

Photography Composition



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Slides at: FlagpolePhotographers.com/programs/Photography-Composition & CCullens.com/Composition

Photography Composition - What is it?

The arrangement of visual elements within a frame to create a compelling photo.
It helps tell a story and guide the viewer's eye to the subject.

Why is it important?

Captivates the Viewer – Draws the viewer in and holds their attention

Creates a Sense of Harmony – This can have a relaxing effect

Express Individuality – Gives the photographer an expressive outlet

“Composition Rules” are “Guidelines”! Use them as a starting point then see which ones work for the scene!



Composition Topics



Getting to the Subject:

- Point of Interest or Subject
- Compose to Tell a Story

Composition “Rules”:

- Leading Lines & S-Curves
- Rule of Thirds vs. Centering
- Rule of Odds
- Fill the Frame vs. Breathing Room & Negative Space

Positioning:

- Direction & Perspective
- Reflections & Symmetry
- Framing

Setting the Scene:

- Colors, Brightness & Contrast
- Foreground, Middle Ground & Backgrounds
- Camera Depth of Field

Things to watch for:

- Mergers, Corners, Horizons, Ankles & other joints
- Simplify

Finishing Touches & Tips:

- Cropping & Vignettes
- Still Life Tips
- “Rules” are Guidelines!

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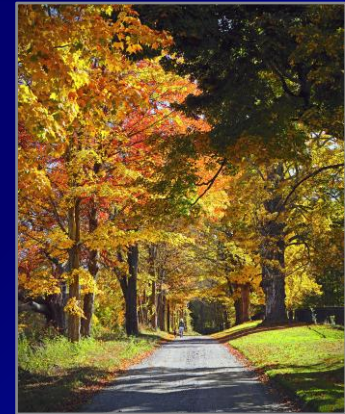
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Point of Interest or Subject

A place for the eye to land. Composition helps us get there.



Compose to Tell a Story When Possible



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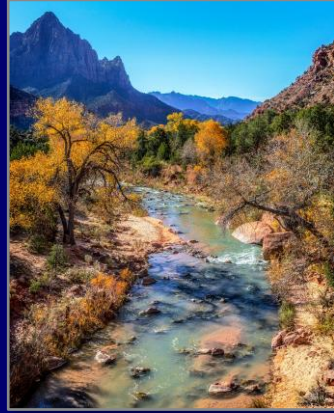
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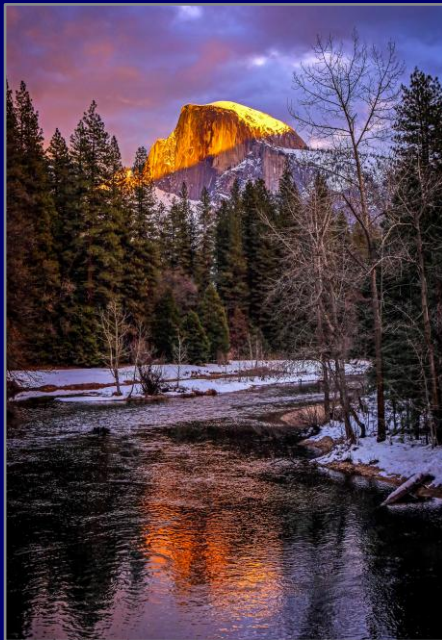
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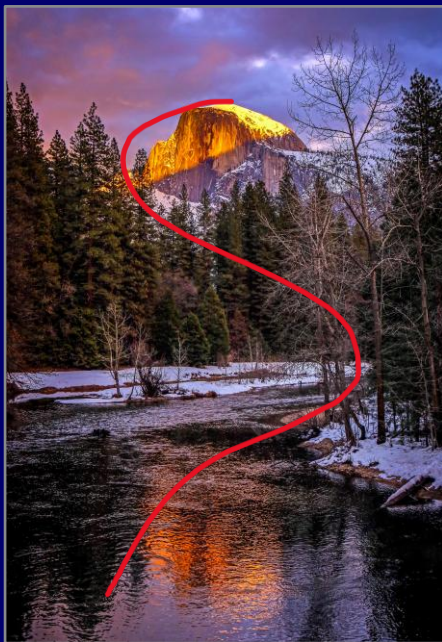
Leading Lines – Into the Photo



S-Curves Can Lead Into the Photo Too!



