

Total time:  
3-8 hours



### Skill Points:

- Identifying frames in a scene
- Using frames properly (frame/subject weight ratio)
- Identifying frames through color, contrast, light, and environment
- Experimenting with frames that help to tell a story

# ADDING DRAMA WITH A FRAME



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The art term “frame” means that the photographer places a visual boundary, within the composition, that helps to direct a viewer’s eyes toward the subject. A frame can be created through structural elements, environmental elements, or it can even be created by light, shadow, and color.

**KEY LESSON:** Look for appropriate compositional elements to place around the subject. Try to pick a frame that is on the opposite tonal scale from the subject. Usually, you would want to place the focus on the subject and not the frame itself. If you think carefully about your frame, it can also add storytelling elements to your photograph.



### Structural frames:

**Man & Bike:** This is the use of a frame at its most basic level. The doorway frames the man. Take note of these details. The frame, while clearly visible, does not overtake the subject. The frame also adds a sense of story and place, which is in opposition to the man’s modern clothing. This creates drama and interest.

**Two Men:** Frames can catch the eye, even if they are a very small portion of the overall image area. If you have a subject that you cannot get close to- try to boost their visual weight by using a frame!



### Color as a framing tool:

**Christmas Elves:** Look for lighting contrasts and color contrasts to create frames. In this picture, the red brick provided a nice frame to the green, red, and white costumes, while the tree at the top contrasted the umbrellas, and thus framed the top of the shot ‘downward’ as well.

**Subway Exit:** The frame here is very reliant on the lighting to create contrast. A frame must ‘stand out’ to do its job. The contrast separates the subjects from the stairs, while also turning the doorway and the woman on the right (in the foreground) into successful frames.



### Dimensional frames:

**Green Pants:** Frames work well in multiples. You can lead someone’s eyes through your picture with multiple frames. This woman is framed by the large door in the foreground, the door that she is facing, and finally by the dark window.

**Tough Guy:** Machinery in the foreground was used to frame the worker. The equipment was bright yellow and overpowered the subject. Using post-production, the frame was changed to a muted color scheme. It still frames the subject, but now attracts far less visual weight.



### ACTION ASSIGNMENT!

- 1- Shoot a subject using a structural frame (i.e. Man & Bike and Two Men).
- 2- Shoot a subject using contrasting color as a frame (i.e. Christmas Elves).
- 3- Shoot a subject using light-shadow to create a frame (i.e. Subway Exit).
- 4- Shoot a subject using multiple frames (i.e. of Green Pants).
- 5- Alter a frame in post-production (i.e. Tough Guy).

### HOW DID YOU DO?

- Did you frame a subject using some structural element?
- Do the frames carry less visual weight than the subjects?
- Is the focus on the subject and not the frame?



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