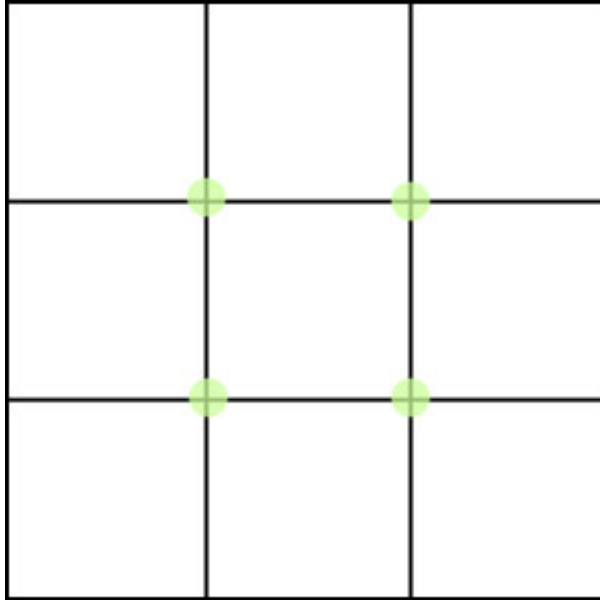


Basic Design Principle: Rule of Thirds

Web Graphics - June 14, 2008



The **rule of thirds** is a basic principle in photography and graphic design. Use the rule of thirds to compose a photograph or place important objects on a canvas. Imagine a grid laid out on top of your image, dividing your photo in thirds horizontally and vertically. Position important objects at the intersections of the lines.

Framing or cropping your photos to conform to the rule of thirds can enliven your images. The following examples show the results of judicious cropping.

Avoid Centering the Subject

Do not center the subject in the frame. Instead position the subject in the top third or lower third section of the frame, or the left or right third section of the frame. Also, remove extra space when cropping and try to fill a third of the frame with your subject. The family of geese now straddles the lower third of the frame.

Before



After



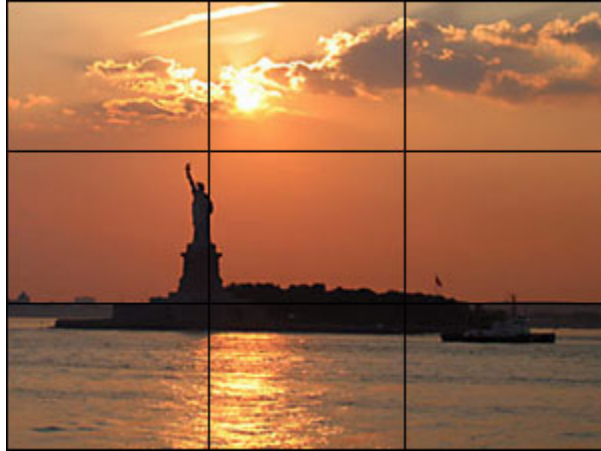
Scan the Horizon

If your photo has a horizon line, do not center the horizon line in the photo. Place it on either the top horizontal line or the bottom horizontal line. Note also that the Statue of Liberty now is aligned with the left vertical line.

