

Composition and Shooting Tips



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Revision 1

Do We Even Need A Brief?

- *"Consulting the rules of composition before taking a photograph is like consulting the laws of gravity before going for a walk." - Edward Weston*
- *"The so-called rules of photographic composition are, in my opinion, invalid, irrelevant and immaterial"*
- Ansel Adams
- *"There are no rules for good photographs, there are only good photographs." - Ansel Adams*

Why Composition Matters

- Adds interest for the viewer, thus reinforcing the message of your photo
- Captures the beauty of our world in a creative way
- Adds your unique viewpoint or “signature” to your work



What is Composition?

- Arrangement of a subject within (and without) the frame
- The ability to see beyond the objects to the greater artistic and pleasing whole; the “organization of space” -
- Michael Minner, photographer
- Emphasis on the subject within the frame

Good composition intrigues the viewer's eye



The Power of Observation

"The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes."

- Marcel Proust



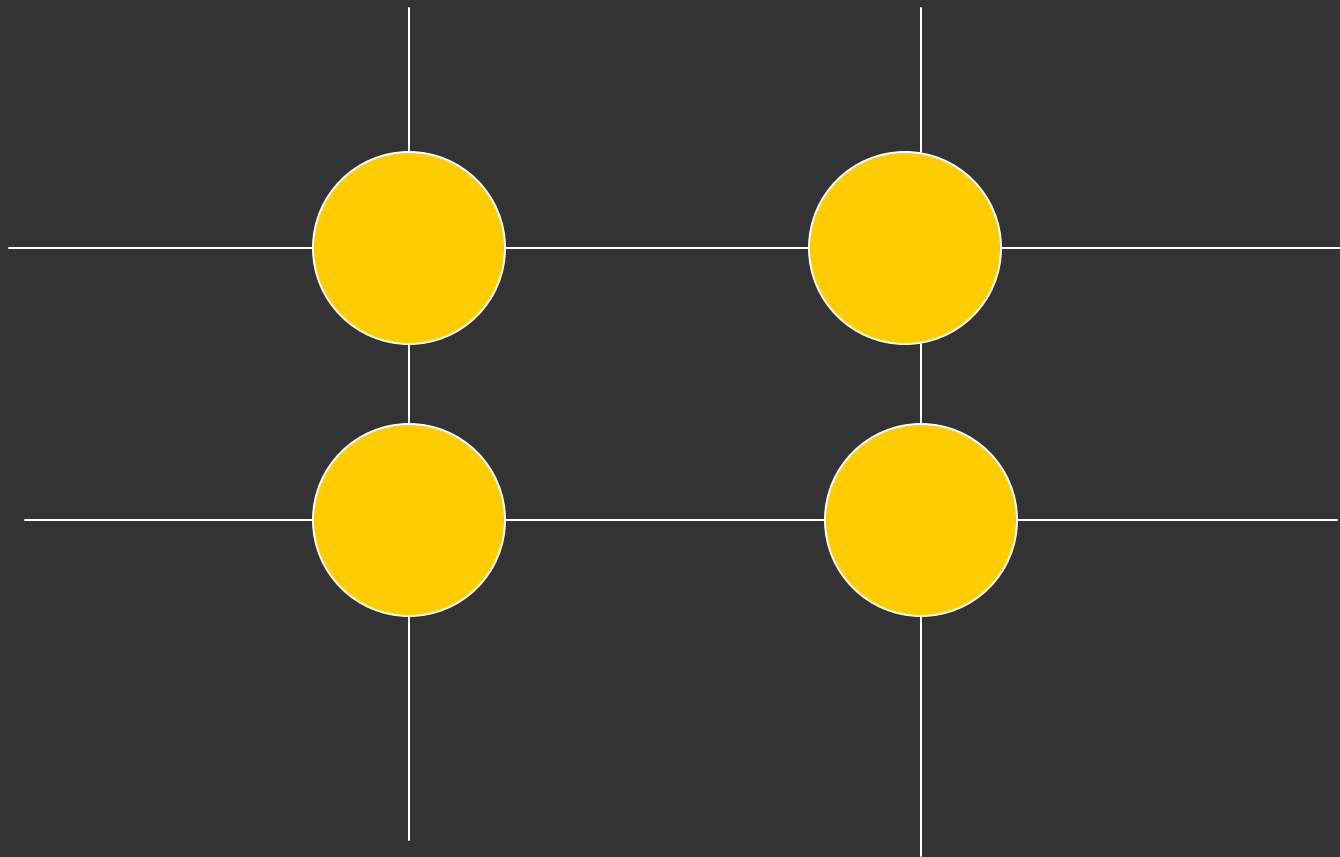
Increase Your Artistic Sensibility

- Practice really seeing
- Study others' work on [Flickr](#), ads in magazines, pictures in newspapers
- Make a conscious effort to compose creatively
- Experiment with everyday objects
- Try to determine in advance what the photograph will be about and look like



