

Exercise walk-through

2.8

Composition

AP 2-D Art and Design

Composition – arranging it all

Composition is how the elements and principles are arranged within the **picture plane**.

- the **format** (portrait, landscape, square) shapes the design
- the **rule of thirds** places key elements on the third-lines
- **cropping** decides what is cut – changing emphasis and tension

A strong composition unifies the elements **and** creates a clear focal point – exactly what the 2-D portfolio is judged on.

Worked example – writing about a principle

“Explain the *balance* in this composition.”

*“The large dark shape on the left is balanced by three small bright shapes on the right – this is **asymmetrical balance**, which gives the piece visual weight on both sides while keeping it dynamic rather than static.”*

A full answer names the **principle**, points to **specific evidence** in the work, **and** states the **effect on the viewer**.

Balance



Leonardo's Vitruvian Man: the figure is drawn with near-perfect symmetry about a central vertical axis, and the surrounding circle gives it radial balance too

Exam tips

- For every work, state which **principle** organises it – balance, emphasis, contrast, movement, or unity.
- Justify **balance** through **visual weight**, not just symmetry.
- Ensure one clear **focal point**, and name the **emphasis** technique that creates it.
- Aim for **unity with variety** – name the unifying device and the source of interest.
- Plan **composition** with the **rule of thirds** and thumbnails before committing.

Exercises 2.1·2.2

2.1 Placing a subject on a grid intersection rather than dead-centre follows the [1]

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A rule of thirds

B value scale

C colour wheel

D vanishing point

2.2 Define composition. [2]

Exercises 2.1·2.2

2.1 Placing a subject on a grid intersection rather than dead-centre follows the [1]



- A** rule of thirds
- B** value scale
- C** colour wheel
- D** vanishing point

2.1 A

- off-centre placement on the 3×3 grid = rule of thirds

2.2 Define composition. [2]

2.2

- the arrangement of all the visual elements in a work to guide the viewer and express an idea

Exercise 2.3

2.3 State one reason to make thumbnails before a final piece.

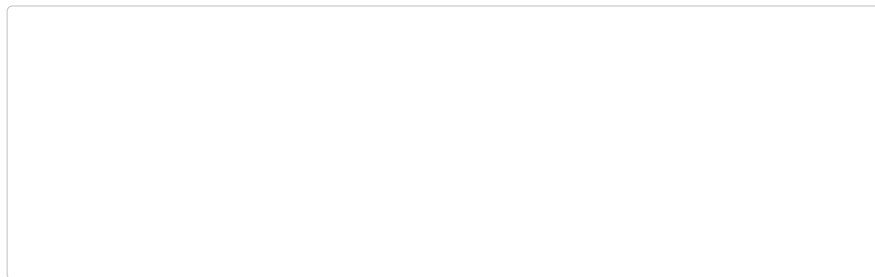
[1]

3 Studio & portfolio tasks

3.1 Plan a composition with **three thumbnails**.

(a) Make three different small layouts of one subject.

[3]



3.2 Choose and justify.

(a) Circle your strongest thumbnail and name two principles it uses well.

[3]

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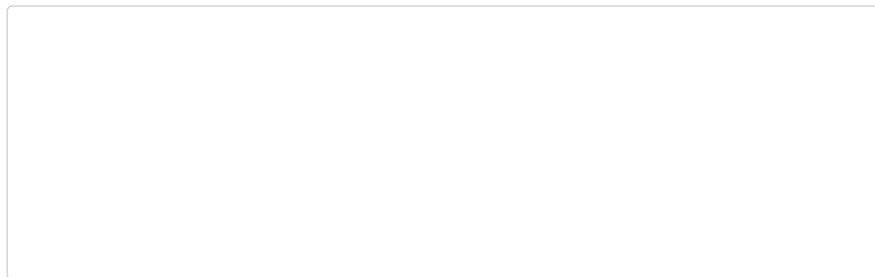
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[3]

2.3

- to test/compare arrangements quickly before committing time and materials

3.1

Full solution 2.3

2.3

- to test/compare arrangements quickly before committing time and materials

3.1

- Look for: three genuinely different arrangements (2); at least one uses the rule of thirds or clear emphasis (1)

3.2

- Look for: a reasoned choice (1); two design principles correctly identified in the chosen layout (2)