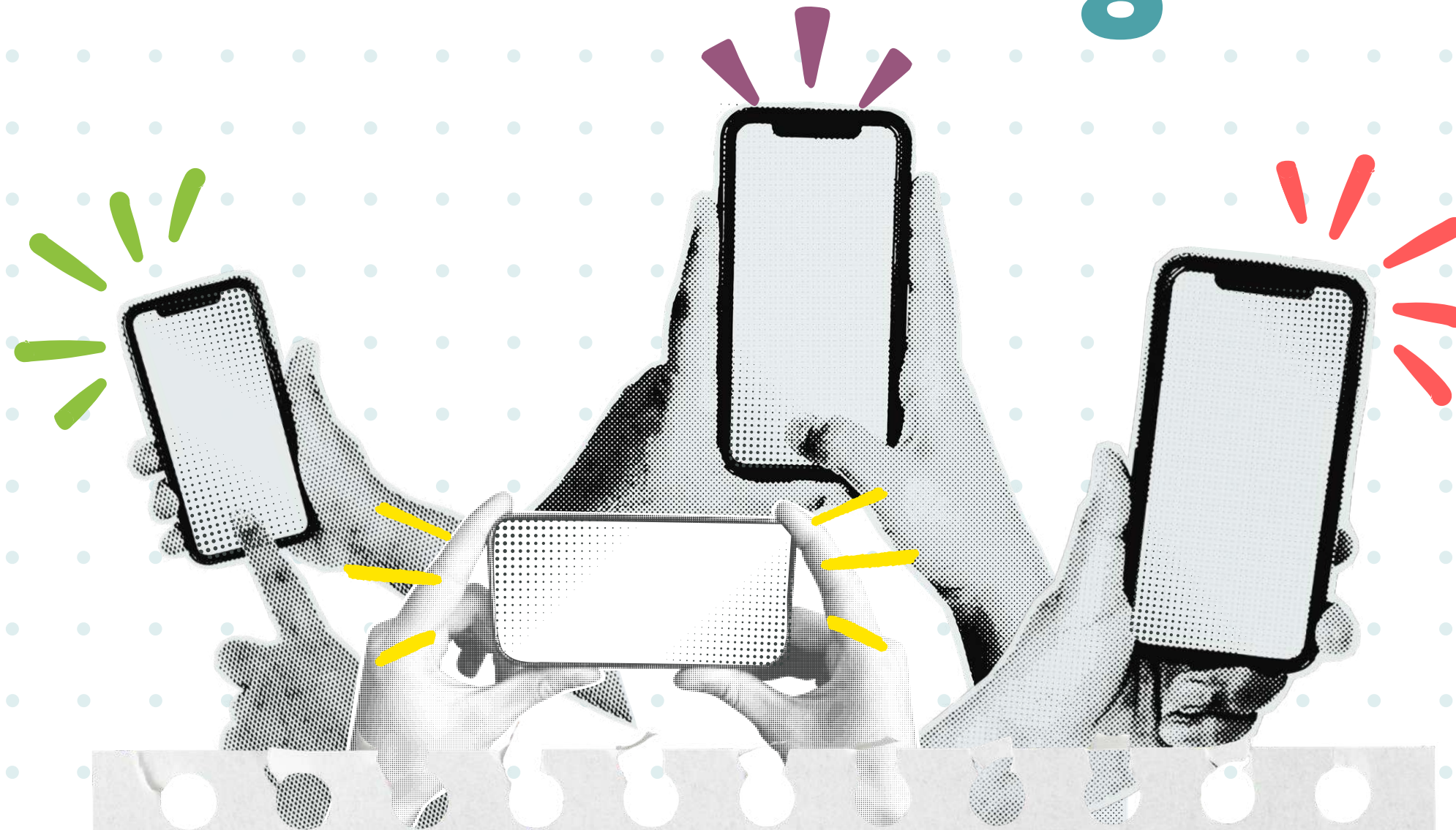


Your Welcoming Photos, Your Welcoming Story



PhotoVoice Toolkit



**CREATIVE
CHANGEMAKERS**

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What does welcoming, belonging, and connection look like through your eyes?

Your phone goes everywhere. Point it at your neighborhood and show people what they miss!

Follow this toolkit to grow the skills you need to share your story.

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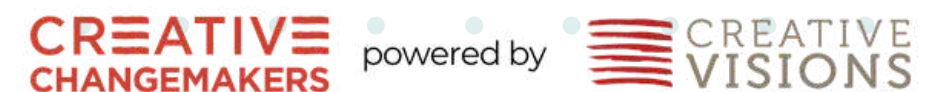
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How to Use This Toolkit

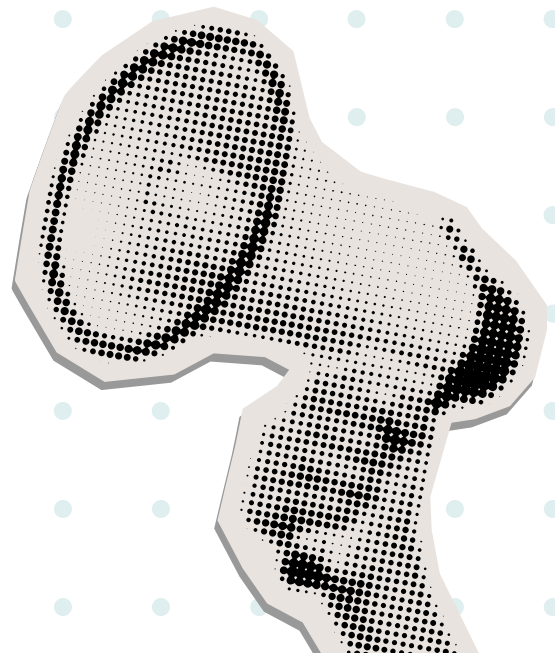
Welcoming America teamed up with Creative Visions to create this toolkit for young creatives like you.



Why You?

Your phone goes everywhere you do. This program gives you the tools to point it at your community and tell a story only you can tell.

When you're done, your photos go into a **global gallery** during **Welcoming Week**, seen by people around the world.



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Meet Creative Visions



Our Vision



To create a more caring, just, and sustainable world through creative activism – the power of media, art and education to drive positive change.

Our Mission



Empower creative activists worldwide to raise awareness of critical issues and drive positive change through impact storytelling.

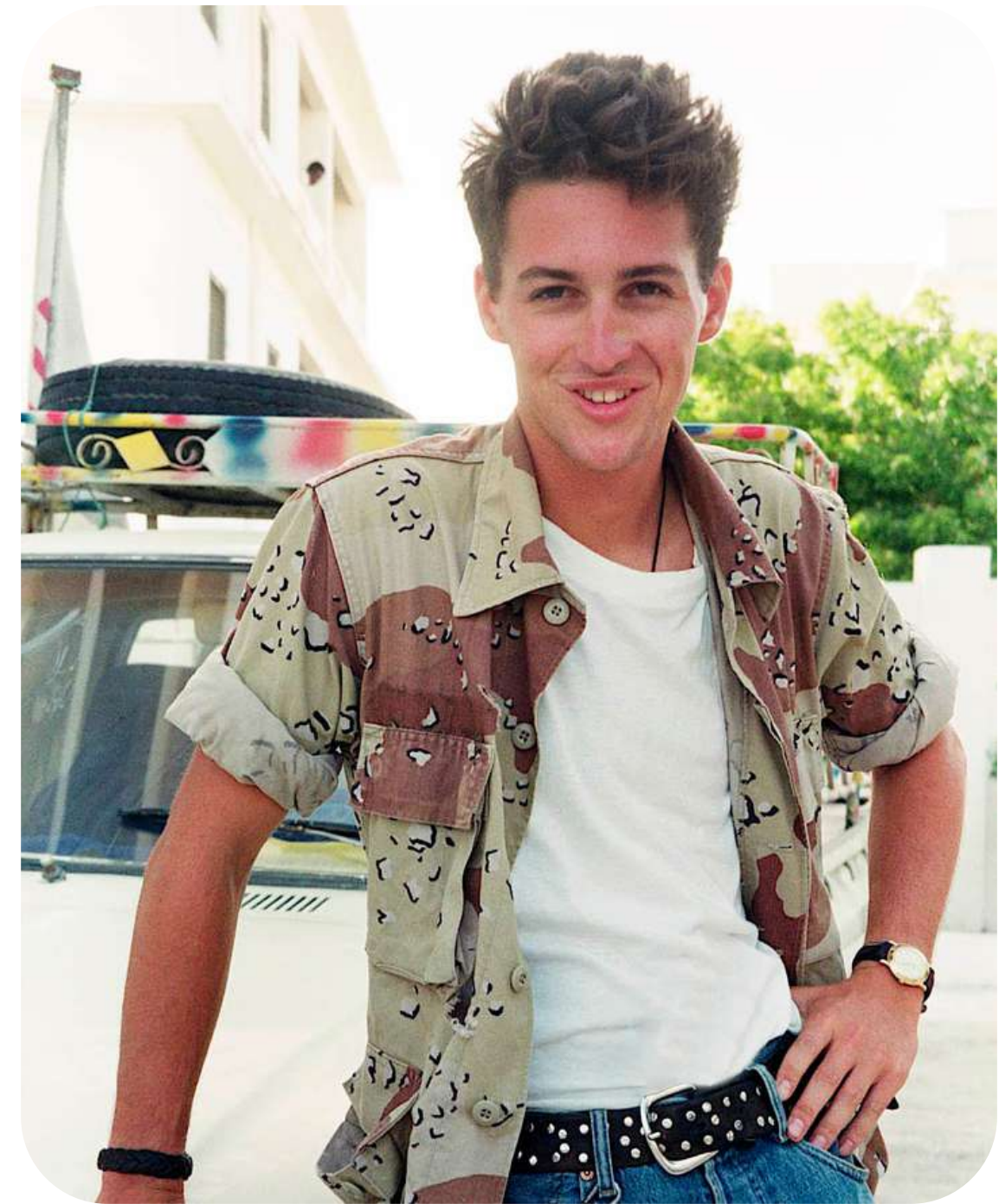


The Story of Dan Eldon



Dan Eldon was more than an artist—he was a young person who understood that creativity could be a powerful tool for exploring social issues.

His artwork wasn't just personal documentation; it was a form of commentary that connected individual experience to global issues.



Dan Eldon's Artwork



Dan Eldon: A Creative Changemaker

Dan Eldon was killed in Somalia while documenting a civil war and the humanitarian crisis it created.

Inspired by Dan Eldon's life and legacy, Kathy Eldon coined the term "**Creative Changemaker**" as someone who uses art, storytelling, photography, film, music, writing, or other creative talents to make a positive difference in the world.



Creative Changemakers



Today, the Creative Changemakers program teaches youth like you to **harness the power of your creativity** for positive change in the world.

1. You choose a human rights issue to tell a story about.
2. You select the creative medium to share the story.
3. Your creative expression helps spread awareness, raise money, and ignite action!

Use your voice to make a difference!



Creative action through storytelling is one of the most powerful tools for creating change in the world.

Stories can shape, strengthen, and challenge our opinions and values.

Stories shift culture and influence the way people think and act.

Stories can give us hope and help us see possibilities.

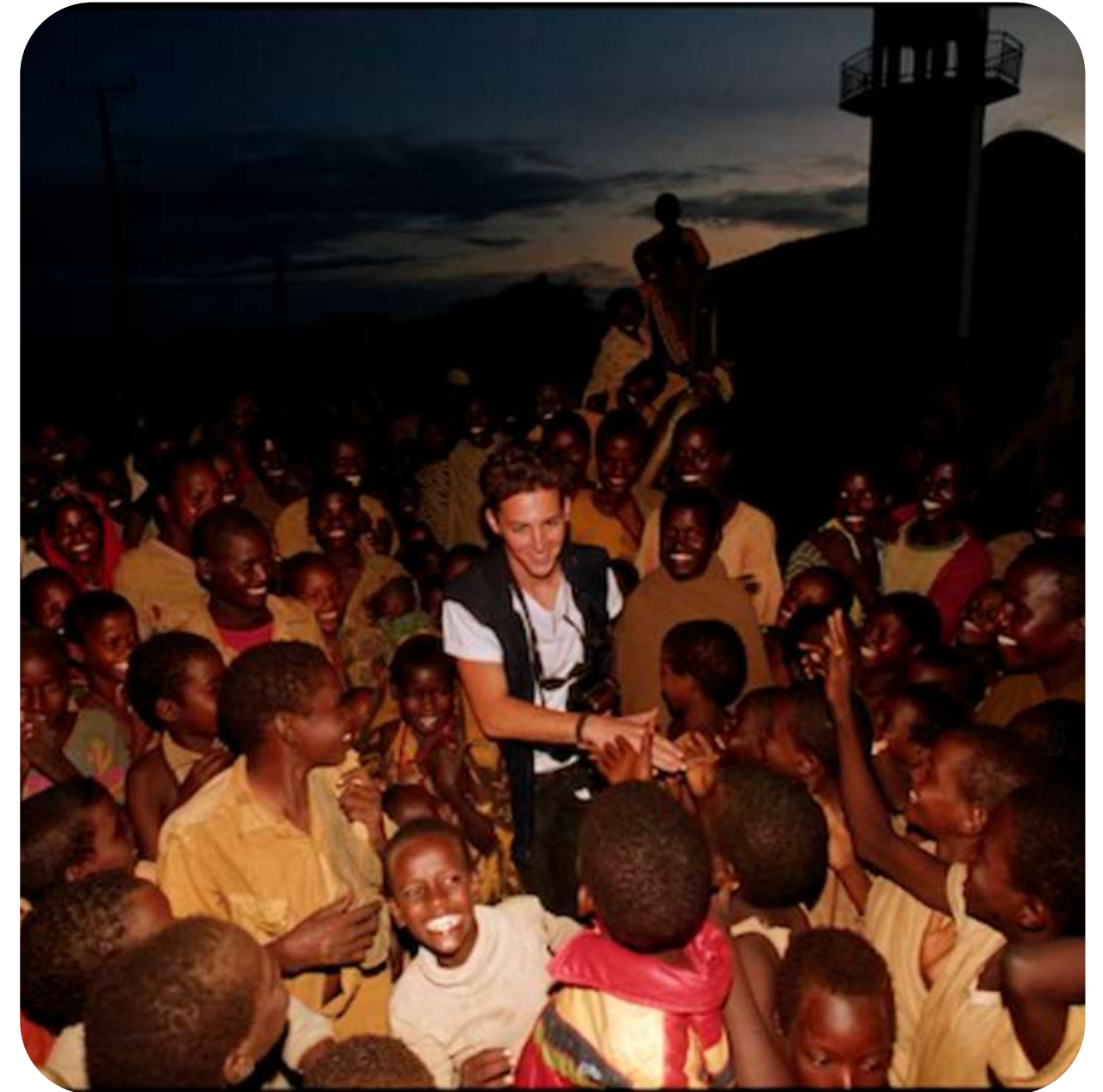


The Ripple Effect of a Photo

Dan Eldon was a teenager when he realized a camera could be a tool for change. He used photography to notice what others overlooked, capturing real people and real stories with honesty and heart. At 21, his images from Somalia revealed a famine the world wasn't paying attention to, helping spark a massive international relief effort.

