



Composition

**The secret behind
AMAZING photos.**

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Introduction

- The difference between a “*snapshot*” and an “*amazing photo*” is your vision (intention).
- Your *vision* expresses your *creativity* as a photographer.
- “*But... I am not creative!!!*”
Really?
- Tonight, we will cover a technique that will help you “***be creative.***”

Composition

Composition is just one way to express your creative self.

Some techniques:

- Subject Framing (placement and size)
- Depth and Depth of Field
(what's the difference?)
- Lines
- Patterns
- Shapes

Subject Framing

- **Main considerations:**
 - Camera Orientation (tall versus wide)
 - Rule of Thirds
 - Foreground Content
 - Background Content
- **Other considerations:**
 - Fill the Frame
 - Content as “Creative Frame”
 - Perspective
 - Symmetry
 - Moving Subjects

Camera Orientation

Wide (landscape)

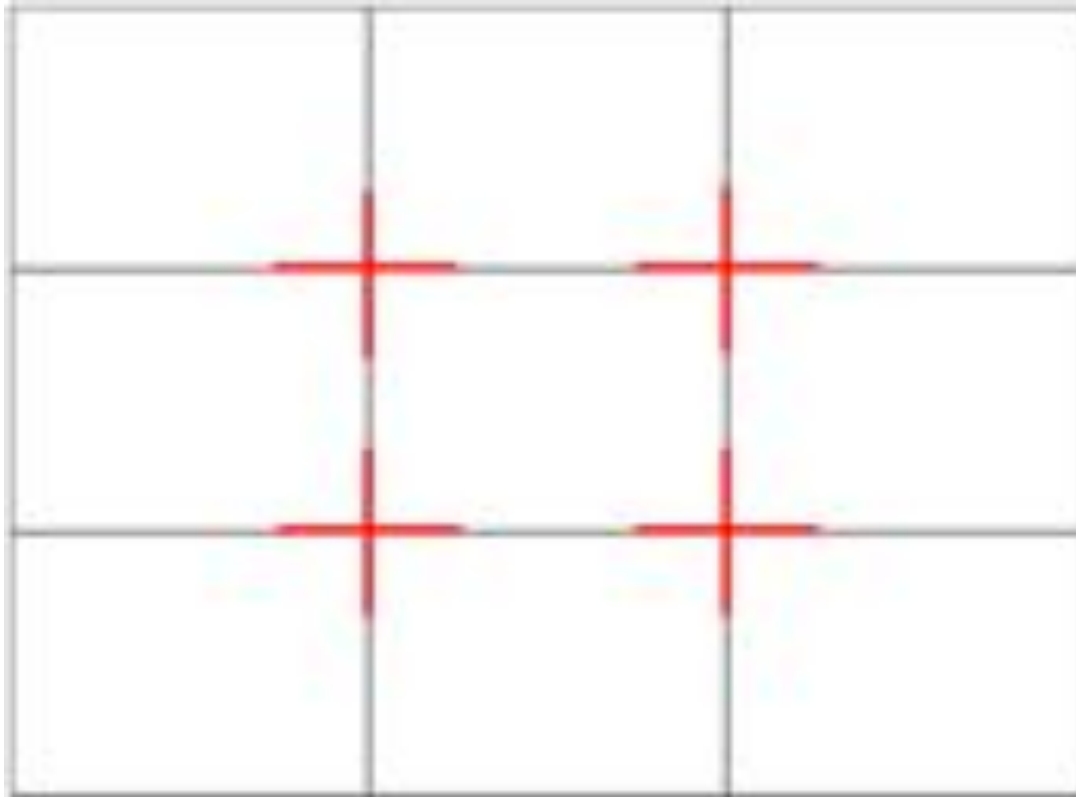


Tall (portrait)



Photograph your subject both ways.

Rule of Thirds



Imagine your camera viewfinder divided into 9 equal segments.

