Making Great Photographs: The Art of Composition

KS3 ART & DESIGN Ages 11-14 ⏰ 4 min read

What Makes a Good Photograph?

A good photograph isn't just about having an expensive camera. It's about telling a story, capturing feelings, and making people notice something interesting. The best photos draw your eye to the most important part and make you feel something—maybe wonder, happiness, or excitement.

Composition is the arrangement of things in your photograph. It's like arranging furniture in a room—where you place objects matters. Good composition makes a photo look balanced and interesting instead of messy or confusing.

The Rule of Thirds

Imagine dividing your photograph into **9 equal squares** using **2 horizontal** and **2 vertical** lines. This is called the **rule of thirds**. The most interesting parts of your photo should sit along these lines or where they cross, not in the dead centre.

Think of it like a tic-tac-toe grid—instead of putting your main subject in the middle square, put it in one of the corner or edge squares to make the photo more interesting.

Leading Lines

Leading lines are paths that guide the viewer's eye through your photo. These could be roads, rivers, fences, or shadows. They naturally lead people to look at the important part of your image.

Think of it like breadcrumbs on a trail—they guide someone from the start of the path right to where you want them to go.

Framing and Focus

Use objects in your photo to create a **frame** around your main subject. A window, doorway, or tree branch can frame what you're photographing and make it stand out.

Your **focus** means what part of the photo is sharpest. Usually, you want your main subject sharp and the background slightly blurry.

Light and Shadow

Lighting is incredibly important. Golden light during sunrise or sunset creates warm, beautiful photos. Shadows add drama and depth. Hard shadows create interesting shapes, while soft shadows look gentler and more peaceful.

Telling a Story

The best photographs show something interesting or tell a story. Think about **what you want people to feel** when they look at your image. Include details that add meaning. Remove things that distract from your main message.

Start practising these techniques with any camera—even your phone! Take the same subject from different angles and positions. You'll quickly learn what works and develop your own style as a photographer.

Free for educational use