

Composition



Composition

“Composition” is generally taken to mean the organization of the objects in a photo. There are a few simple concepts and rules for composition – learn them, then break them!

- “Composition is the strongest way of seeing.”
- Edward Weston

“Now to consult the rules of composition before making a picture is a little like consulting the law of gravitation before going for a walk. Such rules and laws are deduced from the accomplished fact; they are the products of reflection...”

-Edward Weston (again)

Suggested Approach

Purposely try the ideas in this presentation. Then quit thinking about them as you photograph, but reflect on your finished images as to why each “works,” or “doesn’t work,” in the context of what is here.

Isolate and Simplify!

See the previous presentation on isolating the subject, and simplifying the image. Those are part of composing a photograph, along with the things discussed in this presentation. You can access the powerpoint for the previous presentation [here](#).

Fill the Frame

We want to fill up our photograph, especially the corners. This DOES NOT necessarily mean we put things there, but the corners need to *provide balance* to the photograph.







Upper corners not filled?

Avoid Edge “Tangents”

Don't let objects just barely touch the edge of a photograph. Either fully include the object, or cut it off significantly.



←----- Bad!



Avoid Internal Tangents of Objects



Tip of larger tree is almost tangent to the cloud layer, tip of tree to its right is tangent to the sloping background skyline.



This photo was taken from the drivers seat of our van (while stopped!). If I had taken It while standing on the road, the top of the bus likely would have been tangent to the line at the far edge of the grassy field.

Avoid Bright Areas on Edges or in Corners





Avoid Diagonals Leaving at Corners?



Centered Compositions

Centered compositions

- Are static and “formal”
- Leave little doubt as to what the subject is
- Can work quite well with symmetric subjects





People Against a Background

We often wish to photograph friends or loved ones in front of a special scene. It is usually a bad idea to center the person or people when doing this. Try putting them to one side or the other.





Where to Place Things?

There are no fixed rules for this, but two things to learn as a beginner, then ignore, are

- Avoid placing a horizon line at the (vertical) center of an image. This needs no illustration.
- Learn the “rule of thirds.”







About Lines...

Lines can impart a feeling to a photograph. In general,

- Horizontal lines give stability, peacefulness
- Vertical lines give stateliness
- Diagonal lines make an image dynamic



Horizontal Lines



Vertical Lines



Diagonal Lines





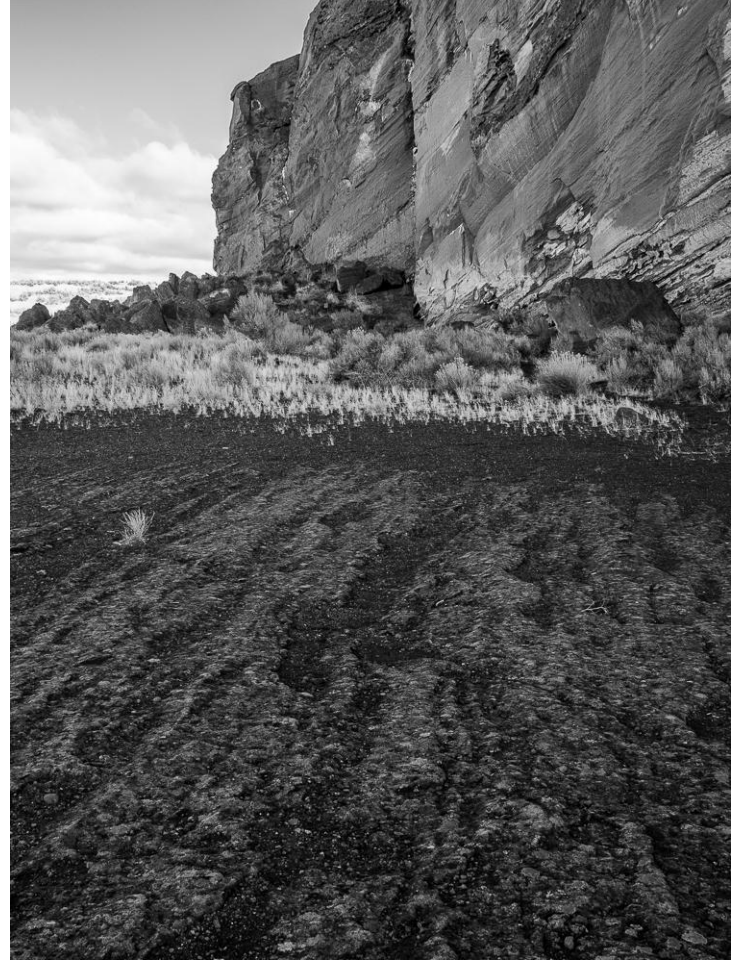
Diagonal Lines



Left image (centered, horizontal and vertical lines) has a stately, formal look. Right image (door slightly off center, diagonal lines) is more dynamic. The lighting (topic for next time) also reinforces the effect of each image.

Near/Far Composition

This might also be called foreground/background. It occurs when a major part of the image is taken up by an exaggerated foreground, but with interest in the background as well. It has become quite common in landscape photography, to the point of becoming somewhat hackneyed.



Framing

It is sometimes possible to create a frame within a photograph. This can make for an interesting photo, but be careful not to overdo this!





Let's look at a few more images!







