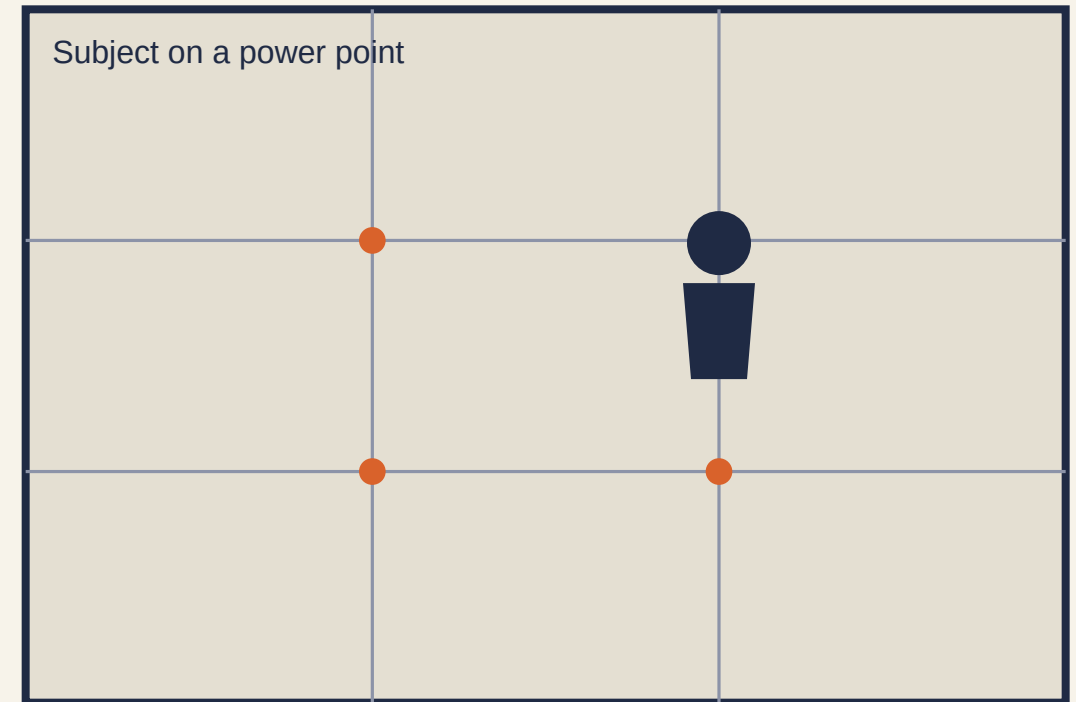

Composition & Framing

Week 6 | Putting figures, characters and settings into a frame

Sources: Framed Ink (Mateu-Mestre), Directing the Story (Glebas), Film Directing: Shot by Shot (Katz)

Rule of thirds & off-center placement

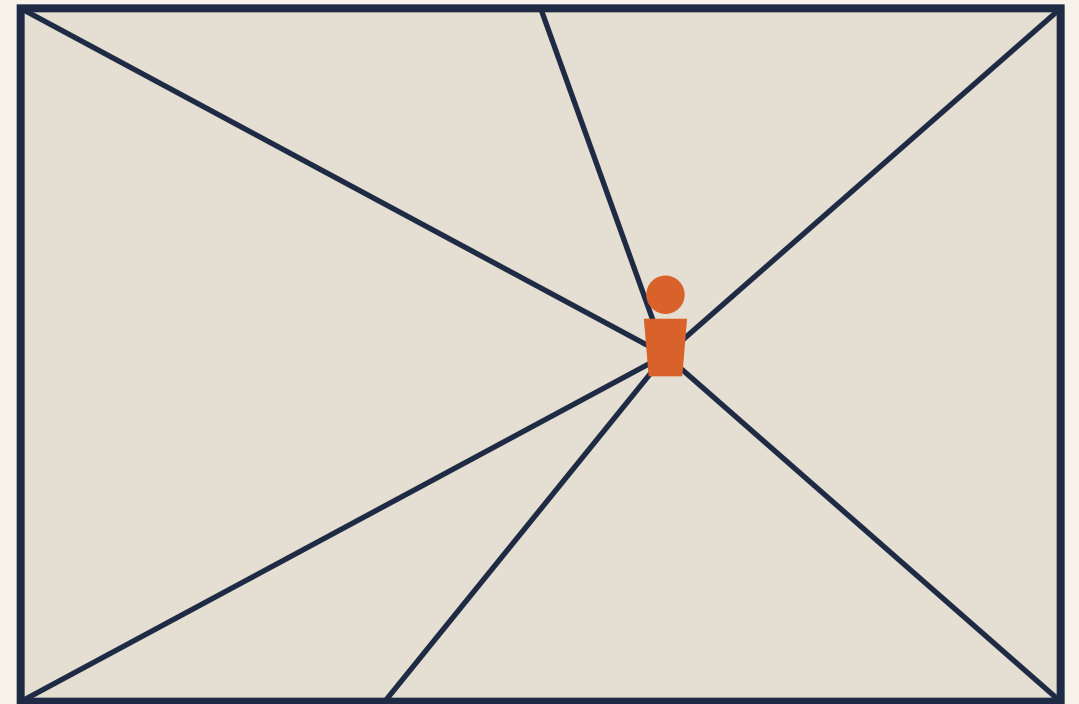
- Perfect symmetry suits epic or special moments; used often it feels self-conscious
- Thirds give an off-center, natural feel without crowding the frame edge
- Put key elements on the grid lines or intersections
- Judge frames in sequence: alternating off-center shots create eye rhythm
- End one shot's focus where the next shot's focus begins



