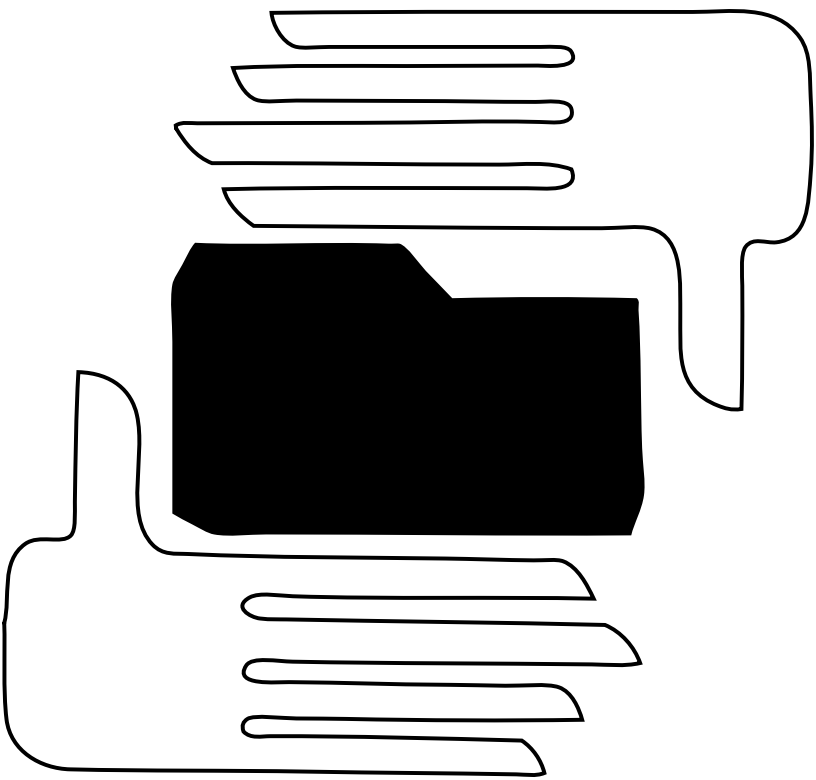
RULE *of* THIRDS



by

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The above image was taken with a film camera, the negative was then scanned. The image below was taken with a digital camera and was then converted to black and white.

RULE OF THIRDS DEFINITION:
In the rule of thirds, photos are divided into thirds with two imaginary lines vertically and two lines horizontally making three columns, three rows, and nine sections in the images. Important compositional elements and leading lines are placed on or near the imaginary lines and where the lines intersect.

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?

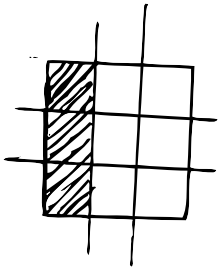
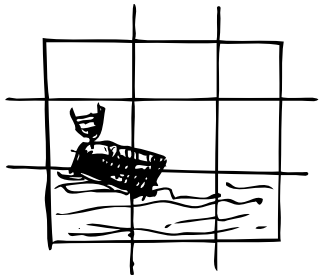
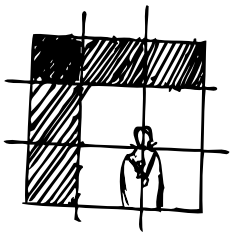
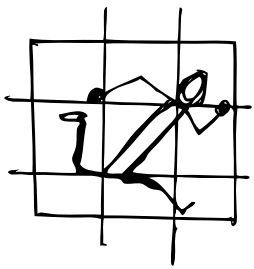
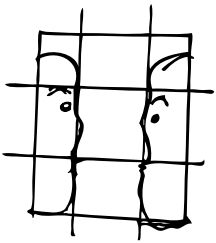
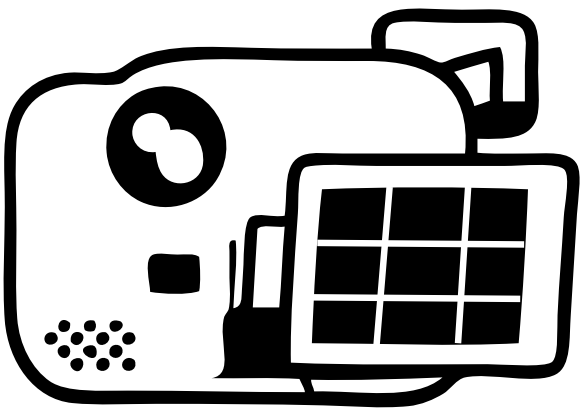
The rule of thirds is one of the most useful composition techniques in photography. It's an important concept to learn as it can be used in all types of photography to produce images which are more engaging and better balanced.

The photography rule of thirds tells us to align our subject with one of the points where those lines cross. That means our subject is one third of the way "into" the picture space – from either the top or bottom, and from either the left or right. And that means it's not in the middle.

It is interesting to note that we refer to the most significant element of our image as the "center of interest." The word "central" is a synonym for "important." It comes as no surprise, then, that we instinctively place the subject of our image in the center of the frame.

Bullseye! It's only natural to line up the camera with what we are paying most attention to.

It takes some conscious thought and careful composition to place your center of interest off-center. However, the result is much more pleasing to the eye. Placing it at the intersection of the tic tac toe lines (also known as the thirds position) produces a nicely balanced image.

When taking a picture of a landscape, it's natural to want to center the horizon in the frame. However, pictures often look better if the horizon falls on the upper or lower horizontal dividing line. If the focus of your image is on land (i.e. mountains, buildings), the horizon should fall near the upper third and if the focus is the sky (i.e. sunsets, sunrises), the horizon should fall near the lower third.

Here is an example of a rule of thirds portrait. As you can see, the muscles are lined up with the upper horizontal line and each arm is where the upper horizontal line intersects with a vertical line.