

Kawartha Camera Club

All levels of photographers are welcome to participate

Composition in Photography

Outline

- Taking Pictures vs. Making Pictures
- Space
- Focal Points
- Scale
- Horizontal vs. Vertical Format
- Positioning (The Rule of Thirds)
- The “Odd Rule”
- The Power of Lines
- Symmetry
- Shapes / Geometry
- Patterns
- Texture
- Colour
- Juxtaposition
- Examples
- Photography Challenge

Taking Pictures vs. Making Pictures

- A photograph is a collection of visual design elements arranged within a frame.
- Composition is the deliberate arrangement of these design elements in a pleasing or compelling manner.
- What you include in the image and what you don't, and how you arrange the elements within the frame, contribute significantly to the overall success of the image.
- Good image composition strengthens the message you're trying to convey.
- In contrast, a snapshot is the result of just clicking the shutter without forethought or planning.

Space

- *Positive Space* – The subject of the image.
- *Negative Space* – The rest of the image.
- Negative space can serve 2 important functions:
 1. Helps tell the story of the positive space.
 2. Helps make the positive space more noticeable.
- Both spaces need to be taken into consideration when determining how to compose an image.
- Treat both spaces as equally important.



Photo by: [Yan G.](#)

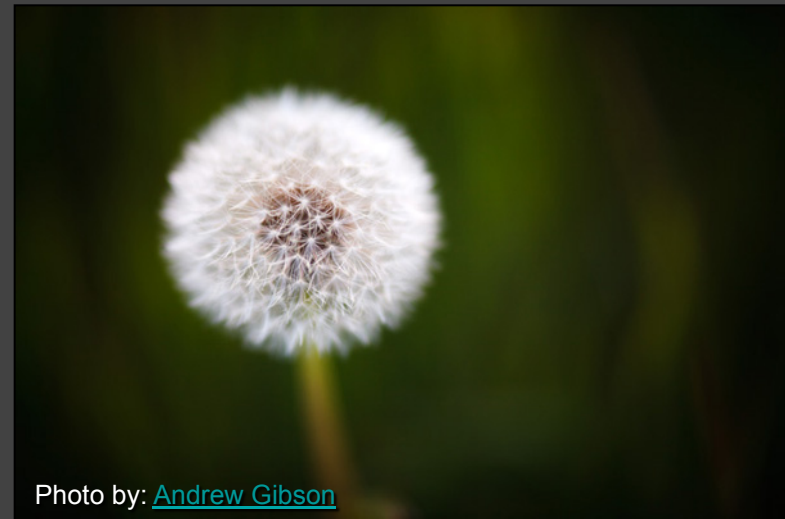


Photo by: [Andrew Gibson](#)

Focal Points

- A focal point is the part of the image that draws the eye of a viewer to the most important part of the photo.
- A focal point is a resting place for the viewers eye – or something of interest to really hold it.
- If there is no focal point, the viewers eye is left wandering around the photo unsure of what to look at.
- When deciding the focal point, ask yourself:
 - What is the central point?
 - What will draw the viewers eye?
 - What is my subject

