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CHRISTIAN TUDOR

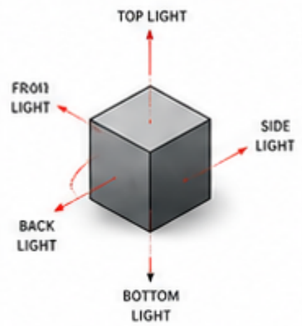
VISUAL INTELLIGENCE
STARTER PACK

10 DIAGRAMS THAT WILL CHANGE HOW YOU SEE PHOTOGRAPHY

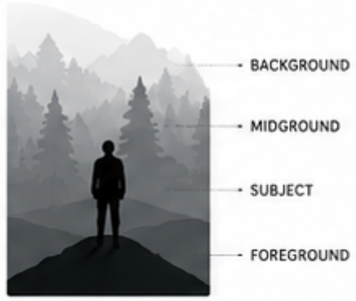
Selected from the complete 100-Diagram Visual Intelligence System



1 LIGHT DIRECTION



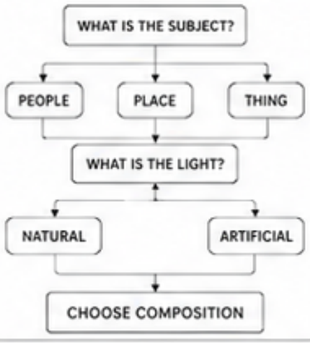
11 DEPTH LAYERS



24 WHY IMAGES FEEL PROFESSIONAL

- LIGHT
- COMPOSITION
- DEPTH
- COLOR
- TONE
- STORY

91 PHOTOGRAPHY DECISION TREE



LIGHT
See the light

DEPTH
Create dimension

ATTENTION
Guide the eye

COLOR
Shape emotion

PSYCHOLOGY
Understand impact

SEE • UNDERSTAND • CREATE

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Welcome

Most photography education begins with cameras.
The problem is that people don't see cameras.
They see photographs.

And photographs are not created by settings alone.
They are created by light, depth, attention, emotion and visual perception.

That is why many photographers spend years learning technical skills
yet still struggle to create images that feel powerful, intentional or memorable.

The **Visual Intelligence System** was designed to solve that problem.
Instead of teaching photography in the order cameras work,
it teaches photography in the order people experience images.

The ten diagrams in this starter pack are selected from
the complete 100-diagram Visual Intelligence System.

Study them slowly.
Apply them deliberately.
Photography is learned by training perception.

YOU WILL LEARN TO:

- **See light** before changing settings
- **Create depth** instead of flatness
- **Control attention** instead of hoping for it
- **Use colour** with intention
- **Understand** the psychology behind visual impact

> *The camera records what is in front of it.*
> ***The photographer decides what matters.***

Christian Tudor

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THE VISUAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

A complete 100-diagram system that teaches photography in the order your brain experiences images. From seeing the light to creating meaningful, cinematic photographs.

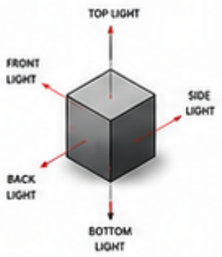
YOU ARE HERE

This starter pack includes 10 essential diagrams from across the system.

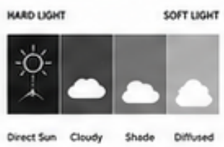
PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5	PHASE 6	PHASE 7	PHASE 8	PHASE 9	PHASE 10
SEEING THE LIGHT	COMPOSITION & DEPTH	VISUAL PSYCHOLOGY	CREATIVE CONTROL	COLOUR & STYLE	FLASH & ADVANCED LIGHT	STORY & MEANING	CINEMATIC LANGUAGE	ADVANCED VISUAL PSYCHOLOGY	THE COMPLETE SYSTEM
1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100

10 DIAGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS STARTER PACK

1 LIGHT DIRECTION



2 LIGHT QUALITY



11 DEPTH LAYERS



15 VISUAL WEIGHT



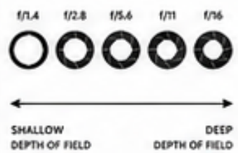
20 LAYER SEPARATION



24 WHY IMAGES FEEL PROFESSIONAL

- LIGHT
- COMPOSITION
- DEPTH
- COLOR
- TONE
- STORY

31 APERTURE VISUALISED



41 CINEMATIC COLOUR



91 PHOTOGRAPHY DECISION TREE



SEE • UNDERSTAND • CREATE

VISUAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM™

HOW TO USE THIS PACK

This starter pack is designed to be practical, clear and immediately useful.

Each diagram in this pack is a visual lesson. Each lesson becomes powerful only when you put it into practice.

Follow this simple process:

1. STUDY ONE DIAGRAM

Read the diagram carefully. Understand the concept. Look at the examples. Let the idea sink in.

2. PHOTOGRAPH ONE CONCEPT

Take your camera out and apply the concept. Create at least one image on purpose.

3. REVIEW YOUR RESULTS

Look at your images critically. What worked? What didn't? What can you improve?

4. REPEAT

Move to the next diagram when you feel confident you have understood and applied the previous one.

> DON'T RUSH THROUGH ALL TEN DIAGRAMS. ONE DIAGRAM PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD IS MORE VALUABLE THAN FIFTY MEMORISED.

FOCUS • PRACTICE
REFINE • REPEAT

01 THE LIGHT DIRECTION DIAGRAM

The direction of light shapes your subject, controls mood, and tells the story.

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THE 6 MAIN LIGHT DIRECTIONS

1. FRONT LIGHT

Light comes from in front of the subject.



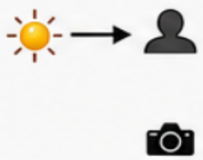


BEST FOR

- Even lighting
- Clear detail
- Flat, low-contrast scenes

2. SIDE LIGHT

Light comes from the side of the subject.