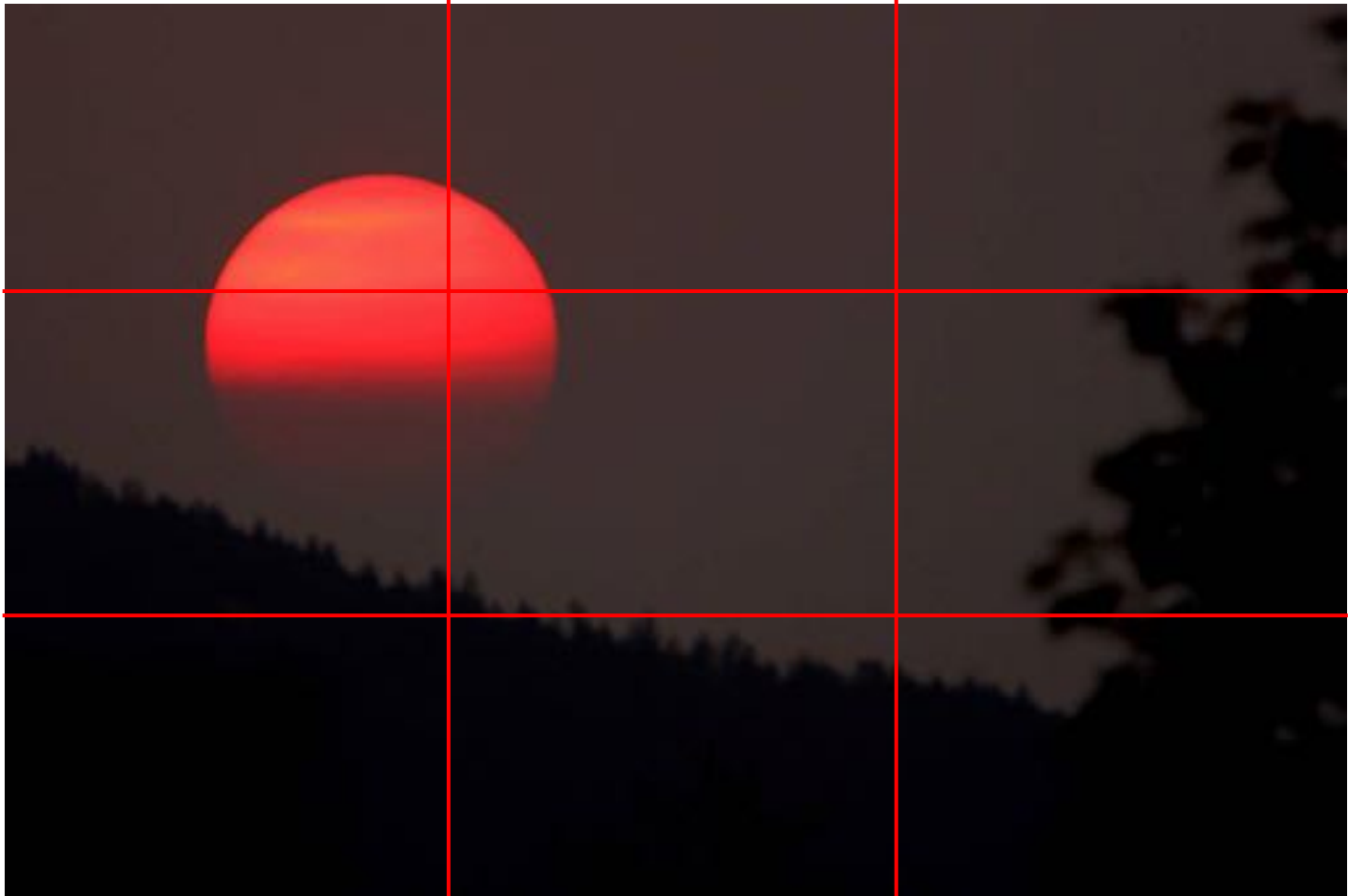
Then, position your main subject on one of the four intersections.

Rule of Thirds



Does this photo follow the Rule of Thirds?

Rule of Thirds



Rule of Thirds (Before)



Rule of Thirds (After)



Foreground: Tips

- Position the horizon
 - Higher: to accentuate the ground
 - Lower: to accentuate the sky
- Get down low to exaggerate the foreground
- Use a wide angle lens (zoom out)
- Use leading lines

Before you click that shutter...

... check the foreground for debris and distractions.