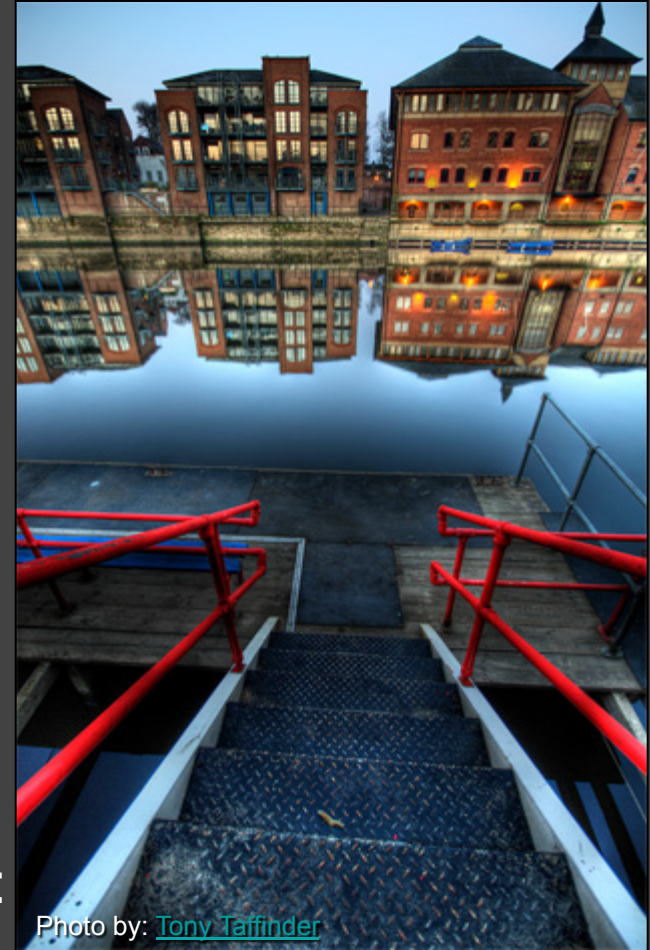


Photo by: [Tony Taffinder](#)

Focal Points

Some Techniques to Enhance the Focal Point in an Image:

- 1.Position** – use the rule of thirds.
- 2.Focus** – use depth of field.
- 3.Blur** – altering shutter speeds.
- 4.Size** – making your focal point larger.
- 5.Colour** – use contrasting colours.
- 6.Shape** – use contrasting shape and textures.



Scale

- The scale of a scene is captured with perspective – the relationship between near and far, and large and small.
- Add size cues with items of known scale to a photo such as a person, a car, a city, etc.
- Wide angle shots are great for big landscapes scenes.
 - Creates a sense of place.
 - Large depth of field keeps most of the frame in focus.
 - Adding a foreground element has the effect of giving more visual depth to the scene.



Scale

- Using a telephoto lens compresses the scene and can emphasize lines and shapes.
- A compressed perspective gives the effect of everything in the photo being closer together than they actually are.
- Abstract images work best when the viewer is left without any hint of the scale of a scene.

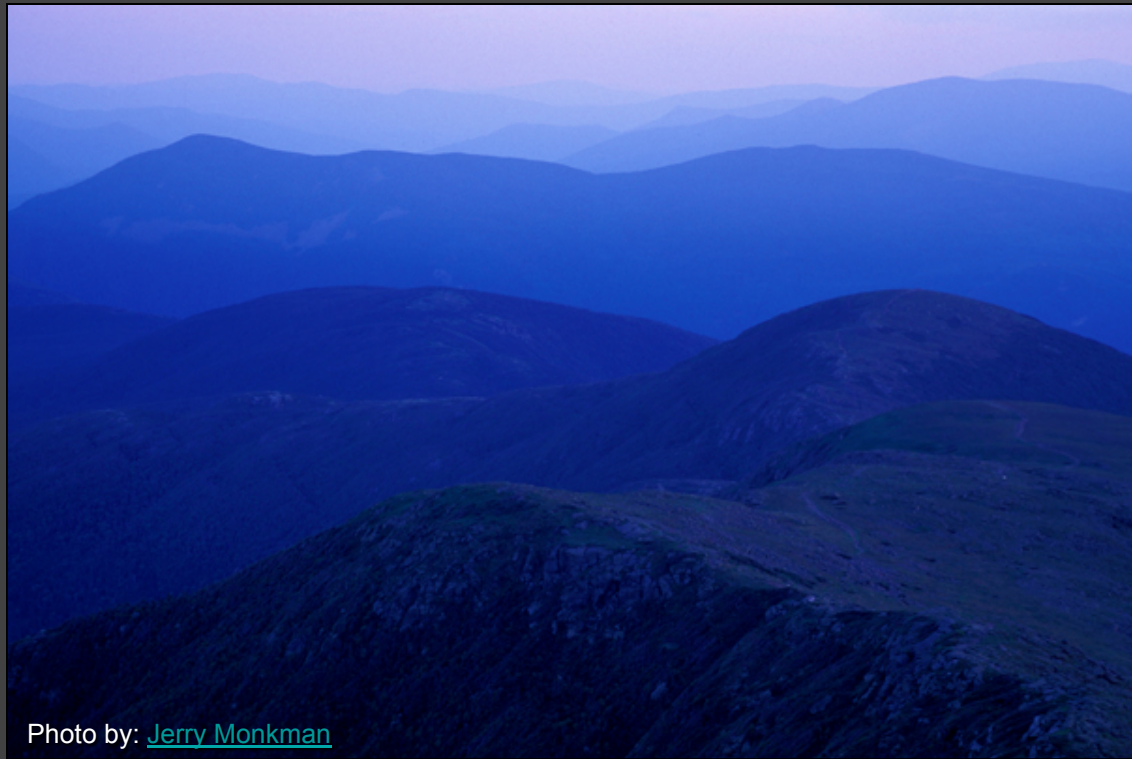


Photo by: [Jerry Monkman](#)

Horizontal or Vertical Format

- Choosing a format is a very important part of composition and the first decision to be made when framing a shot.
- The shape of the frame should help isolate the subject.
- The composition should not look like shoving a round peg into a square hole.