BEST FOR

- Dimension and depth
- Texture and shape
- Dramatic, cinematic look

3. BACK LIGHT

Light comes from behind the subject.





BEST FOR

- Separation from background
- Rim light and atmosphere
- Silhouettes and mood

4. TOP LIGHT

Light comes from above the subject.





BEST FOR

- Dramatic shadows
- Emphasizing texture
- Moody, low-key scenes

5. BOTTOM LIGHT

Light comes from below the subject.



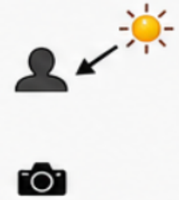


BEST FOR

- Drama and tension
- Unique, stylized looks
- Creative storytelling

6. BACK/SIDE LIGHT

Light comes from behind and to the side.



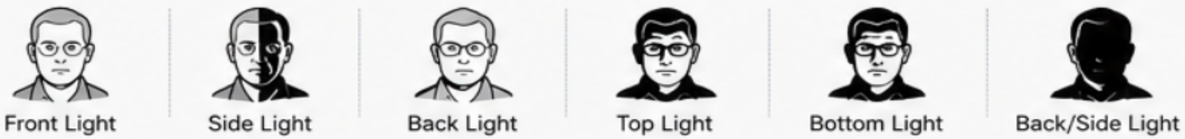


BEST FOR

- Rim light with dimension
- Separation + shape
- Cinematic and flattering

HOW LIGHT DIRECTION AFFECTS YOUR IMAGE

Flat & Low Contrast → Dramatic & High Contrast



KEY TAKEAWAY

Change the **direction** of light, and you change the **emotion, depth, and story** of your photo.

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

	FRONT LIGHT	Use for natural, even results and clear detail.	**Great for:** Group photos, product shots, documentation.
→	SIDE LIGHT	Use for depth, texture, and shape.	**Great for:** Portraits, landscapes, street photography.
	BACK LIGHT	Use for mood, separation, and atmosphere.	**Great for:** Golden hour, silhouettes, high-impact scenes.
	TOP LIGHT	Use for drama and emphasizing texture.	**Great for:** Moody portraits, black & white, strong shadows.
	BOTTOM LIGHT	Use for creative, dramatic effects.	**Great for:** Conceptual shots, night photography, creative projects.
	BACK/SIDE LIGHT	Use for cinematic images with depth and separation.	**Great for:** Portraits, nature, street, storytelling.

PRO TIP: There are no rules—only tools. Master the direction of light, then break the rules with purpose.

02 THE LIGHT QUALITY DIAGRAM

Hard or soft. That's the difference.

Light quality changes how your subject looks, feels, and connects with the viewer.
It's not about the source—it's about the size and softness of the light.

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HARD LIGHT

Small light source. Direct. Strong shadows.

STRONG CONTRAST
Bright highlights and deep shadows.

DEFINED SHADOWS
Sharp edges that reveal texture and shape.

DRAMATIC & BOLD
Creates tension, mood, and visual impact.

BEST FOR
Texture, drama, street, portraits with character, black & white.



RESULT: Strong shadows, texture, drama and impact.

VS.

SOFT LIGHT

Large light source. Diffused. Gentle shadows.

LOW CONTRAST
Smooth transitions between tones.

SOFT SHADOWS
Gentle, diffused edges that flatter.

NATURAL & PLEASING
Creates calm, open, and welcoming images.

BEST FOR
Portraits, lifestyle, beauty, products, travel, everyday scenes.

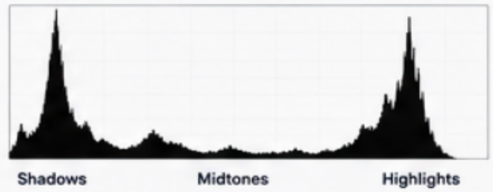


RESULT: Smooth skin tones, gentle shadows, flattering and natural.

HISTOGRAM COMPARISON

HARD LIGHT EXAMPLE

Greater contrast with deep shadows and bright highlights.



SOFT LIGHT EXAMPLE

More even tones with smoother transitions across the range.

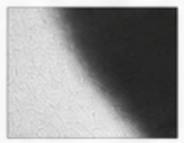


WHAT THIS MEANS
Hard light creates more contrast and separation.
Soft light creates more balance and subtlety.
Choose based on the mood and story you want to tell.

HOW LIGHT QUALITY AFFECTS YOUR IMAGE

SHADOW EDGES

Hard Light



Sharp, defined shadow edges.

Soft Light



Soft, gradual shadow edges.

SKIN TEXTURE

Hard Light



Emphasizes pores, lines and texture.

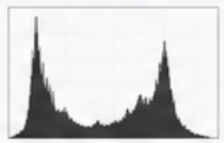
Soft Light



Minimizes blemishes and smooths skin.

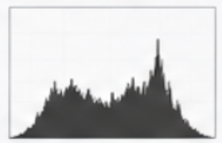
CONTRAST

Hard Light



Higher contrast with deeper darks and brighter highs.

Soft Light



Lower contrast with more detail in shadows and highlights.

MOOD

Hard Light

Feels dramatic, intense, and powerful.

Soft Light

Feels calm, natural, and approachable.

BEST USED FOR

Hard Light	Soft Light
Dramatic portraits	Portraits
Texture & details	Beauty
Black & white	Fashion
Creative shots	Newborn
Storytelling	Interviews

REAL WORLD EXAMPLES

Hard Light / Soft Light



Street Portrait

Hard Light / Soft Light



Outdoor Portrait

Hard Light / Soft Light



Product Photography

Hard Light / Soft Light



Landscape

HOW TO CHANGE THE QUALITY OF LIGHT

MAKE IT SOFTER

- Use a larger light source (softbox, umbrella, window).
- Move the light farther away.
- Add diffusion (softbox, diffuser, curtains).
- Bounce the light off a wall or ceiling.
- Use overcast or shade.

MAKE IT HARDER

- Use a smaller light source (bare bulb, small reflector).
- Move the light closer to your subject.
- Remove diffusion or grids.
- Use direct sunlight.

