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GET OUT THERE AND TAKE SOME DAMN PHOTOS!  
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## **GUIDE TO KILLER COMPOSITIONS**



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# What Is Composition?

*Composition is the arrangement of the visual elements in your photos.*

We use composition to deliberately make a photo that is compelling and pleasing to look at.

To do that we need to understand two basic things.

1. How to arrange the visual elements.
2. And what the visual elements are.

When you look at an image, you might think that you process that image as a whole, but that's actually not the case.

It feels like you process the image as a whole, because your brain is so fast that when you look at an image, your recognition and like or dislike of it feels instant.

But what's really happening is your brain is picking apart the image and dissecting it, looking at the visual elements in the image and the arrangement of those elements

We're going to start off with the arrangement.

# PART 1: ARRANGEMENT

## The Visual Path

Take a look at this image:



When you look at this image, you pretty much instantly recognize this as some kind of industrial complex on the water.

But while a part of your brain is telling you that this is an industrial complex on the shore of a body of water with some railroad tracks, another part of your brain is seeking out and establishing a visual path through the image.

Take a moment to look at the image again. As you do notice how your eyes move around the photo in a pretty consistent pattern. This pattern is the visual path your brain is following through the image.

When I look at this image, I come in on the railroad tracks.

The tracks move me from the front to the back of the image.

Once in the background of the photo, my eyes find the buildings and wander through them until I encounter the steam.

Then I follow the steam up into the sky to the edge of the photo frame.



From there my eyes follow the steam along the edge moving down back into the buildings and then over to what looks like a giant swing set on the far right.

That swing set thing exits the frame on the right, but the rippling water brings me back in, and leads me back to the railroad tracks, which starts the loop over again.

That's my path, but I'm willing to bet even before I outlined it, your eyes were following the same path.

In this regard our brains are pretty predictable, which is a good thing, because as photographers we can control this visual path through the placement of visual elements in our photos.

Now you might be wondering why I'm talking about this visual path thing instead of the Rule of Thirds that everyone trots out as the holy grail of composition. I'm not talking about the rule of thirds, because it's an over simplification of some important concepts of composition.

Here's the deal.

The path the eye follows through an image is based on the movement of the eye, and the rule of thirds (and the idea of not centering your subject) are tools to keep the eye moving.

As humans, we have this instinct to put the subject right in the center of the photo, because the subject is what we want people to see.

Centering the subject is a way of putting a bunch of giant red arrows pointing to the center as if to say, "LOOK AT THIS RIGHT HERE!!!"

The problem is, when we center a subject like that, we have a tendency to create photos that have no visual path.

When all the attention focused in the center, there's no visual path to follow, and with no path to follow your brain gets bored, and you lose interest in the image.

The problem with the Rule of Thirds, is that the explanation given almost never goes beyond, "you should use the rule of thirds because it makes your photos look better."

When it's that simplistic, it ignores the fact that it's perfectly fine to center your subject, as long as there is a compelling visual path moving through your image.

Here's an example:



In this shot, the body of the fork is roughly centered in the photo,

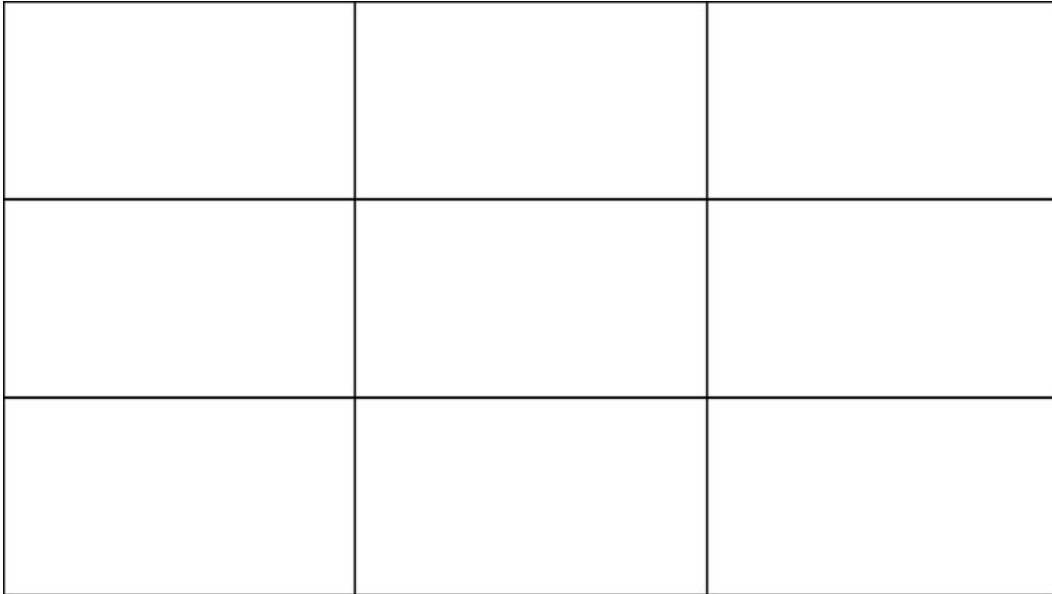
but the shape of the fork moves you through the center of the photo, and the fork tines create a zig zag path that moves in and out of the center, creating a photo with a centered subject that is visually engaging.

