

Image Generation / Cinematic Scenes

Apply cinematic composition rules — professional framing guidance for better visual storytelling.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Model: GPT-4 / Claude / Gemini

Use Case: Framing, Composition

Updated: May 2026

Why This Prompt Exists

Composition determines where the viewer looks and how they feel. Center-framed subjects feel stable. Off-center subjects create tension. Poor composition confuses the viewer.

You get:

- subjects dead center in every shot (static, boring, no tension)
- horizons cutting through heads (distracting, amateur)
- no leading lines (viewer doesn't know where to look)
- headroom too much or too little (unbalanced, awkward)
- no depth (flat, two-dimensional, uninteresting)

But composition rules exist:

- rule of thirds: subject at intersection points (dynamic, interesting)
- leading lines: lines guide eye to subject (direction, focus)
- framing: elements frame the subject (depth, context)

- headroom: space above head (balanced, professional)
- look space: space in direction subject is looking (movement, anticipation)
- depth: foreground, midground, background (dimensional, immersive)

Without rules, composition feels amateur.

This prompt enforces cinematic composition rules.

The Prompt

Assume the role of a cinematography educator who teaches composition rules.

Your task is to recommend composition techniques based on scene intent.

Generate:

1. COMPOSITION RULE CLASSIFICATION

Rule	Description	Emotional Effect	Best For	Avoid For
Rule of thirds	Subject at intersection points	Dynamic, interesting	Most scenes	Symmetrical subjects
Center framing	Subject dead center	Stable, powerful, direct	Speeches, confrontation	Action, movement
Leading lines	Lines guide eye to subject	Direction, focus	Landscapes, architecture	Crowded scenes
Framing	Elements frame the subject	Depth, context	Portraits, intimate scenes	Wide landscapes

Golden ratio	Spiral composition	Natural, harmonious	Nature, classical	Modern, chaotic
Symmetry	Mirror composition	Balanced, formal	Architecture, ceremony	Organic, natural
Look space	Space in direction of gaze	Movement, anticipation	Dialogue, action	Static, centered
Headroom	Space above head	Balanced, professional	Portraits, interviews	Very close shots

2. SHOT TYPE TO COMPOSITION MAP

Shot Type	Primary Rule	Secondary	Headroom
Extreme wide	Leading lines	Rule of thirds	Minimal
Wide	Rule of thirds	Golden ratio	Minimal
Medium	Rule of thirds	Look space	Moderate
Medium close-up	Rule of thirds	Center framing	Moderate
Close-up	Center framing	Rule of thirds	Minimal
Extreme close-up	Center framing	Symmetry	None
Over-shoulder	Rule of thirds	Look space	Moderate

3. COMPOSITION PROMPT TEMPLATES

****Rule of thirds:****

`Rule of thirds composition, [subject] positioned at left/right intersection, balanced framing, cinematic`

****Center framing:****

`Center framing, [subject] dead center in frame, symmetrical, powerful`

composition, cinematic`

****Leading lines:****

`Leading lines composition, [lines] guide the eye toward [subject], depth, directional, cinematic`

****Framing:****

`Framing composition, [element] frames [subject] in foreground, depth, intimate, cinematic`

****Golden ratio:****

`Golden ratio composition, spiral flow, natural harmony, cinematic`

****Look space:****

`Look space composition, [subject] looking toward [direction], space in direction of gaze, anticipation`

4. HEADROOM GUIDELINES

Shot Type	Headroom	Rule
Extreme wide	Very little	Eyes in upper third
Wide	Minimal	Eyes in upper third
Medium	Moderate	Eyes in upper third
Medium close-up	Moderate	Eyes in upper third
Close-up	Minimal	Eyes in upper third
Extreme close-up	None	Fill frame

5. LEADING LINES DIRECTIONS

Line Direction	Emotional Effect	Best For
Horizontal	Calm, stable, wide	Landscapes, horizons
Vertical	Power, strength, height	Buildings, trees, people
Diagonal	Dynamic, tension, movement	Action, conflict
Curved	Gentle, flowing, natural	Rivers, paths, roads
Converging	Depth, perspective, scale	Hallways, roads, tunnels

6. COMMON COMPOSITION MISTAKES

Mistake	Why It's Wrong	Correct Composition
Horizon at eye level	Cuts through head	Horizon in upper or lower third
Subject dead center	Static, boring	Rule of thirds for variety
No look space	Feels confined	Space in direction of gaze
Too much headroom	Subject looks small	Eyes in upper third
No foreground depth	Flat, two-dimensional	Add foreground element
Crooked horizon	Distracting, amateur	Level horizon

INPUTS:

Shot type:

[E.G., "Medium close-up", "Wide landscape", "Close-up"]

Subject position/action:

[E.G., "Looking left", "Walking right", "Standing still"]

Environment:

[E.G., "Forest", "City street", "Empty room"]

Desired feeling:

[E.G., "Dynamic", "Stable", "Tense", "Peaceful"]

RULES:

- Rule of thirds for dynamic, interesting shots (most common rule)
- Center framing for power, stability, direct address (speeches, confrontation)
- Leading lines for direction and depth (roads, hallways, rivers)
- Look space in direction subject is looking (otherwise feels cramped)
- Headroom: eyes in upper third of frame (standard for most shots)
- Horizon never at center (place in upper or lower third)
- Foreground, midground, background for depth (three layers minimum)

How To Use It

- Rule of thirds for dynamic, interesting shots — the most common and reliable rule.
- Center framing for power, stability, and direct address — speeches, confrontation, important moments.
- Leading lines for direction and depth — roads, hallways, rivers, fences.
- Look space in the direction the subject is looking — otherwise the frame feels cramped.
- Headroom: eyes should be in the upper third of the frame — standard for most shots.
- Horizon should never be at center — place in upper or lower third.
- Foreground, midground, background for depth — three layers minimum for cinematic feel.

Example Input

Shot type:

“Wide landscape with a lone tree”

Subject position/action:

“Tree standing alone, no movement”

Environment:

“Open field, rolling hills, sunset”

Desired feeling:

“Peaceful, solitary, harmonious”

Why It Works

Most AI image generation ignores composition rules — resulting in flat, static, amateur-looking images that don't guide the viewer's eye.

This framework improves outcomes by forcing:

- composition rule selection (rule of thirds, center framing, leading lines, framing, golden ratio, symmetry, look space)
- shot-to-composition mapping (which rule for which shot type)
- prompt template generation (ready-to-use composition descriptions)
- headroom guidelines (correct spacing for each shot)
- mistake prevention (common amateur errors)

Failure modes this prevents:

- Subject dead center in every shot (static, boring, no tension)
- Horizon cutting through subject's head (distracting, amateur)
- No leading lines (viewer doesn't know where to look)
- Too much or too little headroom (unbalanced, awkward)

This improves on: Centered, static compositions. Professional rules create dynamic, engaging frames.

Related to: CS-01 (Shot Type) for framing; CS-02 (Lighting) for mood.

Build Better AI Systems

Subscribe for advanced prompt engineering, AI coding tools, debugging frameworks, and practical strategies for developers and engineers.

Carefully engineered prompts for people doing real work.