Before



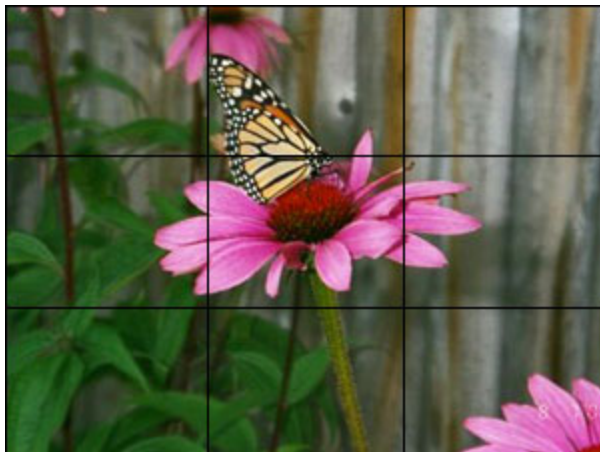
After



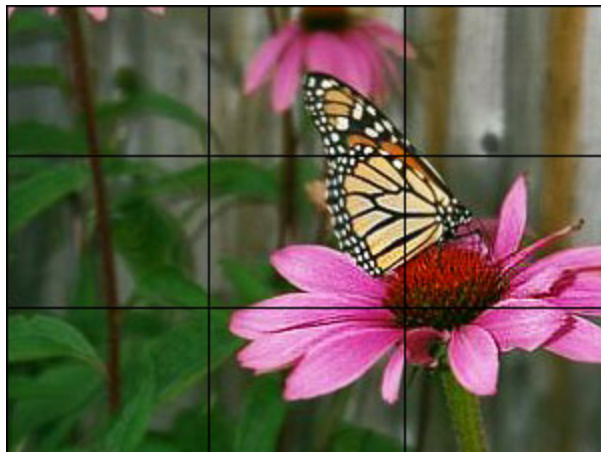
Trim Recognizable Objects

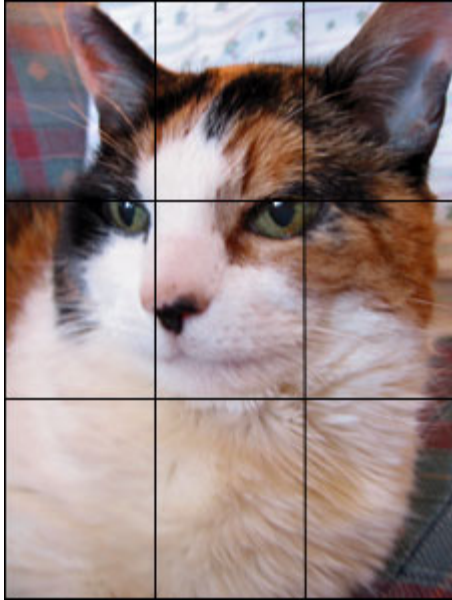
Remove any unneeded space from the photo and do not be afraid to show only a portion of a recognizable object. The right side of the flower has been trimmed to allow a better placement of the flower and butterfly in this photo.

Before



After



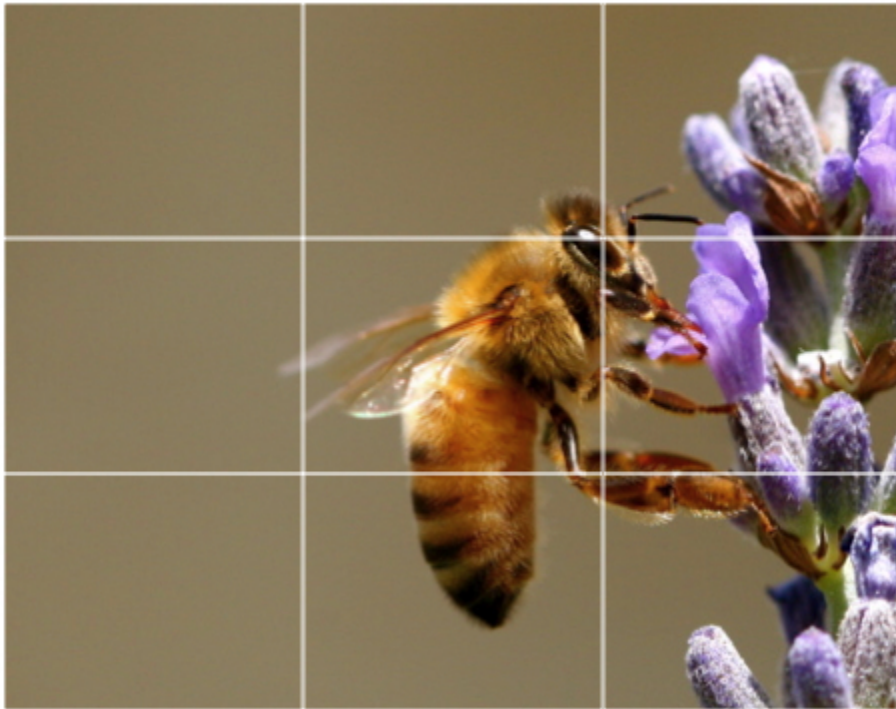


Watch the Eyes

In close ups, try to line up the eyes of your subject to the top third line intersections. My cat, Abby, posed for this photo.

