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RULE OF THIRDS

The rule of thirds divides the photograph composition into "thirds" both vertically and horizontally. The foreground of the above example is divided into "thirds" horizontally by the two pieces of barb wire. The composition is divided into "thirds" vertically by the center fence post taking up the "middle third" and the background on the left and right of the post filling the other 'two thirds.' The division does not have to be 'equal thirds" as is the case with the horizontal barb wire in this example.
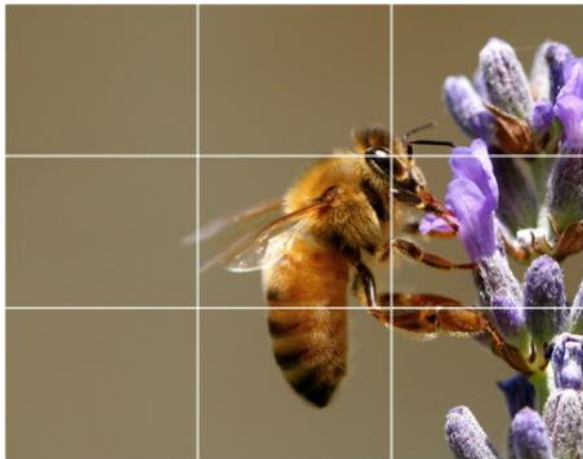
GROUP PHOTOS

A group is three or more people or objects. Group photographs are usually stationary and posed with people looking at the lens. Group photos can also incorporate candidness and action. Positioning people and objects in layers will create the illusion of "depth".

- scope out the location of your shot before hand
- think ahead about how you will pose people and frame your shot
- take multiple shots
- get in as close as you can without cutting someone out
- pose the group
- tell everyone to raise their chins a little
- if you have a large group, elevate yourself as the photographer and have them look up
- it is sunny, have them close their eyes and open them when you count to 3 and then take the picture on 3
- taller people should go to the back and short people to the front or sides in large group shots
- get the heads on different levels
- pose the subjects on different levels like stairs or bleachers
- Use the triangle as a composition trick

CANDID PHOTOS

The candid photo captures the moment without the subject being aware they are being photographed. The subject should never be looking at the camera lens. In order to shoot candid photos, you should always have your camera with you. People should be used to seeing you with your camera so they are less camera shy or worse, camera hams. Let people forget you are there before you start shooting by quietly observing people's activities and interactions.

Candid shots may be taken of one or more than one subject. Something very interesting happens when you photograph more than one person in an image at a time – it introduces relationship into the shot. Even if the two (or more) people are not really interacting in the shot it can add depth and a sense of story into the viewing of the image. Of course ideally in candid shots you'd like some interaction between your subjects as that will add emotion into the shot also as we the viewer observe how the people are acting.

Switch your camera to continuous shooting mode and shoot in bursts of images and in doing so you'll increase your chances of that perfect shot.

Blend into the background and don't be too obvious when taking pictures. You will get more natural photos.

Photograph people doing something. Then they won't notice you taking the picture.
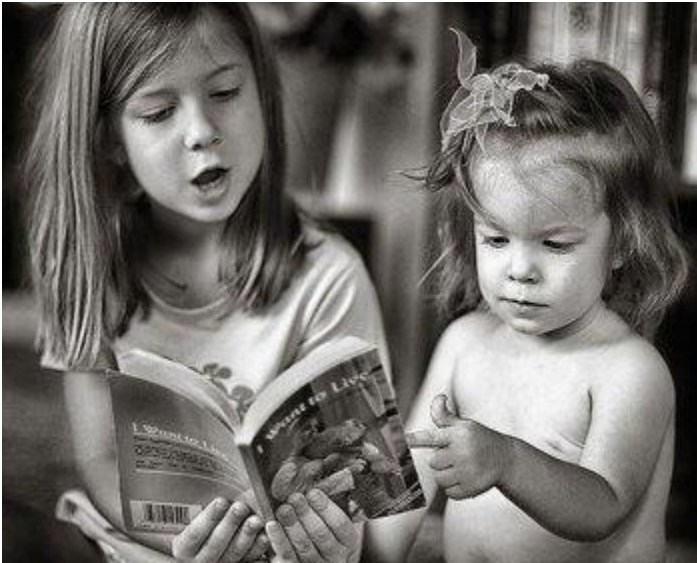
MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY

Taking close-up pictures of small things is called "macro photography."

Hold the camera very steady or use a tripod.

FRAMING

Framing is a technique that creates the illusion of depth and draws the viewer's eye to a focal point of interest. Use something in the foreground to frame the subject of your photo. The photographer might have to move to shoot the picture from a different angle to get the frame in the shot. The basketball players and assistant coach surround the head coach as he gives instructions to the players and draws the viewer's eye to the center of the photograph. The plant branch helps draw the viewer' eye to the cat's face while creating a feeling of depth in the composition of the photograph.

ANIMAL PHOTOS

Photographing pets takes on a deeper meaning when you can capture their character in a photo. It's a good idea to photograph pets in their preferred spots or enjoying a much-loved pastime such snoozing on the porch or catching a Frisbee.

Photographing your pet at play is a great way to capture some interesting shots with personality. Because the animal will be moving quickly and you want to make sure the photos are free from blur, turn the mode dial to TV or S (Shutter Priority) mode so you can control how you freeze the action. Set the focus mode to continuous focusing (AI Servo AF Canon/AF-C Nikon) so that the lens can constantly maintain its focus on the running pet. For multiple shots use continuous shooting mode and hold down the shutter button as long as you'd like.

Aim for the eyes. In your pets quiet moments, after eating or bedtime for example, move in close for some dramatic and expressive shots.

Getting on the floor and at the same level as your pet is a great way to capture some dramatic, yet natural shots. Lying on the ground usually prevents the use of a tripod, so to keep the camera steady you may use a camera bean bag, or a sturdy book as support. To help reduce camera shake, take a deep breath before you take the shot. For the blurred background effect, choose a shallow DOF (f/2.8-f/8) and a fast shutter speed since pets can move fast! Shutter speeds of 1/400s and faster when you are outdoors is a good bet.

There are various reasons why flash should be avoided when taking photographs of pets. For example, flash is bright and can be unnerving for a small animal. Flash can scare them or make them nervous and hide. Additionally, flash is harsh. Particularly if you are indoors, it's best to use natural light since this won't wash out feathers. If your pet is light colored, white fur in particular will look washed out with a flash. Another reason for not using flash is because animals can photograph with red eye, like humans. Finally, try to avoid using flash with animals that live in tanks, because glass will reflect the flash making an unsightly white hotspot. This also is true with metal cages, because once again, even dull metal will look white under the beam.

