

# COMPOSITION IN PHOTOGRAPHY

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# WHAT IS COMPOSITION

composition |,kämpə'ziSHən| noun

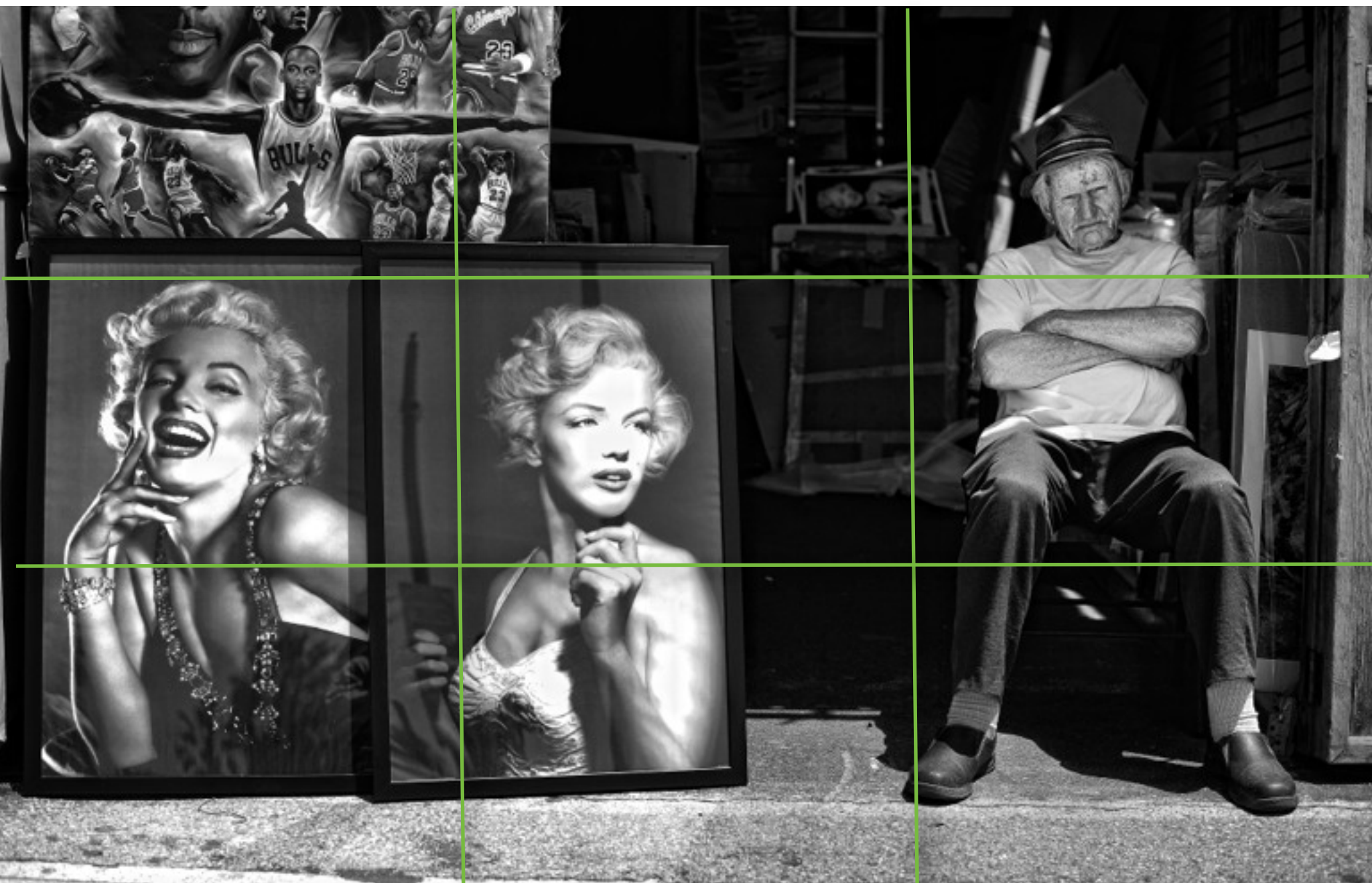
**1** the nature of something's ingredients or constituents; the way in which a whole or mixture is made up:

Webster's Dictionary

Photography is like Fight Club, the only rule is there are no rules. The beauty of photography is that the photographer is free to create images however they might see them. That being said, there are guidelines that can keep a photo from being just another snapshot. These guidelines help you take more compelling images by using composition to bring attention to important things in the photo, leading the viewer around the photo or making it more pleasing to the eye. I like to think of the rules of composition as a tool set that helps me build better photographs.

