

Name:

Class:

# PATTERNS - RHYTHM - TEXTURES

## PATTERNS

Patterns, both natural and man-made, bring a sense of visual rhythm and harmony to photographs that, like a series of repeating notes in a melody, capture the imagination. Patterns appear whenever strong graphic elements—lines, colors, shapes, or forms—repeat themselves.

Once you do become aware of the power of patterns, you will discover them almost everywhere: in a field of Maine lupines, in crowds of faces in a stadium, even in the zigs and zags of modern architecture. The secret to finding patterns is to explore potential subjects from a variety of angles. While you might not notice the colorful design of umbrellas as you maneuver a crowded Paris sidewalk, they become blatantly clear from an upper-floor window or balcony.



Lighting is another potent painter of pattern. Fresh-plowed furrows in a cornfield, all but invisible on a dull, overcast day, rise into waves of highlight and shadow when lit by a bright, low-angle sun.

Close-ups are also filled with pattern—consider the swirl of seeds in a sunflower or the intricate tracings of color in a butterfly's wings.



The key to emphasizing patterns is to isolate them from their surroundings. By excluding everything but the design, you create the illusion that the repetition is infinite, extending beyond the frame. Telephoto and longer zoom lenses are excellent tools for isolating and extracting patterns by enabling you to exclude extraneous images.

**Pattern photography** utilizes elements that are repeated. The repetition of lines, shapes, tones or color can create interesting images. There are photographers who use the pattern as the main subject of an image while others use it to enhance the overall composition and look of the photograph. Photographers can choose to emphasize or break the pattern to capture a great image.

### **Emphasizing the Pattern**

A repetitive pattern that fills the frame gives the impression that the pattern is massive and goes beyond the image even if the pattern or repetition is only enough to fill the screen. This is done to take images of people's faces in a group or crowd or an assembly of arranged bottles in a factory.



### **Breaking the Pattern**

Another technique is capturing the disruption in the flow of a pattern. Using the previously mentioned examples, photographers can have one person wear a yellow shirt in a crowd wearing purple. These disruptions can happen naturally or can be manipulated to appear as such. The break can be achieved by introducing an element in a contrasting color, with a different shape or texture. Removing one of the elements that make up the pattern can also work. Focus on the break to create emphasis.

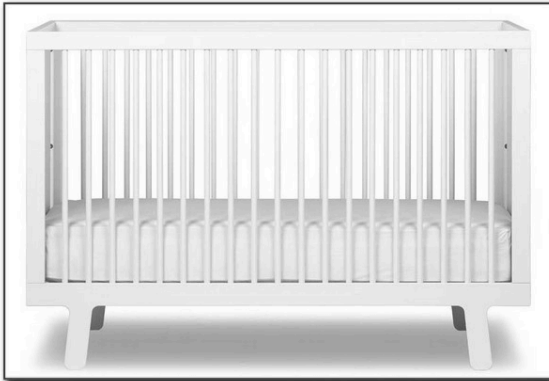


## **RHYTHM**

Rhythm, a critical component of music, dance, and poetry, is also a quality of great significance in the visual arts. Rhythm creates the sense of movement. Rhythm may affect the quality of the viewing experience for your audience and help to draw and keep the eye within the frame. Pattern can be thought of a subset of rhythm in that patterns don't always have rhythm, but rhythm always has pattern.

Let's take a look at a variety of rhythms in the visual arts and the ways they can be applied to photographic composition:

- 1) **Repetition:** This standard rhythm involves the same or similar elements repeating at regular intervals — think of equally spaced light posts extending from left to right across the frame, the slats of a crib, or a series of windows on the side of a city apartment building. In music, this might be the same key played once every 1/4 second on the piano.



- 2) **Alternation:** Alternating rhythm usually involves “AB” elements, like the stripes on a man’s two-colored tie, the black and white keys on a keyboard, or the alternating squares of a checkerboard. Alternation might also involve “AB” intervals — with the same or similar elements repeated across long-short-long spaces. This every-other pattern of visual rhythm is less common than repetition in the general world around us, but it is very common in the design world and may be utilized to create a strong graphic aesthetic when orchestrating a shot. A musical example of alternation is the F/F-sharp theme from Jaws. Duh nuh. Duh nuh.