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/60   APERTURE: F/5.6   ISO SPEED: 100   FLASH: NOT FIRED

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/400   APERTURE: F/4.8   ISO SPEED: 200   FLASH: NOT FIRED

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/15   APERTURE: F/2.8   ISO SPEED: 200   FLASH: NOT FIRED

Still Life

A still life is a group of inanimate (cannot move on their own) objects. The goal of this photograph is to communicate a mood or atmosphere by arranging three or more objects in a visually pleasing composition. You should shoot your still life from "normal" eye level (the lens on the same level as the objects), "Bird's eye" level (the lens above the objects) and from a "worm's eye" level (the lens below the base of the objects). Each "eye level" shot can have the same or a different positioning of the still life objects.

Having a suitable backdrop for your subject matter will play a crucial role in the overall success of your shots. It's best to keep it nice and simple, so it doesn't interfere with your subject. A plain painted wall or a large sheet of white or plain colored paper would be ideal.

LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

Beautiful landscape photos are often defined by the quality of light they were taken in. As a consequence, photographers tend to shoot early in the morning or during late afternoons when the sun is lower, less contrast and often displays a subtle color palette of moody hues. For this reason, the hours after dawn and before dusk are known as the 'magic hours'.

Composition is key to successful landscape photography, and if you don't know where to start, use the 'rule of thirds' to get things going. If you are trying to showcase the sky, then let that have the upper two thirds, and if you are trying to showcase land or water, let that have the lower two thirds.

Make sure the horizon is straight (horizontal). The horizon line in a photograph can be high or low depending on what you want to emphasize. A "high" horizon line as in the example above on the left, emphasizes the "foreground" of the landscape photograph. The "low" horizon line of the example on the right emphasizes the sunrise sky in the "background" of the photograph.

Change your point of view and take a picture from a scenic overlook.

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Increase your ISO for a fast shutter speed to avoid catching someone while blinking and to prevent motion blur appearing, you'll need to use a fast shutter speed.

Fill the frame, but if you shoot a portrait photograph from too close, you will distort the subject's face, making it seem round and bulging, with a huge nose. This can be very distracting, not to mention completely unflattering. Move back as far as your lens will allow and zoom in on your subject. The further back you can get, the less distorted their face will be, and the more attractive and "real" your portrait will look.

There are several positions you can pose your subject in, but the most common are the "Serious pose" (looking at the camera -not smiling), the "Candid pose" (looking away from the camera-serious or smiling) and the "Smiling pose"(looking at the camera- showing some teeth).

Shoot a lot of photos!

A plain background is a popular choice in portrait photography - it is perfect for isolating the subject and cutting out any distracting background elements.

Use a reflector. Use them indoors (near windows) or outdoors to bounce light back onto your subjects to fill in unwanted shadows.

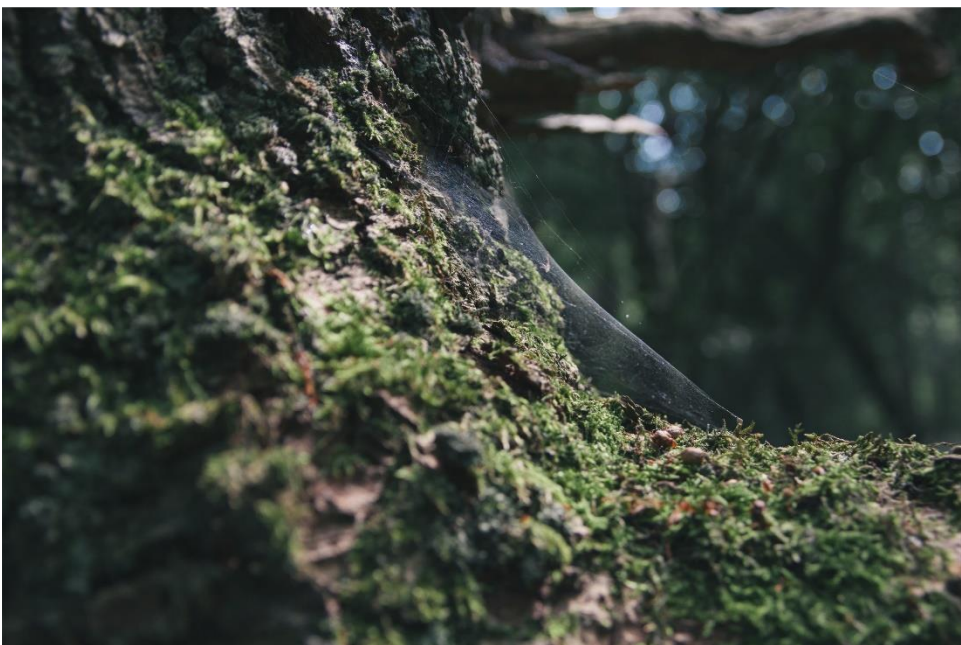|	
Shot without reflector	A white reflector produces neutral results.
A gold reflector warms up your image.	A silver reflector brightens up your image.

NATURE STUDY

Get outside and take a picture of nature. Get in close! Here are some examples:

- Rock types, textures, sizes
- Leaf types, shapes, colors
- Insect types, colors
- Spider webs types
- Cloud types, shapes

REFLECTIONS

Take pictures of glass, water, mirrors or other surfaces that show reflections.