Dan showed that young people don't need permission to make an impact; they just need to pay attention, tell the truth, and share what they see.

What story will your photography tell?





About Welcoming America

We work with more than 300 cities and counties across the country to create places where everyone belongs, whether your family has been there for generations or got there last year.

Photos show what welcoming actually looks like in people's daily lives. That's something numbers and reports can't do.



What is Welcoming Week?

Welcoming Week is a yearly, worldwide celebration where communities bring people together.

From September 10-19, 2026, people will host events where neighbors can meet and share their stories. It's all about making sure everyone belongs.



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WELCOMING
WEEK
2026 THEME

Stories We Share: The Courage to Connect

It takes courage to meet new people and share different experiences.
By sharing your story, you can create a community where everyone feels
valued and connected!

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What is PhotoVoice?

PhotoVoice is a change-making tool.

You document what's happening in your community and
share what you see in your own words.

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Example #1

Though some conversations began with language challenges, bilingual neighbors and even the occasional Google Translate assist helped bridge the gaps.

- Alaric Bien

📍 Redmond, Washington, US



Example #2

A cozy Nowruz celebration... started with the ultimate rice dish, Sabzi Polo (Persian herb rice), cooked and shared by a committed newcomer from Iran.

- Ngoc “Nora” Nguyen

📍 Radford, Virginia, US



Choose a Story That Matters to You

Welcoming can be found in small gestures and big moments. Your experience shapes what photos and stories you share. There's no “right” answer — you get to decide!

Ask yourself:

- Who makes your community feel welcoming? (A friend? A teacher? Your family?)
- What spaces feel safe and inviting to you? (The local park? Your kitchen table?)
- Can you remember a time when you felt like an outsider? What changed?
- When have you helped someone else feel included? What did you do?

Your Story Makes A Difference

Your story can remind someone that they aren't alone.

It shows people everyday ways they can help others belong.

You can shape a community where everyone feels at home!



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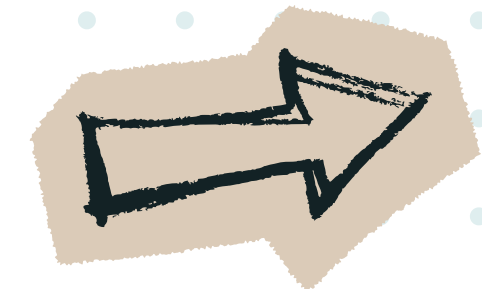


What You Need To Participate

- A phone with a camera
- Something to write with
(paper, notes app, computer)



Let's Get Started!



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Photography 101

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Choose which techniques you want to learn, or keep scrolling to see them all!

- Centered Composition
- Rule of Thirds
- Lines
- Angle
- Position
- Shapes, Patterns, & Textures
- Symmetry
- Silhouette
- Negative Space
- Framing Through Objects
- Lighting
- Creating a Scene
- Candid Moments
- Capturing Portraits
- Event & Privacy Considerations
- Photo Editing

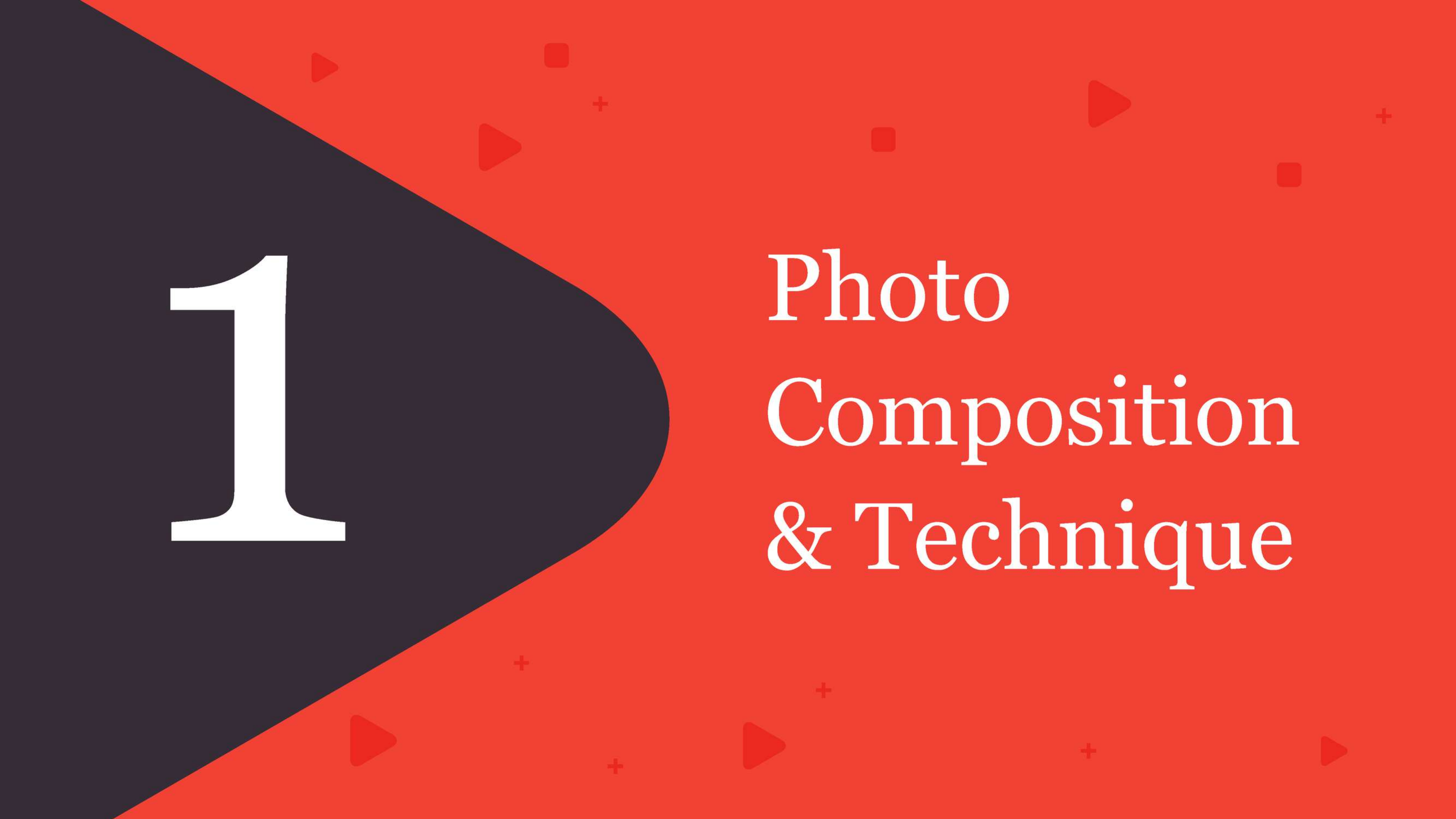


PhotoVoice Photography Training

J M W C R E A T I V E

www.jmwcreative.com | jason@jasonmwillis.com





1

Photo Composition & Technique



CENTERED COMPOSITION



RULE OF THIRDS COMPOSITION

VS



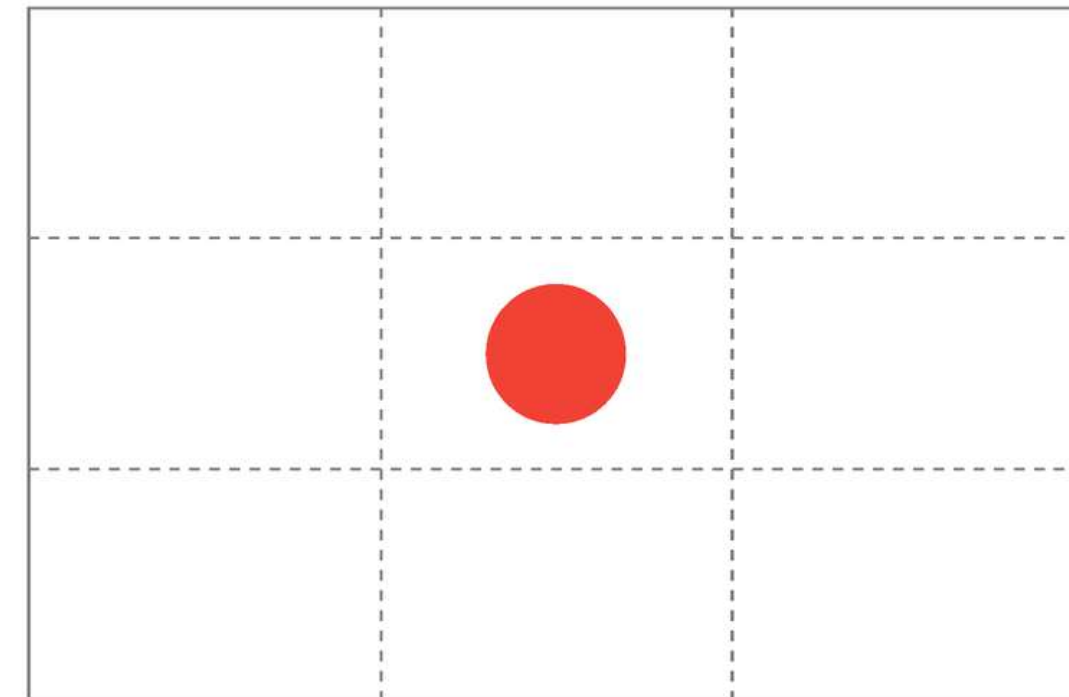
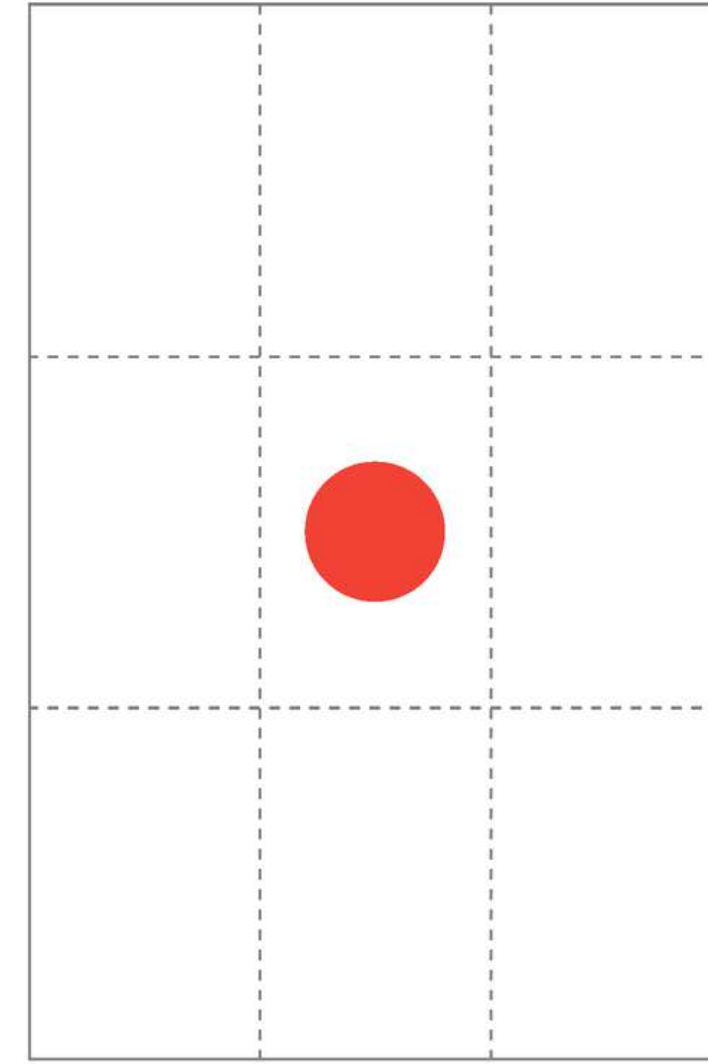
Centered Composition

