

COMPOSITION TIPS: BLACK & WHITE

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TEXTURE

The key to creating powerful black and white photos is to pick the right subject. Anything with texture looks great. The monochrome treatment gives your photos a tactile quality that color can't match.



TONAL CONTRAST

Black and white photos are built on the difference in brightness between the lightest and darkest parts of the scene. This portrait shows the dramatic effect created by placing the model against a dark background.



SIMPLICITY

Black and white photos benefit from a simplified approach to composition. Look for shapes, patterns, texture and tonal contrast. The landscape photo below shows a minimalist composition with just the rock stacks and the sea.



USE DIAGONAL LINES

Diagonal lines pull the eye through the photo and give the composition a sense of energy. Use diagonal lines to make your black and white photos exciting and energetic. Intersecting lines, like in the photo below, are even more dynamic.



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COMPOSITION

TIPS: COLOR

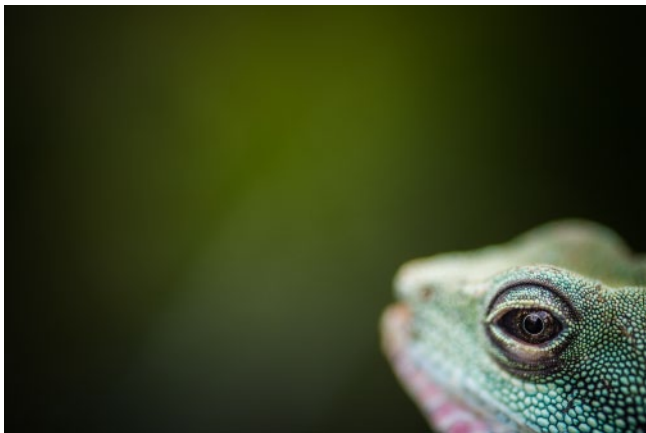
COLOR CONTRAST

You can create powerful compositions by using colors that are far apart from each other on the color wheel (right).



MONOCHROMATIC COLOR

Another approach is to look for compositions that contain one dominant color, like in the photo below. This is a test of your observational skills. It's easier with a telephoto lens as you can close in on your subject.



LIMITED COLOR PALETTES

One way to create strong color photos is to look for compositions that use a limited number of colors. Again, a telephoto lens will help you with this. Keeping the composition simple adds to the power of the photo.



PASTEL COLORS

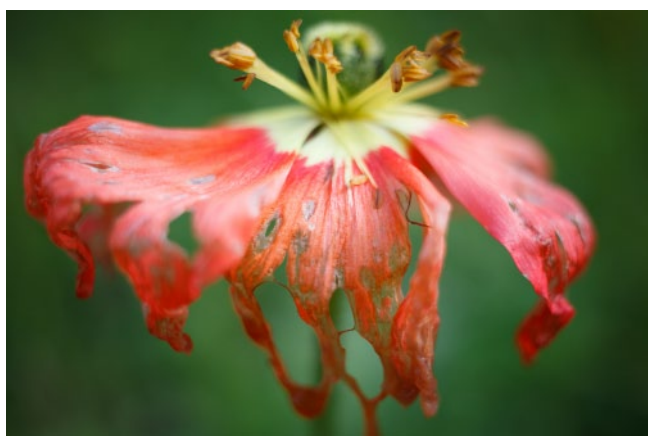
Lots of photographers like to use strong colors in their photos. But how about taking the opposite approach and using subtle or pastel colors? It takes a keen eye for observation, but will help you create more sophisticated compositions.



COMPOSITION TIPS: COLOR

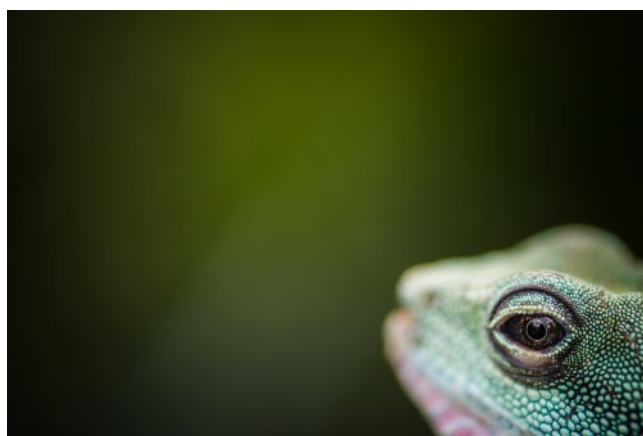
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COMPOSITION TIPS: PORTRAITS

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SIMPLICITY

Keep the composition of your portraits simple so that your model becomes the true star of the photo. This idea extends to technique and gear. Try using a single lens (primes are great) and natural lighting. Don't overcomplicate things!