And in this shot, the squirrel's body is right in the center of the frame,



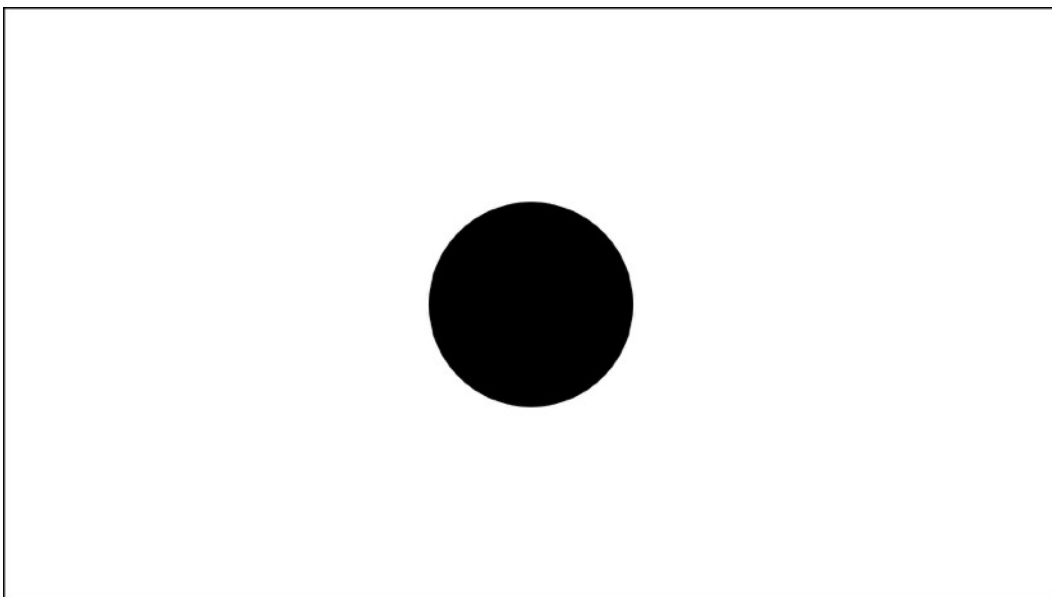
but the arrangement moves you through the image, starting on the eyes, and moving through the body, up and down the legs and then up the tail and out, and back in on the leaves in the grass which let you meander on back into the squirrel.

Now the rule of thirds states that you should divide the frame into thirds like in the image below, and then place major subjects on the lines or at the intersections.



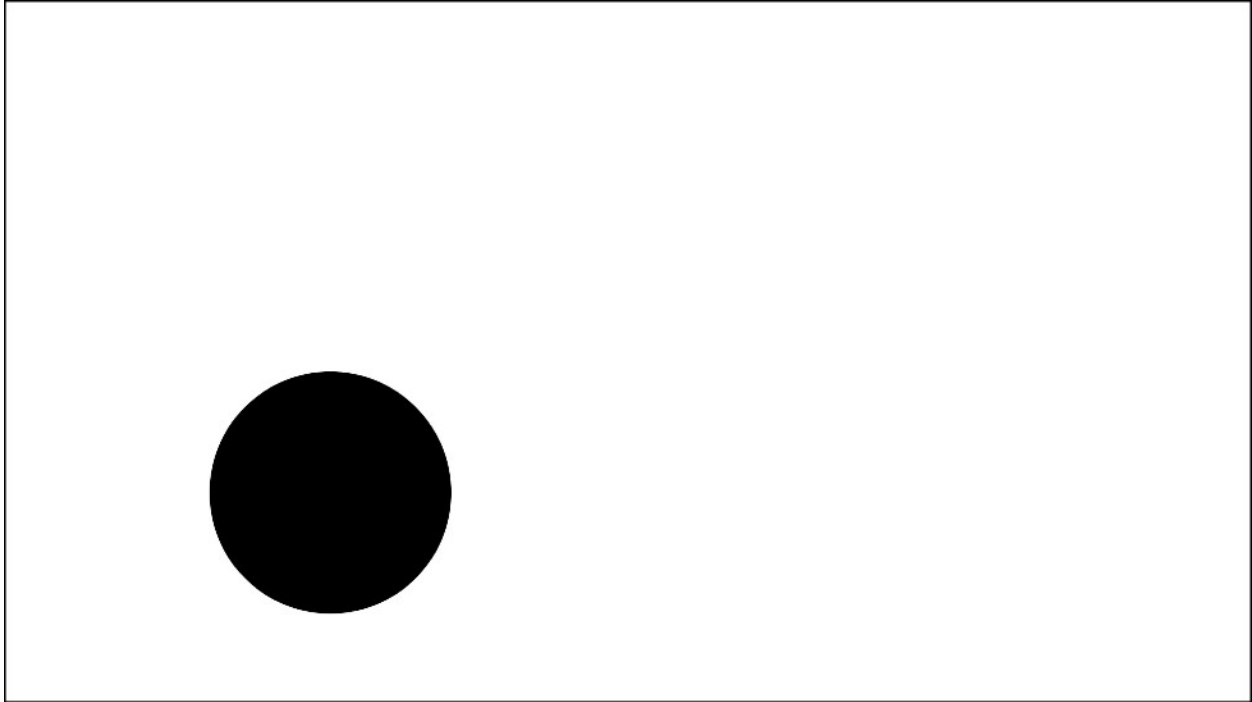
This works to create a visual path through balance. When you place a subject on those third lines or intersections, you create an unbalanced sense of space around the subject.

Here's an example. A sphere in the center of the frame, which is static, because the space around it is perfectly equal.



This balance of space removes the need for the eye to travel because it knows that all around the subject in the center it will find the same thing, because it's all equal.