Draw it centered, then on a thirds intersection

Leading lines: directing the eye

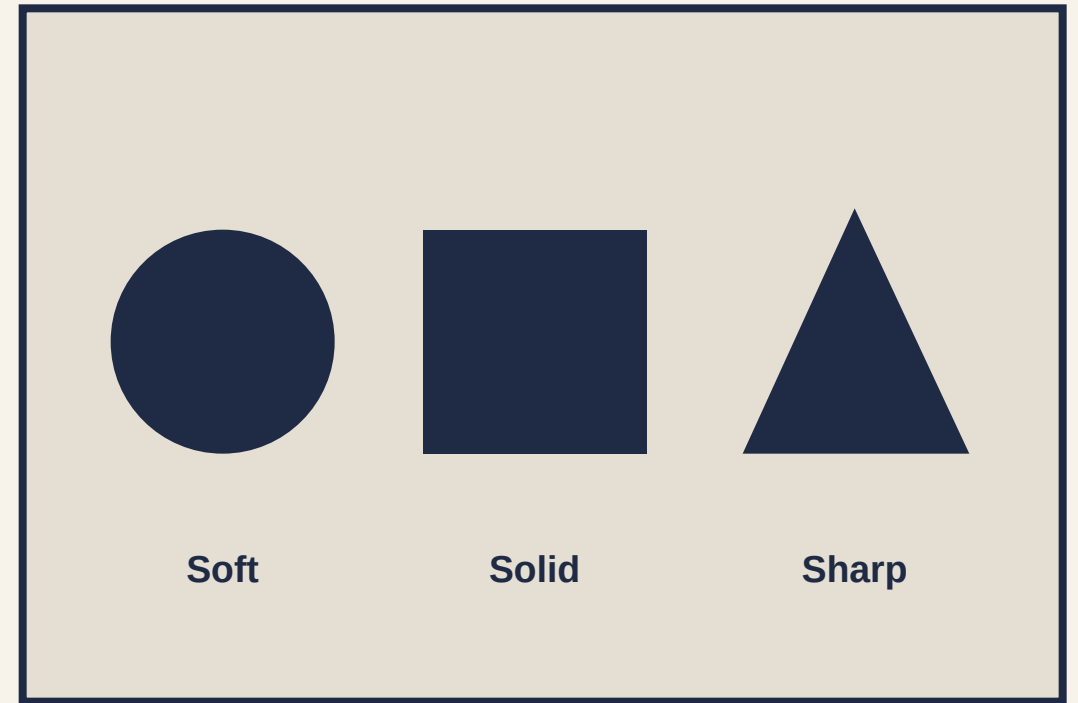
- Lines can be physical (fence, road, shadow) or implied (a row of heads, a gaze)
- Perspective lines pull the eye to the vanishing point
- Curves feel calm, diagonals feel dynamic, straights feel assertive
- A character's look direction pulls the audience's eyes too
- Beware accidental tangents and competing movement