KEY TAKEAWAY

There is no "best" light quality—only the right one for your intention. Choose the quality that matches the mood, depth, and story you want to tell.

HARD = DRAMA & IMPACT
SOFT = NATURAL & FLATTERING

PRO TIP: Try both. The same scene can tell completely different stories with just a change in light quality.

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11 DEPTH LAYERS

PHASE 2
COMPOSITION & DEPTH

Layer your scene. Add depth. Create dimension.

Depth is what makes a photo feel real and immersive.
Layering separates planes, guides the eye and creates a sense of space.

> A flat image shows a subject.
> A layered image tells a story.
> Depth is the difference.
> – *Christian Tudor*

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THE 3 DEPTH LAYERS



3 **BACKGROUND**
The farthest layer. Adds scale, context and atmosphere.

2 **MIDDLEGROUND**
The supporting layer. Adds separation and connects the scene.

1 **FOREGROUND**
The closest layer. Adds depth, leads the eye inward.

WITH vs. WITHOUT DEPTH LAYERS

WITHOUT LAYERS (FLAT)

Subject against a plain background. No separation. No depth.



- ✗ No foreground
- ✗ No separation
- ✗ Background too close
- ✗ Feels static and flat

WITH LAYERS (DIMENSIONAL)

Layers create separation, scale and atmosphere.



- ✓ Foreground adds depth
- ✓ Middleground adds separation
- ✓ Background adds scale
- ✓ Feels immersive and real

HOW LAYERS CREATE DEPTH

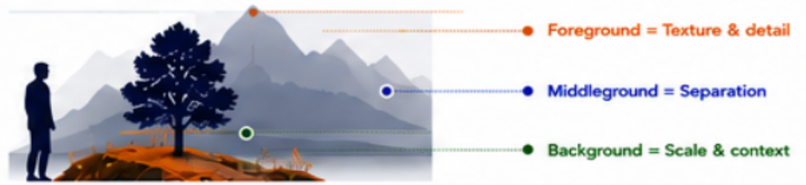
OVERLAP
Objects in front of other objects create depth.

PERSPECTIVE
Lines lead back and objects get smaller with distance.

ATMOSPHERE
Haze, contrast falloff and colour shift add a sense of distance.

LIGHT SEPARATION
Side light and contrast define planes and edges.

DEPTH IN ACTION



PRACTICAL WAYS TO ADD DEPTH LAYERS

INCLUDE FOREGROUND
Use objects, textures or shadows close to the camera.



Kneel, crouch or move closer.

CREATE MIDDLEGROUND
Add elements between subject and background.



Use trees, people, paths, water, architecture or landforms.

USE A STRONG BACKGROUND
Find backgrounds that add scale, context and interest.



Look for depth, not distraction. Keep it supporting.

USE LEADING LINES
Lines draw the eye through the layers.



Roads, rivers, fences, shorelines or paths work beautifully.

CONTROL SEPARATION
Increase distance or change angle to separate layers.



Step sideways or move closer/farther.

USE LIGHT & ATMOSPHERE
Light, haze and contrast increase the feeling of depth.



Shoot toward or away from light for atmosphere.

QUICK DEPTH CHECK

- ☑ Do I have something in the foreground?
- ☑ Is there a clear middleground?
- ☑ Does the background add scale or context?
- ☑ Are the layers separated?
- ☑ Does the light support the depth?
- ☑ Does it feel immersive?

DEPTH EXERCISE

Take the same scene three ways. Notice how small changes transform depth.

1 FLAT



2 SOME DEPTH



3 STRONG DEPTH



THINK IN LAYERS, NOT SUBJECTS

Don't just look for a subject.
Look for a scene you can build.

Ask: Where can I add a foreground?
What can I place in between?
What's behind that adds scale?

Build the depth. Then make the image.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Depth layers turn a photo into an experience.
Layer your foreground, middleground and background.
Guide the eye. Create space.

**LAYER YOUR SCENE.
CREATE DIMENSION.**



SEE
Observe the scene. Identify potential layers.

CHOOSE
Decide what to include in each layer.

POSITION
Move and frame to build strong separation.

COMPOSE
Arrange elements to guide the eye through the scene.

REFINE
Use light, focus and angle to enhance depth.

> DEPTH IS WHAT MAKES A PHOTO REAL.
> TRAIN YOUR EYES. BUILD YOUR SCENES.

15 VISUAL WEIGHT

PHASE 2
COMPOSITION & DEPTH

Control attention. Create balance. Tell the story.

Every element in your frame has a weight.
Balance them intentionally so the eye goes where you want it to.

> A powerful photo isn't about what you include.
> It's about what you emphasize.
> – *Christian Tudor*

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WHAT IS VISUAL WEIGHT?

Visual weight is how strongly an element attracts the viewer's attention.

- **Size** — Larger = more weight
- **Position** — Center = more weight
- **Brightness** — Brighter = more weight
- **Sharpness** — Sharper = more weight
- **Contrast** — Higher contrast = more weight
- **Isolation** — Separated = more weight
- **Colour** — Vibrant colours = more weight
- **Direction** — Elements pointing = more weight



BALANCE: EVEN vs INTENTIONAL

EVEN (Static)
Everything competes.
No clear focus.



- ✗ Multiple bright areas
- ✗ Centered subject
- ✗ No hierarchy
- ✗ Eye doesn't know where to go

INTENTIONAL (Dynamic)
One dominant. Others support.



- ✓ Clear focal point
- ✓ Supporting elements
- ✓ Strong hierarchy
- ✓ Eye flows naturally

WEIGHT IN ACTION (Examples)

Large vs Small



Bright vs Dark



Colour vs Neutral



Sharp vs Soft



Centered vs Off-center



Negative Space



HOW TO MANAGE VISUAL WEIGHT

MAKE ONE ELEMENT THE HERO



Give one thing most of the weight.

SIMPLIFY THE SCENE



Remove distractions. Less = more impact.