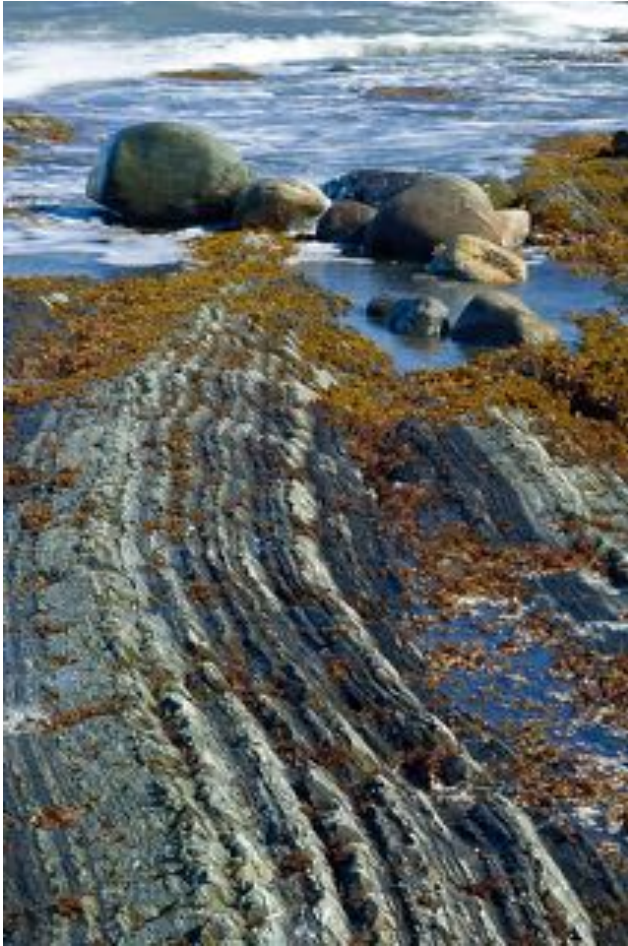
Foreground: Raise the Horizon



Foreground: Lower the Horizon



Foreground: Leading Lines/Curves



Background: Tips

Before you click the shutter...

- Check the background for distractions
- If necessary, move your subject
- Or... move yourself
- Change the shooting angle (higher or lower)
- Fill the frame with the subject

Background



What is wrong with this photo?

Background: Flaws

Mergers:
Objects growing
from heads

Background:
Cluttered and
unattractive



Background: Mood and Place



The background in this photo is clean and attractive.
It creates mood and communicates “place.”

Fill the Frame

Zoom in to remove background clutter

Before



After



YUM!!

Zoom In More (Macro)



Get up close and personal!

Creative Framing



Use objects in the scene to “creatively” frame the main subject. Provides depth and focal point.

Perspective



Shoot from different angles and heights to create unique views of the subject

Symmetry



Strong composition and point of interest
can result in a striking symmetrical image

Symmetry



Look for natural symmetry
in subjects

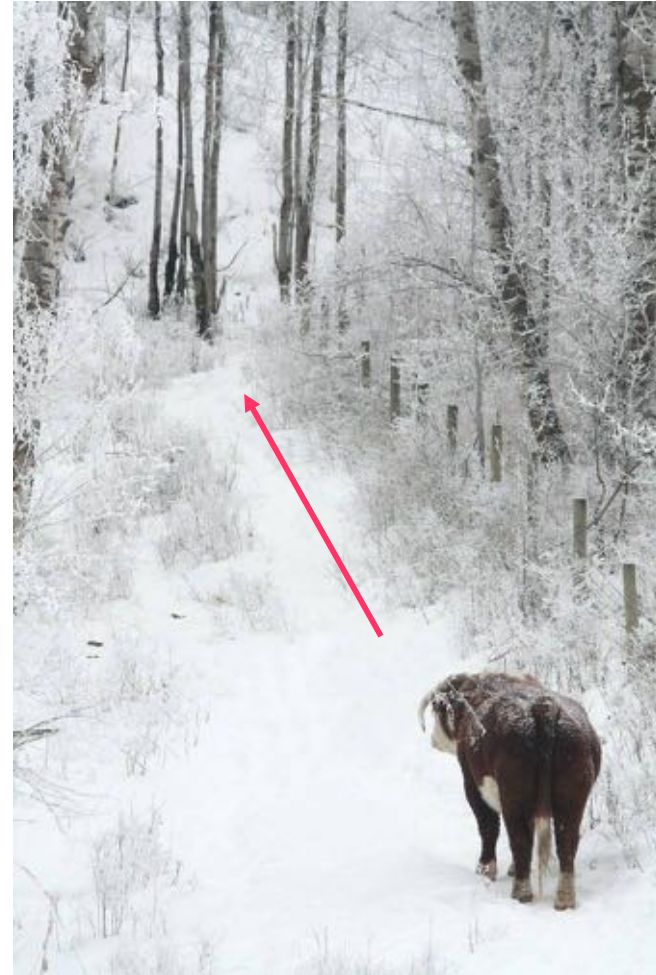
Or... Create symmetry
(in this case, by creating
balance between light
and dark)



Moving Subjects: Tips

- Position the subject to show:
 - Where it has been
 - Where it is going
 - A sense of motion
- A tripod can be helpful (or, not)
- If you don't succeed the first time, keep trying!!

