

How to Use Framing in Your Compositions to Improve Your Photography

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Photos look great when framed on the wall, but that is not the only way to **use frames in photography**. The world is full of frames, and they can be used in your photos to make the **composition** stronger.

In this article, you'll learn how to find frames. You'll also learn how you can work with frames to enhance your images. So let's use framing in your compositions!



For this photo, traditional Korean paper, called Hanji, was held in front of the camera and used as a frame. The person in the photo is making this traditional paper, so the frame adds context to the image.

What is framing?

Framing, as the name suggests, is when you surround your main subject with a border of some kind.

The frame could literally be a picture frame you hold up in front of the camera. However, there are lots of other ways you can create frames in your compositions. For instance, you can photograph through a window frame, a doorway, or a gap in a wall. And you can always create your own frame, which you'll learn about in a moment.

Why add a frame?

A frame is used in your image to draw the eye to your main subject. The subject could be a model standing in a doorway or **architecture** framed through a window.

Plus, a frame can add to your image. The right frame can add context, which creates a further narrative element.



Architecture can provide strong framing opportunities for your photos.

Where to find frames

Here's the next question:

Where can you find a frame that will work for your photo? I've already mentioned a few classic ideas, but let's look at those (and others!) in more detail below:

- **Doorways:** One of the easiest frames to find is a doorway. You can position your main subject in front of the door and use it as a frame. Alternatively, you can photograph through the door and use it as a frame for the background scene.
- **Picture frames:** Hold a frame in front of your camera or ask someone else to hold it for you. Then use this to frame something interesting.
- **Windows:** This is similar to a doorway, but doesn't run to the ground.
- **A wall:** Here, you need to look for a gap in the wall to use as a frame. This can work well when the foreground (the wall) complements the background behind it.
- **Lensballs:** One of the reasons a **lensball** is an effective photography tool is because it always provides a natural frame, with the outside of the ball framing the inside.

- **Photograph through:** Look for objects you can photograph through, such as a plant pot or a tube. These will give your photo a circular frame.
- **Nature:** There are plenty of **natural frames**. A cave entrance or a tree tunnel can work well.



A wide-angle lens was used to capture the archway in front of this temple, which created a great frame.

How to photograph with a frame

On the face of it, photographing with a frame is easy:

Simply compose a photograph in front of something like an arch or window.

However, you need to consider some key compositional and technical questions. For instance, what's the subject in the

frame? And how large or small should your frame appear?

- **Focal length:** The **focal length** you choose will depend on how much you want to **compress the area** surrounding your frame. It will also depend on how far back from your frame you're able to stand. For instance, when photographing indoors, a **wide-angle lens** may be needed to fill the photo with the frame of a window or doorway.
- **Subject:** Just because you have a natural frame does not mean you have a good photo, especially if the subject behind it is uninteresting. Look first for your **main subject**, and then look for available framing options. If you're taking **portrait photos**, this will be easier than if you're photographing a **landscape**; you can, of course, always ask your model to stand within the frame.
- **Narrative:** What will your frame tell the viewer about the rest of the photo? Is it possible to adapt the frame in some way so it better suits the scene behind it? How much of the area surrounding the frame will you include, and how will that affect the story you're trying to convey?



There was no frame for this photo until the light was painted in!

Creative framing in your compositions

When a frame isn't available, you have another option:

Create your own!

This creative approach to framing in your compositions can lead to the best results. That's because you'll have more control over the frame itself. You can control the size and shape of the frame. You'll also be able to precisely match the frame to the image you are trying to create.

The following are some possible ideas for more creative framing:

- **Card or paper:** Choose the color, cut out the appropriate shape, and make your own custom frame.
- **Copper piping:** Placed close to the lens, this will create a flare-like effect when the sun shines off the metal, and this flare can be used as a frame.
- **Plant pot:** Cut out the bottom of a plant pot and use it to photograph through. A wide focal length will likely be needed to catch the edge of the pot as you photograph through it.



Always look to see how a frame can add more of a story to your photo. In this image, the fishing net is used to frame the fisherman.

Get framing!

Now that you know all about framing in your compositions, it's time to get out and practice what you've learned.

Do you enjoy using frames in the photos you take? Is there another approach you use when looking for frames? Have you ever tried creating your own frame so that it matches the photo you're taking?

Share your thoughts in the comments! And if you have photos with frames, please share them, too!



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