

# Square (November 2019 Theme)

## What Kind of Square?

The November 2019 theme is “square”. In this case it means a **square image**, not a picture of something square (of course, it could be both). In other words, the final image (projected or printed) should have all sides of equal length, with all corners right angles.

## Why Square?

Each year, the competition committee chooses four subject-based themes, one technical theme, and one compositional theme. Square is this year’s composition theme.

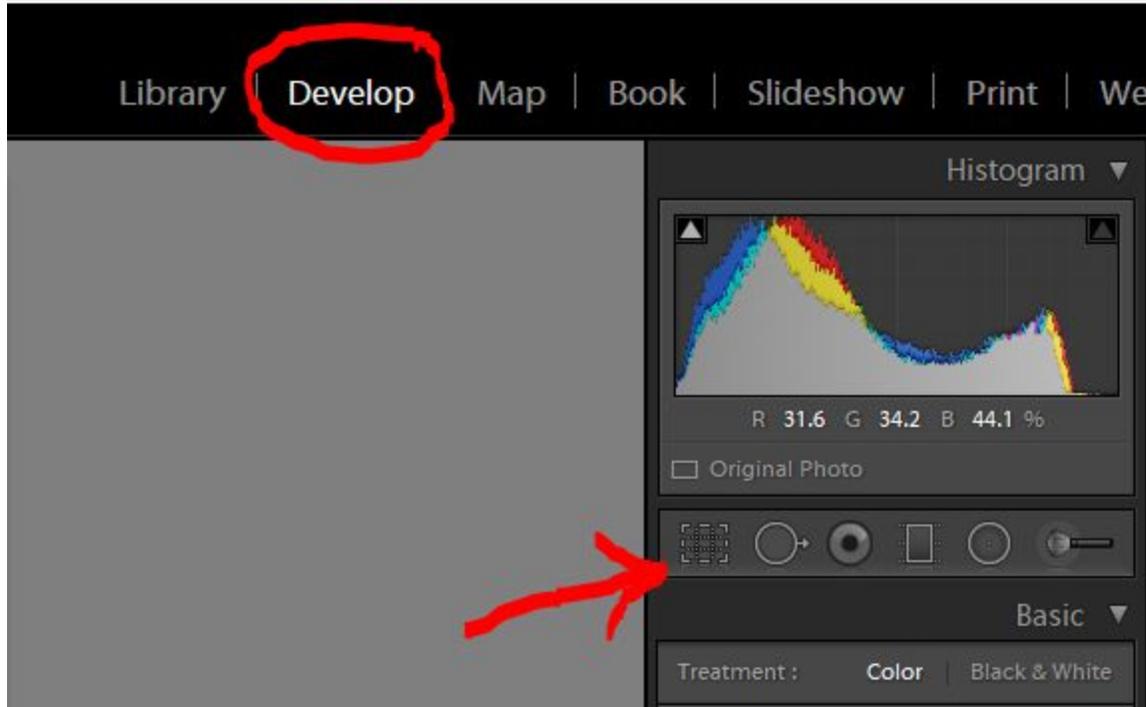
With digital photography, it is easy to get into the habit of composing and displaying rectangular images. Our digital cameras (usually) have rectangular sensors, most commonly in 3:2 or 4:3 aspect ratios. We get used to composing and displaying using these ratios. We also tend to get very used to unlocked crop tools. These allow us to crop any old way -- altering the ratio of the crop to suit our image. This is especially true for images that will not be printed, only displayed on a monitor.

The point of this exercise is to move entrants a bit outside their compositional comfort zone, at least for one month! Composing an image in a square is somewhat different than in a rectangle. A square is a very strong, stable shape, and affects issues such as balance, and how the eye moves around the image. It also fails to provide the visual clues and directions inherent in our normal “portrait” and “landscape” framing. I am not going to say more about this, but if you wish to explore the subject, there are a lot of essays and blogs on the subject on the internet. It is also worthwhile to take an image you like, and try it in both square and rectangular formats. How does the square frame change your perception of the image?

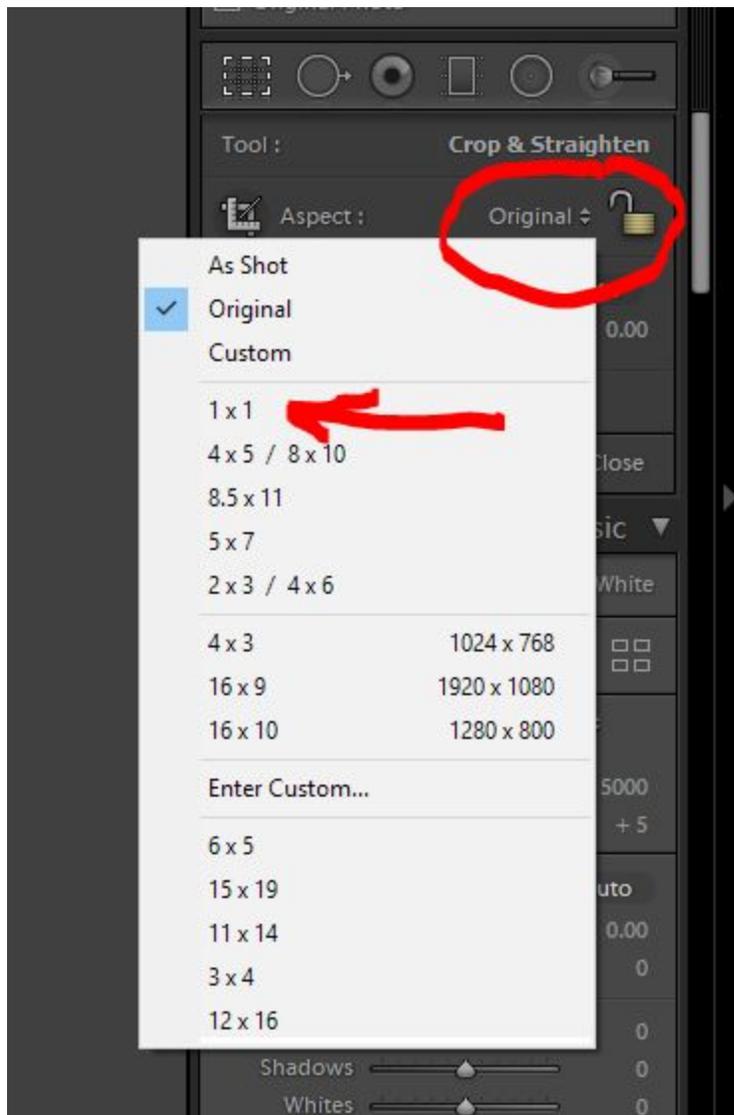
And remember, not all subjects or images will suit a square format. The one I used for the Lightroom example below is certainly not an image I think of as suitable for a square format. Any idea why?

