

# Monthly Theme: Chairs and Benches – Finding Extraordinary Images in Ordinary Places

Most of us walk past dozens of chairs and benches every day without giving them a second thought. This month's assignment asks us to do something photographers do best—slow down, observe, and discover beauty in ordinary subjects.

Your challenge is to create an image where a **chair or bench is the main subject**. While people are not allowed, the scene may include other elements such as shadows, objects, animals, or the surrounding environment to help tell a story or establish a mood.

This assignment isn't about documenting furniture. It's about creating a photograph that makes someone stop and look.

## Every Chair Has a Story

A chair is more than something to sit on.

It can suggest:

- Solitude
- Waiting
- Rest
- Memories
- Conversation
- Abandonment
- Hospitality
- Age
- Peace
- Mystery

Without showing a single person, a chair can imply human presence and invite viewers to imagine who was there—or who might return.

Ask yourself:

**"What story does this chair tell?"**

## Look Beyond the Chair

The chair or bench is the subject, but it doesn't have to stand alone.

Consider using surrounding elements to strengthen your image:

- Autumn leaves scattered across a park bench
- Snow covering an empty chair
- A cat curled up on a porch rocker
- A forgotten book or hat
- Reflections after a rainstorm
- Long afternoon shadows
- Flower petals
- An old weathered fence
- Ocean waves beyond a beach chair

Supporting elements should enhance the image without competing for attention.

## **Light Creates Mood**

The same chair photographed at different times of day can tell completely different stories.

Morning light may feel hopeful.

Midday light can emphasize texture.

Golden hour creates warmth.

Fog adds mystery.

Rain produces reflections.

Night photography can create dramatic contrast using available light.

Don't just photograph the chair—photograph the atmosphere around it.

## **Explore Different Perspectives**

Before pressing the shutter, move around your subject.

Try:

- Shooting from ground level.
- Photographing from directly above.
- Filling the frame with details.
- Using a wide-angle lens to emphasize the environment.
- Using a telephoto lens to simplify the background.
- Looking through nearby objects to create natural framing.

A change in viewpoint often transforms an ordinary scene into something much more compelling.

## Details Matter

Sometimes the most interesting photograph isn't of the entire chair.

Instead, look for details:

- Peeling paint
- Weathered wood
- Rusted bolts
- Woven cane
- Cast-iron scrollwork
- Water droplets
- Frost crystals
- Cracked leather
- Interesting textures

These details often reveal age, character, and craftsmanship.

## Composition Is Still King

Although the chair is the subject, the surrounding composition determines how viewers experience the photograph.

Think about:

- Leading lines.
- Framing.
- Negative space.
- Symmetry or asymmetry.
- Balance.
- Color harmony.
- Background simplicity.

A strong composition can elevate even the simplest subject.

## Use Color—or Remove It

Ask yourself whether the image works better in color or monochrome.

Color may emphasize the warmth of autumn leaves, peeling blue paint, or colorful surroundings.

Black and white can highlight texture, shape, light, shadow, and timelessness.

Consider both before deciding which best supports your vision.

## Slow Down

One of the greatest lessons this assignment teaches is that remarkable photographs don't always require remarkable subjects.

Often, the difference between an ordinary snapshot and a memorable image is simply spending an extra five minutes observing the light, exploring different viewpoints, and asking, "How can I make this scene more interesting?"

## Challenge Yourself

Instead of photographing the first bench you find, look for one with personality.

Search for:

- Historic park benches
- Rustic wooden chairs
- Adirondack chairs overlooking water
- Rocking chairs on porches
- Antique furniture
- Colorful café chairs
- Weathered farm chairs
- Benches in gardens
- Beach seating
- Rustic church pews

Remember, everyone can photograph a chair.

The challenge is to create an image that makes viewers forget they're looking at furniture and instead experience a story, a mood, or a memory.

Happy shooting!

By ChatGPT