But when the sphere is moved to the lower left (where the thirds lines intersect), the space becomes unbalanced, which makes your brain work harder to understand this image because its not sure what might be in the other space.



As it explores the space it's hoping to find something in that unbalanced space to match the sphere, so it moves through the image, making it a more compelling image because the eye moves into the open space, then back to the sphere, and back into the space again, creating a visual path.

The point here is that instead of just thinking about the rule of thirds, you should be thinking about, and creating a visual path in your images.

The good thing is creating a path in your images is pretty simple.

All you need to do is pause for a moment before you actually take a photo, and let your eye wander through the photo you're about to take.

What you're looking for is the path. Feel how your eye wanders through the image, and make note of the path.

You're looking for a visual loop, that catches and keeps your eye moving through the photo.

If you have this loop, you've got a good visual path, but if you find you keep trying to look out past the edge of the frame, you might have a path that exits your image.

If that's the case, you should adjust the camera and change the composition and arrangement until you've created a path that keeps you in the image.

Creating a visual path can be much more deliberate than this, but this is the quickest and easiest way to get started, by simply noticing the path you're unconsciously creating and making sure it keeps your eye moving through the photo.

# Perspective

We all have a shared social knowledge that our brains use to help us survive and function on a day to day basis.

Our brains uses this knowledge to identify, categorize and file away all the stimuli that we're bombarded with every second of every day.

Let's look at the image of the mill again.



Establishing a visual path is just one thing that happens when you look at this image.

At the same time your brain is also processing, identifying and categorizing what's in the image, and even what the image is.

What I mean is that your brain first identifies this visual stimuli as not real, but a representation of something real, and that this particular type of representation is a photograph.

Once identified as a photograph, your brain then has to process the contents, of the photograph, recognizing the building as some kind of industrial complex.

It identifies the railroad tracks, also connecting the railroad tracks with the trains that use those tracks and identifies that the stuff surrounding the tracks is water.

It sees that there is some motion in the water and might determine that this is a river, and it recognizes activity at the complex from the steam rising from the stacks into the blue sky, as well as noticing a million other tiny details that I'm not covering here.

This automatic recognition and categorization allows you to function within your environment without going insane from the constant stimulus, and it happens instantaneously.

Imagine for a second if you didn't know what a car was, or what your computer was, much less how to operate it, or what the sound of a phone ringing meant, or what a bed is, or a table, or a chair.

There is so much stimuli around us that our brain is constantly processing it, as fast as possible just so we can function on a day to day basis.

And one of the ways to make a photograph compelling for people to look at is to break this cycle of instantaneous categorization and force the brain to slow down, and we can force the brain to slow down by changing the perspective of our compositions.

Let's look at the mill one more time.



Most industrial complexes are seen in passing, when you drive past it on the road, or maybe you see the top of a building or just the smoke stacks in the distance.

But here we have a rather intimate view across the water of a complex, on top of some railroad tracks, which is something you don't see every day. *(I wasn't actually on the tracks when I took this photo, but standing just to the right of them)*

And because this is a different perspective, your brain slows down to process what it is actually seeing.

Let's look at another example, the fork you saw at the beginning of this section.





A fork is a pretty mundane instrument used on a daily basis to consume food, and this photo of this mundane object manages to be interesting and engaging to look at.

Compare this to how you might normally see a fork.



This is the normal human point of view.

When we see things from the normal human viewpoint, which is typically above and looking down, surrounded by all sorts of other things as part of the environment, our brains process it, categorize it, file it and are done with it.



This happens because the brain assumes at this perspective that we need to function in this environment, so we need to deal with this stimuli as quickly as possible.

When we put these images side by side, the difference is clear.



On the right, is the fork in the drawer from a normal point of view. From this point of view the brain is processing the jumble of silverware in the drawer which is largely associated with food.

Food is important to survival, so the fork is a means to an end and the brain is not even sure what the subject of this photo is, because not only do we see forks, but spoons and knives and other food related implements.

This re-enforces the idea that what we're looking at is getting ready to eat, and these are the tools with which we eat, and then the brain is done with the photo because it's time to find some food.

Compare that to the fork on the right, all by itself, and what?

We know we use forks to eat, but it's not surrounded by other things associated with eating,

and this fork looks different because when was the last time you looked at a fork from this angle, with nothing else around it for the brain to process?

So now your brain is in process mode, trying to understand the fork in this context and trying to decide how to categorize this fork, so it continues to be engaged with this fork as it tries to figure it out.

So when you are composing your photos, you need to consider and use perspective to slow the brain down and engage the brain in your composition.

And using perspective in your compositions is pretty simple.

First, it's important to isolate your subject.

This removes your subject from its normal context, forcing your brain to process the subject in a way that it normally doesn't, creating interest.

You can isolate your subject by setting it up in a controlled environment, like I did with the fork. You can also isolate your subject through the use of shallow depth of field, blurring out everything but your subject, like I did with the icicle in the photo on the next page.



Behind the icicle is a line of trees, but by rendering the trees completely out of focus, the icicle is isolated for processing by the brain.

In addition to isolating your subject, you can get closer to it.

Take a look at this photo of a bottle of wine. In this shot it's not even entirely clear that the wine is the subject, and the brain processes the scene at its normal breakneck pace.



Getting closer eliminates all the distracting elements that the brain has to process again forcing the brain to slow down and work on this bottle.



Getting closer also changes the angle at which you're viewing the subject, because we don't often get this close to things when we look at them.

All I did in the above shot was get closer, and get a bit lower, which brings us to the last way to change the perspective, and that's by changing your angle.

Look at the fork again.



