

# Introduction to Photography

## Topic 3 - The Rule of Thirds

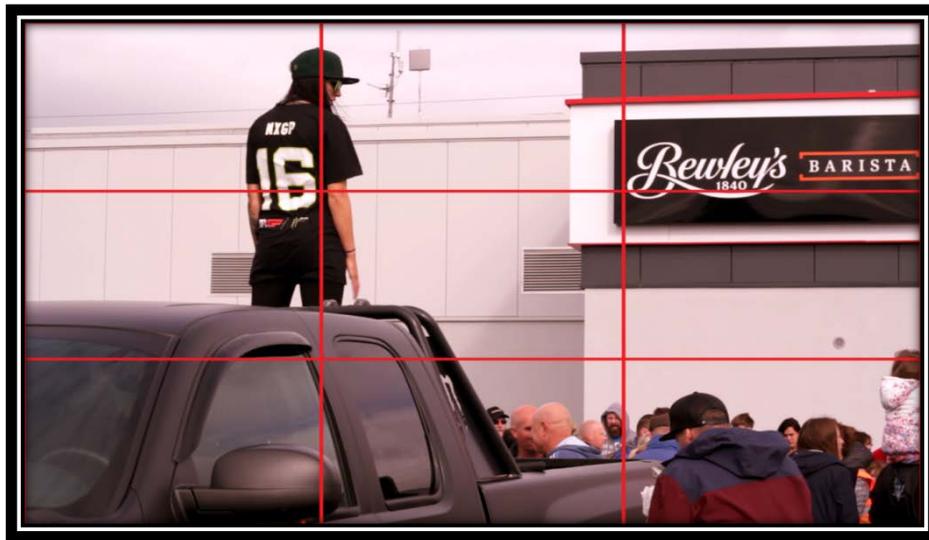
### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this section, you will have a good grounding in how to compose your photograph by following the rule known as the rule of thirds.

### The Rule of Thirds

The great thing about this rule is that it is a simple way to improve the composition of your shot and it is generally a safe bet if you are unsure of how you want to frame your subject or the landscape in your scene.

Let us take a look at the basic composition of the following photograph.



You will immediately notice that there is a grid of nine squares evenly distributed over the photograph. There are two horizontal lines going across the image and two vertical lines running from top to bottom. The key goal here is to ensure that your point of interest occurs at these intersecting lines.

With this technique, your main interest will often be thrown slightly left or right off the centre of the image. In this case, the lady photographed is off to the left of the photograph.



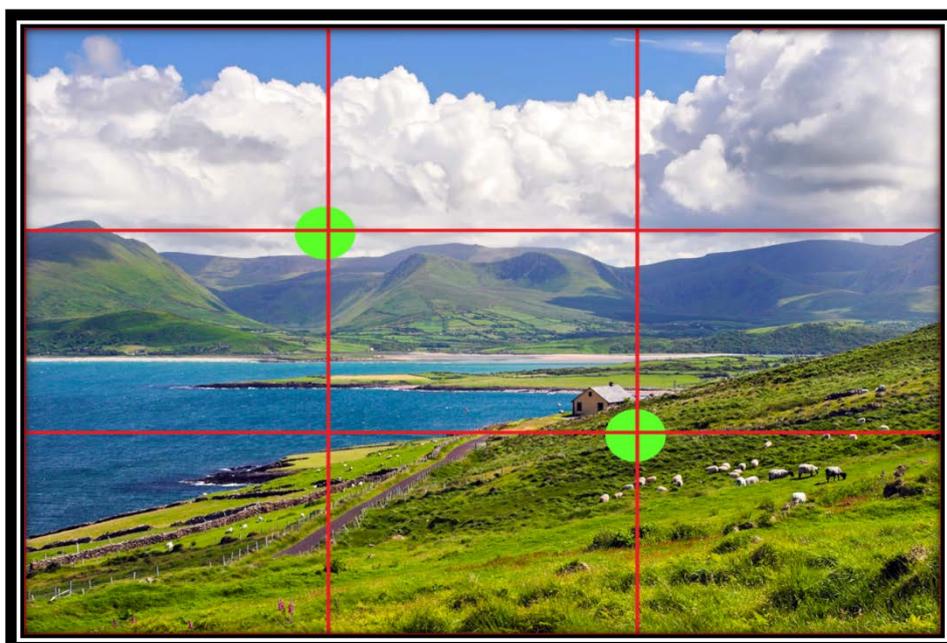
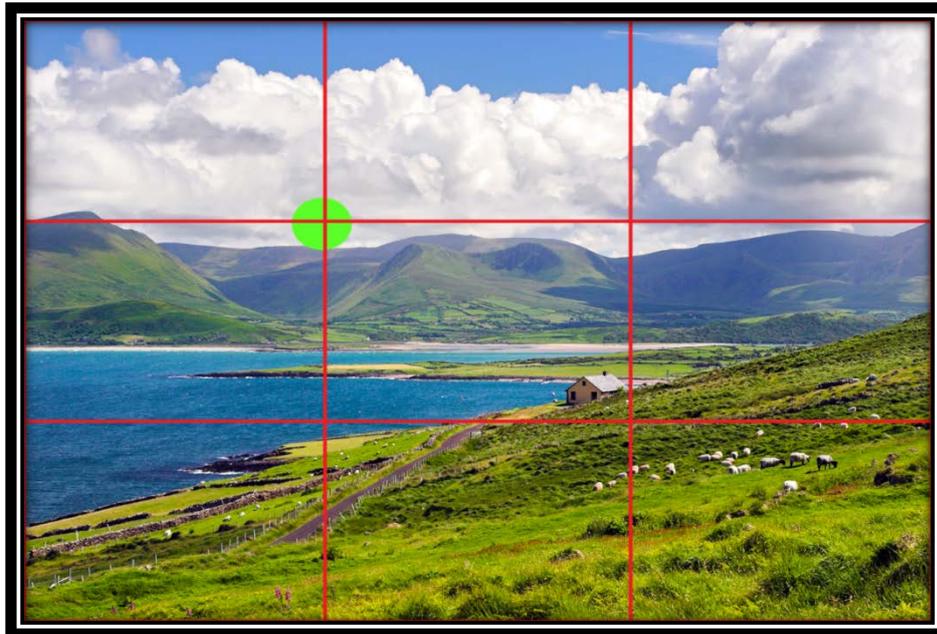
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With portraiture photography, the line of interest is generally in line with the eyes so that the horizontal line meets the vertical line. In the photograph below you are immediately drawn to the person's eyes, as they are the main point of interest in this photograph. In a sense, the eyes are the story. We are curious to know what he is looking at and what he is reflecting on as he is obviously deep in thought.