Outdoor water reflections work best on still days with no wind because there are no ripples on the water to distort the reflections.
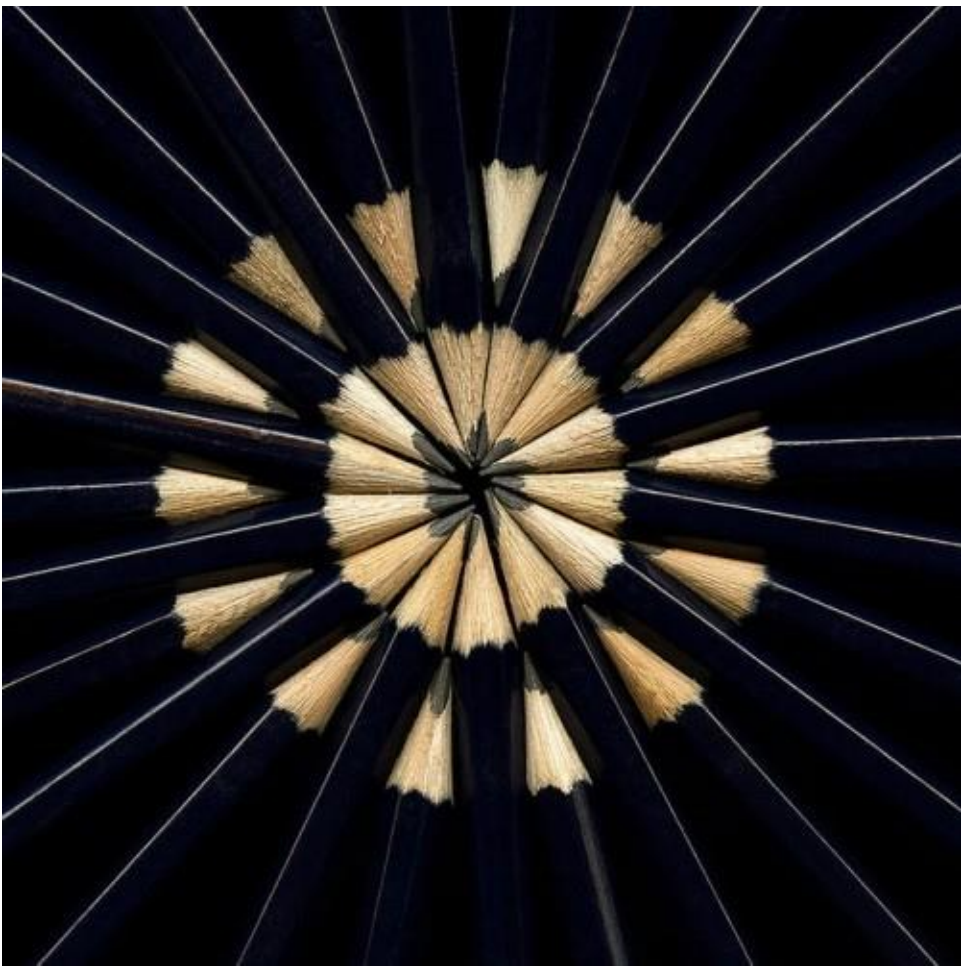
FRAGMENTS

Pictures that only show part of an object, not the whole thing. You can still tell what it is, but it doesn't show the entire object.
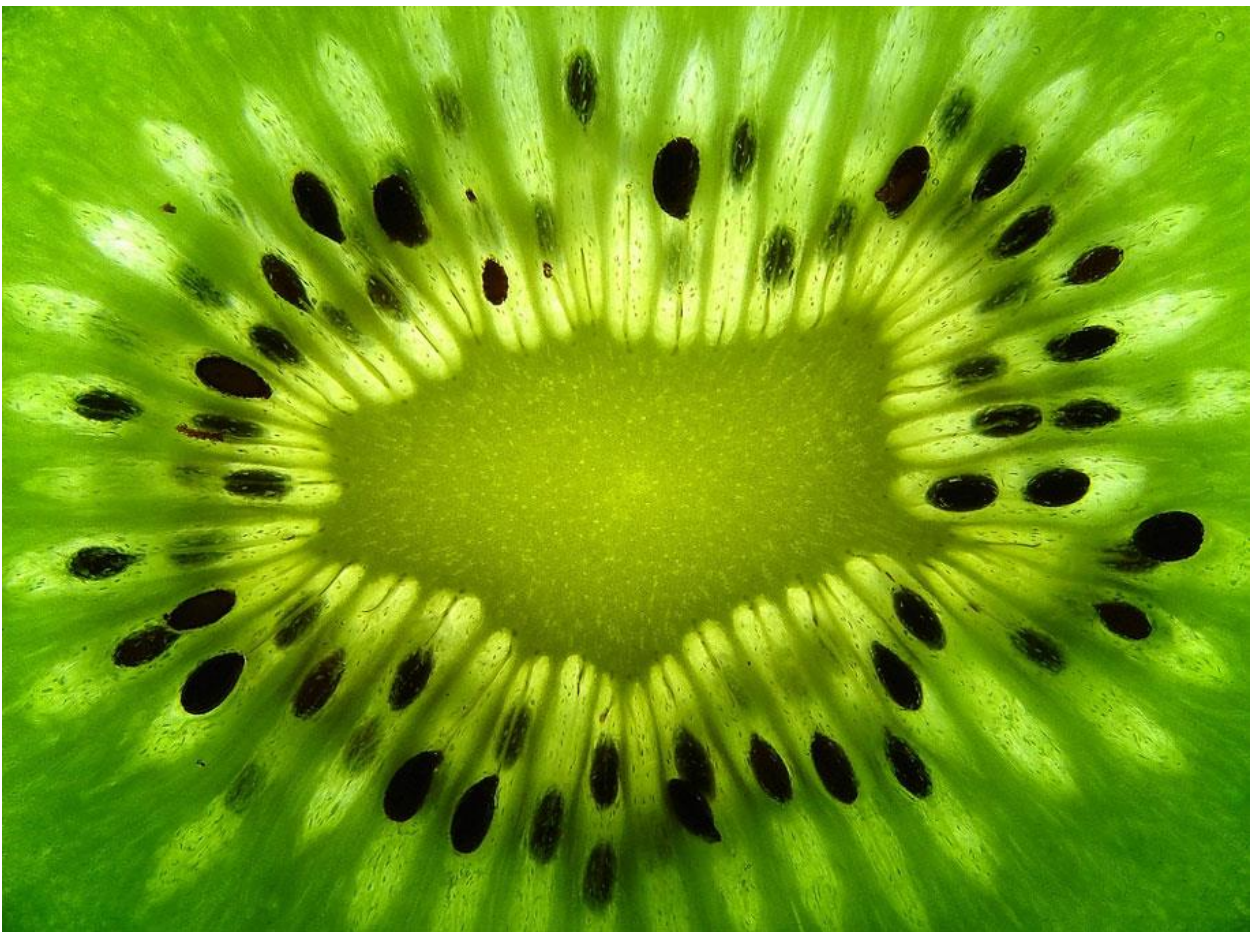
ABSTRACT