All lines converge on the focal point

Shape language & silhouette readability

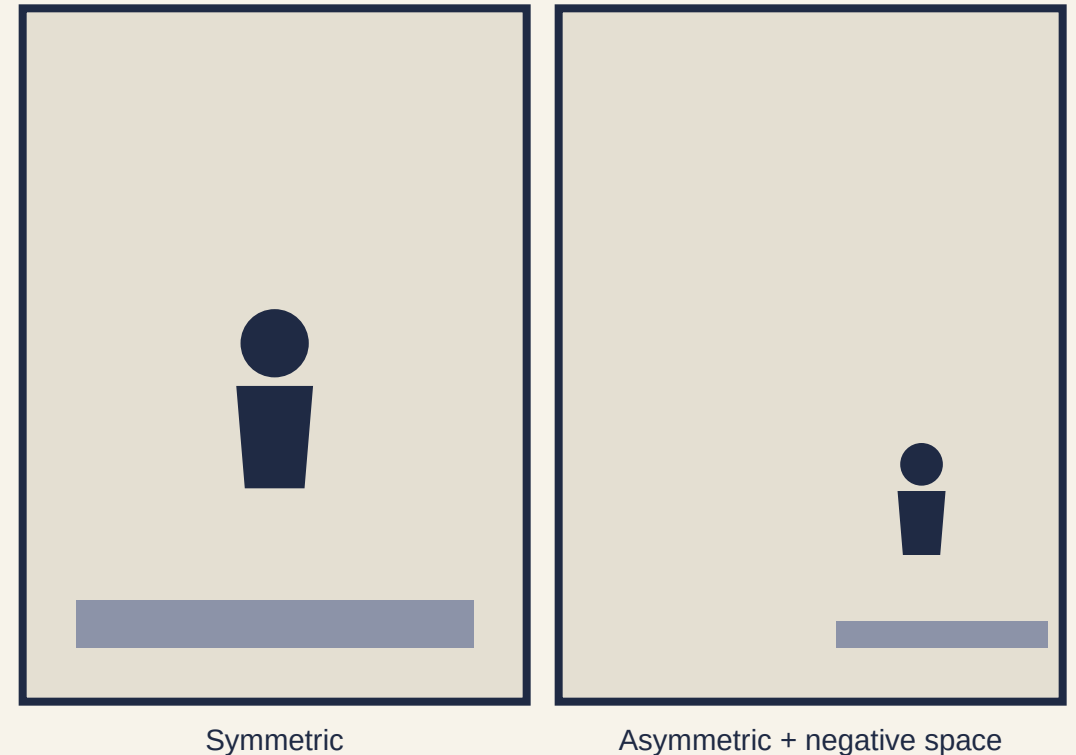
- Think in simple, clear shapes first, then place details inside
- Round = soft and friendly; square = solid, confident; triangle = sharp, edgy
- A strong silhouette reads instantly, even in a quick thumbnail
- Pose changes silhouette: expansive = diagonals, sad = caved-in, relaxed = horizontal
- Keep one distinctive silhouette feature if outfits change



Which character reads as which at a glance?

Balance, symmetry & negative space

- Symmetry feels formal or epic, and can feel eerie when it is too neat
- Asymmetry stays balanced by trading big masses against small ones
- Negative space is not empty: it can frame, isolate or add tension
- Pocahontas example: alone on a cliff reads lonely, in a crowd it does not
- Closed framings favor clarity and balance; open framings feel documentary



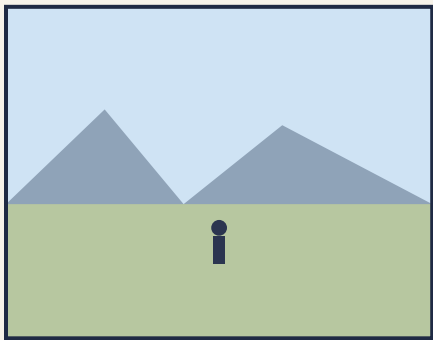
Value grouping: light & dark organize the frame

- Plan the frame as 2-3 big value shapes before adding detail
- The eye goes to the area of highest contrast
- A pool of light inside a dark mass isolates the subject
- Lighting changes meaning: lit reads open, shadowed reads uncertain
- Test it: squint or shrink the thumbnail and check the read