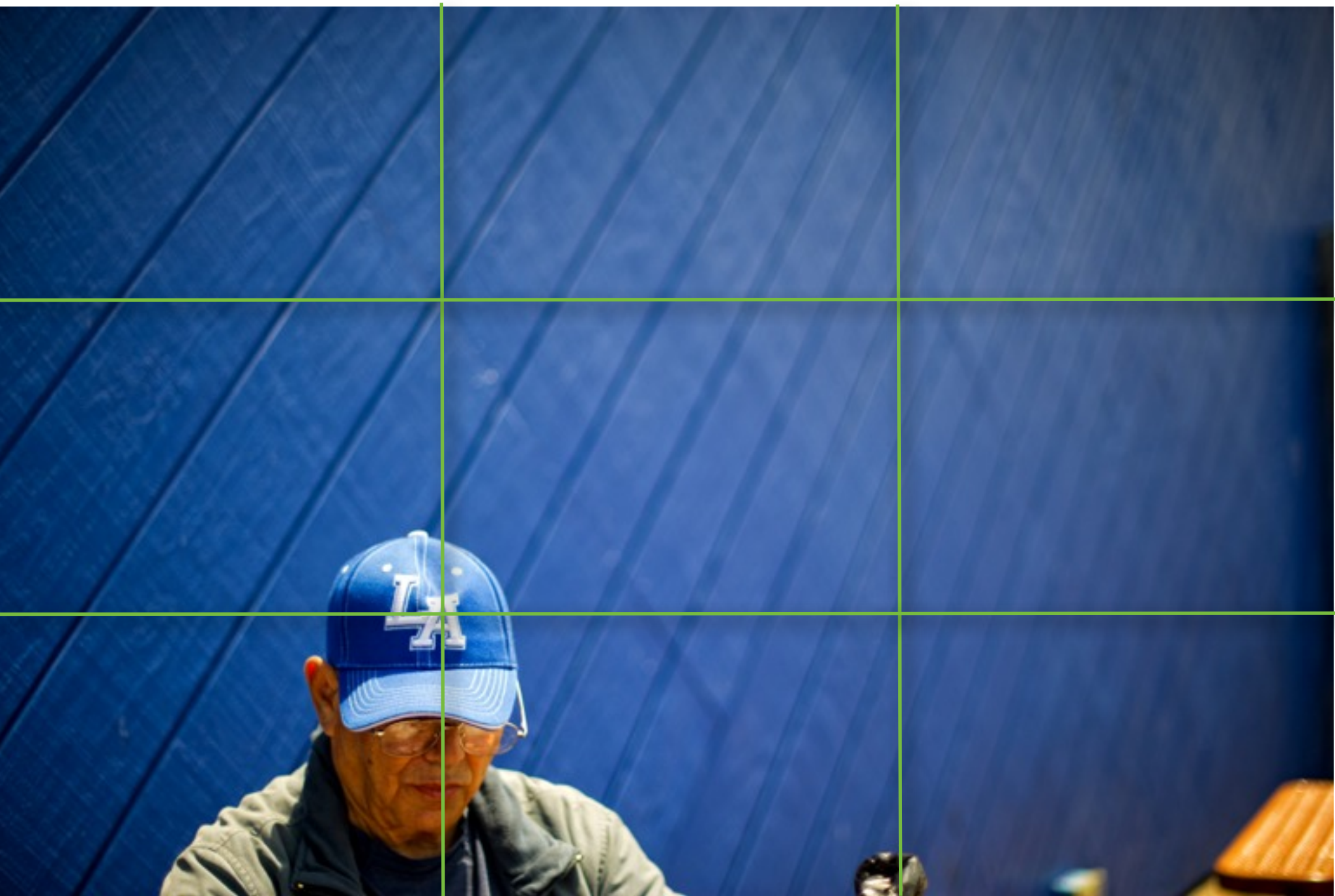






## RULE OF THIRDS

Imagine a grid placed over your photo consisting of 2 horizontal lines and 2 vertical lines that make 9 boxes. The theory is that you should place important elements along these lines or where they intersect.











## BALANCING SUBJECT MATTER

Using the rule of thirds will place your subject on either side of your photograph, this will sometimes create negative space in the photo. If you use something to fill this space you will have balance and a better photo.







## LEADING LINES

Eyes will follow lines in a photograph. Roads, trees, power lines, buildings are just a few examples. It doesn't matter if they are straight, curved or in a circle your eye will follow them. You can use lines to lead a viewer in to or away from subject matter in your photos.











## SYMMETRY AND PATTERNS

Patterns and symmetry are everywhere you look. You can use them to make your photos convey a stronger message or make it more pleasing to the eye. Carefully look at your photo and compose it to explore the patterns or symmetry.