- 3) **Progression:** Like musical scales, progressive rhythm can be perceived as a series of elements that change slightly and predictably with each iteration. This may involve the same elements we might see in standard repetition, but if we change perspective, the repeated elements appear to change gradually — so rather than standing in front of an equidistant series of light posts extending from left to right, we might position ourselves so that one light post is closest and the others appear gradually smaller and smaller as they progress towards a vanishing point. Ripples on water also exhibit progressive rhythm, with their concentric circles appearing larger and larger as they extend outward.



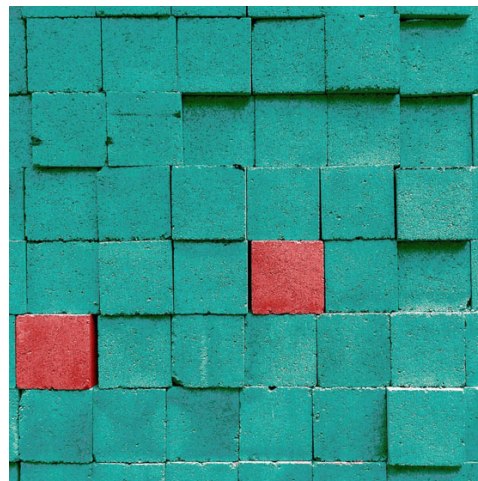
4) **Undulation:** Undulating rhythm involves a smoother, continuous progression of elements that rise and fall or weave left to right. Each undulation is not necessarily equal in size or intensity to that of the previous or subsequent undulation, nor is it necessarily predictably progressive. Wavy hair, rolling hills, billowing clouds, softly blowing grasses, a dancer's graceful extensions, waves rolling up onto the beach, a snake's winding body, wind-swept sand dunes: all of these often showcase undulating rhythm. In music, undulation might be nicely exhibited by the tremulous tones of the violin.



Rhythmic elements can themselves be the sole subject of your composition (think of a close-up of zebra stripes or three simple apples in a row). A general rhythm throughout the frame can also be used to establish an overall atmosphere or mood — the regularity of the rhythm may envelop the viewer in feelings of peace or serenity. To take this back to music, think of how soothing we find sounds that are nothing more than rhythm: a heartbeat, water lapping, the gentle and consistent sounds of the ocean. But is that itself an artistic creation? Some might argue the rhythm is just what the metronome would play; it's not the song itself.

## DISRUPT THE RHYTHM!

With this in mind, visual rhythm is often most powerfully used as a vehicle to or backdrop for your central story or primary subject. Try placing your subject amidst a scene with great background rhythm or seek out variability in the rhythm itself. Your viewer will identify as a point of interest this distinguishing quality amidst the rhythm. Imagine, for example, the one black sheep in a line of six white sheep. Or imagine twelve fence posts equally spaced, with a bird atop one of them; that single point of disruption makes an impact. The rhythm in the scene can also be a simple backdrop, such as undulating waves that lead us to a boat in the water. It doesn't have to be complicated; the key is that while the rhythm can lull and guide the viewer on a journey through the frame, you usually want to offer something in the way of a visual destination, a focal point, or something that otherwise grounds the rest of the scene. Deliberately interrupting a predictable, soothing rhythm is a compelling way to introduce your subject to the audience.



## TEXTURES

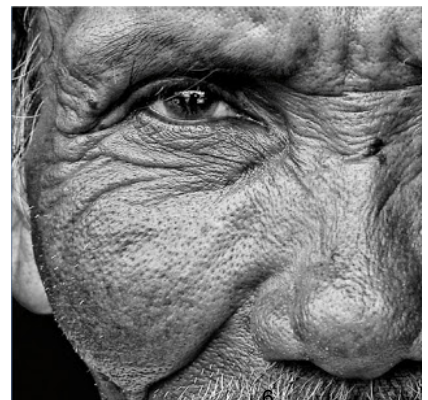
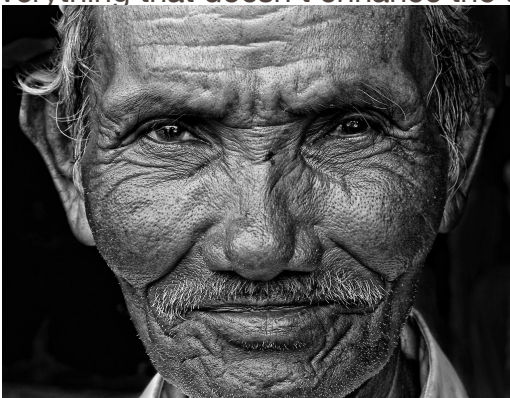
Look at a close-up photo of a weathered old barn board and you almost wince at the imagined pain of catching a sharp splinter. Our memories of how things feel are so ingrained in our consciousness that the mere sight of them brings a vivid sensation of touch. By exploiting textures you can bring a tactile dimension to your photographs.



