

## Photographic Hints and Tips

In my first Hints and Tips article on this site, I advised a number of ways to improve composition. You might recall that one thing I suggested was moving the main subject or horizon in a landscape away from the centre of the image. In this item, I will explain the reasons for this and introduce the Rule of Thirds, which provides a way to give your photographs greater impact.

Envisage your picture divided into three equally divided sections both horizontally and vertically, producing nine segments as shown in the picture below. A subject or point of interest placed on either one of the central vertical or horizontal lines will be more aesthetically pleasing. A particularly powerful place to position the subject is on one of the four points where the lines intersect.



A landscape can often be improved by raising or lowering the camera so that the horizon falls on either the upper or lower horizontal line. It is not just horizons either, as my picture of Grasmere above shows. This image demonstrates several occurrences of the rule of thirds:

- The edge of the lake runs along the top third of the image. I chose to do this as the reflection was the more interesting part of the picture.
- The house on the left and its reflection are close both to the horizontal thirds and the intersections with the vertical lines.

Looking at the image of the moon rising above Hardknott Pass in the Lake District, I placed the moon close to an intersection of the gridlines and allowed the right hand side of the hill to run along the lower third. I was fortunate that the moon lines up with a part of the ground below it where there is a small dip on an intersection. Past this, the hill rises to fill part of the left side of the frame which would otherwise be empty and provides balance to the positioning of the moon.



In my portrait of a polecat, its nose is on an intersection of the thirds, demonstrating that a part of the subject can be used. This use of differential focussing directs the viewer's attention to those elements that are sharp and the positioning also gives the animal space to look into. When using this technique, it is important to ensure at least the eyes are in focus or the image will lose its impact.



It is often tempting to place the subject in the middle of a picture and this is encouraged by the camera's autofocus sensors usually being placed in the central portion of the LCD screen or viewfinder. Keep the shutter half pressed when the camera has focussed on the main subject and then recompose to improve the image. By using this technique, the camera will hold the original point of focus.

Whilst I have presented this as the "rule" of thirds, it is actually more of a guideline and pleasing images can be derived without strictly adhering to it. If you look at the small selection of my images at [www.mikefarley.net](http://www.mikefarley.net), you will note that in some I have followed the rule, while in others I have not. In Blea Tarn Reflection from my LRPS Panel, the shoreline runs directly through the middle. Conversely in Mandeville the centre of the flower is offset for greater impact.

Incidentally, the Rule of Thirds is not unique to photography and is often used by other graphic artists for their compositions.

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