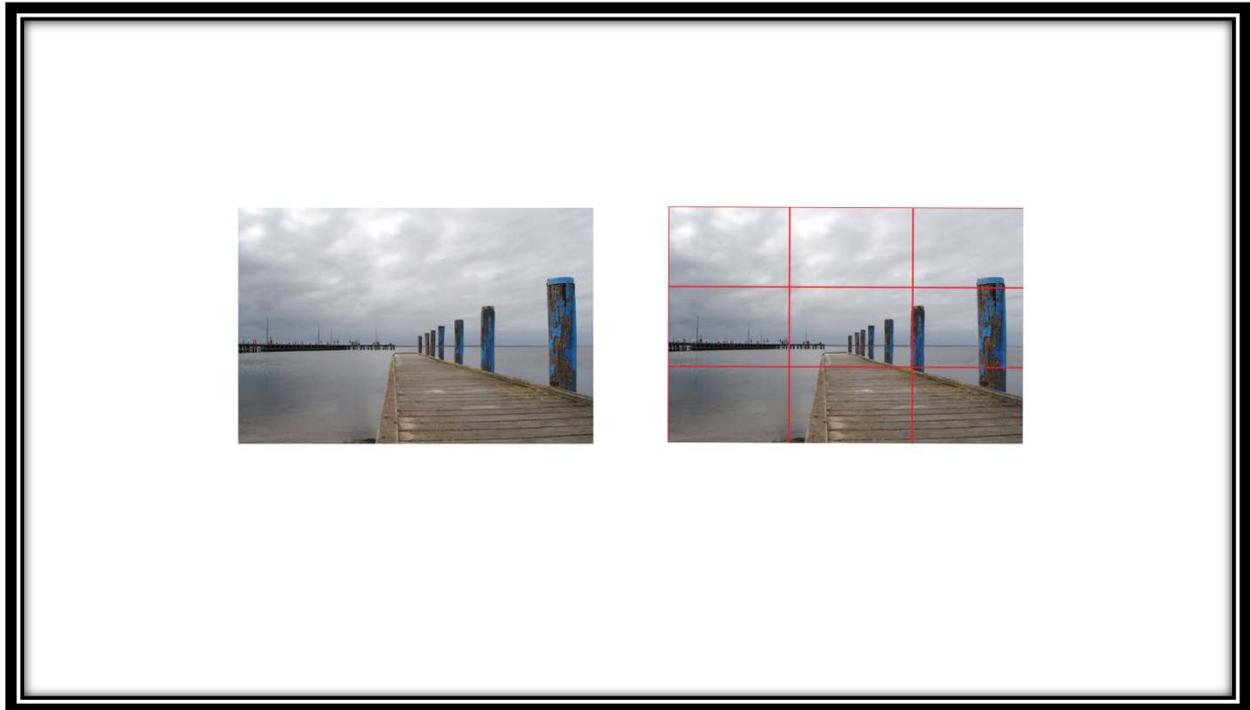
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This technique is very useful when taking landscape photography. The first horizontal line threads the border of the mountain tops and the skyline clouds. The lower line intersects with the right sided vertical line drawing your attention to the little cottage at the bottom of the valley. These lines are subtly telling us where to look and, unbeknownst to ourselves, our eyes are being directed to certain sections in the scene, namely the cottage and the skyline.



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The great thing about the thirds technique refers to the potential to create lines from objects or lines that occur naturally within the frame. This can come in the shape of a tree, a wall or even a stop sign on the side of the road. The important thing is having the creative vision to see these opportunities within your frame and utilising them as you see fit.



As you can see from this comparison sequence of the same image, the photograph is lined using the objects within the scene, particularly that second pole that runs along the right-hand side vertical line. The photograph maintains balance by running the skyline of the nearby town almost on that lower line, filling up the otherwise blank left hand side of the photograph. Here, the photographer just does enough to keep us interested, primarily due to the clever lining of the second closest pole on the deck. This pole acts as the anchor for the entire scene and our eyes move from this point downwards and left of the frame. A strong photograph will know where it wants you to look, giving you very little option on where you should set your gaze.



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## What have we learned today? A Summary

We've learned that the 'Rule of Thirds' is composed of a grid of nine squares and the goal is to ensure that your point of interest occurs at these intersecting lines. We've also learned that you can create lines yourself from objects or lines that occur naturally within the frame, especially when shooting architectural or landscape photography.