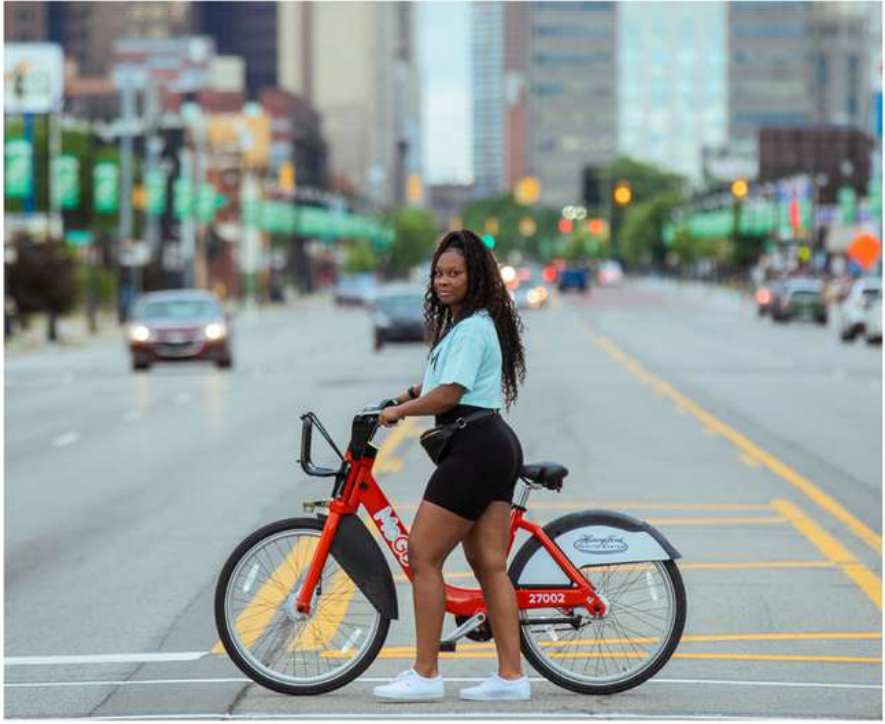
WHAT

- Point of interest in center
- Draws attention to subject
- Creates balance and stability

HOW

- Create 3x3 grid
- Center subject





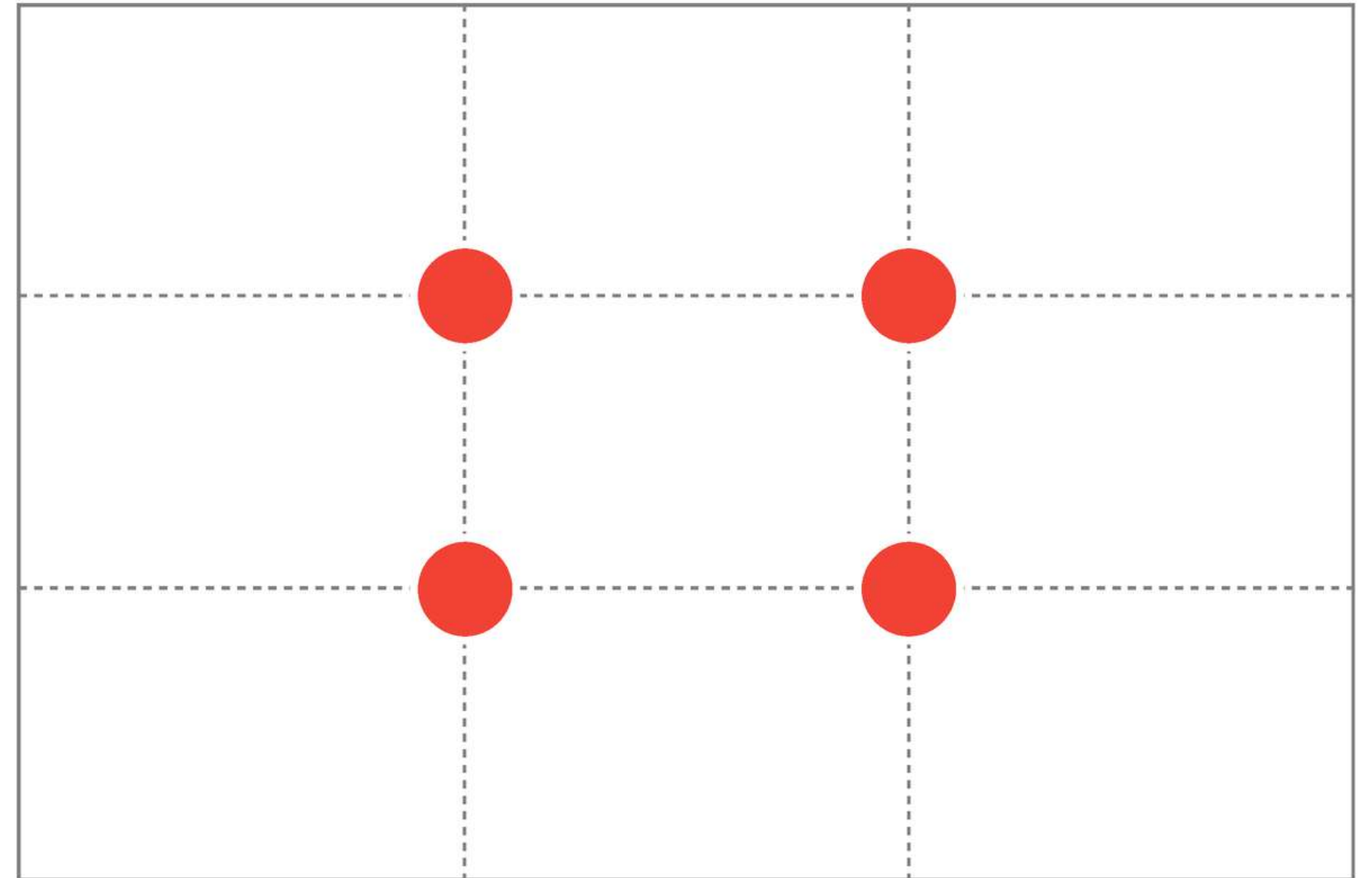
Rule of Thirds

WHAT

- Creates movement
- Guides viewer through image

HOW

- Create 3x3 grid
- Point of interest off-center at intersection and along horizontal/vertical lines







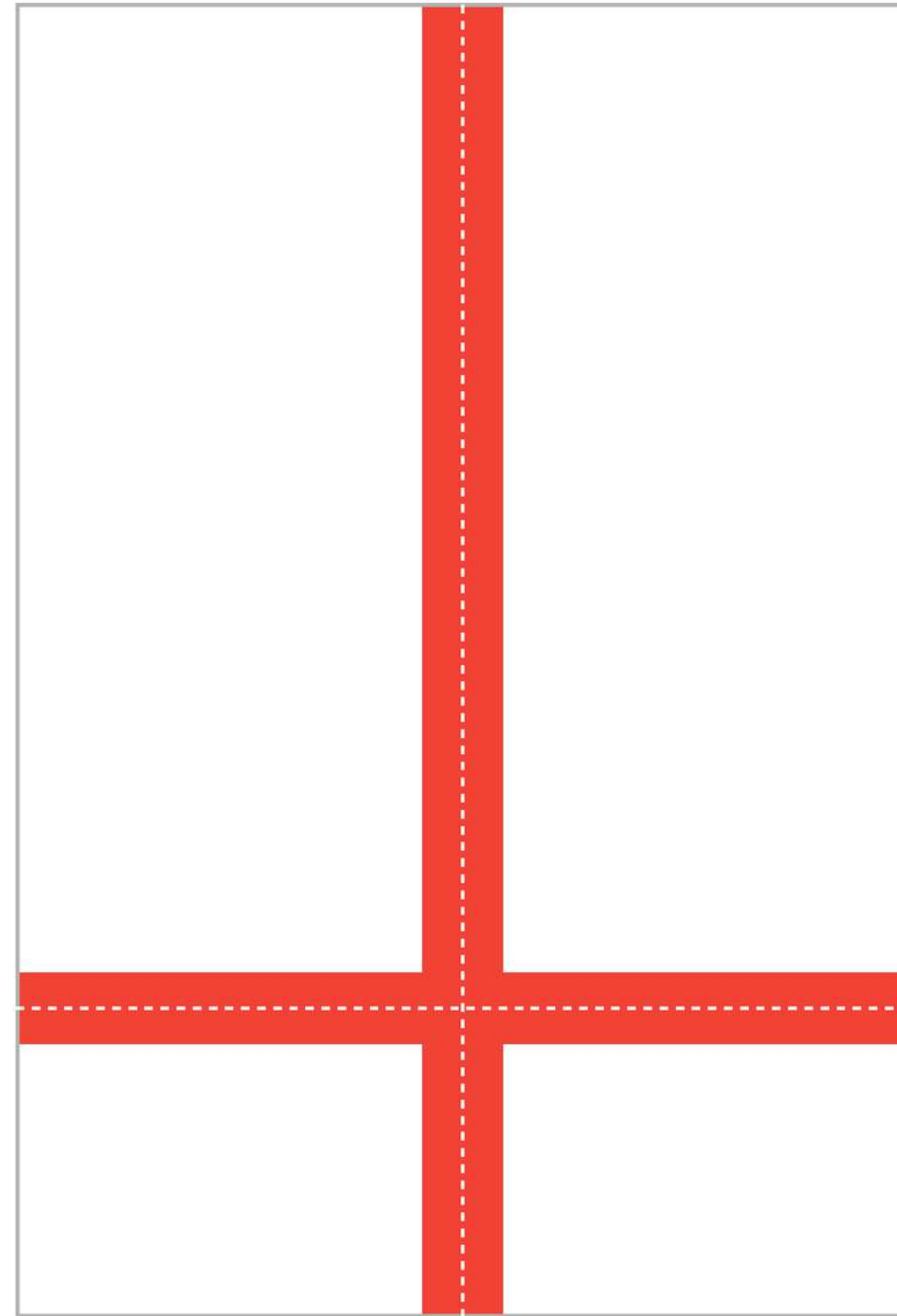
Lines

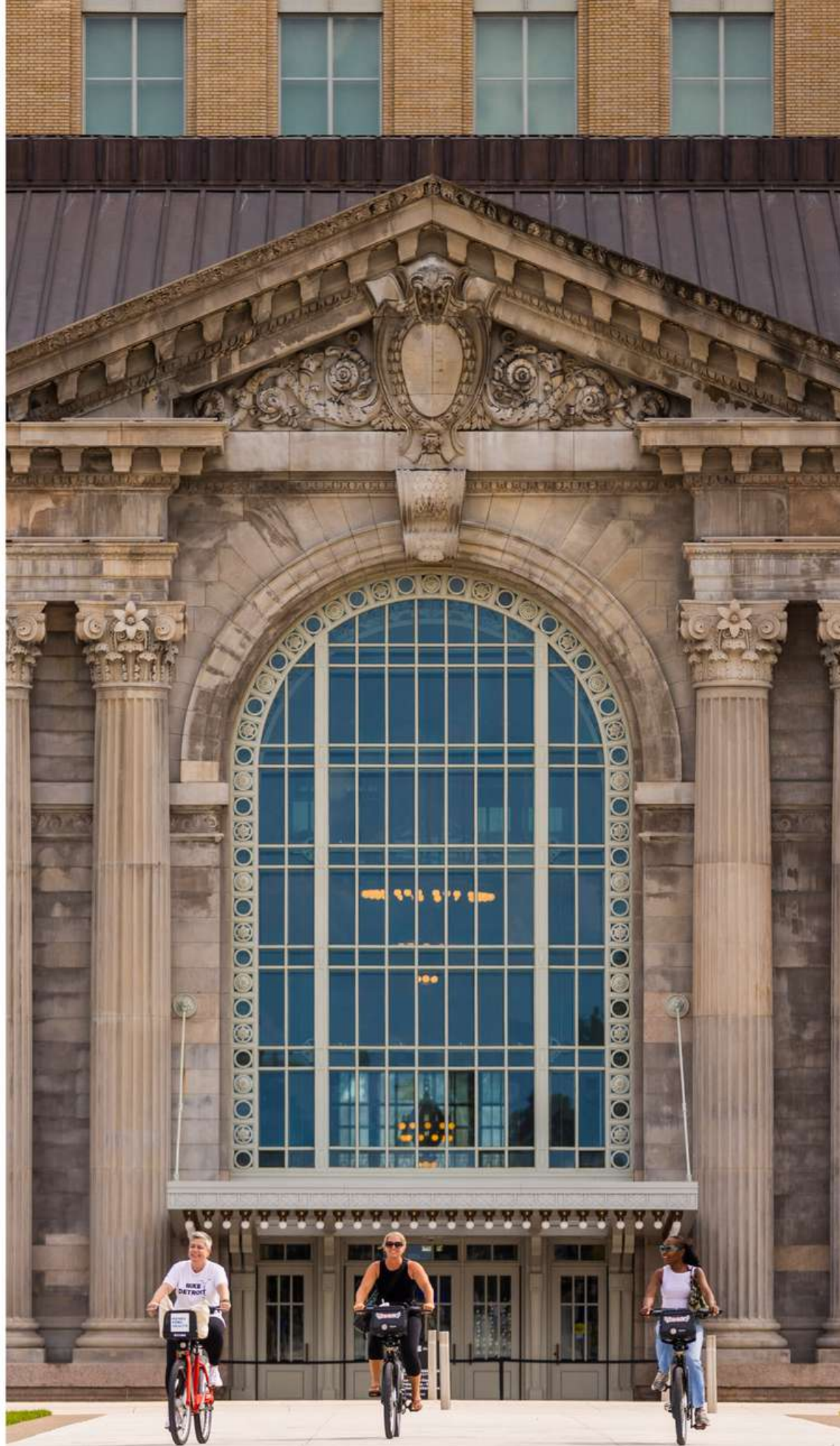
WHAT

- **Horizontal:** Water, sky, horizon, ceilings, floors, walls
- **Vertical:** Buildings, trees, walls, door frames

HOW

- Use lines for framing and visual interest
- Adjust your position and camera's position to ensure straight lines