Keep in Mind the “Rule” of Thirds

Consider this a guideline, not a hard-and-fast rule

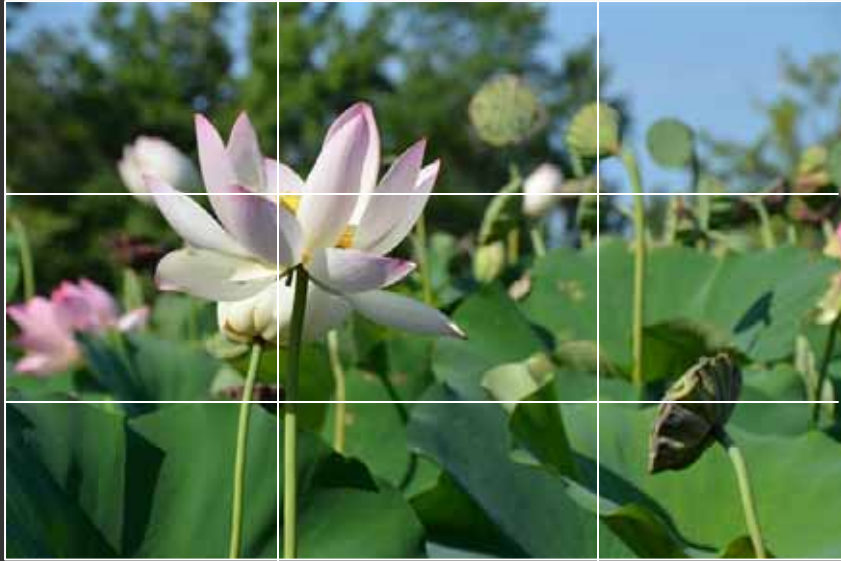


Place objects of interest where the lines intersect

Rule of Thirds



Rule of Thirds



Shoot Subjects Off Center



Subjects typically face the center of the frame



Be Alert to Reflections



Watch for reflections on water, polished surfaces, windows, sunglasses, ornaments, etc.



Move around to determine the best vantage point

Incorporate Diagonals



Incorporate Diagonals



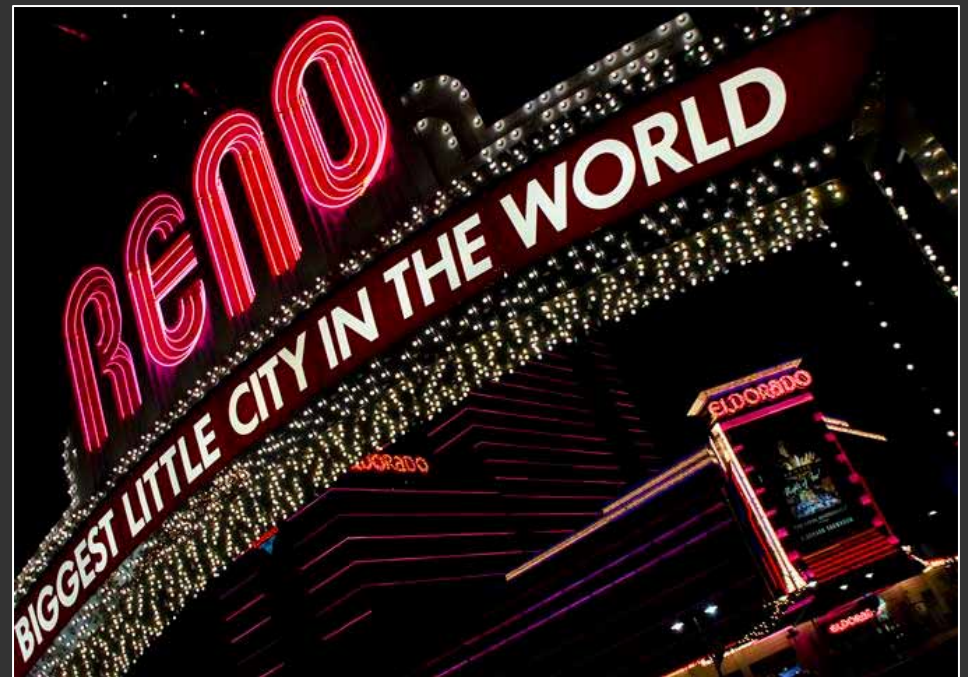
You can increase/create the diagonal through post-processing rotation or cropping, depending on the available space surrounding your subject



