



CREATIVE MEDIA **FUNDAMENTALS**

TAKE BETTER PHOTOS



CMF014

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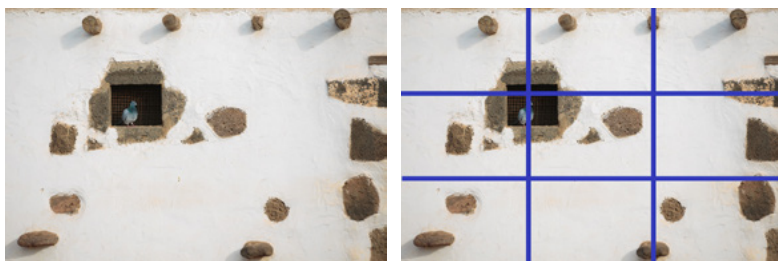
THE RULE OF THIRDS

When capturing a photograph, the average person is likely to pick up their camera or phone, frame the subject in the center and hit the shutter button. This usually results in a static, “dead” composition. Think “dead center.”

Pick up a National Geographic magazine (or any magazine with nice photography) and you will notice that most of the compositions place the subject off-center. Enter the Rule of Thirds. When composing a photo, imagine that there is a tic-tac-toe board stretched across the viewfinder, dividing the frame into thirds horizontally and vertically. To follow the rule of thirds, place the subject on or near one of the areas where the lines intersect. Placing the image off-center like this creates more movement in the composition, making it more visually compelling. This technique works well for both horizontal and vertical compositions.



Pay attention to see whether you naturally tend to center your subjects, and try to make the rule of thirds your new default tendency. Many cameras (both phone cameras and regular cameras) have a feature that allows you to overlay the rule



of thirds grid on the viewfinder and this can serve as a useful guide for image placement. It can also be a good reminder that you should pay attention to the composition and think before you tap the shutter button.

It’s also important to remember that it is not bad to place your subject in the center once in a while. It’s just something that should be done very consciously and with a subject that is strong enough to carry that “center stage” position.

SUBJECT PLACEMENT

Once you have become comfortable using the rule of thirds and it's natural for you to place your subjects off-center, you can move on and abandon formulas all together. Just be mindful that you are not placing your subject in the same location in every image. That can cause your viewers to lose interest after viewing a series of photographs. Try to mix it up, placing your subjects in different parts of the frame.



OBJECTS IN MOTION

When photographing a subject in motion, the edge of the frame can feel like a wall and you wouldn't want your subject to be bumping into it. Give your subject room to move! If the subject is moving from right to left, try placing them on the right side of the frame so they have room to move into the empty space. This will feel like the subject is moving into the frame of the photo instead of moving out of it.



HORIZONS

Pay attention to the horizon line if it's part of your image. We have liquid in our ears that helps to tell us what's level, and we inherently know that the horizon line should be perfectly horizontal. If it's not level, it will feel visually wrong. Many of our cameras and smart phones have a setting that enables us to turn on the grid overlay in our viewfinder. This can serve as a guide for ensuring that the horizon is perfectly level and the grid will not appear on our final photo.



WATCH THE BACKGROUND

The subject might be the most important part of the photograph, but it's also important to pay attention to the background. If there are distracting objects or activities visible in the background, they may draw the viewer's eye from the subject.

After framing your subject, scan the background and see if there are any distracting elements. If there are, consider how you could shift the camera in order to exclude those elements and draw all the attention to the subject. If there are distracting elements in the bottom of the frame, tilt the camera up so that they are excluded. It



might be a movement as simple as a camera shift, or you might have to walk around to capture the subject from a different angle. The main thing to remember is that a cleaner composition will create more impact on the subject of the image.

CLEAN CORNERS

Clean corners will help to keep the focus on the subject of your photo. If there are objects cutting into the corners of the frame, it could be distracting to the viewer's eye, causing it to wander away from the subject you're trying to draw them to. When composing your photo, pay attention to what's going on in the corners and determine whether that content is supporting your subject or drawing attention away from it. Sometimes shifting the camera just an inch or two can help to clean up the corners of the frame.



