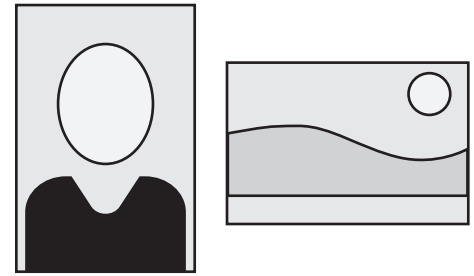


Compositional Dos and Don'ts

DO Explore both vertical and horizontal compositions

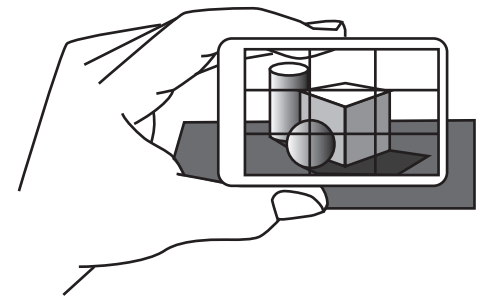
The first choice you often make when composing is deciding if you will have a vertical or horizontal composition. In some circumstances, you might also hear it described as a portrait or landscape.



Which direction do you turn when you're composing an image? It depends on what you want to include and what you want to exclude. There is no right or wrong. Many times, it's simply a matter of preference and what you are trying to communicate in your images.

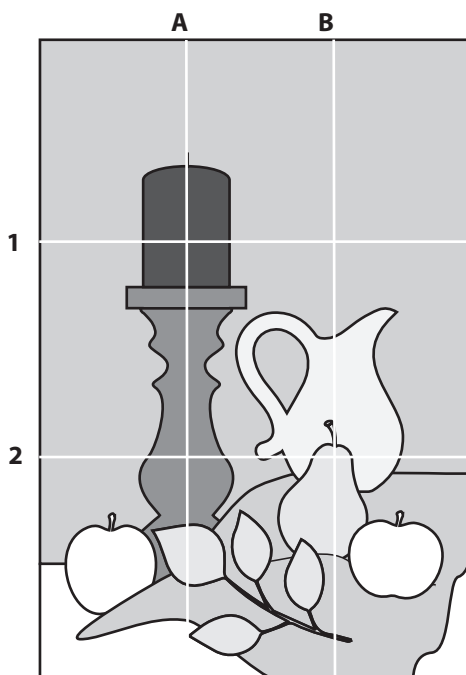
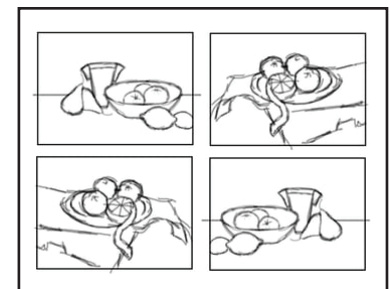
Do Use a View Finder

Use a viewfinder to help plan a composition. A viewfinder can be made or bought. A viewfinder is an artist's tool that enables artists to frame or crop a scene to arrange the composition. It is usually a rectangle made out of card stock or plastic through which you look to consider the arrangement.



DO generate lots of thumbnails

Thumbnail sketches are quick, abbreviated drawings, usually done rapidly and with no corrections. You can use any medium, though pencil is the most common. Thumbnail sketches usually are small, often only 1 to 3 inches high. You typically create many to help you choose the best composition for a larger painting or drawing.



DO use the Rule of Thirds

The rule of thirds refers to dividing your image into three horizontal and three vertical sections. You should have two lines running top to bottom and two lines running left to right. Look at where those lines intersect: place your main subject on one of those points.

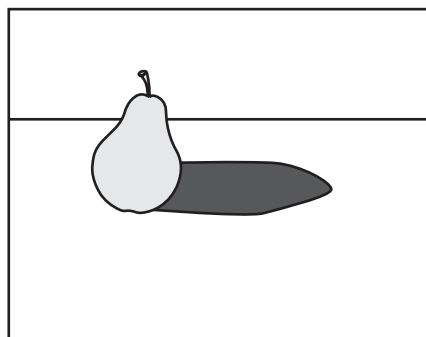
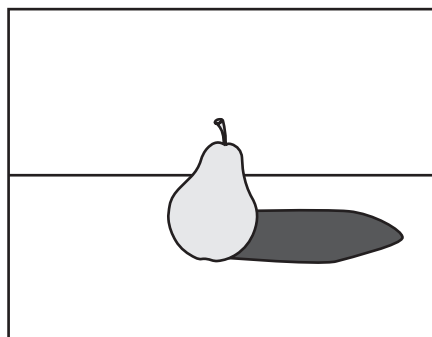
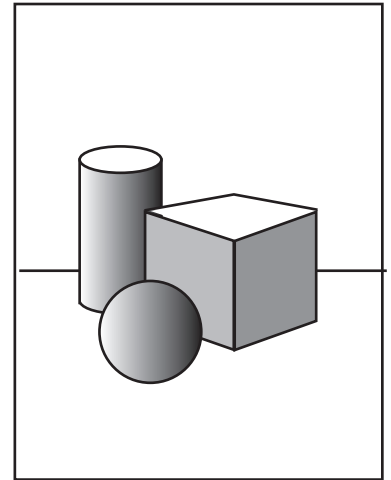
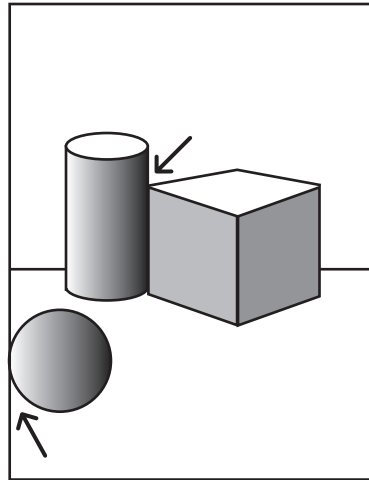
What is the main focus of this composition? If you said the candle, that is correct. See how it is placed in the intersection of line A and line 1? This composition follows the Rule of Thirds.

Artists will often talk about the shape of a composition. A typical shape for a composition is triangular, which is also what the composition to the left forms. Do you see it?

Compositional Dos and Don'ts cont.

DON'T create awkward alignments

Sometimes, shapes touch in a visually unpleasing way, like in the first example to the right. Instead, either move the objects or your view to create overlap with the objects. Overlapping creates space in your still life. Also, don't allow items to touch the edge of the paper. Doing so creates an awkward, crowded sensation for the viewer.



Don't always center objects

Centering an object can be good at times. At the same time, overly centered compositions can be considered static and boring. Remember the "Rule of Thirds" is a way to break the static nature of centered compositions.

DON'T create unbalanced compositions DO use leading lines

In the first illustration, the objects on the left create an unbalanced arrangement. When the knife is added to the composition, it accomplishes two things: it balances the composition, and the knife leads the eye, creating a circular shape.

Be thoughtful in choosing your compositions before starting. Beautiful drawing and rendering will not fix a poor composition!