Photo by: [Michael Small](#)

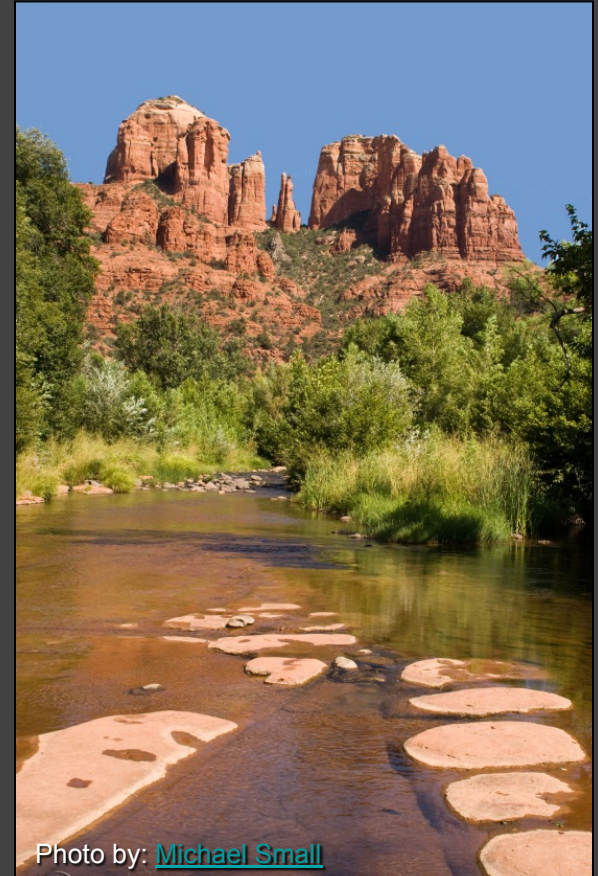


Photo by: [Michael Small](#)

Positioning (The Rule of Thirds)

- Imagine breaking down an image into thirds (horizontally & vertically) so there are 9 equal parts.
- Place important parts of the image at any of the 4 intersections, or along any of the 4 lines.
- Photo becomes more naturally balanced and enables a viewer to interact more naturally.
- Studies have shown that a viewer's eye naturally tends to go to one of the intersecting points.



Photo by: [Trey Ratcliff](#)

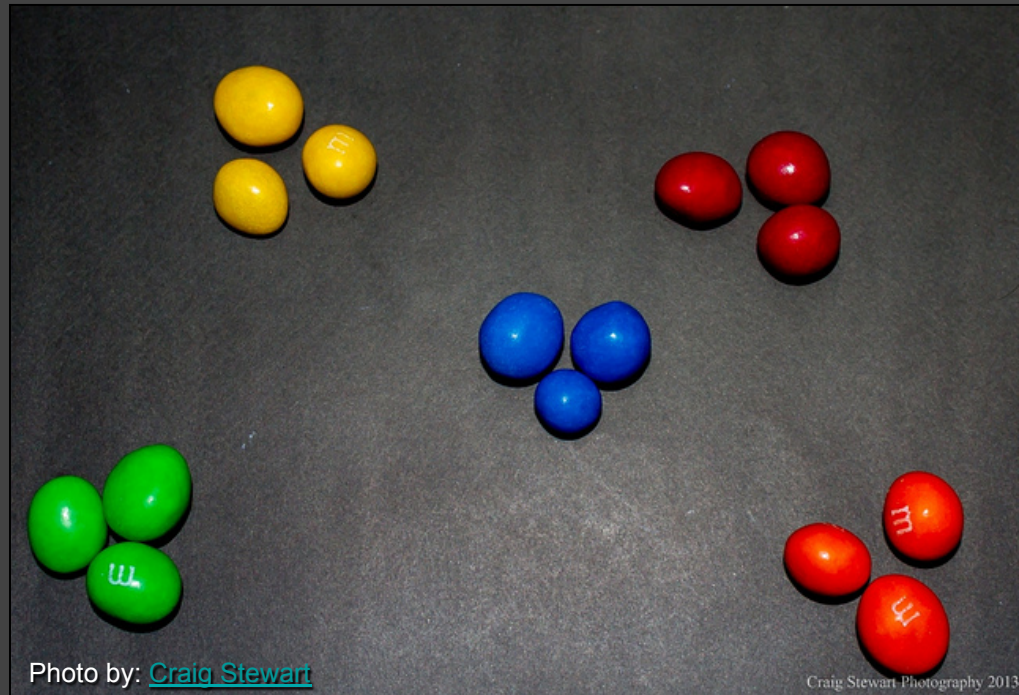
Positioning (The Rule of Thirds)

