

10 Composition Tips - worksheet

Grab a camera and go on the hunt for images that meet the criteria below

1 Simplify the scene

Choose your subject, then select a camera viewpoint that makes it the centre of attention in the frame (not the centre of the composition!) You can't always keep other objects out of the picture, so try to keep them in the background or make them part of the story. Silhouettes, textures and patterns are all devices that work quite well in simple compositions.

2 Viewpoint

Before photographing your subject, take time to think about where you will shoot it from. Our viewpoint has a massive impact on the composition of our photo, and as a result it can greatly affect the message that the shot conveys. Rather than just shooting from eye level, consider photographing from high above, down at ground level, from the side, from the back, from a long way away, from very close up, and so on.

3 Aspect ratio

Often a photo will lack impact because the main subject is so small it becomes lost among the clutter of its surroundings. By cropping tight around the subject you eliminate the background "noise", ensuring the subject gets the viewer's undivided attention.

4 Avoid the middle

Move your subject away from the centre and get a feel for how it can be balanced with everything else in the scene, including any areas of contrasting colour or light – trust that you'll know when something just looks right.

5 Leading lines

Use lines to control the way people's eyes move around the picture.

Lines exist everywhere, in the form of walls, fences, roads, buildings and telephone wires. They can also be implied, perhaps by the direction in which an off-centre subject is looking.

6 Use strong Horizontal, Vertical or Diagonals

Horizontal lines lend a static, calm feel to a picture, while vertical ones often suggest permanence and stability. To introduce a feeling of drama, movement or uncertainty, look for diagonal lines.

7 Space to move

In your shot, there should always be a little more space ahead of the subject than behind it.

8 Backgrounds

Don't just concentrate on your subject – look at what's happening in the background, too.

9 Contrasts

Look for colour contrasts, isolate a bright colour against monochromatic area, complementary colours, how about contrasts of texture or brightness.

10 Framing the subject

Draw attention to the subject. Look for a way of framing that relates to the subject. e.g a teacher through a classroom door... and include the door frame, a footballer shot through the arms of a diving goalkeeper... include the arms etc etc