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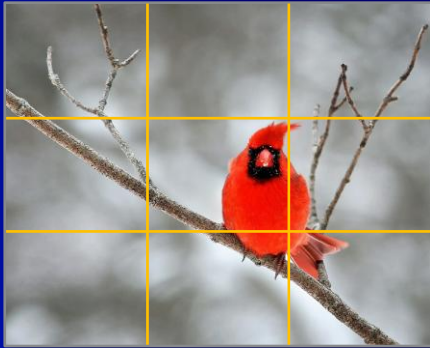


Rule of Thirds

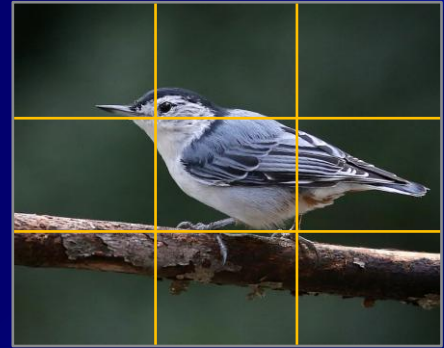
Divide the photo into 9 parts with an imaginary tic tac toe grid



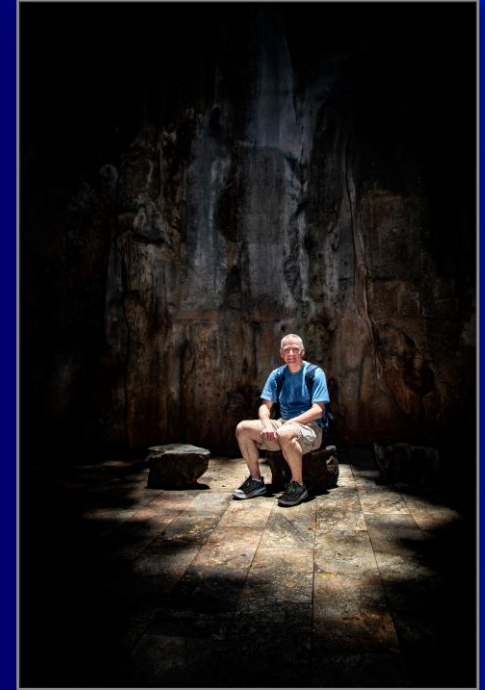
Put points of interest on lines or intersections.



The eye is a point of interest.



Rule of Thirds – Helps the Subject Stand Out

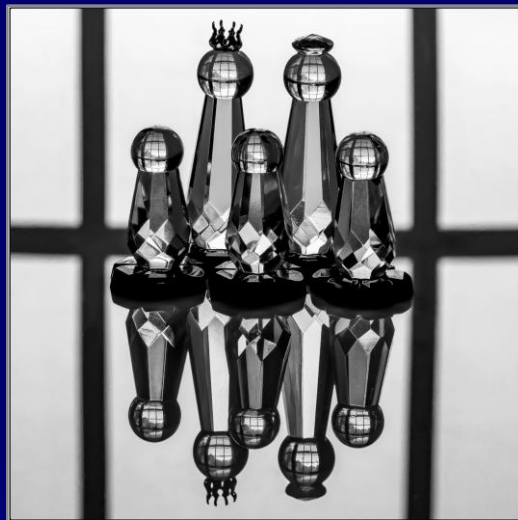


Tip: Look for good light and then find something to photograph!

Centering the Can Work With One Subject Too



Rule of Odds – 1, 3, or 5 Items



Rule of Odds

1 or 3 birds may be better than 2 that are spaced apart
or not interacting with each other



2 Female Wild Turkeys



Swainson's Hawks



Swainson's Hawk



Wild Turkeys – 3 babies + 1 Mom



Red-shouldered Hawk & Common Crow



Male Northern Cardinal

Fill the Frame



Breathing Room - Direction Subject's Heading



(Or equal space if
looking straight ahead.)



Negative Space – Draws Attention to the Subject by Providing and Defining the Breathing Room



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Direction of Subjects – Facing Into the Frame



Tip: Look for diagonal lines from bottom left to top right!

Direction of Camera - Shooting from above down on the subject can make a subject seem weaker and dominated

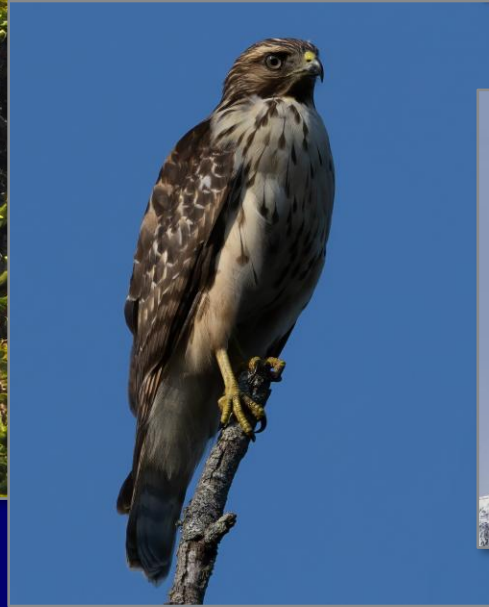


Why are you looking
down on me?



