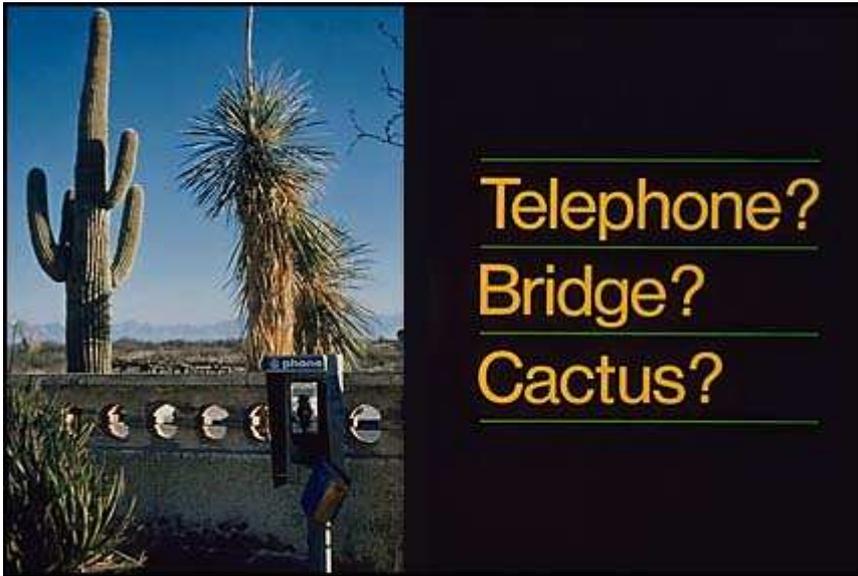


# Guidelines for Better Photographic Composition: Simplicity

The first and perhaps the most important guideline is **simplicity**. Look for ways to give the centre of interest in your pictures the most visual attention. One way is to select uncomplicated backgrounds that will not steal attention from your subjects.



Let's see how we can improve this photo by looking for visual simplicity. First let's decide if we want our centre of interest to be the public telephone, the bridge, or the cactus.



We chose the cactus as the main subject. And by moving in closer and using the plain sky as the background, we have simplified and improved the appearance of this photograph.



We're certainly close enough to our subject in both pictures, but the busy background on the left camouflages the seagull. Just change your point of view slightly and, presto, your seagull stands with visual prominence against the blue sky.



Compose your photograph so that your reason for taking the picture is clearly seen. Arrange other parts of the picture area in such a way as to complement what you choose to be the centre of interest. Most of us would prefer the picture on the right because the parking lot tends to contradict the feeling of antiquity related to this mission.



Remember: we're talking about composition simplicity, and here's another decision you'll probably have to make. How much of your subject should you include, and should it be framed horizontally as we have done here?



Or perhaps you'd prefer to frame your subject in the vertical format, as we've indicated with these frame lines. The choice is yours.



So, you can simplify your pictures and strengthen your centre of interest by selecting uncomplicated backgrounds, avoiding unrelated subjects, and moving in close. If you want to make your centre of interest even more dynamic, place it slightly off centre in your frame as we have done with this young artist.



Generally, pictures with subjects directly in the centre tend to be more static and less interesting than pictures with off-centre subject placement.