EDGES ARE IMPORTANT

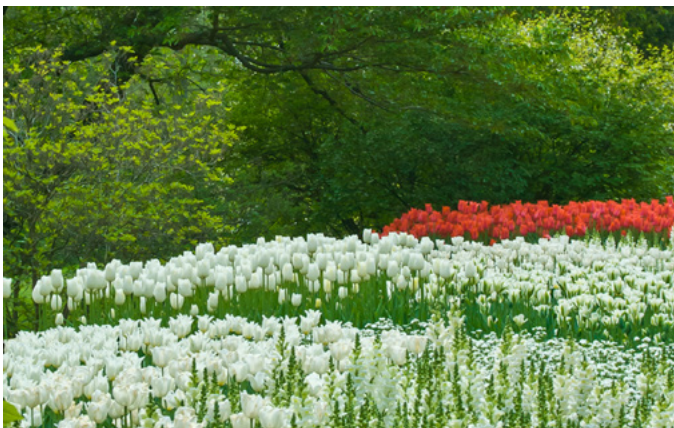
The edges of the frame are important to think about when composing a picture. Any objects or people near the edges could potentially draw the viewer away from the subject. Additionally, the edges of the frame cut like a knife. Any objects or people that get cut off by the frame could look as if they're getting sliced in half. It doesn't mean you shouldn't have objects going off the edge of the frame. Just make sure to compose in a way that doesn't make it feel like an abrupt cut-off.



ODD ANGLES

There is a reason that photographers like to shoot from odd angles. They help to show a vantage point that is less common and often times more interesting.

Instead of shooting all your pictures from eye level, try getting down low or shooting from high up. These angles can show the subject in ways that we're not used to seeing when we're casually walking by.



ANGLE AT THE EDGES

If you have any angled objects, buildings, etc. near the edge of the frame, it can look distracting if the angle of the object is slightly different from the edge of the frame.

To make the image look more natural, either align the angle of the object perfectly with the edge of the frame, or change the angle of the object so that it's drastically different from the edge of the frame. This will make it look as if it was done on purpose.

NEAR AND FAR OBJECTS

Near and far objects will appear to merge together when they overlap in the frame. This is because, while our eyes see in 3D, our cameras see in 2D. We've all seen an image where it looks like there is a telephone pole coming out of someone's head. This could be prevented simply by stepping a foot to the left or right so that the person no longer merged with the pole.

When composing your images, make sure there is a gap between your subject and any objects that are located behind them. Of course, there may be instances where you want to align objects on purpose to create a fun image.



FRAME YOUR SUBJECT

One creative way of composing a scene is to place your subject inside of a frame. This frame can be created by a window, an architectural arch, a hole in a wall, etc. The idea of framing one thing inside of another is a great way of adding visual interests to your photographs. When you're out shooting, take a photo of the subject, but then walk around and see if there's anything you can use to frame it.



DIAGONALS ARE DYNAMIC

It's pretty standard for people to photograph their subjects straight up and down, and it's also what people are used to seeing. But why not mix it up a bit and try shooting diagonally once in a while? Diagonals are dynamic in that they can create movement in a scene that contains an otherwise static object.



GET CLOSE

Don't be afraid to get close when framing your subject. It's common to want to shoot the whole scene, but the most interesting part might be found in the details. Try to isolate what's interesting. It's often better than showing everything.



COMPANION FOR SUBJECT

After you've found a subject that you want to photograph, look for something that can be framed along with that subject to provide interest or extra context. This might be a foreground element that anchors the scene (like a boulder in a landscape image) or a background element that shows the subject's surroundings. Giving the subject a "companion" element can add visual interest and lead the eye through the scene.



TEXT WILL BE READ

If you include any text in your image, know that it will be read, whether you want the viewer to read it or not. The eye is drawn to text, and that's something to be aware of when composing your images. Sometimes, you might want to include text because it adds context to the image or shows where you were. Other times, text may be included by accident and can end up hurting the photo. Pay attention to any text in the scene and decide whether it's helping or hurting the image. Text can be really useful in slideshows to show the viewers where a series of images was taken.



WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

This class contains a lot of ideas and techniques. It's a lot to absorb all at once! Moving forward, try taking two or three of the concepts and applying them to your everyday photography. Use them every day until they become second nature. Then, take two or three additional concepts and start to focus on those. Keep doing this until all of the techniques are ingrained and available in your mental toolbox when you're out shooting. It's impossible to master all of these ideas in a week, but spread them out over the course of a year, and they'll not only be doable, but it's information that you'll retain and refer to frequently.

