setting

1. Focal Element

Subject

1. The Rule of Thirds

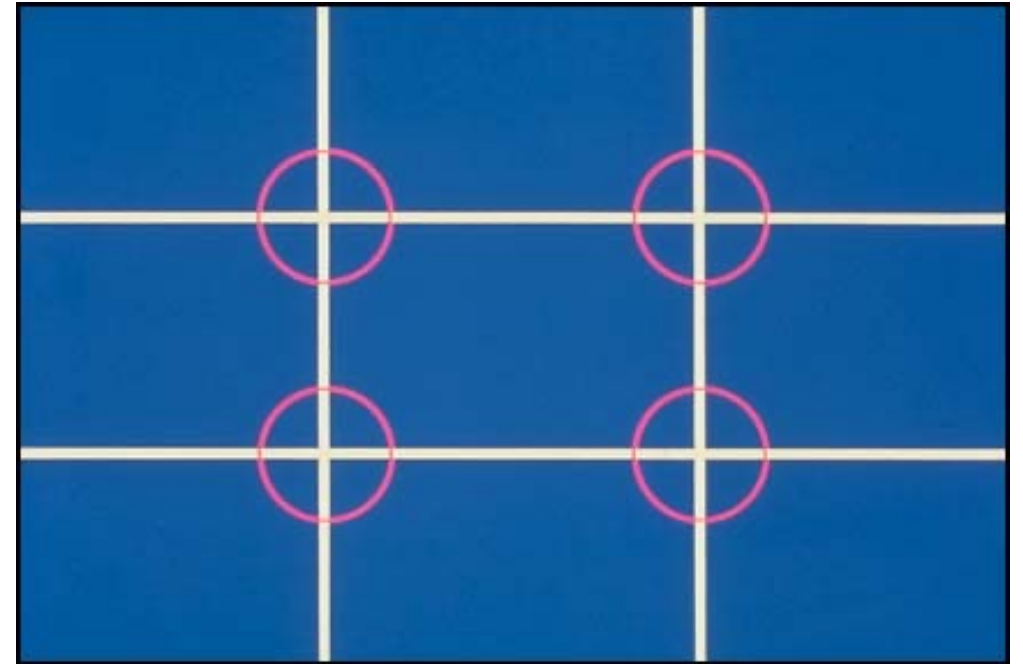
What is the Rule of Thirds?

- It's one of the key compositional rules that many photographers use
- it will immediately give your photographs a feeling of flow and depth
- It will help you to create balanced in an image and a path for the eye of the viewer

1. The Rule of Thirds

How does the Rule of Thirds work?

- The rule of thirds breaks an image up into nine equal squares
- Where the lines intersect, we call these Points of Interest (Focal Points)



1. The Rule of Thirds

The human eye is naturally drawn to these points of interest or **focal points**.



1. The Rule of Thirds

By placing your subject, and other elements, along the lines and at the points of interest we create a **focal point**.



1. The Rule of Thirds

To understand the how **Rule of thirds** works, we must first look at **Fibonacci's Ratio**.

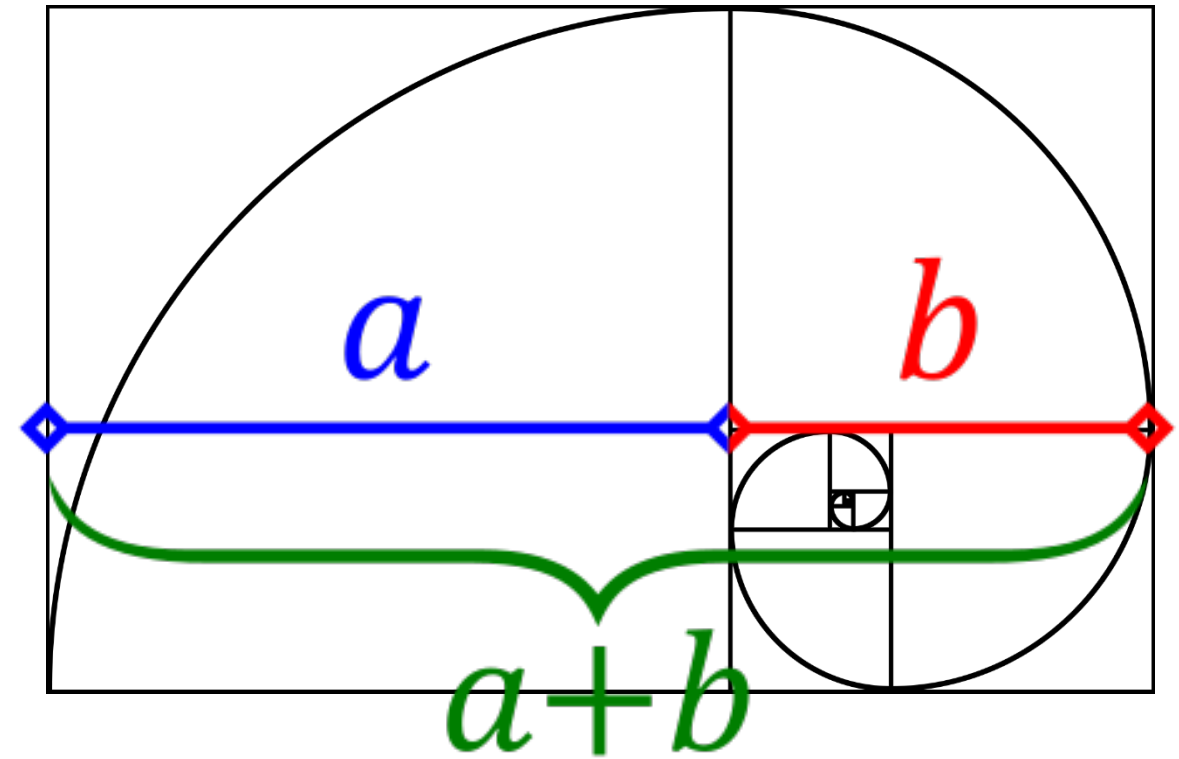
- AKA the **Golden Mean, Phi, or Divine Proportion**
- made famous by Leonardo Fibonacci around 1200 A.D.
- an absolute ratio that appears often throughout nature
- a design that is universally pleasing to the human eye

Since the Renaissance, artists and architects have designed their work to approximate this ratio of 1:1.618

- It's found in **Architecture, Art, web pages, magazines, logos** and in **Photography and film**