From this point of view there's nothing interesting to look at, because it's a view you see every single day.

But compare it again to this:





And look at the difference it makes.

So when you're out shooting, get out of that human point of view.

Get down at the same level as your subject, and get close to it like I did with the fork, or get below it, come at it from the side.

Move all around it until you find a point of view that you don't normally see, and then photograph your subject from that angle

When you do these things, you'll force the brain to slow down and engage with your photos, which creates interest and makes people want to look at your photos.

# PART 2: VISUAL ELEMENTS

Visual elements are the building blocks of composition and can be used to help craft your visual path, change perspective and create photographs that stop people in their tracks.

These building blocks are Line, Shape, Color and Texture, and we're going to start with Line.

## Line

A line is a path that connects two or more points, and lines can be real, or implied.

For example, here we have two lines. The first is an explicitly defined line, with a visible path between the two endpoints.

The second is a line that is implied by the two endpoints, in this case the gaze of the two eyes looking at each other.



There are several types of lines that we can use in our compositions, and each type of line can help create a different feeling in a composition.

We'll start with horizontal lines, which can impart a feeling of calm or tranquility.



In this example we have this nice horizontal line running across the photo, which helps reinforce the nice, calm feeling I was going for in this composition.

But that's not the only line in this composition.

We also have the lines created by the tree, which has two central lines in the trunks, and then a multitude of smaller lines in the branches.

We also have a thick, strong horizontal line at the very bottom of the frame, created by the bright band of sunlight.

This line mirrors the horizon line, which helps to reinforce that feeling of calm and tranquility.

And because the mind looks for repetition and pattern, it finds more horizontal lines in the clouds, which continue to reinforce that feeling.

Now we have some angled lines in the foreground, that help establish the visual path in this image.

For me, I start in this image on the tree, and I can actually go one of two ways. Either following the horizon line to the right, or following the shadow that moves from the tree into that angled line of green growth in the lower right.

Either way leads me in a loop. If I move to the right, My eye follows the horizon and then curves down the edge of the shadow on the right, to the edge of the frame where that line of sunlight brings me back into the frame, up to the line of green, which leads me back to the tree.

Once I find the tree, the angled trunk pushes me into the sky where I wander through the clouds.

Now there are other types of lines, and we want to look at those, so let's take a look at another example.

This photo here is loaded with lines, including three very strong angled lines, and angled lines can help create a sense of energy and movement.



All three lines are explicit, the handrail for the stairs, the support rail, and the stairs themselves.

Despite the fact that the steps are comprised of a series of vertical and horizontal lines, the repetition of the steps creates an angled line of motion.

The feeling of energy and motion is further increased by the fact that this is a photo of stairs, and we have a shared understanding that we use stairs to move through buildings and other structures.

Vertical lines in your composition can imply strength and permanence or longevity.



This composition is lousy with vertical lines.



First of all, we have this thick, black vertical line that shoots up the photo.

Then throughout the entire composition, we have repeating vertical lines in the grout lines of the bricks.

Over and over between the bricks we have vertical lines.

This repetition is again something that the brain likes. It looks for pattern and repetition, which engages the brain, but what's particularly effective is when you have repetition with variety.

In this photo we have repetition of the grout lines, but there is variety. First, the pipes, which break up the patterns, but also the variation in color and the character of the vertical lines, which are not identical.

So this sense of repetition engages the brain, but the variety within that repetition excites the brain, because it doesn't know what to expect.

Another type of line is the the curved line, which can help create a feelings of quiet, softness or sensuality in your image.





Now this is an interesting example of curved lines, because you can see this mill here, which is full of vertical lines, strong and permanent. And you don't necessarily associate a giant industrial complex with quiet or softness or sensuality.

And I think what continually draws me to these mills visually is the contrast that's created by the beautiful, gentle, soft and innocent looking steam that comes out of this tall, vertical, strong, thick, noisy industrial complexes.

So here's a case where I have two different types of lines that create a contrast in the composition, because this photo also demonstrates converging lines, which help create depth and scale in your image, and also create a very strong sense of motion.

In this case it's the railroad tracks, and no matter how many times I look at this photo, the tracks almost immediately grab my eyes and yank me into the photo.

So we have horizontal, vertical, angled, curved and converging lines, all different types of lines that can be used in your compositions,

In addition to the type of line and the feeling it may impart, all lines have weight and length, which can change the impact of that line in your composition.

The weight of a line is it's thickness, and the length of course is how long the line is.

Thicker lines are heavier, and can have more impact and power, while thinner lines can have less impact and power.

However length also changes the impact of a line, and longer lines generally have more impact than shorter lines.

Consider the lines in this photo and the different weights they have.

We have the large, thick, lines of the pillars moving up through this photo, and despite the weatherbeaten look of them, they feel large, strong and permanent.

Compare those to the other lines in this photo. The thin, short vertical grout lines in the bricks, the two shorter, lighter horizontal lines, and the thin, but long vertical lines on the pillars.

They all have a different impact due to their different qualities, which can augment or detract from a composition, depending on what you want to achieve.

Now there are always exceptions, and these are not rules. As I mentioned when we started, these are building blocks to be used in your composition, however you want to use them.

Now, you might be thinking, *"How the hell am I supposed to remember all of this, let alone incorporate it into my compositions?"*

The answer is to relax. When I compose a photo, I almost NEVER sit there looking at the scene to dissect the lines.



I might be attracted to something by a line that becomes the anchor of a composition, but to analyze the entire scene and map the lines is crazy.