## ANGLE OR VIEW

Looking down from a tall building to shoot a line of people on the street below. Kneeling down to shoot a basketball player towering above you. These are examples of high or low angles. If you think about what angle is best you can create a more dynamic photo.





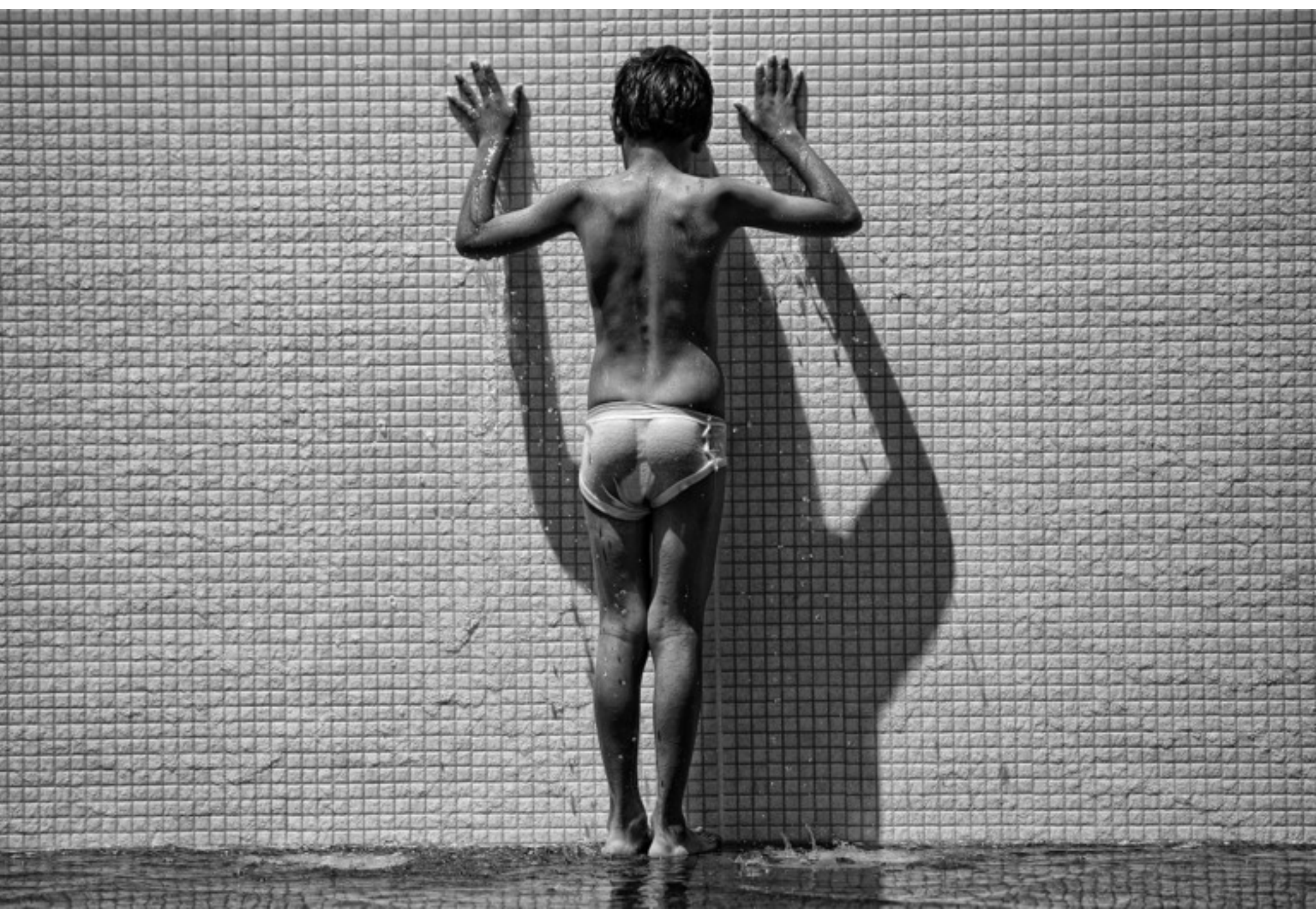


## BACKGROUNDS AND DEPTH OF FIELD

The more unnecessary things in your background the more distracting and unappealing your photo will be. We have all taken a photo of a friend or family member then discovered later that there was a pole, trashcan or some other unsightly thing in the background. Always make sure your backgrounds are as clean as possible and only try to include those things that are part of your composition. Depth of field and focal length are great ways to blur out the background.











## LAYERING

Photos are two dimensional and therefore sometimes a photographer has to use techniques to convey a sense of depth. You can do this by layering your photograph with objects or people in the foreground, middle and background.









## FRAMING

Use objects or light to frame your subject separating them from the rest of the frame and making them/it the point of interest. A window, the space between trees or shadows can all be used in framing.