- In understanding *The Rule of Thirds*, ask yourself:
 - What are the points of interest in this shot?
 - Where am I intentionally placing them?
- Experiment with purposely breaking this rule to see what you discover.
- You can always crop your photos in post-production, but try and keep this rule in mind when framing your shot initially.



The “Odd Rule”

- Having an odd number of objects in an image is more visually pleasing.
- The viewer's eye will tend to wander to the center of the group. With an even number of objects, the eye will end up in negative space.
- A common usage is having 3 objects in the frame that either form a line or a triangle – both considered pleasurable shapes.
- Use an even number of objects when you want to express dullness or a paired relationship.



The Power of Lines

- Lines serve to affect photographic composition in two ways:
 1. They create mood.
 2. They lead a viewers eye through the image.

Horizontal Lines

- Peaceful, tranquil feel.
- Projects a feeling that the image is frozen in time.
- They can also provide contrast with more dynamic parts of an image.
- Horizons are the most common.
- Try to layer horizontal lines.



The Power of Lines

Vertical Lines

- Convey a variety of moods ranging from power and strength to growth.
- Holding the camera in a vertical format lengthens the subject and emphasizes its height.
- Keep vertical lines as much in line with the sides of the image as possible.
- Combine this with the *Rule of Thirds*.



Photo by: [Antoine Jasser](#)

2005 / 9 / 21

The Power of Lines

Diagonal Lines

- Diagonal lines tend to draw the viewer's eye through the photograph.
- They create points of interest when intersecting with other lines.
- They suggest perspective.



Photo by: [Angie Harms](#)

- Studies have shown that a viewer's eye enters the photograph in the lower left corner.
- They can add a sense of action and add a dynamic look and feel.

The Power of Lines

Converging Lines

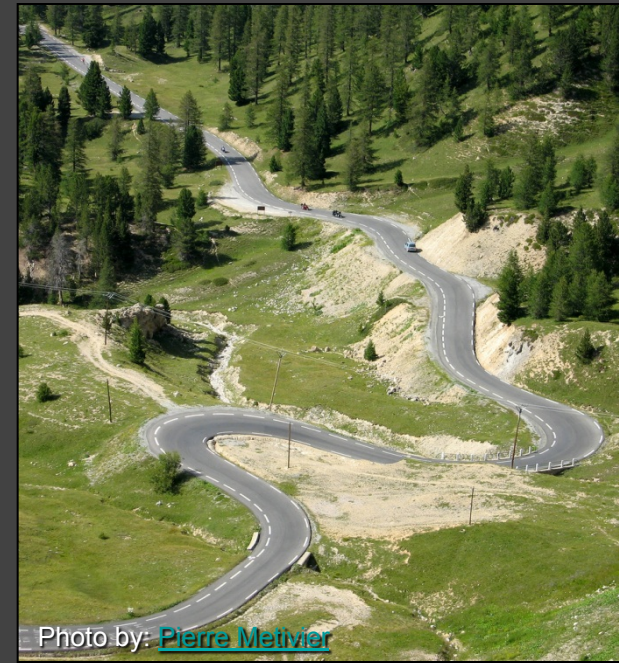
- Naturally, the viewers eye is drawn into the image.
- A variation of this is to step to one side and let the lines run diagonally through the image.
- Try and place the point of convergence on one of the intersecting lines in the *Rule of Thirds*.
- Add interest points to break up the image and give the viewers eye something to land on.



Photo by: [thecrazykanuk](#)

The Power of Lines

- Curves lead a viewers eye through the frame.
- They are graceful, rhythmic, dynamic and add energy to an image.
- They can separate or connect elements or simply offer a balance.
- Look for “C” curves, arches, “S” curves, circles, and implied curves when composing an image.



