Improve your Photography with the Rule of Thirds

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Develop your photographic eye by using the rule of thirds – a simple, effective way to create pleasing, compelling images.



• Start off by imagining a noughts and crosses grid over the scene – many Nikon cameras offer a viewfinder grid option in the menu to make this even easier for you. Now position your subject on or close to where two of the lines cross to create a pleasing, balanced composition.

• For shots of people and animals, it's usually best to have them looking into the frame, so position them on one of the thirds. Similarly, if there is action in your picture, leave more space on the side of the frame where the action is headed by placing the action on one of the intersections. This creates a more natural result and gives the viewer an idea of where the subject is heading.

• Use the rule of thirds to keep verticals straight and horizons level, and also to create a more dynamic image by placing horizons on one of the horizontal rule of thirds lines i.e. above or below the middle of the frame. One exception to this is when you're shooting a reflection, where a central horizon creates visual symmetry…

• …And this brings us to another key point about the rule of thirds – like all rules, it can be broken. While following it will usually make your images more impactful, sometimes flouting it will have an even more powerful effect. So once you've learned how to use it, then it's time to look for occasions when ignoring it will make for an even better shot.

• Remember that if the subject's position turns out not quite right, you can also re-crop in post-production using the rule of thirds, although striving to get it right in-camera is always the best approach.

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