



Composition: From Snapshots to Great Shots

Laurie Excell

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Now that you've bought that amazing new DSLR, you need a book that goes beyond the camera manual to teach you how to take those great shots. One key element is composition—the creative arrangement of components in the shot, and the way a viewer's eye travels through an image.

With *Composition: From Snapshots to Great Shots*, author and photographer Laurie Excell starts with the basics of composition and explores how the elements of color, shape, angles, and contrast work to create compelling images. Contributing photographers, John Batdorff, David Brommer, Rick Rickman, and Steve Simon, provide unique perspectives on black and white, sports, art history, and other subjects related to composition. Beautifully illustrated with large, vibrant photos, this book teaches you how to take control of your photography to get the image you want every time you pick up the camera.

Follow along with your friendly and knowledgeable guides, and you will learn about:

Key camera features that affect composition, including the exposure triangle (ISO, aperture, and shutter speed)
Shadow and light and how to direct the viewer's eye to your subject
Lines and shapes that create visual paths to points of interest in your image
The role of color—using complementary or contrasting colors—to add your own unique artistic expression
Spatial relationship and placing your subject within the frame for portraits, action shots, or landscapes

And once you've got the shot, show it off! Join the book's Flickr group, share your photos, and discuss how you use your camera to get great shots at flickr.com/groups/composition_fromshotsna....

Composition: From Snapshots to Great Shots Details

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Márton says

Nice book. The first chapters are a good introduction to photography, taking care of themes like exposure, aperture, shutter speed and other basics. Then the author enters a good explanation of several principles for good composition, like framing, the rule of thirds, colors, and others. The chapter on sports photography is a good insight on the author's composition thinking process. Very good book for those beginning to study composition on a more serious level.

XO says

A good book to introduce you to the reflex camera world. Keep taking awesome pictures and enjoy!

Jakenv says

This is excellent reference for both first time photographers and more advanced as refresher. Author has clear concise style with excellent photos to illustrate each point. Highly recommend.

Sharon Wilbur says

If you're looking for basic instruction in photography, the first four chapters can be useful. But if you already understand your camera, skip them. I question her "full-frame" claim in a couple of images, so expect a different result if you shoot with one, but overall Chapters 4-10 are good discussions about composition. I particularly loved 6-10; I have been shooting for a while. It's a great beginning book.

Rick Austin says

Pretty good book on photography composition. Does cover some technical elements but really focuses on composition. Best for beginner or intermediate level photographer but even experienced photographers will get something from it.

Kristina says

Oddly focused on aperture priority (to me, blurry background is SO wedding photo), but otherwise nice and contains some good tips for the just-starting-out. Particularly suited for aspiring nature photographers.

Lorraine says

I didn't realize how much I already knew. I've had this book for a while and probably should have read it when I first got it. It's definitely a good one for the person who is past the beginner stage in photography, and working in the intermediate stage. Most of what is written here are things I do pretty much every day. I don't get to go to really exciting places for some of the shots shown here, but there are plenty of examples of good shots taken at places like parks and wheat fields. This is an excellent book for the someone who has gone beyond the basics.

Random says

Somewhat torn on this book. I feel for something which claims to focus on composition, it spends too much time talking about large amounts of expensive photography equipment.

While ISO, aperture, depth of field, etc have a part to play in photography, the author spends a lot of time on these subjects and not very much dealing with lines, form, color, texture, point of view, and other elements of true composition. And while these elements are spoken of, we often get a voodoo answer of "you just get it when you get it". The book never really covers the exact elements of composition. They are alluded to, but we're never really told what they are. The author mentions that sometimes it's ok to break the rules, but we're never really told what the rules are (other than don't stick the horizon in the middle of the picture) and other than a couple example pictures, we never really learn anything about when and why it is a good idea to break the rules.

I do have to add, the author did spend a good amount of time discussing point of view/position and how moving the camera, even just a little bit, can make a significant difference in the quality of an image.

A pet peeve of mine on most books on photography, even the ones aimed at amateurs, is that everyone has access to not only a semi expensive DSLR, a myriad of expensive lenses, and often not just one but multiple bodies. In this specific case, composition is a subject that can be used and explored with any equipment, be it the simple camera of your phone to professional grade DSLRs.

Overall, this isn't a bad book, and many of the photographs are lovely, but I really came away with very little new knowledge. As an amateur, I should be able to walk away with more than I managed to get.

Lisa says

I know I finished this a while ago... and recall being somewhat inspired but not overwhelming 'taught' on composition... I guess I have a specific void I'm working to fill when it comes to composition and this book didn't cover it for me.

As a beginning photographer, however this would have provided great insight on how to truly take my snapshots and make them better..

Jessica Nguyen says

skimmed through for good photos and skipped most of tech parts (e.g. iso, speed & focus settings)

Stephen Kennedy says

Not a bad book on composition. There is a lot of technical points in the book that are important for beginners and intermediates to know about how their camera's work. I think the thing I enjoyed the most was the chapters by other photographers like Steve Simon and John Batdorff and their takes on composition. I would say that this is a good book for Beginner and Intermediate photographers, but if you are fairly experienced and want something on artistic development look elsewhere

Michael says

This is a really good book for someone trying to mature their photography skills. I picked it up from Steve Simons at a photography class at MacWorld Expo this past year. While it took me a long while to read, this is because it does a really good job of providing a set of exercises at the end of each chapter. Highly recommended!

Susan says

This book is packed with good photography information. It was a little too beginner for me but I definitely would suggest this to someone just starting out. I do feel like the title is a little misleading though as there is more about general photography than composition.

Aubree says

This is a great book to teach photography. It was the perfect level for me, not so beginning that it explained what every little word meant, but not too advanced. Each chapter has homework assignments to help you practice what you studied in the chapter. Now that I have read the entire book, I need to go back over each chapter in detail and get the motivation to go out and really put to practice what I have learned.

Cindy says

This book took me a while to digest since I am fairly new to photography. It deals in part about what lens to use, based on what type of scene you are photographing, how much of a scene you are trying to capture, etc. It's what I call "rather technical"! Nonetheless, I learned a lot and will read it again sometime in the

future when I have more experience and a deeper understanding of photography.

BY THE WAY: The description of this book, posted on this page, does NOT describe this book. It is actually the description of another book in this series on black and white photography. Just an FYI.