Instead, I maintain awareness of the lines, and by understanding how the lines can impact my composition, I can actively think about the lines and evaluate the composition when I need to.

What's more important is just maintaining an awareness as you look through the viewfinder to get a feel for the composition.

Which for me is the most important part, the feel of the composition.

That's where all of this information really comes in, because with that awareness of line, you'll develop an instinct for composing and using lines to achieve exactly what you want to achieve.

# Shapes

In its simplest form, a shape is a closed line or series of lines, and there are three basic types of shapes. Geometric, organic and abstract.

Geometric shapes have a defined structure. These are squares, rectangles, triangles, circles, ovals and polygons such as an octagon. With the exception of circles and ovals, geometric shapes are composed of straight lines.

Organic shapes are freeform and irregular, and they can be composed of lines, angles and curves. Examples of organic shapes include leaves, flowers, the shape of a body, trees and fruits or vegetables.

Abstract shapes are simplified forms of organic shapes. For instance a stick person is an abstract shape meant to represent a human. The second shape represents a flower and the third shape represents a camera.

An important thing to realize about shapes is that you often have to consciously work to see the shapes in your composition.

Remember how the brain automatically identifies and categorizes the world around us, so that we can function on a day to day basis?

As a result of this brain activity we often fail to actually notice all the shapes in the world around us.

For example, in this photo here your brain instantly recognizes this object as a chair, but if you take a moment and look at this, you'll actually see the shapes that make up the chair.

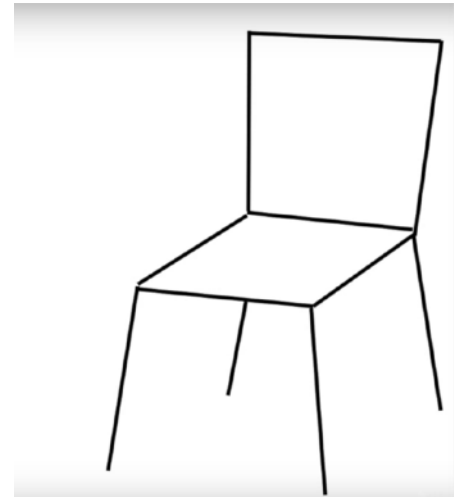


First of all we have the shape of the chair as a whole. Which is a shape that we all recognize as an object upon which we can sit.

The problem here, is that in your brain, you have a basic concept of what a chair is, which probably looks something like the image to the right.

And when you see most any chair your brain automatically makes an association between the unique object in front of you that is a chair, and your brain picture of a chair. This allows you to understand that the object in front of you is a chair and is meant for sitting on.

But when your brain makes that association, it stops seeing the actual chair, because every time you think of the chair, your brain automatically brings up your brain picture of a chair.



By taking the time to look, we can see the shapes that make up this chair.

This particular chair has organic shapes in the arms, rectangles, squares, and other organic shapes, creating what is ultimately a unique object worthy of appreciation



When you look past the basic brain shapes we have for things, you can see the actual shapes that make up your composition, and you should quickly realize that EVERY photo you take has shapes in it.

Just like lines, different shapes can convey different meanings as part of your composition.



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## Circles

First of all, circles are endless, with no defined beginning or end, and circles can convey feelings of longevity, endlessness, and energy through constant motion.

In this photo here, we have the circle shape repeating itself hundreds of times in the berries of the tree. These circles help convey the feeling of longevity, and while they are small circles, the repetition of the shape reinforces that feeling. In addition, the cycle of a tree's growth through the seasons is connected to and reinforced by the idea of endless longevity conveyed by the circle.



And of course, circles are also associated with the sun, the moon, the earth and other celestial bodies, and circles are associated with the shape of a wheel, which is highly suggestive of energy and motion.

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## Rectangles and Squares

Squares and Rectangles on the other hand offer feelings of stability, order, formality and permanence. Squares and rectangles are also shapes that are associated with buildings, which can offer a sense of safety, or security.

For example, here's a composition that's just lousy with rectangles.

This is clearly a brick wall, which is part of a building, and as a result, the basic rectangular shape of a building is immediately associated with this wall. In addition, we can see the bricks in





this wall, stacked in a very orderly, stable and predictable fashion, all feelings that are evoked by rectangles and squares.

On top of that, you have the weathered paint on the wall, which helps to reinforce the feeling of permanence that comes with the rectangle, and the idea of a building, which is generally considered to be a permanent, long lasting structure.

If however you take rectangles or squares and you throw them off kilter,

You introduce feelings of instability, chaos and disorder.





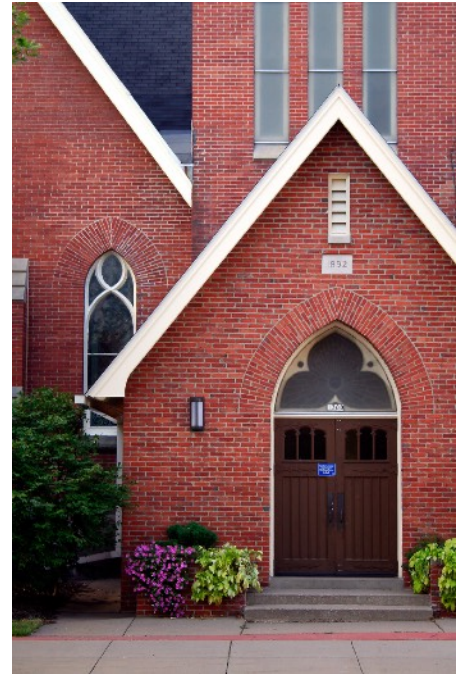
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## Triangles

Triangles can also convey feelings of stability and permanence, and serve to direct movement through your composition based on the direction they point.