1. The Rule of Thirds

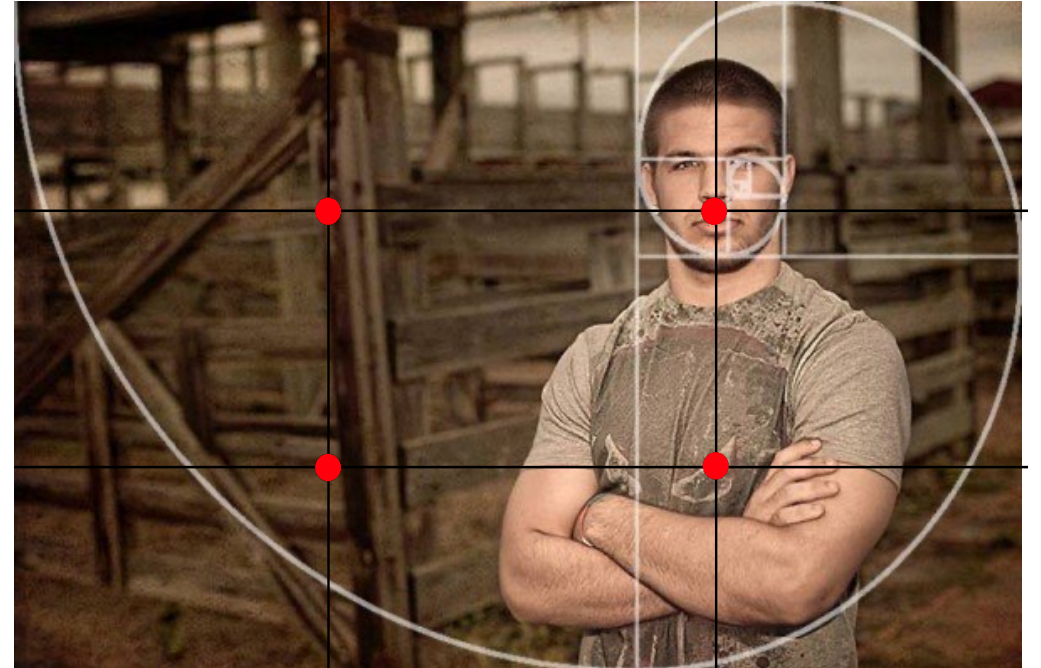
The Golden Ratio is considered by the ancients to not only be aesthetically pleasing but spiritually important.



$a+b$ is to a as a is to b

1. The Rule of Thirds

This is how the golden ratio can also be used to compose photographs.



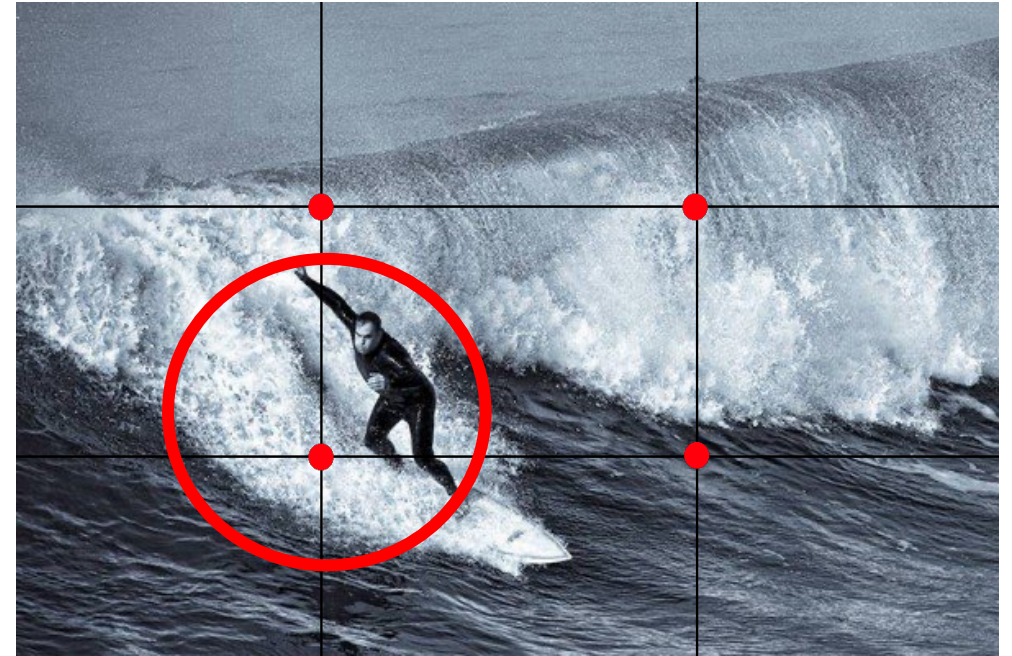
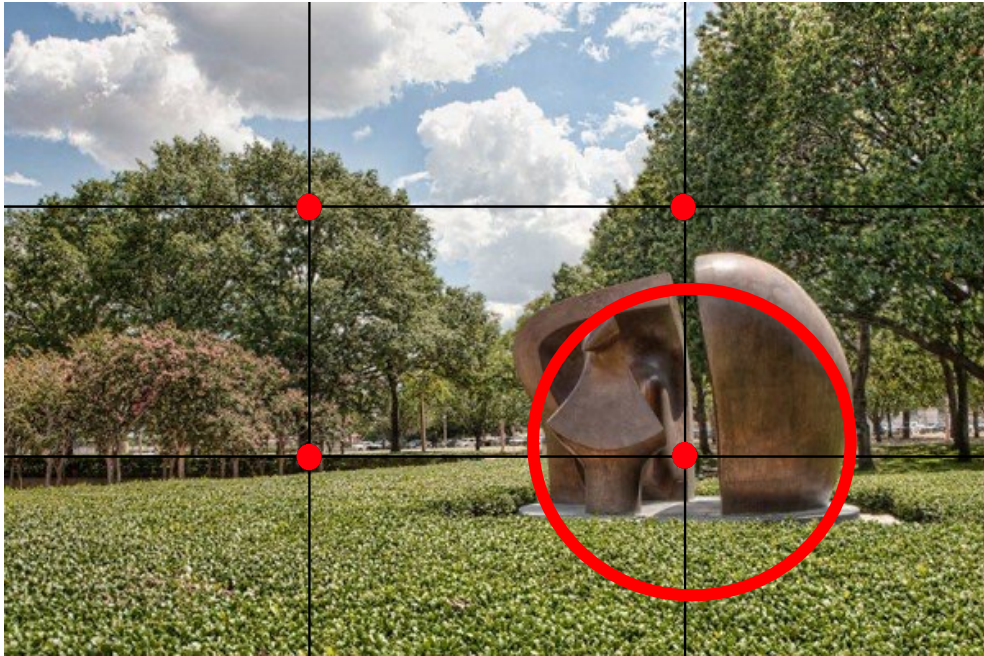
1. The Rule of Thirds

In this example, multiple lines are used on the **Phi grid** adjusted for the final composition.



1. The Rule of Thirds

Without the grid overlay, you can still see why the image was composed the way it was.