PLACE WITH PURPOSE



Use thirds and negative space to guide attention.

USE CONTRAST



Contrast separates and gives weight.

DIRECT THE EYE



Use lines, shapes and patterns to lead.

QUICK VISUAL WEIGHT CHECK

- ☑ What is the main subject?
- ☑ Is it the brightest or most contrasting?
- ☑ Is it placed intentionally?
- ☑ Are other elements supporting, not competing?
- ☑ Is there enough contrast or colour difference to make it stand out?
- ☑ Does the eye move smoothly through the frame?

BEFORE & AFTER

Before (No Order)



✗ No hierarchy. Eye is lost.

After (Intentional)



✓ Clear hierarchy. Eye is guided.

VISUAL WEIGHT EXERCISE

Take a scene and create three versions.

1. Too many weights
2. Balanced weights
3. One strong hero



THINK ABOUT VISUAL WEIGHT

- What do I want the viewer to see first?
- What should support that?
- What should I remove or minimize?
- How can I make the subject stronger?
- Is the balance intentional?

KEY TAKEAWAY

Visual weight is control.
Decide what matters most.
Remove what doesn't.
Guide the eye.

CONTROL ATTENTION.
CREATE IMPACT.

SEE — Notice what naturally attracts your eye.

CHOOSE — Decide what should be the hero.

POSITION — Place it intentionally within the frame.

COMPOSE — Arrange supporting elements to enhance the hero.

REFINE — Adjust contrast, colour and lighting to strengthen weight.

> YOU DON'T NEED MORE ELEMENTS.
> YOU NEED BETTER ORDER.

20 LAYER SEPARATION

PHASE 2
COMPOSITION & DEPTH

Separate your subject from the background.

Layer separation is the distance, contrast or blur between the subject and the background.
More separation = more depth, focus and impact.

> **Depth isn't just in the scene. It's in how you separate one layer from another.**
> *– Christian Tudor*

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WHAT IS LAYER SEPARATION?

A strong photograph has clear visual layers:

- Foreground
- Subject
- Background

When these layers are separated, the image feels dimensional and easy to read.



BACKGROUND
Farthest layer.
Lowest contrast.
Supports the scene.

SUBJECT
Main focus.
Highest clarity and contrast.

FOREGROUND
Closest layer.
Adds depth and leads into the scene.

HOW TO CREATE LAYER SEPARATION

Add distance
Increase the distance between your subject and the background.

Use depth of field
Blur the background with a wider aperture or longer focal length.

Use light and contrast
Light the subject or create contrast so it stands out from the background.

Use colour separation
Contrast colours between subject and background to make the subject pop.

Use framing or foreground
Add foreground elements or natural frames to create separation and depth.

THE PSYCHOLOGY

Guides attention
Separation tells the viewer exactly where to look.

Creates depth
Our brains perceive layers as three-dimensional space.

Reduces clutter
When the subject is clearly separated, the image feels clean and intentional.

Adds impact
Strong separation makes moments feel more powerful and memorable.

COMMON MISTAKES



Subject too close to background
Little to no distance = flat, cluttered look.



Similar tones and colours
Subject blends in with the background.



No foreground or depth
Image feels flat and two-dimensional.



Poor light on subject
Subject underexposed = it gets lost.

EXAMPLES: SEE THE LAYER SEPARATION

STRONG SEPARATION



Background
Subject
Foreground

Clear foreground, well-lit subject, and distant background.
Strong depth and impact.

MODERATE SEPARATION



Background
Subject
Foreground

Some distance and depth, but layers are closer together.
Decent depth, but less impact.

WEAK SEPARATION



Background
Subject
Foreground

Subject is close to background, all layers are too close.
Flat, less depth and separation.

NO SEPARATION



Background
Subject

Subject on the same plane as the background.
Very flat and distracting.

DISTRACTED SEPARATION



Background
Subject
Foreground

Busy background competes with the subject.
Separation is broken.

QUICK WAYS TO ADD SEPARATION

Use wider aperture	Use longer focal length	Increase distance	Use side or back light	Add foreground elements
e.g. f/1.8 – f/2.8	e.g. 85mm – 200mm	Step back and zoom in.	To add contrast and separation.	To create depth and scale.

LAYER SEPARATION CHECKLIST

- [ ] Is there distance between subject and background?
- [ ] Is the subject clearly brighter or more contrasted?
- [ ] Is the background softer or less detailed?
- [ ] Do colours separate the subject from the background?
- [ ] Is there a foreground element adding depth?
- [ ] Does the image have clear visual layers?

KEY TAKEAWAY

Separation creates depth.
Depth creates impact.
Control your layers, and you control how your photo feels.

SEPARATE YOUR LAYERS. ELEVATE YOUR IMAGE.

REMEMBER

A professional photo is not about what you include.

It's about how clearly you separate what matters.

1. SEE
Look for layers in the scene. What's foreground, subject and background?

2. CHOOSE
Decide what is your subject and what will support it.

3. POSITION
Move to create distance and better separation.

4. COMPOSE
Add foreground, use light, and simplify the background.

5. REFINE
Adjust exposure, contrast, aperture and details.

GREAT PHOTOS ARE BUILT IN LAYERS.

24 WHY IMAGES FEEL PROFESSIONAL

PHASE 3
HUMAN PERCEPTION & VISUAL PSYCHOLOGY

It's not luck. It's intention.

Professional images communicate clearly, evoke emotion and feel effortless. They are built on a foundation of light, colour, composition and purpose.

> **A professional image is not about expensive gear, it's about seeing, feeling and choosing on purpose.**
>
> – Christian Tudor

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THE FOUNDATION

Professional images consistently combine six core elements that work together to create impact.

- Light & Lighting
- Colour & Tone
- Clarity of Subject & Intent
- Strong Composition
- Contrast & Hierarchy
- Emotional Connection

1. LIGHT SETS THE TONE (PHASE 1)

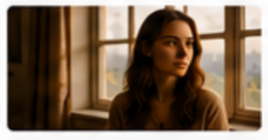
Lighting defines mood, depth and dimension.



