

COMPOSITION  
Photographic Workshop – Wild Ones at Sugar Grove Nature Center

Every part of the image will affect the viewer, and if wrong elements are included, or if the subject is presented in a confusing manner, the photographer's ideas may not be communicated.

The elements that are included, and the relationships between the elements, should be arranged in such a way as to form a pleasing image. Look for the following design elements when composing an image — these can be “hard” elements such as architectural features, tree limbs and branches, edges of various kinds, and plant stems / leaves, but also differences in color or texture.

Most plant photographs should be made without moving or disturbing the plants. When getting ready to take the picture, walk around the plant to find the best angle, distance, and height at which to place the camera. By carefully choosing the camera position, one can have much control over what will appear in the picture and how it will be arranged. The use of wide-angle, normal, or telephoto lenses or zoom settings allows the photographer to control perspective and alter the relative sizes of near and distant objects.

Be very careful to look at the background when composing pictures. Is it cluttered or have distracting reflections, crisscrossing lines, or visual elements that distract from or confuse the subject?

While obvious in architectural photography, even in nature photography the human mind likes to see images that are organized in a pattern. Often, this pattern is geometric or even mathematic. Accordingly, the “rules of composition” are based on this concept.

Below is a list of rules that was partially compiled from *Photographic Composition: A Visual Guide* by Richard D. Zakia and David A. Page (Elsevier / Focal Press, 2011) with additions from web pages and common sense.

EXERCISES

Move around in the Sugar Grove area and try to compose examples of one or more examples of each of the main categories. Places can include: the prairie, the woods, planted garden areas, the bird viewing areas, the Imagination Grove, the creek, the covered bridge, the barn (inside and out), or even in the area around Funks Grove Church. Where is it easier to find patterns — prairie, woodland, along streams, or gardens?

Framing

- Top
- Sides
- Bottom

Lines

- Vertical
- Horizontal
- Diagonal
- Parallel
- Converging
- V-shaped or Inverted

Lead eye through photo

Texture and color differences

Curves

- S-shaped
- C-shaped
- L-shaped
- Lead eye through photo

Symmetry

- Center
- Off-center
- Balancing elements
- Repetition of elements

Investigate these on the web

- Golden Rule
- Rule of Thirds

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