



Common & Lesser-Known Composition Techniques in Photography

(A Guide to Elevate Your Visual Storytelling)

1. Rule of Thirds



One of the most well-known composition rules, the frame is divided into nine equal parts with two horizontal and two vertical lines. Placing the subject at the intersections creates balance and interest.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Willie Bowers model

2. Golden Ratio



A more advanced version of the Rule of Thirds, the Golden Ratio is based on a mathematical sequence that creates a natural-looking spiral composition. This ratio is often found in nature and art.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Yellow Brick Bank Building in Shepherdstown, WV

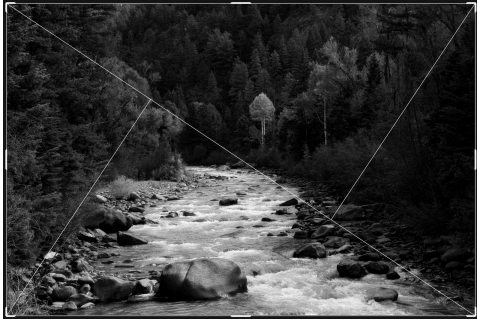
3. Center Composition & Balance



Placing the subject in the center can create a powerful, stable composition, especially when symmetry is present.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Single Camellia flower

4. Golden Triangle



Dividing the frame into triangles using diagonals can help guide the viewer's eye along dynamic lines.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Animas River, Colorado

5. Fill the Frame



Getting close and ensuring the subject occupies most or all of the frame creates a strong visual impact.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Model: Claudia J

6. Negative Space



Leaving large areas of emptiness around your subject can create a striking, minimalist composition. It emphasizes the subject's presence and can evoke strong emotions like isolation, serenity, or mystery.

Photo by Chris Bowers - Model: Jessie T

7. Leading Lines



Lines in an image naturally draw the viewer's eye toward a focal point, creating a sense of depth and direction. These can be roads, rivers, fences, or even shadows.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Mossy Cave Trail, Bryce Canyon National Park

8. Mirroring & Symmetry



Reflections and symmetrical compositions create balance and visual harmony. Using water, glass, or even carefully composed landscapes can enhance this effect.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Molas Lake, Colorado

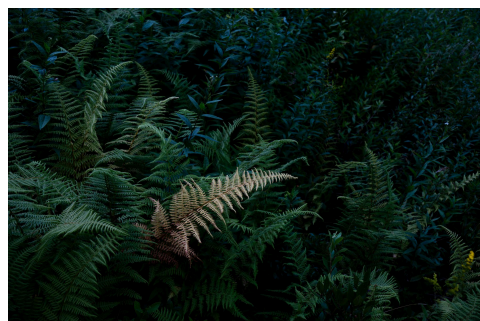
9. Figure to Ground



Strong contrast between a subject and its background makes it stand out. This technique is useful in high-contrast lighting situations or with color contrast.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Caprock Canyon State Park, TX

10. Juxtaposition



Placing two contrasting elements together—whether in terms of size, color, or meaning—adds visual interest and storytelling depth.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Green ferns with golden branch

11. Rule of Odds



Images with an odd number of subjects often feel more natural and visually pleasing than those with an even number. This applies to people, objects, or focal points.

Photo by Chris Bowers - 3 horses

12. Layering



Using foreground, middle ground, and background elements creates depth and dimension. This helps immerse the viewer in the scene.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Moonscape at Zion National Park (log, mountains, and Orion constellation)

13. Diagonal Composition



Placing elements along a diagonal axis creates dynamic energy and movement within the frame.

Photo by Suzanne Bowers - Sand dunes, Great Sand Dunes National Park

14. Framing



Using natural or man-made elements to frame the subject draws attention and adds context. This could be archways, branches, or windows.

Photo by Chris Bowers - Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, WV

15. Repetition & Patterns



Patterns are naturally pleasing to the eye. Breaking a pattern with a single contrasting element can create a compelling focal point.

Photo by Chris Bowers - Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, WV

16. Dynamic Tension



Using opposing diagonal lines to create an energetic and engaging composition.

Photo by Chris Bowers - Pool side, Pahrump, Nevada