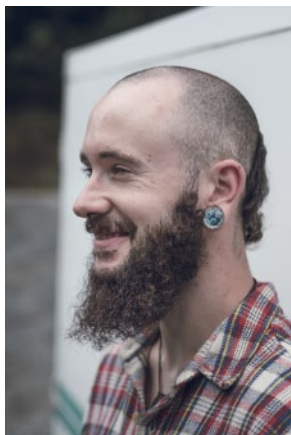
BLURRED BACKGROUNDS

Prime lenses are ideal for portraits as you can use the wider aperture settings to blur the background and eliminate distractions. An aperture setting of $f2.8$, used in the portrait below, is a good starting point for creating bokeh.



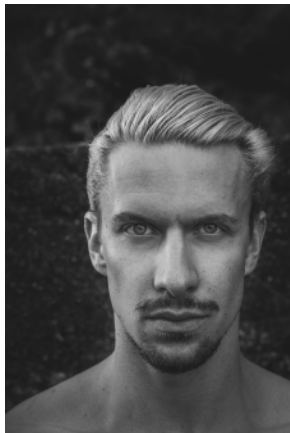
FRAMING

When making portraits outdoors look for natural frames to enhance the composition. In the photos below the models' faces were framed by a painted square (left) and the side of a white caravan (right).



BLACK & WHITE

Black and white is ideal for revealing character as you build rapport with your model, especially with portraits of men. Set your camera to Raw as it gives you the option of developing your portraits in both color and monochrome.



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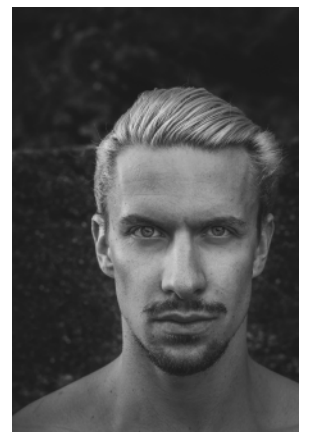
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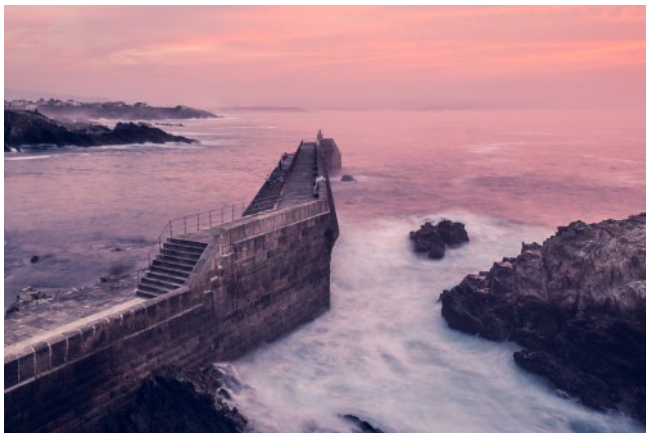


COMPOSITION TIPS: LANDSCAPES

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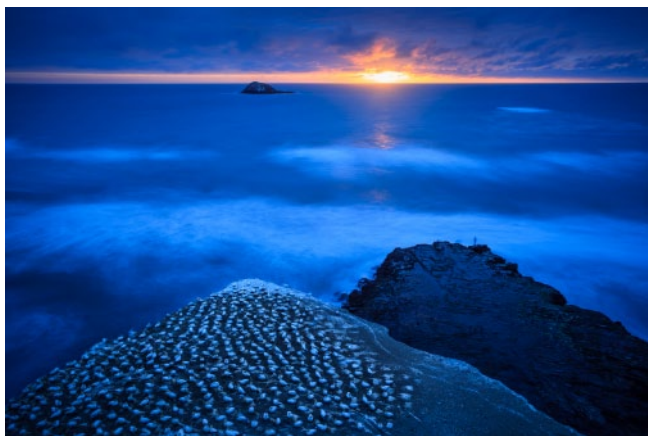
LEADING LINES

Use leading lines to guide the viewer through the composition from foreground to horizon. In the landscape photo below the stone jetty is a strong line. It also helps create a sense of distance, depth and space.



HORIZONS

Don't rely on the rule of thirds as a guide for placing the horizon. Decide what's most important, land or sky, and place it accordingly. It's near the top of the frame in the photo below because the rocks and sea are more important than the sky.



SCALE

Use human figures in the landscape to show scale. In the photo below the people help you see how big the island in the distance is, as well as the rocks they are standing on. It's most effective when the figures are small in the frame.



TELEPHOTO LENSES

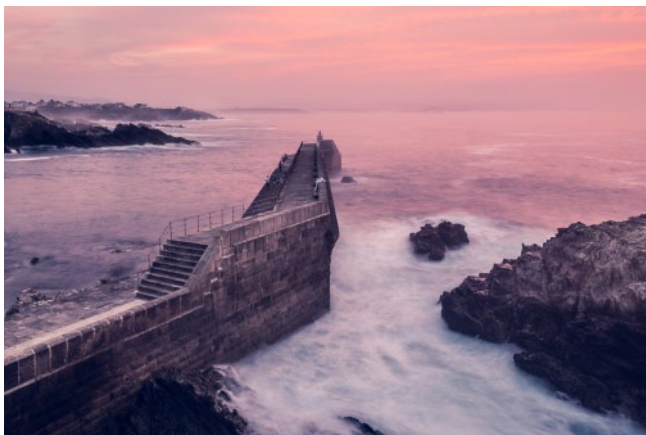
Most landscape photographers use wide-angle lenses to capture the breadth and scale of the landscape. As an alternative try using telephoto lenses to compress perspective and create simpler, more graphic compositions.