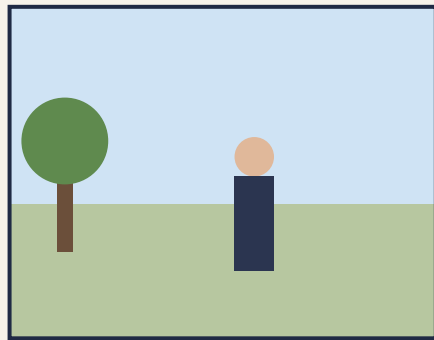


Dark / mid / light masses, with the figure in the light

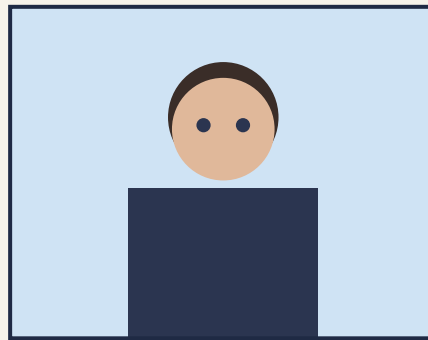
Shot sizes



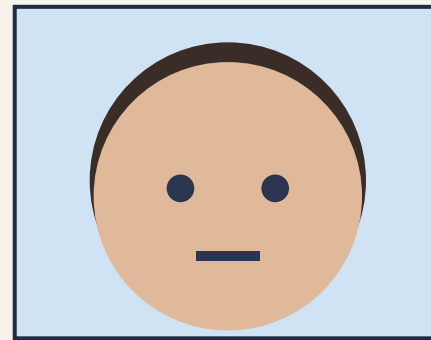
Extreme wide
Place and scale



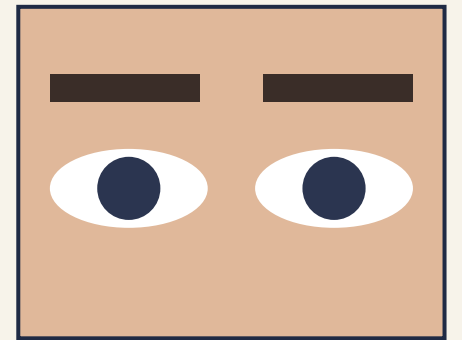
Wide
Body in context



Medium
Gesture, dialogue



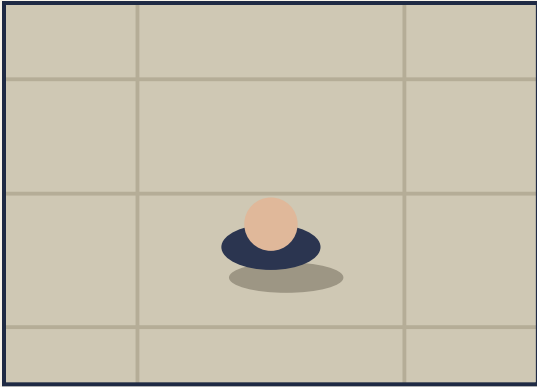
Close-up
Face, emotion



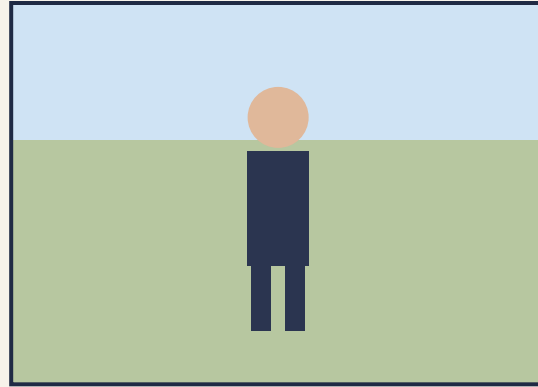
Extreme close-up
A single detail

Move closer as the moment gets more personal or intense

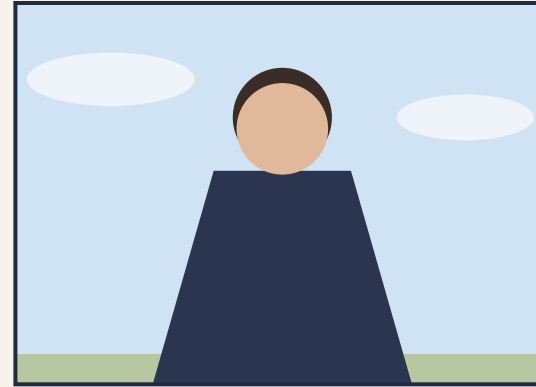
Camera angles & what they communicate



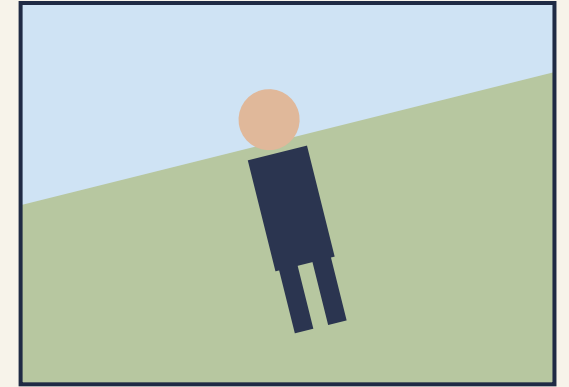
High angle
Small, vulnerable