Golden Light
Warm, soft and cinematic. Feels inviting and timeless.



Hard Light
Strong contrast and clear shadows. Feels bold and dramatic.



Soft Light
Even, gentle and flattering. Feels natural and calm.



Low Light
Moody, intimate and atmospheric. Feels emotional.

2. COLOUR SHAPES EMOTION (PHASE 3)

Colour influences how the story is felt.



Warm & Earthy
Comforting, nostalgic and connected.



Cool & Calm
Peaceful, clean and trustworthy.



Vibrant & Bold
Energetic, confident and alive.



Muted & Moody
Introspective, cinematic and sophisticated.

3. THE PROFESSIONAL DIFFERENCE

The combination that separates amateur from professional.

Clear Intent
Every element has a purpose. Nothing is accidental.

Visual Hierarchy
The eye knows where to go and why.

Balance & Weight
Elements are balanced for a natural, stable feel.

Depth & Separation
Layers create dimension and realism.

Emotion First
It connects with the heart, not just the eyes.

COMMON MISTAKES (AMATEUR PATTERNS)



✕ Flat, harsh or unflattering light. No mood.



✕ Clashing or random colours. No feeling.



✕ Unclear subject or purpose. Nothing stands out.



✕ Cluttered frame. No hierarchy. Eye gets confused.



✕ No emotional connection. Feels distant.

EXAMPLES: INTENTION CREATES IMPACT

LANDSCAPE



- Leading lines guide the eye
- Depth creates scale
- Light adds mood
- Strong composition holds it

Feels epic and timeless.

PORTRAIT



- Soft light flatters features
- Background separated
- Eye contact engages
- Emotion tells the story

Feels intimate and authentic.

STREET



- Contrast creates drama
- Light draws attention
- Story feels alive
- Moment captured with intent

Feels real and engaging.

WILDLIFE



- Side light adds dimension
- Natural tones feel real
- Subject isolated
- Connection with the viewer

Feels powerful and real.

TRAVEL



- Warm light enhances scene
- Colours express the place
- Composition creates flow
- Invites you into the moment

Feels inspiring and alive.

STILL LIFE



- Directional light sculpts
- Tones set the mood
- Simplicity adds elegance
- Purpose in every detail

Feels crafted and intentional.

THE PROFESSIONAL MINDSET: A SIMPLE PROCESS

1. **INTENTION** — What do I want the viewer to feel?
2. **OBSERVE** — See the light, scene and emotion.
3. **CHOOSE** — Select the feeling, colour and tools that support it.
4. **COMPOSE** — Arrange elements to create depth, balance and focus.
5. **CONNECT** — Create an image that speaks to the heart.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Professional images are not about doing more.
They are about choosing the right things and leaving the rest out.

SEE WITH PURPOSE.
CREATE WITH INTENTION.



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PHASE 4
CAMERA & TECHNICAL MASTERY

APERTURE VISUALISED

Aperture controls light. It also controls depth, mood and focus.

The aperture (f-stop) is the size of the opening in your lens.
Smaller numbers = wider opening. More light. Shallower depth of field.

> Aperture is not just a setting.
> It's a creative tool that shapes how your image feels.

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WHAT IS APERTURE?

A circular opening in the lens that lets light reach the sensor.



- Affects exposure (brightness)
- Affects depth of field (focus)
- Affects image quality (sharpness, bokeh)

THE APERTURE SCALE

Full stops. Each step halves or doubles the light.

MORE LIGHT
SHALLOW DOF

f/1.4	Very wide Most light Shallowest DOF
f/2	Wide More light Shallow DOF
f/2.8	Moderately wide Good balance
f/4	Standard Versatile
f/5.6	Smaller More in focus
f/8	Small More depth
f/11	Very small Great depth
f/16	Very small Least light Deepest DOF

LESS LIGHT
DEEP DOF

DEPTH OF FIELD COMPARISON (SAME SCENE, DIFFERENT APERTURES)



SHALLOW DEPTH OF FIELD
Background blurred.
Subject stands out.
Dreamy, cinematic look.

DEEP DEPTH OF FIELD
More of the scene in focus.
Sharp foreground to background.
Clean, detailed look.

HOW APERTURE AFFECTS EXPOSURE

Same scene. Same shutter speed. Only aperture changes.



← BRIGHTER (More light enters) ——— DARKER (Less light enters) →

REAL WORLD EFFECTS

Wide Aperture
(f/1.4 – f/2.8)
Great for portraits, low light, creative background blur.

Medium Aperture
(f/4 – f/8)
Great all-rounder. Good balance of sharpness and depth.

Small Aperture
(f/11 – f/16)
Apeat for landscapes, architecture and maximum sharpness.

COMMON MISTAKES



Always wide open.
Not every shot needs blur.



Too small all the time.
Can lose subject separation and sharpness.



Ignoring the light.
Small aperture in low light = dark images.



No creative intent.
Aperture is a tool, not a default.

APERTURE IN ACTION

PORTRAIT



Subject pops.
Creamy background.
Emotional and intimate.

FOOD



Focus on detail.
Background soft.
More appetite appeal.

STREET



Subject + environment.
Balanced storytelling.
Natural depth.

LANDSCAPE



Everything sharp.
Great detail.
Immersive and expansive.

ARCHITECTURE



Straight lines sharp.
Edge to edge clarity.
Strong and professional.

NIGHT CITYSCAPE



Starbursts on lights.
Great detail.
Clean and dramatic.

MACRO



More of the subject in focus.
Detail with depth.

A SIMPLE PROCESS TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT APERTURE

1. **KNOW YOUR INTENT**
What do you want the viewer to focus on?

→ 2. **CHOOSE DEPTH**
Decide how much of the scene needs to be in focus.

→ 3. **CONSIDER LIGHT**
Check your light. Adjust ISO or shutter as needed.

