

Mastering Composition – The Frame

The Frame (Picture Window)

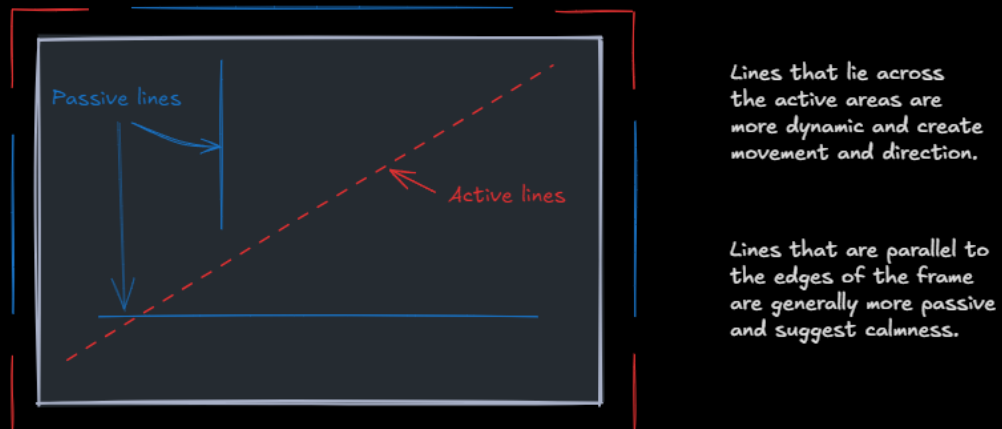
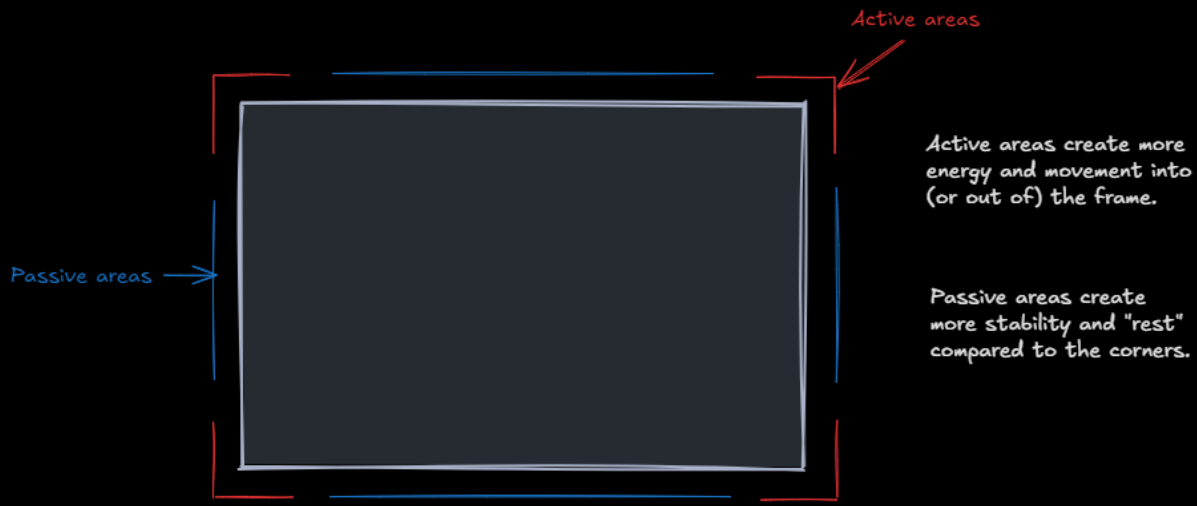


© Landscape Painters Workbook

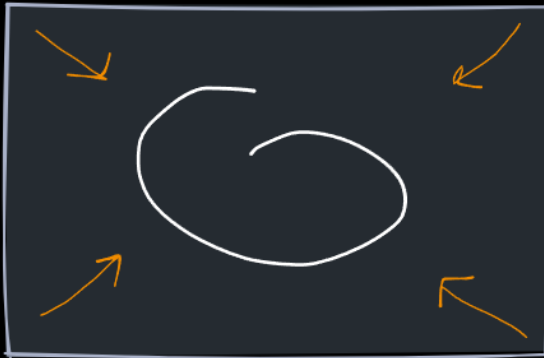
The FRAME is the rectangle we impose on the world around us as our compositional tool.