Triangles can create tension in an image, suggest action or aggression, and convey a sense of instability when not resting on a base.

In this composition, we have two triangles. One in the upper right, which is not resting on its base. This helps to create a sense of instability and tension. The other is resting on its implied base, but is cut off. That cut off helps to contribute to the feeling of instability and tension because the triangle is incomplete.



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## Organic

Now organic shapes are a little different because there are an infinite number of possible organic shapes, but generally speaking, organic shapes occur in and remind us of nature.

For example, leaves, flowers, trees, fruits and vegetables are all examples of organic shapes.



As a result, organic shapes tend to be pleasing, comforting and calming.

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## Abstract

Finally, we have abstract shapes which are simplified shapes or symbols meant to represent a real object or to convey a specific meaning.

In essence, abstract shapes are our brain pictures. In this case, we all recognize the handicap symbol, which is a simplified representation of a person in a wheelchair. And that shape is also used to communicate information, in this case, to indicate that this particular parking space is reserved for handicapped individuals.

As a result, of all the types of shapes, abstract shapes are the most explicit in conveying meaning, since they almost always have an explicit meaning attached to them.



## Texture

Texture is the surface quality of an object, including how it looks and how it feels.

Texture, like our other building blocks, can be used to break the brain out of its regular processing patterns and force it to work harder to understand what it sees.

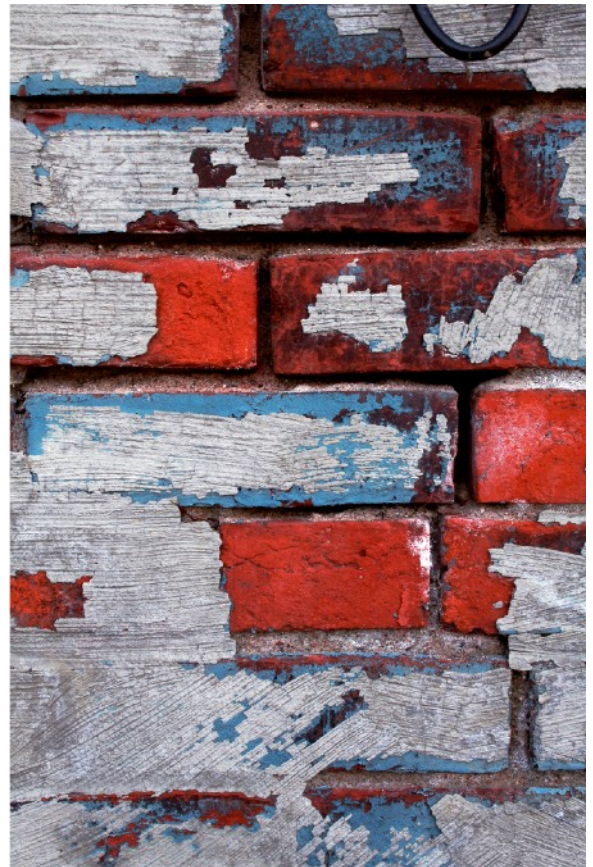
Texture typically shows up as a pattern, a repetition of details that we don't normally see.

For instance, in this photo we can see a couple of different textures.

First, we have the larger texture of the brick wall, and the eroded mortar, leaving large surface gaps between those bricks.

We can see, and imagine this texture because of the shape, color and brightness of the bricks against the darker, shadowed areas of eroded grout.

In addition to the larger wall texture, we have the surface texture of the bricks themselves, which look rather smooth where exposed, but take on a rougher texture where the stucco still clings to them.



Again, it's the contrast between the light and dark areas of the stucco that shows us that there is a variation in the surface, creating the rough, corduroy like texture.





This is really important, because it is this contrast that creates texture. That visual information imparts to our brains an understanding that there is variation to this surface.

Once we understand that there is variation on the surface, our brain then sets out to determine how it feels, and this can be an incredibly engaging element in a composition.

Take a look at the image below and see what I mean. Every time I see this photo, I can immediately imagine exactly how it would feel to run my hand over this surface and break off the peeling paint.

This is an incredibly powerful composition tool, because now you've engaged another sense. By bringing in the sense of touch, the brain struggles to reconcile the desire to actually touch this with the understanding that this is not real, that the surface quality of the actual photo itself, is entirely different from what it visually appears to be.

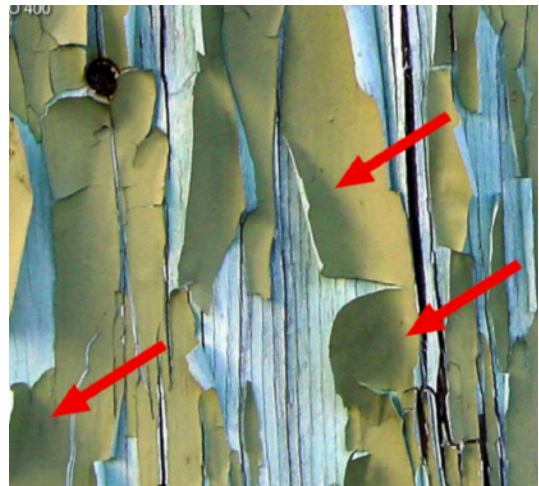
So how do you create texture?

Here we're looking at the peeling paint much closer. Notice the shadows cast by the peeling paint?

Those shadows create the texture.