Force the Diagonals



Initial shot is colorful but
run of the mill



Off-kilter shot has more interest
and energy

Add Depth

Create dimensionality through foreground and/or middle ground objects



Simplify Backgrounds



Original shot with
distracting background



The blue sky helps
showcase the performer

Eliminate Distractions



Clone stamp used in post-processing to make the background more consistent

Shoot into the Sun



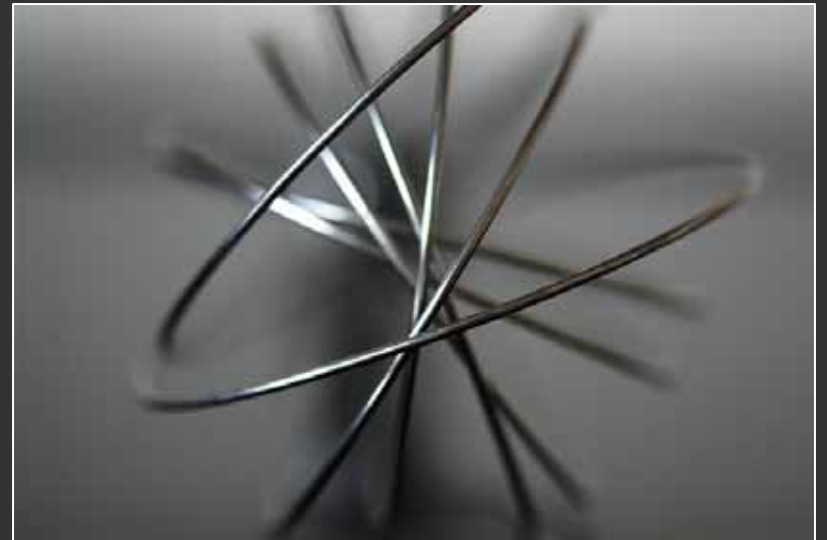
Boost contrast/use burn tool in post processing to bring out the silhouettes, if necessary



Zero in on a Feature



Helps the viewer see familiar objects in a new way



Showcase Massed Subjects

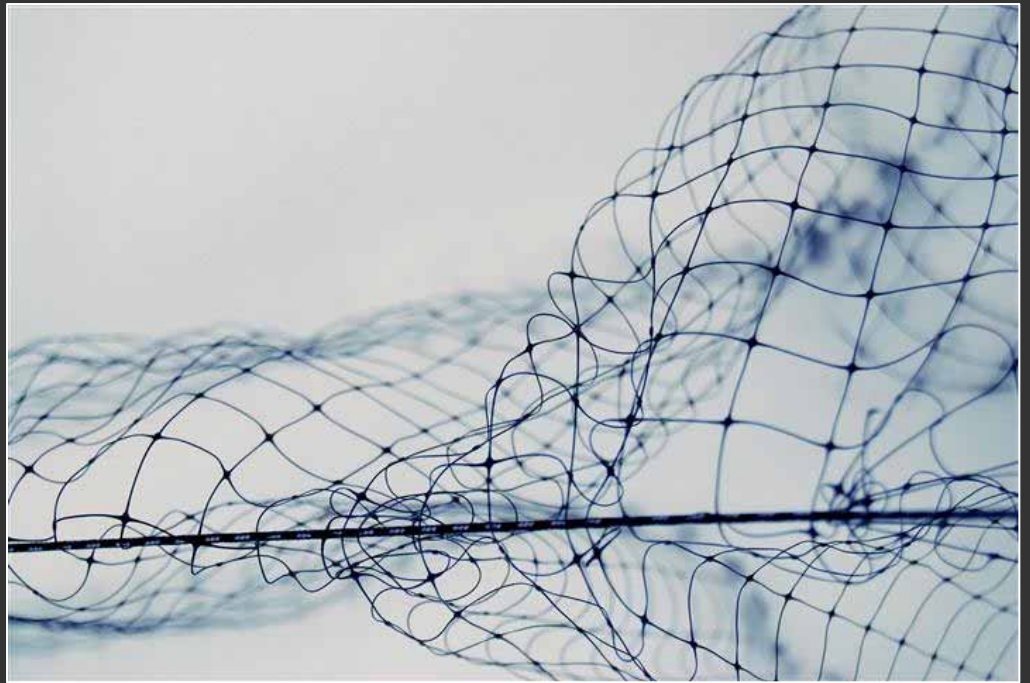


Move in close enough to lose the background/setting

Capitalize on Patterns



Emphasize the dominant lines through judicious framing or cropping



Take Advantage of Atmospherics

Mist, fog, shadows, sun shafts
add an “otherworldly” feel



Fog shots may need
contrast boosting, otherwise
they'll be too flat



Shoot Animals and Kids at Eye Level



Experiment with Unusual Angles



Disrupts our usual way of seeing

Catch the Subject in Action



Panning can create the sense of movement-- make sure the background is colorful

Get in Close



The traditional tourist shot emphasizes the site over the people...fine if you were the architect!

Close-ups create a more intimate record of "being there"



Some Resources

- Podcasts at 7 Photography Questions

“Learning to See Creatively” interviews with Bryan Peterson

Part 1: <http://www.7photographyquestions.com/2008/10/podcast-20-learning-to-see-creatively-an-interview-with-bryan.html#more>

Part 2: <http://www.7photographyquestions.com/2008/10/podcast-21-learning-to-see-creatively-an-interview-with-bryan.html>

- 23 articles about composition at Photoinf.com

- 5 articles about composition and graphic design at BetterPhoto.com

<http://www.betterphoto.com/photography-articles/Photographic-Composition/>

- Bryan Peterson's book *Learning to See Creativity*

Have Fun!