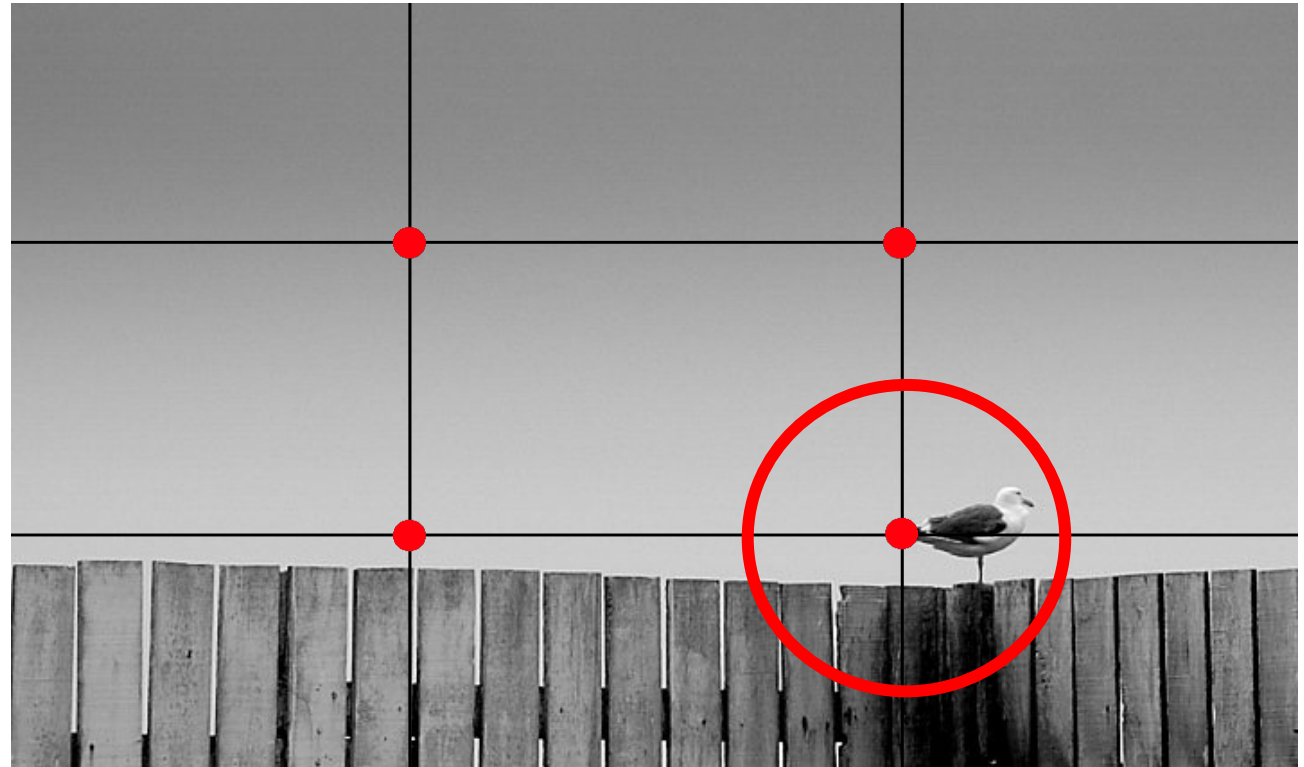
1. The Rule of Thirds

So how do we use the rule of thirds in practice?

1. The Rule of Thirds

Start by Placing a subject on a point of interest, with a simple background.

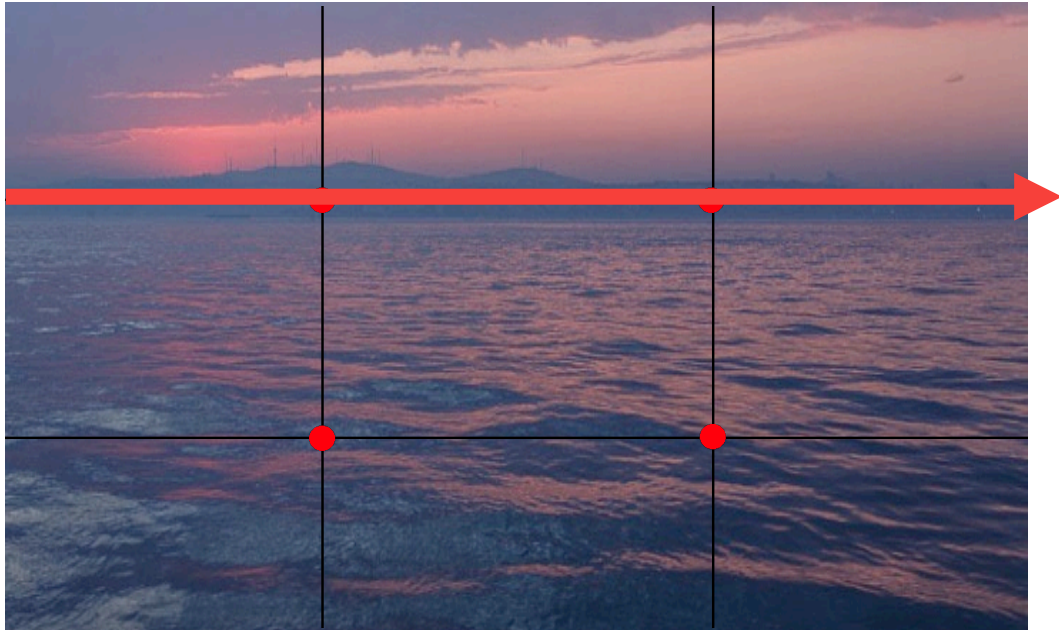
- Emphasize a point of interest (**focal point**)
- Experiment with Low and High horizons



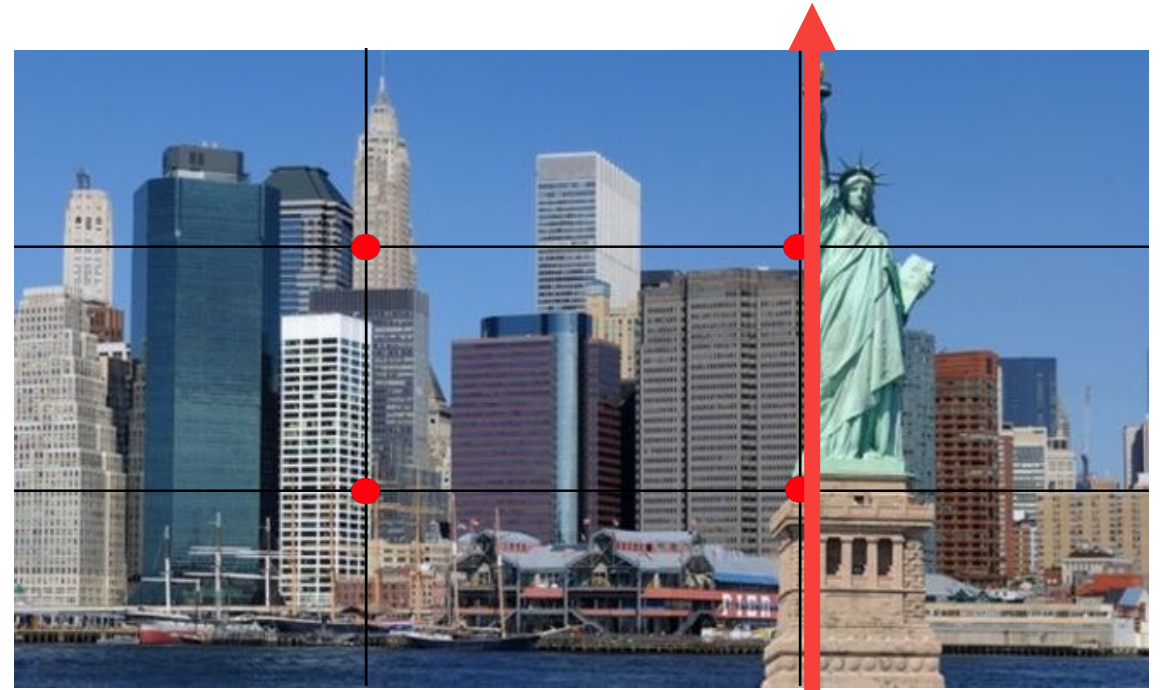
1. The Rule of Thirds

Aligning your horizons in context to their surroundings

- Horizontal with horizontal



- Verticle with verticle



1. The Rule of Thirds

Once you are comfortable with one subject, try using two.