What this means is that the direction of the light is very important to creating texture.

Let me show you what I mean.



The top photo on the right was lit from directly above, and because the light is coming from directly above, there is very little texture. This is because the light is shining directly on the subject surface, eliminating most of the shadows that might be created by variations in the surface elevation.



Compare that to the photo below where the only thing changed is the direction the light is coming from. Look at the richness in texture created by the shadows.

Here, the light is hitting the surface at an angle. Because it's coming in at an angle, the difference in surface elevation creates shadow because the higher points of the surface block the light from hitting the lower points. This in turn creates the contrast needed to represent the texture in the photo.



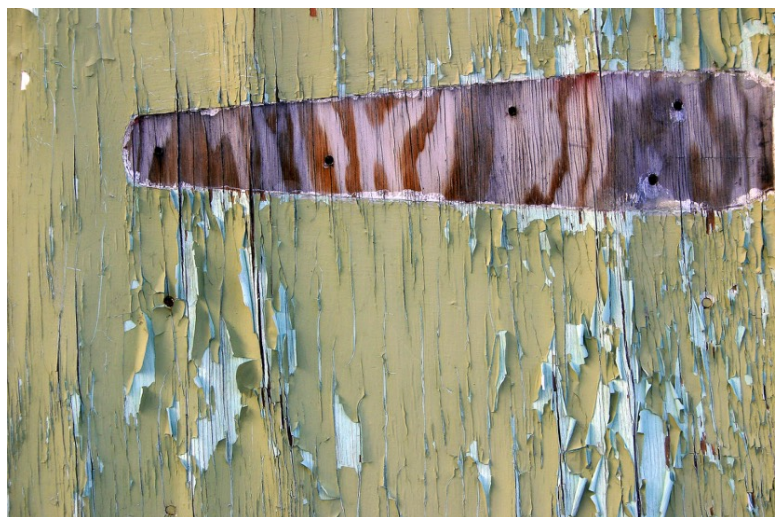
When you're shooting for texture, the direction of the light is critical, and it's something you will want to be aware of.

Another powerful aspect of texture is the patterns it creates. Earlier I mentioned that our brains are always looking for patterns, and patterns in your photos can help to further engage the brain in the composition.

Take a look at the paint again. There is a consistency in the fact that paint is peeling all over the board, but there is a great deal of variation within this pattern.

We have large areas with little or no peeling, and then cluster areas where there is heavy peeling, and then within those areas, even more variation.

What this means is that every element builds upon the other elements in your compositions.





Every photo you take uses all of the components covered in this guide. Even if your focus was on a single component, such as texture, I guarantee you there are still lines, shapes, colors and more in that composition.

## Color

Speaking of color, have you ever wondered what exactly color is?

Color is how our brains process the electromagnetic radiation that our eyes can detect.

There is a lot of science behind this, but in a nutshell humans see color because our eyes contain cells that are sensitive to certain frequencies of radiation.

When radiation within those frequencies enters our eyes and hits those cells, we see any number of these colors you see at the right.

That energy is light and what we see as color is entirely a matter of how our brains process the light that enters our eyes.

It also means that color is part of the constant visual stimuli that our brains process, catalog and filter every second of every day.

To effectively use color we need to understand the basic principles of color theory, which starts with the color wheel.

The wheel to the right shows 6 colors, the primary and secondary colors, and if you take a moment to look around you, you'll find that by and large, these are the colors that you will see.

Now the human eye can actually see around 10 million colors, but those millions of colors are all just mixtures of these six colors.

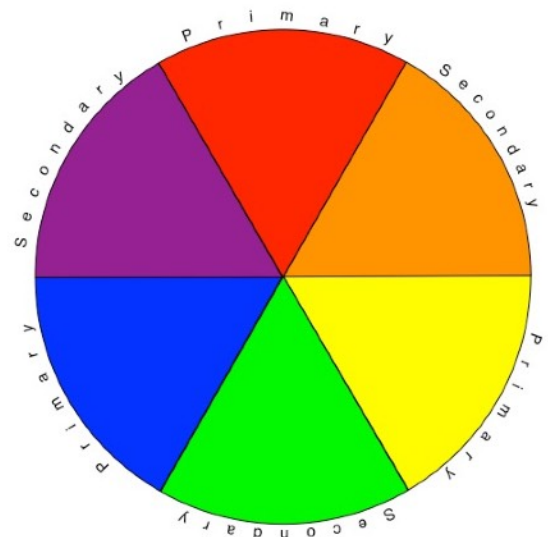
So we're not going to worry about those millions. We're just going to focus on these six.

Color theory is an understanding of how we perceive the interaction of these different colors.

There are two basic color interactions. Complementary and Analogous.

Analogous colors are colors that are next to each other on the color wheel,

And analogous colors blend together, creating harmony and tending mute the overall intensity of each other.



Here we have blue and green together doing just that.



You can see the difference between the blue and the green, but neither color really pops out from the other.

Instead they almost blend together.

The use of analogous colors will tend to promote feelings of calm and harmony in your image.

In addition, blue and green are both cooler colors, and cool colors also tend to promote feelings of calm and relaxation.

One of the things we're seeing here is that the color impacts the overall mood of the photo, which can also influence the mood or feelings that a viewer may experience.

Now let's compare that to complementary colors.

Complementary colors are opposite from each other on the color wheel and increase contrast and intensity, creating feelings of high energy and even agitation.

Here we have orange and red against blue, and right away you should notice a difference in the intensity of the colors.

The complementary nature really makes the red and orange pop out in this shot, where the green and blue tended to blend together.



