

## Photography/Art Key Words

### Describing Colour

Think about your overall impression of the colours used in the photograph, how they look and feel, how the colours work together (or not), how they fit with the subject of the picture, how the photographer has arranged these (or not). Are there any specific colours you can identify?

Natural, clear, compatible, distinctive, interesting, lively, stimulating, subtle, sympathetic.  
 Artificial, clashing, depressing, discordant, garish, gaudy, jarring, unfriendly, violent.  
 Bright, brilliant, deep, earthy, harmonious, intense, rich, saturated, strong, vibrant, vivid.  
 Dull, flat, insipid, pale, mellow, muted, subdued, quiet, weak.  
 Cool, cold. Warm, hot. Light, dark.  
 Blended, broken, mixed, muddled, muddied, pure.  
 Complementary, contrasting, harmonious, monochrome, saturated.

### Describing Texture

Can you see any different textures within the photograph? Do the textures help to create a mood or effect? Does the lighting help to highlight these textures? Don't guess; if you don't see any texture, don't try to talk about it in that particular photograph.

Flat, polished, smooth.  
 Raised, rough, coarse. Cut, incised, pitted, scratched, uneven,  
 Hairy, sticky.  
 Soft, hard.  
 Shiny, glossy, reflective. Satin, silk, frosted, matte.

### Describing Atmosphere

What is the mood or atmosphere of the subject of the photograph and how it is taken? What emotions do you experience looking at it?

Calm, content, peaceful, relaxed, tranquil.  
 Cheerful, happy, joyful, romantic.  
 Depressed, gloomy, miserable, sad, sombre, tearful, unhappy.  
 Aggressive, angry, chilling, dark, distressing, frightening, violent.  
 Energetic, exciting, stimulating, thought-provoking.  
 Boring, dull, lifeless, insipid.

### Describing Composition

Look at how the elements in the photograph are arranged, the underlying structure (shapes) and relationships between the different parts, how your eye moves around the composition.

Arrangement, layout, structure, position.  
 Landscape format, portrait format, square format, circular, triangular. Rule of thirds.  
 Horizontal, vertical, diagonal, angled.  
 Foreground, background, middle ground.  
 Centred, asymmetrical, symmetrical. Balanced, unbalanced, lopsided, space.  
 Overlapping, cluttered, chaotic. Separate, spacious, empty, repetitive, repetition.  
 Free, flowing, fragmented. Formal, rigid, upright, confined.  
 Negative space, positive space.

### Describing Focus

Many photos use focus to highlight certain areas or aspects of the image.

Visible, blurred, depth of field.  
 Background, foreground, highlighted.  
 Soft, sharp.  
 Motion blur, focus blur, Gaussian blur.

## Photography/Art Key Words

### Describing Lighting

Look at the lighting in the photograph, not only in terms of the direction it is coming from and how it creates shadows but also its colour, how intense it is, the mood it creates, whether it is natural (from the sun) or artificial (from a studio light, fire, or candle etc).

Back lit, front lit, side lit, top lit.  
 Indirect light. Reflected or bounced light. Hard light, soft light. Shadows.  
 Natural. Artificial. Tungsten. Fluorescent. Snoot, honeycomb, filter.  
 Colour temperature. Cool, blue, grey. Warm, yellow, red.  
 Dim, faint, gentle, gloomy, low, minimal, muted, soft.  
 Clear, brilliant, bright, glowing, fiery, harsh, intense, sharp.

### Describing Subject Matter

This aspect of a photograph is one where it can really feel like you're stating the obvious. But if you think of how you'd describe a photograph to someone who's not seen of it or who isn't looking at it, you'd probably tell them the subject of the picture quite early on.

Abstract.  
 Cityscape, buildings, man-made, urban, industrial.  
 Fantasy, imaginary, invented, mythological. Photoshopped.  
 Figurative (figures), portraits.  
 Interiors, domestic.  
 Landscape, seascape.  
 Still life.

### Describing Still Life

Before you get into what the individual objects in a still life photograph are, whether they're themed, related, or dissimilar, look at them overall and describe this.

Antique, battered, damaged, dusty, old, worn.  
 New, clean, shiny.  
 Functional, decorative, fancy.  
 Domestic, humble. Commercial, industrial.  
 Macro.

### Describing Viewpoint and Pose

Consider the angle or position we're seeing the subject of the photograph. How has the photographer decided to present it.

Front, side, three-quarters, profile, rear (from behind), angle.  
 Close up, far away, life size, bird's eye view.  
 Upwards, downwards, sideways.  
 Standing, sitting, lying down, bending.  
 Gesturing, moving. Resting, static.

