

**Bill Prosser's Adaptation of Dave Carter's, "Some important Principles of Composition." (1998) [Revised 10-20-2009]**

When photographing, give careful thought to:

**At the Site Location:**

1. Selecting a location (and time of day) to use the **light** qualities (softness/harshness, color, direction) to amplify dimensionality, feelings and message. **IT'S THE LIGHT STUPID!**
2. **Camera placement** relative to the subject to amplify guidelines.
3. Using a **tripod**. It not only may be important for technical reasons (slow shutter speeds and focus), but it encourages thoughtful choices about visual design.
4. How the **camera sees** the image differently than the photographer's eyes.

**At the viewfinder--Story-telling, Visual Design, and Craft Details:**

5. The special meanings of various **types of lines** (horizontal, vertical, and oblique), **shapes** (circles, squares, and triangles) and forms (sphere, cubes, and pyramids)
6. How to **lead** the viewer's eye through the image and to the point of interest, if there is one.
7. How you can give **distance cues** to avoid "flatness".
8. How to **separate** the center of interest from the background.
9. How to simplify the image. **Simplicity** is achieved by eliminating most all elements in the image that do not contribute to the overall feeling or message of the image, not just eliminating elements. (This includes using negative space, because it can be extremely important in reinforcing the other image elements."If it doesn't add, it subtracts.")
10. Whether the image is **appropriately balanced or not** (thirds, room to move/see into, horizon at 1/3 or 2/3) to further the message.
11. Effective communication is facilitated by **common (or imagined) experiences** shared between photographer and viewer
12. Whether a vertical or horizontal **format** is more appropriate.
13. How to capture **fleeting transitional moments**; e.g. sunrises/sunsets, sun breaking thru the clouds, and end to the storm.
14. The **number of similar objects** to include. Small odd numbers of similar objects work better than an even number. The larger the total number of objects, the less important odd/even is.

**Rather than memorizing these principles, practice using them so they become intuitive and instinctive rather than formalistic. [Freeman Patterson]**