

**Grade Level:**5th**Time:**

45 minutes

Season:

Any

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- Understand five elements of photo composition.
- Understand the role of photography in conservation.
- Understand how to take quality photos

Key Concepts:

- Photo Composition
- Foreground
- Background

Materials:

- Camera
- Photography Fundamentals PowerPoint

Photography

Summary

In this lesson students will learn five elements of photo composition. They will learn about nature photography and go outside to express their visual creativity through photography.

Background

Why do people take photos? Many take photos to remember something or an experience, to sell, or simply because they enjoy it. Photography is a versatile method for people to show their visual creativity and self expression. One of the seven principles of Leave No Trace is “leave what you find.” Photography is a great way to take something back with you when you are in the outdoors.

There are many elements that go into composing great photos. We will be focusing on five elements.

Horizon Line:

One of the most common compositional rules says that the horizon line should be level across the frame of a photograph. Further, except in certain situations, the horizon line should not run across the vertical center of an image (effectively cutting the image into an upper and lower half). One exception to this rule is when a subject (e.g., tree, building, mountain) is reflected in a body of water. Again, there are plenty of other examples where breaking this rule resulted in a successful image.

Framing:

Framing uses the foreground to draw the viewer’s eyes to the primary subject in the photograph.



Background (continued)

Rule of Thirds:

When using the “Rule of Thirds,” the image frame is divided into nine smaller areas by overlaying two equally spaced vertical and horizontal lines. The rule suggests placing the subject on or near one of the four-line intersections. People new to photography often have a tendency of placing the primary subject right in the center of the image – much like a bull's eye! Just think of all those family snapshots you’ve taken. Again, a centered subject may very well work for a portrait, but what about with a scenic photo?

Leading lines:

Leading lines are used to draw the viewers eye into a photograph. Many leading lines can be curves or diagonals. Roads, trails, train tracks are just a few examples.

Unusual perspectives:

Unusual perspectives can show the photographers creativity. Try taking a photo from below your subject looking up.

Setup

1. The setup and procedure might be different depending on the type of camera used. If the students are using a point and shoot be sure cameras are charged and ready to go. If students are sharing a camera with others have the students take a selfie at the beginning of their photo collection for separations. If the students are using an iPad or tablet you may choose to have them label their photos as they are taken.
2. Have the Photo Composition PowerPoint presentation ready to go. (Available upon request from the refuge manager (currently colleen_graue@fws.gov))
3. Have the 5 Elements of Photo Composition sheet printed for each person or pair of students.



Procedure

1. Ask students if they have ever been outside and seen something they want to remember? Whether it be plants, wildlife, or scenery. How might they do that? Through photography. Photography is a great and easy way for the students to show their creative talents.
2. Deliver the presentation explaining the five elements of composition that we will be using today.
3. Explain that while most photos use these elements some amazing photos can be taken when you choose not to follow a particular element.
4. Students may need to work with a partner sharing a camera, but each student will need to take photos.
5. Students should take at least one photo demonstrating the use of each of the five elements.
6. Be sure to allow plenty of time to take photos.
7. When the students are finished come back together and talk about what they experienced. Was there an element that was hard to follow? What was their favorite element?

Vocabulary

- **Photo Composition** – the arrangement of elements in your photo.
- **Foreground** – part of a view that is nearest to the observer.
- **Background** – area or scenery behind the main object.
- **Perspective** – the spatial relationship between objects in a frame.

North Dakota Science Curriculum Standards

This lesson helps support the following state standards:

5-ESS3-1 – Obtain and combine information about ways individual communities use science ideas to protect the Earth’s resources and environment.