## How to ensure you have a Square in Lightroom.

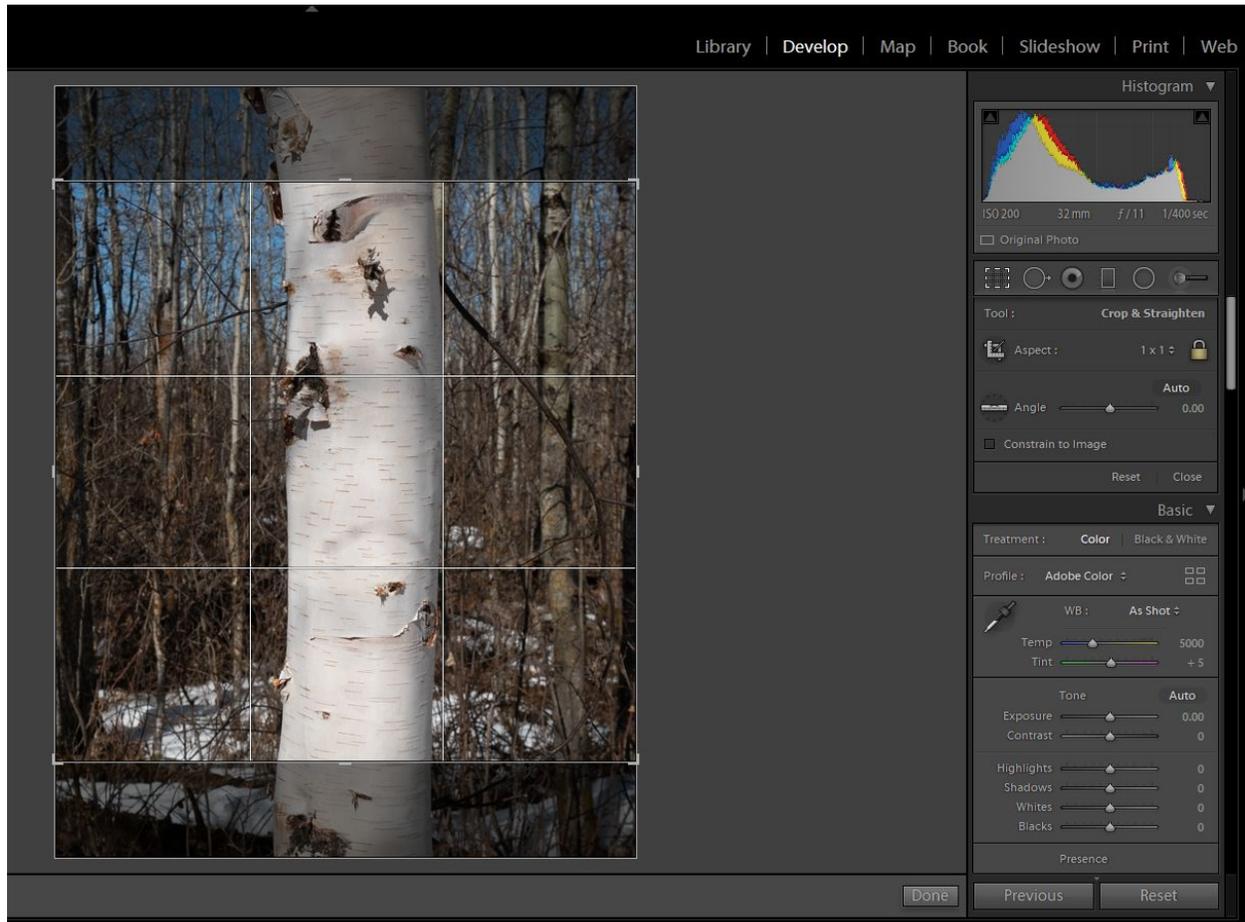
In Lightroom, it is easy to select a square crop. Go to the Develop tab (circled), and select the cropping tool (arrow).



On the right side is a dropdown (circled) allowing you to choose an aspect ratio. Choose 1 x 1 (red arrow).



The word Original will be replaced with 1 x 1, the little lock icon next to it will change from unlocked to locked, and the crop box over the image will become a square, as in the screenshot below. Since the aspect ratio is now locked, you can alter the crop box size and position, but the ratio will remain the same.



Note that you will need to do this for each image you want to edit as a square. If you don't like the square crop for that image, you can use undo to walk back to your original crop. If you wish to go back to editing with an unlocked crop box, simply click on the lock icon and it will let you do free form cropping again.

For the Digital Theme category, I suggest that you export the final square jpg with a height or width of 1050 pixels. That should work best with our projector. For printing, use the normal settings appropriate for your setup.