- It determines what we include (and exclude) and how those parts relate to each other.
- It creates *NEW* relationships between those elements and the four edges.
- Creates new shapes inside the frame based on the position of the frame edges.
- Creates tension and release along the edges
- Creates a *LIMITED FOCUS* for our creative vision (and the viewer.)

Active vs Passive

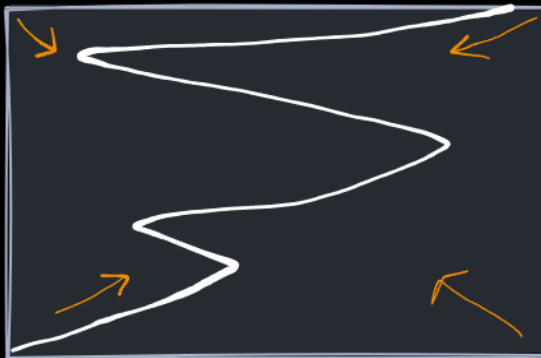


Enclosed vs Open Formats



Enclosed path comes back on itself, easily keeping the eye in the frame.

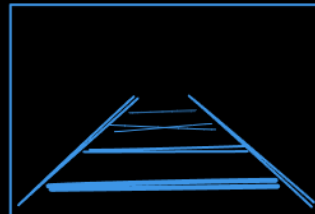
The edges of the frame need to remain subordinate to the central center of interest.



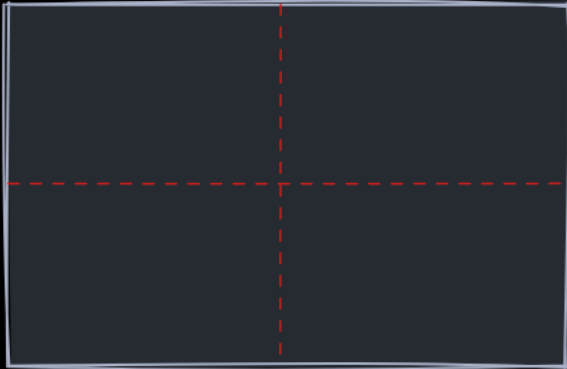
An open path keeps the eye moving back and forth through the frame.

The edges, and especially the corners, should encourage the eye to move "into" the frame.

(Linear perspective)

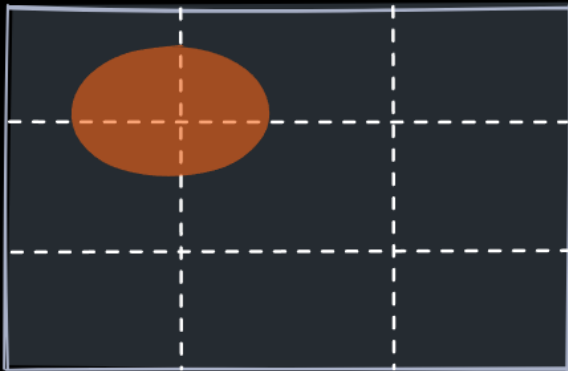


Symmetry vs Asymmetry



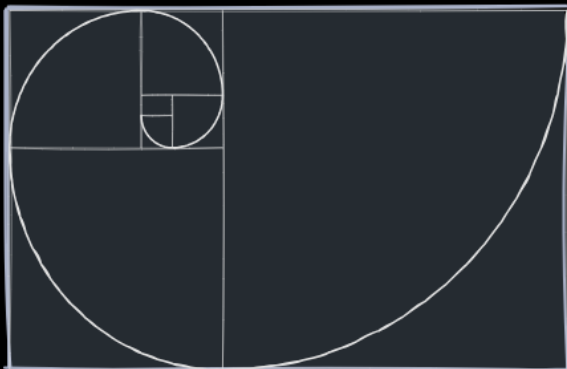
Be aware of dominant elements lying on symmetries

Even a slight offset is more aesthetic and creates more dynamism



Asymmetry by thirds

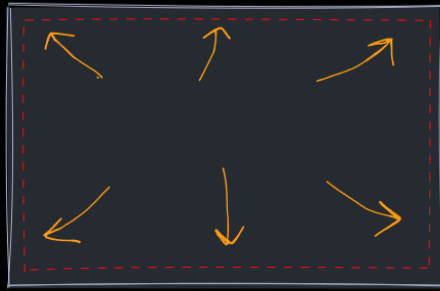
Deviation away from the thirds creates tension and dynamism.



