

Balancing Parts

What is it?	Arranging 2 (or more) parts of a composition in order to achieve some amount of visual balance or harmony within the picture plane.
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 50%-50% Equal distribution = uniformity, balanced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pros: mathematical order, can have calming, organizing feel • Cons: can be too structured and organized, limits dynamic movement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of the difference between a decluttered, organized space; versus a space that is unnaturally cleaned and maintained by some with Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). 2. 40%-60% = classical balance structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro: composition will achieve a natural harmony, Ironically it will feel more balanced than a uniform balance. • Con: need to rely on other effects to enhance your visual message. 3. 80%-10%= Occult Balance Achieved, Usually gives feeling of overwhelming, or overpowering (can be positive or negative for whatever you decided the 10% is). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro: It's a shortcut to making something feel overpowering or dominant over something else. • Con: it takes practice and effort to pull this one off to full effect and also achieve other subtle nuances to this effect.

2

Composition Type

Back Ground Choice

What is it?	Utilizing the background to enhance your content and visual message
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Plain Background: shortcut to dramatically put attention on your main subject. When used with lots of contrast it adds some extra drama to your subject. If there is not enough contrast your subject can get lost in the background.2. Out-of-focus Background: adds some subtle interesting variation to the background. It might still give some added context to your subject but still makes the subject the obvious focal point3. In-Focus- Background: adds more context to your subject but can start to compete for attention. Pay attention to your balance and contrast if you don't want the background to overpower your focal point.4. Expected Background: makes it look and feel like you're "really there". Its great for when you are practicing your observational art skills.5. Unexpected Background: great visual storytelling tool, usually want to put subject in a setting that is dramatically different than where you would expect to see it.

3

Composition Type

Cropping

What is it?	the process of removing or trimming the outer edges of a composition; a tool used to redefine the boundaries and visual message of an image.
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Shifts the Focus: A tight crop eliminates the edges of the photo, forcing the viewer's eye onto the remaining subject. It strengthens the importance of the main element, making it the clear subject of the story.Controls the Context: Removing the background changes what the viewer knows about the scene. A wide crop emphasizes the environment and the subject's place within it (e.g., suggesting isolation or scale). A tight crop eliminates the environment, leading to a more intimate or intense message.Alters the Emotion: Bringing the frame closer to the subject's face or action. Message change: A close crop typically increases drama, intensity, or intimacy. The use of empty space (negative space) can also be controlled to create feelings of anticipation or loneliness.Improves the Composition: Re-framing the image to align with aesthetic guidelines (like the Rule of Thirds). This makes the image more visually pleasing, balanced, and effective at guiding the viewer's gaze.Changes the Format: Switching from a horizontal to a square or panoramic ratio. This can fundamentally change the feeling of the image—for instance, a square crop feels more stable than a wide panoramic shot.

4

Composition Type

Depth of Field

What is it?	<p>Emphasizing a foreground, middle ground, and background elements within your composition. <i>Whatever is "in focus" will become your focal point.</i></p> <p>What is focus? In photography, it's practically married to sharpness. An image that is completely sharp is said to be in-focus. An image that's completely blurry is said to be unfocused. The same metaphor applies to your mind. When you concentrate, your mind is sharp. You are focused. When you're confused, you lack focus. As you are about to learn, you can use focus to direct your viewer's attention to the most important parts of a scene.</p>
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Foreground is most in focus: creates natural atmospheric perspective2. Midground is the most in focus: gives the viewer a sense of looking in from the outside of the event but is still relatively close to the action you're presenting. Tends to create a dramatic atmosphere. Can create some interesting visual story telling effects. The viewer becomes part of the story.3. Background is mostly in focus: similar to midground but viewer is more removed from the situation.4. All of it's in focus: tends to look hyper-realistic or surreal since it's difficult to observe naturally. Need to rely on other composition techniques to develop a strong unified composition.