- a primary subject and a supporting secondary subject
- Place each subject on an opposite point of interest
- Note the Balance, color and weight
- Formal and informal
- Symmetrical and asymmetrical



1. The Rule of Thirds

The Rule of Thirds origins can also be applied to **Gestalt Principles (Laws)**.
(Grouped elements that make up The whole)

- Evolved to explain some of the ways in which we perceive the world.
- When viewing visually chaotic images, the mind simplifies elements into recognizable patterns and shapes.

Laws of Gestalt

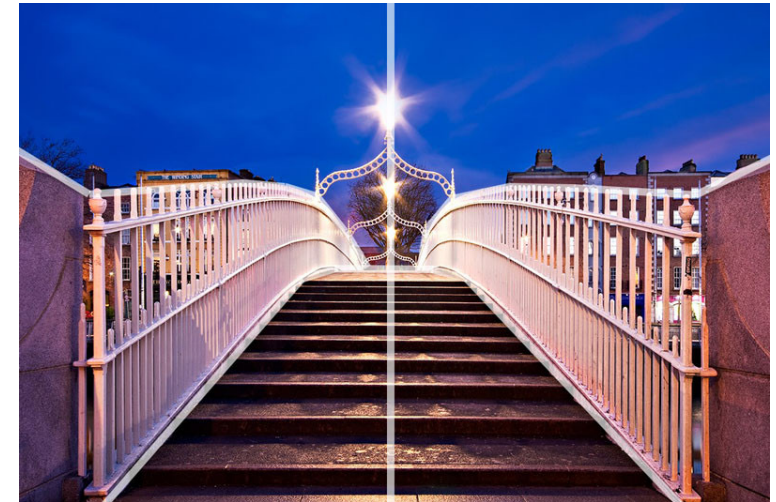
- **Law of Proximity**

The closer objects are to each other, the more likely they are to be perceived as a group (Ehrenstein, 2004)



- **Law of Symmetry**

Objects must be balanced or symmetrical to be seen as complete or whole (Chang, 2002).



Laws of Gestalt

- **Law of Similarity**

Objects that are similar, with like components or attributes are more likely to be organised together (Schamber, 1986).



- **Law of Common Fate**

Objects with a common movement, that move in the same direction, at the same pace, at the same time are organised as a group (Ehrenstein, 2004).



3. Laws of Gestalt

- **Law of Continuation**

Objects will be grouped as a whole if they are co-linear, or follow a direction (Chang, 2002; Lyons, 2001).



- **Law of Closure**

In perception there is the tendency to complete unfinished or partially obscured objects (Ehrenstein, 2004). Kanizsa's triangle (*right*) is one of the most recognisable examples of this (Wikipedia, 2008).



3. Laws of Gestalt

- **Law of Figure - Ground**

Viewers will perceive an object (figure) and a surface (ground) even in shapes are grouped together (Ehrenstein, 2004).

- **Law of Simplicity**

This is the law that states that people will visualise according to the simplest way of grouping items – and the effort to simplify complex items is unconscious (Chang, 2002).



1. The Rule of Thirds

Avoid cluttering the **focal point** by putting too many subjects/items in your image.

- simplify backgrounds
- Look for interesting textures
- And interesting shapes
- Try not to merge dominant colours

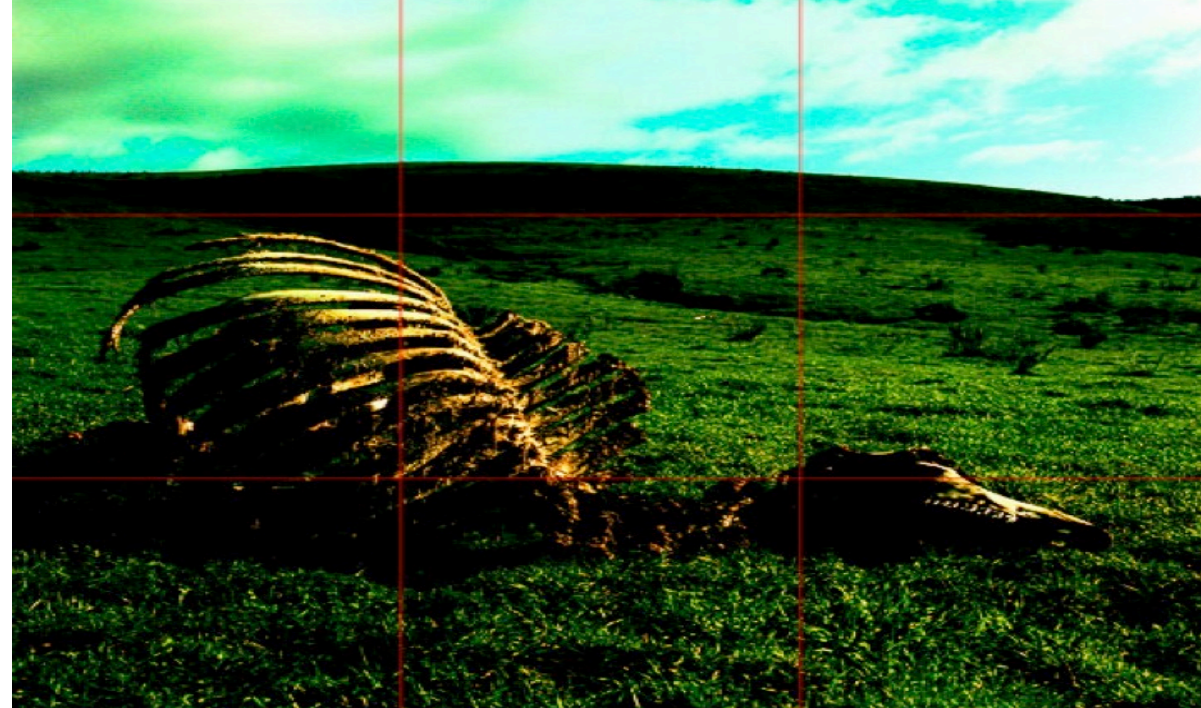


1. The Rule of Thirds

Therefore, try experimenting with the position of your subject on the **points of interest**.

This photo is a rough adherence to the Rule of Thirds.

Play with it.



1. The Rule of Thirds

If you feel an image is off balance, you can always edit it in post production.



Just remember, not all bad images can be saved!

Guided Practice

Take a few images that follow the **Rule of Thirds**:

- Identify the grid intersections
- Identify the focal point
- Identify the horizons and/or vertical alignment

2. Leading Lines



2. Leading Lines

Another way to make complementary images with eye-catching focal points is by using the lines found all around us.