→ 4. **SET APERTURE**
Choose the f-stop that matches your creative goal.

→ 5. **REVIEW & ADJUST**
Check the result. Refine for impact.

KEY TAKEAWAY

- Lower f-number = wider aperture = more light + shallower depth.
- Higher f-number = smaller aperture = less light + more depth.
- Choose aperture based on your creative intent.
- Control depth to control the story.



Master aperture.
Master your images.
Master your story.

> APERTURE GIVES YOU OPTIONS.
> UNDERSTANDING IT GIVES YOU POWER.
> USING IT WITH INTENT GIVES YOU ART.

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PHASE 5
COLOUR & VISUAL STYLE

CINEMATIC COLOUR

COLOUR IS EMOTION. CINEMA USES IT INTENTIONALLY.

Cinematic colour creates mood, drama and story.

It's not about filters—it's about understanding how colours work together.

> Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings.
>
> – WASSILY KANDINSKY

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1. WHAT IS CINEMATIC COLOUR?

Cinematic colour guides emotion and focus using specific colour relationships, contrast and harmony.

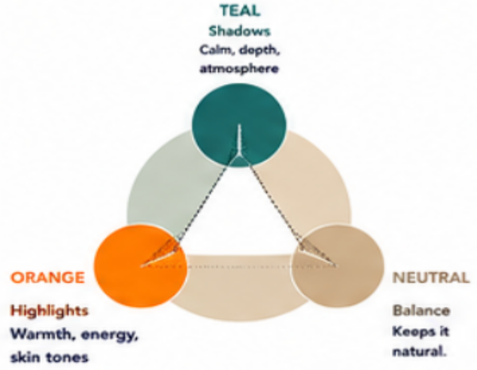
ORDINARY COLOUR | CINEMATIC COLOUR



More contrast
Controlled colours
Emotional tone
Story driven

2. THE CINEMATIC COLOUR TRIAD

Most cinematic looks are built on this simple but powerful colour relationship.



Teal + Orange + Neutral = Cinematic Balance

3. COLOUR CONTRAST & HARMONY

Cinematic images use contrast between warm and cool to create depth and interest.

COLOUR CONTRAST
Warm vs Cool creates visual separation and drama.



COLOUR HARMONY
Using limited colours that work well together.



4. CINEMATIC COLOUR PALETTES

Start with these proven palettes.

TEAL & ORANGE (Classic)



GOLD & TEAL (Warm & Rich)



BLUE & AMBER (Night Cinematic)



Use these as a guide, not a rule.
Let the story decide.

KEY TAKEAWAY

COLOUR CREATES MOOD
Warm feels energetic.
Cool feels calm. Use both.

LIMIT YOUR COLOURS
2–3 main colours keep your image clean and powerful.

CONTRAST CREATES DEPTH
Use warm highlights and cool shadows.

COLOUR SERVES THE STORY
Every colour should support the emotion.

5. HOW CINEMATIC COLOUR AFFECTS EMOTION

WARM & GOLDEN



Feels warm, nostalgic, happy, romantic.
Great for sunlight, love stories, beauty.

COOL & BLUE



Feels calm, lonely, mysterious, sad.
Great for night, rain, dramatic scenes.

TEAL & ORANGE



Feels cinematic, modern, dramatic, energetic.
The most popular cinematic look.

DESATURATED & MOODY



Feels serious, mature, intense, timeless.
Great for documentaries, thrillers, drama.

HIGH CONTRAST



Feels powerful, epic, bold, heroic.
Great for action, adventure, epic scenes.

PASTEL & SOFT



Feels light, dreamy, peaceful, gentle.
Great for lifestyle, travel, minimal scenes.

6. WHERE COLOUR LIVES IN YOUR IMAGE

Colour is everywhere. Control it.

LIGHT
The colour of your light source (sunset, bulbs, LED, window).

SUBJECT
Clothing, skin tones, props, makeup, textures.

ENVIRONMENT
Sky, walls, nature, city, objects, reflections, surfaces.

GRADING
How you balance, shift and shape colour in post.

> CINEMATIC COLOUR ISN'T ABOUT MAKING THINGS LOOK PRETTY.
> IT'S ABOUT MAKING THE VIEWER FEEL SOMETHING.
> EVERY. SINGLE. TIME.



7. PRACTICAL TIPS

- Use natural light whenever possible.
- Watch the direction of your light.
- Include contrasting colours in the scene.
- Shoot in RAW for maximum flexibility.
- Edit with purpose, not just presets.
- Less is more. Keep it controlled.

8. SIMPLE IN-CAMERA TIPS

- Set White Balance intentionally. Don't leave it on Auto.
- Use Picture Profiles / Creative Styles. Start with Neutral.
- Expose for your highlights. Protect the important parts.

9. BEFORE & AFTER – THE POWER OF COLOUR GRADING

BEFORE (FLAT) → AFTER (CINEMATIC)



Same scene. Same light. Different colour decisions.
That's the power of cinematic colour.

10. REMEMBER

- Mood is the goal.
- Colour is the tool.
- Story is the reason.
- You are the artist.

91 THE PHOTOGRAPHY DECISION TREE

A CLEAR FRAMEWORK FOR EVERY SITUATION.

PHASE 10
THE COMPLETE SYSTEM

Great photos aren't accidental. They're the result of clear decisions, made in the right order, for the right reason.

> "The best camera is the one that's with you. The best skill is seeing. The best photo is the one that means something."
> — CHRISTIAN TUDOR

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EVERY PHOTO STARTS WITH INTENTION.

This tree guides you from that intention to the final image.

THE CORE PRINCIPLES

- **INTENTION** — Know why you're photographing.
- **AWARENESS** — See the light, the moment, the possibilities.
- **SIMPLIFY** — Remove clutter. Focus on what matters.
- **COMPOSE** — Use the frame with purpose.
- **TIME** — Be patient. The right moment matters.
- **CONNECT** — Make the photo mean something.
- **REFLECT** — Review, learn, and evolve.