Golden Grid (Spiral) can also be used as a way to organize elements within the frame.

TIP: Press the letter "O" in Lightroom while in crop mode to cycle through various overlays, including this one.

Tension vs Release



Shapes close to the edges of the frame create tension and attract the eye

Use tension to create movement across active paths.

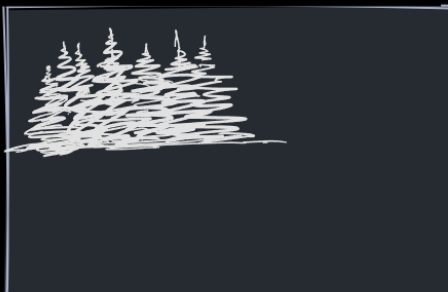


Shapes on the edges of the frame create tension.

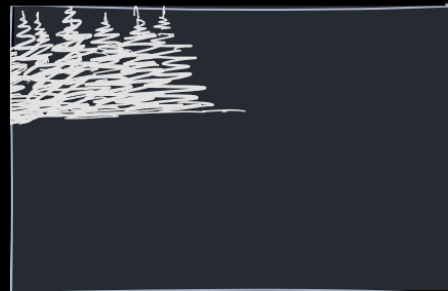
Shapes that extend into the frame create visual weight that needs to be counter-balanced.



Shapes that extend into the frame on opposite sides create greater visual balance and allow the eye to rest on other shapes within.

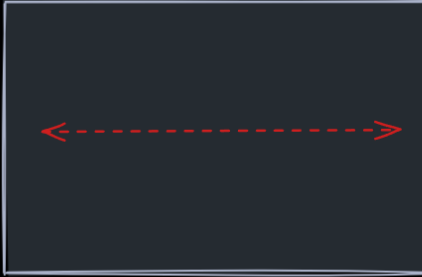


A complex shape that is fully enclosed inside the frame creates greater dominance and implies a destination for the eye.



A complex shape that extends out of the frame creates less attraction and "suggests" a continuation outside of the frame. It also implies that the viewer continue traveling inside the frame.

Orientation Formats



HORIZONTAL FORMAT

Most natural and easy to visualize.

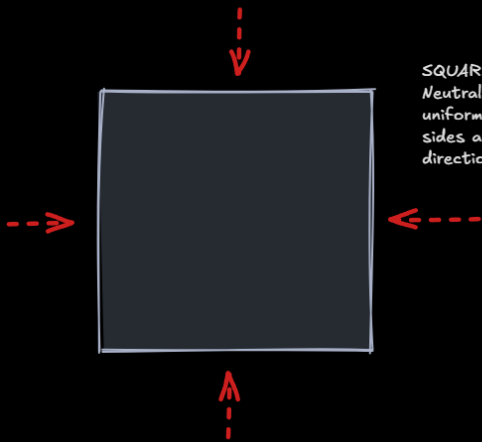
Reinforces stability and horizontal movement.



VERTICAL FORMAT

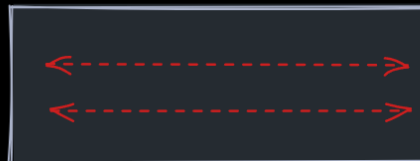
Reinforces movement along the vertical axis.

Can be used to create movement inwards and upwards.



SQUARE FORMAT

Neutral - exerts uniform pressure on all sides and adds little directional movement



PANORAMA

Creates the greatest horizontal movement within the frame.

***IMPORTANT:** Never choose a format arbitrarily - choose one that best matches your subject and your compositional intent.