Surface textures become most apparent when they are illuminated from an oblique (non-direct) light source. Angled light catches the shape and imperfections of an object's surface and creates a pattern of highlight and shadow to produce visual texture. The quality of the light is also important. Bold and large textures, such as the bark of a tree or the rough surface of the door detail, are best revealed by strong, direct sidelight. Smooth, more finely detailed textures, such as that of satin, would be erased by powerful light and are revealed best by gentler, oblique light.



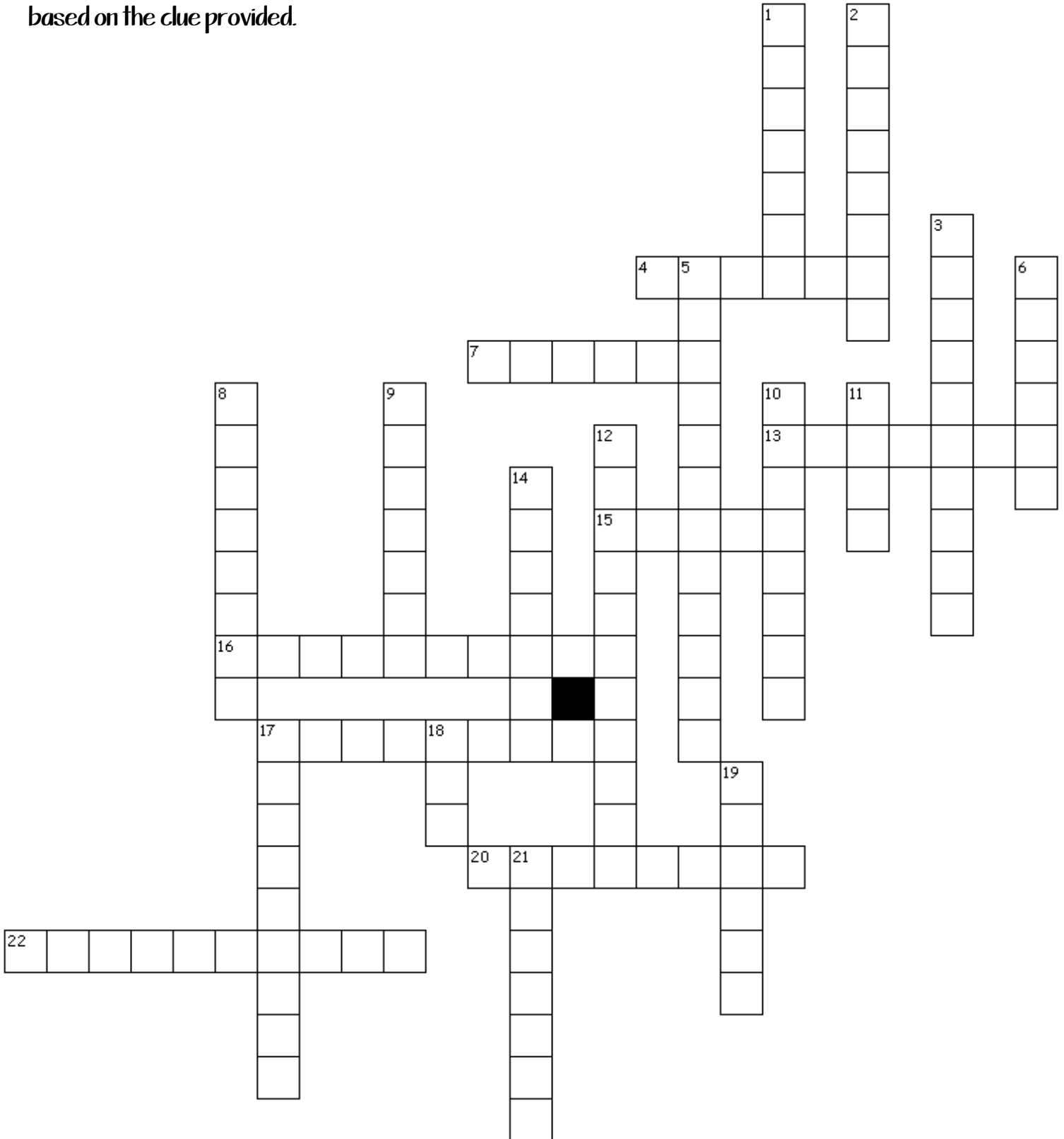
Framing is important, too, especially when you want to give texture a leading role. By moving in close to an old, weathered face, either physically or with a long lens, you focus the viewer's attention on the wrinkles and crevices. When the texture is part of a broader scene, as in the surfaces of a coarse and barren desert, it's often better to back off and show its expanse. Sometimes you can dramatize texture by comparing different surfaces within a scene: an elderly potter's gnarled hands turning a vessel of wet, silken clay. In revealing such contrasts, it's important to move in close and exclude everything that doesn't enhance the tactile qualities of your image.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# PATTERNS – RHYTHM – TEXTURES - Handout