Better to look me in the eye!

In some cases, shooting from below can make a subject seem more powerful or in charge

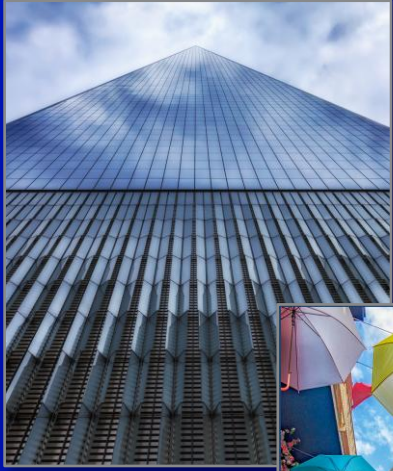


Direction of Camera – Shooting Down, Level, or Up

What story are you trying to tell?



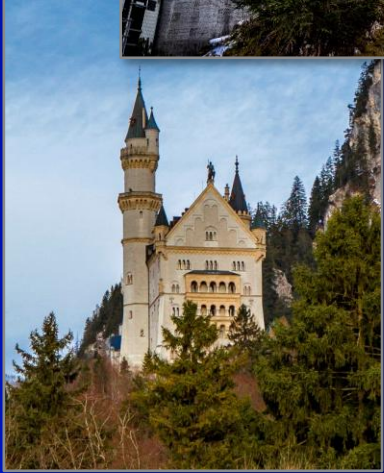
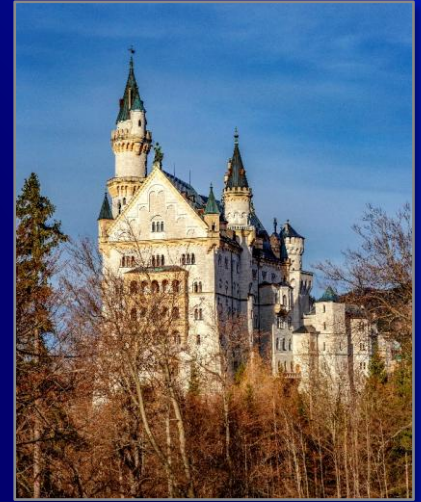
Perspective – Looking Up or Down



Different Angles Give Different Perspectives

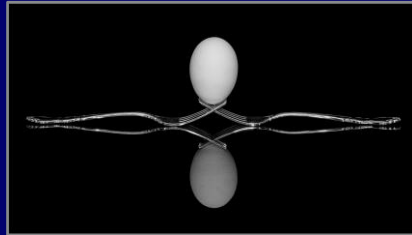


Capture Many Angles

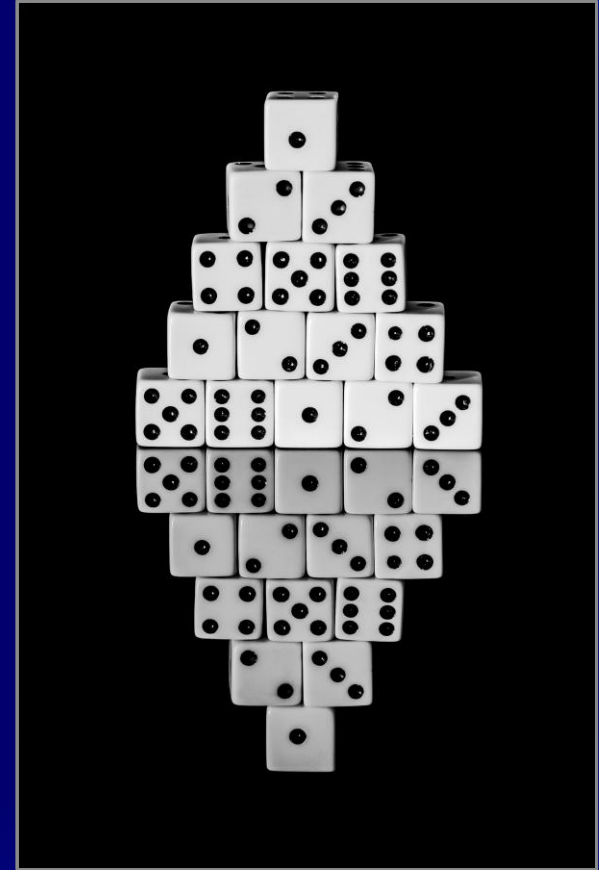


Tip: Take a variety of angles of the subject, especially if you can't take it again!