- Diagonal, directional, S-curves and Shapes
- Static vs. dynamic
- Foreground and background
- Lighting direction subject in portraits

2. Leading Lines

Leading lines may either lead the eye towards focal point or away from it.

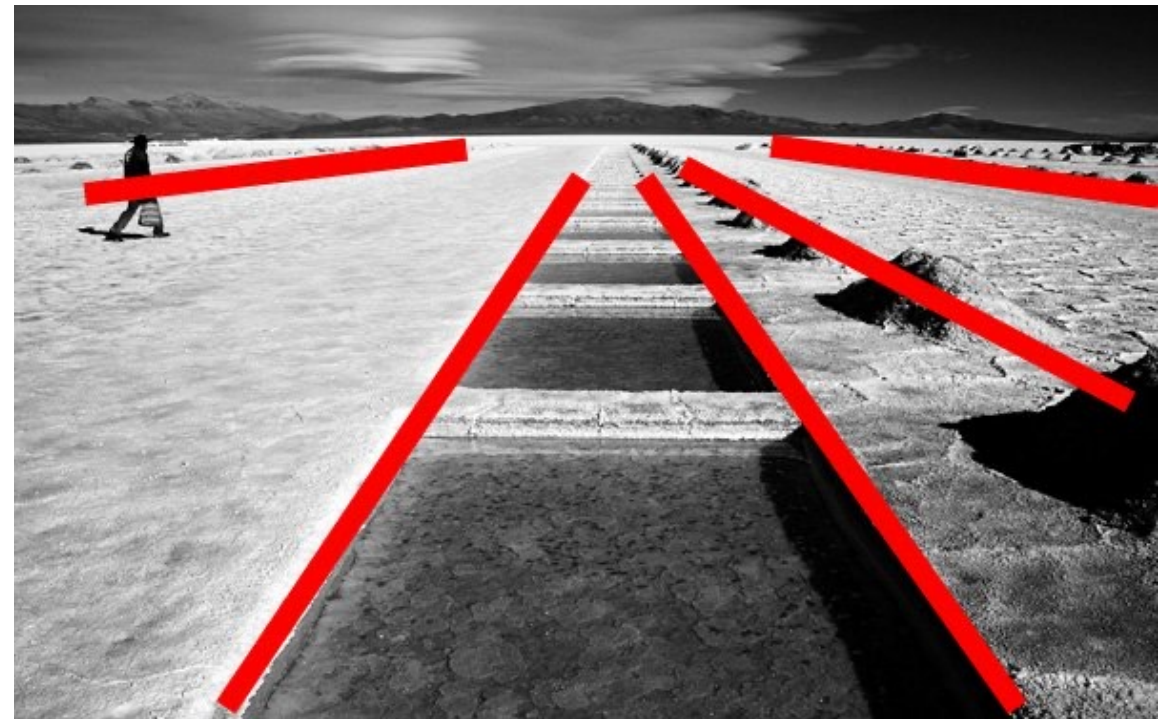
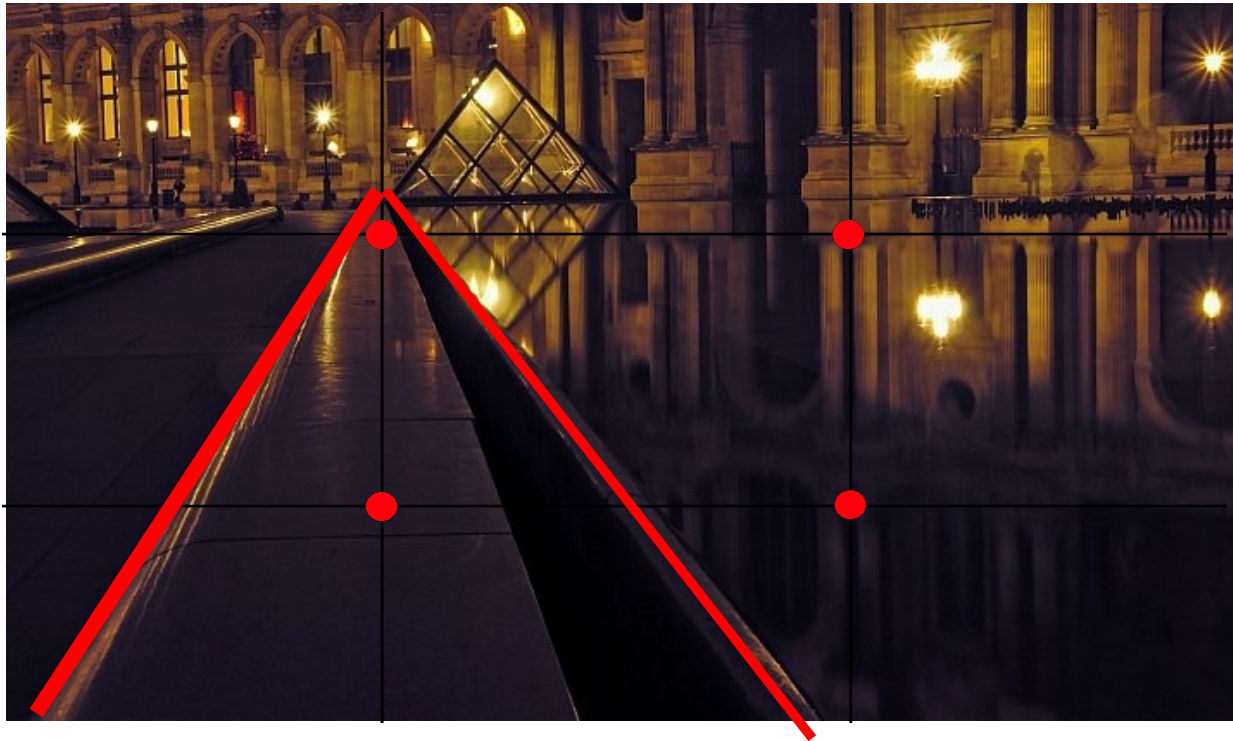
It's perception!

Which way did the light lead your eye, up or down?