Directions: Read the "Patterns - Rhythm - Textures" handout and then fill in the following crossword, based on the clue provided.







## Across

4. Bold and large textures, such as the bark of a tree or the rough surface of the door detail, are best revealed by strong, \_\_\_\_\_ sidelight.
7. Patter can be thought of as a \_\_\_\_\_ of rhythm.
13. The key to emphasizing patterns is to \_\_\_\_\_ them from their surroundings.
15. Our memories of how things feel are so ingrained in our consciousness that the mere sight of them brings a vivid sensation of \_\_\_\_\_.
16. Emphasizing the Pattern is when a repetitive pattern fills the frame and gives the \_\_\_\_\_ that the pattern is massive and goes beyond the image, even if the pattern or repetition is only enough to fill the screen.
17. The break can be achieved by introducing an element in a contrasting color, with a \_\_\_\_\_ shape or texture.
20. In Progression rhythm, we might position ourselves so that one light post is closest and the others appear gradually smaller and smaller as they \_\_\_\_\_ towards a vanishing point.
22. Breaking the Pattern is when you capture the \_\_\_\_\_ in the flow of a pattern.

## Down

1. Smooth, more finely detailed textures, such as that of satin, would be erased by powerful light and are revealed best by gentler, \_\_\_\_\_ light.
2. Patterns appear whenever strong graphic \_\_\_\_\_ such as lines, colors, shapes, or forms - repeat themselves.
3. This rhythm, also known as Flowing Rhythm, involves a smoother, continuous progression of elements that rise and fall or weave left to right.
5. Deliberately \_\_\_\_\_ a predictable, soothing rhythm is a compelling way to introduce your subject to the audience.
6. The secret to finding patterns is to explore potential subjects from a variety of \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Focus on the break to create \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Visual rhythm is often most powerfully used as a \_\_\_\_\_ to or backdrop for your central story or primary subject.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is another potent painter of pattern.
11. A general rhythm throughout the frame can also be used to establish an overall atmosphere or \_\_\_\_\_.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ rhythm usually involves "AB" elements.
14. By exploiting textures, you can bring a \_\_\_\_\_ dimension to your photographs.
17. Sometimes you can \_\_\_\_\_ texture by comparing different surfaces within a scene.
18. Rhythm may affect the quality of the viewing experience for your audience and help to draw and keep the \_\_\_\_\_ within the frame.
19. Angled light catches the shape and imperfections of an object's surface and creates a pattern of highlight and shadow to produce \_\_\_\_\_ texture.
21. The standard rhythm involves the same or similar elements repeating at \_\_\_\_\_ intervals.