5

Composition Type

framing

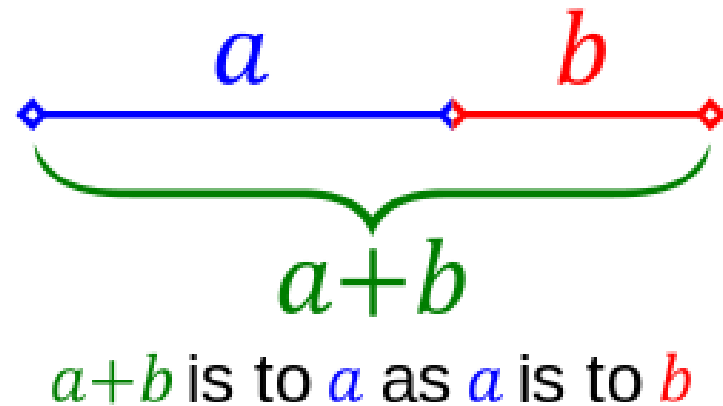
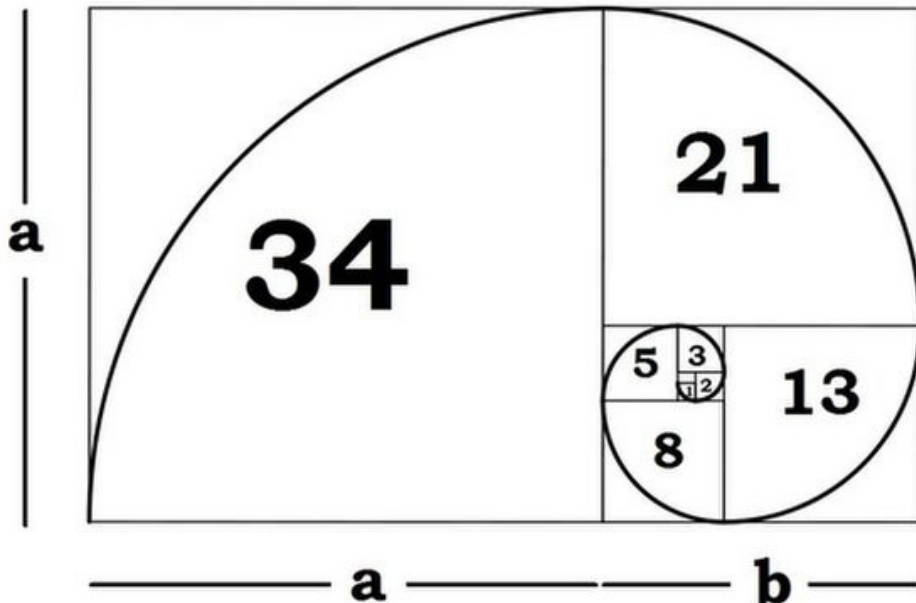
What is it?	utilizing natural or man-made elements in a scene (such as a doorway, window, archway, branches, or even two foreground objects) to visually enclose the main subject and focus the viewer's attention; Directs viewer's attention to your focal point in a dramatic way. When used well can add balance and contrast to not just your focal point but your overall composition
Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus is Intensified: The subject is highlighted and visually prioritized, making it the undeniable main point of the story. The viewer is immediately told what they should look at.• Depth and Dimension: The scene gains a sense of spatial volume. The image is layered (foreground frame, midground subject, background), allowing the viewer's eye to travel into the scene, which makes the composition more immersive and dynamic.• Context and Narrative: The material of the frame (e.g., a rustic wooden doorway or delicate tree branches) instantly provides context about the subject's environment, adding specific meaning and enriching the storyline.• Declutter: Distracting background elements are minimized or contained by the inner frame. The result is a cleaner, more organized, and clearer message.• Observational Perspective : The viewer feels like a hidden observer looking through a peephole or window. This can evoke feelings of secrecy, intimacy, or objective detachment from the subject.• Emotional Tone is Controlled: Tight framing can convey isolation, confinement, or intense intimacy. Wide framing (using a large inner frame) can emphasize the vast scale or grandeur of the environment relative to the subject.