Eye level
Neutral, relatable



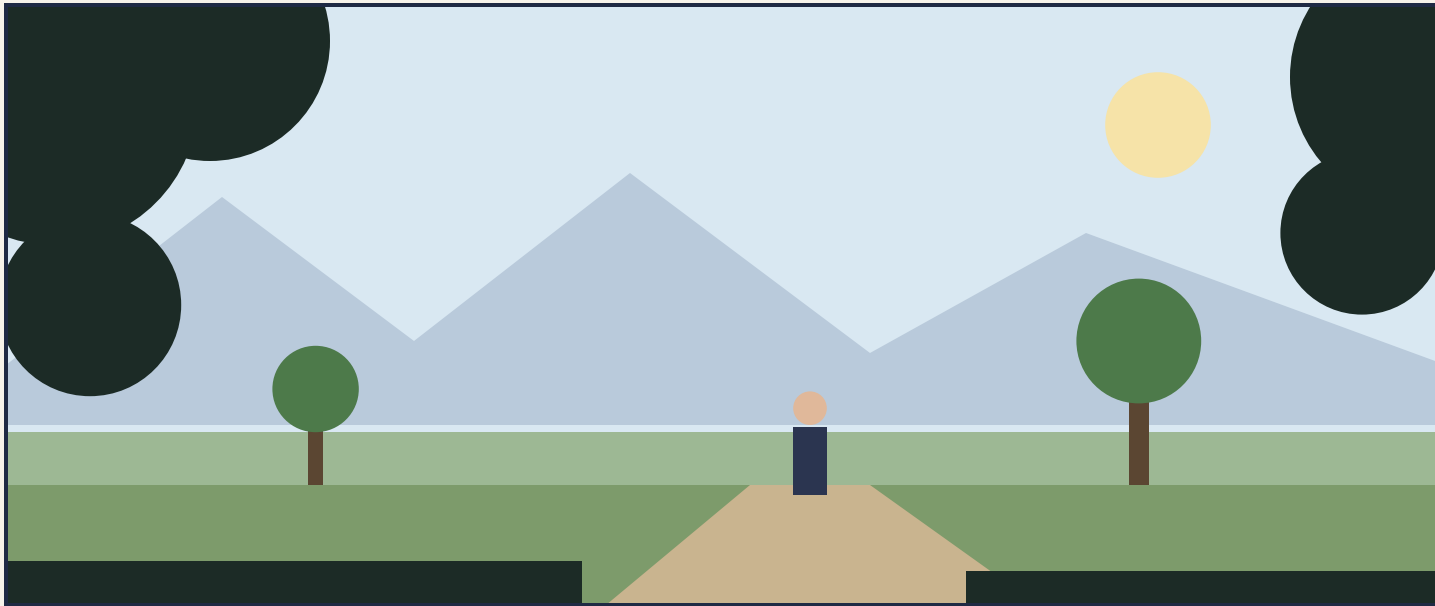
Low angle
Powerful, imposing



Dutch tilt
Uneasy, off-balance

Choose the angle that matches how the audience should feel

Depth: foreground, midground, background



■ **Foreground**

Dark, large, cropped
Frames the shot

■ **Midground**

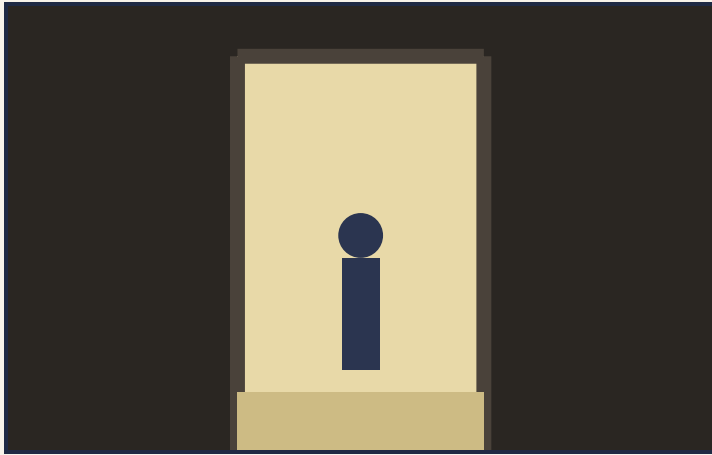
Where the action is
Sharpest detail

■ **Background**

Pale, small, soft
Sets place and mood

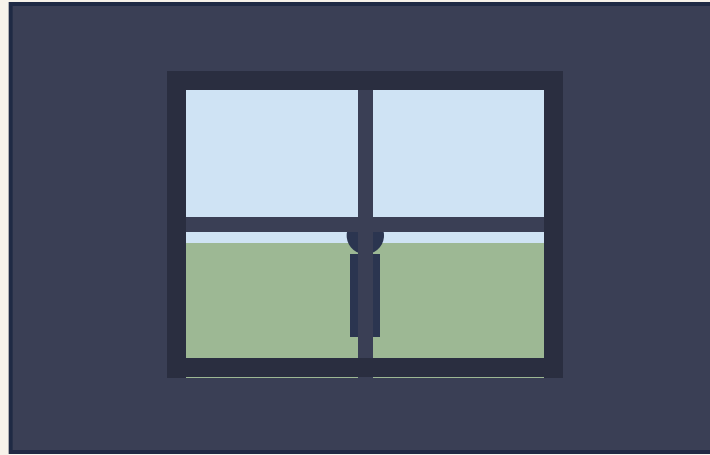
Overlap layers and change value to create depth

Framing within a frame



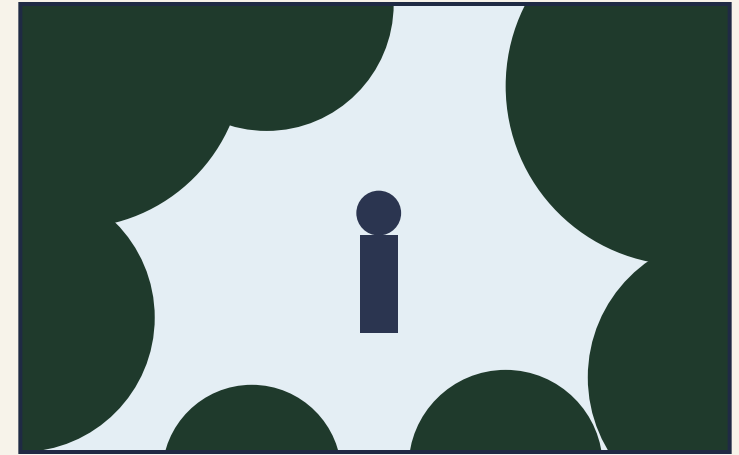
Doorway

Isolates, adds mystery



Window

Observed, separated



Foliage

Peeking, voyeuristic

A frame inside the frame pulls the eye to the subject

Recap & in-class exercise

Tools for one job: guide the eye

- Thirds: place off-center, avoid dead center by habit
- Lines: aim them at the focal point
- Silhouette: shape tells character and mood
- Balance: use negative space on purpose
- Value: group light and dark into big shapes
- Framing: match shot size, angle and depth to the beat

Thumbnail exercise (25 min)

Pick a story beat: discovering something frightening, or reconciling.

Draw 4-6 thumbnails, each with a different shot size and angle.

Annotate: which tool did you use, and why?

Homework: redraw a favorite film still as a thumbnail.