QUICK REMINDERS

- Slow down.
- Breathe.
- Look before you shoot.
- Trust your eyes.
- Less is often more.
- Your perspective is your power.
- You don't need every photo to be perfect.

1. WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

Capture a Memory | Tell a Story | Express a Feeling | Solve a Problem | Create Art

2. WHAT IS YOUR SUBJECT?

People | Places | Things | Nature | Events | Abstract

3. WHAT IS THE CONDITION?

Good Light | Low Light | High Contrast | Fast Moving | Static / Controlled | Unpredictable

4. WHAT MATTERS MOST RIGHT NOW?

Light | Composition | Moment | Emotion | Detail | Context

5. HOW WILL YOU APPROACH IT?

Wide (Establish) | Normal (Natural) | Tight (Focus) | Creative (Unique) | Do Nothing (Wait)

6. CHECK YOUR FRAME

- Is the subject clear?
- Is the light working for you?
- Are there any distractions?
- Does it support the story?
- Does it feel balanced?

7. IS IT STRONG?

NO — Go back and adjust.

YES — Capture with confidence.

8. REVIEW & REFINE

Check Focus | Check Exposure | Check Composition | Check Emotion | Learn One Thing

NOT WORKING
Reassess the situation. Change something. Try again.

GOOD
Captured the moment. Now make it better in editing.

GREAT
It tells the story. Share it with purpose.

CAMERA SETTINGS STARTING POINTS

PORTRAITS
f/1.8 – f/2.8
ISO 100–800
1/125 or faster

LANDSCAPES
f/8 – f/11
ISO 100–400
Tripod

LOW LIGHT
f/1.4 – f/2.0
ISO 800–3200
1/60 or faster

ACTION
f/2.8 – f/4
ISO 400–1600
1/500 or faster

STREET
f/5.6 – f/8
ISO 200–800
1/125 or faster

COMPOSITION TOOLS

- Rule of Thirds
- Leading Lines
- Framing
- Symmetry
- Negative Space
- Patterns
- Depth

LIGHT GUIDE

- Golden Hour (Soft & Warm)
- Blue Hour (Cool & Calm)
- Backlight (Drama & Rim)
- Side Light (Shape & Texture)
- Overcast (Soft & Even)
- Hard Light (Contrast & Edge)

SPECIAL SITUATIONS: QUICK PATHS

- **UNSURE WHAT TO SHOOT?** Look for light, emotion, or contrast.
- **BORING SCENE?** Move closer. Change angle. Wait for light.
- **TOO BUSY?** Simplify your frame. Remove distractions.
- **NOT CONNECTING?** Find the story. What does this mean?
- **RUNNING OUT OF TIME?** Focus on one strong frame. Make it count.
- **INSPIRATION LOW?** Study great work. Take a break. Go shoot anyway.

TIPS TO STAY SHARP

- Practice often.
- Analyze your photos.
- Learn continuously.
- Challenge yourself.
- Keep it fun.
- Tell your story.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S MINDSET

Be Curious | Be Present | Be Patient | Be Honest | Be Brave | Keep Learning | Share Value

INTENTION → AWARENESS → SIMPLIFY → COMPOSE → TIME → CONNECT → REFLECT → EVOLVE

SEE INTENTION. MAKE DECISIONS. CREATE MEANING.

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PHOTO DIAGNOSIS CHECKLIST

USE THIS CHECKLIST IN THE FIELD

A few seconds of awareness can make the difference between an average photo and a powerful one.

BEFORE PRESSING THE SHUTTER

LIGHT

Light shapes everything.

- [ ] Where is the light coming from?
- [ ] Is it soft or hard?
- [ ] Is the light helping the subject?
- [ ] Are there unwanted shadows?
- [ ] Is the exposure balanced?

DEPTH

Depth creates dimension.

- [ ] Foreground (Does it add depth?)
- [ ] Subject (Is it clear and separated?)
- [ ] Background (Does it support the story?)
- [ ] Separation (Is the subject separated from the background?)
- [ ] Depth of field (Is it enhancing the image?)

ATTENTION

Control where the eye goes.

- [ ] What attracts the eye first?
- [ ] Is there a clear focal point?
- [ ] Is there visual clutter?
- [ ] Does the composition guide attention?
- [ ] Is there a clear hierarchy?

STORY

Every photo communicates.

- [ ] What is this image about?
- [ ] What moment or feeling am I capturing?
- [ ] What emotion should it create?
- [ ] Is the story clear to the viewer?

TECHNICAL

Get the basics right.

- [ ] Exposure (Overall brightness)
- [ ] Focus (On the right point)
- [ ] White balance (Correct colour)
- [ ] Sharpness (Where it matters)
- [ ] File quality (For the intended use)

ASSIGNMENT 1

SEE THE LIGHT

For seven days photograph the same subject using:

- Day 1 — Front Light
- Day 2 — Side Light
- Day 3 — Back Light
- Day 4 — Top Light
- Day 5 — Soft Light
- Day 6 — Hard Light
- Day 7 — Your Favourite

OBJECTIVE

Understand how light direction changes the mood, depth and emotion of your photographs.

DAY 1 — FRONT LIGHT

Light from behind the camera.



Mood: Flat, even, neutral

DAY 2 — SIDE LIGHT

Light from the side.



Mood: Dimensional, shaped, natural

DAY 3 — BACK LIGHT

Light from behind the subject.



Mood: Dramatic, silhouetted, atmospheric

DAY 4 — TOP LIGHT

Light from above.



Mood: Dramatic, moody, intense

DAY 5 — SOFT LIGHT

Large, diffused light source.



Mood: Soft, gentle, pleasant, calming

DAY 6 — HARD LIGHT

Small, direct light source.



Mood: Strong, contrasty, bold, powerful

DAY 7 — YOUR FAVOURITE

Use the light you love most.



Mood: _____

WRITE ONE SENTENCE DESCRIBING HOW THE MOOD CHANGED.