Reflections – Adds Interest and Depth

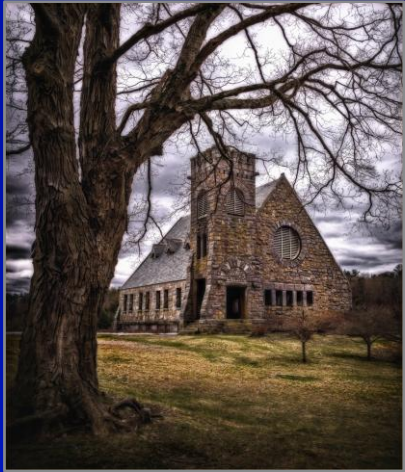


Symmetry – Adds Order and Balance



Framing

Use Elements to Draw Attention to Subjects



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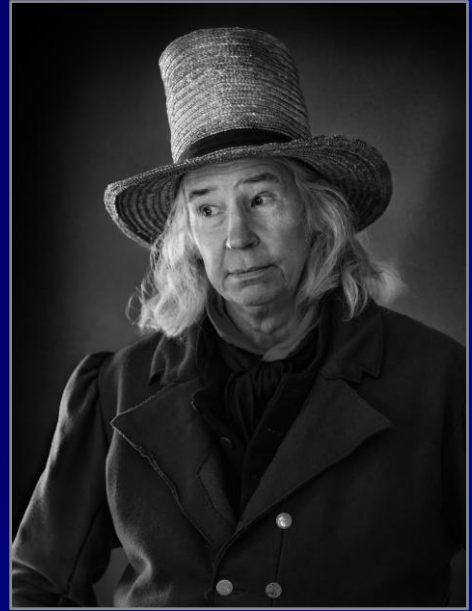
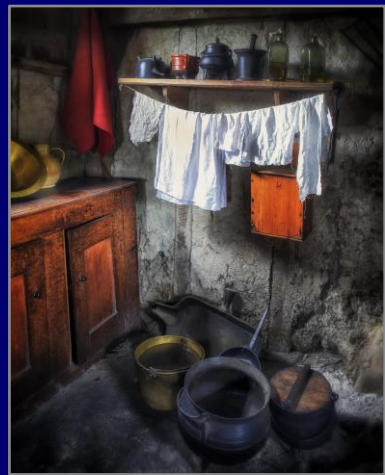
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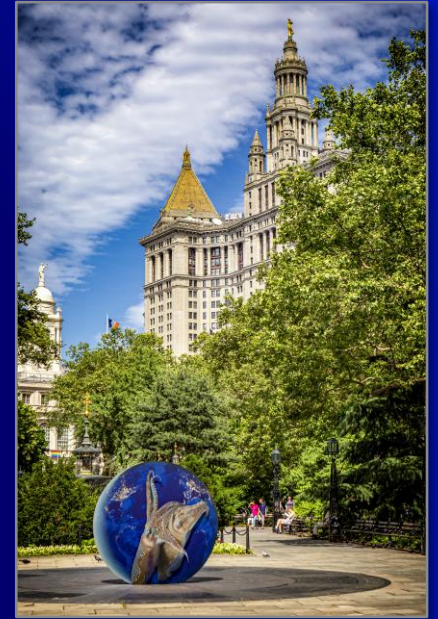
Color for Attention