http://www.alibony.com/graphics/def_rule_of_thirds.html

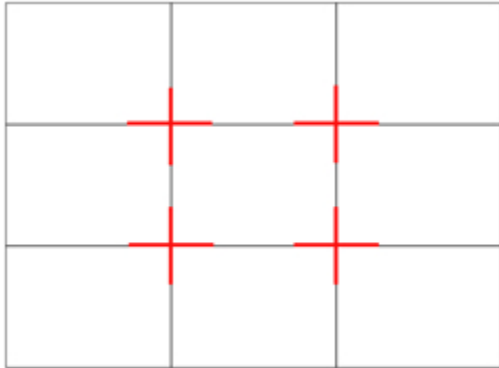
Rule of Thirds - by Darren Rowse



Perhaps the most well know principle of photographic composition is the '**Rule of Thirds**'.

It's one of the first things that budding digital photographers learn about in classes on photography and rightly so as it is the basis for well balanced and interesting shots.

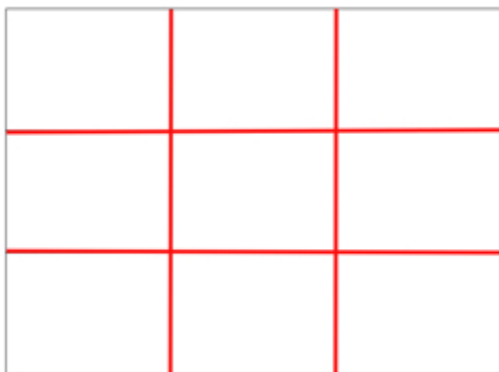
What is the Rule of Thirds?



The basic principle behind the rule of thirds is to imagine breaking an image down into thirds (both horizontally and vertically) so that you have 9 parts. As follows.

As you're taking an image you would have done this in your mind through your viewfinder or in the LCD display that you use to frame your shot.

With this grid in mind the 'rule of thirds' now identifies four important parts of the image that you should consider placing points of interest in as you frame your image.

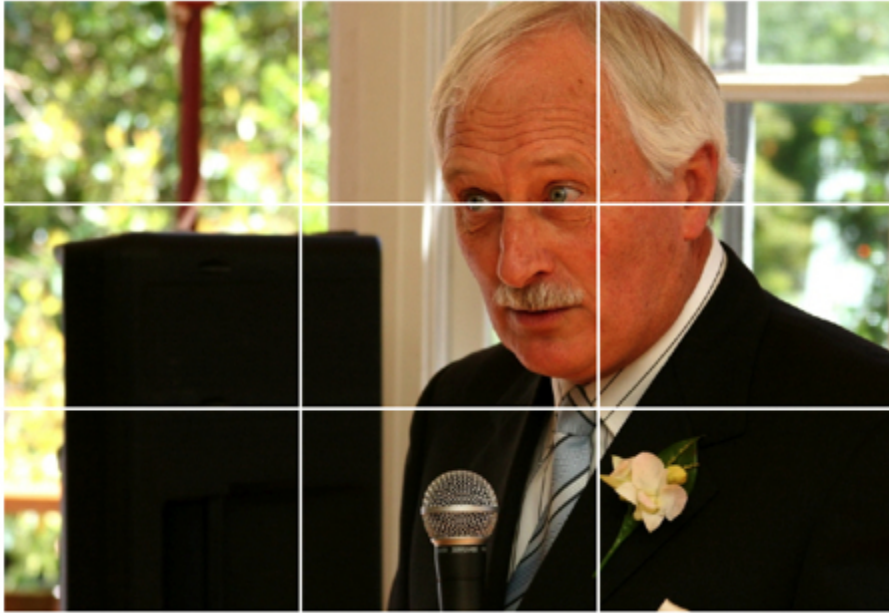


Not only this - but it also gives you four 'lines' that are also useful positions for elements in your photo.