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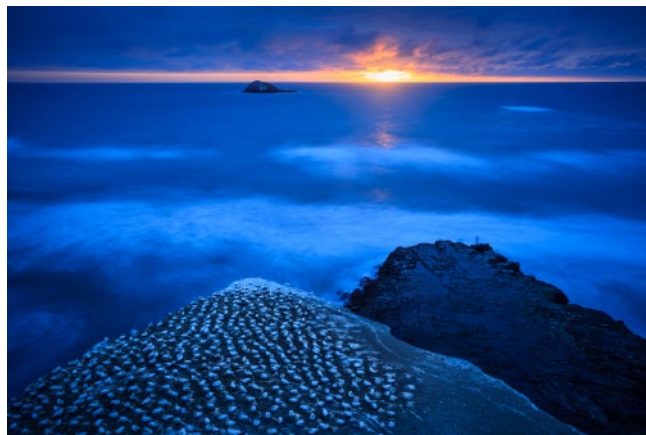
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COMPOSITION

TIPS: PLACEMENT

RULE OF THIRDS

Divide the frame into thirds both vertically and horizontally. Place the main subject on the intersections. But don't forget to think about what else is going on in the frame. See how the man has space to walk into in this photo?



CENTRAL COMPOSITION

Don't use the rule of thirds all the time. Sometimes a central composition is better. This portrait gains impact from the symmetrical composition, the strong eye contact and the simplified color palette.



BALANCE

The tree in the photo below is placed on the intersection of thirds. But do you see how it's also balanced by the large hill on the right and the smaller one on the left? The space around the tree gives you a sense of its size in the landscape.



CREATING TENSION

Push the subject to the edge of the frame to create visual tension. In this photo it takes a little longer to see the boy as the eye has to move further across the frame to reach him. The large pillar on the left creates a balanced composition.



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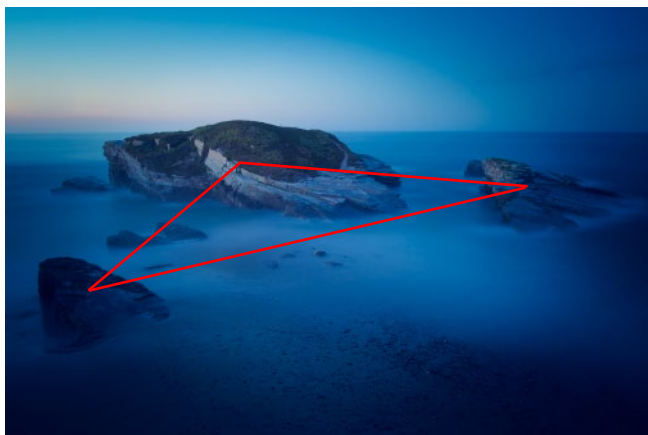


COMPOSITION

TIPS: SHAPES

TRIANGLES

Good photographers learn to see the subject in terms of shape, line and pattern. For example, in scenes with three distinct focal points you can often arrange the points of interest in a triangle that pulls the eye around the frame.



CIRCLES

Man-made objects tend to have strong geometric shapes. The Chinese baoding balls in the photo below are spheres. They are framed by the squares and rectangle made by the box. The result is a composition of shapes within shapes.



SQUARES & RECTANGLES

Here's an example of shape formed by negative space. The dark interior of the home creates a black rectangle that frames the hanging plant. The shape of the photo itself, created with a 35mm digital camera, is another rectangle.



IRREGULAR SHAPES

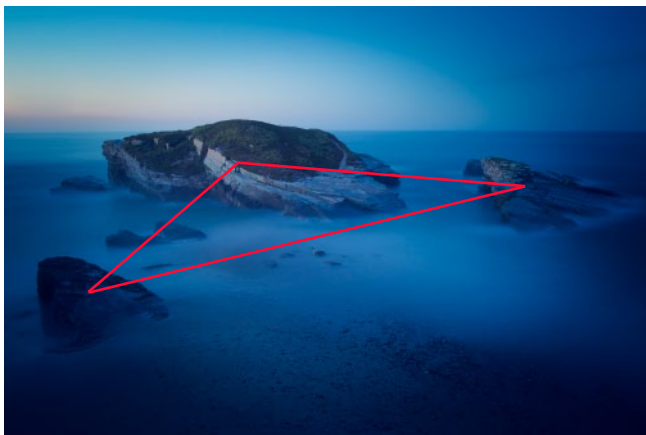
In nature, shapes tend to be organic and irregular rather than geometric. You can make the most of shapes that occur in nature by using simplified compositions that provide space around the subject, as in the landscape photo below.



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