

The first assessment criterion for visual arts courses at OCA is 'Technical and visual skills' which includes compositional skills (see the assessment criteria at the end of Part One). But is it possible to learn composition, or do you just have a feel for it? For the American photographer Edward Weston (1886–1958), 'to consult rules of composition before making a picture is a little like consulting the law of gravity before going for a walk' (Weston, 1930, p.320). Yet Harold Evans (b.1928), the legendary picture editor of the Sunday Times, stressed the importance of technique: 'In writing, the injunction is to have something to say and to say it well, and in photography, similarly, the idea needs to be served by technique' (Evans, 1997, p.88). In practical terms, we can begin by simplifying composition to the fundamental elements of point, line and frame.