

FIRST FOUR COMPOSITION TIPS – FOCAL POINT:

1. A landscape may have a center of interest, enhanced further with value contrast. The rest: secondary.

A strong center of interest has:

- An intense shift in the value contrast (light-dark)
 - Desirably, but not essential, it should take up a good part of the picture plane.
 - Structures, or figures will further enrich the center of interest.
 - Elements around it should lead a viewer to center of interest by use of visual lines or pointers.
 - Placement of the focal point is crucial. It should not be in the center or halfway in the format, but placed in any of the 1/3 portions as the rule of thirds implies is more effective; see explanation below.
 - The focal point should not be blocked, not even a little. This will weaken its importance.
2. A successfully created center of interest will grab and hold the viewer's interest.
3. Your visual path should not begin in a corner.
4. Avoid leading the viewer out of the drawing. This can be achieved if elements don't point to, or touch the edge of the picture, such as tree trunks, branches, roads, and rivers.

THE NEXT FOUR COMPOSITION TIPS - INTEREST:

1. Forms should be varied. If you have a scene with round shaped trees, the clouds should not be circular in shape, also. Combine circular clouds with pointed mountains or pine trees for variety and interest. Avoid duplicated shapes in trees, mountains, rocks even if that is the reality.
2. Try not to have any one-inch portions of your drawing be the same as any others.
3. Balance, a principle of art, is crucial. The four portions of your drawing should have similar mass: the top, bottom, left or right, or your drawing may seem lopsided.
4. Allow the eye to follow a form even if it goes behind another, Say, if a meadow bathed in sunlight, continues behind a grove of trees, allow the meadow's glow to show between the tree trunks.

THE NEXT SIX COMPOSITION TIPS - TO CREATE DEPTH:

1. Overlap objects to depict depth.
2. Linear perspective is one and two-point perspective.
3. Atmospheric perspective: values get lighter as they recede. Dark values are darker as they are closer.
4. Draw less details and texture in the distance compared to the foreground.
5. Soft edges in the background will increase the appearance of distance. The hard edges should be in the foreground and/or within the center of interest.
6. Create a foreground, middle ground, and background: three planes. Each should have a major value.

NO FOCAL POINT, THEN REPLACE WITH LINEAR MOVEMENT:

1. Create a linear movement to weave the viewer and pull them through the work, to take them to the back. Then you can skip the focal point because the eye is traveling around and exploring.
2. When looking at a beautiful scene, we don't look for a focal point. We take it all in. The same of artwork.

WATER REFLECTION RULES TO REMEMBER:

1. Keep the reverse in mind as what is dark on land will be lighter in water.
2. What is light on land will be darker in water.
3. Colors become less saturated in water reflections, so reflection values are more gray when drawing in pencil. Even white (clouds, birds or buildings, for example) will need to be grayed down.
4. Remove details. Only basic smudges of value change are needed, reflections shouldn't have hard edges.