Symmetry

- Symmetry basically implies putting an equal amount of visual weight on each side of the photo.
- Symmetry is easy to find in architecture and water reflections.
- They can make for very eye-catching compositions, especially in situations where they are not expected.
- Break the symmetry pattern by introducing a focal point to the scene.



Shapes / Geometry

- Shapes play an auxiliary role in an image and can help pull the picture together.
- Rectangles – can be used to place your subject.
- Circles – help lead the eye through the frame.
- Triangles – naturally create a depth of composition and interest.
- Squares – make excellent frames and create interest with repetition.

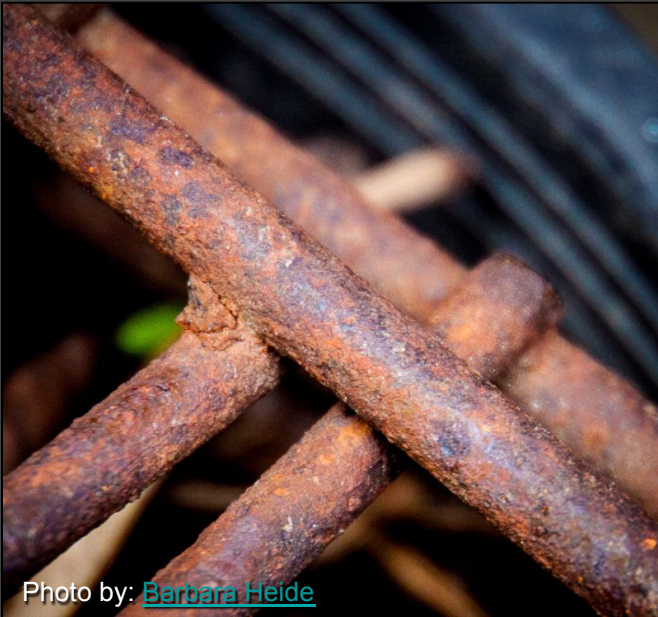


Photo by: [Barbara Heide](#)



Photo by: [Kevin Collins](#)

Patterns

- When lines, shapes, and colours occur in an orderly way, they create patterns that enhance the attractiveness of a photograph.
- Creating images around repeating elements or patterns provides unity and structure to a photo.
- Pattern repetition creates rhythm that the eye enjoys following.
- Break the pattern by adding a focal point that draws the viewers attention.



© Sean Reidy 2007

Photo by: [Sean Reidy](#)

Texture

- Texture helps emphasize the features in detail.
- When a viewer sees a soft, furry, smooth or rough texture, there is an urge to touch it.
- Subjects lit from the side help bring out texture.
- By removing colour from an image, the viewer can focus on other elements such as texture.

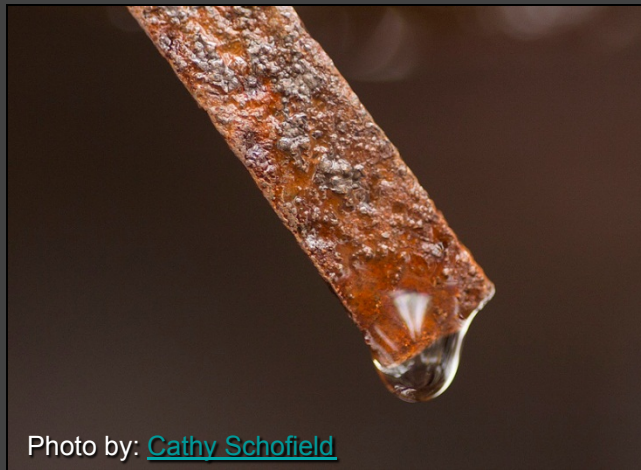


Photo by: [Cathy Schofield](#)

