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## Taking better pictures: composition

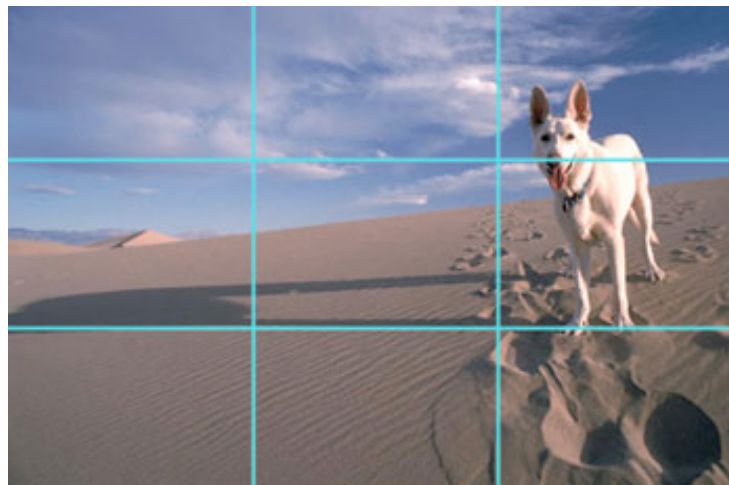
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By [Kleber Stephenson](#)

Good composition is essential in photography. It allows you to convey messages and emotions through the images that you shoot. Fortunately, good photo composition is easy to achieve by following a few simple guidelines.

### Rule of thirds

First, learn the "rule of thirds." As you look through your camera's viewfinder, imagine there are lines dividing the image into thirds, both horizontally and vertically, essentially dividing your image into nine equal-shaped blocks. Frame your subject at one of the intersection points instead of in the center of the viewfinder, as shown in the following illustration.



Now, with this said, many photographers make a very good living breaking this rule, but your photography will become much more interesting and visually stimulating if you use the rule of thirds when framing your subjects.

### Framing

Careful framing of your subject can make a dramatic difference in your photos. Remember—every photo has a foreground and background, so use them together to add an interesting element to the shot.

Use foreground elements to frame your photo's subject. Architectural elements work well (windows, doorways, arches, and so on), but you can find any number of interesting elements to use for framing your photos. The important point here is the subject. It doesn't do much good to frame your subject with interesting elements if they overshadow the subject, making it difficult to determine what the subject is supposed to be.



### **Visual cropping**

Crop your photos visually before you take them. Look into the corners of the viewfinder. Do you see things that shouldn't be there? You can remove, or crop, these elements from your photos simply by moving closer to your subject, zooming in on your subject, or moving your subject within the viewfinder. Try different angles. Look for anything that will diminish the impact of unwanted objects in your photos.



### **Angle of the view**

Believe it or not, the best angle for a photo is not always upright and directly in front of the subject. Some of the most interesting photographs are those taken from a unique vantage point. Get down to the level of the flowers before taking the picture. Climb a

tree to take a picture of a meadow. Always ask yourself if the photo would look better taken as a landscape or portrait shot. Experiment and try different perspectives. Look for angles that are interesting and demonstrate the mood and inspiration you're trying to capture.



### **Balance**

Achieving good balance in your photographs requires the correct combination of colors, shapes, and areas of light and dark that complement one another. Achieving the right balance in your photos is easier than it appears. Think about your subject and capture it from an angle, viewpoint, or even time of day that focuses attention on the subject.



### **Perspective**

To capture the essence of what you experience when viewing a scene, it helps to add an element to your photo to convey this perspective. In the following picture, the bow of the boat helps to add an interesting perspective to the vastness of the scene. .



Without the bow of the boat in the picture, the scene would be far less interesting and void of any drama.



### **Draw the viewer's eyes through the photo**

A path, a row of telephone poles, or even a line of chairs at the beach can serve as elements in a good photo.



These simple guidelines should help you find your "camera's eye." The key is to experiment and have fun, and the resulting photos will wow anyone who sees them.

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**Kleber Stephenson** is Director of Seminars/Director of Windows Technologies for KW Media Group, Inc. He is the author of *Windows XP Killer Tips* (Pearson Education), *Microsoft Office 2003 Killer Tips* (New Riders Press), and *Learn Windows XP for 5 Bucks* (Peachpit Press), and is the co-author of *The iTunes for Windows Book* (Peachpit Press).

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