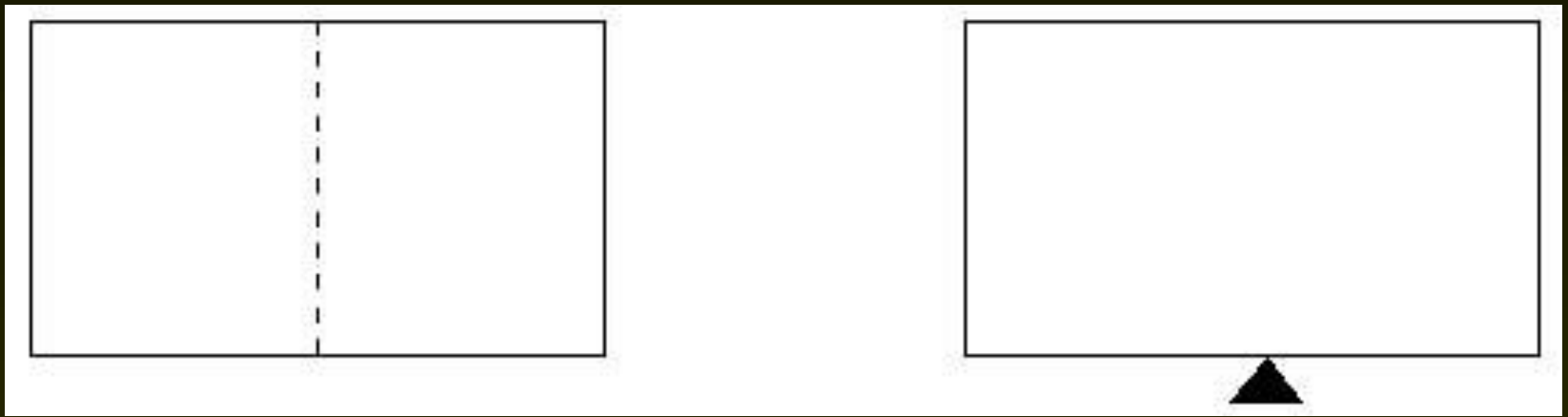
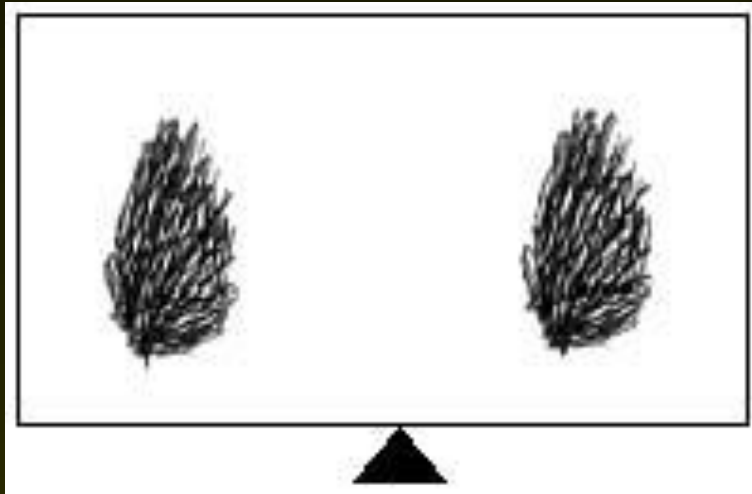


The “Odd Rule” Of Composition

Composition in photography is a learning experience; and a dynamic one.



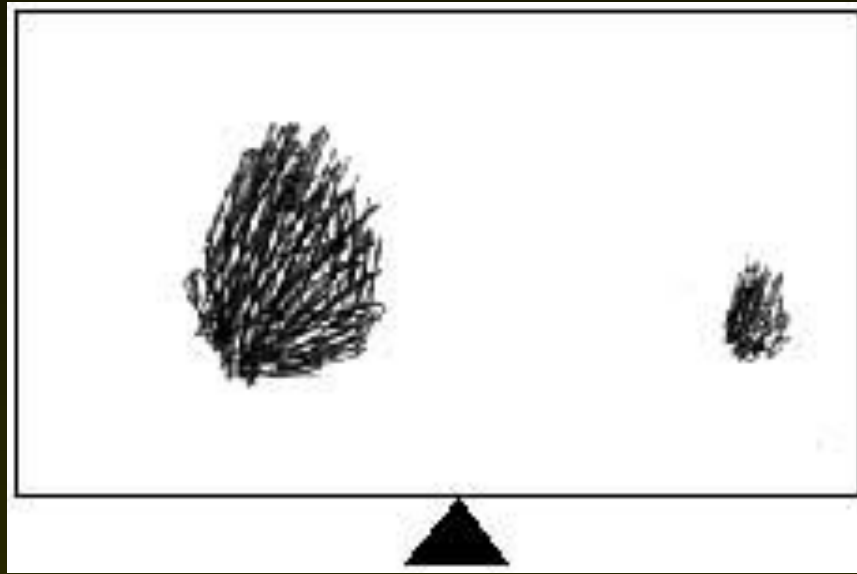
When looking at a picture, there exists an unconscious action in the viewer's mind to divide the space in half; to want the visual objects to find balance much the same way equal weight on the end of a teeter-totter balances.



The more common method is to place objects of equal mass or weight on each side of the balancing mid-point. This was the practice of the medieval era, and the balance is referred to as "formal" or "symmetrical" balance.

While it is true that symmetrical balance works, it is considered the obvious solution, and in the art world: Boring!

“Asymmetrical” balance, also called “informal” balance, looks for unique relationships that appear at first glance as though it ought not to work, yet does. Such creates much appeal and interest, and calls attention to the viewer's eyes.



For example, above we have a larger mass closer to the mid-point, with a much smaller positive element far away from center. This is similar to an adult sitting closer to the center of a teeter-totter in order to “balance” with a child, instead of leaving the child hanging in mid-air.

So, “asymmetrical” or “informal”
balance in composition is generally more
pleasing to the eye.

The “Odd Rule” of photographic composition also creates results that are more pleasing to the eye.

Basically, the “odd rule” of photographic composition says that odd numbers of things in photos work better than even numbers of things.

This "rule of odds" suggests that an odd number of subjects in an image is more interesting than an even number. Thus if you have more than one subject in your picture, the suggestion is to choose an arrangement with at least three subjects. An even number of subjects produces symmetries in the image, which can appear less natural.



No one is exactly sure why it works - but almost everyone agrees it does. Perhaps it's about the balance that odd numbers create; perhaps because there's something in the centre to give balance, rather than an even number of things which creates symmetry.



When discussing composition (that is, the placement of elements in the area of a photo), the “odds rule” does seem to produce images which are more pleasing to the eye (generally), and certainly “more natural”. This may be because in nature we don’t generally see things arranged in a precise symmetrical order.







Note the 1 dragonfly, 3 sticks, and 5 wall boards in the background.



But be careful with the “rule of odds”: one or three objects in a shot are particularly good; five, usually OK; seven or more may work, but you run the risk of clutter.







Related to the rule of odds is the observation that triangles (not images of triangles, but images of subjects arranged in triangular fashion) are an aesthetically pleasing implied shape within an image.





Assignment 4

- Work with a partner; i.e., group of 2.
- Take a camera and go take photos that illustrate the “Odd Rule” of Composition. Take as many photos as possible in the period of time you have.
- When you return, download your photos, view them, and keep only your five best shots. Name these “odd1”, “odd2”, and “odd3”, etc. Save these in your Photography folder.