Brightness & Contrast - Eye goes to brightest spot



Foreground



Middle Ground



Background



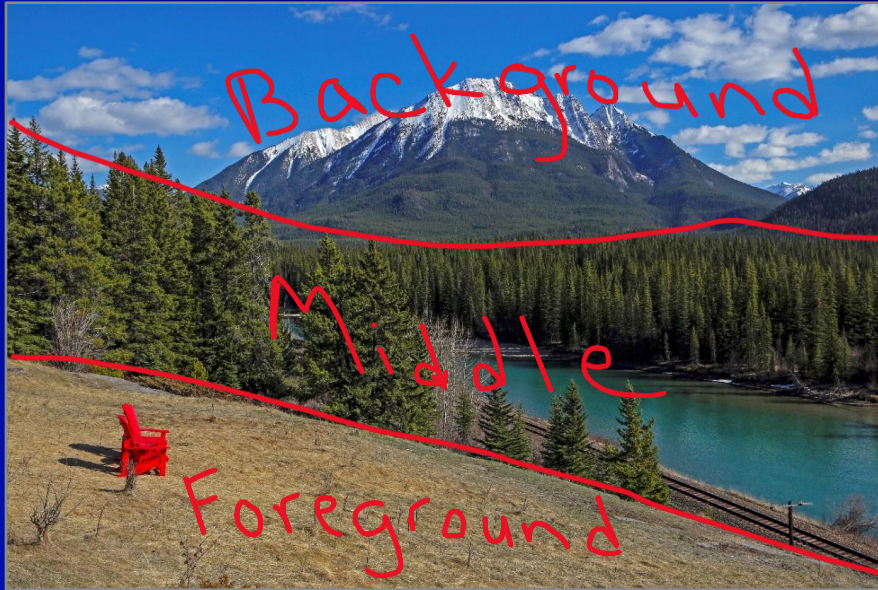
Choose Background Color for Subject to Stand Out



Foreground, Middle Ground & Background



Foreground, Middle Ground & Background



Camera Depth of Field – Use Aperture (lens opening) to blur background & select what is in focus.



Tip: A small aperture number (like f/4.0) puts less in focus. A large aperture number (f/22) puts more in focus.

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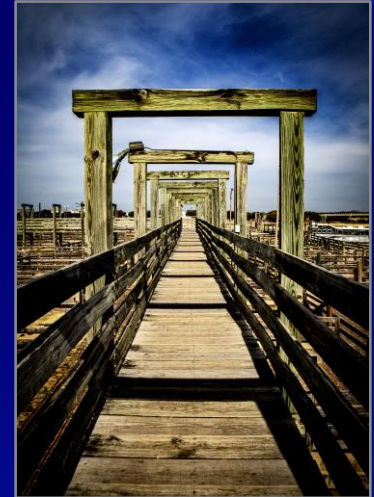
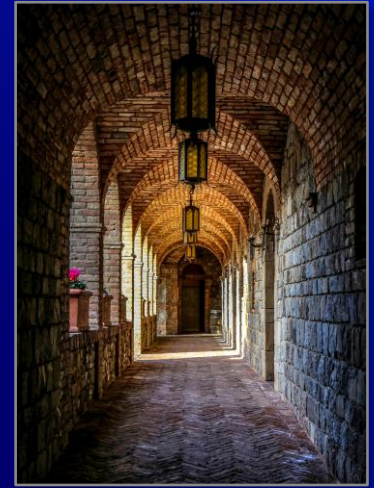
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Avoid Mergers

Change your position for a cleaner background &/or foreground.



Corners – Start Lines “Near” Corners



Horizons – Keep Them Level!

Low Horizon Emphasizes Sky; High Emphasizes Foreground



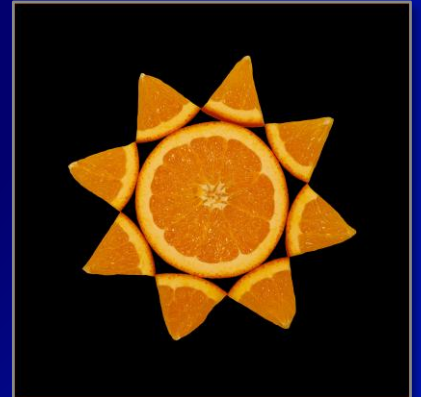
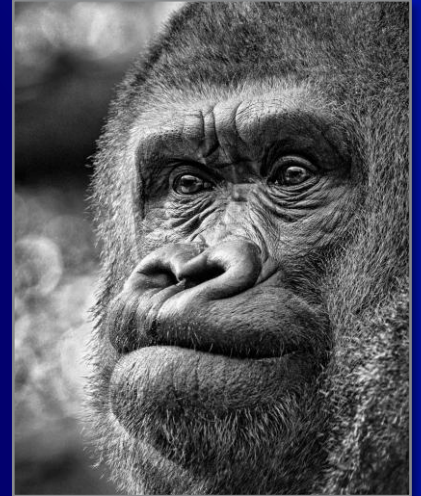
Don't "cut the subject off at the ankles"! (Or joints)

At least crop down far enough allowing for where feet should be.



Better yet, show a foot or two!