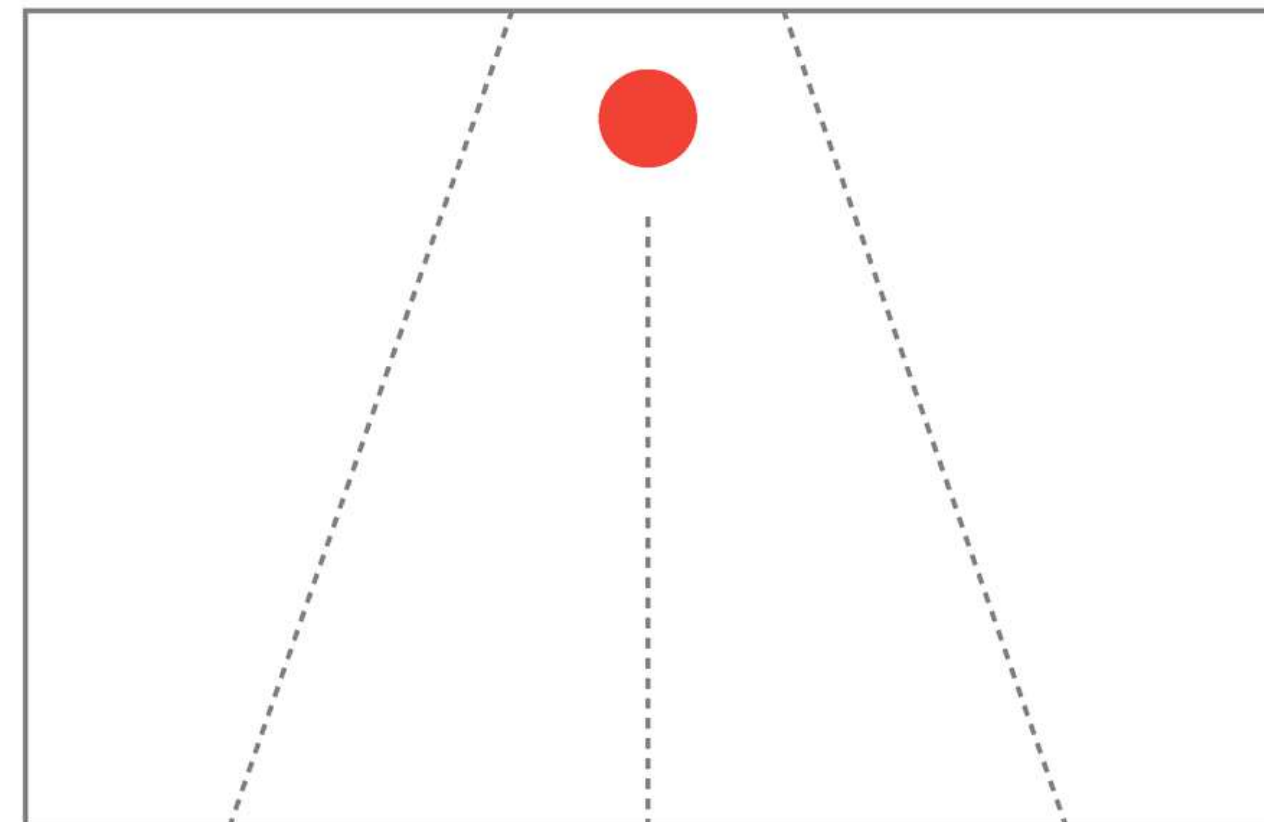
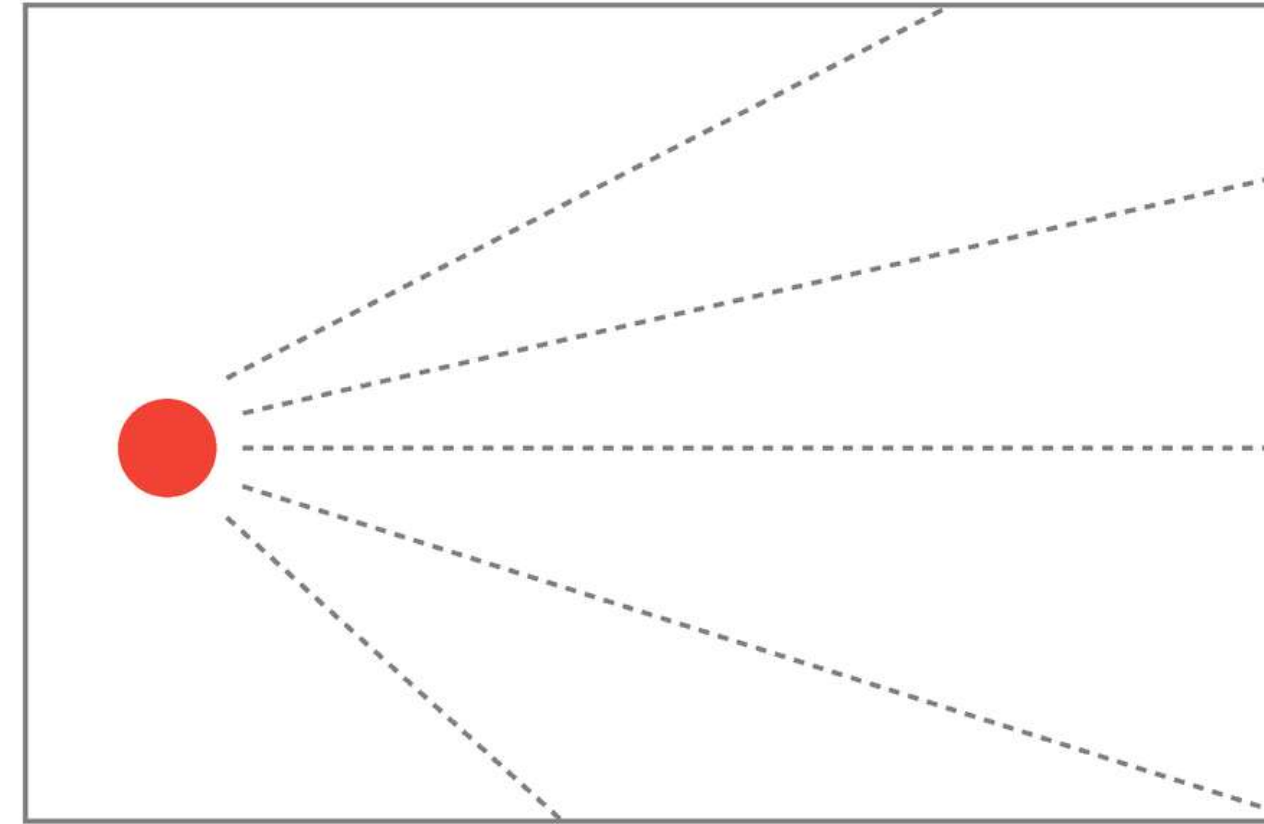
Leading Lines

WHAT

- Guides eye to subject
- Can create depth, symmetry, balance and visual interest
- Horizontal, vertical, diagonal or curved lines

HOW

- Lines from roads, fences, walls, ceilings, floors, buildings, tables, etc..





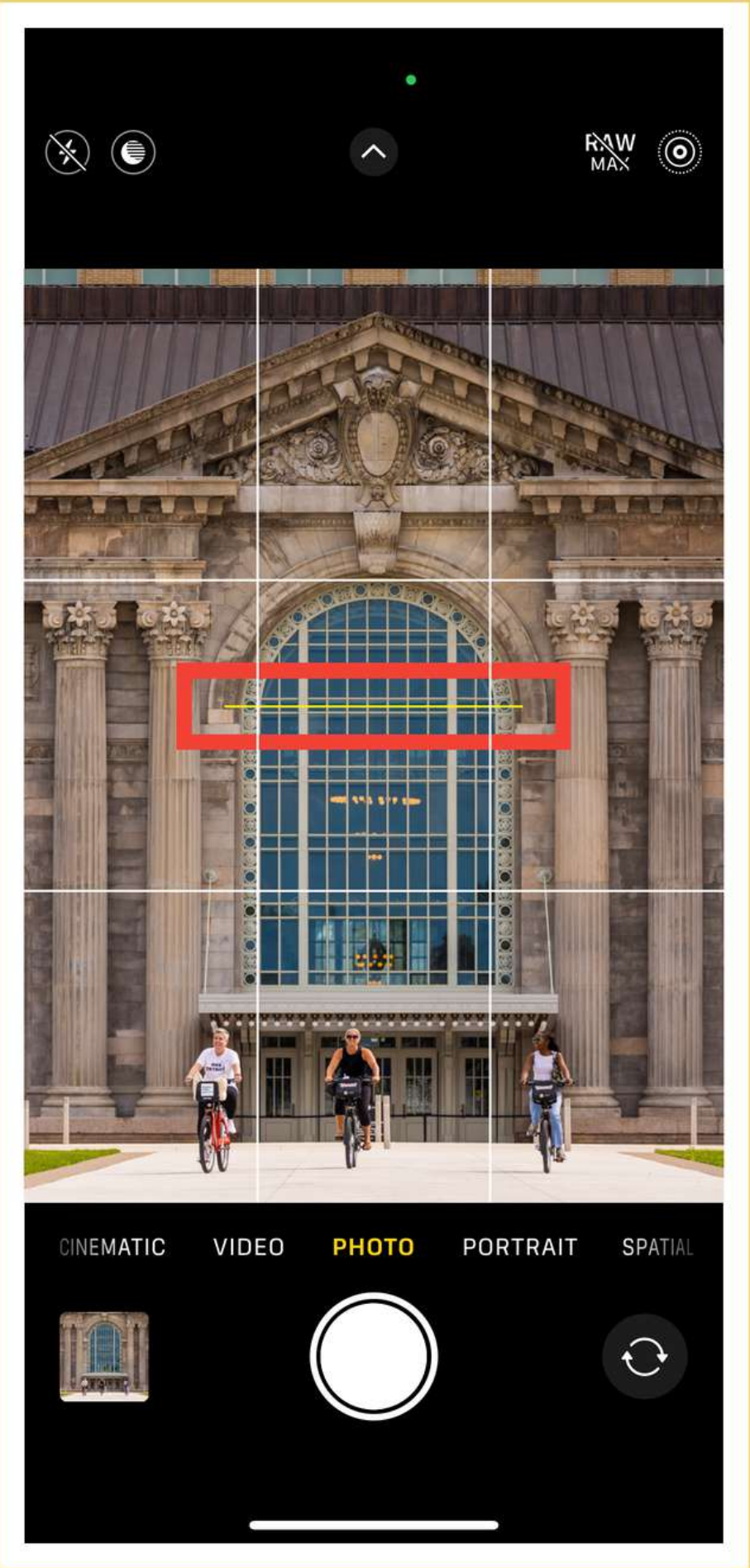
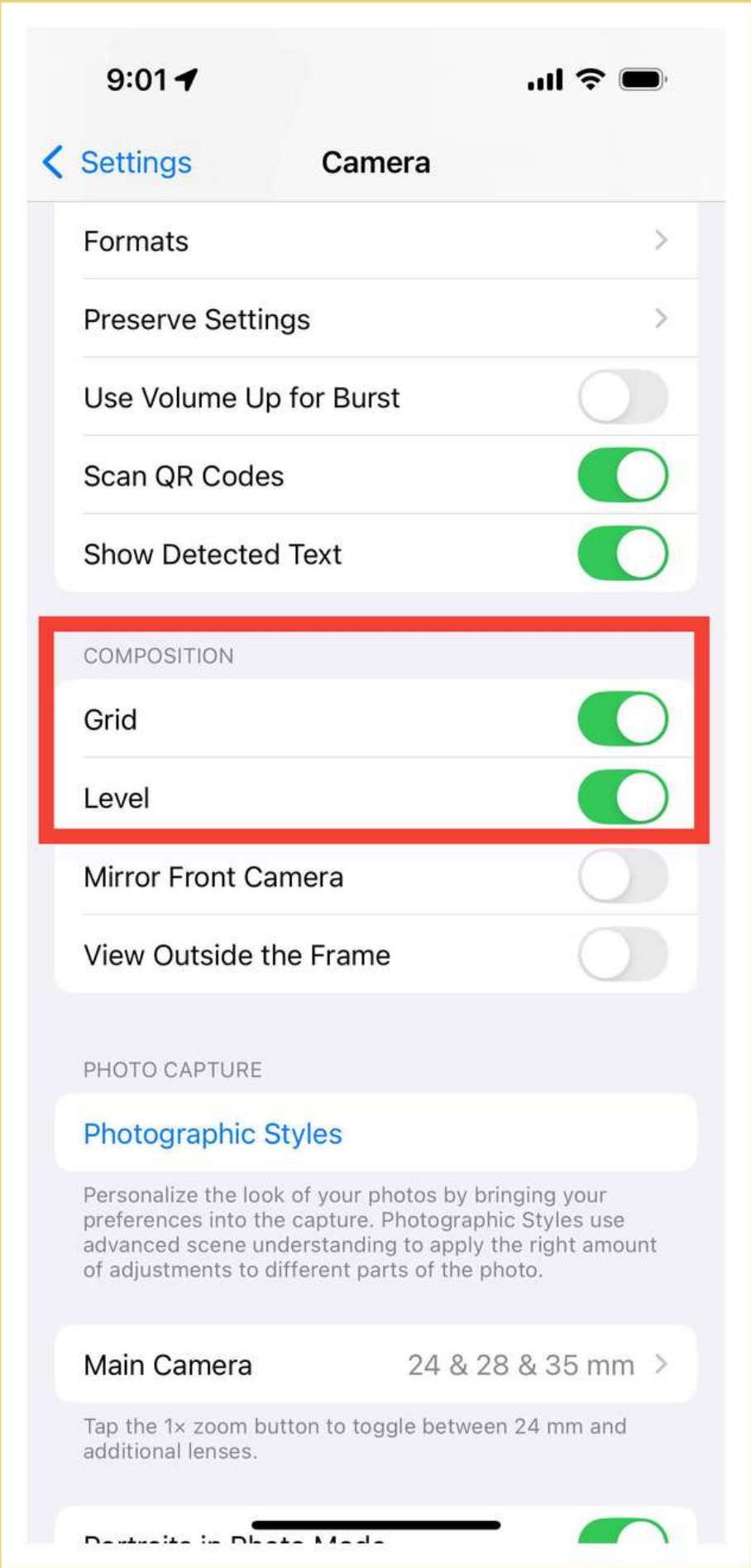
Grid Lines and Level

WHAT

- Assists with rule of thirds, centered composition and symmetry techniques

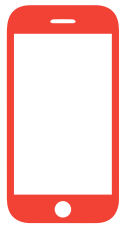
HOW

- Settings > Camera > Composition
- Turn on Grid and/or Level





Practice



5 MINUTES

Take a photo with a centered composition and a rule of thirds composition.