ASSIGNMENT 2

BUILD DEPTH

Create one image containing:

- ☐ **FOREGROUND**
  An element close to the camera that adds scale and depth.
- ☐ **MIDGROUND**
  The area that supports the subject and leads the eye.
- ☐ **BACKGROUND**
  The distant area that adds context and atmosphere.
- ☐ **SUBJECT SEPARATION**
  Clear separation between the subject and the background.

BONUS: Add light direction.
Use light to enhance depth and mood.

EXAMPLE



BACKGROUND
Mountains, sky and atmosphere create a sense of place.

MIDGROUND
The lake and trees support the subject and add context.

SUBJECT SEPARATION
The subject stands out clearly from the background.

FOREGROUND
Elements close to the camera add depth and scale.

TIP: Move around, change your angle and perspective until all three layers are visible.
The stronger the depth, the more immersive the image.

ASSIGNMENT 3

CONTROL ATTENTION

Photograph a busy scene.

Then create a second version where:

- ☐ One subject dominates
- ☐ Clutter is removed
- ☐ Attention is controlled

TIP: Use composition, light, depth of field, colour and contrast to guide the viewer's eye.

COMPARE THE TWO IMAGES.

IMAGE 1 — BUSY SCENE

Many competing elements. The eye has nowhere to rest.



RESULT: The viewer's eye is confused. Nothing stands out.

IMAGE 2 — CONTROLLED ATTENTION

One clear subject. Distractions removed. The eye is guided.



RESULT: The subject is clear. The image feels calm, intentional and powerful.

ASSIGNMENT 4

LUXURY VS ORDINARY

Using Diagram 81:
Create two versions of the same subject.

A **VERSION A: VISUAL CHAOS.**

- Too many elements compete for attention.
- Cluttered background.
- No clear hierarchy.
- The subject gets lost.

B **VERSION B: VISUAL RESTRAINT.**

- Fewer elements.
- Clean, intentional composition.
- Clear hierarchy.
- The subject stands out.

ANALYSE THE DIFFERENCE.

Which image feels more premium?
Why does one feel more powerful?
What makes the subject stand out in Version B?

DIAGRAM 81 — LUXURY VS ORDINARY

Diagram 81 teaches the difference between visual chaos (ordinary) and visual restraint (luxury).

VERSION A — VISUAL CHAOS

Many elements. No clear focus.



The eye has nowhere to rest. Everything competes.
The product feels ordinary.
It looks busy, cluttered and confusing.

VS

VERSION B — VISUAL RESTRAINT

Few elements. Clear focus.



The eye rests on the subject.
The product feels premium and intentional.
It communicates luxury, quality and confidence.

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PROGRESS TRACKER

Track your progress through the Visual Intelligence Starter Pack

DIAGRAM			COMPLETED
	1	Light Direction	☐
	2	Light Quality	☐
	11	Depth Layers	☐
	15	Visual Weight	☐
	20	Layer Separation	☐
	24	Why Images Feel Professional	☐
	31	Aperture Visualised	☐
	41	Cinematic Colour	☐
	81	Luxury Aesthetics	☐
	91	Photography Decision Tree	☐

COMPLETION SCORE



0 / 10

Diagrams Completed

NEXT STEPS

- Revisit diagrams you found difficult
- Complete all four assignments
- Apply the concepts in real photographs
- Continue with the complete Visual Intelligence System.

> *Knowledge becomes skill only when it is applied.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CONGRATULATIONS.

You have completed the first stage of the Academy of Photography Visual Intelligence System.

These ten diagrams are only a small selection from the complete 100-diagram framework.

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WHAT'S NEXT?

You have completed the Visual Intelligence Starter Pack.
This is just the beginning.

KEEP BUILDING.
KEEP CREATING.

Every great image starts with understanding.

Every powerful image comes from intention.

The journey continues.

WHAT YOU'VE ACHIEVED

10
DIAGRAMS EXPLORED
You've learned the foundational building blocks of photography.

4
PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS
You've applied new concepts through hands-on practice.

1
NEW WAY OF SEEING
You've started developing your Visual Intelligence and creative awareness.

A STRONG FOUNDATION
You're now ready to take your skills much further with the full system.

WHAT COMES NEXT

PHASE 2
COMPOSITION & DEPTH

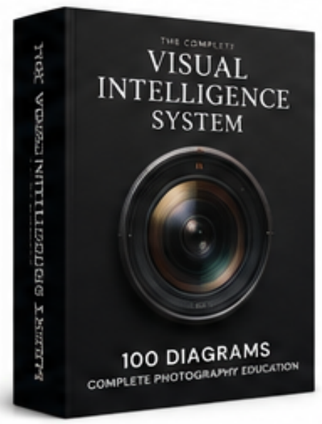


Master depth, composition, framing and visual storytelling.
Diagrams 11–25

PHASE 3
CAMERA & TECHNIQUE



Build technical confidence and creative control with your camera.
Diagrams 26–50



100 DIAGRAMS • 4 PHASES • LIFETIME ACCESS • CONTINUOUSLY EXPANDING

YOUR ROADMAP

STEP 1: STARTER PACK
Completed
You've built your foundation.

STEP 2: COMPOSITION & DEPTH
Next Step
Learn how to create depth, structure and strong compositions.

STEP 3: CAMERA & TECHNIQUE
Coming Next
Gain full control of your camera and creative tools.

STEP 4: COLOUR & LIGHT MASTERY
Future
Use colour and light to create mood, emotion and style.

STEP 5: PROFESSIONAL MASTERY
Future
Develop your signature style and create work that stands out.

THE GOAL
To see the world differently and create images that inspire.

THE BEST CAMERAS DON'T TAKE GREAT PHOTOS. PHOTOGRAPHERS DO.

See Intentionally.
Understand Deeply.
Create Beautifully.

THE COMPLETE VISUAL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM IS WAITING FOR YOU.

Continue your journey and unlock your full creative potential.