2. Leading Lines

Used in relation to **The Rule of Thirds** lines can offer Depth and distance to a focal point



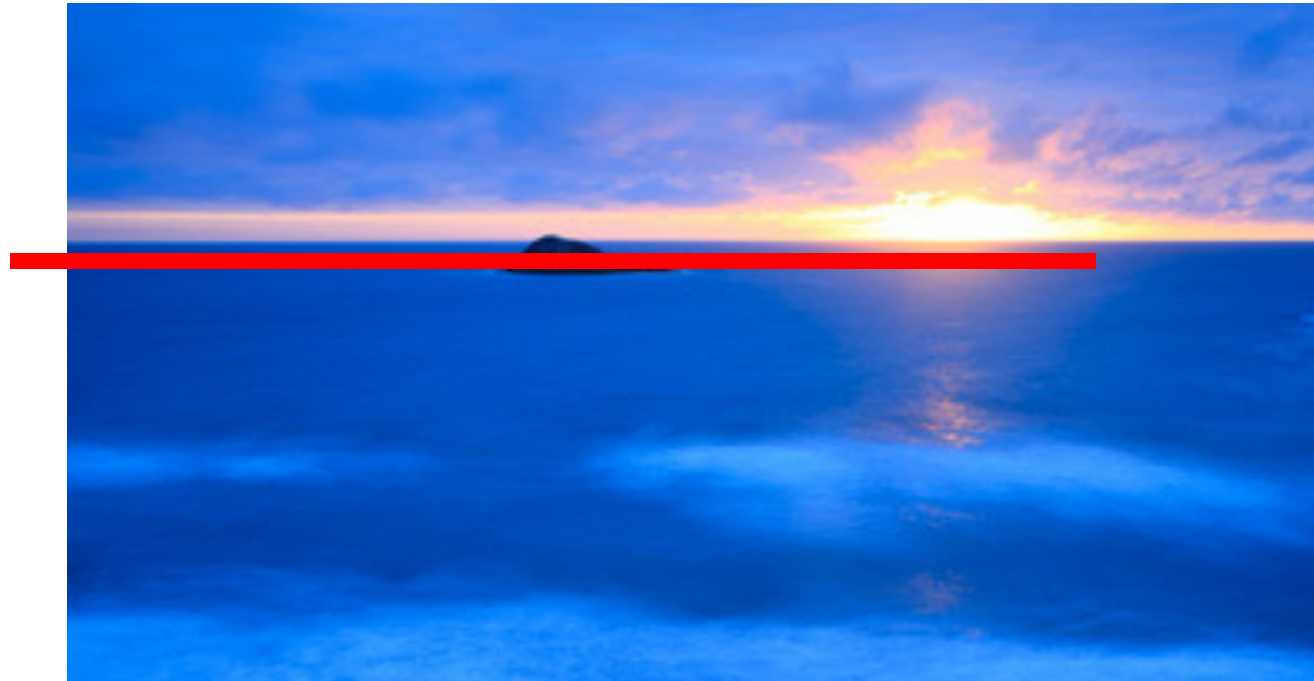
2. Leading Lines

Lines can add dynamism to your composition.



2. Leading Lines

Shapes can offer a visual clue that directs the eye along *invisible lines*.
Whereas **horizontal lines** can direct the eye from side to side giving a sense of stability and peace.



2. Leading Lines

A diagonal line can create the **illusion of motion** while others can create **dynamic tension**.



2. Leading Lines

Try using a combination of leading lines with stark contrasts. reflections of lines to give your image an interesting dynamic.



2. Leading Lines

You may also want to try combining the use of leading lines with interesting textures.



2. Leading Lines

Leading Lines don't have to be straight though. Some can direct the eye around corners while others can create dynamic lines while at the same time keeping the composition simple.



2. Leading Lines

Some lines are just happy accidents!



Guided Practice

Take a few images that use **Leading Lines**:

- Identify the focal point
- Identify the depth or direction
- Identify the angles and/or curves

3. Colour Harmonies



3. Colour Harmonies

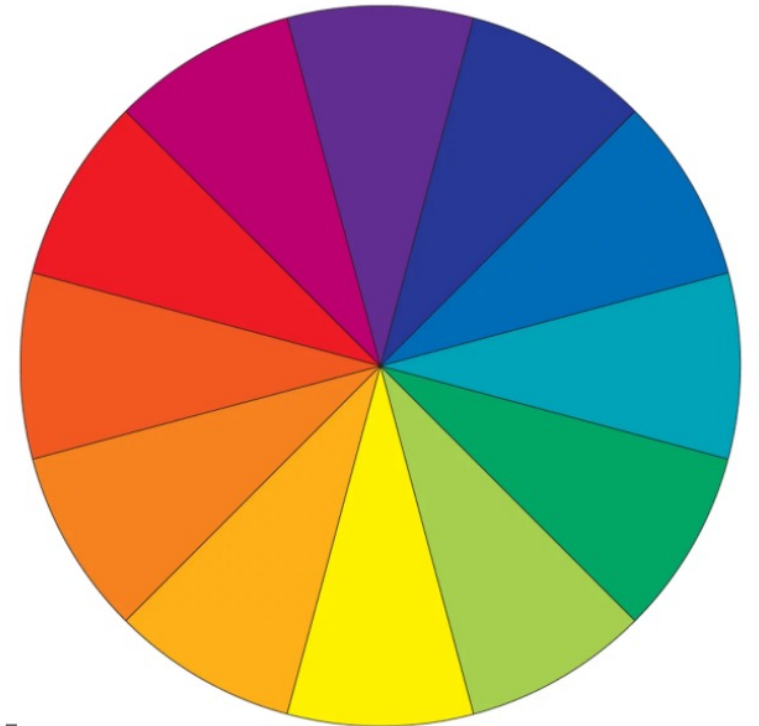
You can also use colour in your compositions to infuse a new level of sophistication and create a **focal point**.

- Maximise the effect of bold, dark and muted backgrounds
- stark contrast will deemphasize the surrounding areas
- Use vibrant colours with deep, rich tonality for your subject to bring the viewer's attention directly to the subject

3. Colour Harmonies

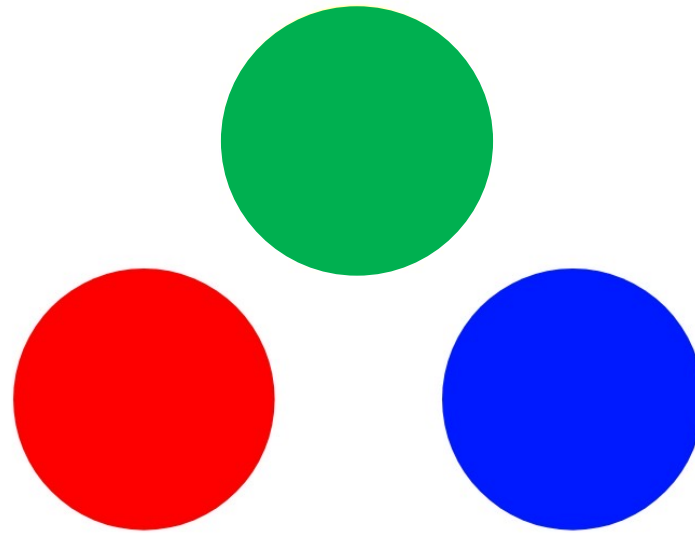
A simple tool can help you choose color combinations is the color wheel:

- Every color combination can be defined by where it resides on the color wheel
- The wheel makes color relationships easy to see
- by dividing the spectrum into 12 basic hues
- three **primary colors**
- three **secondary colors**
- six **tertiary colors** (tər-shē-,er-ē/ tər-shə-rē)