Photographs which represent reality mainly as patterns and/or shapes and not as recognizable objects. Take pictures of lines, shapes or unrecognizable three dimensional forms.
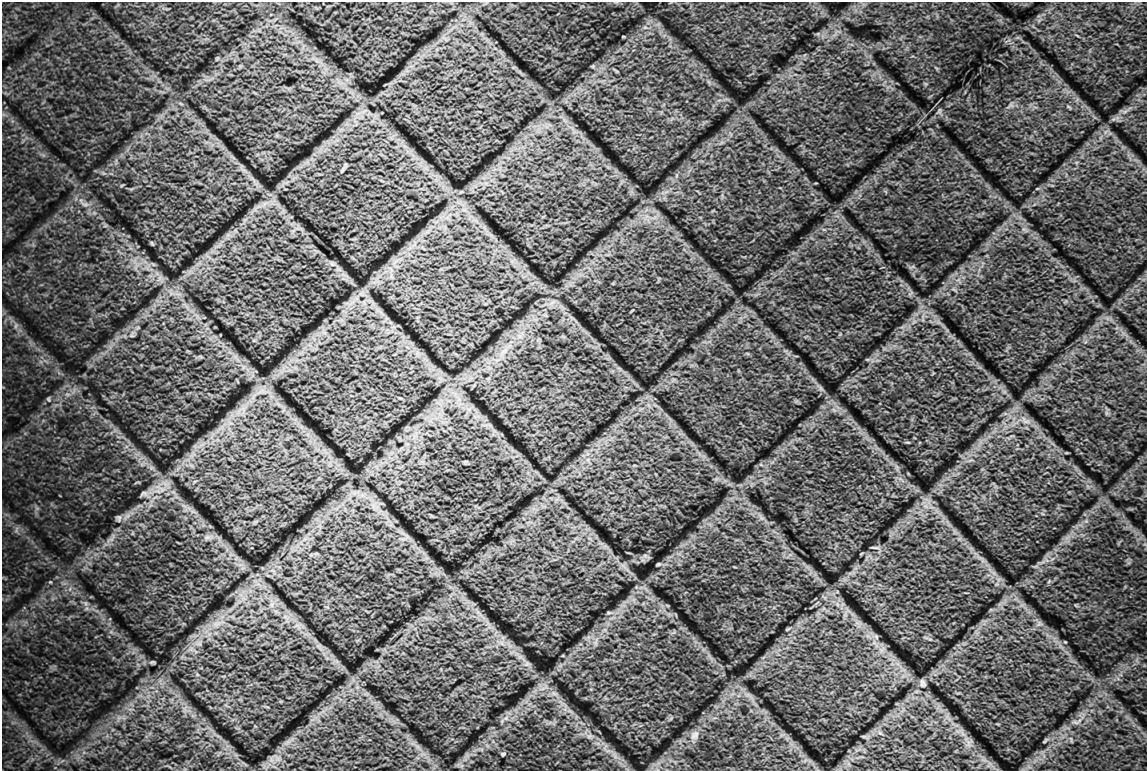
PATTERN

The repetition of lines or forms in an arranged sequence. Occasionally, it is nice to break the pattern as in the picture below.