### Describing Tone

Don't forget to consider the tone or values of colours too, plus the way tone is used in the photograph as a whole.

Dark, light, mid (middle).  
 Flat, uniform, unvarying, smooth, plain.  
 Large/small tonal range.  
 Varied, broken.  
 Constant. Changes.  
 Graduated. Contrasting.

### Describing Shape and Form

Think about the overall shapes in the photograph and the way forms (things) are depicted. What sense of depth and volume is there?

2D, flat, abstracted, simplified, stylized.  
 3D, realistic, natural, sense of depth and space.  
 Sharp, detailed.  
 Blurred, obscured, overlapping, indistinct.  
 Distorted, exaggerated, geometric.  
 Linear, long, narrow.  
 Hard-edged, soft-edged.

Circle any words you do not understand and ask a teacher to explain them for you!

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## Glossary of Photographic Terms

When you are writing about your work or the work of others it is important that you use keywords and terms correctly.

Below are some of the keywords and terms which are commonly misused. Check your own understanding before using them to discuss your work.

<b>Aperture</b>	This is the hole down the middle of the lens, it controls how much light comes into the lens of your camera and hits the sensor. It also controls how much of your image is in focus or not (i.e.. what is clearly and sharply seen and what is blurred out).
<b>Background</b>	The image or scene behind the main subject of the photograph.
<b>Birds-eye-view</b>	A camera angle which looks down on the subject. This can make your subject look small or submissive.
<b>Blur</b>	The effect which makes an image appear unclear or unsharp. This could be caused by the camera or subject moving during the exposure or by the lens not being focused correctly.
<b>Complimentary Colours</b>	Colours which are opposite each other on the colour wheel.
<b>Composition</b>	The arrangement of the subject and surrounding elements of a photograph as seen through the viewfinder.
<b>Contact Sheet</b>	A collection of all the images taken during a photoshoot or project which helps you to compare the images and choose the best ones to use.
<b>Contrast</b>	The brightness range of the subject or the scene lighting (what range of blacks to whites there are in the image). High contrast scene - has a wide range of blacks to whites. Low contrast scene - has a narrow range of blacks to whites.
<b>Depth of Field</b>	The range of objects which are in focus between the nearest and furthest objects in a photograph. Depth of field is controlled by the aperture f-stop selection, and influenced by a particular lens focal length.
<b>Exposure</b>	The total amount of light allowed through a lens and onto a camera's sensor. The exposure is controlled by the aperture, shutter-speed and ISO settings. Overexposure - When too much light reaches the digital camera sensor, creating a photograph that appears too light and washed out. Underexposure - When too little light reaches the digital camera sensor producing a dark and muddy-looking image.
<b>Focal Point</b>	The most important part of the image where the eye is first drawn to.

<b>Focus</b>	A lens setting that brings a scene or image into sharpness through the movement of a ring on the lens.
<b>Foreground</b>	The image or scene in front of the main subject of the photograph.
<b>Hard Light</b>	A small light source which leaves sharp edged shadows on the subject or it's background. This creates a strong, dramatic image and shows up lots of small details.
<b>Harmonic Colours</b>	Colours which are next to or near to each other on the colour wheel.
<b>High Key</b>	An image with more light tones (whites) than dark ones. Normally with a white background.
<b>Low Key</b>	An image with more dark tones (blacks) than light ones. Normally with a black background.
<b>Macro</b>	Short for "Macroscopic", this term refers to producing photos of very small items at a scale larger than life size.
<b>Monochrome</b>	An image using only white and one colour (usually black).
<b>Resolution</b>	The number of pixels in a image, expressed as ___ x ___ (ie. 1200 x 1870). The higher the resolution, the greater the amount of detail and quality in a photograph and the larger it
<b>Shutter Speed</b>	This is how long your camera's shutter stays open for and it can be read on either the back of your screen or within the viewfinder.
<b>Soft Light</b>	A large light source which leaves "soft" shadows which fade gradually from one tone to another. This type of light creates flattering portraits and can hide small details creating a smooth, flat surface.
<b>Symmetrical</b>	Something which looks the same on one side as it does on another, as if a mirror has reflected it.
<b>Wide Angle</b>	A type or setting of lens which gives a large field of view (the opposite of being "zoomed in"). This is often used in landscape photography.
<b>Worms-eye-view</b>	A camera angle which looks up at the subject. This can make your subject look large or powerful.