6

Composition Type

Golden Ratio

What is it?	Composition strategy based on the "Golden Ratio"- basically it's a mathematical formula that is also found in nature all the time! It's a quick guide to achieving more natural balance in your composition.
Effects	Helps you activate your entire picture plane in a more purposeful way. It helps you achieve balance between open and closed space within your picture.



7

Composition Type

Point of View

What is it?	Being mindful of the position you are viewing your subject; The way an image is shot (the camera's Point of View or Angle) controls how the audience perceives the subject's power and emotion.
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Eye-Level: viewer at subject's height. Creates a sense of equality, familiarity, and connection. The viewer is meant to relate to the subject.2. Low-Angle / Worm's-Eye View: Viewer looking up. Projects power, dominance, and strength. Makes the subject look taller, more important, or intimidating.3. High-Angle : Viewer looking down. Conveys vulnerability, weakness, or inferiority. Makes the subject look smaller, defeated, or trapped.4. Bird's-Eye View: Viewer directly overhead. Emphasizes scale, patterns, and the environment. Makes subjects look like insignificant pieces on a map, showing the "big picture."5. Dutch Angle (aka Canted): Viewer is tilted. Creates tension, instability, and psychological disorientation. Signals that something is wrong or unbalanced in the scene.6. Subjective POV : Viewer acts as a character's eyes. Forces immersion and immediate identification with the character, allowing the viewer to feel their experience directly.

8

Leading Lines

(AKA Visual Passage)

What is it?	Using roads, paths, or other elongated lines/shapes to lead you through a composition.
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="386 841 1971 979">1. Converging Lines (e.g., railroad tracks): Creates extreme depth and perspective, making the scene immersive. The lines meet at a point, guiding the eye to a specific, singular destination (the focal point).<li data-bbox="386 1016 1971 1110">2. Diagonal Lines (running across the frame). Introduces movement, energy, and dynamism. These lines create a sense of action and quickly pull the viewer's eye through the scene.<li data-bbox="386 1148 1971 1242">3. Horizontal Lines (e.g., the horizon): Suggests stability, peace, and calmness. They provide a sense of expansive space and order, often grounding a landscape shot.<li data-bbox="386 1279 1971 1373">4. Vertical Lines (e.g., tall trees, towers): Conveys power, height, and grandeur. These lines draw the eye upward, emphasizing the scale and dominance of the subject.<li data-bbox="386 1411 1971 1505">5. Curved Lines (e.g., winding rivers, S-curves): Suggests grace, flow, and elegance. They offer a gentle, meandering path for the eye, making the composition feel natural and harmonious.

9

Composition Type

Rule of Odds

What is it?	<p>Having an odd number of subjects in a composition. Creates Tension and Flow. Even numbers (like two or four) allow the viewer's brain to easily pair up the elements, which can make the composition feel static or dull. An odd number, which cannot be easily paired, forces the brain to work harder to find a pattern or central anchor, sustaining the viewer's interest. It Feels more Natural. Odd-numbered arrangements often feel more organic and less staged, mimicking the subtle asymmetry found in nature.</p>
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Three Subjects (The Most Common): Creates a strong sense of balance and harmony by naturally positioning one subject in the center as the main focal point. The two surrounding subjects serve as "bookends" or supporting elements, guiding the eye into the center. This arrangement often forms a stable visual triangle.2. Five Subjects: Introduces more visual complexity and rhythm without becoming too cluttered. It allows for multiple points of interest and encourages the viewer's eye to explore the image longer, often in a dynamic, circular, or zigzag pattern.3. Seven or More Subjects: At this quantity, the individual elements often lose their distinctiveness and are perceived simply as a "group" or a "pattern." The rule still technically applies, but its psychological effect of creating a dominant, central figure is diminished; the message is more about abundance, repetition, or scale.