TEXTURE

Why is Texture one of the essential visual design elements in photography? Because a photo is 2-dimensional, highlighting the texture of your subjects adds the look of a third dimension. Texture, of course, exists in the surface details of your subject. It is that quality that makes an otherwise two-dimensional object seem like it could be experienced through touch.
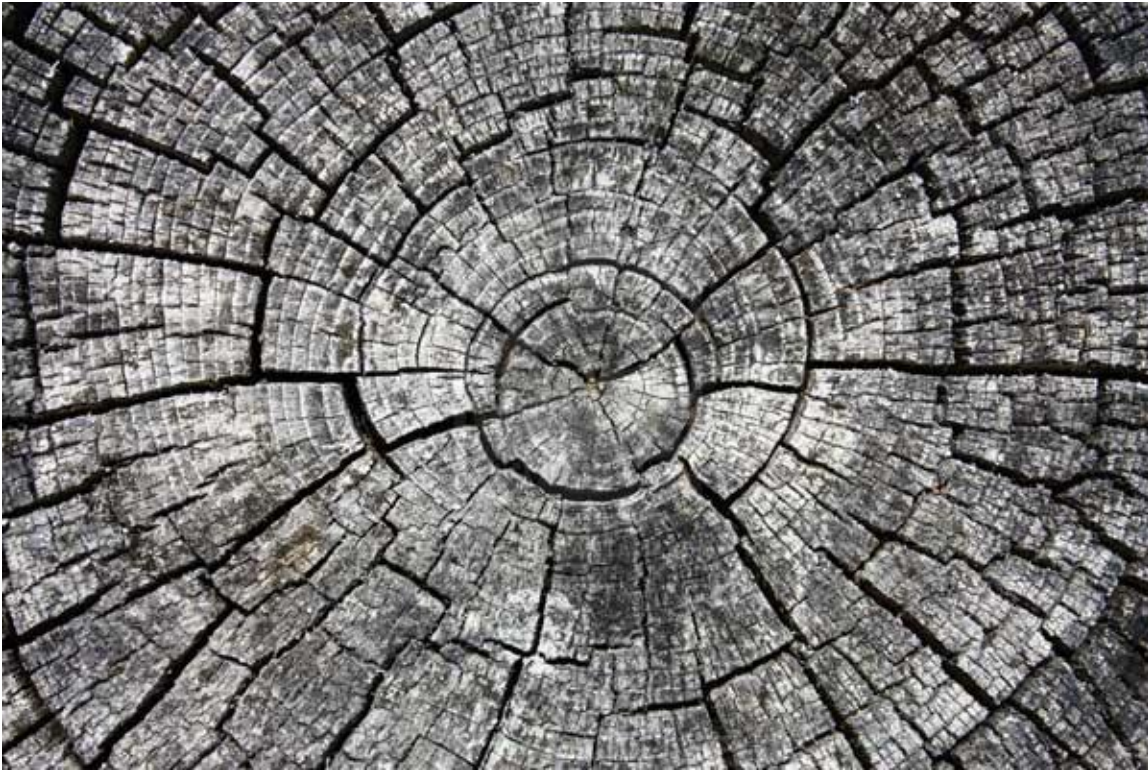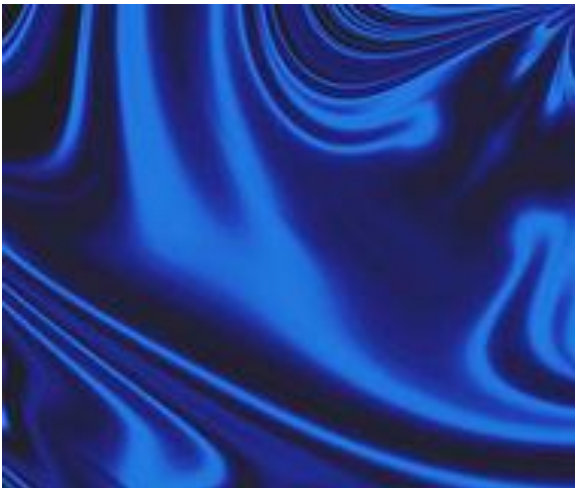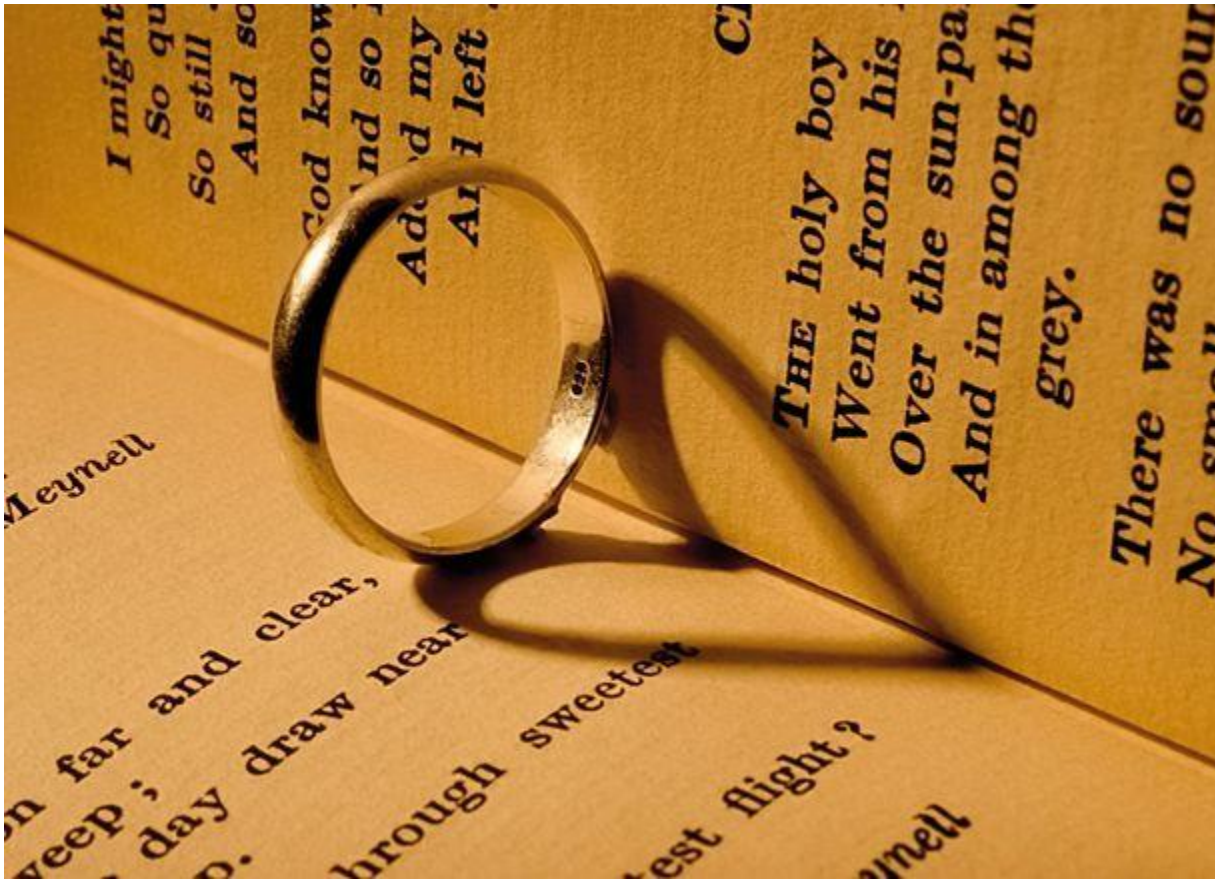
SHADOW

Light makes it possible for us to see. Shadows are areas of darkness caused by objects that do not let light pass through. Cast shadows may also make an object look more three dimensional. Take pictures that emphasize the shadows cast on or cast by an object. (Usually the object and the shadow)

Omar Saleem 2006

LOW POINT OF VIEW

The Point of View is the position from which you are looking at something. Often photographers can get a dramatic effect by taking a picture of something from a low point of view, an ant's eye view.

ATYPICAL POINT OF VIEW

The perspective that a shot is taken from is another element that can have a big impact upon an image.

Shooting from up high and looking down on a subject or shooting from below looking up on the same subject drastically impact not only the 'look' of the image, emphasizing different points of interest, angles, textures, shapes etc. – but it also impacts the 'story' of an image.

LIGHT

Light is reflected through glass blocks or off of shiny objects. Rays of sunshine are rays of light as are rays coming from a light fixture. Take pictures of light being reflected off of something or light projecting from a light source like a light bulb.
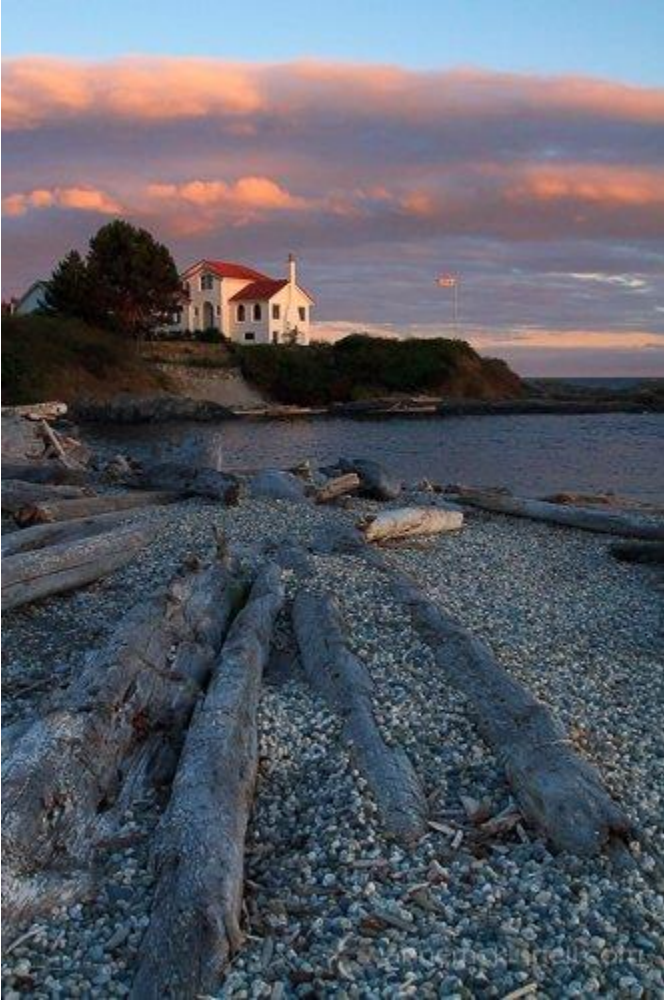
LEADING LINES

Leading lines draw the viewer's eye to the point of interest or help create the illusion of depth and/or distance. When leading lines, such as roads, connect the foreground to the background of a scene, they help to create depth and dimensionality which draws the viewer into the image.