Simplify – Minimize Distractions and Clutter



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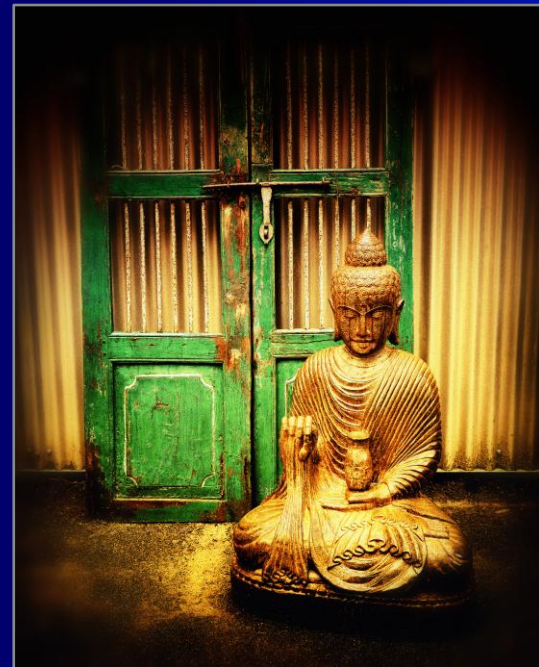
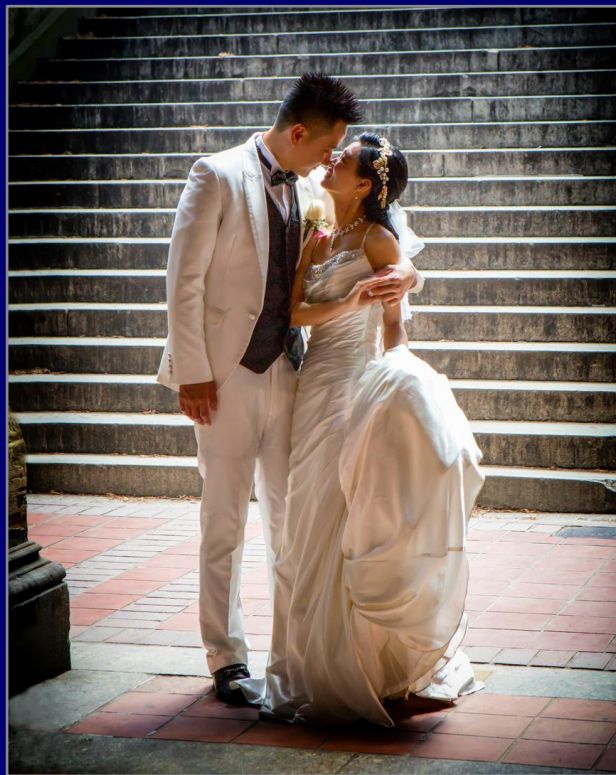
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**Finish by cropping the photo, but not too tight!
The subject shouldn't look "Boxed in".**



You left room when you took the photo - don't spoil it in post-processing!

Add vignettes to keep viewer in the frame.



Tip: Don't use vignettes on "Nature" photos. They should look natural.

Still Life Tips – Vary Heights and Textures



Tip: Don't be discouraged when starting out!

Many photos can greatly benefit from at least some post-processing!

But that's a lesson for another time!



Original Out of Camera

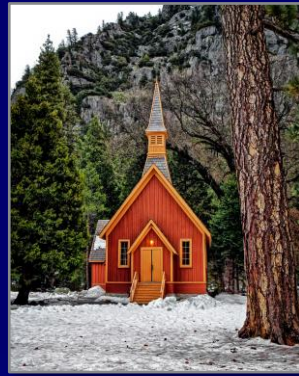


After Post-processing

Remember “*Composition Rules*” are Guidelines!

Use them as a starting point then see which ones work for the scene.

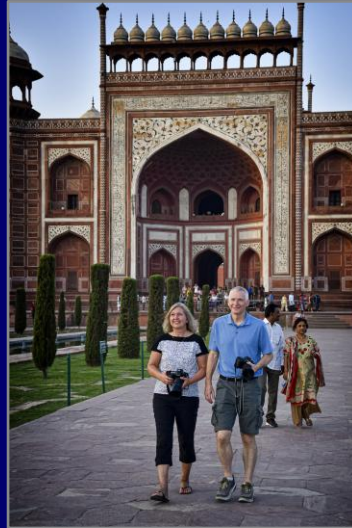
You can use more than one in your photos too! Which “rules” do you see below?



Thank you!

Presented by:

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