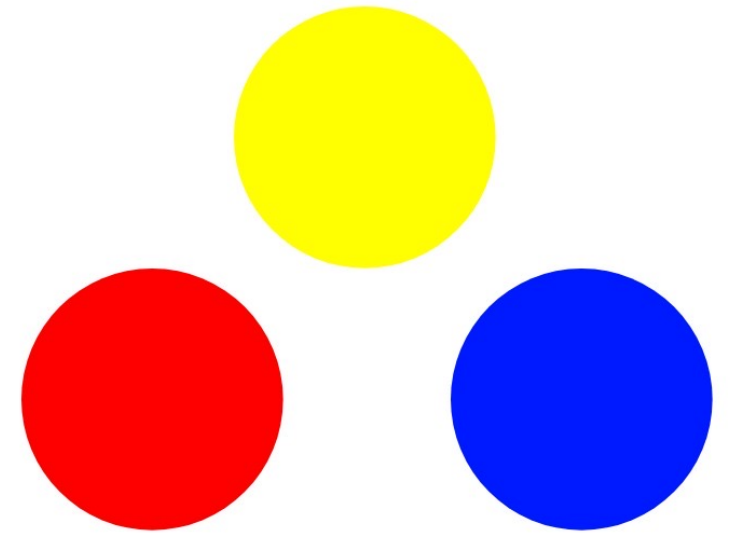


3. Colour Harmonies

Primary colors are pure colours all other colors are created from them:



(RGB)

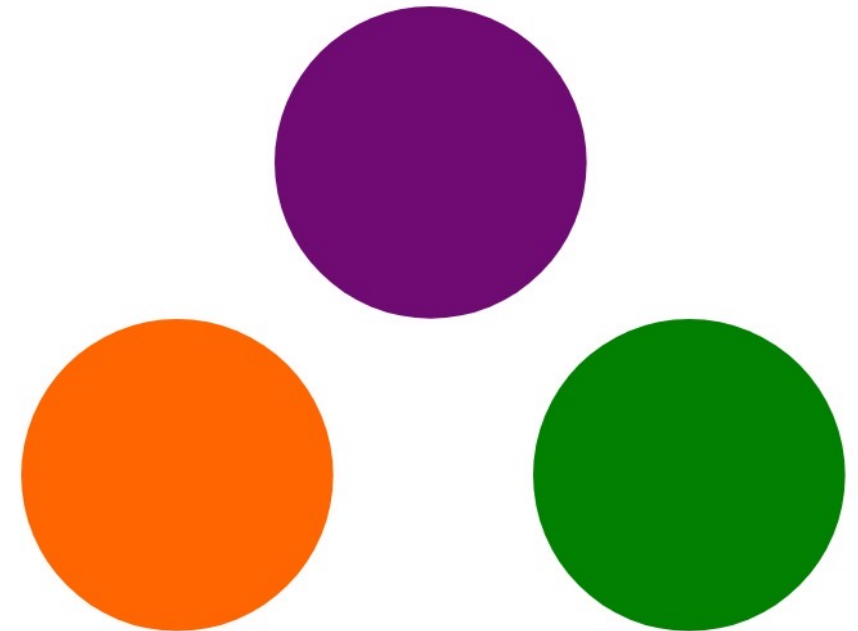


(CMYK)

3. Colour Harmonies

Between the primary color spokes on the color wheel are **secondary colors**:

These hues are formed when equal parts of two primary colors are combined.



3. Colour Harmonies

Tertiary colors (tər-shē-,er-ē/ tər-shə-rē) are formed by mixing a primary color with a secondary color:



3. Colour Harmonies

Together these segmentations can create palettes with varying degrees of contrast:

The common types of color **schemes** derived from the color wheel are:

- Complementary
- Analogous
- Triadic
- Split Complementary



Complementary



Analogous



Triadic



Split
Complementary

3. Colour Harmonies

Complementary Scheme

Colour harmonies can be found everywhere.



3. Colour Harmonies

Analogous Schemes can usually be seen while the sun is gone down.



3. Colour Harmonies

Triadic schemes combined with depth of focus can also help with bringing out interesting images.



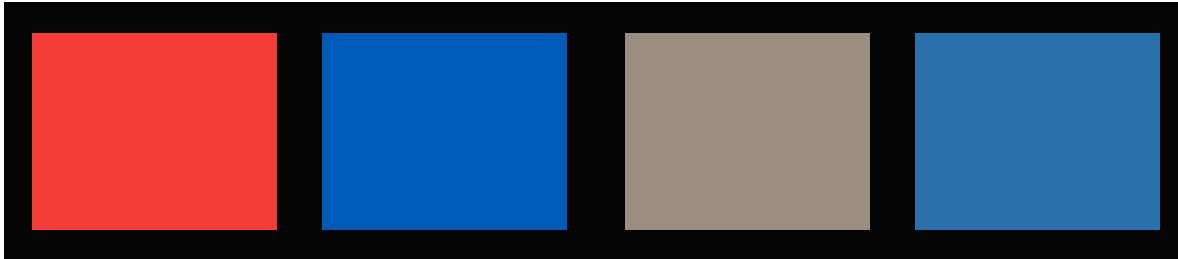
3. Colour Harmonies

Split complementary schemes are also easy to find.



3. Colour Harmonies

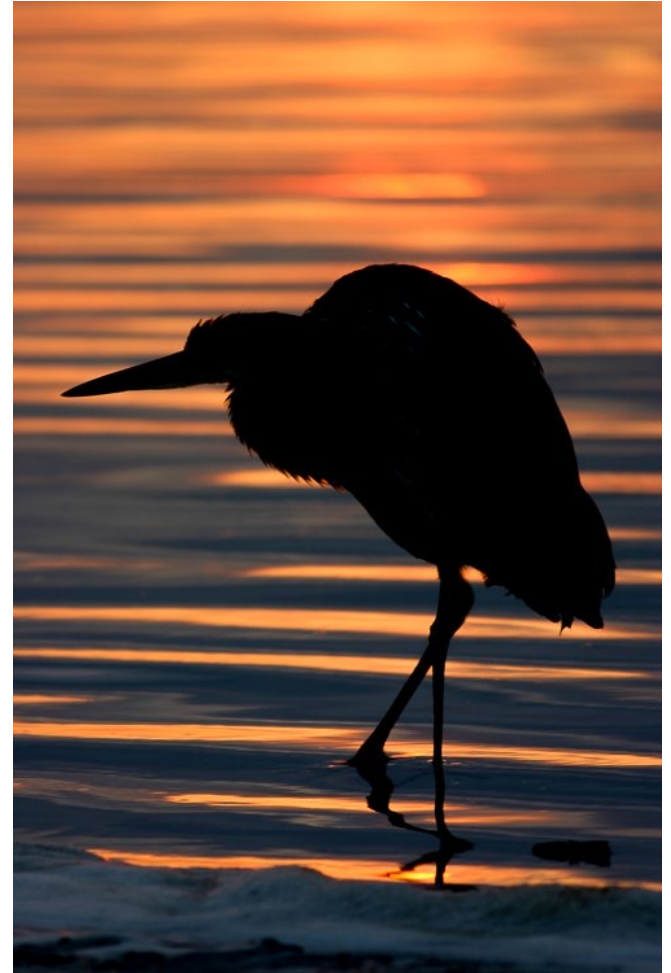
Try using stark contrast! The eye is naturally lead to the subject due to the obvious.



3. Colour Harmonies

Plan to photograph during the **magic hours** aka **the golden hour**, around sunrise and sunset, to get the most vibrant colours.