Leading lines are all around us in cities and in nature. Your job as the photographer is to find them and arrange them in your photograph so that they lead towards something, even if that something is infinity.

The logs on the beach draw the viewer's eye into the frame and lead up to the house.

The soft leading line of the river's edge creates depth in the image.

The leading line of the path leads the viewer's eye directly to the maple tree.

FORMAL (SYMMETRICAL) BALANCE

Formal balance is equal or symmetrical balance. Each side of the vertical center of the photograph has equal weight and similar or exactly the same shape, texture, and value contrast.

INFORMAL (ASYMMETRICAL) BALANCE

Informal or "asymmetrical" Balance is uneven or unequal balance. The objects have nearly the same "visual weight" on either side of the vertical center of the photograph composition, but are different in size, shape, texture, or value

How can we achieve good visual (asymmetrical) balance?

- Light against dark.
  Black against white has a much stronger contrast than gray against white. To balance gray against white you need a larger gray area to compensate compared to if you used black.
- Colors
  Small areas of vibrant color can be balanced to larger areas of more neutral colors
- Space
  Open space can be balanced on one side with the primary subject on the other side of the image
- Large against small
  Sometimes larger elements on one side of the image can be balanced by a smaller element that is positioned by itself at the far end of the other side of the image.
- Shape
  Large flat areas without much detail can be balanced by smaller irregularly shaped objects since the eye is led towards the more intricate shape. This is a very tricky type of asymmetrical balance that often ends up looking out of balance.
- Texture
  Smaller areas with interesting textures (variegated light and dark, or random fluctuations) can balance larger areas with smoother, un-textured looks
- Eye direction
  Your eye can be led to a certain point in a picture by using elements like triangles or arrows or as simple as the eye is led in the direction the people in a picture is looking.

Photograph by Ian Bramham

In the photograph above, you can see how the composition is beautifully tonally balanced. The deep shadows are perfectly countered by the bright shadows, and the darker industrial scene in the background balances the large, bright branch in the foreground. The balance doesn't stop there, however. The branch, which is no longer alive, speaks to the effect of industrialization on the environment.

LIGHTING TECHNIQUES

Lighting adds dramatic effect to your photographs. Usually you want the light source behind you when shooting photographs. "Backlighting" occurs when the light source is in front of the lens, creating dark silhouettes. A dramatic effect for sunsets, but not so great for a shot of a child opening birthday presents in front of a dining room picture window or the exchange student at school in front of the glass doors to the outdoor eating area. "Side-lighting" is effective in communicating strong emotion. "Floor-lighting" is a technique of placing a single light source in front of and below the subject and the camera to create suspense and mystery.

SELECTIVE FOCUS

Selective focus is achieved by using a large lens aperture which creates a shallow depth-of-field. Selective focus draws the viewer's eye to a point of interest by blurring the background. This technique is very useful in portrait and close-up photographs. Selective focus is a very useful technique for drawing the viewer's attention to a certain area of an image. Typically, though not always, the area you want to draw attention to will be the subject of the photo. By having the subject in sharp focus, but the rest of the image blurry, the eye is naturally drawn towards the sharp area of the image.

