

Good Composition is a key element of good photographs yet is something that is hard to define.

Instead of looking at composition as a set of 'rules' to follow - view it as a set of ingredients that can be used to make a great 'meal' (photograph).

Alternatively, think of it as a set of 'tools' for the construction of a great image.

The key is to remember that in the same way as a chef rarely uses all the ingredients at their disposal in any dish - a photographer rarely uses all of the ingredients of composition in the making of an image.

Here are five of the ingredients (or tools, or elements) of composition that can be used in your photography. They're not 'rules' - just things that can be considered when setting up a shot.

Pattern



There are patterns all around us if we only learn to see them. Highlighting these patterns can lead to striking shots - as can high lighting when patterns are broken.

Symmetry



Depending upon the scene - symmetry can be something to go for - or to avoid completely.

A symmetrical shot with strong composition and a good point of interest can lead to a striking image - but without the strong point of interest it can be a little predictable.

Experiment with both in the one shoot to see which works best.

Texture



Photographic images are two dimensional yet with the clever use of 'texture' they can come alive and become almost three dimensional.

Texture particularly comes into play when light hits objects at interesting angles.

Depth of Field



The depth of field that you select when taking an image will drastically impact the composition of an image.

It can isolate a subject from its background and foreground (when using a shallow depth of field) or it can put the same subject in context by revealing its surrounds with a larger depth of field.

Lines



Lines can be powerful elements in an image.

They have the power to draw the eye to key focal points in a shot and to impact the 'feel' of an image.

Diagonal, Vertical, Horizontal and Converging lines all impact images differently and should be spotted while framing a shot and then utilized to strengthen it.

These are just some of the elements of composition that should be considered in your photography. They reflect your own style and personality but there are plenty more.

Framing



Most of us use 'frames' to display our images when we hang them on walls for viewing - however 'framing' can be used within the composition of a shot to help you highlight your main point of interest in the image and/or to put it in context to give the image 'depth'.

Perspective



The perspective that a shot is taken from is another element that can have a big impact upon an image.

Shooting from up high and looking down on a subject or shooting from below looking up on the same subject drastically impact not only the 'look' of the image, emphasizing different points of interest, angles, textures, shapes etc - but it also impacts the 'story' of an image.

Space



There can be a fine line between filling your frame with your subject (and creating a sense of intimacy and connection) and also giving your subject space to breathe.

Either technique can be effective - so experiment with moving in close and personal and moving out to capture a subject in its context.

Sometimes it is what you leave out of an image that makes it special.

Balance



The positioning of elements in a frame can leave an image feeling balanced or unbalanced.

Too many points of interest in one section of your image can leave it feeling too 'heavy' or complicated in that section of the shot and other parts feeling 'empty'.

Colour



The colours in an image and how they are arranged can make or break a shot.

Bright colours can add vibrancy, energy and interest - however they can also distract from focal points.

Colours also greatly impact 'mood'. Blues and Greens can have a calming soothing impact, Reds and Yellows can convey vibrancy and energy etc.

This is, of course, not the full story of composition. Even employing all the 'rules' and guides above, sometimes a picture just doesn't 'work'. But your photography will improve immensely by at least an understanding of how the end-product will look... just consider what the viewer's eyes are first going to alight on and think about which way they'll wander around the image.