Meanwhile, your subject will likely be in heavy shadow which will create a silhouette.



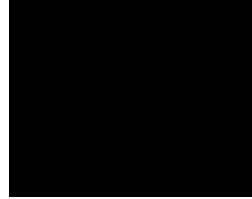
3. Colour Harmonies

Try combining colour and textural elements.



3. Colour Harmonies

..or colour, texture and contrasts.



3. Colour Harmonies

Even a small amount of contrast can allow your subject to stand out from the rest of the frame.



3. Colour Harmonies

Try combining coloured textures found in nature and industry.



3. Colour Harmonies

.. Or use soft or muted colours to bring attention to your main subject.



3. Colour Harmonies

Ok, contrast, texture, colour and shape...

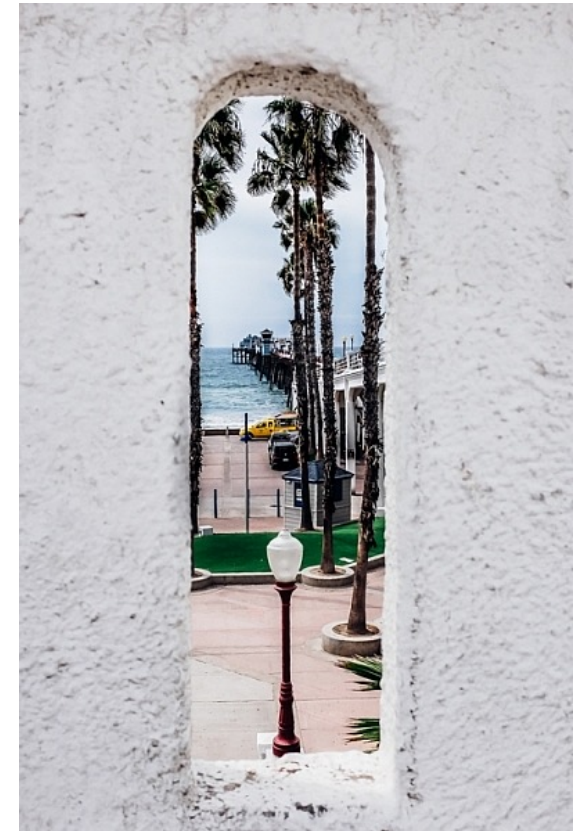


Guided Practice

Make some images using the **Colour Harmonies** principle:

- Identify a subject or the focal point
- try capturing a specific colour as a goal
- Then two colours and so on..
- Try thinking in colour

4. Framing



4. Framing

How many frames do you see in this image?



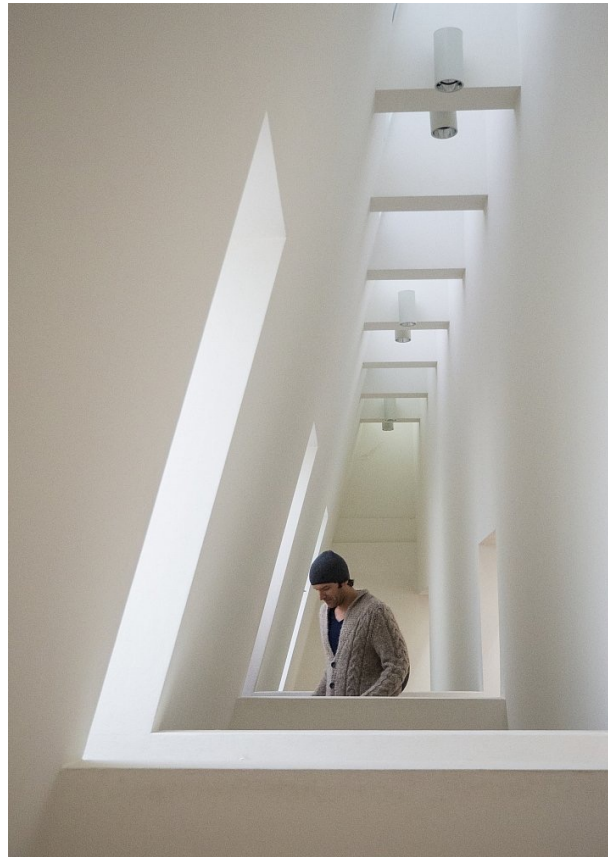
4. Framing

To begin seeing like a Photographer, recognise natural framing elements into your images.

- framing often one of the strongest tools you have to create strong compositions
- we can use other objects to intentionally create some sort of border around the subject of the image
- use framing in order to draw attention to, and strengthen, the subject

4. Framing

The frame may be so awe inspiring that it carries the image all by itself.



4. Framing

Looking for architecture and use framing to boost your photo's appeal, is a great approach to creating original images.



4. Framing

Framing can be planned or even occur naturally if we have an eye for it.



4. Framing

Some framing elements may be actual frames.. Duh!



4. Framing

You can also try filling the frame with your subject. These are known as a **Full Framed Shots**



4. Framing

Some of the more common techniques to be used in framing a subject may also include:

- The view through foliage such as between trees, branches, and leaves
- Between the head and shoulders
- various lighting around a subject
- Doorways and arches and other architectural features
- Long range shots provide depth and perspective

Take away tips

Things to remember when taking photos:

- Keep backgrounds uncluttered
- Avoid merging or chaotic colours and textures
- focus on the subject
- Avoid centered horizons
- Avoid putting your subject in the middle of the frame "all the time"!!!
- ...and finally, if you want to **shoot a cat – just shoot the friggin' cat!**

Composition

Summary

1. **The Rule of Thirds** – breaking the image up into 9 squares
2. **Leading lines** - creating a path for the eye
3. **Colour Harmonies** - emphasise a subject or de-emphasise a background
4. **Framing** – the use of natural framing elements

Independant Practice

In your groups, take a series of videos and create a **montage in Premier Pro**:

- Practice with 5 examples from each of the **4 topics**
- Can be of an interesting object or a subject (person)
- You have 1 hour to shoot.
- Have fun!

Welcome back!

I hope you enjoyed that exercise.

Next up:

1. Remove the SD cards from the camera
2. Transfer footage to your computer + USB drive
3. Remove all your footage from the SD card
4. Remove all the batteries
5. Dismantle your cameras, lights and stands
6. **Remember to remove the camera plate!**
7. Place the cameras back in the camera bags, lights in the light bags, etc...



Reflection

Use 5 - 10 minutes to review the **Subject** of today's lecture:

List the **Topics**:

- What do they mean to you?
- Which **Topic** was the most interesting and why?
- How can you begin to start working this knowledge?
- What new questions have arise?
- What are you still wondering about?

Resources

Literature:

- Van Sijll, J, 2005. *Cinematic Storytelling: The 100 Most Powerful Film Conventions Every Filmmaker Must Know*. 2nd ed. Michael Wiese Productions.
- J, Miotke. 2005. *Guide to Digital Photography*. Crown Publishing Group. New York. Pp 240 – 286

Video:

- [Understanding Composition](#)
- [Composition In Storytelling](#)
- [Drawing Fundamentals](#)