©Nicki Varkevisser
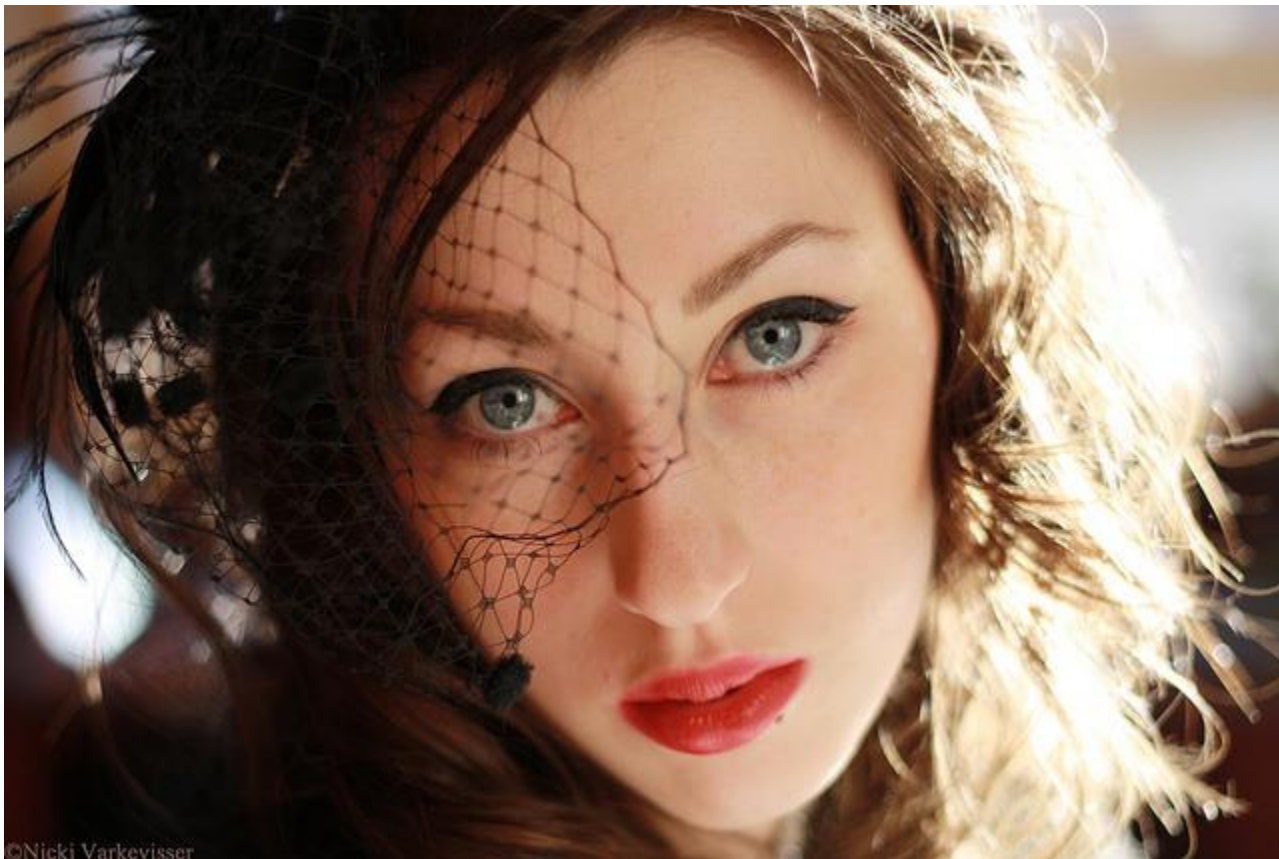
LIGHT PAINTING

In a completely dark room, set your camera on Bulb, open the shutter using your locking release for a long exposure of about 10 seconds, walk into your scene and write something using your flashlight.

PHOTO STITCHING

WHITE BALANCE

White balance (WB) is the process of removing unrealistic color casts, so that objects which appear white in person are rendered white in your photo. Proper camera white balance has to take into account the "color temperature" of a light source, which refers to the relative warmth or coolness of white light.

The color of an object is affected by the lighting conditions under which it is viewed. Our eyes and our brain compensate for different types of light—that's why a white object appears white to us whether it's viewed in sunlight, under overcast skies or indoors under incandescent or fluorescent light. But digital cameras need help to emulate this process, to compensate for different types of lighting and render a white object white.

The white balance setting is that help.

We can simply set auto white balance and the camera will read the scene's color temperature (basically the hue and intensity of a particular light source, measured in degrees Kelvin) and choose a setting from its collection of pre-programmed adjustments. That's a good solution when a scene's lighting is pretty much all of one type and there's a prominent white or neutral subject in the scene.

In most cases, though, accurate color rendition is going to call for a manual white balance setting. Those settings choices are incandescent, fluorescent, flash, cloudy, open shade, sunny, Kelvin color temperature and PRE.

The Incandescent setting is best for traditional household bulbs; Fluorescent will prevent the green cast common to photos taken in fluorescent light; Cloudy will add a bit of warmth to the light; Flash adds a more aggressive touch of warmth to take the edge off the bright light of a flash; Open Shade adds a slight pink tone to eliminate the blue cast that shadows take on in open shade; and Sunny sets the color temperature to 5000 degrees Kelvin, which is typical of mid-day sun.

Then there's the Kelvin Color Temperature setting. It's a do-it-yourself choice, in which you actually set the degrees Kelvin to affect how the camera will see and render the hue and intensity of colors in the scene. Using the Kelvin setting you can fine tune those colors to your definition of "accurate," or skew the colors to reflect your choice of the scene's mood and feeling. And when you turn on your Nikon camera's Live View, you will see in real time the result of your specific Kelvin color temperature choices.

Finally, you can choose PRE, the so-called "white card" setting. With that option selected, hold a white card in front of the lens and press the shutter button. The camera will read and lock in the color temperature of the light reflected from that card, and that locked-in reading now becomes the standard for the camera's white balance setting. PRE is an ideal way to handle a scene that presents mixed lighting—fluorescent lights in the ceiling and daylight streaming through a window, for example—because it takes into account all the lighting in the scene. (The locked-in setting is maintained in PRE until you take another white card reading.)

Custom Kelvin
6050 °K

Auto
7450 °K

Daylight
5500 °K

Shade
7500 °K

Tungsten
3250 °K

Fluorescent
3800 °K

Florescent Lighting

Taken without White Balance correction


Taken with White Balance correction

The range in different temperatures ranges from the very cool light of blue sky through to the very warm light of a candle.

We don't generally notice this difference in temperature because our eyes adjust automatically for it. So unless the temperature of the light is very extreme a white sheet of paper will generally look white to us. However a digital camera doesn't have the smarts to make these adjustments automatically and sometimes will need us to tell it how to treat different light.

So for cooler (blue or green) light you'll tell the camera to warm things up and in warm light you'll tell it to cool down.

RULE OF ODDS

The eye tends to be more comfortable with images that contain an odd number of elements rather than an even number. A photograph of three birds on a wire, for example, is probably going to be more appealing than an image shot after that third bird flies away. The reason for this is that the human eye will naturally wander towards the center of a group. If there's empty space there, then that's where the eye will fall. As a photographer, you want your viewer to look at a subject, not at an empty space.
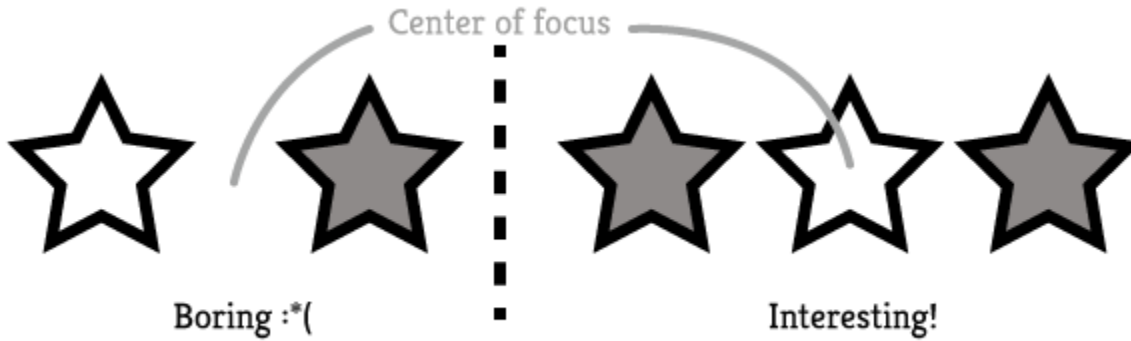
Rule of Space

The rule of space says that in order to portray movement, context and the idea that the photo is bigger than just the part that you're seeing, you need to leave clutter free 'white' spaces. For example if you're photographing a runner, give him a space to run into. Don't photograph him with all the space in the world behind him because this doesn't help the viewer picture the forward motion & the space he has yet to run. If you're making a portrait of a woman laughing at something not in the photo, leave space in the direction where she is laughing. This leads the viewer to wonder what's just beyond the boundaries of the photo. What is she laughing at? The reason I got this mixed up with the rule of thirds is that naturally, when giving your subjects space, they will be placed in a third of the photo.