In addition to that, warm colors give feelings of stimulation, energy and activity, which is in direct opposition to the calm harmony of the cool colors.

So in a shot like this, there's not only a contrast of actual color, there's a contrast in the feelings the photo may generate.

Let's take a moment to look at the colors themselves.

With the green on blue there is definitely a difference between the two colors, but it's not incredibly jarring.

This is because these are analogous colors, and the harmony that exists between these colors allows them to blend and appear to be on the same level.

Now let's look at the green against the red. This is pretty jarring.

Both the red and the green look MUCH more intense because they are complementary colors, opposite from each other on the color wheel.

And the green looks like it's popping right off the screen.

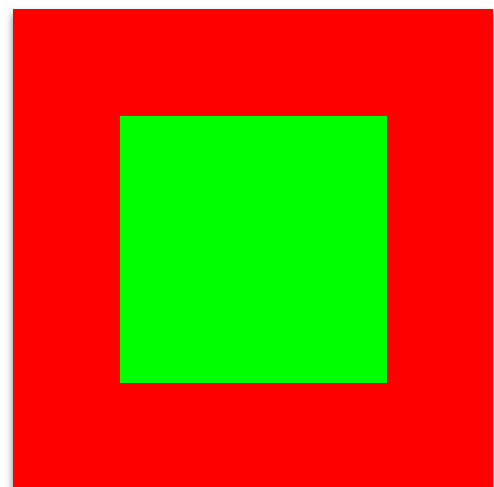
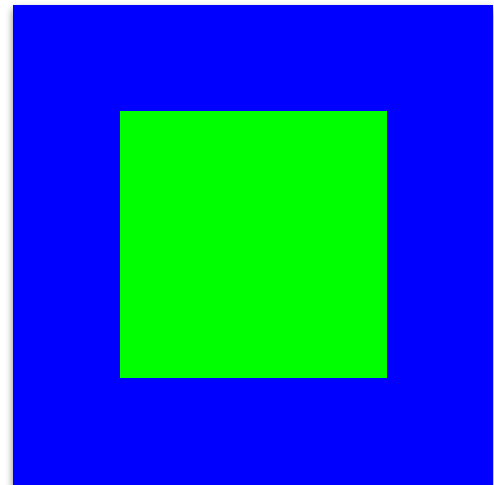
That increased contrast and intensity creates a separation in the colors that really makes them stand out.

And that right there is basic color theory.

Colors that are next to each other will promote harmony and tend to blend together, and colors that are opposite from each other will tend to be more intense and create contrast with each other.

Now this is our purely visual reaction to colors based on how our brains process things.

However colors also have a social context that we need to consider. I've listed some of the common associations for the different major colors on the next page.



## Common Color Associations

Red	Orange	Yellow	Green
Energy	Joy	Sunshine Joy	Restful
Aggression	Sunshine	Intellect	Safety
War	Enthusiasm	Energy	Money
Strength	Creativity	Food	Fertility
Danger	Determination	Honor/Loyalty	Jealousy/Envy Growth
Passion/desire	Autumn		Nature Fresh
Love	Good things to eat		Healthy
Lust/Adultery (USA)	Heat		
Fertility/Life/Happiness (Asia)			
Blue	Purple	White	Black
Relaxing	Royalty	Weddings	Mourning
Serenity	ExpenseLuxury/ Extravagance	Light	Darkness
Sea/Sky	Spirituality	Goodness	Evil
Cold	Power	Innocence	Elegance
Trust	Ambition	Purity	Formality
Loyalty	Wealth	Safety	Mystery
Wisdom	Independence	Cleanliness	Unknown
Truth	Creativity		Authority
			Strength

# CONCLUSION

Whether you're using complementary colors, lines, shapes, contrast or perspective, when you create a composition you are creating a work of art.

Composition plays a huge role in creating photographs that are engaging and enjoyable to look at, and the more deliberate you are about your compositions, the better your photos will be.

However, being deliberate doesn't mean that you should let all these elements paralyze your process. It's something that can easily happen if you actively think about all of these different elements for every photo you take.

So when I say to be deliberate about your compositions I don't mean that you need to run through everything we've covered in some massive compositional checklist.

Instead, try to always maintain an awareness of your composition, and when you feel it's not working try to figure out what about your composition is or isn't working and how you can fix it.

If you do that, I guarantee you'll immediately start creating better photos.

It's the difference between seeing something shiny and instinctively grabbing the camera to take a photo, and deliberately exploring your subject to find and capture a photo that speaks to you and your audience.

Finally, I want to say thank you for taking the time to watch my videos and read this ebook. I am honored to be part of your journey in photography and I look forward to seeing what you can do with your compositions, but composition is just one aspect of creating a good photo.

The other aspect is knowing how to use your camera so that you can make it do what you want it to do to bring those compositions to life.

So if you want to truly master your camera and use it to take amazing photos that will match the vision you see in your mind, check out my [Guide to Shooting in Manual Mode](#).

The Guide will unlock the secrets of your camera for you and covers things like:

- How cameras work, including more in depth explanations of ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed
- Exactly how to change your ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed settings
- An in depth look at exactly how changing ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed will change your photos
- Exactly how to get Shallow Depth of Field when you want it
- The secret to my I Am Shooting method, which will help you choose the right settings for the photo you want to take every single time
- How to take sharp photos and avoid those crappy blurry photos we never want to take
- and much more...

[Go check it out](#), and then...

**GET OUT THERE  
AND TAKE  
SOME DAMN  
PHOTOS!**