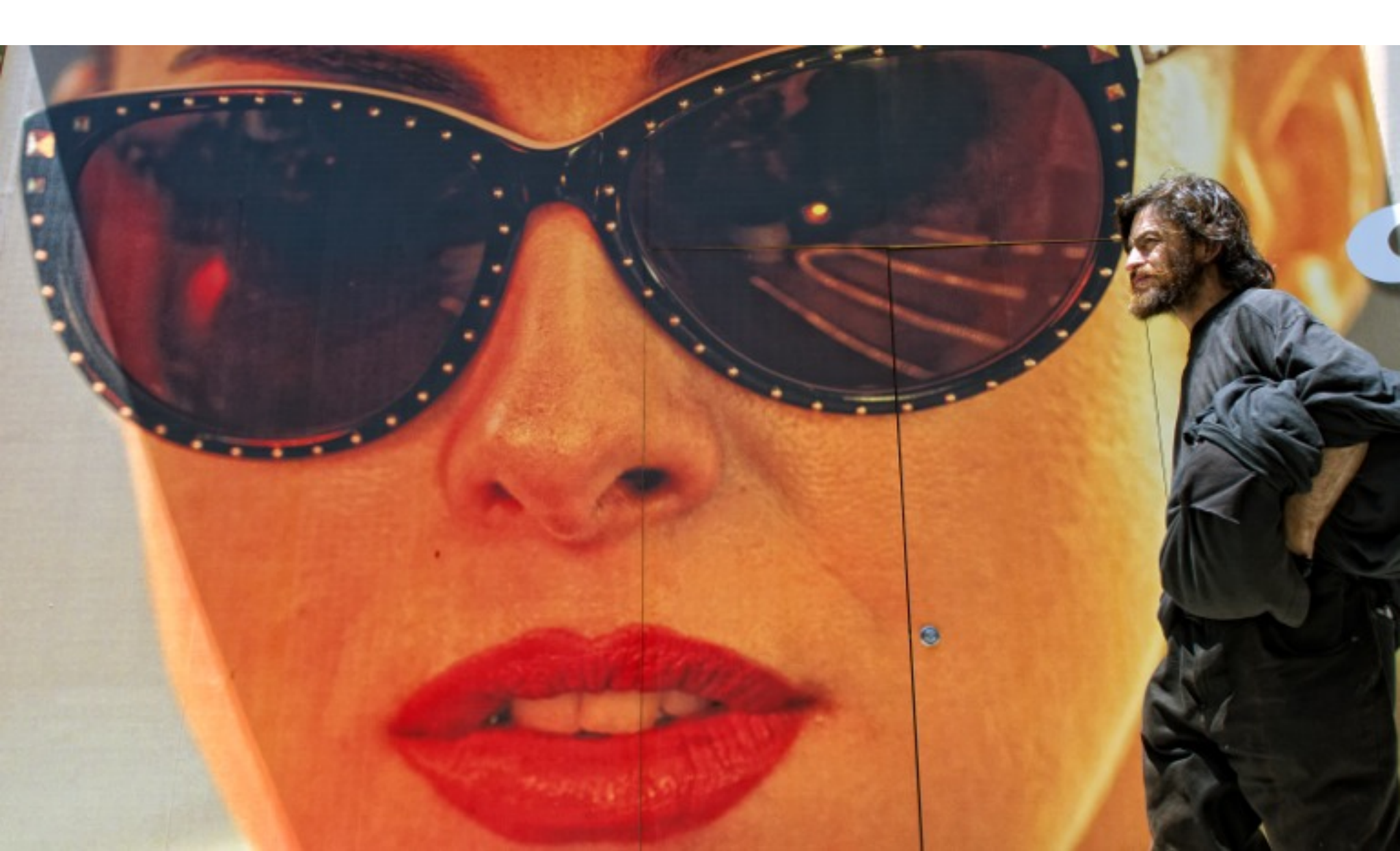




## NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE SPACE

Negative space is the area in a photo that surrounds your subject. Most of the time I like to fill my photos with positive space (the subject) but negative space can be equally important. Negative space can be used to create compelling images and give the eye a resting point. Use negative space to enhance your composition by using it to focus attention on your subject or to create tension. Having negative space in your photo that adds nothing to the composition can make your subject get lost and ruin a photo.









## SUMMARY

If you practice these guidelines you will find your photography improving every time you pick up a camera. You should also 'look, think and shoot' when you take photographs. Look through your viewfinder and think about what story you would like to tell with the photo you are about to take. After you figure out how you would like to compose the image take your eye and scan your frame. Start with the upper corner of the frame and move your eye along like you are reading a page of writing. This will help you spot those things in your photo that you may have missed.