10

Composition Type

Rule of 3rds

What is it?	Arranging things in your composition so they occupy 1/3-2/3rds of your picture plane, vertically, horizontally, or even both.
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Placement on Intersections ("Sweet Spots"): Placing the main subject on one of the four crossing points of the grid. Creates visual energy and tension, making the subject the clear, active focal point of the image.2. Horizon on the Top Line: Placing the horizon on the upper horizontal line. Emphasizes the ground, landscape, or foreground elements (dedicating 2/3 of the frame to them).3. Horizon on the Bottom Line: Placing the horizon on the lower horizontal line. Emphasizes the sky, atmosphere, or clouds, making the scene feel vast and dramatic (dedicating 2/3 of the frame to the sky).4. Subject on a Vertical Line (Rule of Space): Aligning a person or object with the left or right vertical line, leaving empty space in the direction they are looking or moving. Creates a sense of motion, narrative, and anticipation, showing the viewer where the subject is headed or what they are focused on.5. Bonus: Mrs. Schmit "Rule of 3rds" uses that rule more as a way to check for variety in your composition– it helps create balance between the visual activity in your picture plane.

11

Composition Type

The Shapes

(Triangular, Circular, etc.)

What is it?	Arranging things in your composition that creates implied lines within your composition. These implied lines are what create "The shapes" like triangles, circles, squares, etc.
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Triangle Composition (Three points/objects): Creates stability, structure, and strength (if pointing up). Introduces energy and direction due to the diagonal lines.2. Circular / Curved Composition (Circles, spirals, S-curves): Conveys harmony, unity, and endless flow. The curves create a graceful visual path that feels soft and welcoming.3. Rectangular / Square Composition (Sharp corners, vertical/horizontal lines): Suggests order, stability, and reliability. It feels grounded and structured but can also be formal or rigid.4. Organic / Irregular Composition (Natural, free-form shapes): Evokes feelings of warmth, nature, and spontaneity. They are less formal and more approachable than geometric shapes.5. X and Z Compositions (Intersecting lines): Creates tension and strong visual dynamism. The crossing point instantly becomes a compelling, central focal point.

12

Composition Type

Symmetry

What is it?	using mirrored or repeating elements to create balance and order in a work of art to create a specific effect
Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bilateral Symmetry (Mirror Image: Left-Right or Top-Bottom): Conveys order, calm, and formality. It's instantly pleasing to the eye and focuses attention on the central dividing line.2. Radial Symmetry (Elements Radiating from a Center Point): Creates a strong sense of unity, infinity, and rhythm. The viewer's eye is powerfully drawn to the exact center of the spiral or circle.3. Asymmetrical Balance (Balanced but NOT Mirrored): Creates dynamism, excitement, and visual tension. It feels more spontaneous and encourages the viewer to explore the whole frame to find the equilibrium.4. Occult Balance (Hidden/Extreme-out-of-Balance): Creates intrigue, sophistication, and sustained viewer engagement. A massive object on one side is subtly balanced by a small object with intense visual weight (like a bright color) on the other. The balance is felt, not explicitly seen. Can create awe and wonder.

13

Composition Type

Pattern

What is it?

Patterns use repetition to create rhythm, order, or visual disruption for various effects.

Effects

1. **Regular / Uniform Pattern** (Same element repeated evenly) : Conveys order, calm, and stability. The unity of the scene is emphasized, often feeling soothing and predictable.
2. **Flowing / Curvilinear Pattern** (Repeating waves or curves): Creates grace, movement, and natural harmony. The smooth, continuous rhythm leads the eye through the composition elegantly.
3. **Progressive Pattern** (Elements change size/color along a line) Creates a strong illusion of depth, distance, and scale. The gradual change gives the image a sense of motion or progression.
4. **Alternating Pattern** (Two different motifs repeated): Adds visual variety and complexity without chaos. It maintains order while keeping the viewer's interest through slight changes.
5. **Broken Pattern** (A single interruption in the pattern): Creates emphasis, surprise, and a strong focal point. The unexpected break instantly captures the viewer's attention and makes a statement about the unique element.
6. **Organic Pattern** (Natural, free-form shapes—new entry) Conveys calmness, vitality, and a connection to nature. The irregular curves feel spontaneous and familiar.