Angle

BIRD'S EYE

- Taking a photo from **above** the subject

WORM'S EYE

- Taking a photo from **below** the subject



Position

- Get on the subject's level
- Especially important with kids and pets
- Getting closer to your subject will often result in a more impactful photo





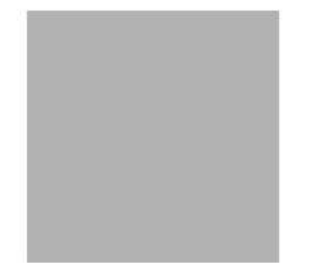
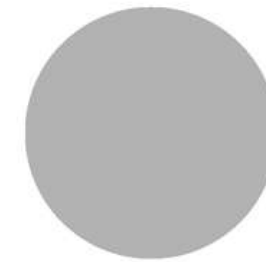
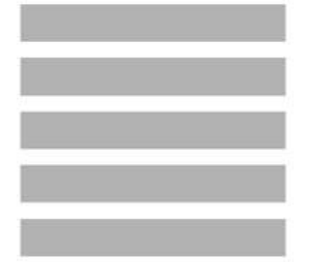
Shapes & Patterns

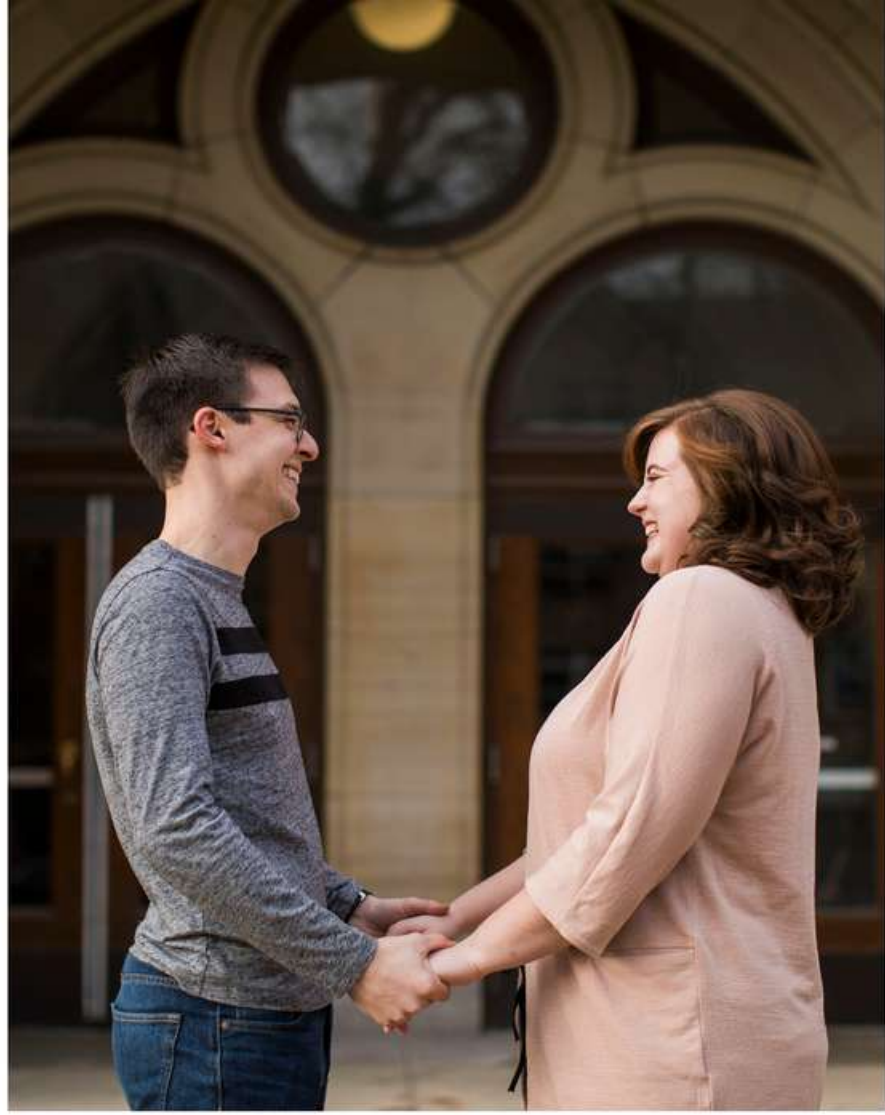
WHAT

- **Natural Shapes:** windows, doors, steps, buildings
- **Created Shapes:** light, shadows, reflections

HOW

- Use as background or foreground elements or for framing





Textures

WHAT

- Walls, ceilings, furniture, clothing, floor, ground, etc.

HOW

- Backgrounds for details or portraits





Symmetry

WHAT

- Left and right side of image mirror one another

HOW

- Look for shapes and objects to create symmetry
- Pay attention to horizontal and vertical lines



Silhouette

WHAT

- Subject is in front of a brighter light source such as the sun, sky, door frame or window

HOW

- May need to adjust exposure on your phone



Negative Space

WHAT

- Purposeful empty space above, below, left or right of subject
- Guides eye and creates movement

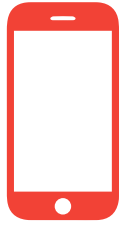
HOW

- Often happens naturally with rule of thirds compositions
- Large empty skies or walls





Practice



5 MINUTES

Take a photo using one or more of these techniques – leading lines, negative space, or symmetry.

Framing Through Objects

WHAT

- Something in the foreground (often blurred) to frame subject
- Feels like you are there in the action or scene

HOW

- Photograph through things like people's heads or shoulders, plants, decorations, lights, or other interesting objects



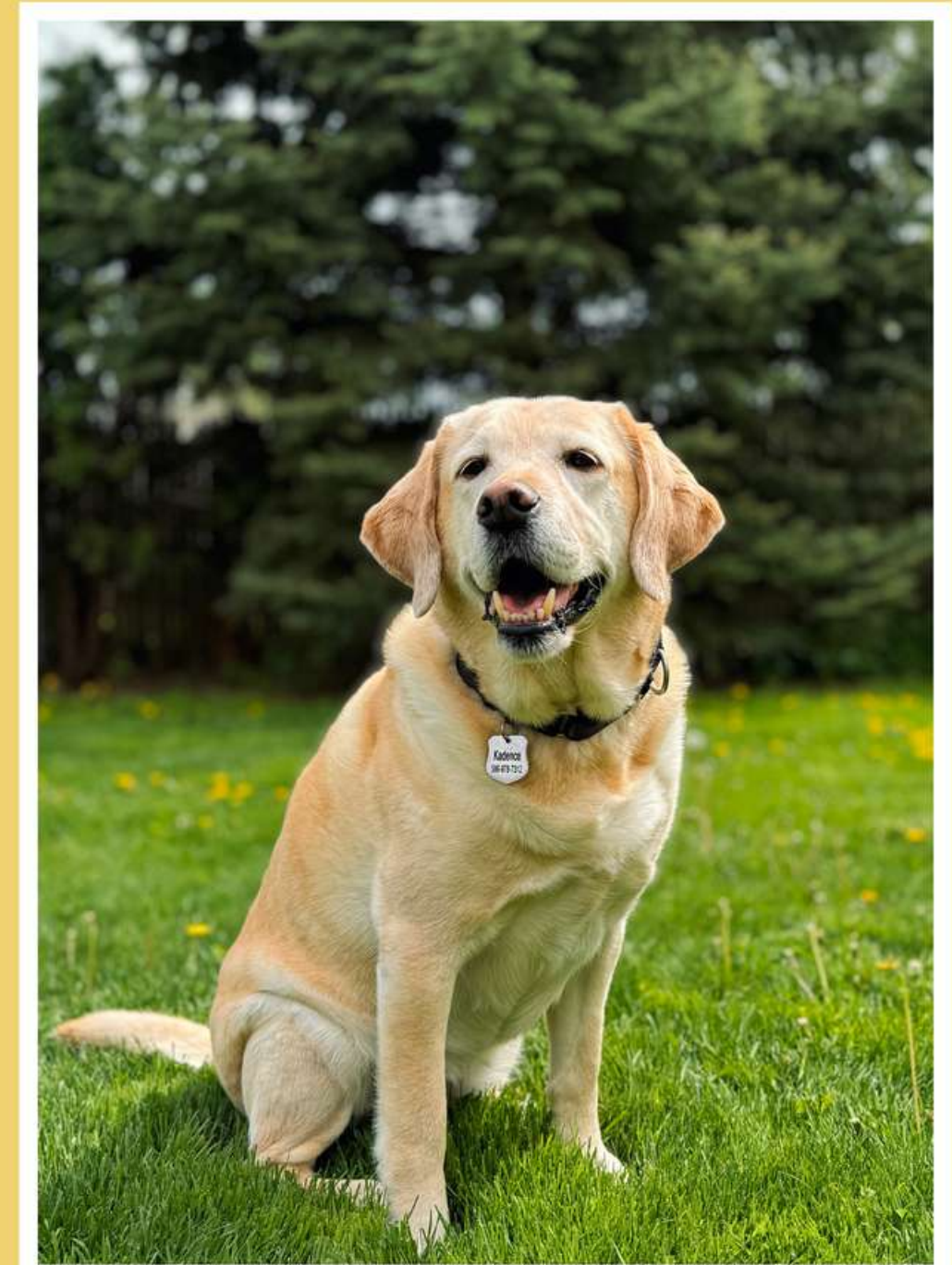


Portrait Mode

- Blurs the background or foreground so your subject stands out
- Try with “Framing Through” technique