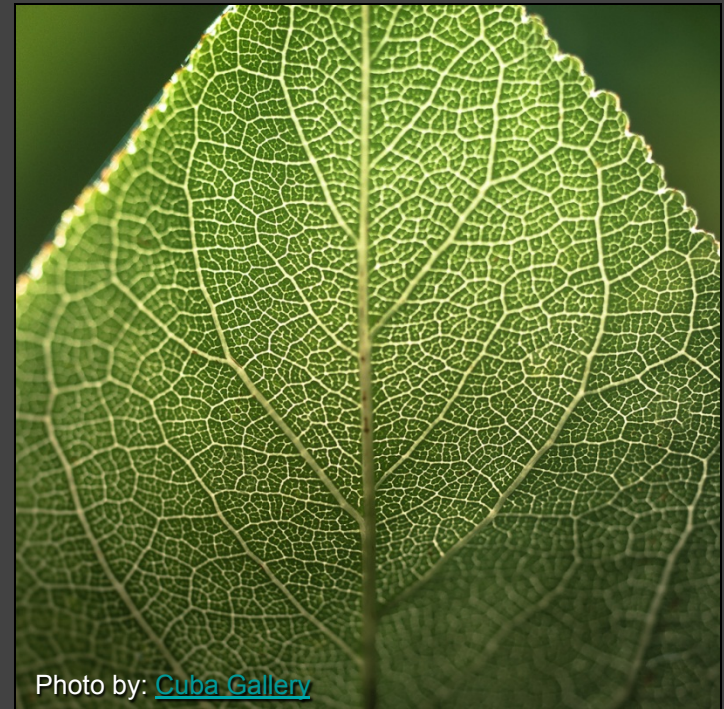


Photo by: [Cuba Gallery](#)

Colour

- Most obvious element of composition.
- Intense colours help to draw attention.
- Colour is the reason why you see so many sunset or flower photos.
- Set the mood through the use of different colours.
- Blue – calm or cold.
- Green – lushness or freshness.
- Yellow/Orange/Red – warmth and comfort.



Photo by: [Fady](#)

Colour

- Use complimenting and contrasting colours.
- Close colours are complimenting, and opposite colours are contrasting.

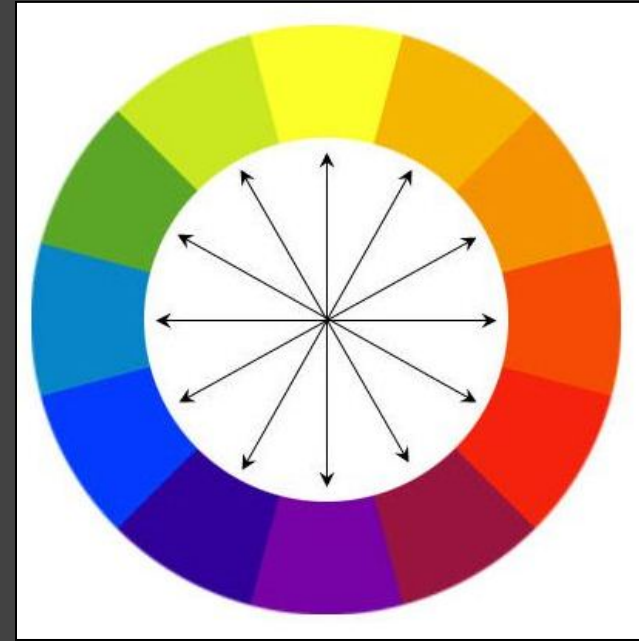


Photo by: [lclower19](#)



Photo by: [Neusa](#)

Juxtaposition

- Happens when there are 2 or more elements in a scene that either:
 - contrast each other, or
 - one element contributes towards another to create an overall theme.
- To create a point of juxtaposition, the photo should have at least 2 elements that contain strong visual weight.
- Largely based on the chance appearance of 2 elements.
- Contrast stresses the difference between graphical elements in an image.
- Results in a more interesting photograph and has a bigger impact on the viewer.



Juxtaposition





Photo by: [Ragin](#)



Photo by: [Dan Foy](#)



Photo by: [Kevin Collins](#)



Photo by: [Kasia Walas](#)



Photo by: [Bensliman Hassan](#)



Photo by: [Kevin Collins](#)



Photo by: [Denise Denley](#)



Photo by: [Stan Linkovich](#)

Photography Challenge

- Take and submit 2 photos for our month end slideshow that clearly exhibit at least 2 principles discussed below.
- The subject can be anything you choose.
- Be prepared to identify the elements of composition in your images.
 - Space
 - Focal Points
 - Scale
 - Horizontal vs. Vertical Format
 - Positioning (The Rule of Thirds)
 - The “Odd Rule”
 - The Power of Lines
 - Symmetry
 - Shapes / Geometry
 - Patterns
 - Texture
 - Colour
 - Juxtaposition

Source & Reference Information

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