Moving Subjects: Placement



Create empty space to show direction of movement.

Depth of Field

- Aperture and focusing technique define subject sharpness, from the foreground to the background
- Can make a photo great, or can ruin it

Depth of Field

- Rules of thumb:
 - Maximum depth of field for scenes (big F number, like **F14** or **F22**)
 - Shallow depth of field for photos of people (smaller F number, such as **F5.6** or **F8**)
 - Even shallower depth of field for “close up” (macro) photos (**F2.8**)
- Where you focus can depend on your lens; experiment to see what works for you (practice makes perfect!)

Depth of Field: Scenic Photos



In this photo, the footprints in the foreground are in focus (and they create a leading line).

The buildings in the background are also in focus.

Use a big F number, like **F14** or **F22**.

Focus on the footprints.

Depth of Field: People Photos

In this photo, the child and the tree in the foreground are in focus.

The ground behind the tree is blurred.

Use a smaller F number, such as **F8**.

Focus on the child's face.



Depth of Field: Blurring the Background



Use aperture **F2.8** to blur the background and accentuate the subject.

Lines

- S-Curves
- Horizontal
- Vertical
- Diagonal
- Leading

Lines: S-Curves

- Beautiful, graceful, rhythmic
- Change direction: Left to right, back and forth
- Lead your eye through the scene
- Encourage you to look at both sides of the curve

Lines: S-Curves



Lines: Horizontal

- Convey a sense of strength and stability (especially in scenic photos)
- Usually not centered

Lines: Horizontal



Is there something “not right” with this photo?

Lines: Horizontal



Make sure the horizon is straight!

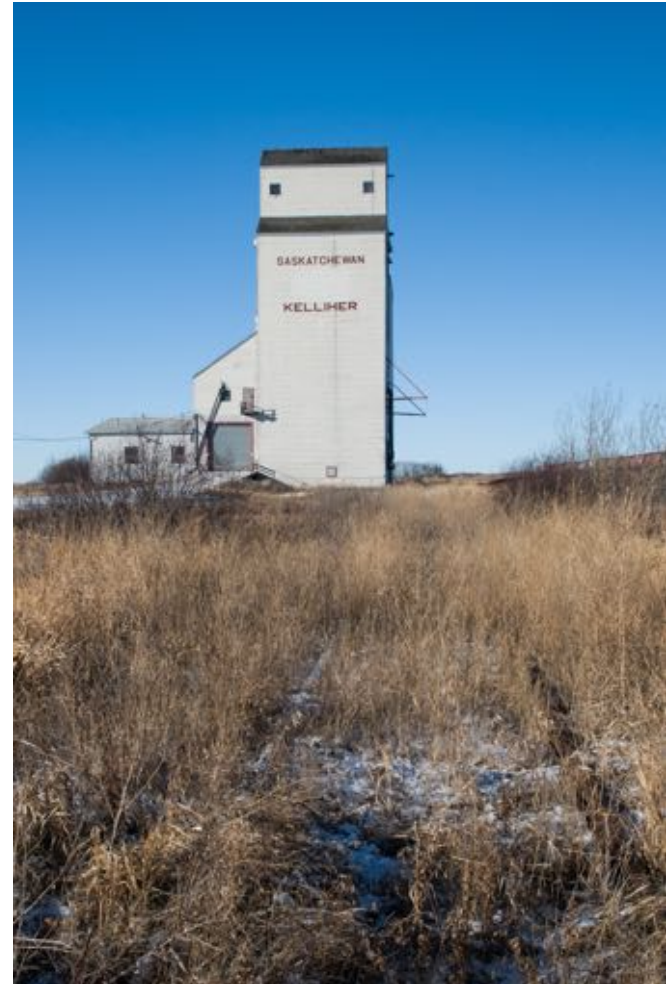
Lines: Vertical

- Convey power and strength
(for example, tall buildings, towers, trees)
- Use to create different moods
- Accentuated in portrait (tall) framing