Blurred foreground



Blurred background

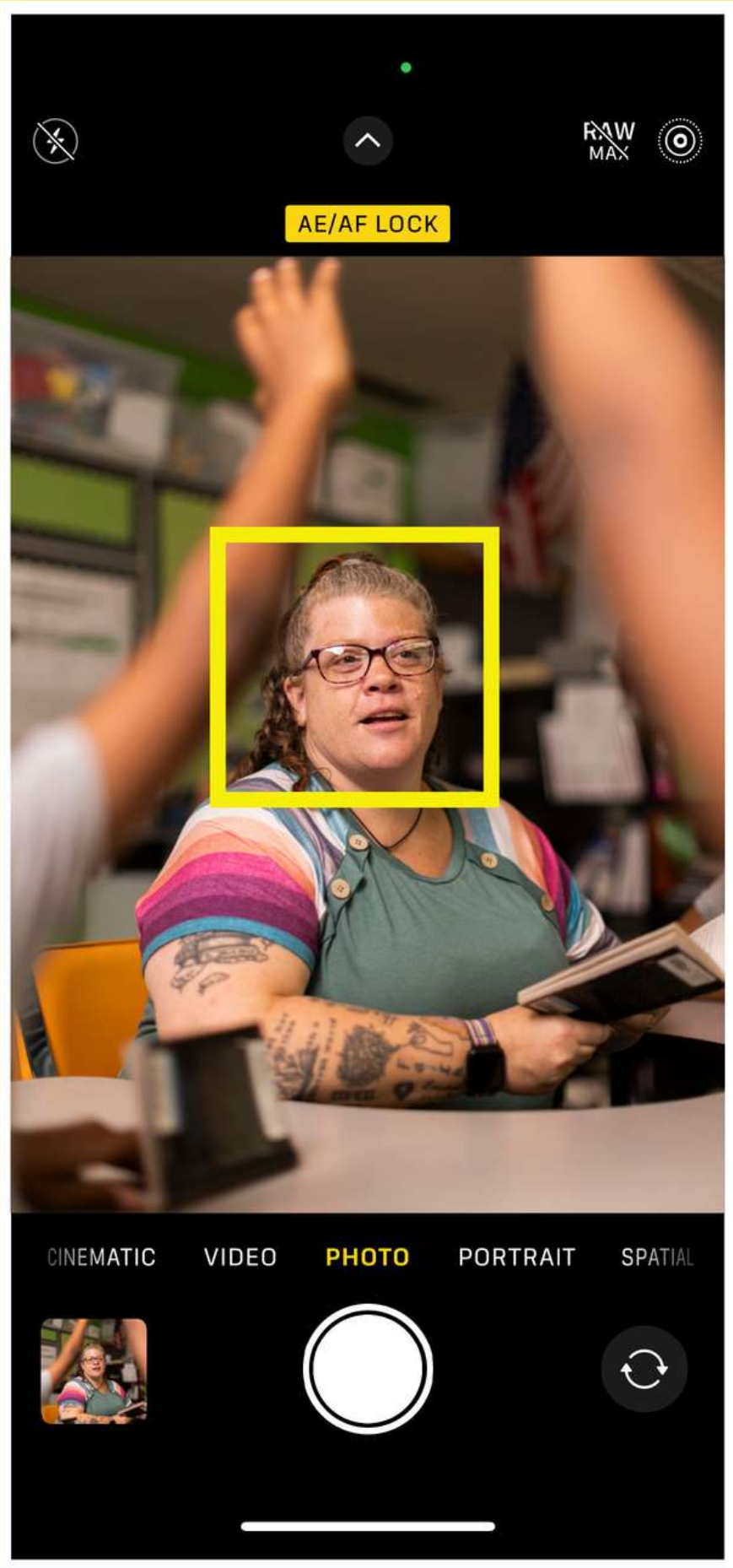
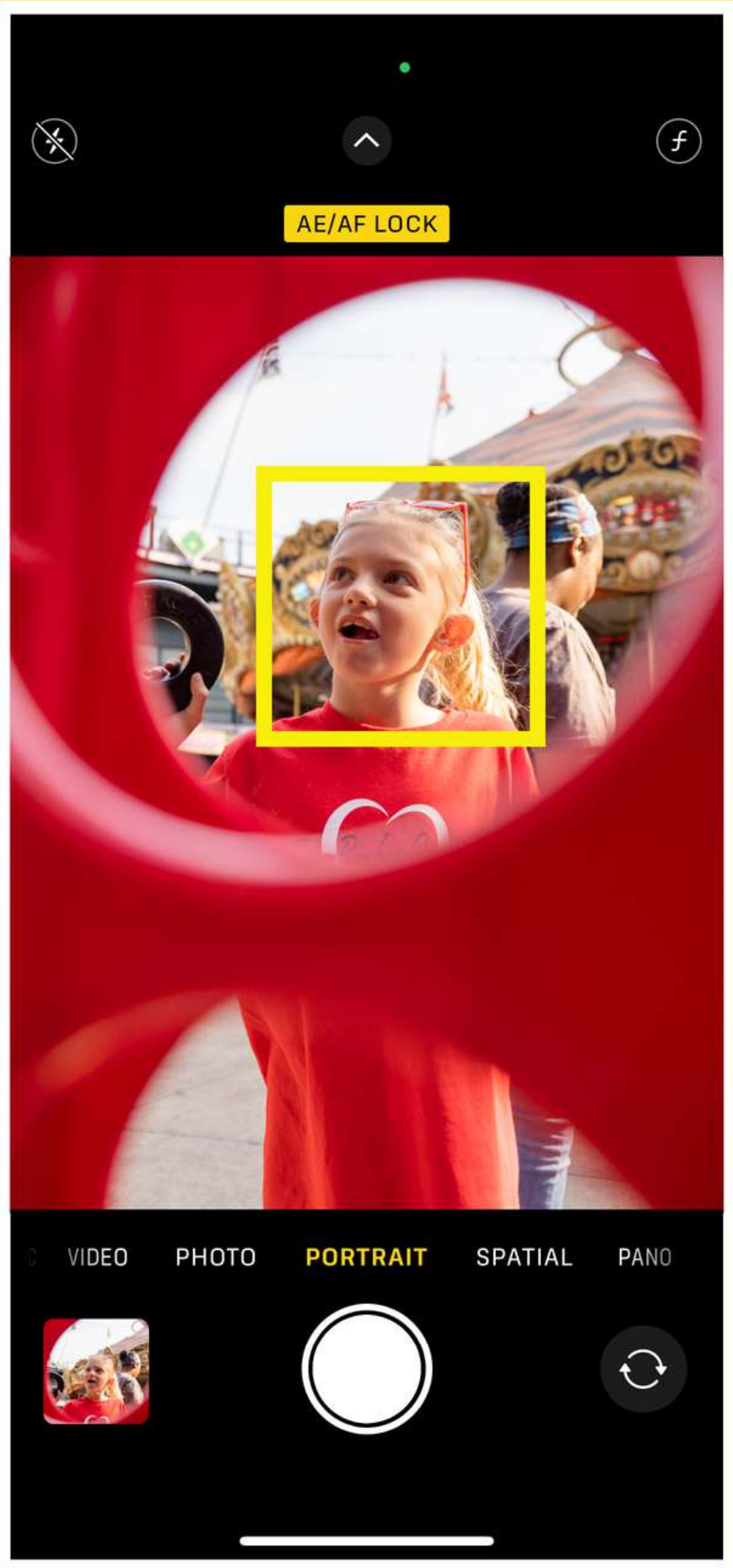
Locking Focus

WHAT

- Allows you to move camera without losing focus
- Try with “Framing Through” technique
- Especially useful for video

HOW

- Tap and hold on your subject until you see the lock indicator



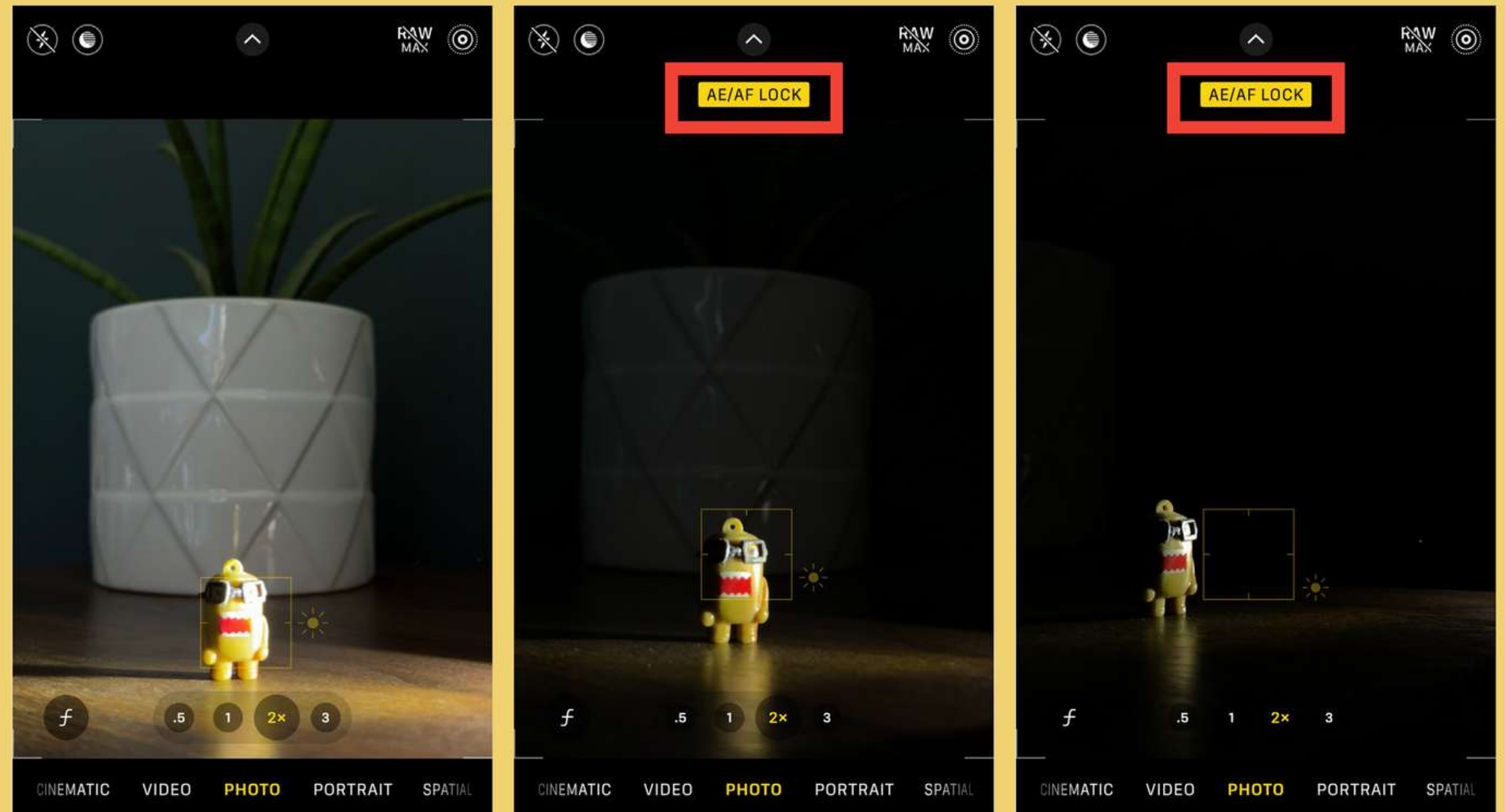
Locking Brightness

WHAT

- Lock the brightness so it doesn't change when you move your phone
- Useful for getting creative with lighting and silhouettes

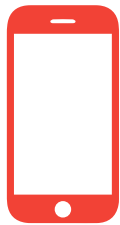
HOW

- Tap and hold your subject, then slide your finger up or down to make it lighter or darker





Practice



5 MINUTES

Take a photo using the “Framing Through” technique while locking focus.

General Composition Tips

- Try combining multiple techniques.
- What's not in a photo is just as important as what is in the photo.
- Logos, text and recognizable products can be distracting.
- Move up, down, left, or right to get the shot you want and/or move your subject a couple inches.

Remember!

- Photography rules are meant to be broken and experimented with.
- It's how YOU see the world.
- Get creative and try things out!



2

Lighting



Mid-Day Sun

WHAT

- High sun from approx. 11 am to 3 pm

HOW

- Find shade and keep the sun behind your subject to avoid harsh shadows or squinting



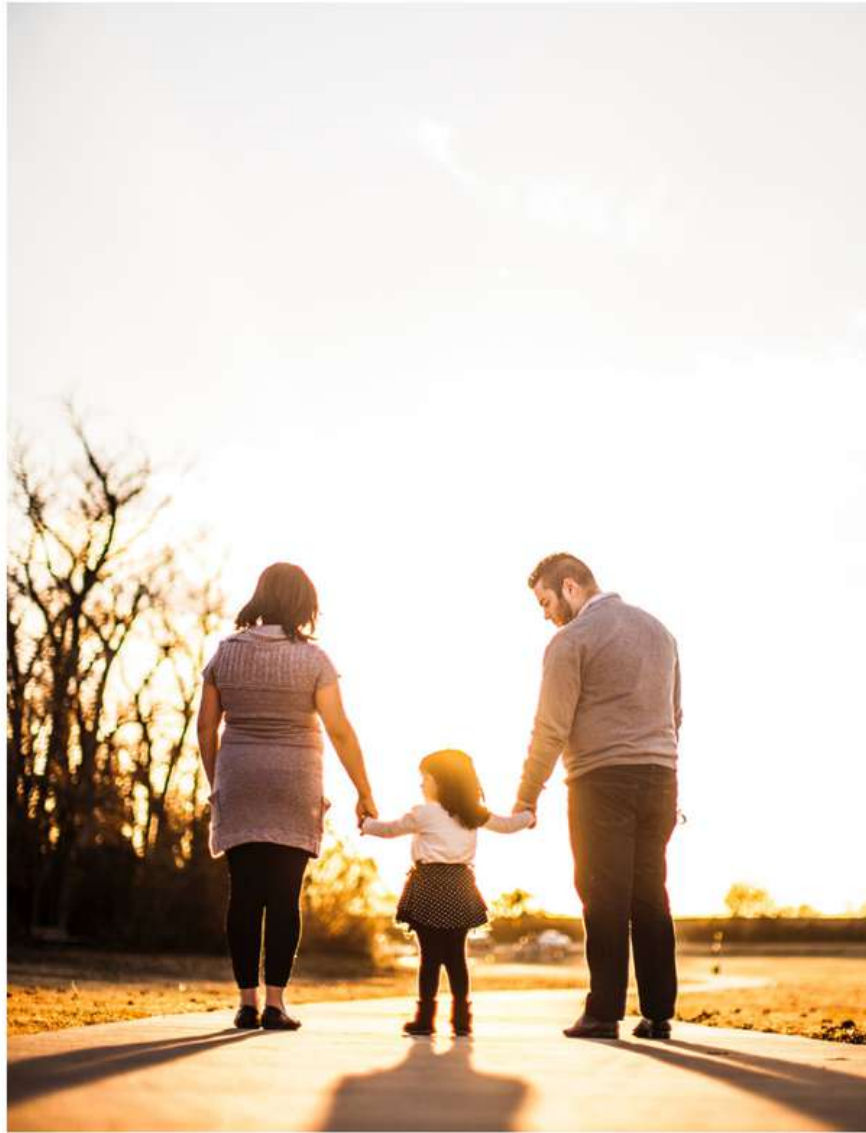
Shade & Overcast

WHAT

- Creates even light and reduces harsh shadows
- Clouds diffuse the sun

HOW

- Still keep the sun behind your subject



Golden Hour

WHAT

- Shortly after sunrise and before sunset
- Light is warm with yellow/red tones
- Light is directional and easy to work with

HOW

- Use as main light source from the front or for back lighting



Indoor Lighting

HOW

- Find natural window light
- Avoid overhead light sources – creates shadows similar to high sun



Light as an Element

WHAT

- The sun or lighting at an event

HOW

- Use for interesting flares or effects



3

Telling a
Story With
Your Photos

WIDE



Creating a Scene

- Compose with **wide, medium and tight** images in mind
- Adds **variety** to your photo story
- **Wide** - establishes the location; shows environment, scenery and scale
- **Medium** - interaction, action, people
- **Tight** - details