The theory is that if you place points of interest in the intersections or along the lines that your photo becomes more balanced and will enable a viewer of the image to interact with it more naturally. Studies have shown that when viewing images that people's eyes usually go to one of the intersection points most

naturally rather than the center of the shot - using the rule of thirds works with this natural way of viewing an image rather than working against it.

In addition to the above picture of the bee where the bee's eye becomes the point of focus here are some of examples:



In this image I've purposely placed the head of my subject on one of the intersecting points - especially his eyes which are a natural point of focus for a portrait. His tie and flower also take up a secondary point of interest.



In this shot I've placed the subject along a whole line which means she is considerably off center and therefore creating an additional point of interest. Placing her right in the center of the frame could have resulted in an 'awkward' shot.

In a similar way a good technique for landscape shots is to position horizons along one of the horizontal lines also as I've done with the following shot (I'll let you imagine the lines).



Using the Rule of Thirds comes naturally to some photographers but for many of us takes a little time and practice for it to become second nature.

In learning how to use the rule of thirds (and then to break it) the most important questions to be asking of yourself are:

- What are the points of interest in this shot?
- Where am I intentionally placing them?

Once again - remember that breaking the rule can result in some striking shots - so once you've learnt it experiment with purposely breaking it to see what you discover.

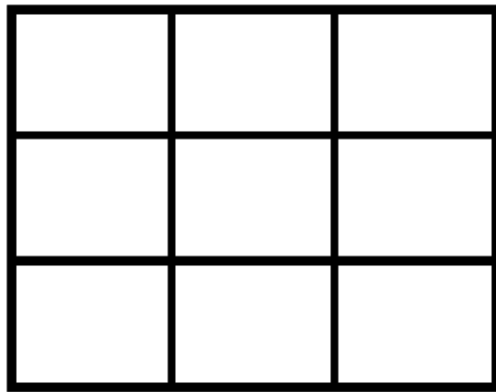
Lastly - keep the rule of thirds in mind as you edit your photos later on. Post production editing tools today have good tools for cropping and reframing images so that they fit within the rules. Experiment with some of your old shots to see what impact it might have on your photos.

<http://digital-photography-school.com/rule-of-thirds>

Rule of Thirds and Photography - <http://www.betterphoto.com/exploring/tips/thirds.asp>

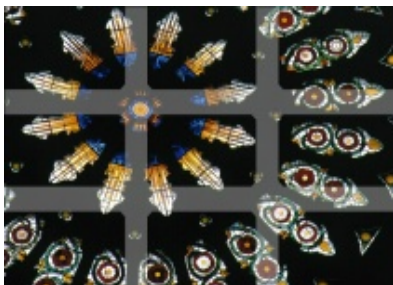
Although most beginning artists resist following "rules" - fearing they will hurt their creativity, there are indeed many rules and guidelines that help. One rule in particular is really essential: the Rule of Thirds.

The Rule of Thirds actually goes way back. Painters have been benefitting from this rule since the days when Greek artists discovered it. So let's take a look at the Rule of Thirds as it relates to photography.



Actually, as my friend likes to say, this should be called the "Rule of Nincths" instead of the "Rule of Thirds". This is because the Rule of Thirds is put to use by dividing the rectangular shape of your scene into nine smaller rectangles.

You add a great deal of dramatic interest by placing your subject at any of the four points where the lines cross, like so:



Rose Window at York
Minster – Rule of Thirds
Overlay

Little Lamb
Obeying the Rule of
Thirds

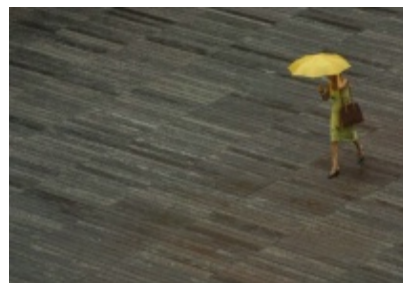


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Barn Near Mt. Rainier

Rainy Day in
Place de la Celestines



Note how each of the above photos holds additional visual interest because the subject is placed off-center, according to the Rule of Thirds.