Lines: Vertical



Lines: Vertical

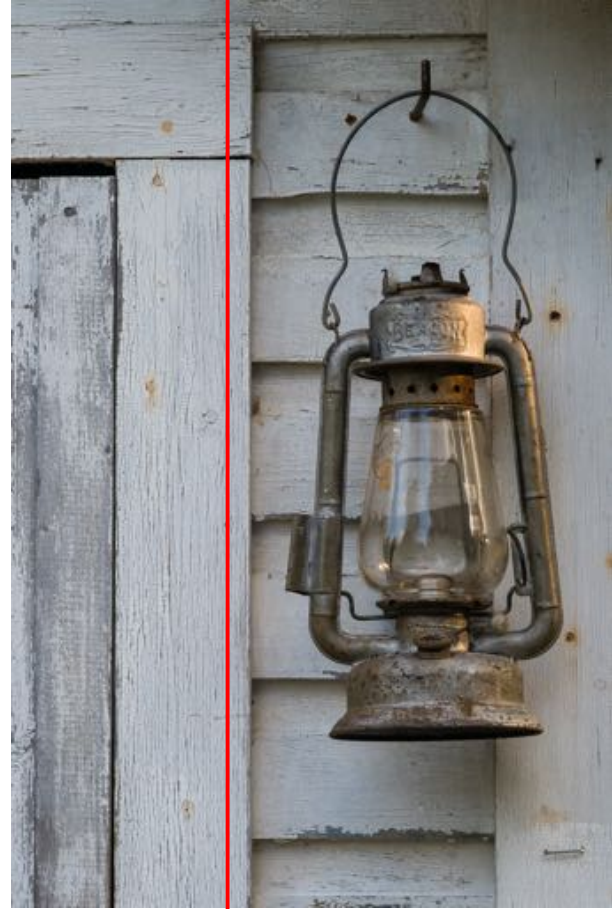


Lines: Vertical

Make sure vertical lines are straight



Not straight



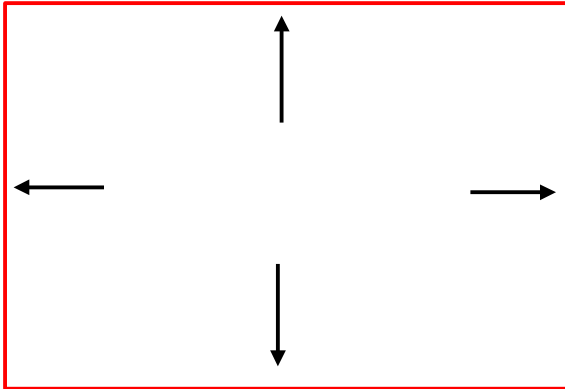
Straight

Line Straightening Tools

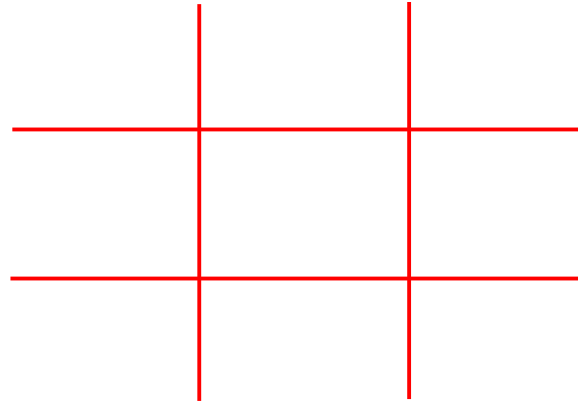
- Lines that are not straight are caused by bad camera angle during capture
- Tools you can use to keep lines straight:
 - Outside edges of viewfinder
 - Grid lines in viewfinder
 - Spirit level on camera
 - Tripod with built-in bubble level

Line Straightening Tools

Outside edges of viewfinder



Grid lines in viewfinder



Spirit level on camera



Lines: Diagonal

- Use diagonal lines to
 - Direct the viewer's eye
 - Create a sense of movement
 - Create shapes
- Usually left to right, lower to higher
- Avoid corner to corner (unless you are using diagonal lines to create symmetry)

Lines: Diagonal



Lines for Graphic Design



This photo uses horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines to create interesting shapes.

Lines: Leading



Leading lines draw the eye to key focal points and impact the 'feel' of the photo.

Lines: Leading



Patterns



Patterns are all around us

Other Creative Techniques

In addition to these composition techniques, try:

- Panning
- Long exposures
- Panoramas
- And more!!

Panning



Focus on one spot (in this case, the dog's head).
Follow with the camera at the same speed as the subject.
Use a longer shutter speed to blur the background.

Long Exposure



Nikon 28-105mm @ 38mm
F14, 13 seconds, ISO 500

A tripod is a “must” for long exposures like this.

Painting with Light



In this photo, the dock and path up to the house were “painted” with a flashlight during a long exposure.

Panorama

Capture several photos in sequence



Panorama

And stitch them together into one



Where to Learn More

- Photography magazines
- Photography reference books
- Photography web sites and blogs
- Kamloops Photo Arts Club



Questions?