MEDIUM



TIGHT





WIDE



MEDIUM



TIGHT



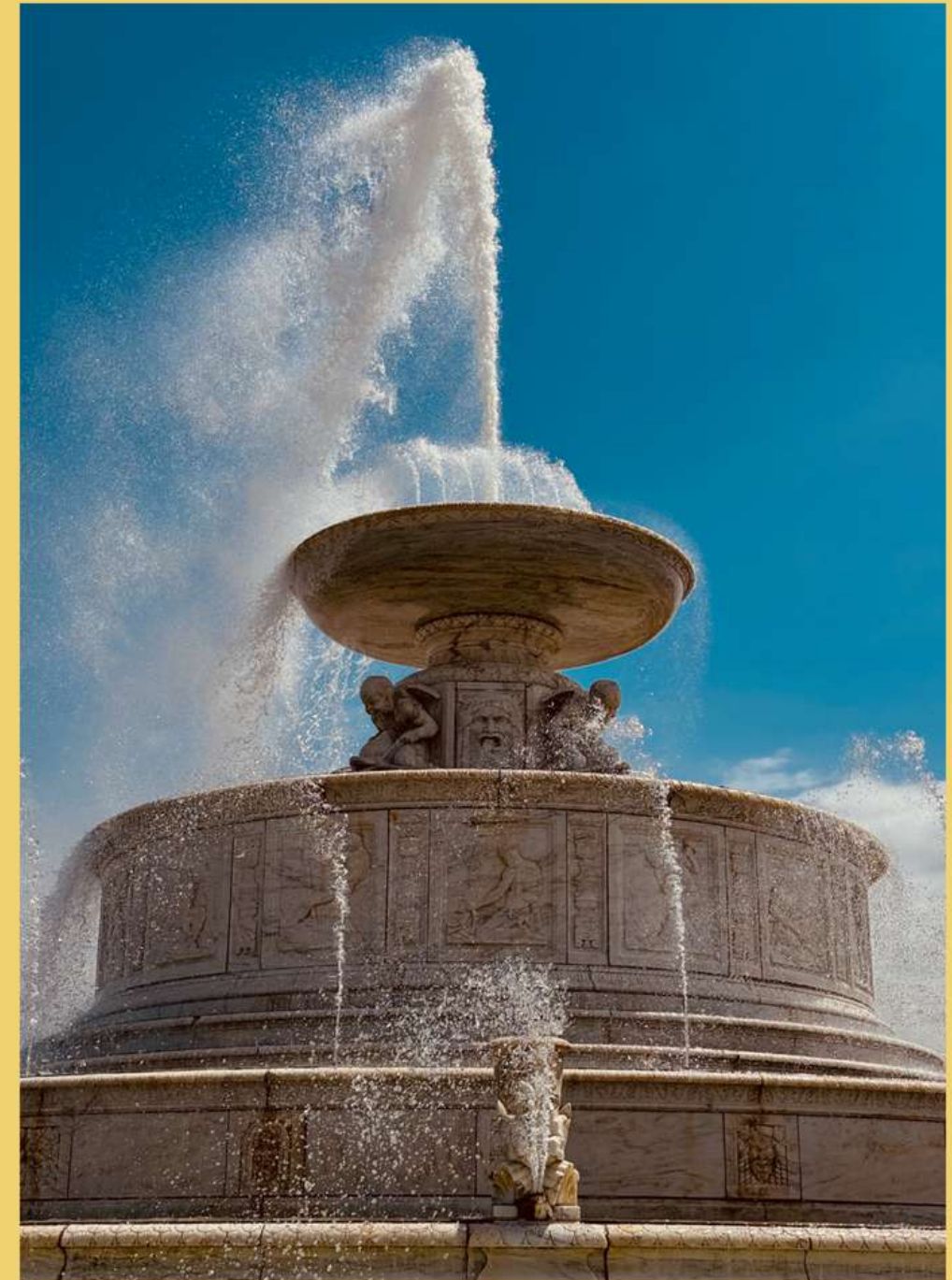
Phone Photography Lenses



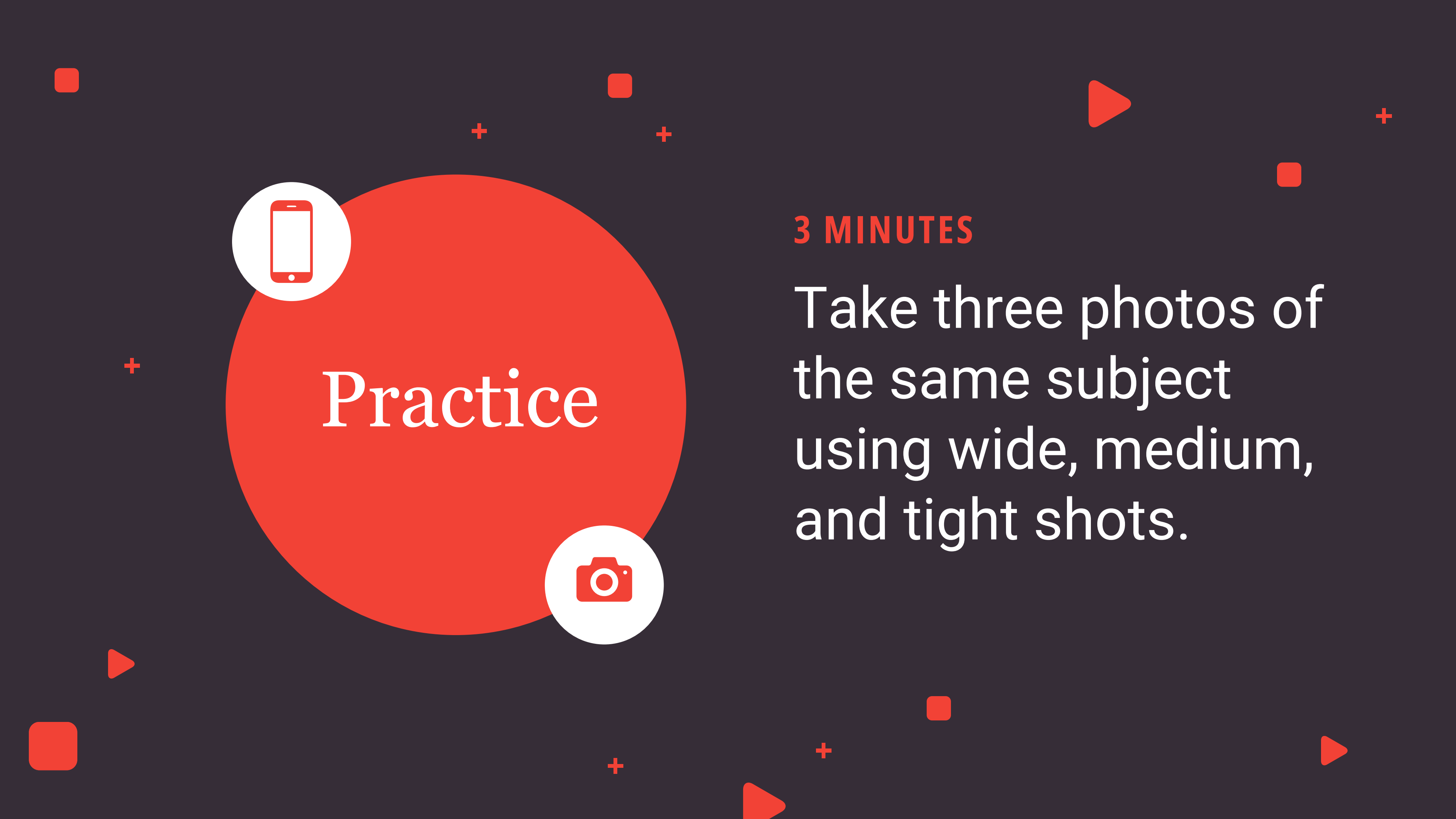
WIDE ANGLE (0.5X)



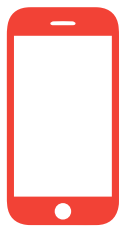
STANDARD (1X)



ZOOM/TELEPHOTO (UP TO 40X)



Practice



3 MINUTES

Take three photos of the same subject using wide, medium, and tight shots.



BEGINNING



MIDDLE



END



Building Sequences

- Think **beginning, middle and end** for storytelling
- What just happened, what's happening, what might happen next?
- Build a story one photo at a time
- Does the story happen over a day? Week? Month? Year?



Example:

Community Park Cleanup Day

BEGINNING

People setting up and preparing for the day

MIDDLE

People doing the work

END

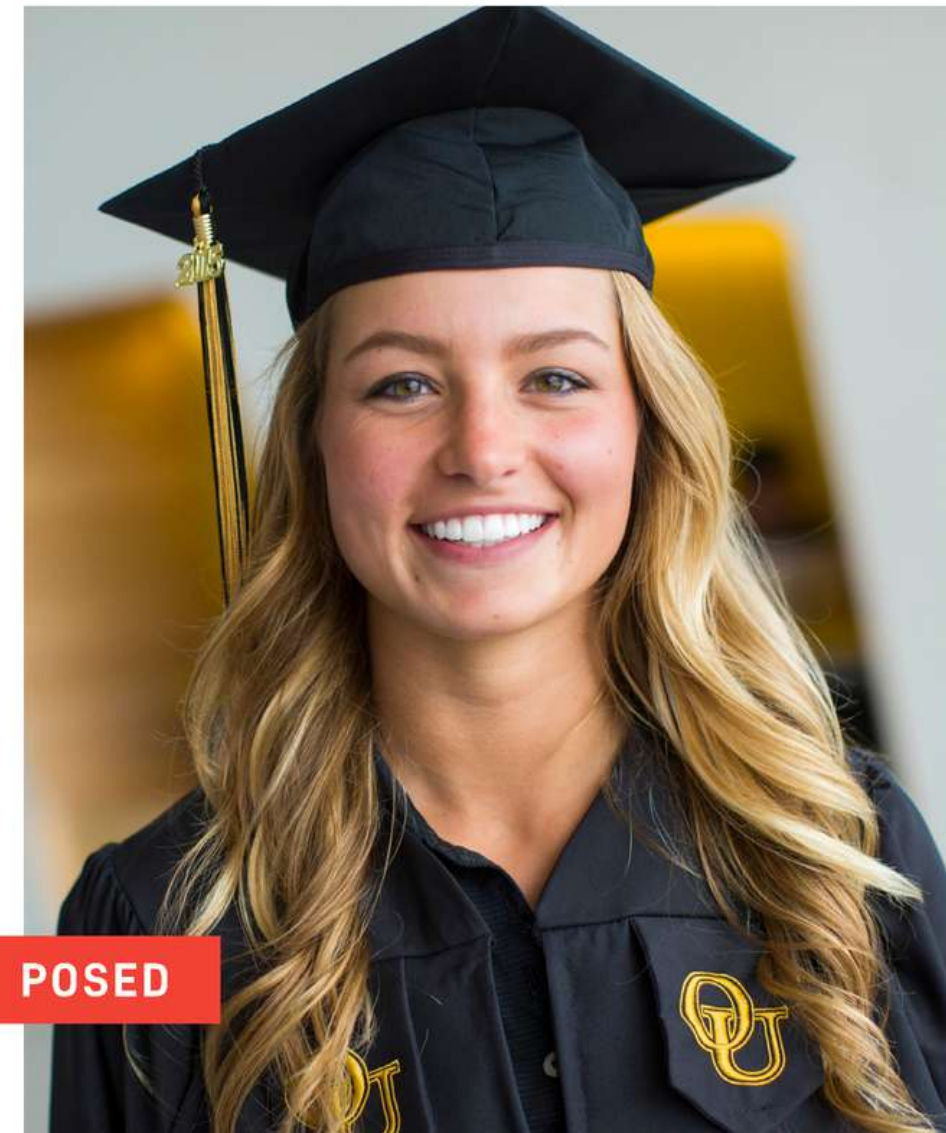
Family enjoying the park



POSED



CANDID



POSED



CANDID

Candid vs Posed

CANDID

- Captures moments and emotion
- Documentary/photojournalism approach

POSED

- Can capture ideas and emotion through a portrait (Ex: pride, achievement, identity, connection)
- More control over composition



Capturing Candid Moments

- **Patience:** anticipate the action or emotion you're looking to capture (Ex: smile or laugh)
- Watch **interactions** develop (Ex: hug, handshake, pointing)
- **Get closer:** feels like you are in the action

