

SHOT COMPOSITION

All great pictures have one thing in common — they are well composed. Composition — also called “framing” — is fun to talk about, because there is no right or wrong. The only rule is that there are no rules. But there are a few tips to help you take better pictures:

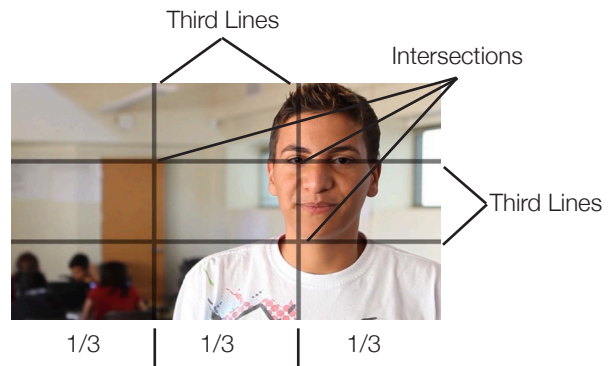
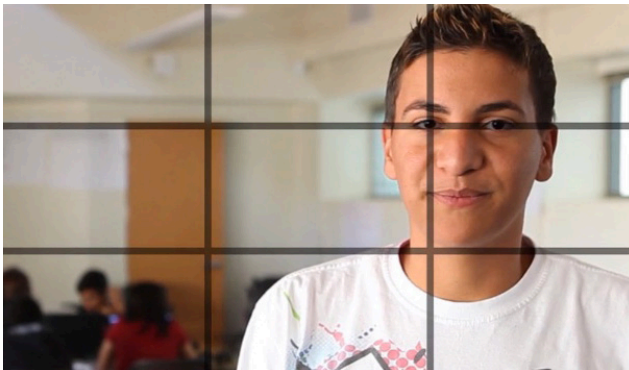
FRAMING

Pay attention to framing. Nothing ruins a photo faster than distracting elements in the background. Don't get so focused on the photo's subject that you ignore what else is going on around them. Watch out for poles, trees and power lines, and look all the way around the edges of the frame, asking “Is this what I really want?”



RULE OF THIRDS

Learn the Rule of Thirds. The human eye has its “visual center” and this is the place that it is naturally drawn to. Imagine the viewfinder is divided into thirds, both horizontally and vertically. This grid creates four points where the lines cross. For the greatest impact, place the subject where the lines intersect, instead of in the center of the frame.



FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND

Every photo has a foreground and a background. How you want people to look at your picture tells you what to do with the foreground and background. To blur the background, zoom in close and choose a large aperture setting (like F2.8). This works really well for pictures of a person.



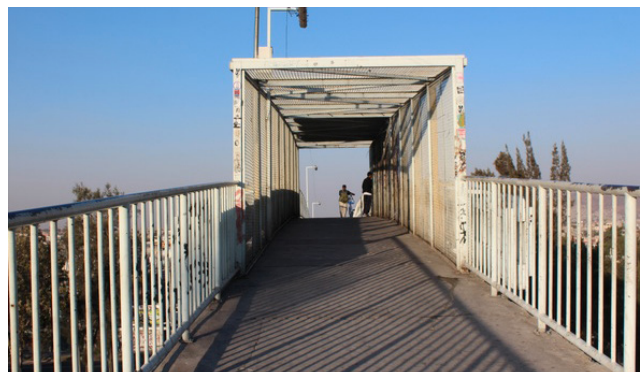
LINE OF SIGHT

Change your line of sight. Try kneeling, or even putting the camera on the ground. Or climb a flight of stairs so you're higher than the subject you're photographing. Digital cameras with twist and tilt LCD screens make it even easier. Changing angles provides a new way of seeing things, and makes for a more dramatic picture.



LEAD THE EYES

Look for elements that lead the eyes through the photo. A winding path, a row of telephone poles or even a line of chairs at the beach can serve as elements in a good photo.



FIND PATTERNS

Keep your eyes open for patterns. Interesting photos can be made of the waves and patterns created by drifting snow, a flock of birds flying in formation or pipes stacked at a construction site.



GET IN CLOSE

Try getting in close. Look for texture, in the wrinkles of a face or the bark of a tree. Pay attention to details.



CROPPING

Cropping brings a photo to life. If you edit photos on the computer, you are no longer limited to the standard 4 x 6, 5 x 7 or 8 x 10 print sizes. Look at each photo and think about what you really want people to see. Then crop everything else away. Try some unusual shapes, like panoramas or narrow verticals.



Original Photo



Cropped Photo

CAMERA SHOTS

ESTABLISHING SHOT OR EXTREME LONG SHOT (ES)

Used to establish a setting or sense of place. Shot is captured very far away from the subject.



LONG SHOT (LS)

Captures all of the subject, this shot generally establishes the size of the subject relative to place (for example a person from head to toe).



MEDIUM SHOT (MS)

This shot captures half of the subject, generally seen from waist to head for a person.



CLOSE-UP SHOT (CU)

This shot focuses in closely on the subject. Used most frequently with people during interviews.



EXTREME CLOSE-UP SHOT (ECU)

Goes in even closer to the subject than the Close-Up Shot and is used to focus on details or to make a more interesting shot.



CAMERA ANGLES

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Shooting the subject from way above.



HIGH ANGLE

A shot that is just above the subject looking down, but not nearly as high as Bird's Eye View. This shot can make the subject look or seem smaller and inferior.



LOW ANGLE

A shot that is just below the subject, looking up at them. This shot is used to make subjects look larger and more powerful, for example the President is usually shot from a low angle.



CANTED ANGLE

A shot that is tilted. Generally used to create the feeling of imbalance.

