



What Makes a Good Composition in Art

KS2 ART & DESIGN

Ages 9-12 ⌚ 4 min read

What is Composition?

Composition is like the recipe of a work of art. Just as a chef arranges ingredients on a plate to look appetizing and balanced, artists arrange shapes, colours, and objects in their paintings, drawings, or photographs to create something beautiful and interesting. Good composition means every part of the artwork has a purpose and works together like a team.

Think of it like organizing your bedroom. You wouldn't throw everything in the middle of the floor—you'd arrange your bed, desk, and shelves so the room feels balanced and you can move around easily. Art works the same way.

The Rule of Thirds

One of the most famous composition tricks is called the **Rule of Thirds**. Imagine dividing your artwork into **nine equal squares** using two horizontal and two vertical lines. Instead of putting your most important object in the dead centre, artists place interesting things along these lines or where they cross. This creates more dynamic and engaging artwork.

Professional photographers use this rule all the time. A sunset looks more exciting when the horizon sits along one of the lines, rather than right in the middle of the photo.

Balance and Movement

Balance makes artwork feel stable and comfortable to look at. There are two types: **symmetrical balance** (where both sides look the same) and **asymmetrical balance** (where different elements balance each other out). A symmetrical butterfly painting feels calm and orderly, while an asymmetrical arrangement of rocks and a tree feels more natural and interesting.

Think of it like a seesaw at the playground. You can balance it with two people of equal weight on each side, or you can balance a heavier person closer to the middle with a lighter person farther away. Both work!

Movement is how your eye travels through the artwork. Artists use lines, colours, and shapes to guide you around the picture, almost like a treasure hunt.

Focus and Contrast

A good composition has a **focal point**—the main thing you notice first. Artists create this using **contrast**: making something bright against dark, large against small, or colourful against dull. This tells viewers where to look and what matters most in the artwork.

When you understand these composition rules, you'll notice them everywhere—in films, advertisements, and nature itself. Learning to compose well makes your own art speak louder and more clearly to anyone who looks at it.