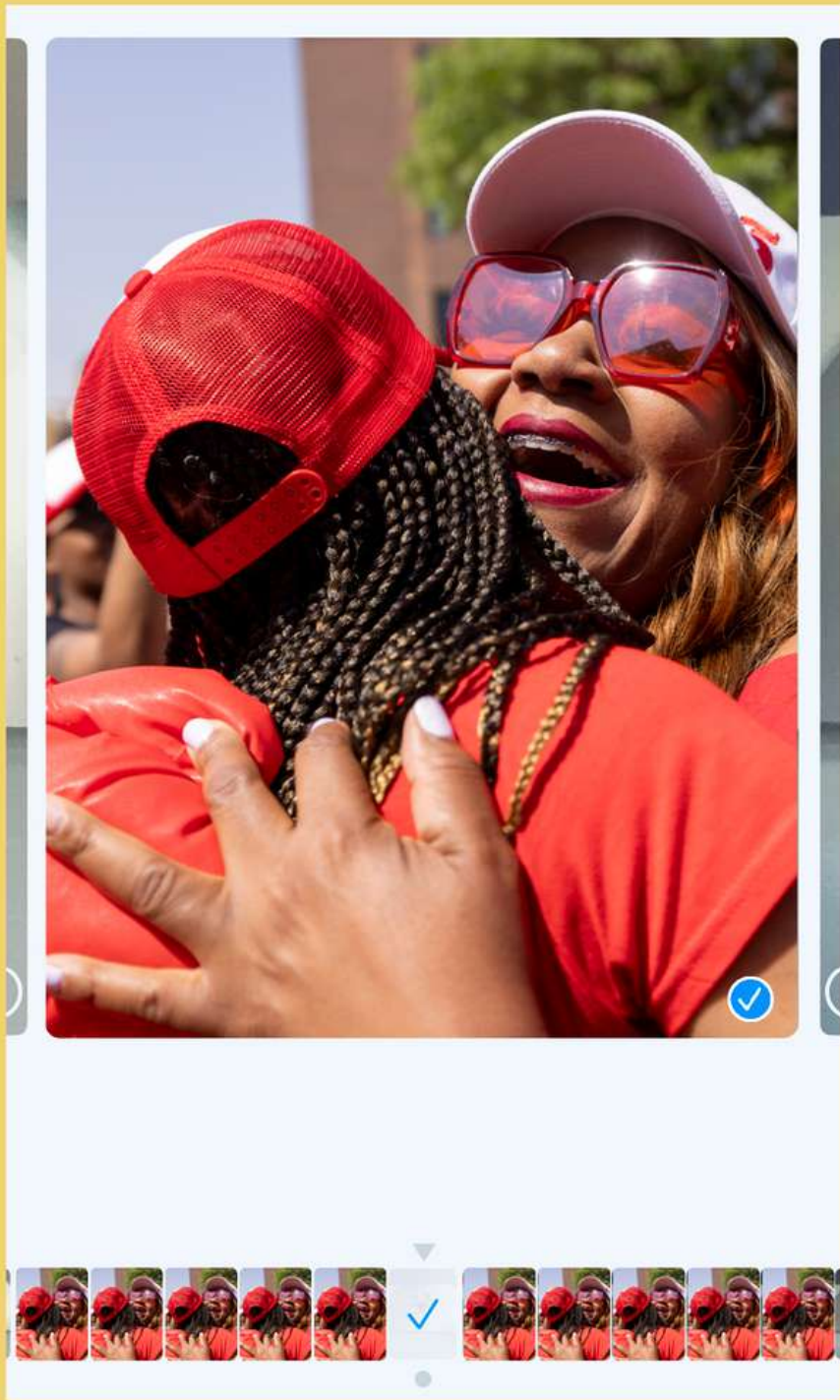
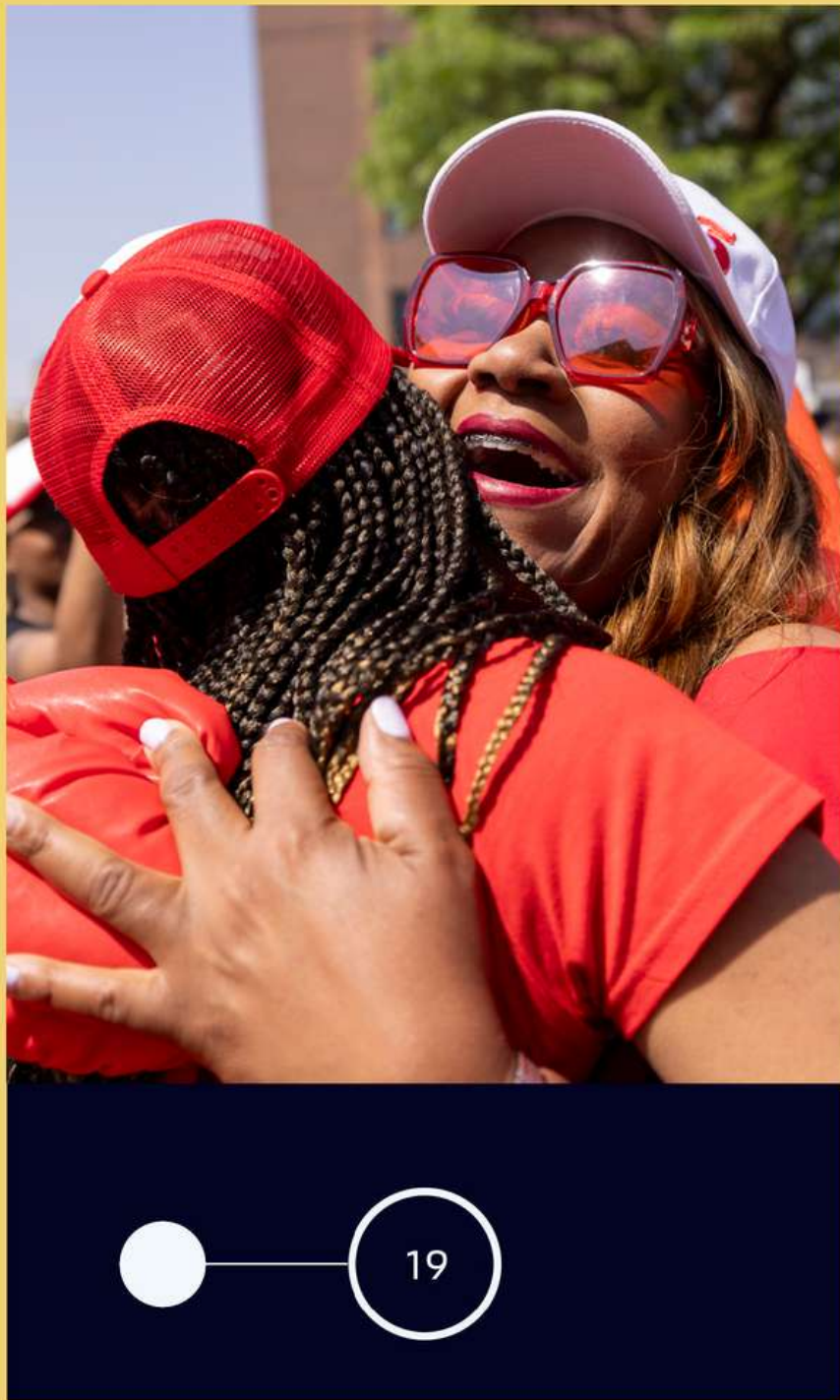
Burst Mode

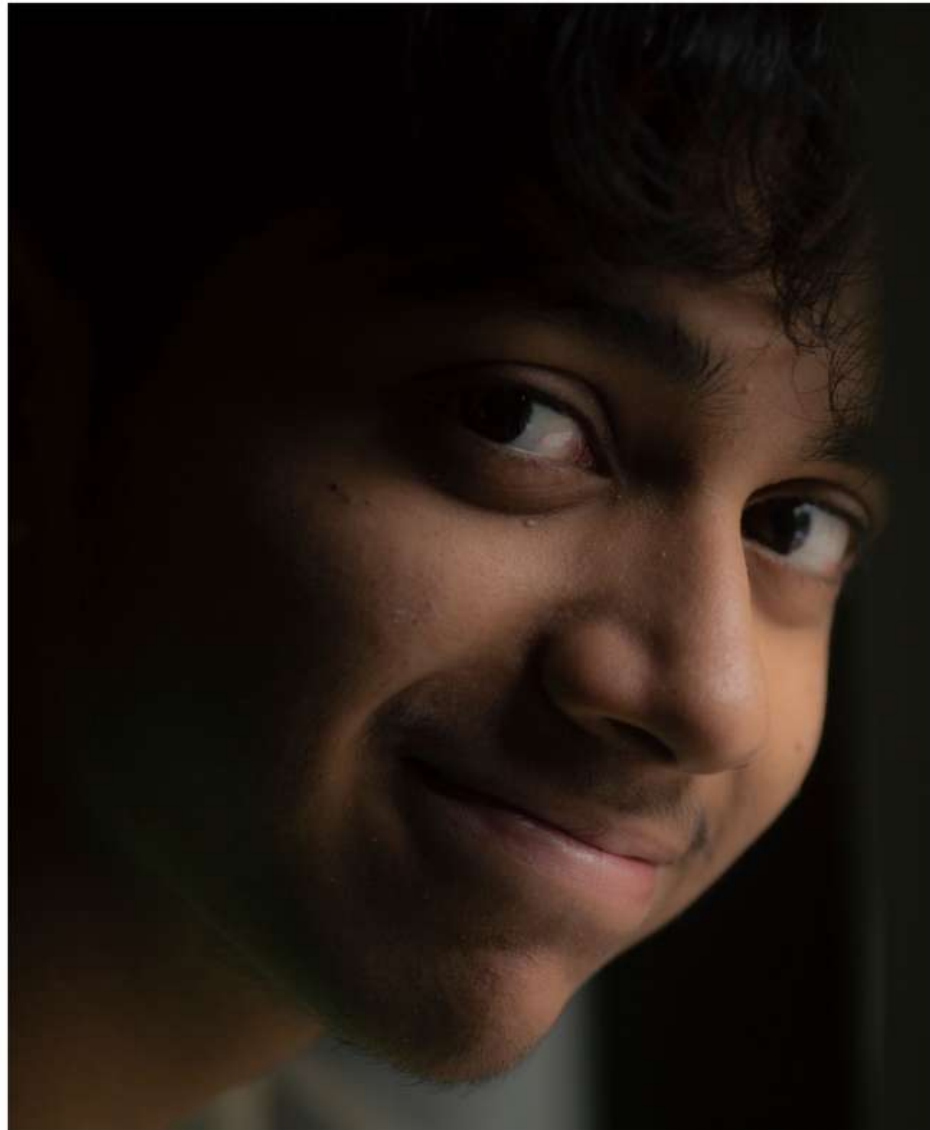
WHAT

- Takes rapid photos for fast action or emotions

HOW

- Slide shutter button to left until you see number counting up
- Select favorite shot from the burst





Composing Portraits

- **Composition** – you control the background and framing
- **Lighting** – move your subject to capture them in the best light possible
- **Proximity** – Full body, mid length, or close up



Composing Portraits

- **Groups vs individual** – Mix it up
- **Subject interaction** – Have fun with it, give prompts



Composing Portraits

- **Eye line** – Looking at the camera vs looking off camera
- **Positioning** – Hand, head and body positioning, shoulder angle
- **Sitting vs standing**



Indoor or Private Events

- Example: school events, indoor performances, smaller community events
- Follow any photo/video guidelines from event organizer
- Check with a parent or guardian if you're unsure



Larger Outdoor Public Events

- Generally don't need to ask permission or get approval in public spaces.
- Photographing children in public is generally allowed but feel free to ask their parents' permission if it makes you feel more comfortable.



General Considerations

- Be mindful that some people may not want their photo taken, even if photography is allowed.
- Would I be comfortable if someone took this photo of me?
- Am I being respectful of this person and the moment?



4

Phone Photography & Editing



Adjust

Filters

Crop

Clean Up

Photo Editing

CROP

- Use to crop or straighten/adjust horizontal and vertical perspective

-2



-7





Photo Editing

FILTERS

- Use subtly and often reduce intensity
- Select some favorites for consistency



19



20



Photo Editing

ADJUSTMENTS

- Exposure, Highlights, Shadows
- Contrast
- Vibrance, Saturation
- Warmth
- Sharpness, Definition
- Clean Up Tool



BEFORE



AFTER

Composition & Storytelling Ideas To Try

- 1 Take a portrait of someone in your community using a composition technique.
- 2 Photograph a scene using the wide, medium, and tight storytelling approach.
- 3 Use the “Framing Through” technique in Portrait Mode on your phone using Focus Lock.
- 4 Use light, a shadow, texture, or shape as an element within a photo or background for a photo.

The background is a dark charcoal grey. It is decorated with various geometric shapes in two colors: red and yellow. These include circles of different sizes, squares, triangles (some pointing right, some pointing left), and plus signs. The shapes are scattered across the frame, with some appearing in the corners and others more centrally located. The main title 'Acknowledgements' is centered in a large, white, serif font.

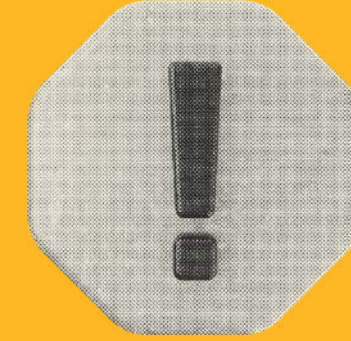
Acknowledgements

Photos in presentation by Jason Willis, JMW Creative



Practice

Using the techniques you learned,
take 3 photos that show how
people in your community
connect with each other.



Do this before
moving ahead!

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Practice:
5 mins

Check In

Reflect on the 3 practice photos you took. Write down:

Which image is strongest and why?



Look Beneath the Surface

As you look at your photo, push past what you see.

What is it about and what are the values it shows?

What you see: A potluck





Who walked in not knowing a single person
and is now sitting down next to someone?

Who made that dish in the corner
that nobody's touching yet because
they don't recognize it?



What you see: A potluck

What it's about: Feeling at home

Identify the Values In Your Photo

Welcoming

Friendship

Courage

Joy

Love

Trust

Hope

Family

Belonging

Kindness

or pick your own!

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Practice:
5 mins

Say Why It Matters

Choose 1-2 values represented in your strongest photo.

Then write:

- What in the image shows that value?
- Why does that value matter to you?
- What do you feel when that value is in your life?



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Find The Story Behind Your Photo

Think about why this moment was worth capturing. It's not just a great picture - it also has a story behind it.

What's not in the photo is important too: Who's standing off to the side? Who almost didn't come to a gathering?

What were people feeling?



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Practice:
5 mins

Sharing the Moment

Write down:

- What happened 5 minutes before the photo?
- What happened 5 minutes after?
- Why did you take the photo?
- What would someone miss if they only saw the image and not the story?



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Captioning Your Photo

Let's put together everything you've learned so far!

Great captions reveal something people couldn't
know just from looking.



Tip #1: Say Less

Don't explain the whole photo. Say the one thing a stranger couldn't know. Let the picture do the rest.



Photo by Mercedes Walkham

Instead of: Three people eating ice cream.
Try: They met that afternoon and stayed till it melted.



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Tip #2: Know Who's Looking

Imagine who'll see it and what you want them to feel.

Write the caption for them.



Instead of: *My grandma's dumplings.*

Try: *She's made them every Sunday for forty years.*



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Practice:
5 mins

Caption Your Photo

If you had only one sentence to go with your photo, what would it be?

Welcoming looks like _____.

Sometimes belonging starts when _____.

The story behind this photo is _____.



The goal isn't to write the perfect sentence.
It's to say something only you know!

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How to Submit Your Photos

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How To Submit Your Photos

★ **September 30:** Deadline to submit photos & stories
Up to 10 photos and a story in 100 words or less



Soon after you submit: Your photo goes live on Creative Visions' site
September 10: Global photo gallery opens during Welcoming Week

wamerica.us/submit-photos

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Tips for Your Photos & Stories

Use these guiding questions to write your story:

- If you had only one sentence to go with your photos, what would it be?
- What would someone miss if they only saw the image and not the story?

Only share photos you're comfortable having public!

✉ Questions? communications@welcomingamerica.org