FILL THE FRAME

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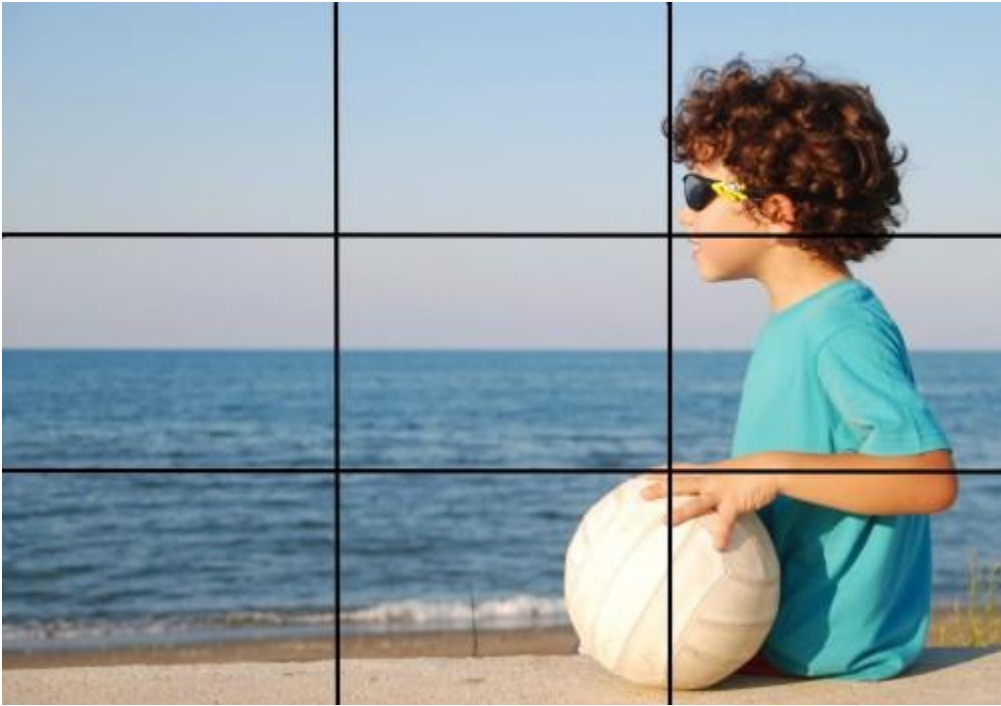
SIMPLICITY

If the background is distracting or merges with the subject, move and take the picture from a different angle so you have a simple background.

COLOR

The colors in an image and how they are arranged can make or break a shot.

Bright colors can add vibrancy, energy and interest – however in the wrong position they can also distract viewers of an image away from focal points.

Colors also greatly impact 'mood'. Blues and Greens can have a calming soothing impact, Reds and Yellows can convey vibrancy ad energy etc.

Perhaps nothing can compete with color as a tool for creating mood in a photograph. Cool colors (blues and greens) can make your viewer feel calm, tranquil or at peace. Reds and yellows can invoke feelings of happiness, excitement and optimism. A sudden spot of bright color on an otherwise monochromatic background can provide a strong focal point. How you use color can dramatically change a viewer's perception of an image. Pay attention to the colors in everyday scenes and use them according to what you want your viewer to feel when looking at your image.
Sometimes, colors that are opposite in hue (colors that are opposite to each other in the color wheel) to the color of the subject work well as backgrounds.
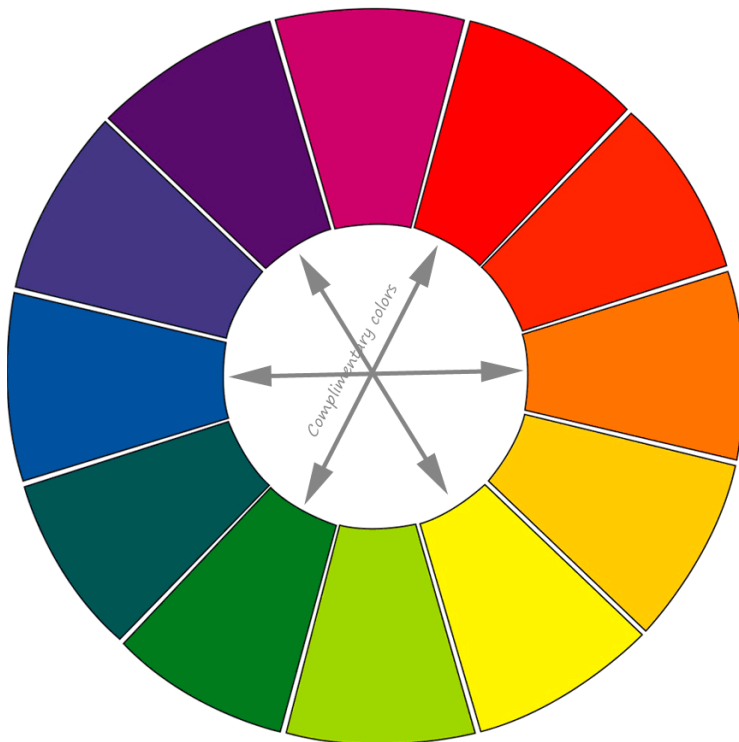
VERTICAL LINES

Vertical Lines denote dignity, height, strength, and grandeur. We find vertical lines in trees, tall buildings, fences, people standing up, mountains, etc. A tall building shows height, strength, dignity, and grandeur. Trees show height and strength.

HORIZONTAL LINES

Horizontal Lines denote repose, calm, tranquility, and peacefulness. Examples would be pictures of a person lying in the grass sleeping, flowers in a field, the flatness of a desert scene or lake.

DIAGONAL LINES

These lines give the sense of force, energy, and motion as seen in trees bent by the wind, a runner at the starting line or the slope of a mountain as it climbs into the sky.

megan dill

CURVED LINES

Curved lines show beauty and charm, such as the curve in a river or a pathway through a flower garden.

"S" CURVE

This line goes further than just the plain curved line. It is called the "Line of Beauty" You have seen this curve hundreds of times in drawings and paintings and other works of art. The double curve of a river makes an "S" Curve. A path, row of trees or bushes that curve one way and then the other way create the "S" Curve.