

Rule of Thirds

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This photograph of a sunset taken in the [Thousand Islands](#) region demonstrates the principles of the rule of thirds

The **rule of thirds** is a compositional [rule of thumb](#) in [photography](#) and other visual arts such as [painting](#) and [design](#).^[1] The rule states that an image can be divided into nine equal parts by two equally-spaced horizontal lines and two equally-spaced vertical lines. The four points formed by the intersections of these lines can be used to align features in the [photograph](#). Proponents of this technique claim that aligning a photograph with these points creates more tension, energy and interest in the photo than simply centering the feature would



The photographs above demonstrates the application of the rule of thirds. The horizon sits at the horizontal line dividing the lower third of the photo from the upper two-thirds. The tree sits at the intersection of two lines, sometimes called a *power point*. Points of interest in the photo don't have to actually touch one of these lines to take advantage of the rule of thirds. For example, the brightest part of the sky near the horizon where the sun recently set does not fall directly on one of the lines, but does fall near the intersection of two of the lines, close enough to take advantage of the rule.

The application of the rule of thirds to photographs is considered by many to make them more [aesthetically](#) pleasing and professional-looking. The rule of thirds can be applied by lining up subjects with the guiding lines, placing the horizon on the top or bottom line instead of the center, or allowing linear features in the photograph to flow from section to section. In addition, many photographers recommend treating any "rule" of composition as more of a guideline, since pleasing photographs can often be made while ignoring one or more such rules.

The rule of thirds appears as early as 1797 as a rule for proportioning scenic paintings.

For more tips and short tutorials on composition see [digital-photography-school.com](#)